Above: shadows from the afternoon thundershower cover the ridges and sides of Mt. Kollates, in the highest range of Albania’s ‘Forbidden Mountains.’

John Ely, Kukes, Albania July/August 02
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Introduction to Climbing in Albania

Geography and Geology
Albania is a small mountainous coastal republic lying on the Adriatic Sea. It is bordered in the south by Greece and in the north by the countries of former Yugoslavia -- by Montenegro in the north-west, by Kosovo in the north-east, and by Macedonia in the east. Though the successive north-south ranges of uplifted carst and limestone rarely reach over 2500 meters, the steeply ridged and steep sided nature of these mountains, combined with the precipitous gullies carved through the underlayers of flysch, provide an unusual geological environment unique in Europe. Some of these cuts are so smooth and vertical, they appear cut as if by a gigantic jigsaw. Albania owes its involved structure and intricate features partly to the complicated folding of its rocks, but chiefly to its copious rain and snowfall, the drainage of which has given rise to a remarkable river system, combining long trough valleys eroded in the softer beds, with precipitous gorges cut through the harder rocks between them. It is in the superfluidity of such gorges and in the dolomite-style limestone ridges and faces carved geologically by the same forces which provide good rock climbing possibilities.

Style of Rockclimbing
Nearly all the rock climbing is on the steep limestone faces and ridgelines that are carved out by this geography. Long and broken but steep broken backbones of rock and accompanying cracks or gullies cut across the limestone faces, providing the typical lines of first interest in the formations. Between these, the limestone frequently drops in vertical faces of varying quality, with the overhanging portions generally visible by the extremely abrasive limestone covering caused by water drainage and leaving such portions of stone a distinctive dark reddish or dark brown. Long fourth and easy fifth class lines can, depending on the rock character, be broken by short overhang steps forcing detours or sometimes exciting traverses where the broken crack-ledge systems disappear into steeper rock or cross harrowingly above it. Though of varying solidity in places, there is much rock dropping right down to road beds which is steep and offers muscular liebacking and crack climbing of a much more committing sort.

Protection is sometimes sparse, and much of the face climbing is unprotected. Vegetation and crack systems, as well as horns and spikes of limestone on the ridgelines provide more options when following the more obvious lines. A crag hammer or some other kind of substantive gardening implement is quite useful, together with many slings and some common sense.

The main advantage of climbing in Albania is the rugged and completely isolated nature of the environment, combined with the fact that almost none of these rocks have had their potential developed or their lines ascended. The previous regime did little in terms of developing real rock climbing potential through there was an Alpinists’ Club which did some ascents in the Tirana area and in the ‘Accursed Mountains’ around Theth and the Valbona gorge. In nearly two years of cragging about in Albania, I have come across one rusty fixed piton on a short steep pinnacle near the new Lake Bovilla dam and reservoir.
project. (See illus. 7 below.) Otherwise Albania is almost completely unexplored and undeveloped as a rock climbing area.

The steep hillsides, fracturing limestone ridges, and lack of climbing traffic means that much of the terrain is extremely exposed, with much precarious rock from pebbles to giant blocks perched about in the most spectacular places. Particular care on steep talus and scree fields on the carst hillsides is merited. Only a few small rocks can start spontaneous rock slides loosening large blocks and falling hundreds of meters upon goat paths or mountain roads below. If proper care and appreciation of the rugged conditions is taken into account, the possibilities for exploring and developing new lines of many lengths and in all degrees of difficulty are manifold. In particular, long half-day or all day fourth and fifth class ridgelines rise up the sides of the steep limestone peaks are a characteristic option for this region. Many options require long and sometimes harrowing approaches up steep hillsides and even steeper shoulders of crumbling carst. Some such areas appear as scree fields but turn out to be solid bands of rock whose surface is composed of sluffing off sheets of sharp edged limestone pebbles. Where proper care on approach or descent is taken, inspiring, sometimes easy but frequently devious, long and meandering lines of ascent can be found. The entirety of highland Albania is criss-crossed with goat and livestock trails, and while the road are still remarkably and nearly universally in the most terrible conditions, the manner in which they – whether unused mining track or main thoroughfare – cut through and across steep escarpments and precipitous gorges guarantees many places throughout the country with spectacular routes up unclimbed limestone straight off the road-bed. Through most of highland Albania covered in the pages below, cragging, bouldering, and scrambling is readily available in every shape and variety.

**Traveling and Staying in Albania**

Much of the experience in Albania results from the rugged natural and social surroundings. After 50 years of ultra-totalitarian rule, Albania has emerged from revolution, upheaval, economic collapse, ethnic warfare, banditry, black marketeering, and refugee crises to become and increasingly stable and economically viable, while nonetheless continually interesting and uniquely adventurous part of Europe. Its mountains are sparsely but thoroughly populated due to the policies of the old regime, and shepherds can be found are nearly every precipice and gorge cut. At the same time, there is no one else much to bother the car-camping visitor who comes prepared for rough conditions, brings a four-wheel drive vehicle, and takes the necessary precautions against theft.

The roads are treacherous and winding, and in nearly all cases require 4-wheel drive. In many places, arrangements should be made to park cars during the day and at night; in some, a local guide or informant is still quite recommended; and in general a expense of ca. 100-250 New Lek per night for ‘protection’ of vehicle or more for ‘camping fees’ can be expected. Since property relations are still not clarified and since there is a tradition of xenophobia as well as a highly developed host-guest culture in the Albanian highlands, it is best to exercise caution. When in doubt, having local connections via a guide or a property owner with ‘bed & breakfast’ arrangements or the like is recommended, as this
grants one the nearly sacrosanct ‘guest’ status protecting one from the otherwise usual forms of banditry and highway robbery which are a well-known part of Albania highland history.

Albania must be seen as the last true adventure left in continental Europe. The second poorest European state, it is terraced with tiny dirt roads, obscure and isolated mountain villages. It still contains active bands with assault rifles and purloined Daimlers from the EU countries. (Indeed, nearly all the vehicles in Albania are Daimler sedans providing Albania with a private automobile fleet subsidized by the German Automobile Insurance Fees.) Old tribal ways of life continue, especially in rural areas, amidst a largely Muslim population. In some areas of the north, the tradition of the ‘blood feud’ is still quite active, and most of the inhabitants get by via subsistence farming and herding and remittances from family members working abroad. Most of this adds color and spice to a vacation without involving and serious dangers or hassles. Serious crime is hardly a problem, as long as precautions are taken to protect vehicle and camping gear.

