

DEFENSE SYSTEM OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

SEAC 2012: first part of the full-day excursion on Saturday, September 29, 2012

Two archaeological parks with remains of Late Roman defense system *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* will be visited. The main purpose of the system was the defense of Italy, the heart of the Roman Empire. Consisting of natural barriers, walls, fortresses and towers, this defensive system presents the largest Roman construction on the territory of Slovenia. It extends across three countries: from Rijeka in Croatia over the western part of Slovenia up to the Ziljska valley in Austria. Due to its strategic significance, monumentality and conservation, it is comparable with the remnants of *limes* along the outer frontiers of the Roman Empire, such as the Wall of Hadrian or German *limes*. Since it has a great potential for the development of tourism, a nomination for its inscription into the UNESCO World Heritage is being prepared. The archaeological site of Hrušica – Ad Pirum is located 45 km from Ljubljana.

PROGRAM

- 8:00: Departure from Ljubljana
- 9:15: Guided tour of the Late Roman fortress at Lanišče
- 10:00: Guided tour of the Late Roman fortress and defensive wall at Hrušica – Ad Pirum, including museum rooms with Roman military equipment.
- 11:30: Coffee break
- 12:00: Departure

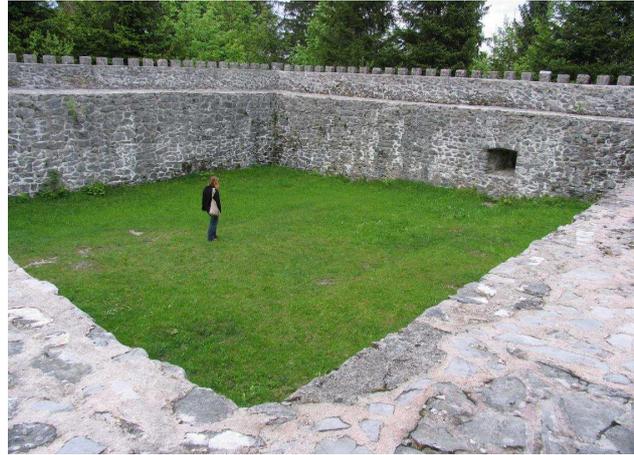
RAMPARTS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In the late 3th century A.D., the long period of peace and wealth secured by the arrangement of the Roman Empire was undermined by invasions of different Germanic and other barbaric tribes, which plundered the territory of the Empire. For the defense of Italy, an 80 km long defense system was built known as *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, which also included the fortress of Hrušica. The Romans took advantage of natural conditions of the Karst and Alpine region, but added defensive walls along naturally less protected parts of the territory. The system was further strengthened by towers, while fortresses of different sizes, such as Lanišče and Hrušica, were built along the most important communication routes. Initiated in the late 3rd century, the construction was completed during the Constantine period (early 4th century) and maintained its function until the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the late 5th century.



FORTRESS AT LANIŠČE

Three defensive zones had to be passed in the 4th century by anyone going from Ljubljana westward through Hrušica to Italy. The traffic along the important Roman state road from Emona (modern Ljubljana) to Aquileia was strictly protected by towers and fortresses with military garrisons. One of these posts was at Lanišče in the second defense zone, where the fortress and parts of the wall are preserved. One of the few partially reconstructed archaeological monuments in Slovenia offers a vivid image of the original appearance of the fortress. From here the Romans guarded and controlled the passage along the state road and in the surrounding area. On the north side of the fortress the defensive wall descended to the main road, which must have been guarded by the gate tower. All the traffic was conducted through the tower, which exerted direct control over the road, much like modern customs and toll stations.



MILITARY FORTRESS *AD PIRUM*

The ground plan of the fortress at Hrušica is adjusted to the land and is of irregular oval form, its dimensions being of 250 by 75 m. It is surrounded by a 2.7-m wide wall, which was originally 8 m high and surmounted by towers. Also fortified with towers was the transversal wall dividing the fortress into upper and lower parts. The upper part served for allowing tactical retreat in cases of emergency and for cattle pasturing, while the lower part included headquarters facility with military shacks and tents, small workshops, a post station and a cistern. Around 500 soldiers (one cohort) could stay overnight in the fortress. The two entrances to the fortress placed along the road Emona - Aquileia were flanked by towers, which were probably about 10 m high. The fortress was abandoned in the 5th century, but the traffic along the road continued at least until the 6th century.



HRUŠICA IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND AFTERWARDS

The early medieval period at Hrušica is poorly known. Between the 12th and 14th century a church was built in the deserted fortress, dedicated to Saint Gertrude, patroness of travelers. By that time the old Roman road was brought to life again, serving up to the mid-19th century for regular postal service communicating Gorica and Ljubljana. At that time the building of today's restaurant at Hrušica was a post office, and later on a hunting cottage of the Count Lanthieri family.

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