

Çerem, Albania – Dobërdol, Albania

Trail distance: 15.64 kilometers

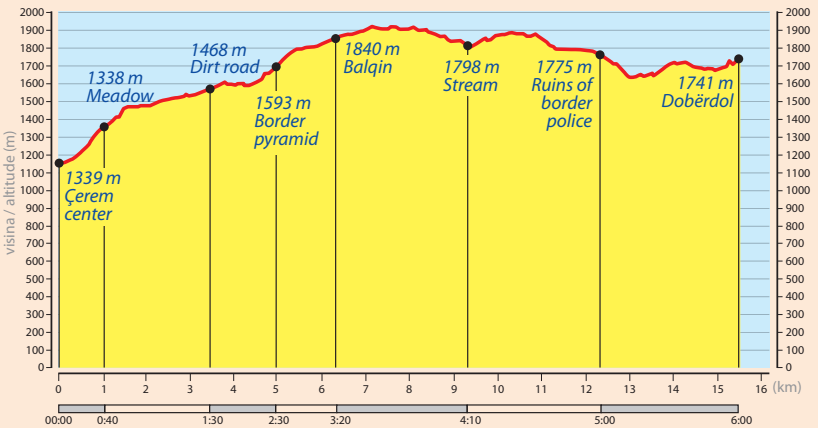
Elevation min: 1,152 meters **max:** 1,920 meters

Cumulative height uphill: 1,025 meters **downhill:** 440 meters

Difficulty level: ● Moderate

Time: 6 hours

Markings: — white/red/white



This day involves a transfer hike from Çerem to Dobërdol, a remote shepherd's village accessible only by mule tracks and populated only during the summer time by shepherds. From Çerem, the hike climbs up to the Montenegrin border, passes the beautiful summer shepherd's village of Balqin, and continues through the Gashi valley (protected area) to the shepherd's village of Dobërdol. The main attractions in Dobërdol are the glacial lakes of the Dobërdol-Sulbicës plateau.

This trail can be separated perfectly into two days hike by having an overnight stay at the picturesque summer shepherd's village of Balqin (WP 8b) which is located almost in the middle of the trail. The first day hike is 9.1 kilometers and the second day is 6.5 kilometers long. You can either camp there or ask the shepherds for a shelter. Fresh food can be bought directly from them.

There are a number of springs and streams along the trail which are safe for drinking.

The hike starts at Çerem center (WP 7a) and continues northeast on a gravel road along the Markafsha stream. At WP 1b, we cross the stream and follow the mule track which enters the forest and zigzags upwards. The path exits the forest at WP 2b and follows northeast through a beautiful meadow with breathtaking views towards Çerem. The track is easily identifiable by a slight depression when the grass is long and very easy to follow because the meadow is lined by the forest leading you to the gravel road (WP 3b).

The ascent softens as we follow the gravel road through the forest for approx. 2.5 kilometers. Our route turns left at the junction (WP 4b) and we leave the gravel road at the border pyramid (WP 5b). From the border pyramid, our track continues along Montenegrin territory for approx. 2.5 kilometers by following an easily identifiable, gently ascending mule track northeast through the forest. At WP 6b, we reach a nice meadow and can see a small building on our left which had been used as a survey point by the border police. We take a right turn at the junction, and as our path enters the forest, after several meters, the ascent starts to become steeper. We bear right at the junction of WP 7b and after approx. 100 meters we meet a dirt road. A few meters ahead, on our right side, another border pyramid is located.

We cross the dirt road and follow the mule track northeast, passing through the forest until we reach Balqin (WP 8b), a beautiful shepherd's village also used only during the summer time. Balqin is an inviting place to take a rest and get to know a little more about the locals' culture.

The track to Dobërdol follows northeast with an easy ascent through the forest. At the junction (WP 9b), one can either turn right or left. Both ways are marked and lead you onto the same path. We suggest making a left turn because this way is shorter. From here we start a gentle descent and then cross a stream (WP 10b), following the track east along the stream. After approx. 800 meters, we reach a water source (WP 11b). The ruins of the border police office can be seen a few meters off to our right side.

From here, one path descends to the Gashi valley, while another one climbs up to the border. We follow north along the descending path to the valley and a few meters further on we make a left turn at the junction. At WP 12b, the path starts ascending (from 1660 to 1760) and afterwards the hike through the beautiful meadows of Dobërdol is flat along the river.

Dobërdol is a good option to spend a day at and have a relaxing hike to the glacial lakes located a few kilometers southeast. You can stay overnight at the mountain hut (WP 13b) which is managed by a local family for touristic purposes.

UTM waypoints:

- 7a. 34 T 414611 4705051, 1139 m, Çerem center
- 1b. 34 T 414919 4705565, 1191 m, stream crossing
- 2b. 34 T 414940 4705849, 1338 m, meadow
- 3b. 34 T 415148 4706301, 1468 m, dirt road
- 4b. 34 T 416875 4706918, 1593 m, bear left at the junction
- 5b. 34 T 416583 4707134, 1593 m, border pyramid
- 6b. 34 T 417356 4707595, 1792 m, meadow and border police survey point
- 7b. 34 T 418434 4707468, 1898 m, turn right at the junction
- 8b. 34 T 419635 4708607, 1840 m, Balqin
- 9b. 34 T 419965 4709720, 1809 m, junction (turn right is suggested)
- 10b. 34 T 420060 4710127, 1798 m, stream crossing
- 11b. 34 T 420757 4710353, 1775 m, water source and the ruins of border police office
- 12b. 34 T 420757 4710353, 1659 m, start ascending
- 13b. 34 T 423294 4711127, 1741 m, mountain hut in Dobërdol