

SALT AND TIME

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE ROUTE OF THE ULCINJ SALINA - GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

There are places whose value is measured not only by their natural beauty, but also by the people who created them. Their story is written through work, knowledge, community, and time. The Ulcinj Saltworks is one such place. For more than eight decades, the “Bajo Sekulić” Ulcinj Saltworks was one of the largest producers of sea salt on the eastern Adriatic coast and an important driver of Ulcinj’s economic development. Generations of engineers, laboratory technicians, water-management workers, mechanics, electricians, administrative staff, and salt harvesters created a unique system in which nature and people worked in perfect balance. The sun, sea, and wind were just as important as the pumps, canals, laboratories, and the knowledge of the people who managed the entire production process. It is little known that the story of the Ulcinj Saltworks began long before the first salt harvest in 1935. Its roots go back to the late nineteenth century. What initially began as an attempt to drain a wetland and combat malaria was transformed by nature into the area from which one of the largest Mediterranean saltworks would later emerge.

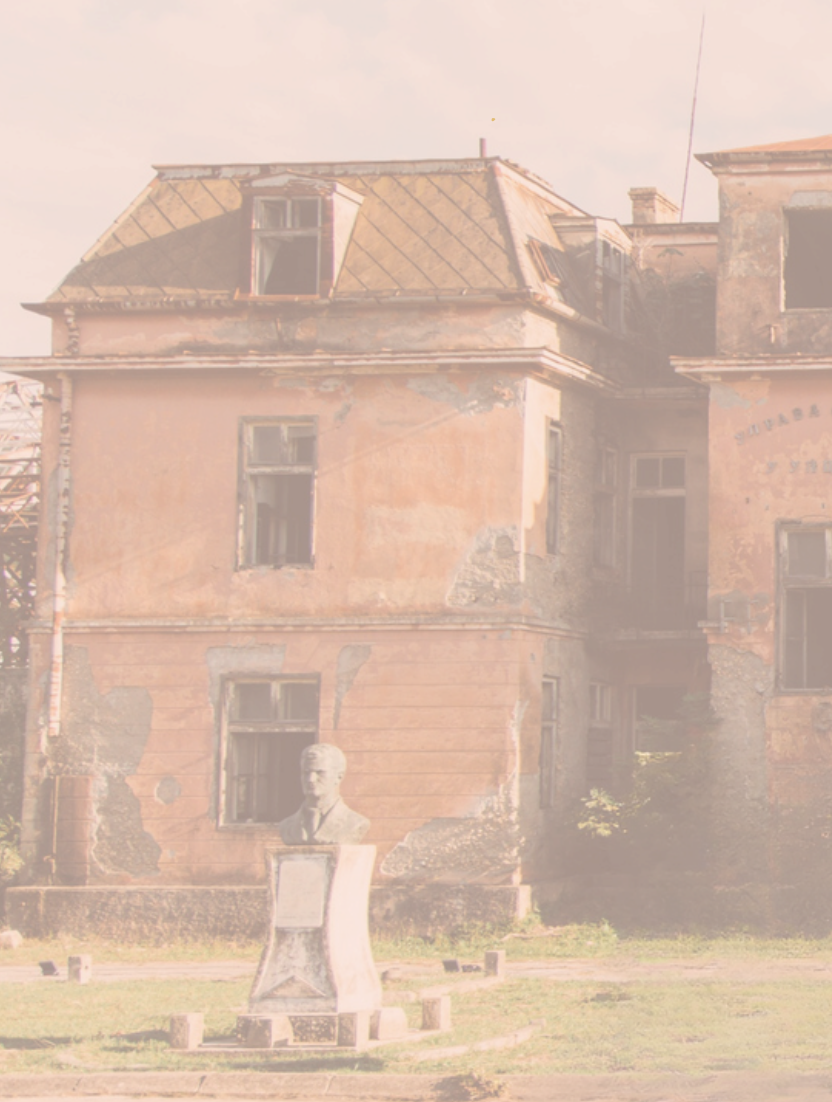
The Ulcinj Saltworks is not merely a place where salt was produced. It bears witness to a particular era, the development of industry, advances in engineering, and the everyday lives of the people whose work shaped the landscape we know today. The ponds, embankments, pumping stations, laboratory, administrative building, workshops, and warehouses are not merely structures. They are material traces of collective memory and an important part of Ulcinj’s identity. At the same time, it was precisely this complex industrial system that created a unique natural area, which today represents one of the most important bird habitats on the eastern Adriatic coast. For this reason, the industrial and natural heritage of the Ulcinj Saltworks cannot be viewed separately. Together, they form a unique cultural landscape created through the harmony of natural processes, engineering knowledge, and human labour.

The Salt and Time project was created to preserve this story in its entirety. Through research into archival materials and literature, interviews with former workers, the collection of photographs, the mapping of industrial structures, and the development of an interpretive route, we aim to bring the public closer to an often-overlooked but exceptionally valuable part of Ulcinj’s cultural heritage. The support of the Ulcinj Municipal Tourism Organisation made the implementation of the project possible and contributes to the preservation, research, and promotion of the industrial heritage of the Ulcinj Saltworks as one of Montenegro’s most distinctive industrial and cultural landscapes.

This guide is not intended merely as an aid for visiting the Saltworks. It is an invitation to experience this area from a different perspective and to recognise, in every canal, pumping station, laboratory, or warehouse, the story of the people who worked, learned, built, and lived here. Their work shaped the area we have inherited today, and for that reason it deserves to be researched, preserved, and presented to future generations. We believe this guide will help you discover the Ulcinj Saltworks from a new perspective, not only as a Nature Park, but also as an exceptionally valuable example of industrial heritage that bears witness to a time when nature, people, and technology jointly created one of the Mediterranean’s most distinctive landscapes.

As you follow this route, you are not merely visiting a former salt factory. You are walking through almost a century of work, knowledge, and the lives of people who turned seawater into salt, and salt into the history of Ulcinj.

SALT AND TIME



INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE ROUTE OF THE ULCINJ SALINA - GUIDE

A story of salt, people, technology, and the landscape that shaped Ulcinj.



CHRONOLOGY OF THE ULCINJ SALINA

1885 | The beginning of the story

On the orders of Princess Milena, the excavation of the Port Milena canal began with the aim of draining the Zoganj Wetland, creating arable land, and combating malaria.

1896 | Nature changes the plans

A major flood of the Bojana and Drim rivers allowed seawater to enter through Port Milena, permanently increasing the salinity of the Zoganj Wetland and creating the natural conditions for future sea-salt production.

