



# 8<sup>th</sup> ECPA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

of Regional Card Schemes and Retail  
Financial Market Infrastructures

Tirana, Albania  
3 - 6 November 2026

**INFORMATIONAL GUIDE**



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# Welcome to Tirana

The 8th International Conference of Regional Card Schemes and Retail Financial Market Infrastructures comes to Albania, co-organized by ECPA (European Card Payment Association), the World Bank Group, and hosted by Bank of Albania.

This year's expanded format builds on the success of the 7th edition in Lisbon, bringing together senior leaders, innovators, policymakers, and experts from across the global payments community to explore the developments shaping the future of payments: the evolution of card payments, fast payments, the rise of stablecoins, the role of AI, and beyond.



# Conference venue

## Maritim Hotel Plaza Tirana

Hotel 5 ★★★★★ - Albania

### Conference Hall “Queen Geraldine”

Rruga Abdi Toptani 18,  
Tirana, 1001, Albania

Phone +355 (0) 422 112 21  
E-mail [info@plazatirana.com](mailto:info@plazatirana.com)

### Getting there

- *Taxi: Easily accessible from anywhere in Tirana via taxi services.*
- *Public Transport: Well-connected to the city's public transportation network.*
- *Car: On-site parking is available for guests arriving by car.*



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**MARITIM HOTEL PLAZA TIRANA**



# Accommodation



## Hotel Tirana International

Hotel 4 ★★★★★

Sheshi Skënderbej 8, Tiranë  
1001, Albania  
Phone +355 (0) 4 223 4185  
E-mail  
hotel@tiranainternational.com



## Marriott Tirana

Hotel 5 ★★★★★

Sheshi Italia 1, Tiranë 1001  
Phone +355-69 80 84 328



## Hilton Garden Inn Tirana

Hotel 4 ★★★★★



## Hotel Rogner Tirana

Hotel 5 ★★★★★

Address: Bulevardi Dëshmorët  
e Kombit 9, Tiranë 1010

Phone: +355 4 223 5035



## MAK Albania Hotel

Hotel 5 ★★★★★

Address: Sheshi Italia 2,  
Tirana, Albania  
Phone: +355 4 227 4707



## Maritim Hotel Plaza Tirana

Hotel 5 ★★★★★

Rruga Abdi Toptani 18, Tirana,  
1001, Albania  
Phone +355 (0) 422 112 21  
E-mail info@plazatirana.com

The accommodation options listed above are suggested for participants' convenience and are located within close proximity to the event venue. Participants are welcome to explore additional accommodation alternatives based on their preferences.

# Essential Information

## WEATHER IN TIRANA



November in Tirana is generally cool and mild, with temperatures around 14–17°C during the day and 7–9°C in the evening. Occasional rain is possible, so a compact umbrella is recommended.

## EVENT DRESS CODE



Nov. 3: Business casual attire  
Nov. 4-5: Formal business attire  
Nov. 6: Casual attire

## LANGUAGE



Albanian is the official language. English is widely spoken, especially in hotels, restaurants, and conference venues.

## SAFETY



Tirana is a safe and welcoming city. Standard precautions are recommended in busy areas. Emergency numbers: 112 (general emergency) and 129 (police).

## MOBILE & CONNECTIVITY



Albania is not part of the EU roaming area — calls and mobile data are charged according to your home operator's tariff. Check rates before travel or purchase a local SIM upon arrival. SIM cards are available at Tirana International Airport.

## POWER & PLUG TYPES



Standard voltage: 230V / 50Hz. Plug types C & F (standard European plugs). EU devices generally do not require an adapter.

# Currency & Payments

## OFFICIAL CURRENCY

The official currency is the Albanian Lek (ALL). Exchange counters are available at Tirana International Airport and throughout the city centre.

## SEPA

Albania is part of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA). Incoming and outgoing credit transfers with SEPA countries are processed according to SEPA rules.

## PAYMENT METHODS

Card Payments are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, and conference-area shops. Contactless and NFC payments are commonly available. American Express acceptance is more limited.

## CASH

ATMs are widely available and compatible with most international credit and debit cards. Carrying small amounts of cash in local currency may be useful for smaller vendors.

## TIPPING

Tipping is not mandatory in Albania but is appreciated. A tip of around 10% is customary in restaurants if service is not already included.

## BANKING HOURS

Banks are generally open Monday to Friday, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Most ATMs operate 24/7.



# Transportation

## AIRPORT TO CITY CENTER



**Tirana International Airport “Nënë Tereza”** (TIA) is located approximately 17 km from the city centre. The journey typically takes 20–30 minutes, depending on traffic.