Maps are frequently unreliable, signposts poor to non-existent, and thoroughfare turn-offs or lack thereof obscure or disingenuously uninviting. The geography is distinctive enough, however, that one is usually well oriented after a day or town in any one locale, and a short question of the many pedestrians using the roads or watching passers-by is usually enough to sort out a confusion.

In many respects one is reminded of Latin America. In Albania, the state is frequently weak or ineffective in rural and remote areas; but as long as care is taken and courteous arrangements with the local inhabitants, the ranges and wild alpine terrain in such areas are in their totality available to the visitor. Compared with the rest of Europe, Albania is a region free of rules and regulations. At present, uncontrolled criminality and smuggling is a problem only in the Bajram Curri area (Tropoje District), a part of Albania which for this reason requires particular precautions if it is to be made part of a planned itinerary.

Hotels are sparse and frequently unattractive dilapidations leftover from the totalitarian era, but tolerable accommodation is available in most areas with short drives of major crags; 4x4 vehicle – rented or driven in – is preferable, but transport is also possible in the cheap, efficient and regular system of minibuses the criss-crosses the country, even on the most obscure and deserted mountain roads. Many remote villages and destinations have farmers with extra buildings or primitive ‘bed & breakfast’ like accommodations which are typical comfortable, interesting, and ‘authentic’, particular if one is served lamb together with the potent local form of Rakjia or fruit brandy around the tin wood stove on a floor covered with sheepskins.

Probably the best option is to arrange for long term use of a legal four wheel drive vehicle which could be driven into Albania via the ferry from Bari to Durres. Alternately, one could travel via by highway via Zagreb-Belgrade-Pristina or Podgorica in Montenegro. Vehicles could be rented either in Montenegro or Kosovo as long as arrangements were made to cross the border.
[One can fly into the capital of Tirana, or drive in through Montenegro to Shkodra, or through Greece, Macedonia or Kosovo into the North East to find the best rock climbing areas. Alternatively one could fly into Podgorica in Montenegro or Prishtina in Kosovo and rent a four-wheel drive for the short trip into Albania.]

Most of the excellent rock climbing is within a day trip of the towns of Tirana, Shkodra, or Kukes, with the exception of the Cem Gorge and Vermosh area, and the Theth-Valbona region. Bed & breakfast arrangements can, however, be made in these areas.

For more detailed information on Albania, the ‘Blue Guide’ written by James Pettifer is strongly recommended. Though Pettifer is not a particular devotee of high mountain environments and alpinism so much as Albanian culture and traditions, he is one of the best English language historian of the country, and his guide is well written and provides a wealth of detail and generally reliable information. Road maps are readily available, and excellent topographical maps are available from the Albanian Armed Services and the Geographic institute for 1500 Lek a piece in varying sizes for all of the country; and they are recommended navigation tools.
I. Tirana-Kruje Area Central Coastal Range

A. Kruje Town

Kruje is a mountain town located at the northern end of the Kruje-Daiti Range of mountains on the western slope facing the Adriatic. Kruje Mountain to the north is followed successively by Mt. Gamtit, Mt. Berarit, and Mt. Daiti, with steep limestone gorges cut into the ridgelines of the range between each peak, a limestone escarpments running along especially the seaward or western slopes of the range.

At Kruje, there is a gorge as well at the north end of town can be reached by the lower of the two roads that lead inland from the town; it is notable for its vertical keyhole shape cut into the limestone cliffs; and the characteristic long limestone ridge which climbs to the summit of the mountain north of Kruje.
Mountain (1150m). The lower Kruje road, the Rruga Burreli, can be followed to Burrel. Just out of town, the road transverses several steep limestone faces just after leaving Kruja. (See the illustrations below.) The Kiktafe stream, north of Kruje town, disappears here into a cavern in the limestone, and there is much karst surface with dolines.

The upper road leads to the top of Kruje mountain, and cuts through three successive limestone buttresses on the way up the mountain. A third road leads along the base of Kruje Mountain’s western side past a series of overhanging limestone bluffs and pinnacle formations to a new prison complex some 3 km South of Kruje Town. The formations along the road fine face climbing but would be difficult to protect, and difficult, steep and hard-to-protect limestone faces constitute the best part of the other climbable terrain around Kruje.
B. Mt. Bastarit (Berarit) and Bovilla Gorge

Entrance Area  Bovilla Gorge contains the best rock climbing available in the greater Tirana area. It can be reached via a 20-minute trip down the road to Zall-Herr which turns right at the Bathore intersection one kilometer south of the town of Kamez on the Shkodra Road. The badly rutted dirt road follows the Herr I Bastarit river past the Albanian Army Commando Base and a gravel pit. The road rises as the road cuts through the gorge on the north side after crossing a bridge at the entrance. The road passes the Bovilla Dam, holding in the drinking water for the city of Tirana in the reservoir.

The entrance to the gorge is marked on the south side a pair of distinctive limestone pinnacles in the front of a set of steep limestone crags rising in a series of archlike ridges up the front face of Mt. Bastardit (1403m) on the right and Mt. Gamtit (1268m) on the left. On the north side of the entrance, three crags rise up east side of Mt. Gamtit. The first crag – marked a large orange face rising above the road -- contains an easy fifth class
ridge route that can be reached by vegetated fourth class ledges at the base of the large orange face (illus. 6). A third class ledge rises on the face to the left, dividing broken lower sections from the steep face capped with overhangs above. The second crag is to its left and can be reached through the gully on its right, which also provides descent from all three crags. Two major fifth class cracks, the left hand in a large north-facing corner, provide the most obvious of several lines. The third crag is the largest and can be reached by following the olive terraces stretching down towards the road. It offers steep free routes leading up the steep buttresses lying between overhanging sections; and three-four pitches of fourth and easy fifth class take one up the right hand ridgeline.

Illus. 8 Above Left: The steep faces of Gamtit Crag Three, illustrating hard lines starting left of the round cave area, and easier routes on the ridges to the left.

Illus. 9 Above Right: Gamtit Crag Two, with fifth class routes either side of the large left facing corner.

Illus. 10 Right: Rising above Gamtit Crag Three is the rocky lower summit of Mt. Gamtit itself, with routes high on the south face and south ridge, both visible on the right skyline.
**Bovilla Gorge – Dam Area** The entire interior of the gorge is mottled with ridge systems and crags reaching down to the streambed. A couple of faces along the road can be top roped, while closer to the dam, longer problems rise up to the left (illus. 12), including a capstone crag about 20 minutes walk uphill from the road (illus. 13). A number of crags, including a 15 meter pinnacle (illus. 14), are formed down southern sides of the gorge from broken karst formations ending in the area of the dam runoff. Mt. Bastardit drops in two distinct ridges down directly onto the reservoir Dam. Both ridges offer good multi-pitch afternoons; the second can be reached by following the goat trail along the reservoir shore that begins just beyond the tunnel leading to the reservoir intake units.

