

Hiking the High Scardus Trail

Three-week trek through the mountains of North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania

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Trek one of Europe's wildest and least explored long-distance routes on the High Scardus Trail (HST), a 314km journey through the mountains of the Western Balkans. Following the borders of North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania, the trail runs from Staro Selo on the edge of the Shar Mountains to the monastery of Saint Naum on the shores of UNESCO-listed Lake Ohrid, linking remote border ridges, high summits and traditional mountain villages over three challenging weeks.

The route begins with an epic crossing of the Shar Mountains (Shar Planina), traverses the Korab and Deshat ranges, and includes an ascent of Mount Korab (2,764m), the highest mountain in both Albania and North Macedonia. Continuing south, the trail explores the Jablanica and Galichica mountains, often following the border ridge itself before descending into cirques, pastures, valleys and gorges, and finally reaching the Saint Naum Monastery beside Lake Ohrid.

The High Scardus Trail is described in 22 daily stages and divided into three sections, with short transfers required after Stages 14 and 19. Section 1 (Stages 1-14, 218km) forms the main two-week traverse across the Shar, Korab and Deshat mountains. Section 2 (Stages 16-19, 56km) crosses the Jablanica range, while Section 3 (Stages 21-22, 40km) follows the Galicica Mountains to Lake Ohrid. Overnight stays are in small mountain villages, with options for wild camping close to the border ridge.

- 22 detailed stage-by-stage route descriptions of the High Scardus Trail, guiding you from Staro Selo to Saint Naum with clear daily distances, terrain notes and key navigation points across all three countries.
- A clear breakdown of the three sections of the High Scardus Trail, including practical guidance on the transfer links required to bridge the two gaps in the route and advice on organising onward travel.
- Comprehensive planning advice for the High Scardus Trail, covering permits, border crossings, transfers between trail sections, and essential logistics for trekking in remote Western Balkan mountain regions.
- Detailed information on accommodation and facilities along the High Scardus Trail, from small mountain villages and family-run guesthouses to practical advice for wild camping near the border ridge.
- Fully described alternative route for two stages of the High Scardus Trail where accommodation is very limited, plus descriptions of other alternative routes and shortcuts.

- A fully described day trip to Mount Korab from Radomirë, enabling trekkers on the High Scardus Trail to summit the highest peak in Albania and North Macedonia as part of their journey, whether hiking the official or the alternative route.
- Essential safety and preparation guidance specific to the High Scardus Trail, helping walkers plan for remote terrain, limited infrastructure and variable mountain weather.
- Downloadable GPX files enable easy digital navigation on GPS devices or smartphone apps.

Combining high mountain scenery, cultural encounters and true wilderness walking, the High Scardus Trail offers a rewarding alternative to Europe's busier long-distance routes. This comprehensive guidebook - the first guidebook to the High Scardus Trail - provides everything you need to plan and complete this unforgettable Balkan trek with confidence.

About the author

Rudolf Abraham (<https://www.rudolfabraham.com>) is an award-winning travel writer, photographer and guidebook author specialising in Central and Southeast Europe. He is the author of over 15 books, including the first comprehensive English-language hiking guidebooks to Montenegro and Croatia, and has contributed to many more. His work is published widely in magazines. He first visited the mountainous borderlands of Montenegro and Albania in 2004, having already lived and worked in neighbouring Croatia in the late 1990s - and has been a frequent visitor to this little-known corner of Europe ever since.

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