

# PREHISTORIC FORAGERS IN THE DINARIC ALPS PROJECT, MONTENEGRO

**COURSE ID: ARCH XL 159**

***JUNE 11–JULY 15, 2017***

## **FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR:**

Dr. Dusan Boric, Department of Archaeology Conservation, Cardiff University ([boricd@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:boricd@cardiff.ac.uk))



## **INTRODUCTION**

There are only few regional hotspots with concentrations of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites in southeastern Europe. The territory of Montenegro is one such region that has seen only limited explorations to-date. Its karstic landscape in the hinterland of the southern part of the eastern Adriatic Sea, with mountainous regions off the Dinaric Alps carved by deep river canyons, reveals many cave sites that were the main repositories of human occupational histories in the prehistoric past. The focus of our investigations is the site of Vrbička Cave and its immediate environs, located in western Montenegro. The site has a commanding position over a large gorge and reveals evidence of Late Paleolithic (dated to the Gravettian period, c. 24–20 kyr cal BP), Mesolithic (c. 11 kyr cal BP), Early Neolithic (c. 8 kyr cal BP), Late Neolithic (c. 6.5 kyr cal BP), and Bronze Age (c. 3.6 kyr cal BP) occupation layers.

Excavations during our 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016 seasons revealed finds-rich prehistoric layers. Unexpectedly, the Upper Paleolithic occupation at Vrbička coincides with the coldest phases of the last Ice Age, i.e. the Last Glacial Maximum (c. 22±2 ky cal BP). Human occupation during this period is poorly documented in the wider region, and this makes the site important. Flint knapped artifacts found in the Paleolithic layers are typical hunting implements characteristic of the Gravettian period and show diagnostic features, such as shouldered pieces that were hafted armature for hunting gear. Faunal remains from Paleolithic layers of the cave indicate specialized hunting of marmots, a typical cold-loving species. Similar specialized sites were found only in later phases of the Paleolithic in the Italian and French Alps, which suggest that human at the period had much broader spectrum of targeted resources than initially assumed. Chronologically younger layers at Vrbička similarly provide evidence of

innovation and long-distance connections between local Holocene foragers and areas farther afield across Mediterranean Europe.

The 2017 season will expand the excavation areas open thus far. Research will focus on gaining better understanding of the use of the cave space for specialized activities during different phases of its occupation. In addition, research will include a survey of surrounding landscapes for locating sources of flint deposits that might have been used by prehistoric foragers.

#### ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 12 quarter credit units (equivalent to 8 semester units) through our academic partner, UCLA Extension. UCLA is a top ranked research university and its archaeology program is ranked amongst the best in the country. All IFR field schools instructors and curricula are approved both by the corresponding academic department and the Academic Senate at UCLA. This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours.

**Transcripts:** Transcripts are available through UCLA UnEX and instructions for ordering transcripts may be found at <http://bit.ly/2bDOZ3E>. Grades will be posted and transcript available usually within six weeks after the end of this field school. All IFR field schools are designated XL classes – courses that are equivalent to undergraduate courses offered by the UCLA regular session. All XL courses are transferable for unit and subject credit toward the Bachelor's Degree at all campuses of the UC and CSU systems. Classes numbered 100 to 199 are considered upper division (junior/senior). For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy>.

**UCLA students:** Students can take classes through UCLA Extension to complete requirements. However certain considerations must be taken into account. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bJWeHK>.

**Credit Units Transfer:** Most universities accept UCLA credit units – there are very few exceptions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the transferability of the credit units with school officials BEFORE attending the field school.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objective of this field school is to enable students to better understand how archaeology is practiced in the field, to explore the diverse lifestyle of people in the past and to gain basic understanding of human adaptations to changing climatic conditions in prehistory. To achieve these objectives, this course has two primary goals: (1) to provide students with a practical working knowledge of **archaeological field methods**, including survey, excavation, laboratory analysis, and artifact cataloging; and (2) to introduce students to the **intellectual challenges presented by archaeological research**, including research design, the interpretation of data, and the continual readjustment of hypotheses and field strategies with regard to information recovered in the field.

The course will take place in western Montenegro, 10 miles northwest of the present-day town of Niksic.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

**Excavations:** Students will participate in guided excavations at the site and in sieving/flotation.

**Survey:** Students will conduct survey of the surrounding environs in search for flint sources.

**Recordation:** Students will participate in filling out specific excavation forms, map finds, and record stratigraphy.

**Cataloging:** Students will participate in field sorting and cataloging of finds.

**Laboratory:** Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting, drawing, and cataloging of finds.

The course begins on Sunday, June 11 and will meet every weekday and for a half-day on Saturdays until July 15. An intensive lecture series during the first three days of the project will provide the cultural and archaeological background to the fieldwork, and additional lectures by project specialists will be offered periodically throughout the remainder of the field season.