**Mt. Gamtit – Backside or Westfaces** Beyond Bovilla Dam, the road turns left in a series of switchbacks up over the reservoir and along the backside of Mt. Gamlit, which contains three separate distinctive rock formations. (1) **Gamtit Slabs**: a small karst ridge rising from the dam breaks off eventually into a series of steep limestone slabs, and eventually a series of high corners formed by the drainage funnels in the cliffs rising above the slabs (illus. 15). (2) **Gamtit Back Crag**: A
limestone crag rises some 350 meters high to two points on the same ridge line 1.5 km further up the road above a parking lot formed by an abandoned factory, providing several multi-pitch fifth class lines (illus. 16). (3) Gamtit Back Ridge: A large and broken ridge of limestone reaches down from Mt. Gamlit towards the east three km north of the reservoir (illus.17).

West Side of Mt. Gamtit: Illus. 15  above left: back slabs; Illus. 16  Above right, back crag; Illus. 17  Below, back ridge.
C. Mount Daiti and Babru Gorge

Mt. Daiti (51612m) rises directly east of the Tirana metropolitan area. A road leads to a National Park on the summit, from which a number of crags can be reached. Others can be found by turning left of the road up Mt. Daiti on the Rruga Dibres which passes the hamlet of Babru before entering a limestone gorge separating Daiti from Bastardit. A series of ridges run from the entrance of this gorge up the side of Mt. Daiti, in which a pair of easy fifth class ridge routes can be followed. Alternately, approaches by foot are available to the steep palisades of vertical and overhanging limestone ringing the north-west sides of Mt. Daiti (illus.18). The central buttresses underneath the summit can be reached from an access road a few hundred meters beyond the Chateau Linze complex on the Mt. Daiti road (illus. 20 & 21).
D. Erzenit River Gorge and Cave

South of Tirana on the Rruga Elbasanit, a left hand turn at a large white stone adjacent to a long concrete aqueduct some 15km from the city center leads uphill along the southern bank of the Erzenit River. The large escarpments to the right forming into the Erzenit North and South Cliffs in the gorge formed by the river are visible from the Elbasan Road. Follow the road up to the village of Pellumbas, on the south hillside of the Erzenit Gorge, where one can park.

Follow the distinctive goat trail up to the large limestone cave and 60-150 meter cliffs on the south side; or alternatively walk down and follow the aqueduct on the other side of the gorge up through it to the reservoir at its mouth. The river flows through a series of deeply cut waterfalls that provide climbing opportunities, as does the large limestone cliffs that rise from the gorge cut up the mountain to the north and south.
South of the Erzenit River cut, a series of steeper and overhanging cliffs rise to a long rocky capstone of a large butte of limestone rising for a kilometre above the hamlet of Pellumbas and dropping down to the south into the town of Krrabe and the path of the Murdhardit River. Accessible either directly up the path from Pellumbas or up from the Erzenit gorge cut just below the dam, one can see the entrance to a large, 100m deep limestone cave with striking stalagmites and stalagmites, and some steep and difficult climbing lines on these **Erzenit South Cliffs** in the limestone faces just uphill from the cave entrance.

Just before the turnoff to the village of Pellumbas, the road turns right and south up to this headland, cutting after a few switchbacks through the southern escarpments of Pellumbas Butte overlooking Krabbe. This series of the **Krabbe Escarpments** offer some climbing possibilities, though much of this portion along the road cut is of broken and uneven quality. The main set of cliffs leads below the road where the road itself cuts across the escarpments near the top of the Pellumbas Headland.

**Illus. 24**: Line of cliffs rising on both the North and South Side of the Erzenit Gorge, with dam and reservoir behind the last set of visible cliffs — the North Cliffs -- rising to the left.

**Pellumbas Butte is formed by the ridge rising to the right.**

**Illus. 25**: The cave entrance is the dark hole in the center of this view of the Erzenit South Cliffs rising from the Erzenit Gorge notch.
Illus. 26 above left: Two layers of the many layered lower South Cliffs rising out of the Erzenit gorge; and illus. 27 above right: aquaduct running through gorge notch.
Illus. 28 below left: the broken limestone cliff line of the Krrabe Escarpment above the road cut on the southern side of Pellumbas Butte.
Illus. 29 below right: the larger and more solid portion of the Krrabe Escarpment cliff line running down hill and below the road cut through the southern side of Pellumbas Butte.
E. Ulez Reservoir Rocks and Mat River Gorge

About 13 kilometers up the Mat River from the point where the Fan flows into the Fan, a large hydroelectric dam contains the Ulez Reservoir at the point where the Mat River gorge is cut into two rocks, **North and South Ulez Rocks**. Below them in the gorge canyon of the Mat are a series of crack-lined cliffs, while rising above this complex to the north rise the Dervent Ridges and to the south the Mount Mallezit (1113m). Especially the **Dam Cracks** in the reservoir canyon and the North and South Ulez Rocks offer spectacular and completely unexplored climbing possibilities. The area is roughly 1.5 hr. drive from downtown Tirana, and 20 minutes down the road from Burrel.

**Illus. 30 Above:** Wide shot from the Ulex Reservoir looking at the dam, with South Ulez Rock on the left and North Rock with its tunnel entrance visible on the right.

**Illus. 31 Below Left:** The sharp buttress of South Ulez Rock with Dam in front. The Dam Cracks are below to the left in the picture.

**Illus. 32 Below Right:** The step sides of North Rock viewed from the Dam.
The Dam Cracks

Illus. 33 Above Left: the Dam cracks seen on the left viewed from the Dam.
Illus. 34 Above Right: three of the Dam Cracks rising just at the base of the Ulez Dam.
Illus. 35 Below Left: This steep layback in the Dam gorge needs gardening.
Illus. 36 Below Right: The short but forbidding vertical and overhanging crack lines of the Mat Gorge below Ulez Dam.
II. Mirdita
A series of crags in the Mirdita area can be accessed via the main road between Tirana/Lezhe and Kukes. After driving past a series of broken composite crags ca. 10 km after leaving the town of Rreshen, a road turns right down into the Fan (I Vogel) River valley at Blinisht just beyond the police station perched on the scenic overlook.