Licensed airport taxis are available 24/7 directly outside the terminal and provide a convenient way to reach the city centre. Ride-hailing and taxi apps are also widely used in Tirana. Always use licensed transportation services.

## AIRPORT SHUTTLE



**The Rinas Express operates 24/7 with departures every hour.** The fare is approximately 400 ALL (€4) per person, payable on board. The bus connects the airport with Skanderbeg Square in the city centre, with a journey time of around 30–45 minutes depending on traffic.

## WITHIN THE CITY



**Taxis in Tirana are widely available** and remain one of the most practical ways to move around the city. Most taxis are metered, and many vehicles in Tirana are now electric. Ride-hailing and taxi apps are commonly used and offer a convenient alternative for short distances.

Public transportation is available throughout the city, though taxis are generally considered the most comfortable and efficient option for conference delegates.

# City Landmarks



**SKANDERBEG SQUARE**

The heart of Tirana and the city's main gathering point. Surrounded by key landmarks including the Et'hem Bey Mosque, the National Opera, and the National History Museum.



**BUNKART 1 & 2**

Two former Cold War bunkers transformed into museums exploring Albania's communist past. Bunk'Art 2, located in the city centre, is the most accessible for visitors.



**THE PYRAMID OF TIRANA**

One of Tirana's most iconic landmarks, recently transformed into the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, a hub for youth innovation and digital learning.



**PAZARI I RI — THE NEW BAZAAR**

A restored market area featuring local products, traditional Albanian restaurants, cafés, and artisan shops. A lively spot to experience local city life.



**BLLOKU DISTRICT**

Tirana's most vibrant neighbourhood, known for its cafés, restaurants, boutiques, and nightlife. Ideal for dining or an evening walk after conference sessions.



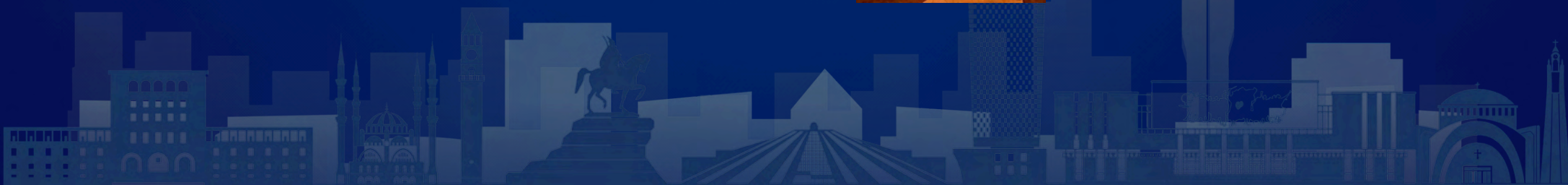
**MOUNT DAJTI & THE DAJTI EKSPRES CABLE CAR**

Located just outside the city, Mount Dajti offers panoramic views over Tirana. The Dajti Ekspres cable car provides quick access to restaurants, trails, and outdoor activities.



**GRAND PARK OF TIRANA**

Tirana's largest urban park, featuring an artificial lake, walking paths, cafés, and green spaces. Perfect for a morning walk or a relaxed afternoon outdoors.



# Eat & Drink in Tirana

## WHERE TO EAT IN TIRANA

“Era” and “Oda” are among the most popular restaurants for traditional Albanian cuisine, serving local specialties in authentic settings.

For a more contemporary interpretation of Albanian gastronomy, “Mullixhiu” is widely recognized for its seasonal tasting menus inspired by local ingredients and traditions.

Raki, Albania’s traditional fruit brandy, is commonly served before or after meals. Dhallë, a refreshing yogurt-based drink, pairs well with savoury dishes. Albania is also increasingly known for its local wines, especially from central and southern regions.

Seafood lovers can explore “Grep i Artë” and “Pireu Fish Restaurant”, two well-known restaurants offering fresh fish and Mediterranean cuisine in elegant settings.

For a more casual and local atmosphere, the restaurants and cafés around “Pazari i Ri” (The New Bazaar) are ideal for experiencing Tirana’s vibrant food scene.

### FËRGESË



One of Tirana’s signature dishes, fërgesë is a creamy mix of peppers, tomatoes, and cottage cheese, traditionally baked and served hot with fresh bread.

### BYREK



A flaky savoury pie filled with cheese, spinach, or meat, commonly found in bakeries across the city. A popular local snack for breakfast or a quick bite.

### QOFTE



Traditional Albanian grilled meatballs seasoned with herbs and spices, typically served with bread, salad, or yogurt sauce.

### DRINKS



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