In addition, a fieldtrip will be organized in the first week in order to visit the medieval towns of Kotor and Perast in the Bay of Kotor, a large fiord on the southern costs of the Adriatic Sea. Here, students will be able to learn more about the rich history of the region.

Niksic is only one-hour drive away from the Adriatic coast and Sundays can be spent on a beach. It is also possible to organize an excursion to the famous medieval city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, which is only 60 miles away from Niksic.

#### **DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

Archaeological fieldwork involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. This program operates in the mountainous Mediterranean environment of the western Balkans. During the day, temperatures fluctuate between 70°-85°. Nights could be cooler and you may need some warmer clothing. Humidity is relatively low and some mosquitoes and/or flies may be close to the excavation area. Venomous snakes, such as viper, are also endemic in the karstic environment of Montenegro.

In order to be protected from sunburn, insects and/or snakes you will not be allowed to work in shorts or tank tops at the site and will be required to wear hiking boots in the field.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the project director – as appropriate.

#### **PREREQUISITES**

There are no prerequisites for participation in this field school. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus, requires a measure of acceptance that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired and have to work in the outdoors. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires real, hard work – in the sun, on your feet, and with your trowel.

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

On successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

- Understand the different elements of an archaeological field project and the relationships between these elements; understand all elements of the archaeological process
- Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts and undertake water sieving
- Use standard recording techniques to document excavation results (fill out context description forms, drawing in plan and sections, use of total station/EDM)
- Use landscape survey methods in flint prospecting
- Undertake preliminary processing of archaeological artifacts and ecofacts
- Undertake preliminary analysis of archaeological artifacts and ecofacts

#### **GRADING MATRIX**

- 50%:** Attend and participate each scheduled day, including lecture and field and laboratory work
- 30%:** Keep a field notebook that will be submitted and evaluated at the end of the course
- 10%:** An exam taken at the end of the first week of field school, testing students on required readings and initial formal lectures.
- 10%:** Participate in daily reports of research activities to the group

### **TRAVEL & MEETING POINT**

Students arriving by air will be met at the **Podgorica airport** in Montenegro (TGD) on the first day of the program by project staff members. Alternatively you could also arrive to **Dubrovnik airport** (DBV) in Croatia. Please let us know which airport you will be arriving to so we may organize an airport pickup.

Students may choose to fly into Belgrade (Serbia) first and then take a short flight from there to Podgorica airport. For students arriving by alternative means (bus, boat from Italy, etc.) special arrangements will be made.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email project director immediately. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students will live in comfortable, but modest, apartments in the town of Niksic. The site of Vrbicka Cave is located 10 miles from Niksic at 950 meters above sea level (*ca.* 3,100 feet). Apartments will have all basic necessary amenities, including hot showers and a washing machine. Students will sleep on beds, couches or on inflatable mattresses on the floor and will share bathrooms with other students in the same apartment. There will be up to 5 students per apartment. Students will need to bring their own sleeping bag and towels.

All meals will be communal events and will provide plenty of nutritious but basic food in the tradition of local cousin. Dinner will be served at a local restaurant where a choice of grilled meat, fish or salads will be provided. Some specialized diets may be arranged (vegan, kosher, etc.) but students must consult with project directors and no guarantees will be made. Vegetarian options will be much easier to accommodate although you should be aware that Balkan cuisine is very much based on meat, especially grilled meat.

### **INTERNET, CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS AND MAIL**

If you need internet, pre-paid dongles can be purchased in the town for around 25 euros. The easiest and cheapest way to keep in touch with home is to buy a pre-paid cell phone SIM card when you arrive in Montenegro. The cheapest deal costs about \$8. Make sure your own phone is not locked for use with foreign SIM cards. Be aware too that plugs and electric current in Europe are different from those in the US and operate on 220V 50Hz. Post offices in Niksic work every work day and on Saturdays.

### **CURRENCY**

Montenegro uses the euro. Check with your bank to make sure that your ATM card works in Europe.

### **WHAT TO PACK**

All of the items listed below can also be bought in Niksic.