As one descends this ‘improved road’ leading to an abandoned copper mine at Reps visible in the distance, the river valley below and the crags in the area can both be clearly viewed as long as the sky is not overcast. The pine forested mountain terrain is highlighted by the reddish color of the earth giving this area of Mirdita in the Fan River drainage its characteristic aspect. A large screefield scoring the mountainsides directly behind a large complex of abandoned copper mines indicates a gorge cut in the Fan revealing excellent crags rising out of the river bed. Above and to the right, a series of limestone cliffs rise on the plateau above. The former can be access by driving up the Fan River past the abandoned copper mine. The latter are accessed on the more difficult but spectacular mountain road that leads right up two km upstream from the abandoned copper mine. Following on the southern side of a steep streambed opposite the village of Gryke-Orosh, the road continues past logging operations upwards, eventually running along the base of a long terrace of limestone crags forming the Mal e Gurit de Cikut area. After the series of ca. 40-60 meter crags uplifting in a series of jagged rows above the road, a long cockscomb crag rising above a couple of farmhouses offers additional cragging in this upper area. Both areas provide local camping opportunities and are ca. 4 hours by vehicle from central Tirana.

Illus. 37 & 38 Above: Two views of the crags forming the terraces of Mal e Gurit de Cikut rising above the Fan river beyond the villages of Gryke-Orosh and Bulshar. This crags are part of a long escarpment visible from the main road to Kukes which are serviced along their entirety by a logging

Some remote crags are found on the lumber roads rising above the village of Klos along the Fan river, or by taken the mountain roads north beyond the crags of Mal e Gurit
visible from the road, leading to the summer grazing pastures of the Orish Clan. See the illustrations below.

**Illus. 39 Right:** The cockscomb of limestone average 35 m rising as one travels the Orosh logging road north past Male Gurit de Cikut.

**Illus. 40 Below Left:** the Fan Pillar rises out of the Fan river three kilometres from the village of Klos.

**Illus. 41 Below Right:** the Crags rising above the Fan Pillar just upstream.
Illus. 42-45 Left: Three Views of the Fan River Stack. This distinctive feature rises just above the road along the Fan. Above, the jagged top viewed from upstream, left center, the main face looking from the stream bed, and left below, the overhang features on the downstream faces.

Beyond this stack, offering routes on all sides, the Fan Pillar drops directly into the river visible on the other side of the canyon. Above it additional crags provide a third set of alternatives.
Illus. 46 Left: Typical steep limestone crags offering innumerable well protected lines which are found in the backwoods of the Fan River valley. Logging roads cut across the base of this 80 meter crag of broken overhands and corners; while the ridges of limestone in the mist above require a walk up the gullies to the right.
III. Kukes Area/NorthEast Albania

Kukes became famous during the 1999 Kosovo refugee crisis as one of the two main border crossing out of Kosovo over which the Serbian military forces pushed their campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing.’ Besides its beautiful alpine environment, Kukes has little to recommend for itself. But is located within a short drive of several large masses of limestone in sharp gorges, as well as the alpine peaks of the western frontier range separating Albania from Kosovo and Macedonia.

This range runs from Mt. Kornitik (2394 m) on the border with Kosovo and Mt. Djallica (2486 m) – both strikingly visible from Kukes – south to Mt. Korabi (2751 m), the highest peak in Albania, and Mt. Deshatit (2374m), with the town of Peshkopi nestled in its foothills. Korabi lies on the frontiers of Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, with the Sar Planina mountains (that rise to 2500 m) dividing Kosovo from Macedonia also running north and east from the same highland point. From the Korabi massif and rising to the north east from them are the Palaeozoic rocks of the Macedonian Sar Planina. This range -- massive, strongly folded and independent of the Drin Valley structures -- likewise offer few technical opportunities.

The peaks south of Korabi located in Diber District around Peshkopi offer less in the way of technical climbing, with the exception of a small but interesting gorge near the trout farm of Arrez between Peshkopi and Kukes. Korabi itself, located at end of a canyon leading upwards from the village of Radomir, is located in a striking setting, and offers much climbing potential. The Black Drin Canyon south of Kukes on the road to Peshkopi, however, is wild and interesting for those with four-wheel drive. Those portions in Kukes District offer more rock climbing possibilities. From the villages of Skavice, Resk, Kolosjan, and Bushtrice, spectacular mountain scenery of the bare rocky uplands and numerous limestone crags characterize the landscape. Beyond this area, the main climbing is in two gorges draping the sides of Mt. Gjallica formed by the Lumes River on its northern and the Tershanes Creek on its southern shoulder.

Mt. Gjallica itself makes a spectacular exercise. The steep gradient from the summit into the town of Kukes constitutes the largest single visible geological formation in this part of Albania. Its steep, relentlessly uniform, and seemingly endless north-west slopes drop right into the satellite villages of Kukes. Gjallica can be ascended up a spectacular but secure third class ridge line reached by following the hillside directly behind the 250 meter stack of the abandoned copper mine just before the entrance to the Lumes River gorge, or directly up one of the gullies or approaches from the village of Shtiqen just to the south. A simple and shorter walk-up leads from the village of Topojan/Brekje high on the north east shoulder, and after driving through the gorge and turning right along the less steep western slopes. Alternatively, one can follow the mountain road south of Bicaj left up the sides of Mt. Kolosjan past the village of that name, making sure at ca. 1600 m to keep left around the village of Tershane in the gorge below to stay on the sides of Gjallica.
A. The **Gryka e Vanave or Lumes River Gorge**
The Lumes River gorge divides Mt. Gjallica from Mt. Koritnik, and may offer some of the best overall rockclimbing in all of Albania. It has a road following the Lumes River running west to east, beginning just north of Kukes on the road to Kosovo right after the reservoir bridge. This road cuts along the northern bank of the gorge. After a preliminary set of broken karst hillsides, two tunnels through limestone formations reaching down the south face across the roadway mark the most distinctive landmarks in the gorge. The first tunnel is .75 Km from the bridge, the second is 2 Km past the first; and two subsequent markings are constituted by the only Hoxha-bunker along the road 1 Km from the second tunnel (with the number 39 painted on it in red), and the visible serpentine formations at the base of the **South-East Buttress** one kilometer further at the west entrance to the gorge.

This gorge offers a tremendous amount of rock climbing in all classes of difficulty and in all grades between I & IV. The climbing possibilities arise from the multiple ridges of limestone and faces formed between and on the sides of these ridges, rising in fins, pinnacles, and crags. The single largest formation is the ridge of Koritnik, running 1000 meters up to a 1352 meter subsidiary peak called Koritnik Peak.