1898 | Opening of Port Milena

Port Milena, the canal that would later play a crucial role in the development of the Ulcinj Saltworks, was officially opened.

1920–1925 | Choosing the location

On the instructions of the State Monopolies Administration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, engineers Guido Grisogono and Antun Koludrović surveyed the Adriatic coast and, after several years of analysis, selected Ulcinj as the most suitable location for the construction of a large sea saltworks.

1926 | Preparing the site

The purchase of land and preparations for the construction of one of the largest industrial complexes on the eastern Adriatic coast began.

1927–1934 | Construction of the Saltworks

The Ulcinj Saltworks was constructed using technical solutions applied at the famous Italian saltworks of Margherita di Savoia. Over seven years, ponds, canals, embankments, pumping stations, a laboratory, an administrative building, workshops, and other infrastructure were built.

1935 | The first salt harvest

The first salt harvest took place, officially marking the beginning of production at the Ulcinj Saltworks.

1941–1944 | The war years

During the Second World War, the Saltworks operated under difficult conditions during the Italian and German occupations. Part of the infrastructure was damaged, but the production system was preserved.

1946 | An enterprise of national importance

The Ulcinj Saltworks was declared an enterprise of national importance.

1950 | A new name

The Saltworks was named “Bajo Sekulić” in honour of the national hero who had worked there as a seasonal worker before the war.

1952 | Record production

The highest production level in the history of the Saltworks was achieved: 41,882 tonnes of salt. This made it one of the largest salt producers in Yugoslavia at the time.

1955 | Modernisation of production

Salt iodisation was introduced, and a vocational school for water-management workers was opened, further improving the production process.

1965 | Development plans

A development programme was adopted, planning the expansion of the Saltworks and an increase in annual production to 90,000 tonnes.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ULCINJ SALINA

1971 | New technology

A project was developed for the industrial production of salt through vacuum evaporation, with the aim of making production less dependent on weather conditions.

1972 | New products

Production began of a scented bath salt called “SolMex”.

1975 | Reconstruction of the processing plant

The modernisation of salt processing began through the introduction of new technological processes for washing, drying, and packaging.

1979 | Earthquake

A devastating earthquake severely damaged the buildings of the Saltworks, embankments, and production infrastructure.

1983 | New factory

A new salt-processing plant began trial operations, improving the final processing of the product.

2001 | Privatisation

The Ulcinj Saltworks entered the mass voucher privatisation process.

2004 | The beginning of nature protection

In cooperation with the organisation EuroNatur, the “Nature Park” business unit was established, marking the beginning of the first organised activities aimed at protecting the natural values of the Salina.

2005 | Gradual decline of production

Following privatisation, production gradually decreased and industrial activity began to shut down.

2009 | The first privately managed Nature Park

The Management Plan for the privately managed “Ulcinj Saltworks” Nature Park was presented. The Saltworks became the first privately managed Nature Park in Montenegro and took on a new role in biodiversity conservation.

2013 | The final harvest

The last salt harvest took place.

2014 | End of production

After almost eight decades of operation, salt production ceased completely.

2019 | Official protection

The Ulcinj Municipal Assembly declared the Ulcinj Salina a Nature Park, giving the area official protected status for the first time.

2019 | Ramsar Site

The Ulcinj Salina was designated a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, confirming its exceptional importance for the protection of wetland habitats and migratory birds.

HOW WAS THE ULČINJ SALINA CREATED?



Princess Milena Petrović Njegoš
Source: <https://catalog.shm.ru/entity/OBJECT/5560754>

At the end of the nineteenth century, more precisely in 1885, Princess Milena was the direct initiator and patron of a major state project. On her orders, work began on excavating the Port Milena canal, which was intended to drain the Zoganj Wetland.

The objective was twofold: to convert the wetland into fertile land and to eliminate the mosquito breeding grounds that were causing the widespread transmission of malaria at the time. However, nature has its own rhythm. Following the major floods of 1896, seawater entered the inland area through the canal and created the conditions for the development of one of the largest saltworks in the Mediterranean.

At that point, no one had yet envisaged the construction of a saltworks.

In the early 1920s, the State Monopolies Administration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia commissioned civil engineer Guido Grisogono and mining engineer Antun Koludrović, both from Split, to find the best location for the construction of a large sea saltworks.

During several years of research, they surveyed the entire coast of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, from Ankarana to Ulcinj, and studied the best-known European saltworks, including the famous Margherita di Savoia in Italy.

Ulcinj was ultimately selected. The high salinity of the seawater, large number of sunny days, favourable winds, extensive flat terrain, and impermeable soil created almost ideal conditions for salt production.

There are few places in the Mediterranean where all these natural conditions come together in a single area. However, natural potential was only the beginning.

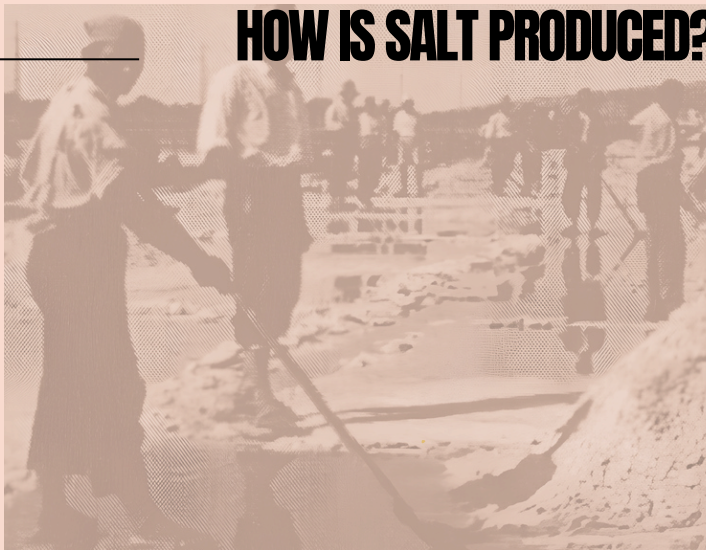
The Salina as we know it was created by people: planners, engineers, and workers who built kilometres of canals, embankments, pumping stations, and salt pans. This is precisely why the Ulcinj Saltworks represents a unique combination of natural and industrial heritage.

WHY ULČINJ?

Antun Koludrović
Photograph from Solana Ulcinj by Vaso Radović



HOW IS SALT PRODUCED?



Salt harvesters. Photograph from Solana Ulcinj by Vaso Radović.

At first glance, it seems simple: sea, sun, and wind.

However, behind every crystal of salt was a carefully planned and controlled process.

