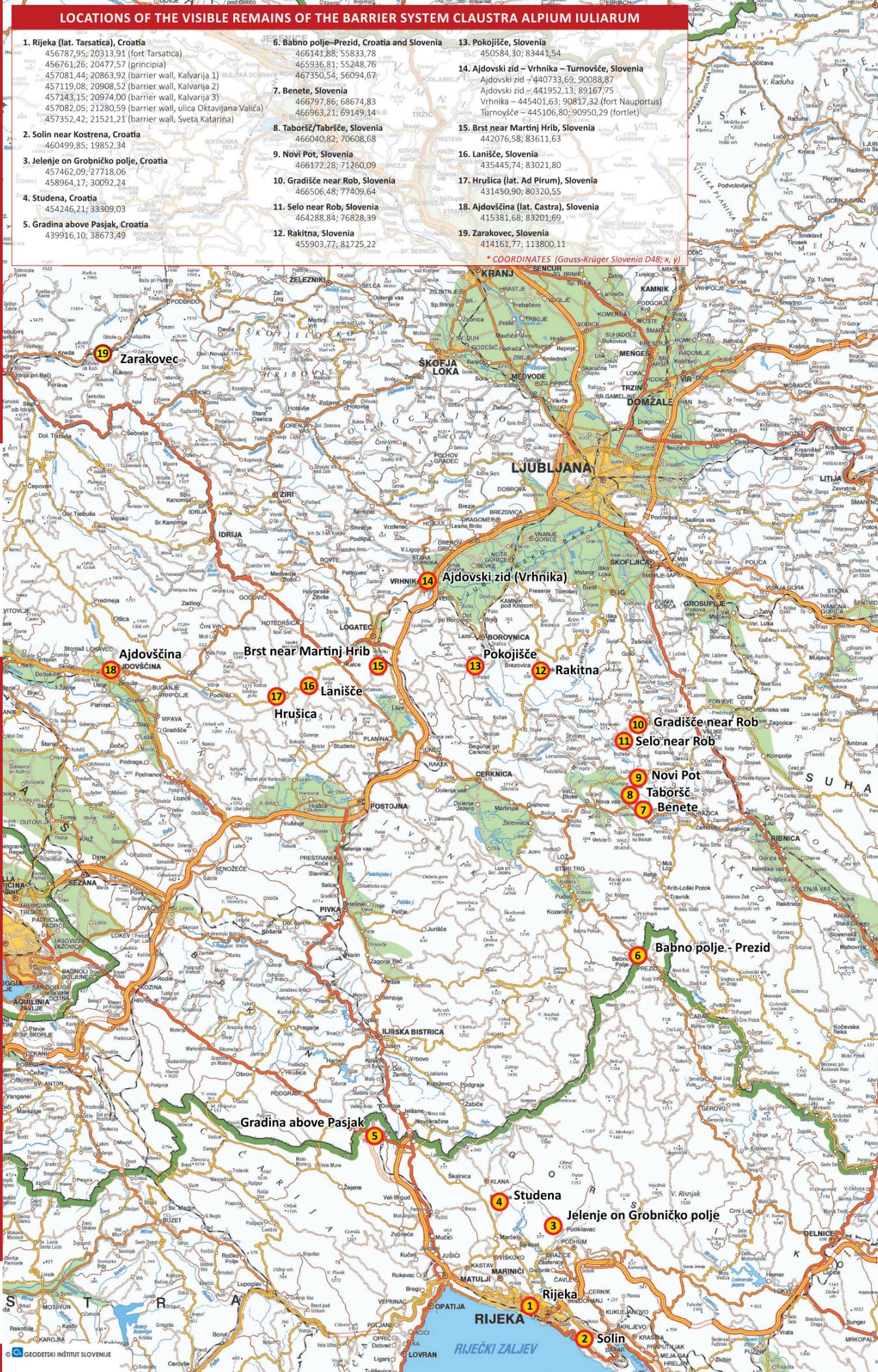




CLAUSTRA ALPIUM IULIARUM



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Defence and barrier system from the late Roman times, Claustra Alpium Iuliarum, was built in the 2nd half of the 3rd century or in the beginning of the 4th century at the latest, in the interior of the Roman Empire. It protected the heart of the Empire from the intrusions of foreign peoples, and it also played an important role in case of internal conflicts and struggles for power. It was the last defence line before entering the rich and fertile plain of Northern Italy and the ultimate barrier of the eternal city of Rome. The system was abandoned in the beginning of the 5th century at the latest.

