

## Skodra, Albania Report Week

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After 21 days of complaining about heat and sticky sweat, it's hard to believe that this morning I woke up feeling cold from the cloudy, rainy London weather. In our trip, each week was a new start in a new city with a new bunch of people. It wasn't planned but it's interesting that as it went on, it became more and more challenging.

Level 1: Korca. The centre leader, Miri, prepared most of the activities for us. We helped a little but I felt we were more participants, joining in with the mobilisation members and guests. Vlora was Level 2. Lola (Centre Leader) connected us with an Ambassador for Peace to help with the service project and many other things but at the same time, allowed us more responsibility in looking for venues, meeting and inviting people etc.

The last city of our mission was Shkodra: Level 3. We were given full ownership by the centre leader, Erjon, and organised everything from scratch. This made the tasks much more difficult but the past 2 weeks has prepared us for it and we were ready. To start, we joined the Albanian mobilisation team during witnessing. In a pair, we stopped people in the street and invited them to the CARP centre and our activities. Many guests joined the Wednesday Evening Service and the football project that followed it. They even participated in the sharing session afterwards. I think it really brought guests and the teams together and formed a strong sense of community and openness around the centre. Erjon himself used to be a football professional so no doubt he loved it. I am sure he will carry it on after we leave. For volleyball we went to Velipoja beach. The heat was intense and the sun burnt our feet but this did not stop a crowd from forming and joining in. We then used this opportunity to give out leaflets, and tell the audience about CARP. That afternoon, we also did our cleaning project. We got bin bags, gloves and walked through the beach picking rubbish. It may seem pointless but to get our point across more effectively, as in Vlora, we asked people to sign 'The Green Pledge' to encourage them to keep the surroundings clean and protect nature for future generations.



As you can see our ideas and methods were quiet simple. The main reason was that we were pioneering. Of course we can still make a lot of improvements; however, I found that even simplicity itself can bring great results as long as our hearts are in the right place. The night we left, we celebrated Sarah's birthday and had a leaving party which involved splatting cake at each other and traditional Albanian dancing. It was the perfect ending. I could see from our watery eyes (from the sisters at least) that for us, this trip was truly unforgettable.



To the reader, I must say that if you are looking to experience something special and meet extraordinary people, I recommend that you go to Albania!

Shum Faleminderit!