



Artisans & Bazaar

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An introduction

What makes the bazaar so special? Its people of course: a melting pot of stories, skills, families, colours, tasty food and creative products to enjoy throughout your visit in Gjirokastra. So unleash your senses and start feeling like a local whilst immersing yourself in the bazaar and its history.

If you want to understand what life is like in Gjirokastra don't miss the opportunity to meet the artisans in the bazaar and take your time observing what they do! Learn about the ancient crafts and techniques that they use to make traditional products, whether they are made of stone, cotton, wool, metal or ...flowers, like the tasty chai mali (mountain

tea).

Visit Anastas - the wood carver - and his wife in their workshop. Experience how he turns wood into wonderful objects (and souvenirs!) that carry the traditional values of the city. Margarita will share with you her passion for embroidery and at Gjiro Art. Lubi and Eli will let you use the traditional looms with which they create their colourful kilims (carpets). Beqir the blacksmith will show you his traditional workshop where his father, and the father of his father, mastered the art of working metal. Nowadays he is teaching his son to do the same. Each of the handmade products that you buy will help the artisans safeguard centuries of arts and crafts, as well

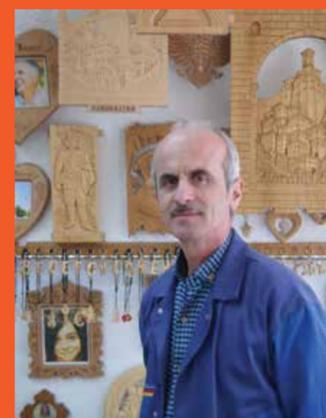


BEQIR AND BERNARD LLANO - Blacksmith

The art of the blacksmith is very rare nowadays in Gjirokastra. But Beqir Llano, whose family has practiced this ancient art for five generations, is determined to keep the knowledge alive.

"I heard the hammer hit the iron, so I came to see," a Dutch tourist told me when he came into my workshop. His father was a smith. He recognized the noise, and he became curious.

I have learned this art from my father and he learned it from his father. I am passing it on to my son, Bernart, who is the fifth generation of blacksmiths in our family. Years ago, we had our shop in the bazaar of Gjirokastra, where the street of the craftsmen is now. At least the name of the street remains. There were many more different crafts in the Bazaar of Gjirokastra in those years. Now I have a small workshop in my house where I work with my son. We produce different tools according to what clients order. I like the fact that people who deal with the restoration of traditional houses come and order different products that they use during the restoration. Our work is difficult but beautiful. Seeing the doors of Gjirokastra houses 'embroidered' with iron elements produced at my workshop is a great pleasure for me. My personal desire for doing this work relates to the passion that I have to keep my family's profession and the hope that my son will continue it. Moreover, it is much better working in this job rather than hanging out around the bazaar of Gjirokastra doing nothing. It is much better working as a smith for less money and being happy about what you do. Smiling!



ANASTAS PETRIDHI - Wood carver

Anastas Petridhi is a well-known woodcarver, who owns a shop in the Gjirokastra bazaar.

I started working in the field of arts in 1986. I always liked this craft and I work with commitment and passion. Then I opened a small workshop near my home where I worked with my brother. Some years ago, I decided to open a shop in the bazaar, where I work with my wife.

Working not only for myself but to represent the traditional values of the city — this is my motto.

Tourists mostly want to buy small objects that they can take with them. So, I work according to their requirements. However the motifs of my creations are the motifs of the city: the castle, the characteristic house, the museums, the different symbols, etc. I also work for local customers who want to restore various traditional objects or parts of their houses, — rosettes for the ceilings of Gjirokastra houses, etc. When tourists enter the shop, they approach my working table and appreciate my various designs and carving techniques. They see how a simple piece of wood turns into a beautiful symbol of our stone city.



ELI PASKALI

"Are these works handmade?" the tourists ask when they enter my store. And I am delighted to answer: "Yes, they are all handmade." To be more convincing, I show them the process. I'm specializing in different traditional techniques, such as embroidery, crochet, knitting with pads, felting. In my shop, I also sell jewelry and gliko (local sweets). I prepare and sell medicinal plants and traditional herbs.

I learned all these beautiful arts from my grandmother. I have always wanted to teach everything I know to the younger generation. Since I do not have daughters myself, I have taught this profession to many young girls and women living in my neighborhood. My son works with me in the shop, and he enjoys this business very much. It brings us profit, but also gives me pleasure. Craft is my passion.



MUHEDIN MAKRI - STONE CARVER

I am 79 years old, and I'm a stone-carver. My father and grandfather were stone-carvers as well. I taught this art to my sons and to my grandson, and I enjoy seeing them creating beautiful stone products with their hands. I have also taught a lot of younger people from the city the art of stone-carving. It is a beautiful feeling when the younger generation likes stone-working and values the traditions of our city.