- Sleeping bag
- Towels
- Work clothes
- Hiking boots
- Sun glasses
- Sun hat
- Sun block cream
- Insect repellent
- Adapters for plugs
- Flip-flops

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1 (June 11–June 18):

Sunday	by 4:00 pm: Students arriving on this day assemble at the Podgorica airport 4-4:30 pm: Preliminary introductions 5:15 pm arrive in the town of Niksic, get settled in 7:30 pm: Group dinner at the Merak restaurant
Monday	7:00: meet minibus 7:15: leave from Niksic 8:30 am: tour of the Palaeolithic to Bronze Age site of Crvena Stijena 11:30 am: visit rock paintings and the medieval town of Perast on the Adriatic coast 1 pm: lunch in Perast 3 pm: visit the medieval town of Kotor on the Adriatic coast (Bay of Kotor) 7 pm: dinner in Kotor 10 pm: back in Niksic
Tuesday	<u>Morning</u> : Lecture: “Intro to Balkan Archaeology I” <u>Afternoon</u> : Lecture: “Intro to Balkan Archaeology II” <u>Readings</u> : <a href="#">Bailey 2000</a> ; <a href="#">Borić 2015</a> ; <a href="#">Price 2013</a>
Wednesday	<u>Morning</u> : Lecture: “Contextualizing Investigations at Vrbicka Cave” <u>Afternoon</u> : visit Vrbicka Cave, tour of the site <u>Evening</u> : Lecture: “Prehistoric hunter-gatherers in the eastern and central Mediterranean” <u>Readings</u> : <a href="#">Alley et al. 2005</a> ; <a href="#">Mihailović 2009</a> ; <a href="#">Miracle 2007</a> ; <a href="#">Mussi 2001</a> ; <a href="#">Kozłowski 2008</a> ; <a href="#">Price 2013</a>
Thursday	<u>Morning</u> : Lecture: “Archaeological Field Methods” <u>Afternoon</u> : Lecture: “Introduction to Finds Drawing Techniques” <u>Readings</u> : <a href="#">Glassow 2005</a> ; <a href="#">Griffiths et al. 1990</a> ; <a href="#">MOLAS 1994</a>
Friday	<u>Morning</u> : Fieldwork <u>Afternoon</u> : Fieldwork <u>Evening</u> : Lecture: “The Spread of the Neolithic in the Eastern Adriatic Region” <u>Readings</u> : <a href="#">Forenbaher and Miracle 2005</a> ; <a href="#">Forenbaher et al. 2013</a>
Saturday	<u>Morning</u> : Exam – testing students on required readings and initial formal lectures <u>Afternoon</u> : Free
Sunday:	Free

### Week 2-4 (June 19–July 9):

Daily schedule for the four weeks of fieldwork Monday through Friday, half day Saturdays:

6:30-7:15am	Breakfast
7:15-8:00am	Transfer to the site of Vrbicka Cave
8:00am-4:30pm	Research activities at the site (snack and lunch break at the site)
1:00-2:00pm	Rest and lunch
4:00-4:30pm	Daily debriefing where different team members present findings of the day
4:30-7:00pm	Return to Niksic and Lab work
7:00-8:00pm	Dinner
8:00-9:00pm	(occasionally) invited lectures by project specialists and guests

## Week 5 (July 10–15):

- Mon-Thur (7/10–13) Continued regular research schedule  
Friday (7/14) Packing and lab cleaning  
Saturday (7/15) Return home/continued travel in Montenegro or elsewhere in the Balkans on your own

## READINGS

The readings listed below will be posted on the dedicated Moodle web page for this field school.

