

## **Generation Peace Academy Overseas: Hoon Dok Hae in Vlore, Albania**

Akira Watanabe  
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Welcome to Albania! Hey it's H. Kikuchi, and here we are in Vlorë at one of the CARP centers starting our center life as a group. Yes! A lot of things have happened since flying over here about two days ago. We drove to the workshop site in Tirana, Albania, where we were able to settle ourselves in. There, we were able to have our first delicious dinner in this beautiful country and even had some CIG missionaries from GPA make a surprise visit to see us! Everyone around was beaming with joy to see them again after being in Albania for 5 months doing their missionary work. After saying our goodbye to the CIG missionaries, we had a quick orientation where we were able to hear

from one of the CARP center leaders named Billy and he shared with us his personal testimony on witnessing. Personally, I was really surprised that, despite our exhaustingly long travel, we were so open and attentive in listening to what he shared. Afterward, we called it a night to prepare ourselves for the next day where we would have our first full day in Albania.

We started the next day with Hoon Dok Hae and breakfast made by the lovely cooks at the site. Then we transitioned into prepping time for moving officially into three of our respective centers. So we were able to pack up our luggage to move into our centers as well as organize the medical products for each of the centers to ensure our safety and health! For some of us, it was also OMT to get ourselves ready to leave as well. After a while, the amazing cooks had prepared lunch for us. And we were able to nourish ourselves with a warm bowl of soup and an Albanian pastry bread. Then it was time for us to leave to our respective centers. Yes, as you may imagine it was quite sad to leave each other but a really exciting new beginning for all of us to experience what it really means to come together to share our differences and thoughts under one roof. We all eventually got picked up by our center leaders and they drove us to our centers. When we personally got to our center in Vlore, we were able to settle in and explore our quite humble and small center home. There we cooked dinner for the first time using the kitchen they had at the center we were going to stay. It was quite fun being able to get to know how to use the kitchen and make food together. I was happy to know that they had ingredients to make pasta that evening and that I could eat a dish I was familiar with especially being away from America into a new culture of food. After dinner, we had family time and played UNO with each other, which was fun getting to know the team more as the game went and we put our game faces on. Then we ended the night by closing. What a day it was!

The next day we were to have a more set-up schedule, so we all woke up, greeted, read Hoon Dok Hae, and then after eating breakfast we walked over to the carp center in Vlore for the first time, which was so cool to see inside! There we heard orientation from the carp center leader, Lubin. And he introduced to us what it's like to witness in Albania and how everything works. After the orientation we actually went out to go witnessing for about 40 minutes or so, because the only way for us to truly understand what witnessing is like, is by going out witnessing! That was honestly a really great experience. It was definitely pretty refreshing to go out and not fundraising this time which is what we usually do and instead experiencing God's love through seeing the spiritual growth of a child of God. After one run of witnessing, we were able to go out to see and explore Vlore more by visiting the holy ground and going down to the beach that was near the center. It was such a fun and exciting adventure, and also a nice way to bond as a center. Then after we went to a cafe that was right next to our center, and got to try out their coffee, which was so delicious and fun to try! That sums up our amazing and eventful day!