

## ***Archaeological Site of Lepenski Vir***

Country or territory:  
SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Name of organisation  
compiling the information:  
Institute for the Protection  
of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, Belgrade

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Name and address of building(s) or site:  
VIR



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF LEPENSKI

Inventory reference number(s):

By the Decision of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia - No. 554/1 dated May 26, 1966 the site of Lepenski Vir has been listed as a "cultural monument". Its boundaries were established by the Appendix Decision No. 10/21 dated February 3, 1971. It is categorized as cultural monument of outstanding importance (Official Gazette No. 14, April 7, 1979) under the number AN 45. By Decision of the Municipality of Majdanpek No. 03-1770 (November 3, 1970), a part of Đerdap at the site "Lepenski Vir" was put under state protection. The measures and conditions for the preservation, protection and improvement of the area of the National Park were defined on August 19, 1979 (Official Gazette, Republic of Serbia, No. 34, p. 12/79).

Building type(s):

Monumental complex comprised of separate residential and religious buildings – prehistoric settlement.

Main date(s):

136 buildings, settlements and altars that are 8,000 years old were found by archaeological excavation between 1965 and 1970. At the beginning of the seventies, the site was moved to a new higher location, to be protected from a lake created by a hydro power plant.

Current use(s):

The Lepenski Vir site is under temporary conservation. Nevertheless, it houses a museum and during the summer is visited by tens of thousands of visitors.

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### Significance:

Lepenski Vir is one of the rare archaeological sites, which provides us with the possibility to understand the relationship of pre-historic humans with the surrounding natural environment. The natural conditions, with their slow and weak changes, enabled the preservation of numerous relict species of plants, which justified the proclamation of Đerdap as a National park. The natural reserve of Lepenski Vir is under strict protection, together with the reserves of Boljetinska River and Bosman-Sokolovac, surrounded with Bosman-Vlasac (second graded protected zone).

Cultural characteristics of Lepenski Vir. A number of settlements from the same period were found during intensive archaeological excavations of Đerdap from 1965 until 1971: Hajdučka vodenica, Padina, Vlasac, Ikoana, Kladovska skela and others. However, only the Lepenski Vir settlement displayed specific findings and continual duration through millennia, where extraordinary culture and art prospered within the framework of an organized social and religious life. It was unique in the area of Middle and South-East Europe, and provided the reference for what is known in archaeological science as the Culture of Lepenski Vir. The different settlement phases are clearly divided by the typology and complexity of sculpture shaping.

Nine levels of settlement were identified spanning over a millennium. In five of these layers the basic type of the houses and of fireplaces remained the same, together with the orientation of buildings. The two last archaeological layers are from the oldest agricultural cultures of the Danube area – Starčevo and Vinča. Lepenski Vir today represents a unique monumental complex, including settlements and cult buildings of pre-historic humans that lived in this area from 7000 to 6000 b. c.

Touristic characteristics of Lepenski Vir. In the working season of the museum, from April till October, Lepenski Vir is visited by thousands of visitors. Visits are made mainly in groups, and they are especially massive in the period of school excursions. In that period it is not unusual for visitors from ten buses to gather in the area around the museum.

There are no facilities at Lepenski Vir today for welcoming tourists. Except for the museum complex, in the area of Lepenski Vir there is virtually no tourism at all.

### Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance

The archaeological site of Lepenski Vir represents a monument of outstanding national significance, as well as exceptional findings of monumental sculpture. However, taking into account its great importance and outstanding place in archaeological science, this site has elements of international significance.

### Categories of ownership or interest:

Lepenski Vir is a prehistoric archaeological site, unrelated to the present day's religious and ethnic characters of the region. For this reason, the site has a common cultural significance for all local communities and groups.

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Documentation and bibliographic references:

Documentation

The documentation of the exploration, of the projects for the dislocation of the site, as well as field architectural documentation of buildings are stored in the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, the National Museum and the Institute of Archaeology. In addition, a project for the protection of the natural environment, a project for the construction of a shelter over the site and a conservation programme on pre-historic settlements and movable material were prepared. Finally, a project for the presentation of the site and the display of the museum collection was also developed.

Bibliography

1. D. Srejović, Lepenski vir - nova praistorijska kultura u Podunavlju (Lepenski vir – new pre-historic culture in Danube area), Beograd 1969.
2. D. Srejović, Lepenski vir, Beograd 1969.
3. D. Srejović - Z. Letica, Epipaleolitska naselja na Vlascu (Epi-paleolithic settlements in Vlasac), Starinar XXII, Beograd 1971.
4. D. Srejović, Protoneolit - Kultura Lepenskog vira, Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja II (neolitsko doba) (Protoneolithic – Culture of Lepenski vir, Pre-history of Yugoslav countries II (Neolithic times), Sarajevo 1979.
5. M. Čanak-Medić - Projekat za spasavanje Lepenskog Vira (Project for salvation of Lepenski Vir), Saopštenja VIII, Beograd 1970.
6. M. Čanak-Medić - Radovi na spasavanju Lepenskog Vira u 1970. godini (Works on salvation of Lepenski Vir in the year 1979), Saopštenja IX, Beograd 1971.
7. M. Čanak-Medić - Spasavanje Lepenskog Vira - Konceptija i problemi (Salvation of Lepenski Vir – Concept and problems), Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture, Beograd 1978.
8. Arheološko blago Đerdapa (katalog) (Archaeological Treasure of Đerdap (catalogue)), Beograd, 1978.
9. Nened Radojčić, Vasoje Vasić, Arheološko putovanje Đerdapom (Archaeological travel through Đerdap), Beograd.