Pumping stations drew seawater into a system of canals and salt pans, where it gradually evaporated under the influence of the sun and wind. As the water evaporated, the concentration of salt increased until the first crystals appeared in the crystallisation ponds.

For the entire process to succeed, the water level, salinity, temperature, and weather conditions had to be monitored every day. Water-management workers and the laboratory played a crucial role, continuously monitoring the seawater, brine, and quality of the finished salt.

At the Ulcinj Saltworks, salt production was not the result of chance, but of a precise combination of natural processes and human knowledge.

Who Were the People of the Salina?

Behind every salt pan, canal, and embankment were people. During almost eight decades of operation, thousands of people worked at the Salina: water-management workers, laboratory technicians, machine operators, electricians, carpenters, mechanics, engineers, administrative staff, and seasonal salt harvesters.

For many families in Ulcinj, the Salina was more than a workplace; it was a way of life. It was where many people began their working lives, formed lasting friendships, and passed knowledge from one generation to the next.

Their daily lives were marked by responsibility, physically demanding work, and constant attention to water management, because it was the water that determined the rhythm of production. Today, their memories are just as important as the surviving structures. Without the stories of the people who built and operated the Salina, its history would remain incomplete.

How Did the Factory Operate?

The Ulcinj Salina was much more than a place where salt was produced. It was a complex industrial system in which every facility had a precisely defined role. Pumping stations moved water through the salt pans, the laboratory monitored quality, workshops maintained the machinery, the Central Warehouse supplied production, and the processing and packaging facilities.



and packaging facilities prepared the salt for the market. Rail trolleys transported workers and materials every day, while warehouses held thousands of tonnes of salt ready for dispatch. At the height of production, the Salina functioned like a small town, with its own infrastructure, workshops, vehicle fleet, energy system, and specialist departments.

Everything was interconnected. If one part of the system stopped working, the entire production process could be severely disrupted.

Why Is the Salina a Nature Park Today?

Although it was created as an industrial complex for salt production, the Ulcinj Salina gradually became one of the most important bird habitats on the eastern Adriatic coast. The salt pans, canals, and embankments built for salt production created new wetland habitats that are now home to hundreds of plant and animal species. The Salina is particularly important for migratory birds, which use it as a place to rest, feed, and nest. For this reason, the Ulcinj Salina is now protected as a Nature Park and designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Its greatest value lies in the fact that nature and industry are not opposites here. Together, they have created a unique cultural landscape.

Why Is Industrial Heritage Important?

Industrial heritage is not made up solely of old buildings, machinery, and abandoned factories. It tells the story of people, their work and knowledge, and the ways in which they transformed the world around them. The Ulcinj Salina is an outstanding example of how industry shaped the identity of a city. For decades, it drove economic development, employed hundreds of people, and created the landscape we now know as the Nature Park. By preserving industrial heritage, we are not only protecting buildings. We are also safeguarding the memories, knowledge, and experiences of the generations who helped build Ulcinj. It is therefore important that the story of the Salina remain accessible to future generations, as a reminder that nature, people, and industry came together here to create a unique place in the Mediterranean.

The background of the page is a sepia-toned photograph of salt pans. Overlaid on this are several large, three-dimensional, perforated metal structures that resemble salt storage or processing equipment. These structures are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and complexity. The overall aesthetic is industrial and historical.

INTERPRETIVE ROUTE THROUGH THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE OF THE ULCINJ SALINA

Discover the facilities that drove salt production for decades and shaped a unique combination of industry and nature.