The defence system consisted of several sections of stone walls with towers. It adapted to the natural shape of the terrain, which even enhanced its defence potential. Individual sections were closing valleys, passes or ridges, where Roman roads led towards ancient Italy.

The most important sections of the system included fortlets and forts with military units. The length of each barrier was from a few hundreds meters to a few kilometres and the walls were between one and two meters wide, while the walls of the strongholds were even broader. The longest barrier was the so called Heathen Wall (Ajdovski zid) above Vrhnika (the ancient Nauportus) with 8 km in length, which included at least 35 towers.

Today, we can trace the remains of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum defence system from Rijeka (the ancient Tarsatica), Croatia, through Prezid and the Babno polje in Slovenia, over the Bloška planota and the area between the towns of Vrhnika and Ajdovščina (ancient Castra) all the way to Zarakovec near Cerklje. The virtual line linking all the barriers extends to approximately 130 km. There are 19 archaeologically documented locations with more than 30 km of barrier walls, more than 100 towers, 4 forts and 5 fortlets.

The archaeological remains of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum defence system are sometimes difficult to recognize, at a few locations they are displayed and accessible to the public.

Start your journey and experience them!

The leaflet was prepared by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia on the basis of its own materials, the contents of the exhibition CLAUSTRA- MYSTERIOUS LEGACY OF ANCIENT ROMANS (authors: Jure Kusetič and Tina Lah, National Museum of Slovenia), the book CLAUSTRA ALPIUM IULIARUM – Between Research and Management (authors: Jure Kusetič et al., 2014) and materials of the Croatian Conservation Institute.

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Additional information: <http://www.claustra.org/>





1 Rijeka (lat. Tarsatica), Croatia

Defence walls of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum system stretched from the ancient Tarsatica on a steep slope towards north above the canyon of the river Rječina. In ancient times, it was also built a building of the military headquarters in the centre of reinforced Tarsatica, the so called principia (praetorium). The town was thus a part of the defence system, protecting one of the main Roman roads from the Balkan Peninsula, Pannonia and North Europe towards ancient Italy.



2 Solin near Kostrena, Croatia

At the top of Solin in the municipality of Kostrena, we can find the remains of a fortlet, which was probably part of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum barrier system.



3 Jelenje on Grobničko polje, Croatia

The barrier in Jelenje on Grobničko polje is situated approximately 6 km north of Rijeka. Today, we can trace the remains of the barrier with five towers as far as 2850 m.



4 Studena, Croatia

6 km north of Grobničko polje, near Studena and Klana, a barrier with three towers and the length of 5380 m is preserved. Together with the canyon of the Rječina river and the section of walls in Rijeka, the barriers represent 20 km of continuous defence line.



5 Gradina above Pasjak, Croatia

On the way from Rijeka to Trieste, near Pasjak, we can see the remains of a mighty stronghold with 3 m wide walls. Due to the lack of archaeological findings, its role as part of the defence system is not completely clear, but the stronghold was definitely present around the year 270.



6 Babno polje - Prezid, Croatia and Slovenia

The remains of the central part of the defence walls run exactly along the present state border between Slovenia and Croatia, between Babno polje and Prezid. On the location of the international border crossing, the remains are completely ruined. Full length of this part of the defence wall is approximately 2800 m.



7 Benete, Slovenia

Bloška planota was well protected in the late Roman times. Its eastern margin was controlled by at least five defence walls. The most southern of them was the defence wall near Benete, approximately 580 m long, reinforced by three towers.



