

## Dave from davestravelcorner.com visiting Vlora, Albania

One of the greatest things about starting the “**VisitVlora.com**” project is the fact that we come in contact with awesome people all the time. I got to chat with through Internet with one of them who is a great person with an amazing travel experience. I couldn't let go so I politely asked him for an interview with us which he gladly accepted.

Dave visited Vlora in 2012 and we were very excited to ask him to share with us his experience in Vlora but also about the 6 out of 7 continents and the over 100 countries and territories he has visited.

As you will understand after reading this interview, traveling has become an extension of who he is and he truly enjoys it, as we do reading his blog.



Dave in Maldives

**SO WHATS YOUR BIGGEST DRIVE THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO VISIT COUNTRIES AND PLACES?**

I love to explore – mainly because of curiosity and an interest in learning more about cultures, food, people and both urban and natural landscapes. I get “tired” of staying in one place too long and I crave the excitement that “moving” inherently brings.

## HOW MANY CONTINENTS AND COUNTRIES HAVE YOU VISITED UNTIL NOW? DO YOU FEEL YOU HAD ENOUGH?

*I've been to six of the seven continents* – I still have to visit Antarctica and haven't yet mostly because of the great cost to get there as well as the fact from South America you have to take a boat for three days through the often very rough Drake's Passage (and I'm extremely prone to sea sickness). I've been to **over 100 countries and territories** – but it is not numbers I'm interested in – rather it is experiences. I continue to travel to seek new experiences and environments. I hope I never reach the point where I feel I have had enough.

## THE TEAM HAS BECOME BIGGER SINCE YOU STARTED *DAVESTRAVELCORNER.COM* BACK IN 1996 AND NOW YOU HAVE A GREAT TEAM AROUND YOU. HAS TRAVELING AND BLOGGING BECOME A BUSINESS SOMEHOW? MANY OF US ARE WONDERING HOW CAN YOU AFFORD TRAVELING OFTEN?

You have to want to do this – it is a lifestyle. You make sacrifices – I am not rich nor did I come from a wealthy background. My wife and I live in a small apartment in California when we are here, we don't have children, we keep our living costs very low and when traveling we try to either do homestay or couch surfing (helping to eliminate the cost of hotels).

After 16 years I wish my site would make enough income to support us – my wife has her own business and I give select concierge type services for those interested in visiting California's wine country as well as help manage a very small Internet Service Provider with a friend. With that said, I spend most of my time working on my website, research, writing or traveling. *It has become an extension of who I am and essentially contains most of a lifetime's worth of travels.*

## DO YOU TRAVEL ALONE OR WITH COMPANY? WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO THOSE WHO ARE THINKING OF BECOMING THE NEXT WORLD-TRAVELER BUT STILL HESITATE?

About 75% of my trips are with someone and the rest are solo. Most of my trips are self funded but occasionally I will go on a “hosted” trip where all expenses are paid for – usually by a tourism bureau or sometimes by a specific property wanting promotion. Sometimes I will create my own “hosted” trips by reaching out to particular destinations or properties.

Lack of money, current responsibilities and fear are the most common reasons for putting off

extended travel and trips. And to some degree all of those are reasonable factors. However if traveling becomes a top priority in your life, you will find ways to get past these barriers.

Unless you are already wealthy – it is a good idea to have a plan of how you will leverage your International travels into a business. Making money entirely from a travel blog especially when just starting is typically not realistic. It might be through freelance writing, part time unrelated work, through other media, or building a location independent business like my brother has (programming). The very difficult challenge is to find what you enjoy doing and combine it with a way to make an income.

In regards to interest in world traveling – don't let fear hold you back – fear when it relates to travel is often rooted in the reality of sensationalized stories about a particular incident in a particular region (recent examples include a couple getting attacked in Peru, a woman set on fire in Papua New Guinea and a woman murdered in Turkey). There are lots of countries deemed “unsafe” to visit – but in reality often it is not the entire country that is unsafe – rather parts of the country. Take the jump at any age but if you are young, find a way to do it sooner than later!



Dave in Brunei

## IF YOU COULD CHOOSE WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 5 DESTINATIONS? THE ONES YOU TRULY LOVE/LOVED VISITING.

**California** – I have to say my home state. I was born and raised here. I love the diversity that our large state has from urban to natural environments. You can be eating in fine restaurants drinking

world-class locally produced wine then in the mountains skiing the same day – or you might be in cold rain in the winter – take a 4-6 hour drive south and be in warm sunshine.

**Jordan** – You cannot beat the magic of Petra. Or the beauty of Wadi Rum. Not to mention Wadi Al Mujib in which you have to swim up stream at the bottom of steep canyon walls – pulling yourself up with ropes and ultimately reaching a dead end from which waterfalls rain down on you from high above.

**Oman** – there is nothing quite like the feel of being in the “desert of the empty quarter” (in Arabic they call it the Rub’ al Khali) all alone at night with thousands of stars all around you and a total quiet. Roads here are dirt tracks that go for kilometers. Dirt tracks fade off into the distance and scream to be explored with a 4wd vehicle!

**Nepal** – I love the world’s greatest and most impressive mountain range and the inspiration that being surrounded by these jagged snow capped mountains brings.

**Parts of Sub Saharan Eastern Africa** – I love the rawness and unpredictability of travel here. The wildlife is prolific – really there is nowhere else in the world like it.

## HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA OF VISITING ALBANIA? AND WHAT DID YOU HEAR ABOUT VLORA THAT MADE YOU WANT TO VISIT OUR CITY?