Over one thousand Internet sites could be found, mentioning Lepenski Vir. Among them, the most important are:

[www.yurope.com/people/nena/Vir/](http://www.yurope.com/people/nena/Vir/)  
[www.infis.org/study4a.htm](http://www.infis.org/study4a.htm)  
[www.heritage.org.yu/lepenski.htm](http://www.heritage.org.yu/lepenski.htm)  
[www.djerdap.com/english/a-lvir.htm](http://www.djerdap.com/english/a-lvir.htm)  
[www.leyhunter.com/arch/arch19.htm](http://www.leyhunter.com/arch/arch19.htm)  
[www.funet.fi/~magi/metsola/arkisto/wyrd/gimbutas.html](http://www.funet.fi/~magi/metsola/arkisto/wyrd/gimbutas.html)  
[www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/imagbank/anni-ann.htm](http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/imagbank/anni-ann.htm)  
[www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/imagbank/europe-gin.htm](http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/imagbank/europe-gin.htm)  
[www.edunetconnect.com/cat/timemachine/10000wne.html](http://www.edunetconnect.com/cat/timemachine/10000wne.html)  
[www.studioa.co.yu/muzeji/muzeji.htm](http://www.studioa.co.yu/muzeji/muzeji.htm)  
[www.serve.com/archaeology/europe.html](http://www.serve.com/archaeology/europe.html)  
[www.archaeologie-online.de/links/2/3/40/](http://www.archaeologie-online.de/links/2/3/40/)  
[www.cce.ufpr.br/~agbctba/links/arljueo-links/links-arljueo-regioes.htm](http://www.cce.ufpr.br/~agbctba/links/arljueo-links/links-arljueo-regioes.htm)  
[www.nhm-wien.ac.at/NHM/Prehist/Links\\_E.html](http://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/NHM/Prehist/Links_E.html)  
[arheo.f.bg.ac.yu/linkovi/lokalite.htm](http://arheo.f.bg.ac.yu/linkovi/lokalite.htm)  
[www.stud.uni-saarland.de/~pebu0000/arch.html](http://www.stud.uni-saarland.de/~pebu0000/arch.html)

Condition:

The condition of the site is very bad. Thirty years ago, the site was relocated, to avoid its destruction by the waters of an artificial lake. It was transported to a site about 20 meters above the original. At that time, a temporary protective shelter had been constructed over the relocated remains, out of old building material taken from houses that were torn down. This construction is still in place today, with only sporadic maintenance. However, as the decay of the wooden pillars progresses, it is now necessary to build a permanent roof or a new temporary shelter.

War associated damage:

Due to bad conditions and inadequate protective construction, which allows some water infiltration, the site suffers from moderate damage. All damage could be repaired with appropriate conservation works.

Risk:

There is immediate risk of further deterioration of the site. The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia prepared a project for a permanent protective structure, the presentation of the site and the conservation of findings, but this project has not been implemented due to lack of finances.

Technical assessment and costing:

Repairs of the temporary protective shelter were made more than once, to remove immediate danger of collapse and damage to the site. In order to build a permanent protective structure, and for the conservation and presentation of the site, the following amounts would be needed:

Architectural and building works	58 708 032, 00 dinars
Protective construction	41 260 500, 00
Electrical installation	48 360 000, 00
Thermo installation	28 239 075, 00
Conservation and presentation	3 000 000, 00
Total needed for site protection	179 567 607, 00 dinars

Ownership:

Lepenski Vir is State owned. It is within a Natural Reserve and the National Park of Đerdap.

Occupation:

The Lepenski Vir site is presently open to visitors, with temporary presentation of the site and movable material set in a small museum building. Owing to the bad conditions of the shelter, the Museum is opened from April to October. Despite this, it is one of the most visited museums in Serbia.

Management:

The Lepenski Vir Museum is under the protection and management of the National Museum in Belgrade, with a permanent security service and curator. Since the property is within a Natural Reserve and National Park, it is under the constant protection of the Nature Protection Service and of the Public Company National Park Đerdap.

Given that the site is an immovable cultural property and that the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia prepared a project for a permanent protective structure, the entity responsible for the works would be the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia – Belgrade, in cooperation with the National Museum from Belgrade and the Institute for Natural Protection of Serbia.

Summary:

Lepenski Vir is one of the most significant pre-historic archaeological sites in this part of Europe. The possible collapse of a worn wooden protective shelter constitutes an immediate danger for the site. It is also exposed to slow deterioration due to inadequate environmental conditions. The Museum, visited by several tens of thousands of visitors every year, has no adequate presentation. Due to security reasons, the movable material is not displayed.

Lepenski Vir is of great importance for science. It is also significant as a site by the Danube River, near the border with Romania (regional and international significance), but it is in jeopardy, and, as such, it has high priority for works on its protection and presentation.

Signature and date:

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1<sup>st</sup> March 2004