

Report on the scholarship program in Albania

I had the chance to participate in the scholarship program in Albania on a farm specializing in ecotourism, bird watching and nature conservation. This scholarship gave me the opportunity not only to gain new knowledge and skills, but also to get acquainted with the rich culture and nature of the country.

3B farm, where I did my scholarship program, is an example of a successful combination of ecotourism and environmental protection. It actively engages tourists in bird watching, which is an important aspect of biodiversity conservation in the region. During my internship, I participated in activities aimed at studying local fauna and flora. I visited the office of the NGO, where I was introduced to information about the NGO, how it was established and how it works now, as well as how it worked before the pandemic. I learned about the main areas of work and further plans for development.

Ecotourism and bird watching

One of the key components of the scholarship program was bird watching. I learned how to recognize different species of birds living in the region, and also realized the importance of monitoring their numbers and behavior to preserve natural ecosystems. I spent a lot of time outdoors observing birds in their natural habitat.

The bird watching took place in a protected area near the Buna River delta.

Cultural program

During my scholarship program, I also had the opportunity to get acquainted with the culture of Albania. I visited the city of Shkodër, which impressed me with its historical heritage and architectural monuments. Visiting the sights allowed me to better understand the centuries-old history and traditions of this country. In particular, I visited the castle of Shkodër, as well as the lake, river and main attractions of the city.

Exploring nature

I walked a lot in the village and its surroundings, getting acquainted with the natural landscapes of Albania. I was able to see many interesting plants and animals that are an integral part of the local ecosystem.

These walks helped me to better understand how people can live in harmony with nature and contribute to its preservation.

The best place to walk and explore was the protected area near the Buna River Delta.

While exploring the area on my own, I also talked to the local people to better understand the peculiarities of the area. In particular, I learned about traditional food in Albania, where food is usually sourced from, and how local farms sell their products in cafes and shops. I was surprised that small businesses prevail in Albania. For example, there are a lot of small grocery stores, but there are almost no supermarkets. Also, since I am interested in growing eco and organic products and organizing a balanced diet, I read about the Slow food initiative. I liked one of the local cafes that specializes in quality food, using products from local agricultural producers. An employee of the establishment (whom I met) shared information about the specifics of their work, as well as her experience and advice on proper nutrition, which I took into account.

In fact, when I went to Albania, I thought that the situation with gender equality would be worse there. These opinions were formed on the basis of stereotypes that are broadcast, in particular, on social media. But, fortunately, the situation turned out to be much better. There is a lot of work being done to further promote gender equality, including the NGO where I had a scholarship program.

Regarding the gap between generations, I noticed that it is very common for parents to start a business and then their children continue it. NGO is such an example.

Traditionally, most of the agricultural land - farms - belonged to men, but now the balance is being equalized. It is not surprising for Albania when a woman owns a farm, small-scale agricultural production, and a hotel business, including in Velipoje.

Conclusion.

The scholarship program in Albania was an extremely useful and informative experience. I gained new knowledge and skills in the field of ecotourism and nature conservation, got acquainted with the country's culture and natural resources. This experience has become an important step in my professional and personal development, and I hope that my achievements will contribute to further work in the field of environmental protection.

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