8 Taboršč/Tabršč, Slovenia

On Taboršč hill, we can see scarce remains of a tower, measuring approximately 6 x 5 m, with a defence wall of 9 m. This is the shortest known part of the defence system. It was probably in control of a small road crossing, and as the defence wall near Benete and Novi Pot was close by, experts assume it was not used as an independent barrier.



9 Novi Pot, Slovenia

300 m long defence wall was discovered by the archaeologists only a few years ago. Mighty, 2 m wide wall was reinforced by two towers.



10 Gradišče near Rob, Slovenia

Defensive wall in Gradišče near Rob differs from the others due to its groundplan shape. In the middle of this defence section, at the top of the Gradiški vrh, the wall turns by 90 degrees and starts descending down the slope. In antiquity, the wall was protecting two narrow valleys leading to the Bloška planota. Approximately 1550 m long defensive wall used to be fortified with seven towers.



11 Selo near Rob, Slovenia

In ancient times, 340 m long defensive wall with two towers was running close by Selo near Rob.



12 Rakitna, Slovenia

The 600 m long defence line on Rakitna, climbing through natural stone walls, used to protect the ancient crossing from Ljubljansko barje towards Cerknica. It had two defence towers, built on opposite slopes, providing good overview over the whole part of the defensive wall.



13 Pokojišče, Slovenia

In antiquity, the defensive wall above Borovnica in Ljubljansko barje ran above the plain and provided a good overview from Nauportus to Emona. The 675 m long wall was fortified with five towers.



14 Ajdovski zid - Vrhnika - Turnovšče, Slovenia

Ajdovski zid is the longest defensive wall in the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum system, so far known to the archaeologists. It is over 7700 m long with at least 35 defence towers. It was protecting Nauportus, where the fort in Gradišče and the smaller fortlet of Turnovšče were also part of the defence system.



15 Brst near Martinj Hrib, Slovenia

A defence line with a fortlet and three towers is located near Logatec on the ancient connection Nauportus - Ocra (today Razdrto near Postojna) - Castra. With 660 m in length, it was closing down the narrow crossing of the Roman road. Inside the fortlet, archaeologists discovered a structure with hypocaust - Roman system of underfloor and wall heating. Therefore it seems the army might be staying here all year long, also during the cold winter months.



16 Lanišče, Slovenia

A defence line with a fortlet was built between Ajdovski zid above Vrhnika and Hrušica. The fortlet with a square ground plan was included in a 370 m long defensive wall that was closing down the main Roman road.



17 Hrušica (lat. Ad Pirum), Slovenia

The last defence line at the highest point of the ancient main road Emona - Castra is Ad Pirum fort, with defensive walls running for hundreds of meters north and south of the fort. In total, they measure almost 2 km in length, and the circumference of the fort is more than 600 m. Due to its location, the Ad Pirum fort was one of the most important points in the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum defence system, and, next to Tarsatica, it is also the richest archaeological site. The remains of the fort's walls have been consolidated and the inside was almost completely explored. You can visit the archaeological park or exhibition and you can walk the 4 km long archaeological route or enjoy in the restaurant.



18 Ajdovščina (lat. Castra), Slovenia

In the second half of the 3rd century, the ancient town of Castra was surrounded by a strong wall, including 14 towers. After descending from the impassable forests around Hrušica, Castra was the first town where the terrain opened up towards the plain of Northeastern Italy. Due to its proximity, the archaeologists assume the town provided good logistical support to the defence lines in Hrušica and can therefore be classified as a part of the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum system.



19 Zarakovec, Slovenia

The northernmost defensive wall documented to date lies near the village of Zarakovec, under the steep slopes of the Julian Alps. It was protecting the north road to Italy, leading over the hills of Škofja Loka and the Soča river to Northern Italy. Since the 650 m long defensive wall was built on a location, remote from other lines of the defence system, the experts believe there were more defence lines in this area during the late Roman times, that haven't been discovered yet.