

13. Narta Lagoon – Albania



Narta Lagoon is situated on the south-eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea and stretches over 10,000 ha. The site consists of salinas, sand dunes, salty lands and cultivated land. The area is bordered by the hills of Zverneci and on this side of the lagoon two small islands are located. An embankment lies between the lagoon and the Salinas of Skrofotina and there are two water exchange channels through which Narta communicates with the sea. It is the second most important site for water birds in Albania and hosts a notable number of mammal species, among which several are rare and endangered, as well as a large number of fish species (mulletts, eels, rays, as well as crabs).

In the region there are traces of civilisation from the Hellenistic period. The Via Egnatia, linking the South Illyrian coast with the East, passed through the city of old Aulona where today the city of Vlore stands. The city was also known as Triport and its remnants date back to the 5th century BC, as do the ancient ruins of the city of Spiranica. On the Zverneci island, the Zverneci Monastery that dates back to the 14th century AD is located, and it is the most important tourist attraction of the region. Modern agricultural methods have replaced the traditional ones. Fishing constitutes another occupation of the locals. Nowadays, many illegal forms of fishing have been recorded, such as poisoning and the use of dynamite. Illegal hunting is another adverse factor affecting the area's ecological equilibrium. Salt extraction is taking place at the salinas; the site has been industrialised and the salina owners destroy the islets where many birds nest.

Each year, in the second week of April, a Carnival celebration takes place in the area. The festivities include concerts, an ethno-gastronomic fair, games, visits and public awareness events. Objectives of these activities are the appreciation of the historical and cultural values of the area and the support of their protection and conservation in view of the further development of the region. The festivities are organised by the Vlora District City Council, in co-operation with active organisations and local authorities and supported by local NGO's, the Chamber of Commerce and the religious community.