INDUSTRIAL ZONE FACILITIES

N°1 | Old Administration Building

N°2 | Laboratory

N°3 | Museum

N°4 | Fuel storage

N°5 | Boiler room

N°6 | Central Warehouse

N°7 | Maintenance Workshop

N°8 | Electrical Substation

N°9 | Compressor Station

N°10 | Salt Processing Hangar

N°11 | Packaging Warehouse

N°12 | Workers' Changing Room

N°13 | Workshop

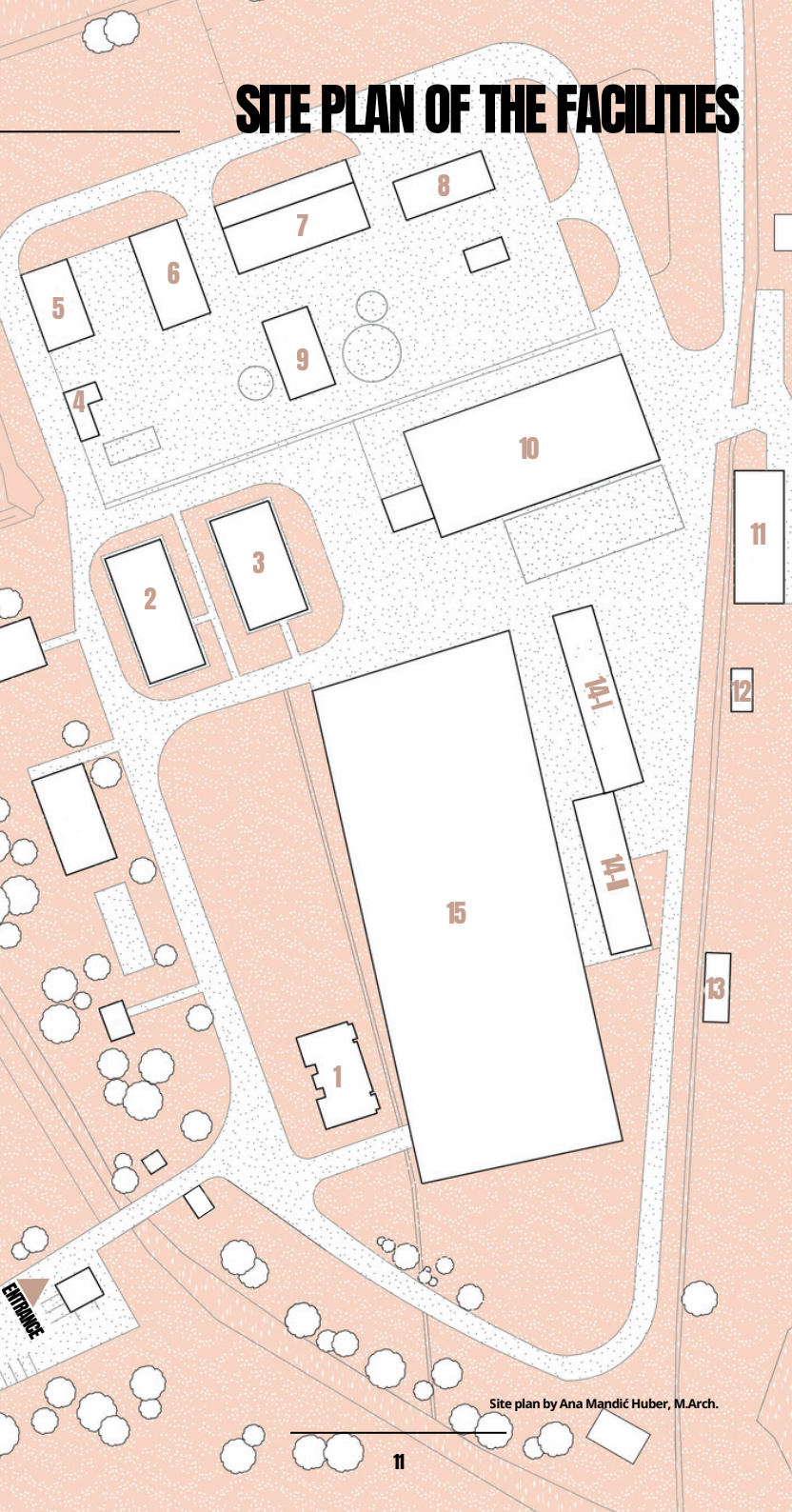
N°14 | Warehouse I & II

N°15 | Hangar



The interpretive route is also available in a digital version.

SITE PLAN OF THE FACILITIES



Site plan by Ana Mandić Huber, M.Arch.

THE SALT ROUTE

Discover the buildings that powered salt production for decades and shaped a unique harmony between industry and nature.

NO. 1 | OLD ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING: THE FIRST WITNESS TO THE BIRTH OF THE SALINA

The old administrative building of the “Bajo Sekulić” Ulcinj Salina is one of the most valuable preserved structures dating from the establishment of this industrial complex. It was built during the initial construction of the Salina in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as the administrative centre of the future saltworks.

The building was designed by engineer Guido Grisogono, one of the authors of the Ulcinj Salina project, and modelled on the administrative buildings of European saltworks. Located at the entrance to the complex, it served an important purpose: this was where production was organised, operations were managed, and decisions shaping the everyday life of the Salina were made.

Because of the marshy ground of the former Zoganj wetland, the building was constructed on piles, an especially interesting engineering solution for its time. Despite decades of change and the devastating earthquake of 1979, it has preserved its original appearance and structure.

Together with the salt pans, the old administrative building represents a unique example of early 20th-century industrial architecture in this part of Montenegro and an important element of the Ulcinj Salina's identity.

Today, although it no longer serves its original purpose, it remains one of the most important surviving witnesses to the period when salt production shaped Ulcinj's development and identity.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°2 | LABORATORY



The 1970s and 1980s were a period of major investment and modernisation at the Ulcinj Salina. Alongside the traditional production of sea salt, new processing technologies and products were developed, demonstrating the broader value of this natural resource.

A new laboratory was also built during this period. Here, production processes were monitored daily, samples of seawater and salt were analysed, salinity was measured, and product quality was monitored.



The results of these laboratory analyses helped water-management workers and production teams control the flow of water through the salt pans and determine the right time for harvesting salt.

The laboratory was not only a place of quality control, but also a centre for research and development. New products were created here, including SolMex, a scented bath salt that demonstrated how Ulcinj salt could have uses extending far beyond food and industry.

Did you know?

SolMex, a scented bath salt produced at the Ulcinj Salina, shows that the saltworks was exploring new links between natural resources, health, and personal care several decades ago.

In many ways, this product anticipated the approach that now lies at the heart of modern spa and wellness tourism.



Laboratory. Photograph from Solana Ulcinj by Vaso Radović.

For decades, laboratory technicians and specialists safeguarded the quality of Ulcinj salt through their expertise, measurements, and experience. Their work often went unseen, but it was an essential part of the vast system that connected nature, technology, and people.

Today, the laboratory is a valuable part of the Ulcinj Salina's industrial heritage. It preserves the story of a time when the sea, science, and human expertise came together in every crystal of salt.

THE SALT ROUTE

N°3 | MUSEUM

The Beginning and End of the Working Day

Before starting their working day at the Salina, many workers passed through this very building.

The former changing room was where workers prepared for the day, put on their uniforms, stored their personal belongings, and began their daily routines at the saltworks.

For a period, the building also served as a staff canteen.

Today, it has taken on a new role. It has been transformed into a small salt museum, preserving part of the Ulcinj Salina's history through objects, photographs, and memories of a time when salt production was one of the city's defining symbols. It also houses a biodiversity exhibition focusing on birds.

Once a place of everyday work, the former changing room has become a space for education, meetings, and public engagement. The building will also serve as the administrative office of the Salina's future management authority.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°4 | FUEL STORAGE



Large industrial systems such as the Ulcinj Saltworks could not operate without a reliable energy supply.

This facility was used to receive, store, and distribute the fuel oil required for the operation of individual production units and technical systems.

Although it was one of the less visible parts of the factory, the energy infrastructure was essential to the Salina's daily operations. A filling station used by the vehicle fleet of the "Bajo Sekulić" Ulcinj Saltworks was also located next to the building.



This facility reminds us that salt production depended not only on natural forces, but also on an extensive network of people, machinery, energy supplies, and technical solutions. It also conveys the scale and complexity of an enterprise that was often referred to simply as "the Giant".



THE SALT ROUTE

Nº5 | BOILER ROOM

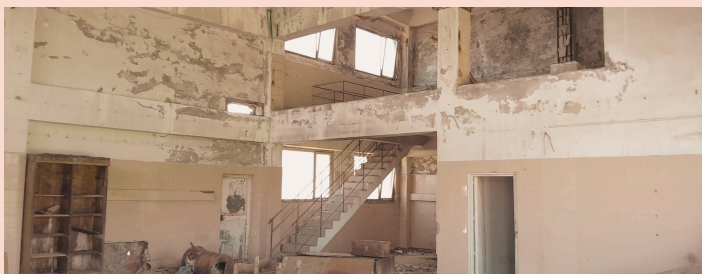
The boiler room was one of the technical facilities that supported the operation of the Salina's industrial system.

It generated the thermal energy required for specific stages of salt processing and for the operation of auxiliary units.

Together with the fuel storage facility, the boiler room formed part of the industrial production system designed to make salt processing less dependent on seasonal weather conditions.

Like many technical facilities, the boiler room operated away from the public eye, yet it played an important role in maintaining the continuity of production.

