

## Budva History - Ancient Budva 03

Roman Budva occupied a much larger area than Illyrian Budva or later medieval Budva. Remains of Roman construction have been discovered in front of the present city gate in the west wall, while a large villa or *thermae* occupied the space between the Repero tower and the east side of the Avala Hotel. Discovered in one of the chambers of this building are figural floor mosaics depicting playful dolphins and hippocampi, which on the basis of stylistic and technical features can be dated to the 1st century. The walls of Roman Budva have been found to the north and south of present-day Njegos Street, they are almost certainly covered by the existing Venetian and Austrian walls. This hypothesis is supported by the location of the Roman necropolis, which like the Illyrian-Greek burial grounds is west of the city, only on a much large area along the road approaching Budva from the northwest.

Available archaeological material is insufficient to reconstruct the appearance of Roman Budva, but the fact that Pliny the Younger cites Budva as a city of Roman citizens, and that all the graves in the necropolis reflect purely Roman forms of burial, clearly shows that it was a typical Roman city where people lived in comfort. The names on the early tombstones in the Budva necropolis are predominantly foreign, which means that Budva was inhabited primarily by people who had served in the state administration or had been drawn here because of trade with Italy, Greece, Asia Minor or Syria. These newcomers, attracted by the comforts of urban life, saw to it that their new home was furnished with all the amenities of classical civilization: comfortable houses, shaded porticoes, fountains, shrines and large public baths. These earliest citizens were eventually joined by Romanized autochthons, who quickly adopted all the features of Roman culture. During the 1st and 2nd centuries, flanking the road to Budva, were necropolises with rows of graves like cemeteries in large urban centres such as Thessaloniki or Aquileia. Almost in straight rows stand family tombs in the form of small chapels or stepped pyramids crowned with gravestones, sacrificial altars or a conical cippus. Set in walled chambers were urns with the cremated remains of the deceased, and with them various objects, often bottles of golden-yellow, blue or violet glass. It seems that in Budva in the 1st century the legend of ancient contacts with the eastern Mediterranean had survived, for the most valuable glass bottles, decorated with reliefs, came from Sidon, the birthplace of Cadmus. Also found in the graves besides glass from Sidon, were various luxury articles from workshops in Alexandria, Cyprus and Italy. The import of luxury goods and the building of large tombs above the ground in Budva ended abruptly at the end of the 2nd century. The Budva necropolis from the 3rd and 4th centuries is only a small cemetery with scattered graves and few tombstones. The deceased were no longer burned but buried in walled graves and placed beside them were modest offerings such as a clay pitcher or cup and occasionally a glass bottle. These graves show not only that Budva was affected by the economic crisis that beset the Roman Empire at the end of the 2nd century but that its population had declined, abandoning the city for their country estates. Characteristic of the end of the 3rd century in the surroundings of Budva - in the Budva flats, Petrovac and Prevlaka near Tivat - are villas with farm buildings (*villa rustica*). The decline of Roman Budva was hastened by large-scale administrative reforms instituted at the close of the 3rd and during the 4th centuries, also the advance of the barbarians, first the Visigoths between 396 and 403, and after 450 the Ostrogoths. The creation of the special province of Prevalis during the reign of Diocletian and the division of the empire during the reign of Theodosius I placed Budva on the periphery of Prevalis, on an unstable frontier between the Eastern and Western Roman Empire, which later became the boundary between the Orthodox and Catholic Church. The only monument remaining from those troubled times in Budva is a large Christian basilica situated between the churches of St. John and the Holy Trinity. When it is completely excavated and studied, the basilica will explain the position of Budva in the church organization of Prevalis and Illyricum. For the time being, this is the last archaeological monument testifying to the history of ancient Budva.

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