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**7:40AM, Still at the Rooster hostel** - We got up after our restful sleep. The hellish warmth got exchanged for a pleasant morning temperature. Air conditioning had to be turned on through the whole night, even now it's still ON. All of the beds in this 6-bunk room are occupied, but even so, everyone is just doing their thing and not bothering anybody else.

As for today, we will get back to the marketplace, then head somehow to the second largest city in Albania, Durres.



Marketplace, which we found filled with insane amounts of tobacco. Some random merchant wanted to sell us an entire kilogram for cheap, I had to say "no" like 3-4 times, he was like *"it's good for you"* ☐.



**3:40PM, Laying in our Durres apartment** - Getting here was fun. We couldn't find any information on the internet as to how the intercity buses work. We only knew that they leave every 30 minutes from the Station. We packed up our things and got out of hostel Rooster at **11AM**.

We let the reception lady explain the bus schedules to us. Well it works like this, local buses have no schedule at all and you have to talk with the driver in order to figure out where they're headed. *"The buses aren't marked. Just approach them and be like 'Terminal?' and if they're like 'Terminal.' then you know you will get to the bus station."* And then from there to Durres.

Before we took the bus, we went to see the city center once more. What is the first thing that tourists like us usually want to take with them? Postcards! So... we walked around and looked for postcards. As it turns out, the lady at the post-office knew English, but still had no idea what postcards were and presented us with a catalog of postage stamps instead ☐. My sister was already losing her mind, because all we wanted by this point was to arrive at some kind of a souvenir shop, which we actually passed along the way, so we then had to walk a long way back from where we came. In any case, the merchant at the souvenir shop did indeed have some postcards... hidden in the back for no-one to see. As odd as this whole situation was, we did end up happy.

The second bus driver we approached was indeed headed over to the Terminal. The road towards there was all sorts of ways weird. Random\* architecture on top of each other, trash next to the road. (\*Google: Tirana, the capital of Albania, is known for its colorful Ottoman-, Fascist- and Soviet-era architecture.)

After we arrived, we slowly came to a bunch of realizations: Buying the bus tickets is not done ahead of time, or at the driver's seat, but through a guide (basically an

not come ahead of time, or at the driver's seat, but through a gate (usually an additional person that always takes the bus alongside the driver) when you're already seated, first come, first take. The so-called "Terminal" is actually just a broken-down concrete skeleton, which stands for at least 20 years in the middle of an overgrown grass field. All you get is the parking lot next to the "Terminal", which is constantly filled with buses and nagging taxi drivers. The semaphores are more advanced and show timers, yet people don't care and cars run a red light ~20% of the time, which is a lot. Honk!

But anyway, let's slow down a bit, we get to the parking lot and here is what happens: All the buses are now properly marked, however the bus we got onto was apparently full and after not even 50 meters we got kicked out, because standing/sitting on stairs is not allowed. Afterwards we walked not even 5 meters to find the next bus, when I realized that it only stands at the same spot and all the other buses are for different destinations. On our way back to that spot a taxi driver started nagging us, saying random lies like *"That was the last bus to Durres today."* even though its barely **noon** and that *"It will cost 5000Lek"* (~40€).



And at that time as we tried to persuade the driver to leave us be while two of his friends watched by, suddenly he was like *"no it will cost only 3200Lek"*, another driver with a much calmer tone of voice took note of the situation and approached us in the middle of it too.

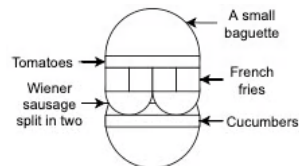
He managed to navigate us away from the other nagging drivers to the parking spot for our bus, saying *"Sorry, it's a big problem in Albania, our people doing this."* As for how much English these people knew, the nagging ones barely any, just to get by and the calmer one, well he clearly knew more and not just in terms of English. In any case, the bus cost 150Lek per person, yes, 10x less.

It's an experience for the buses coming from Tirana and headed for Durres to even get to the "highway" from which they arrived, because here they apparently don't know how to build exits/entrances and so it took another 15 minutes for the bus driver to get all the way back to the nearest roundabout, just so the bus could get to the right lane.

The road to Durres was OK. From the window we could see even more broken down and odd architectural pieces overgrown with grass-fields and mixed in with industrial buildings. Most of the grass in this country is scorched by the sun, there is close to no green left in it and I have no idea how it manages to survive. Durres may be 46km away from Tirana and there may be some more towns in between, but whoever designed them didn't actually design anything. There was not even a 50m stretch of road where we could see, that we're outside any kind of settlement. Population centers in this country are actually the whole country and not like over here in Slovakia, where cities/towns/villages are settlements and then you don't have any more settlements, just fields.



Once we arrived to Durres, I bought a very questionable piece of food that was advertised as a "*hamburger*" in a run down "restaurant", because why not (note: this is actually a really bad idea in most cases if you don't want to ruin your trip). Well, here is what it contained:



By the time I got to eat it, the already soggy fries got even soggier. Surprisingly enough, it was eatable. Not palatable, but eatable. In any case, before I got to eat my hamburger, we first had to arrive at our apartment. It was just about **12:30PM** when we were forced to walk through the whole town, because the bus station had to be 1.2km from the place we stayed at (note: the future me can only laugh at this pathetically low number, even during noon ☐). Towards the end, there was of course a problem to even find the place we were staying at. Once we got to the point marked in my Booking.com app, such a place simply wasn't there.



As we circled around the same building for the third time, we stopped a random grandpa and somehow using body language and pictures we explained to him what we're looking for. He then proceeded to navigate us all the way there, because

whenever he wanted to go on with his day and let us keep walking on our own we had no idea what he meant. In any case the place called very simply just "*Top view*" actually had a pretty good view and cost us once again around ~14€ together for a single night, maybe even less. Finally, all the issues vanished for the day, I could take a shower and enjoy my "hamburger" alongside the view, which for the most part was just the back of the local archeological museum.



**Here are some more things that occurred on this day** - In the afternoon, we went to the beach, enjoyed the sea. Afterwards, we stayed at a questionable Italian restaurant, precisely because unlike all the other restaurants this one had no guests at all. The food was good, but the staff behavior rather questionable. Afterwards we walked by the beach until nighttime, then it started getting crowded and afterwards my sister got upset because "*you don't know how to take pictures with composition*", ironically enough for an artist that studied composition during art classes □.

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