

Stari Mlini

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Keith and I spent 10 days touring round Montenegro by car in June. Before travelling we had done some research and found information about a whole deserted village with lots of mills, so of course we were determined to find it. To quote one of the websites:

"The story of the Poseljani mills is remarkable. At one time, there were 14 of them, operating day and night. There were three gambling houses and three coffee-houses where those who were waiting for their corn to be ground spent their time. This could have taken as long as seven days. The oldest mill is said to be 300 years old. The mills stopped their activity long ago, but 2 or 3 of the houses are still occupied."

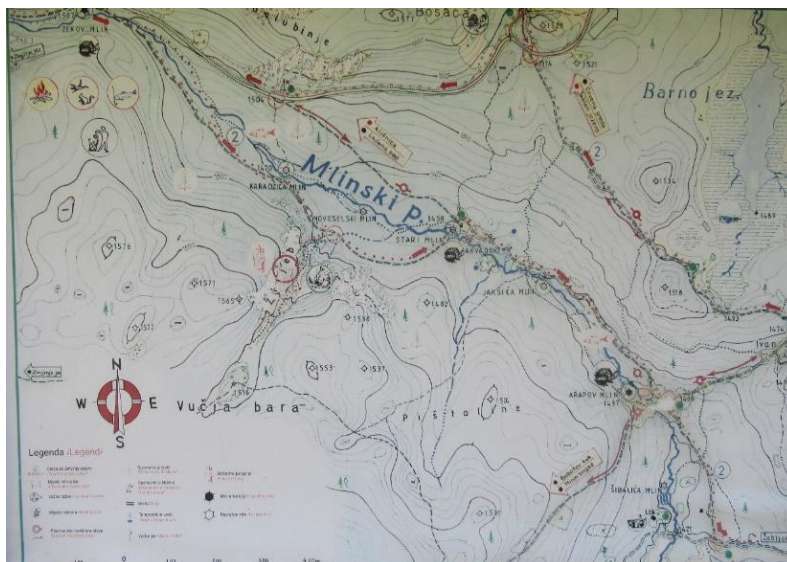
The village of **Poseljani** is in a steep valley leading into the northern end of Lake Skadar, which is the largest freshwater lake in Southern Europe, situated between Montenegro and Albania. Our hotel owner had given us detailed instructions for finding the start of the private road which is the only practical access to the village, other than a 3 hour boat trip.



The said road descends very steeply to the village but we soon spotted the houses far below us through the trees. We spent a pleasant half hour exploring the dilapidated remains of the single storey Norse-style mills before trudging back up the road in the blazing sun and heat over 30°C: 20 minutes down, 35 minutes back up with lots of pauses.



Several days later we were in the Durmitor National Park where the done thing is an easy 3.5km walk round **Crno Jezero** (Black Lake). By this time we had bought a local map which marked some mills on *Mlinski Potok* (Mill Stream) which drains into the lake. At the Visitor Centre was a more detailed map (*right*) with the mills marked, so we set off to find them.



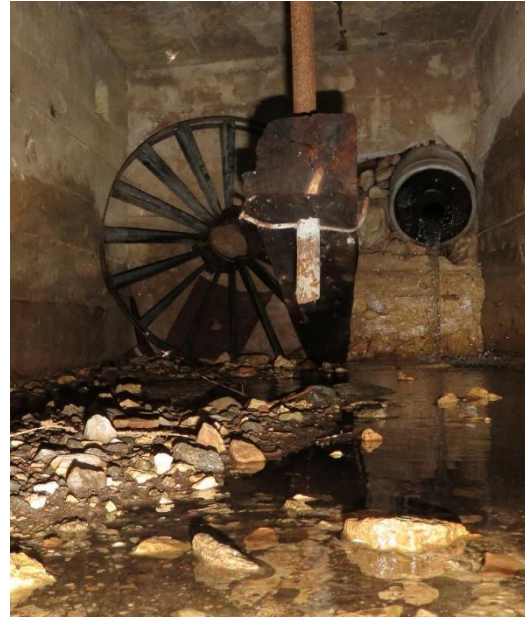
The first one, *Jaksića*, (*left*) was easy to find, although inevitably it was locked. We could not see any details of the water courses or what was inside.

Then things got harder: we passed several mill sites of which *Ostaci Uskočkoc* (*below left*) is typical, well-marked but underwhelming (*right*).