1. The Gorge South Side

**Tower Pinnacles Area**
Following the second tunnel, several limestone ridges run down the south face of the gorge to the roadside – available after a short by dizzying approach up the steep karst scree fields beneath and separating each of the ridge formations. Along each of these ridges, a series of faces are available for route development, averaging one to three pitches, and with, in many cases, roadside belay stations. These **Tunnel Buttresses** are
steep, and partially broken in places, offering some easier fifth class routes, but consisting mostly of shallow cracks in broken corners and steep faces.

There are several limestone ridges directly before this tunnel, all of which offer moderate 4th and 5th class ascents, while the steeper faces of these ridges offer progressively hardly free climbing possibilities. All of these ridges lead to two large (‘tower’) pinnacles of limestone some 350 meter over the road on the ridge just in front of Koritnikut Peak ridge. Each face is broken by at least one easy fifth class and several more difficult crack systems. Descent is found to the north -- down a steep cow pasture past a pumphouse, which also serves as approach to upper routes on Koritnikut Ridge.

The rock stretch below the pumphouse can be seen distinctly from the road as three ‘beehive’ like formations containing a small pinnacle. Each of these formations is broken by a crack with a 5.9 move on the left, with moderate and easier alternatives in the two cracks and the ridgeline on the right leading up the ridge up left past a pinnacle.

Illus. 48 above left: Pumphouse Rock with two of its three cracks visible either side of the dark brown splotch.  
Illus. 49 above: The Two Towers.  
Illus. 50 left: The Two Towers viewed together with additional pinnacles from the opposite side of the gorge.
Above left: the main tunnel buttress looking west. Above center: close up illustrating the cracks above the tunnel. Above right: the largest of the Tunnel Buttresses rising before and above that with the Tunnel through it.
Illus. Xx &xx below: two views of the Tunnel buttress and the road along the Lumes River; in the left hand image, the two towers are visible in the upper left.
The Upper South Face

The upper south face is cut by several ridges which jut out, especially at the north and south entrances of the gorge, in large buttresses. The most distinctive is the north-east ridge of the Koritnikut Peak itself, visible on the way in the gorge, while at the east entrance, the south east buttress or the Quelesh is the most evident feature, as it rises the full height of the rock formations. The largest rock routes, however, are formed by the ridgelines and faces of the north-eastern area. This whole formation rises above the towers area described above.

Above the two towers, the main ridge of Koritnikut Peak rises up above the town of Perbreg. Both its long north-east ridge and the approach to this ridge from inside the gorge gullies makes exciting and long fifth class ascents. Inside the gorge faces, a series of spines of limestone can be followed to reach either of these major access points onto Koritnikut Peak’s main ridge. This entire area of rock can be treated as offering shorter ascents up the bewildering number of fins, shoulders, and rivulated slabstones, most of which can be descended in the gullies between the ridges rising out of the gorge.

The largest face in the formation can be seen in the upper right hand portion of the photograph to the right.

The dark brown portions of the faces are caused by limestone dripping on overhanging sections, creating a remarkable abrasive surface of coral like deposits.

An equally broad array of ascent possibilities are available on the upper face to the right of the north-east ridge and the faces formed by its eastern side. Several of these can be seen in the second picture of Koritnikut Peak’s upper face directly below.
Beyond the overhanging upper parts of the central face, a series of broken limestone areas of varying quality rock and elaborate routefinding also allow access to the top of the cliff area.

Left: The Upper Face of Koritnikut Peak, with its broken central buttress and the large gully leading up to its overhanging amphitheatre directly above.
Left: two views of the main formation of the Korinik Peak following the first ridgeline, with subsidiary ridgelines rising to its peak across the face from right to left, forming alternating broken sections of the lighter colored rock and the brown faces of overhanging limestone, upon which the dripping rain has produced an abrasive rasp-like surface.

The lower picture is a close up illustrating the central ridge on the upper section rising up to a peak containing a pine tree. In the upper picture, the entire face is visible, showing the tops of the tunnel buttresses with their large overhang rising directly above the present roadbed.
Quelesh or the North-East Buttress
The largest single piece of rock in the lower parts of the Lumes Gorge is the North-East Buttress. From below along the road at the eastern gorge entrance, the formation looks like a quelesh, that is, the traditional white rounded felt caps of the Albanian mountaineer. The west face is steep enough that many lines would be artificial as is evident from the brown color of the overhanging rock, while easier fifth class lines can be found on the lower east face leading up to the long ridge line. The upper parts of the east face are longer and more broken, and exuded many more difficult fifth class possibilities.

Above left: Quelesh from the road directly below. Above: Quelesh Buttress east face viewed from Lumes Gorge east entrance. Left: Quelesh Buttress West Face. Below: A view of Quelesh with goatherd and goats on the upper of the three dikes of rock that divide it from right to left.
The main routes on Quelesh can be approaches most easily from the fields that lead up to the goat paths along its base, leaving from just above the gorge at the suspension bridge by the west entrance. From this approach, the three great dikes of broken limestone rising from left to right across the face and offering many fourth and fight class multi-pitch ascent options are readily apparent. As the last picture above makes evident, the last and largest of the ledge systems is roomy enough to contain an entire herd of goats and its keeper, though this ledge edges in the middle of the face, with some interesting fifth class ascents leaving from the right hand side of the ledge through the rim of the main headwall. These routes can be seen in the last picture leaving up to the right from under the right hand brown patch that appears under the right-hand skyline.
2. The Gorge North Side

Entrance Cracks
The northern face of the gorge is broken by a series of uplifted crags with distinctive crack systems at the entrance. Many of these, including the two formations of ‘Hoxha’s Head’ and Split Rock, are continuations of the Tunnel Buttress ridges up the shoulders of Gjallica.

The right hand side of Hoxha’s head can be ascended via the obvious corner, including a tricky overhanging portion, which leads to the back ridge of the ‘head.’ On the face further right are easier fifth class alternatives, while on the left side, a blocky corner can be followed leading up to steep layback just left right hand profile.

Split rock contains a grimy and wide chimney up its right hand side dividing it in two, with a more interesting corner that rises to its right. The face left of the chimney and the
large chimney in the middle of split rock are fourth class, as is the buttress to the left of the main chimney.
Aqueduct Terraces
Two large ridges of limestone which jut from the top of the gorge down into the Lumes river. Where they come down to the river, they form a series of terraces combining steep and overhanging portions with broken faces. Along this section, several climbing areas are accessible by a goat and miners trail which has been hewn into the karst, and by an aqueduct system which runs along the base of the gorge some 20 M above the river bed. The first or Lower Terrace appears first driving from west to east; and the second or Higher Terrace a few hundred meters further.

*Illus. xx right:* West facing view of the **Lower Aqueduct Terraces** visible on the other side of river and road.

*Illus. xx left below:* West facing view of the **Higher Aqueduct Terraces**.