Today, it forms part of the Salina's technical heritage and recalls a time when machinery, energy, and human expertise worked together to keep the factory operating.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°6 | CENTRAL WAREHOUSE



In a factory that depended on pumps, machinery, and transport systems, every component mattered.

The Central Warehouse stored the spare parts, tools, and equipment required for the maintenance of the Salina, ranging from the smallest components to parts for large industrial machinery.



When a breakdown occurred, the speed of the repair often determined whether production could continue without interruption.

This facility illustrates the careful organisation of a vast industrial system and the work of the people who ensured, day after day, that the Salina never ground to a halt.



"From screws to large pump components, we stored everything here that was needed for the continuous operation of our Salina."

— Viktor Gazivoda, Head of the Water Management Department



THE SALT ROUTE

N°7 | MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Behind every salt pan, pump, and machine were people whose names were rarely mentioned, yet without whom salt production would have been impossible.

The workshop was the centre in which the entire technical system of the Ulcinj Saltworks was maintained and repaired. Skilled tradespeople worked here, including metalworkers, electricians, sheet-metal workers, welders, mechanics, and turners.

The workshop was equipped with lathes, drill presses, electric and gas welding equipment, and other machinery used to manufacture and repair mechanical components.

Pumps were repaired, machinery was serviced, spare parts were manufactured, and breakdowns were resolved here every day to keep production running smoothly. The workshop complex also housed the offices of mechanical and electrical engineers who worked alongside the tradespeople to plan maintenance and optimise the operation of the production system.

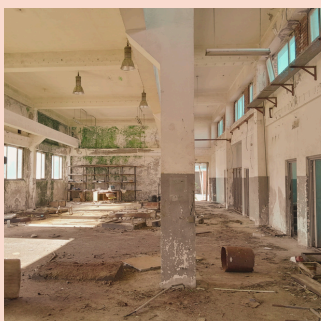
The workshop was much more than a place for repairs. It was a centre of knowledge, craftsmanship, and practical problem-solving, where experience was passed from older generations of workers to younger ones. Every successfully completed repair helped keep production on schedule and the entire system in operation.

Today, this facility bears witness to the people whose skill and dedication sustained one of the largest industrial systems on the Montenegrin coast for decades.



Did you know?

Most spare parts were not ordered from external suppliers. When a breakdown occurred, technicians at the Ulcinj Saltworks often manufactured or adapted the required components in the workshop, relying on their own knowledge, experience, and craftsmanship.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°8 | TRANSFORMER SUBSTATION



With the construction of the Salina, the industrial era arrived in Ulcinj.

A large transformer substation was built in the industrial zone during the initial construction of the Salina between 1927 and 1934.

Modern salt production required a stable supply of electricity.

The substation powered the processing plants, pumps, workshops, and other facilities within the industrial zone.

Without electricity, it would have been impossible to manage water flow, operate equipment, or maintain the factory's daily rhythm.

This facility demonstrates how salt production combined a natural process with the modern technology of its time.



Did you know?

The Ulcinj Salina once supplied Ulcinj with electricity. Thanks to its power plant, the city's street lighting was powered by electricity generated at the Salina for many years.

Old transformer substation.



Photographs on the left and right from Solana Ulcinj by Vaso Radović.

THE SALT ROUTE

N°9 | COMPRESSOR STATION

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Ulcinj Saltworks entered a new phase of development. The construction of a new industrial salt-processing plant marked the beginning of a period of modernisation aimed at improving production and introducing more advanced technological processes.

A compressor station was built as part of this new system. Its role was to supply the compressed air required for the operation of equipment and specific technological processes in the new factory.

Although it was not directly involved in the traditional process of salt production in the salt pans, the compressor station formed an important link between the old and new phases of the Salina: between production based on the sun, wind, and seawater, and industrial processing designed to open up new possibilities.

Today, this facility preserves the story of a period when the Ulcinj Saltworks expanded its capacity, introduced new technologies, and developed into one of the major industrial complexes in the former Yugoslavia.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°10 | SALT PROCESSING HANGAR



After spending months in the salt pans, exposed to the sun and wind, the harvested salt began a new stage of its journey here, in the salt-processing facility.

The processing hangar was where natural sea salt was prepared for the market. After arriving from the crystallisation ponds, the salt passed through several stages of processing, including washing, drying, grinding, and packaging.



This was where natural processes and industrial technology came together. Machinery transformed raw sea salt into a finished product suitable for households, the food industry, and other markets throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Particular attention was paid to quality control. Every stage, from the size of the salt crystals to the final packaging, formed part of a system that established the reputation of Ulcinj salt over many decades.



The salt-processing hangar bears witness to a time when the Ulcinj Saltworks was not merely a place where salt was harvested, but a modern industrial complex that encompassed the entire process, from seawater and salt crystals to a finished product ready for consumers.

Salt Packing and Processing Facility. Photograph by Saša Mitrović (private archive).



THE SALT ROUTE

N°11 | PACKAGING WAREHOUSE

The packaging warehouse was primarily used to store the various types of packaging required for packing salt. Sacks, boxes, and other materials required to ensure that the salt reached customers safely were kept here. When necessary, the building was also used for part of the salt-grinding and packaging process.

During periods of increased production, the warehouse served an additional purpose: it was used to store bulk goods and materials that could not be accommodated in the Central Warehouse. In this way, it provided essential logistical support for the Salina's daily operations.

Sacks and packages bearing the name of the "Bajo Sekulić" Ulcinj Saltworks helped carry the name of Ulcinj throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Each package marked the completion of a long process that began when seawater entered the Salina's salt pans. It represented months of work, the knowledge of generations of salt workers, and the carefully coordinated interaction between nature and people.

This building reminds us that salt production did not end with the harvest. On the contrary, every package reflected the work of many people: from the water-management workers and those working in the salt pans, to the laboratory specialists who monitored product quality, and finally those who prepared the salt for the last stage of its journey, from the Salina to the homes of millions of people.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°12 | WORKERS' CHANGING ROOM



Before heading out to the salt pans, production facilities, or workshops, the workers of the Ulcinj Salina passed through this space. The workers' changing room was where they prepared for their shifts, leaving their everyday clothes behind, putting on their workwear, and beginning another day at the saltworks.



However, the changing room was more than a functional space. It was a place for meetings, conversations, and the everyday stories of the people who built their lives around the Salina. Here, workers exchanged information before starting work, discussed their tasks, and shared moments of rest after long shifts.



Particularly during the salt-harvesting season, when the entire system operated at full capacity, this space formed part of the daily routine of the many workers whose labour kept production running.

