6. **Excursion: Ston – Pelješac peninsula – Korčula Island (by bus and boat; lunch in restaurant)**

**Ston**

The Ston area was settled as early as the prehistoric times. The town area of the medieval Ston expanded over the southern slopes of St. Michael. A settlement on the top has existed since the prehistory. The St. Michael Church, located in the immediate vicinity of the present-day town, is one of the most valuable monuments from the Early Middle Ages. In Roman times Ston was named Turris Stagi. In 1333 it became part of the Dubrovnik Republic. From that time, until the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic in 1808, Ston was its integral part and the second largest town after Dubrovnik. The tame and picturesque Mediterranean landscape makes this small town and its environment even more beautiful. Tourists are especially attracted by gastronomic specialities of the region, primarily oysters, mussels and other seafood that makes the Malostonski Bay famous. In other words, Ston should be visited and enjoyed in every sense.

*Fig. 6.1 Ston – city walls and saltwort ([http://www.split-excursions.com/destinations/ston/](http://www.split-excursions.com/destinations/ston/))*
Korčula Island

Korčula Island is situated in the southern part of the Adriatic Sea in Dalmatia, Croatia. Korčula is one of the largest (sixth) and most developed islands (Starc et al. 1997). It has about 18,000 inhabitants in three larger settlements (Blato, Vela Luka and Korčula) and a few smaller ones. Every summer the number of people increases significantly because of tourism.

The western part of the island with the villages of Blato and Vela Luka has a water supply from the island’s karst aquifer in the area of the Blatsko karst polje. Groundwater is pumped from four pit wells, and the maximal pumping rate is about 60 l/s. These rates are always extracted in the summer seasons when the need for water is increased as a result of tourism and agricultural production, while the recharge in this half of the year is usually minimal or none. When hydrological conditions are extremely unfavourable, there is a significant salinity increase of the pumped water. The sea-water intrusion happens only when the pumping rates are close to maximal and a dry season (with precipitation much below average) has lasted for at least one hydrological year. The Blatsko polje is a typical karst polje with a few temporary springs, mostly in the southern and western side, and the estavell of Mali Studenac in the east. The surface of the polje is drained by a network of canals and is used for extensive agricultural production. All the canals end at the Mali Studenac estavell, and during high water levels when the estavell acts as a spring (or simply cannot absorb all of the water) it continues toward the tunnel that was dug in the year 1912 for drainage. Before that time, Blatsko polje had been flooded almost every year, and those conditions were very unfavourable for agricultural production. Also, while the valley was flooded, there occurred many diseases (even malaria). Controlled closing and opening of the tunnel entrance was considered an option for improving the hydrological conditions in the island’s karst underground during recent investigations. The purpose of that drainage control was to diminish or avoid sea-water intrusion into the karst aquifer by increasing the infiltration, but it was concluded that this is pointless, because the increase of salinity occurs only after long-lasting dry periods, and in such years surface flow does not occur at all, so there is no surface water to be retained before the tunnel entrance. In the seasons when surface flow occurs, the underground will usually be saturated enough not to allow any sea-water intrusions during the summer season.
Fig. 6.2. Agricultural production in the Blatsko polje (photo by T. Marković)

Fig. 6.3. Studenac well (photo by T. Marković)
Fig. 6.4 The town Blato (photo by O. Hasan)