*Illus. xx right below:* North facing view of the **Higher Aqueduct Terraces**.
**South-East Buttress**
The last major formation on the south side is the **East Buttress**. This ridgeline runs directly down to the road where some striking steep grooves break the face of the buttress. Above it rises in a long ridgeline that is also broken by a 250 meter face higher on its upper east-facing side.

*Two views of the East Buttress looking west from the eastern gorge entrance. Above left: a wide shot of the upper buttress with the main face visible in the upper left. Above right: the 60 meter lower East Buttress with its two grooves cutting the face and the aqueduct cut appearing as ‘balconies’*

*Below: Two views of the long East Buttress from the other side of the gorge illustrating the length of the central to sections and the broken fourth and fifth class sections which pass through the final canyon rim headwall. The aquaduct cut through the lower gorge is visible in the lower part of the left hand picture.*
**B. Bicaj Gorge**

Eight kilometers south of Kukes on the road to Peshkopi, a sharp gorge following the Tershanes creek cuts dramatically through the lower south shoulder of Mt. Gjallica just above the Town of Bicaj. Behind the two-story white school building, a road leads a half kilometer to the hamlet of Mustafe. Very steep lines run up both sides of the sharp keyhole cut in the side of the mountain, while above longer and steeper lines run 150 meters or more up the limestone ridge behind the keyhole entrance to the gorge and in the amphitheater cut into the side of Gjallica behind.

Bicaj is the old tribal center of the Luma, who were the dominant political force in this area historically, and the area is populated and requires a local guide to avoid irritations from the local children. The gorge can be accessed, always with difficulty, three ways: (1) via the entrance by going down through a few farmers fields from the village of Mustafe, (2) from this village up along the steep goat path over the southern lip of the gorges precipices towards the village of Tershane, or (3) from the Mt. Kolosjan road downwards past Tershane into the gorge. Much of the limestone is extremely steep and broken, and there are for many of the features, questionable and difficult approaches, but the environment of this gorge is as strange and spectacular as any in Albania.
Above right: A major corner with a chimney sized crack rises up the center of the left wall viewed from in the gorge entrance.

Above left: The same corner can be seen from a distance, approaching Bicaj Gorge from the aquaduct above the Tershane stream flowing to the road. The goat trail to Tershane Village rises up the right-hand hillside.

Right: A view of the sharp blades of exposed limestone rising just inside Tershane Gorge on the right hand side. Curved amplitheatres of overhanging limestone with sharp buttresses of rock dividing them rise from her up the south side of Mt. Gjallica, offering many possibilities for those able to manage the complex approach.
C. Kolosjan, Bushtrice and Tejdrine

South the Bicaj Gorge on the road past Bicaj Town, a series of crags rear up in the vicinity of the mountain villages of Kolosjan, Bushtrice, and Tejdrine. Kolosjan lies on the main road to Peshkopi 15 km south of Kukes, and the turn-off left to Lusen and Bushtrice is 2 km further down the road. The three Kolosjan Crags appear on the shoulders of Mt. Kolosjan (2050 m) along the road to Bushtrice.

Right: Kolosjan Crags 1 & 2. Belowleft: Close up Kolosjan Crage 2. Below Right: Kolosjan Crag 3 from the south, with the main routes leaving near the slabs in the lower left of the picture, and then on the crags rising to the left up the various scree chutes. The road cut and that caused by the aqueduct are visible on the left; descent is via to the right at the top via the back side down to the aqueduct cut.
After the third crag, the road turns up the side of a canyon towards Bushtrice. Before this road drops down into Bushtrice Canyon, there are several crags that are visible and can be reached from the tiny hamlet of Lusen on the north side of Bushtrice Canyon. Follow the aqueduct from Lusen in direction of these crags. Several large pillars and corners drop right into the creek of Bushtrice Gorge, and these can be reached by following the road down to Bushtrice, from which the road leads later up to Radomir and Mt Korabi following the turn off just past the canyon to the right. The left turn leads up past the series of Bushtrice pillars rising above up the Bushtrice canyon on its left hand hillside to Fshat and the Fshat Wall in the other.

Throughout this area, the climbing can excellent. The vast scars caused by the faces of Kolosjan Crags 1 & 2 offer routes along both sides, as well as overhang crack and boulder problems of all sizes, while the south side of both crags, as seen in the picture below, offer multi-pitch ascents of varying fifth class difficulty.

Kolosjan Crag 3 drops to the side of the hill to Lusen, where a series of difficult and steep faces rise right from the road cut, with a palisade of varying limestone pillars rising above. The main path of ascent is a striking 5.5 route begins at the detached pillars to the right of these slabs by following the main angular cut in the face from right to left, following that forming some five pitches, and finishing with a harrowing traverse over a sluice gulley of shattered overhanging limestone at the top of the crag. Left of this, several fourth class options follow right of the shattered gully, and to the right a manifold of moderate and difficult fifth class routes are evident beyond the two pillars at the base of the first scree piles.
Bushtrice Gorge and the Lusen Wall

The crags of Bushtrice Gorge can be reached by scrambling down and left from Lusen, or up through the gorge along the river. The upper crags of the Lusen Wall, which rises just
up river from the village of Lusen, are best reached by following the aqueduct from Lusen. The gorge can be entered by driving 2 km down the road from Lusen on the road to Bushtrice and Radomir. Routes of varying difficulty rise to right and left, with easier cracks and faces to the right and steep blades of limestone along the base of the village of Lusen as the gorge rises towards the Lusen Wall.

About two kilometers up the gorge from its entrance on the Bushtrice-Fshat road, the buttresses of the Lusen Wall rise up to the full height of the cliff. Their best approach of one seeks to climb the entirety is through the gorge, and then up one of the steep vegetated cracks or gullies leading to the upper ramparts.
Below: Two of the several Upper Bushtrice Crags accessible via Lusen. The lower portions of the Bushtrice gorge form the lower part of the same face as these towers; and the entirety is accessible from the gorge entrance 3 km down the road from Lusen. The Lusen Wall abuts the Fshat Wall.

Left:

Unclimbed moderate and difficult crack and layback lines line the entrances of Bushtrice gorge.