Today, the workers' changing room preserves the memory of the most important part of the Salina: its people. Behind every kilogram of salt stood not only machinery and natural processes, but generations of workers whose effort and knowledge shaped the history of this place.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°13 | WORKSHOP

The carpentry workshop was an important part of the Salina's daily operations. Here, carpenters made and repaired wooden components for the sluice gates, including grooves, braces, and gates used to direct and control the flow of water through the salt pans. They also produced formwork for construction, as well as planks, pontoons, fences, and gates for the crystallisation ponds.

A seemingly simple material such as wood played an important role in the complex system of salt production. Without the carpenters' work, the water could not be properly managed, and without water, there could be no salt.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°14 | WAREHOUSE I & II

The Last Stop Before the Market



While unprocessed salt awaited further processing in the Raw Salt Hangar, Warehouses I and II held the finished products. Processed and packaged salt for human consumption was stored here, ready to be dispatched to the market, along with coarsely ground salt intended for gritting roads.



The warehouses were the final stop in a long production process that began with seawater, continued through kilometres of canals and salt pans, harvesting, washing, and processing, and ended with a product ready for the customer.



Today, these buildings are particularly valuable because of what has remained inside them. A significant quantity of salt from the final production run in 2013 can still be seen, preserved in various types of packaging.

These packages are no longer merely products of a former factory. They have become authentic traces of the final chapter in Ulcinj's almost eight-decade-long tradition of salt production.



THE SALT ROUTE

N°15 | HANGAR

From the Salt Pans to Processing

The Raw Salt Hangar was one of the key points along the salt's journey through the factory.

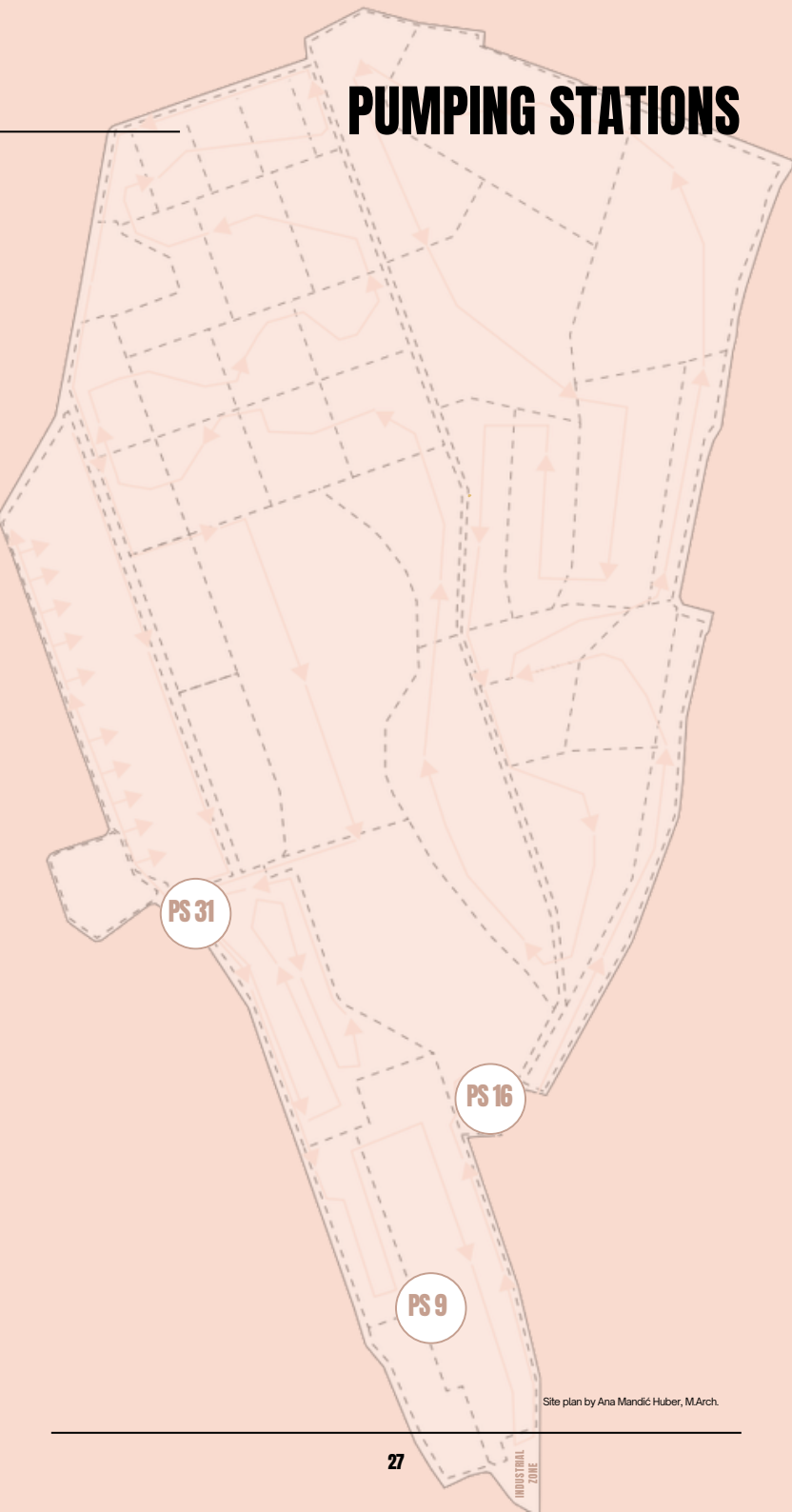
After harvesting, the raw, unprocessed salt was transported from the salt pans to the washing basins and then carried by a fixed conveyor belt into the large hangar. Here, it was temporarily stored before continuing to the processing facilities, where it passed through the next stages of treatment and preparation for the market.

Even today, the size of the hangar reflects the former scale of production at the Ulcinj Salina. Inside, a special witness to that era has also been preserved: a small mound of salt from the final harvest in 2013.

More than a decade after production ceased, it still stands in the place where the final stage of Ulcinj salt's journey once began, from the crystallisation ponds to the finished product.



PUMPING STATIONS



Site plan by Ana Mandić Huber, MArch.

THE HEART OF THE ULCINJ SALINA

Pumping stations - guardians of water, salt and life

There is a phrase that former Salina workers often used: "If the pumps stop, the Salina stops." These words capture the full importance of these facilities.

The pumping stations were a vital part of the Ulcinj Salina's production system. Their role was to draw seawater into the Salina, first from Port Milena and later through the Salina Channel, and enable its controlled movement through a network of canals, sluices, and salt pans. Thanks to the pumps, the seawater could begin its long and carefully planned journey towards becoming salt crystals.