- Alley, R.B., Clark, P.U., Huybrechts, Ph., and Joughin, I.  
2005 Ice-sheet and sea-level changes. *Science* 310: 456–460.
- Bailey, Douglass W.  
2000 *Balkan prehistory: Exclusion, incorporation and identity*. London: Routledge.
- Borić, Dušan  
2015 Mortuary practices, bodies and persons in the Neolithic and Early-Middle Copper Age of southeast Europe. In C. Fowler, J. Harding and D. Hofmann (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Forenbaher, Stašo, and Miracle, Preston T.  
2005 The Spread of Farming in the Eastern Adriatic. *Antiquity* 79: 514–528.
- Forenbaher, Stašo, Kaiser, Timothy, and Miracle, Preston T.  
2013 Dating the East Adriatic Neolithic. *Journal of European Archaeology* 16(4): 589–609.
- Kozłowski, Janusz K.  
2008 End of the Aurignacian and the beginning of the Gravettian in the Balkans. In A. Darlas and D. Mihailović (eds.) *The Palaeolithic of the Balkans* (BAR Int. Ser. 1819): pp. 3–14. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Glassow, Michael  
2005 Excavation. In *The Handbook of Archaeological Methods*, edited by Herbert D. G. Maschner and Christopher Chippindale, pp. 133–175. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press.
- Griffiths, Nick, Jenner, Anner, and Christine Wilson  
2007 *Drawing Archaeological Finds. A Handbook* (Revised Edition). London: Archetype Books.
- Mihailović, Dušan  
2009 *Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Chipped Stone Industries from Crvena Stijena*. Belgrade: Centre for Archeological Research, Faculty of Philosophy.
- Miracle, Preston  
2007 The Late Glacial ‘Great Adriatic Plain’: ‘Garden of Eden’ or ‘No Man’s Land’ during the Epipalaeolithic? A view from Istria (Croatia). In R. Whallon (ed.), *Late Paleolithic Environments and Cultural Relations around the Adriatic* (BAR Int. Ser. 1716): pp. 41–51. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- MOLAS  
1994 *Archaeological Site Manual. Museum of London Archaeological Service* (third edition). London: Museum of London.
- Mussi, Margherita  
2001 *Earliest Italy: An Overview of the Italian Palaeolithic and Mesolithic*. New York: Springer.
- Price, T. Douglas  
2013 *Europe before Rome. A Site-by-Site Tour of the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages*. **Chapter 1; Chapter 2: Early Europeans:** Neanderthals Krapina; Croatia, 130,000 years ago; Vindija Cave, Croatia, 34,000 years ago; Ancient DNA; Neanderthal Diet; Some Reflections; **Chapter 3: The Creative Explosion:** Origin and Spread of Modern Humans; The Upper Paleolithic; Pesterța cu Oase, Romania, 40,000 years ago; The Last Hunters; Franchthi Cave, Greece, 9000 BC; Reflections **Chapter 4. The First Farmers:** The Origins and Spread of Agriculture Nea Nikomedeia, Greece, 6200 BC Lepenski Vir, Serbia, 6200 BC; Vinca, Serbia, 5500 BC; Rudna Glava, Serbia, 5000 BC

Varna, Bulgaria, 4500 BC; Some Reflections. **Chapter 5. Bronze Age Warriors:** The Rise of Metals; The Bronze Age in the Aegean Knossos, Crete, Greece, 3000 BC; Akrotiri, Greece, 1627 BC Mykene, Greece, 1600 BC; Some Reflections; **Chapter 6. Centers of Power, Weapons of Iron** At the Edge of History; The Celts; Some Reflections; **An Epilogue. Past and Present - Lessons from Prehistoric Europe** Europe before Rome; Significance.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Baković, M., B. Mihailović, D. Mihailović, M. Morley, Z. Vušović-Lučić, R. Whallon & J. Woodward  
2009 Crvena Stijena Excavations 2004–2006. *Journal of Eurasian Prehistory* 6(1–2): 3–31.
- Bailey, Geoff N. (ed.)  
1998 *Klithi: Palaeolithic Settlement and Quaternary Landscapes in Northwest Greece*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
- Bailey, Geoff N., Adam, E., Perlès, Catherine, Panagopoulou, E., and Zachos, E. (eds.)  
1999 *The Palaeolithic Archaeology of Greece and Adjacent Areas*: pp. 330–342. London: British School at Athens.
- Forenbaher, Stašo  
2013 Small but special: The island of Palagruža in the 3rd millennium BC Adriatic. In E. Starnini (ed.) *Unconformist Archaeology. Papers in honour of Paolo Biagi* (BAR Int. Ser. 2528): pp. 89–99. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Hughes, P.D., Woodward, J.C., van Calsteren, P.C., and Thomas, L.E.  
2011 The glacial history of the Dinaric Alps, Montenegro. *Quaternary Science Reviews* 30: 3393–3412.
- Kozłowski, Janusz K., Kozłowski, Stefan K. and Radovanović, Ivana  
1994 *Meso- and Neolithic Sequences of the Odmuť Cave (Montenegro)*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Jones, Andy (ed.)  
2008 *Prehistoric Europe*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Chapter 3, D. Borić, First Households and ‘House Societies’ in European Prehistory; Chapter 7: J. Chapman: Approaches to Trade and Exchange in Earlier Prehistory (Late Mesolithic–Early Bronze Age).
- Romandini, Matteo, Peresani, Marco, Gurioli, F., and Sala, B.  
2012 Marmota marmota, the most common prey species at Grotta del Clusantin: Insights from an unusual case-study in the Italian Alps. *Quaternary International* 252: 184–194.
- Whallon, Robert  
2007 Social territories around the Adriatic in the late Pleistocene. In R. Whallon (ed.) *Late Paleolithic Environments and Cultural Relations around the Adriatic* (BAR Int. Ser. 1716): pp. 61–65. Oxford: Archaeopress.