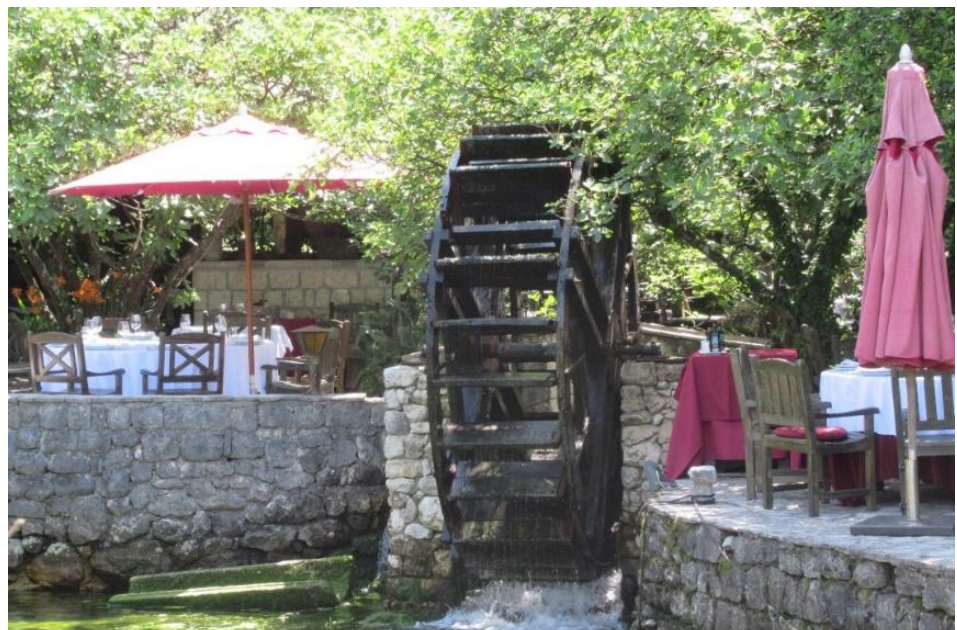
After a while we gave up and did the easy (!) lakeside path instead. I will never complain about tree roots and boulders ever again. Later in the evening when we had recovered we drove back up to the only working mill higher up the stream.

Zekov mill (*next page*), which appeared to be similar in type to *Jaksića*, was more interesting because the metal flume and its associated wooden launder looked to be original. We particularly liked the sluice control on the flume. Again the building was locked, but by aiming my camera up the outlet arch I was able to look inside.



I was surprised to see a vertical water-wheel but it turned out to be a metal tirl – probably a modern replacement – not attached to its shaft. Above you can see the circular end of the metal flume, the vertical shaft, and the tirl safely stored against the far wall.

By now we knew the words to look for were *stari* (old) and *mlin* (mill). So the very well advertised and smart restaurant *Stari Mlin* at **Ljuta** was an obvious coffee stop. It was not open but they were happy to let us look around and take photographs.



There were two large vertical wheels – very atmospheric and probably authentic, but not in original positions. A hopper and very confusing horizontal wheel were on display amidst the dining tables. The massive stone mill building appeared to have 3 outlets for horizontal wheels, but we could not work out whether the vertical wheels came from the same building. The owners had also collected quite a few traditional stone vats and jars for storing olives.

And finally we did have coffee!



Catowice Mills near **Konstanjica**, our fourth attempt, was also a restaurant, again with a substantial building, unlike the small buildings with a single wheel at Black Lake. We found a very odd wheel mounted vertically in the tailrace (*left*); it had paddles rather than spoons so perhaps it was just a small undershot wheel.



Inside the restaurant there were a pair of stones and a hopper in a more credible position (*left*). Keith asks if that is a curious form of tentering gear housed in the flour ark.

Across the valley we glanced inside a derelict roadside building and were surprised to find a crushing stone assembly (for olives?). You can see the pit wheel to the left of the crusher.



There are 3 straight modern supports to stop the gear wheel and crushing stone collapsing. On the other side of the wall was a wheel pit and the axle of a vertical waterwheel; so yes, both types were in use in Montenegro. In the other half of the building there was also a press dated 1880 (*below right*).



Our only other finds were limited to several well-worn remains of the hubs of horizontal wheels on display in restaurants, such as these in Kolašin. They demonstrate that, because the spoons on horizontal wheels do not have a very long life, they need to be easily replaced and seem to be designed to bolt on to the bottom of the drive shaft.