Throughout the production process, assisted by the pumps, sun, and wind, the water moved from one salt pan to another. Its salinity gradually increased until the first salt crystals formed in the crystallisation ponds.

Without the pumps, it would have been impossible to produce salt or maintain the delicate balance between natural processes and human knowledge that made the Salina unique.

Today, however, their importance extends beyond their former industrial purpose. The movement of water also determines the survival of hundreds of plant and animal species inhabiting this area. Proper management of the water regime helps preserve the wetland habitats on which migratory birds, fish, and numerous other organisms depend.

The pumping stations therefore represent a unique place where industrial and natural heritage come together. They once helped produce salt, and today they remind us that without water, there can be no production, no biodiversity, and no life in the Salina.



PUMP NAMES

How Did the Pumps Get Their Names?



Pumping station: **PS 9**

Each pumping station at the Ulcinj Salina had its own designation: the initials PS, standing for “pumping station”, followed by a number indicating its distance from the point where seawater first entered the Salina.

For example, **PS 16** designated a pumping station located **1.6 kilometres** from the first aqueduct through which seawater began its journey across the Salina.

The designation of each station formed part of a carefully designed water-management system without which salt production would not have been possible.



Pumping station: **PS 16**

The numbers assigned to the pumping stations were not arbitrary. Together, they formed a kind of map tracing the movement of water through the Salina. Each new stage marked another part of its long journey towards salt crystallisation, reminding us that water was the driving force behind this unique interaction between nature and human knowledge.



Pumping station: **PS 31**

THE PEOPLE OF THE SALINA

More Than Eight Decades of Work, Knowledge, and Memories

The Ulcinj Salina was not made up solely of salt pans, pumps, and machinery.

It was shaped by people: water-management workers, pump operators, laboratory technicians, mechanics, electricians, carpenters, engineers, administrative staff, and seasonal salt harvesters.

Generations of workers devoted part of their lives to this place, not only producing salt but also creating a unique industrial culture that left its mark on the history of Ulcinj. Today, their knowledge, memories, and experiences are as valuable a part of the Salina's heritage as its buildings and structures.

The story of the Ulcinj Salina is therefore not only a story of industry and nature. Above all, it is a story about people.



THE PEOPLE OF THE SALINA

ANTON KASTRATI: A LIFE DEVOTED TO THE SALINA



"People in Ulcinj used to say that, in order to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, you either had to belong to the Begovska or Bajraktarska family, or work at the Salina. A job at the Salina meant secure employment, an honest living, and a future for one's family."

This anecdote says more than statistics ever could. It shows how important the Ulcinj Salina was not only to the economy, but also to the city's social life. A job at the Salina was a symbol of security, responsibility, and respectability, and generations of Ulcinj residents built their families and their futures around it.

Some people remember the Salina as more than just a factory. They remember the sound of the siren at dawn, workers meeting at the entrance, the scent of the sea and salt, and the responsibility that each new day brought. Anton Kastrati is one of them.

He studied in Pristina, Belgrade, and Novi Sad, where he earned a master's degree in technological sciences in 1986. He devoted his professional life to the "Bajo Sekulić" Ulcinj Salina, where he worked for 29 years, from 1974 to 2002, serving as its director for sixteen of those years.

For him, the Salina was never merely a production facility. It was a complex organism in which nature, technology, and people had to function as one. Managing the Salina meant making daily decisions that depended on the sea, the weather, the operation of the pumps, the embankments, and hundreds of employees.

"It was a pleasure to go to work. I arrived fifteen minutes before everyone else. Every morning, we met, exchanged information, and solved problems together. Everyone knew their task. We were a team that trusted one another."

His words show that the Salina's success rested on a well-organised system, but above all on the mutual trust and sense of responsibility shared by the people who worked there.

Today, Anton Kastrati is one of the most important living witnesses to the history of the Ulcinj Salina. His memories preserve the story of a time when the Salina was much more than a saltworks. It was a place of knowledge, responsibility, solidarity, and pride for the entire city.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SALINA

FEJZI HODŽA: THE MAN WHO COULD READ THE SALT

For more than twenty years, Mr Fejzi Hodža headed the laboratory of the Ulcinj Salina, where the quality of the salt and the rhythm of production were monitored daily. He applied his knowledge and experience to the daily analysis of seawater and salt samples, with each result forming part of a carefully managed process that enabled the Ulcinj Salina to produce salt of recognised quality for decades.

The laboratory was more than a place for chemical analysis. It was where nature, science, and experience came together. Here, the concentration of the brine was monitored, the crystallisation process was controlled, and important decisions concerning salt production were made. For the Salina to function, it was necessary to understand the water, sun, wind, and weather. Mr Hodža devoted much of his working life to precisely this task.

During our conversation with him, it was impossible not to notice the pride with which he spoke about the laboratory and the people of the Salina, but also his sadness that such a complex and valuable industrial system now stands as a silent witness to a bygone era. His memories remind us that industrial heritage is not made up solely of buildings and machinery, but above all of the people whose knowledge and dedication left an indelible mark on the history of the Ulcinj Salina.

Thanks to their stories, we now have the opportunity to preserve part of our city's collective memory and pass it on to future generations.



"It should not have happened. There was no need for it... What a shame."

These are the words Mr Fejzi Hodža used to describe the fate of the Ulcinj Salina. They convey much more than a memory: they speak of an era, its people, and a place that shaped Ulcinj's identity for decades.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SALINA

ZUHRA “ZYLE” KOLLARI: 33 YEARS AT THE SALINA



“Salt was as sought after as bread, because it too was essential food. Bread, salt, and heart, as our traditional saying goes.”

Zuhra remembers a time when lorries waited for days to collect Ulcinj salt. For her, this image best illustrates how sought-after and valuable the Salina's product once was. Salt was not merely a commercial product, but an essential food item transported from Ulcinj throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Zuhra Kollari began working at the Salina in 1981, when she was just 18 years old. As she recalls, for a young woman from Ulcinj, it was a great privilege to find employment at what was then one of the city's best-known and most important companies, or “the Giant,” as she calls it.

She began as a typist, at a time when there were no computers and everything was done manually. She later worked as an administrative officer and managed the archives. Altogether, she spent 33 years at the Salina.

When she started working there, the Salina employed around 410 people. But for Zuhra, it was much more than a workplace. She remembers shared breakfasts and lunches, celebrations, May Day gatherings, weddings, and the births of her colleagues' children. “We were like one big family,” she says.

She particularly remembers a time when lorries would wait for three or four days to collect their loads of salt. As a young employee, she wondered how the demand for Ulcinj salt could be so great.

