

# Watermills of Medvednica

The abundant, fast-flowing streams of Medvednica provided the ideal power source for mill wheels. Consequently, watermills were once a common sight, found along almost every significant stream descending the mountain slopes. While primarily used for grinding grain and oil-bearing seeds, the water's power was also harnessed to drive sawmills, fulling mills, and mills for crushing the raw materials used in the production of paper and ceramics.

Due to their immense economic importance, grain mills sparked fierce conflicts between Gradec and Kaptol over milling rights along the Medvednica streams. At the end of the 14th century, a special regulation was introduced to determine exactly who could build mills, where they could be placed, and under what specific conditions they could operate. The fee peasants paid to the miller was called "mlinšica" and was not paid in money, but in flour: for every 10 kg of flour ground, the miller kept 1 kg as payment. Poor peasants often could not afford the fee; instead, they worked in the miller's fields as payment while their grain was being ground.

The milling trade at the foot of Medvednica completely died out by the 1960s, and most of the historic watermills were left to decay. This vanished craft survives today in the names of the sub-Sljeme settlement Mlinovi and Mlinarska Street. Only in the past decade have several Medvednica mills begun to be restored, reclaiming their vital role as symbols of the cultural and historical identity of Nature Park Medvednica.

According to tradition, the Ribnjak stream in Gračani was once home to thirteen mills. Today, only one survives: the Gračanski Ribnjak mill, which is now a protected cultural monument. Milling operations have existed at this site since 1773, though the current structure was likely built during the latter half of the 19th century. Even today, the mill continues to grind grain for the Banić family and for the enjoyment of the numerous visitors who come to witness this living tradition.

The streams of eastern Medvednica once powered numerous watermills. Local accounts suggest that ten mills stood along the Bidrovec stream alone, though all were destroyed during a major flood in 1953. Today, the Ferenčak Mill remains the oldest preserved mill in the Markuševac area. At the confluence of the Bidrovec and Trnava streams stands the charming, recently fully restored Ročić Mill. The Lipa stream, which flows through Čučerje, was reportedly once home to as many as eleven mills. None of these mills are active today; however, a few picturesque wooden structures remain, hiding silent millstones within.

Ten watermills once lined the Vukov Dol stream, though they ultimately shared the same fate as most Medvednica mills during the latter half of the 20th century. In the area of Planina Gornja, the "Planinska Družina" association is in charge of protection and restoration of its wooden and stone watermills. Two mills have already been restored—the stone Tarandekov Melin and the concrete Boscev Melin—while work continues on the wooden Babićev Melin in conjunction with extensive landslide rehabilitation.

According to local accounts, seven mills once lined the Dubravica stream in the western part of Medvednica. Today, only a small masonry mill remains—a 19th-century structure built as a cooperative venture by the Coljak family.

On the northern slopes of Medvednica, in Donja Stubica, the restored Majsecov Mlin has returned to life, once again grinding traditional varieties of maize.



Gračanski Ribnjak or Banićev Mill  
Miljenko Gregl, 2004 / MGZ



**Gospodarić Mill in Mlinovi**  
Marijan Szabo, 1963 / MGZ



**Watermill in Šestine**  
Foto Corso, 1943 / MGZ



**Watermill in Gornje Vrapče**  
Josip Kokalj, c. 1902 / MGZ



**Ročić Mill in Bidrovec**  
Radoslav Karleuša, 2009 / MGZ