Gjirokastra is a stone city and stone is its main element. This work gives me not only income, but great pleasure. I have always been very talented in stone carving, and esteemed all my life for my abilities. I recently was awarded the title "Best in the Country" in a national competition. I work with different designs, but mostly motifs from the city.



FERENIQI LLAVDANITI

Fereniki and her husband, Aurel, have their small shop in the Bazaar. In 2010, when they returned from Greece, they decided to rent a shop in the historic part of the town and to create there their handicrafts. "We opened the shop out of our passion for craftsmanship and design and we both worked hard, helping each other and always trying to bring new products into the market."

Their shop is full of handicrafts, offering a modern style. What stands out the most are the different types of accessories they make, handmade with care and devotion, for all their customers. According to Fereniki, it is important for craftsmanship to be passed on to the new generations as well as to enrich it, by combining it with new modern elements, that adapt to the time and make the product more attractive to the customer.



MARGARITA MASTORA

When people ask me who taught me artisanship, I answer: work. The first steps were taught by my mother, but then due to my passion for embroidery and hard work, I taught myself so many different techniques (crochet, needlework, knitting, embroidery and machine embroidery). I also tried to learn as much as I could from my friends and to create my own designs and products. Sometimes we have had competition about who was best, and who was quickest. I wanted to win, so I'd stay up all night to finish my work, even if my mom didn't like that. My shop is like a beautiful handicraft show.



RUHIE BINERI

"The craft will never leave you without bread," my parents told me. "But you must love it too." I work at the loom, and I think that being an artisan is a gift. Although I am old now, I continue to work. It keeps me alive and takes away some of my life's problems.

In my small shop in the bazaar, I sell rugs and carpets produced by various artisans from this area. I like to share my knowledge and experience and to teach other women how to produce quality products using traditional techniques.

Those who visit my store find not only traditional rugs and carpets, but they can also experience the process and work at the loom.



DUART E ARTA - VJOLLCA MEZINI

Duart e arta – Vjollca Mezini
In 1993, there were many requests from foreigners for handicrafts. So, I started collaborating with many female artisans and selling the products in Greece. We all produced handicrafts using traditional techniques. Now I have opened my own shop in the Gjirokastra bazaar where visitors can find works produced by many women and girls living in Gjirokastra.

I called my business "Golden Hands" because golden are the hands of those artisans that work using many traditional techniques such as needlework, crochet, embroidery and so on. I also design (using the motifs of my city) and produce many of my products. I learned from my grandmother who worked with the Italian nuns during WWII.



LEONORA CICI

To produce something with your hands is a pleasure. I started to embroider when I was 6 years old. My mother taught me the basics of crochet and embroidery. I then also learned from my friends. When I was 17, I started to work at the former artistic atelier in Gjirokastra. I worked there for 13 years and specialized in weaving techniques and in the usage of the loom.

Since 2005, I have been working in my own shop in the Gjirokastra bazaar where I also produce handmade products using techniques such as crochet and embroidery. Unfortunately, my daughter is not interested in this profession, but I try to transmit the beautiful art of embroidery and looming to the younger generation by teaching young artisans as much as I can. I like to use motifs and patterns from Gjirokastra, because I find them so beautiful — just like the city itself.