I first heard about visiting Albania from my brother who spent some time exploring the country. I was reminded of Albania again when I was traveling in Croatia and Montenegro a few years back and saw a number of trips offered from the small town that I was staying in.

During my latest trip to this part of Europe, I wanted to at least get a “taste” of a number of countries – and with limited time I was drawn to the fact that this part of Europe contains countries that are fairly small and as a result, distances between are not huge. I was greatly missing the seaside (as all of my travels on this particular trip were inland). From prior research I had read about a number of towns along the Albanian coastline. I was also attracted to the fact that Albania as of now is not considered a go to destination by “western” tourists at least not from the USA – like say nearby Italy or Croatia. Despite finding plenty of regional tourists, especially in the beach towns – I loved the fact that it was easy to get “off the beaten path”.

## HOW DID YOU TRAVEL IN TO ALBANIA AND VLORA? BOAT, AIRPLANE OR CAR/BUS? WAS IT EASY, ANY DIFFICULTIES?

I took a bus from Macedonia through Kosovo – ultimately arriving in Tirana. I really wanted some seaside time so after a quick overnight stop in Tirana I took a local bus and van directly to Vlora.

Transportation was easy to find (by asking around) and each leg of the trip to Vlora from Tirana was painless.



Dave in Zwaziland

**WAS IT EASY TO REACH YOUR DESTINATION IN ALBANIA? WAS IS EASY TO GET THE INFORMATION YOU WERE LOOKING FOR? HOW ABOUT THE COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE?**

Yes it was actually easy to reach Vlora from Tirana. The visitor's center in Tirana is conveniently located near a number of the bus companies and they were helpful in giving me information about where to go as well as regional logistics. Returning to Tirana from Vlora was a bit more challenging. I returned to the site of where I was dropped off but could not find a bus station or where to catch the vans so after asking around I finally found where the vans depart.

**WHAT IS YOUR GENERAL IMPRESSION AFTER VISITING VLORA? DID YOU SEE THE “WESTERNIZATION” AND INDUSTRIALIZATION OF TOURISM AFFECT THE CITY?**

I chose Vlora because of its relative proximity to Tirana and in part due to my limited time in the area. Sure there are closer beachside towns to the capital – but I had heard good things about Vlora from fellow travelers. In addition, I did not want to stay in what I thought seemed like a more touristy town (Durrës). I prefer the small to medium size cities. I did not stay right in town, but rather went just south and found some nice smaller hotels across from the beach.

Besides the sea (which always attracts me) and seeing the stark contrast between the water and the very dry mountains (summertime), my biggest impression of the area was driving in to the beautiful mountains that rise above the coastline just to the south of Vlora. I loved the fact I could easily get off the main road onto a dirt road and drive through small villages and quickly visit old ruins. In many parts of the world ruins are “in a restored state” and or are less accessible.

***I love the connection I feel when I’m the only one in an area that is so ancient, surrounded by so much history and natural beauty.***

I certainly saw the tourist infrastructure and residential high rises in the main part of town but did not get the feeling that things were too western. However, I would have liked to have had more time to get a deeper feel for the city.



**Beach in Dhermi, Vlore**

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO VISIT THE COUNTRY AGAIN? IF YES IS VLORA A POTENTIAL DESTINATION AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPERIENCE MORE OF THIS TIME?**

Absolutely. The next time I visit Albania, I will be renting a car for a longer period of time and doing a lot of independent travel – driving around the countryside – exploring much more of the small towns and going at a slower pace. Vlora is a good base – both for exploring the beaches in the immediate area, the countryside and more of the smaller coastal towns to the south.

**WHAT INFORMATIONS IS A TOURIST OR TRAVELER LOOKING FOR BEFORE AND DURING THEY STAY IN A CITY LIKE VLORA? WHAT WOULD WE FROM *VISITVLORA.COM* AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS ON TO BETTER PROMOTE THE VLORA REGION?**

I think more information about where to stay based on interest would be useful. Which beaches cater more to the independent traveler and or where to stay for the luxury traveler. Also recommended itineraries and or trips based on “themes” – perhaps some categories for Vlora and the vicinity could be based on beaches, romance, nightlife, religion, kayaking, fishing, history, or nature as examples. What would also be useful is to list and describe local tour outfitters.

**You can reach Dave at :**

[davestravelcorner.com](http://davestravelcorner.com) – [Davestravelcorner Facebook](#) – [Davestravelcorner Twitter](#)

For the media and bloggers: For reposting this interview [contact us](#) or e-mail us at [visitvlora@gmail.com](mailto:visitvlora@gmail.com)

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## 2 REVIEWS

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1.

**Maria**, 26/03/2013 23:59 -Dave from davestravelcorner.com visiting Vlora, Albania

Nice interview. Like how up-front Dave is and the entire form of the interview; informative answers to solidly inquiring questions.

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**admin**, 14/04/2013 23:16 -Dave from davestravelcorner.com visiting Vlora, Albania  
Thank you for your kind words Maria. Dave is a great person and very kind.

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2.

**Micaela**, 19/09/2013 09:48 -Dave from davestravelcorner.com visiting Vlora, Albania

I have been surfing online more than 3 hours lately to find information about Vlora, but I never found any interesting articles like yours. Thank you Dave as well. Great interview..

It's lovely worth enough for me. In my view, if all site owners and bloggers made good content material as you probably did, the life of tourists who are planing to visit Vlora might be a lot more easier than ever before. Keep up the great work and update us more often.

Micaela from Swiss.