Difficult face climbing would be possible as well on steep ridges and slabs caused by the fracturing limestone
Fshat Wall

Up the road from the Bustrice gorge routes, a steep and harrowing mountain passage with massive drops into the gorge below leads, after five kilometers, up to the village of Fshat. The bluffs of the Bustrice gorge rise up on the mountainside directly north, with the same formation developing into the 2-300 meter limestone formations above the mountain hamlet of Fshat. The large upper bluffs can be reached via Lusen, while the lower are approached via the gorge. Lusen and Fshat are connected by a two-hour goat trail leading along the base of the main Fshat wall, and providing a convenient means of descent from the crags all along the 4 kilometer walk up the Bustrice gorge to Fshat. The rock in this gorge is of mixed quality, with the most noteworthy feature being the large funnel, chimney and crack systems that make great incisions down the overhanging limestone faces.
D. Radomir and Mt. Korabi

Driving south from Kukes, one reaches the Radomir and the Mt. Korabi complex by following the road into the valley beyond that of Bushtrice, in the process crossing the border from Kukes into Diber Districts. The road in this direction is not bad, but distances are typically not marked on Road Maps below Bushtrice. The following intervals are worth keeping in mind: From where the road turns right down the hill at Lusen, it is eight kilometres to the next important intersection at Ploshtan, where the road goes left up the hill around a Café-Bar; from this intersection it is another eight kilometres to a left hand turn at Cerem which leads up two kilometres to the village of Radomir. From here, access to the magnificent limestone cliffs of the three Radomir Rocks and the complex formation constituting Mt. Korabi can be easily accessed.

Parking is found on the road just beyond the village mosque, and here the broad livestock trail leads up into valley towards Mt. Korabi. The largest part of the rockclimbing in this area can be found on the three Radomir Rocks which rise on the same ridge line as Mt. Korabi itself directly up the valley out of town. Access the rocks, or the Ridge ascent of Mt. Korabi via the goat trail visible at the base of these rocks; while following the stream bed allows access to easier ascents of both Mt. Korabi (2571m) as well as the fractured limestone pillar broken by scree fields that constitutes the slightly lower Mali Korab (2683 m), the large peak which is broken by a giant snow gully on its south side, facing Peshkopi.
Besides the Radomir Rocks, the complex cirque of massive limestone pillars that forms Mt. Korabi offers many possibilities for rockclimbing in exposed alpine conditions and at all levels of difficulty.

All three of the Radomir Rocks offer distinctive possibilities. Cragging of all sorts can be found on the first, and as well on the set of 1-2 pitch pillars just beyond them.
Radomir Rock 2 is a massive steep and fractured affair which has one or two distinctive traditional lines, and acres of space for more elaborate sport or artificial activities, all in the Grade IV range. The main weaknesses are in the center of the face and the large corner on the upper part of the face; the right hand lower face is mostly overhanging and largely unclimbable, but the domed face above offers possibilities. As evident in the view of the entire face above left, the reddish areas indicating overhanging and largely unprotectable limestone pose obstacles to most other lines on the 800 meter wide face.

Radomir Rock Three has three excellent fifth class lines breaking its otherwise sheer face, the most attractive being a moderate corner as enjoyable as the broken faces above. It also has an extremely forbidding looking overhanging chimney rising out of the cave in the upper eastern end of the rock.
The massive limestone pillars can be approached best by following the stream bed up past the Radomir Rocks, following the goat trails right around the waterfalls, and scrambling up the scree fields out of the pastures ca. 1-2km further up the valley.

Right: A view of Radomir Rock 3 from uphill showing the blank lower and broken upper face, together with the eastern cave and chimney.

Below left: A downhill view of the middle face of Radomir Rock 3, illustrating the excellent corner route, and the liebacking flake which rises past the small oak tree visible in this photo and that above.

Below Right: the steep left side of Radomir 2, with the upper corners visible.
Right: this right hand pof the two main pillars dropping down from the summit of Korabi offers the most spectacular options for rockclimbing, includining the crusted face and corner leading up to the main ridgeline, the ridge face itself visible on the right hand of this photo, or the yet steeper and overhaing faces forming the other side of this pillar.

These are about a two hour approach from the roadside.

Right: The exciting 3rd/4th Class Summit Ridge of Mt. Korabi.
Tejdrine Towers

The last and most striking of the limestone formations in this area lies near the town of Tejdrine in a set of towers rising from the Black Drin up to the town. These are reached by turning right 2 km after Kolosjan and remaining on the main road to Peshkopi, following the switchbacks some 6 km more down into the bottom of the Drin Canyon. Tejdrine Towers appears on the other side as one drops into this canyon.
IV. Shkodra Area and North Western Albanian Alps

A. Malesia e Madhe: Hoti to Vermosh

This area of Northern Albania along the Montenegro border is perhaps some of the most beautiful in Albania, and it also holds the most spectacular rock climbing in the country as well. A turnoff into the Hoti Valley west off the Podgorica-Shkodra Road is found a few hundred meters south of the Montenegrin border. The road meanders up the hill past the valley village of Hoti to the stone town of Rrapsh formed in a flat col composed of odd formations of broken limestone. (Along the way, the road is broken by a series of 3-8 meter limestone rocks jutting up out of the gorsebushes like sharks teeth.)

After Rrapsh the road descends dramatically in a series of twelve large switchbacks some thousand meters in two cojoining valley sides. Large limestone cliffs rise all along the road path in a series of overhanging buttresses of solid limestone abounding in possible one-to-four pitch lines up the corners and faces with access and descents made possible by proximity of the road (illus. 19). The road drops into the Cem River gorge, following the river upstream. Sharp limestone cliffs drop down to the riverbed, especially on the south facing sides of the gorge.

Among the key formations are:

**Limestone Aprons** – Some 2.5 km downstream from Tamare, aprons of calcified lime deposits appear on the northern or lefthand side of the gorge, formed by drainage funnels.
down between limestone escarpments. Forbidding alone is the steep approach.

**Tamare Wall**– Out side of the tiny village of Tamare, in the drainage gorge forming the village’s resting point, a large rectangular and layer-caked limestone wall rises. It is cut with a large obtuse corner dividing a near vertical face from a smaller overhanging right face. It is ca. 5-700 ft. high and 350 ft. across. It is part of a formation which also includes a long limestone ridge line rising some 8-900 ft, together with large 3-400 ft. corners, cracks and pillars in the adjoining formation to its right.

From the Tamare Wall, the south facing limestone cliffs run eastward for several kilometers.

**Selce Buttress** – The most striking portion rises over the following village of Selce. Outside the village, a large cliff reaches out of the upper cliffs, in a corner with two distinct sides.
(A) The Southern face includes upper parts vertical limestone that are some 5-600 meters in length.
(B) The East Face is longer, steeper and shorter, and runs roughly one kilometer wide and some 300 meters in height.

Above Tamara rise the limestone peaks of Koshtices (1760m), Studenica (1909m), Mal I Viles (2093m), and Mal e Kertolit (1920m); each constitute third class ascents above and beyond reaching the gorge rim, and Mt. Vila in particular has a large limestone headwall which rises above the cliffs of Selce.

