

Liburnians and Legends

The first known inhabitants in this area were Liburnians, who belonged to one of the Illyric tribes; the Liburnian area got its name from them. Liburnians lived in the region from river Rasa in Istria all the way to river Krka in Dalmatic and they were vital bearers of the maritime tradition along the Adriatic coast as early as in the 12th century B.C.. They were masters of shipbuilding as well as pirates. Romans took over the basic type of Liburnian fast-boat and created the well-known battle ship "Liburna" which tells us what good quality ships the Liburnians were building. We will never know the exact number of those Liburnian battle ships which were sailing across the Adriatic Sea before the Romans began to rule, but the history of this area is rich with secrets, legends and myths from those ancient days.

The first mythical story from the Liburnian region – the Golden Fleece – tells us about searching for wisdom. Jason, leader of the Argonauts and eager for glory, decided to take the Golden Fleece from King Aetes who reigned on the Black Sea. The fleece was kept by a dragon. Jason managed to take it, with the help of the King's daughter, Medea – a sorceress desperately in love with Jason. In order to avoid a King's revenge, Medea, Jason and his fellow Argonauts ran away by ship, chased by the King's son Apsyrtus.

First the Argonauts reached the Adriatic Sea, "over the River Ister", with the writer of "Argonautica", Apollonije Rodijski, who was a librarian in Alexandria and was quoted by Strabon, Diodor and others. After the chase reached the abductors, Medea fraudulently lured her brother into negotiations, whereupon Jason killed him. Medea cut into pieces her brother's body and threw them overboard to delay those chasing. Out of these body parts new islands emerged, nowadays known as the Apsyrtides – just as ancient Greek sailors used to call them.

Today those islands are the Kvarner islands – Cres, Losinj, Krk – floating before Lovran in the azure Gulf of Kvarner.

Living legend supplemented and interpreted over the centuries says that the sorceress Medea was hiding somewhere in Lovran's area, under the Ucka Mountain near one of the most beautiful beaches – Medveja – which was named after Medea. It also says that mountain waters from Ucka, which spring under the sea's surface, are her tears because of the crimes she committed.