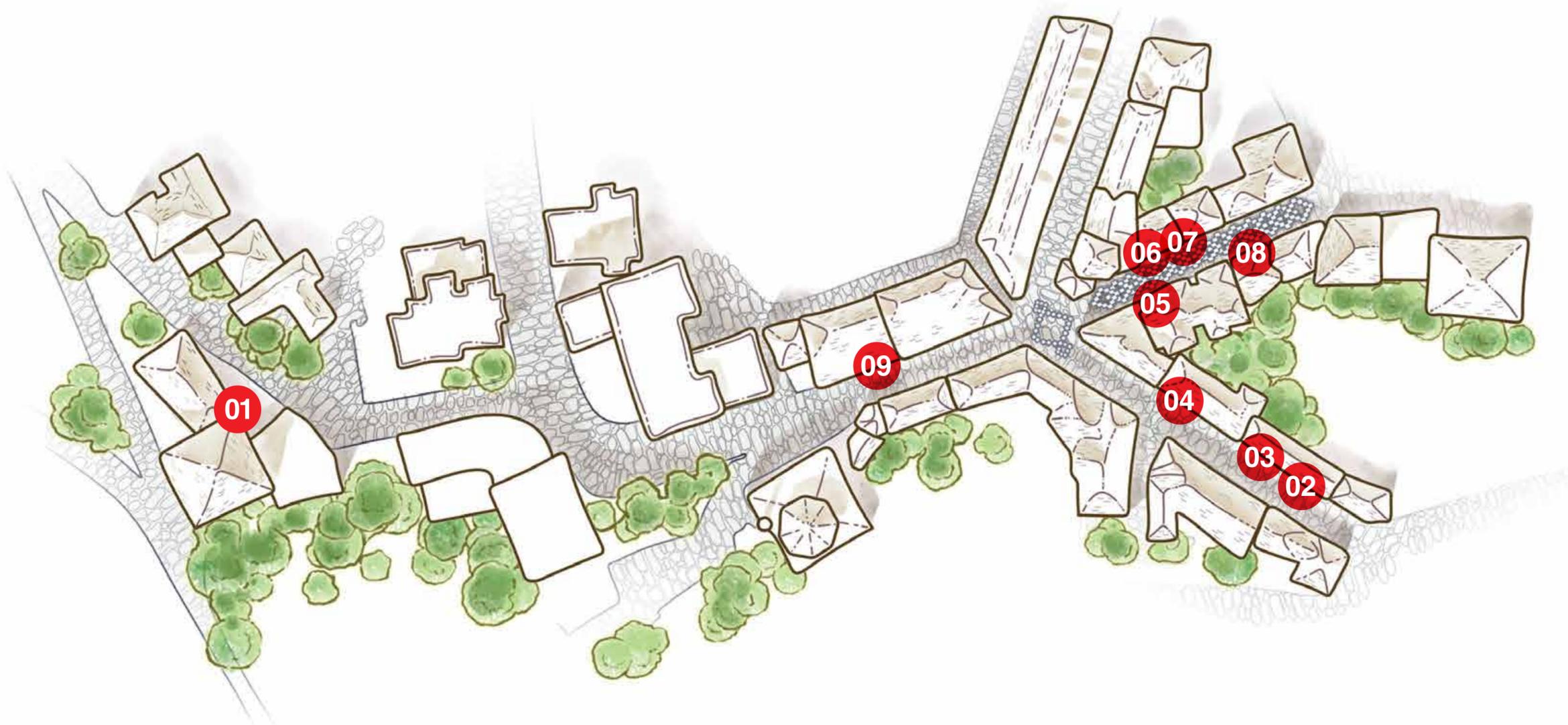
The story of the Bazaar and crafts in Gjirokastra is all about people. The Gjirokastra bazaar is the beating heart of the historic city. Settled among the curves of the hillside, the bazaar links the castle above with several of the historical neighbourhoods below. However, the Gjirokastra bazaar is more than a maze of beautiful buildings. Along these narrow stone streets, Gjirokastra's famed artisans and craftspeople learned and perfected their skills. The bazaar did not start where it is now. The city's first bazaar was located just outside the lower end of the castle, below the place

where the clock tower now stands. But, the city soon outgrew it. In the 17th century, Gjirokastra was growing in trade and importance, so the Ottoman governor Memi Pasha planned and built a new and larger commercial centre. This became known as Pazari i Ri (The New Bazaar), but today we know it simply as the Bazaar. The New Bazaar quickly became the life of the town, and it wasn't only about business. The area included a mosque, artisans' workshops and dwellings, as well as traditional shops. During this time, the bazaar took on an identity of its own, as the place where Gjirokastrites conducted

most of their crafts and trade activities. In 1872, disaster struck. A devastating fire almost completely destroyed the bazaar. However, the citizens of Gjirokastra rebuilt and gave the bazaar a new life. As a result, most of the buildings of the bazaar that you see today were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The people living here continue the traditions of craft and artisanry that they developed centuries ago. You can meet some of them on your tour. Historically, many craft industries were organized in groups of 10-15

craftspeople, like today's Gjiro Art collective of weavers and embroiderers. However, certain crafts would be identified with a specific person or family, such as the blacksmith Beqir Llano, whose family has practiced their craft for generations. Today, more than 100 years since Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire, the people of Gjirokastra still practice a number of important crafts that have disappeared from neighbouring areas. As you stroll through the bazaar, see if you can spot these skilfully produced local products: silk embroidery, cotton fabrics, woven carpets, wood and stone carvings, liqueurs and local sweets,



Artisans & Bazaar

Map and contacts

01 Beqir Llano

02 Muhedin Makri

03 Anastas Petridhi

04 Leonora Cici

05 Vjollca Mezini

06 Ruhie Bineri

07 Idea Gjirokastra

08 Margarita Mastora

09 Eli Paskali

Anastas Petridhi

-  Bazaar (03)
-  09:00 - 21:00
-  0692617562

Muhedin Makri

-  Bazaar (02)
-  08:00 - 20:00
-  0693191279

Margarita Mastora

-  Bazaar (08)
-  09:00 - 20:00
-  0695691247
-  *margarita mastora*

Eli Paskali

-  Bazaar (09)
-  09:00 - 21:00
-  0698726366

Vjollca Mezini

-  Bazaar (05)
-  08:00 - 22:00
-  069 316 1121

<https://doraearte.wordpress.com/>

Ruhie Bineri

-  Bazaar (06)
-  10:00 - 18:00
-  0692542122

Leonora Cici



Bazaar (04)



09:00 - 20:00



0694219190

Beqir Llano



Bazaar (01)



09:00 - 20:00

Idea Gjirokastra



Bazaar (07)



09:00-21:00



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