After Selce, the limestone formations drop closer to the road while the gorge narrows with large overhanging and damp, vegetated cliffs dropping on the north facing side under the Maj e Galishit (2023m). The southern face, though also vegetated, contains a number of possible routes in the steep, sometimes overhung limestone at high standards of free climbing. After this point, the road rises up towards the pass of Qaf e Predelecit, at which point the road turns due north and joins the Lepushe River, dropping under the shadow of the escarpments of Mal i Trojanit (2183m) to the confluence with the Vermosh River. The charming alpine village of Vermosh lies at the Montenegrin border eight kilometers west. Though in general lacking rock for climbing, there is one solid 250 meter double buttress of limestone on the lower shoulder of Maja Matdules (2188m) which can be reached via the trail along the west side of the Jacices Brook two kilometers out of the Village of Vermosh. This steep valley leads to the summit of Madules and the adjacent peaks, offering spectacular views of the Crna Gora or Black Mountains of Montenegro, land of ‘black mountains’, on the northern border of Albania.
B. Kiri Valley

The Kir River flows into the plain of the Albanian lowlands three kilometers east of the city of Skhodra, at the distinctive single arch of the Venetian era Mez Bridge. A few crags pepper the entry canyon, but the best climbing possibilities in this spectacular gorge lie some 30 kilometers up the valley past the town of Prekal and the right-hand turn in the road towards the moutain town of Theth. Roughly seven kilometers past Prekal along the road which stays right and continues to follow the Kir River, a sharp limestone monolith rises out of the river valley. On its West end, a steep pillar of limestone juts out in front of a larger rounded dome of curving limestone behind. Both can be reached by climbing down to the suspension bridge in the bottom of the Kir Canyon 1/2 kilometer east of the intersection with the Shlogut River just beyond the hamlet of Pog where the limestone formations cut across the road. An 3rd class approach can be made low along the river. East of the road, two large ridges of limestone stretch from high on the peaks above down onto the road in a series of shattered and overhanging pillars which are distinctively vegetated but nonetheless offer numerous climbing opportunities. Above these rocks rise the massive limestone spires and walls of the cirque of mountains formed by Bishkasit (1879m), Mahde (2011m), and Biges se Gimajt (2391m).
V. Bajram Curri Area and North Eastern Albanian Alps

A. Valbona Gorge and Jezerica Range

The entire core of the Albanian alps is constituted by a complex drainage system flowing in all directions. In the middle of the alpine plateau (long 19 50’ E.) the dark narrow Lum I Shales rising on the massif of Mt. Jezerce (2693 m), the highest peak in the district, flows from north to south until abruptly turning eastward. The sides of Jezerce and nearby Mt. Ethe are carved with vertical faces of limestone. East of Prroni i thate, a high narrow line of peaks – Maje e Radohines (2599 m) and Mal I Elbunit massif (19-2300 m) – has steep escarpments towards the Kir and Shale valleys. Beyond the Nikaj-Curraj basin, Maje e Hekurave (2560 m), with the town of Bajram Curri five km down on its east facing shoulder, is the summit of a massive limestone block connected with Kakinja and with Jezerce between the Shale and Valbone rivers. It is largely accessed via the ‘wild-eastern’ town of Bajram Curri. The road to Bajram Curri continues on towards the town of Tropoje, providing access to the Valbona gorge entrance and the ridges of the Mt. Shkelzen-Mt. Radeshes upheaval just to their north. From here the road continues Tropoje and the Qaf Morine border with Kosovo leading to Djakova (Jacovica), Prizren, and Prishtina.

Below illus. 25: Looking Limestone ramparts of Mt. Gjaperivith the Gjaperi fin visible on the left, on the road up the Valbona River Gorge towards the village of Rrogam.
The area is better for mountaineering than for pure rock climbing, though many of the long ridgelines make beautiful lines of ascent, and the views from these steepest and highest and Albania’s mountain ranges are spectacular. One must be careful only of the precarious security conditions in and around the town of Bajram Curri, which has been famous for its lawlessness and banditry from the end of the old regime up to the present.
There is much climbing throughout the Bajram Curri area, but the most attractive is found in the Valbona Gorge, which offers many interesting and accessible crag formations as well as some of the largest rock faces and technical peak ascents in Albania outside of the Cem river gorge on the other side of the same range of mountains.

A right-hand turn off the main road leading up the market place in Bajram Curri leads 2km north past a bridge and a gorge to the entrance of Valbona gorge, which the road enters one switchback above on the north side. Crags line both sides of the gorge for several kilometers up to a characteristic notch dropping down into the river bed, with fabulous climbing possibilities available on the repeated right to left crack lines which slice across the main crag on the north side.

Beyond this notch, the possibilities become ever more alpine in character, largely in the form of giant limestone towers and spires, many with significant and difficult approaches, which jut out of the gorge, rising in great magnificence either side of the valley beyond the town of Dragobi, with its Kullas and his notorious tradition as a center of Albanian blood feuds.

Most striking of these formations are the large towers of Mt. Gjaperi, which rise like a row of teeth from the top of a 1x00 meter limestone ridgeline along the north side of the
gorge as the most distinctive parts of the Kolates range. This formation includes the Gjaperi fin, a large free standing piece of limestone separated from the ridgeline.

Beyond Mt. Gjaperi in the same complex rises the striking tower of Mt. Kolates, with towering limestone faces, and two long ridgelines reaching down in to the valley towards the village of Valbona. After this formation, the most noteworthy further upstream are found on the southern side as valley widens and rounds into an glaciated shape, from which massive pieces of solid limestone rise out of the more gently sloping sides. Most
striking are the formations of the Qetet e Arushes, and the massive limestone face of Grykat e Hapeta.

Left above: the distinctive ridges of the giant piece of limestone forming Mt. Kolates, showing the two distinctive ridges dropping down into the treeline above the village of Valbona.

Right above: the peak of Qetat e Arishes.

Right: a down canyon view of the main massive face of Mt. Hapeta (2625m), illustrating the long fissures and the central gully which cut the face from left to right.
Above: Another view of the main face of Mt. Hapeta and the relatively short approach necessary from the vast post-moraine river bed of the Valbona river near the alpine village of Rrogram.
B. Shkelzen Range

Shkelzen reaches 2409 meters, with a very steep escarpment overlooking the Tropoje valley. The approaches to these escarpments are rather forbidding, but the ridgelines dropping from Mt. Radeshes, 2 km southeast on a curving ridgeline, are more accessible.