

Road to Mandarina

Celebrating Citrus in Albania

Natty Mark Samuels

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Narrator

If you should ask me dear reader, which country in the Balkans I would like to visit first, without a pause I would answer Albania. And as your next question would be why, I would tell you; it is because I want to take the Road to Mandarina, to the region where the mandarin grows: grapefruit, oranges and lemons too.

1st Voice

I will take a road going south,
Stopping at Berat and at Vlora.
Through the district of Konispol,
To a destination called Saranda.

2nd Voice

I will go at the time of harvest,
Sometime in late November.
For the Festival of Mandarins,
Held in the village of Xarra.

3rd Voice

There'll be a range of activities,
Facilitated by the farmers.
And for the football enthusiasts,
A match for the local supporters.

4th Voice

An array of local produce,
Generating culinary wonders.
Exhibition of regional art,
Live music for the concert lovers.

Voices

I cannot stay long with you Tirana;
Something else awaits me:
The Road to Mandarina.

1st Voice

So much to see and sample,
Like the very tempting "soupa;"
A soup of lemon and eggs,
Soupa Od Jaja I Limona.

2nd Voice

Got to try try a salad there;
Almonds, lemon juice and cucumber.
Lettuce, onions and mushrooms,
Olives, peppers and the cheese called feta.

3rd Voice

Ah, so much to try and enjoy,
Yes, there'll be so much to savour.
The option of Date Cookies,
With orange, lemon and vanilla.

4th Voice

I've heard of their hospitality,
The tradition called "Besa."
Of their ancestry of giving,
Like a symbol of Albania.

Voices

I cannot stay long with you Tirana.
Something else awaits me:
The Road to Mandarina.

Narrator

And the fruit of Mandarina, sends blessings far and wide; Kosovo, Poland, Macedonia;
Czech Republic, Serbia and Lithuania. I think of them like the Buddhas Hand of Japan or
the Chinotto of Italy: as gifts of welcome, gratitude and best wishes.

I see the citrus farmer, giving thanks, for the everyday offerings of air and water, as he sits
contemplating after a day of work: looking out, over the Ionian Sea.

Sources

Tirana Times

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The Balkanista

Agroweb

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