Today, she speaks about the Salina with pride, but also with sadness. She finds it difficult to accept that such a vast system has ceased operating. For her, the sea, sun, salt, and people have always belonged together, just as she believes salt production and birds can once again share the same space.

After spending 33 years at the Salina, Zuhra does not want her story to remain merely a memory of the past. She believes it is especially important for young people to discover the Salina, speak with former workers, and preserve their knowledge, while also having the courage to create something new. For her, the Salina's future depends on new generations who will understand its value and carry its story forward.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SALINA

VIKTOR GAZIVODA: HEAD OF PRODUCTION AND GUARDIAN OF THE WATER REGIME

Some people know the Salina through its buildings, while others know it through every canal, embankment, and salt pan. Viktor Gazivoda belongs to the latter group.

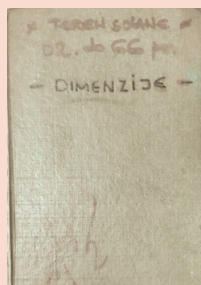
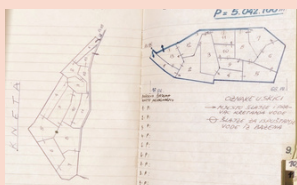
He worked at the Ulcinj Salina from 1993 until 2014, when its last workers left. He began his career at the gatehouse and later completed a one-year training programme for water-management workers. In addition to learning how to manage the water regime, he studied chemistry to understand the processes of salinity, evaporation, and salt production. Over the years, he worked in almost every position at the Salina before eventually taking responsibility for managing production and the entire water regime.

As Head of Production, he was responsible for the work of the water-management workers and pump operators, as well as all the systems that ensured seawater reached every salt pan at precisely the right time and in the correct quantity. He knew well that without water, there could be neither salt nor life at the Salina.

A particularly important part of his work was the Dimenzije ("Dimensions") logbook, a unique record in which he documented the condition of the entire system in detail. Every salt pan, canal, outlet, and sluice was mapped in it, together with the modifications, repairs, and technical solutions developed over the years. The logbook was more than technical documentation; it was a map of life at the Salina.

For Viktor Gazivoda, the Salina was never merely a workplace. It was a school of life, a responsibility, and part of his everyday existence. His story therefore did not end when salt production ceased. Even today, as an associate of the National Parks of Montenegro, he remains one of its guardians.

His knowledge of the water regime, canals, salt pans, and pumping stations remains indispensable to the preservation of the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park. It confirms that the Salina's greatest treasure was never merely its salt and water, but the people who knew and cared for it.



SALINA GLOSSARY



Fixed Conveyor. Photograph by Saša Mitrović (private archive).



Šlajz (sluice) – A fixed sluice structure made of wooden braces and grooves, used to precisely regulate the flow of seawater between the salt pans.

Vrata / ustava (sluice gate) – A movable gate used to open or close the passage of water. Proper operation of the gates was essential to the entire production process.

Baumé (°Bé) – The Baumé scale was used to measure the density of brine. Its readings helped workers determine when the water was ready to move to the next stage of salt production.

Salamura (brine) – Concentrated, salt-rich seawater from which salt crystals form through evaporation.

Salinitet (salinity) – The salt concentration of water. In the crystallisation ponds, the water reached the very high salinity required for salt formation.

Vodar (water-management worker) – A worker who controlled the movement of water throughout the entire system of canals and salt pans. Their knowledge was essential to successful production.

Pumpaš (pump operator) – A worker responsible for operating and maintaining the pumping stations that supplied the Salina with seawater.

Kaseta (pond compartment) – A smaller production pond within the Salina's complex system, in which the water underwent a particular stage of evaporation.

Berba soli (salt harvest) – The final stage of production, during which salt crystals were collected from the crystallisation ponds.

Drezina (rail trolley) – A small rail vehicle used to transport workers, tools, and materials around the Salina's industrial complex.

Akvadukt / viadukt (aqueduct / viaduct) – A structure that carried seawater to particular sections of the Salina and directed it through the production system.

Ispusti (outlets) – Concrete sluice structures built into the knete, used to control the flow of water from one salt pan to another.

Mostovi (bridges) – Structures that allowed vehicles, machinery, and workers to cross canals and move between the salt pans.

Bentovi (service embankments) – Wide earthen tracks separating the salt pans. In addition to dividing the area, they allowed workers to move around the Salina, materials to be transported, and heavy machinery to access the site during maintenance.

Nasipi (embankments) – Earthen barriers forming the boundaries of the salt pans. Workers could walk along them, but they were not designed to carry heavy vehicles.

Sifon knete i sifon jezera (Knetasiphon and lakesiphon) – Underground concrete channels that redirected water below the level of the salt pans. These complex hydraulic structures connected different sections of the Salina without interrupting the evaporation process.

Samohodni transporter (self-propelled conveyor) – A mobile conveyor machine used during the harvest to collect salt from the crystallisation ponds. It was used exclusively during the final stage of production.

Stabilni transporter (fixed conveyor) – A conveyor that carried raw salt, after harvesting and washing, to the hangar for storage or further processing.

Koševi (storage hoppers) – Large containers used to store salt. Separate hoppers were used for raw salt and for processed salt awaiting packaging.

Šneka (screw conveyor / auger) – A spiral conveyor that moved salt towards the packaging facility, ensuring that each package was filled evenly.

Sušnica (dryer) – An industrial machine in which salt was dried, reducing its moisture content and preparing it for packaging and sale.

FOR THOSE WHO BUILT THE SALINA AND THOSE WHO WILL PROTECT IT

We dedicate this guide to all generations of Salina workers, whose knowledge, labour, and experience shaped the Ulcinj Salina and sustained its traditional salt production for decades. Their work left behind more than industrial buildings, canals, and salt pans. It also created a unique landscape in which people and nature learned to coexist.

We also dedicate it to the generations to come, in the hope that they will discover, understand, and preserve what has been entrusted to them.

We extend our gratitude to all former employees of the “Bajo Sekulić” Salina who shared their memories, knowledge, photographs, and stories with us throughout the years of our work together. Without their testimonies, much of this story would have remained undocumented.

We hope that Salt and Time will inspire curiosity and interest in the industrial, cultural, and natural heritage of the Ulcinj Salina, while also helping us better understand the importance of preserving the heritage of Ulcinj and Montenegro.

The Salina is not merely a story of the past.

It is part of our identity and a legacy we leave to future generations.



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The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Tourism Organisation.

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INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE ROUTE OF THE ULCINJ SALINA - GUIDE