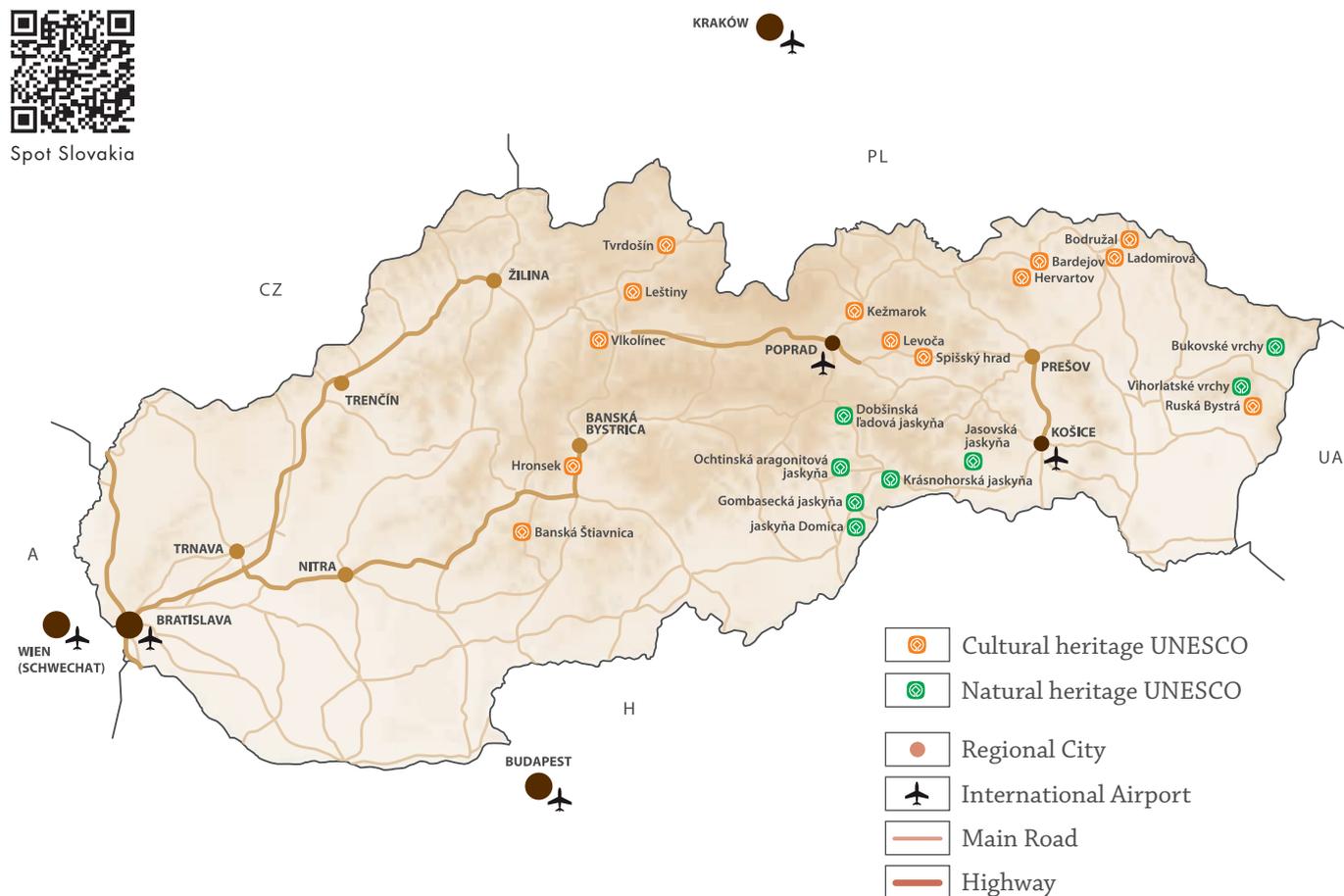




UNESCO Monuments

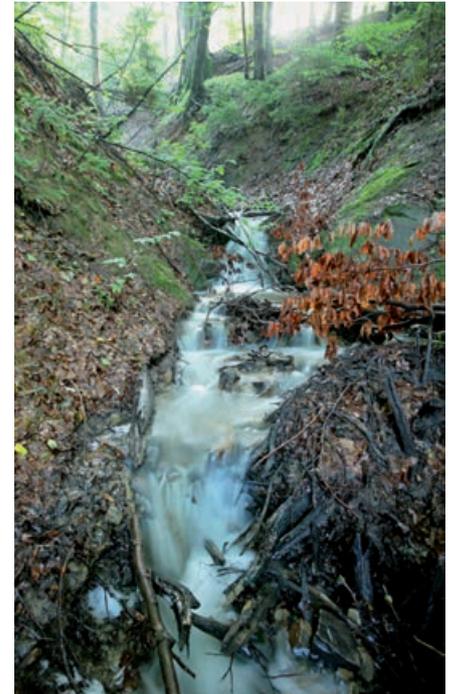


Spot Slovakia



Cultural and natural heritage sites inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List

VLKOŠÍN	Folk architecture heritage reservation
LEŠTINY	Evangelical articulated Church
TVRDOŠÍN	Roman Catholic All Saints church
HRONSEK	Evangelical articulated church
BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA	Historical town and technical monuments in the vicinity
KEŽMAROK	Evangelical articulated church of the Holy Trinity
LEVOČA	Historical town centre
SPIŠSKÝ HRAD	Spiš Castle and associated monuments: Spišské Podhradie – village centre, Spišská Kapitula with St. Martin's Cathedral, Žehra – Church of the Holy Spirit
HERVARTOV	Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis of Assisi
BARDEJOV	Historic town core
BODRUŽAL	Greek Catholic Church of St. Nicholas
LADOMIROVÁ	Greek Catholic Church of St. Michael Archangel
RUSKÁ BYSTRÁ	Greek Catholic Church of the relics of St. Nicholas
VIHORLATSKE VRCHY	Carpathian primeval beech forests (Vihorlatský prales)
BUKOVSKÉ VRCHY	Carpathian primeval beech forest (Stužica, Rožok and Havešová)
DOBŠINSKÁ ĽADOVÁ JASKYŇA	ice cave
OCHTINSKÁ ARAGONITOVÁ JASKYŇA	aragonite cave
GOMBASECKÁ JASKYŇA	karst cave
JASKYŇA DOMICA	karst cave
KRÁSNOHORSKÁ JASKYŇA	karst cave
JASOVSKÁ JASKYŇA	karst cave



Slovakia, rich in world heritage

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www.slovakia.travel



Banská Štiavnica

The silver town

The historic town of Banská Štiavnica can be found right in the centre of the volcano among the peaks of Štiavnické vrchy, and it is a magical and mystical place where humankind and nature have harmoniously merged over the centuries. It gives a special allure to Štiavnica and thanks to its intimate, almost family-like atmosphere, the town attracts visitors looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It is thanks to the unique charm of this scenic countryside that the town and surrounding technical monuments were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. Referred to as the Silver Town in the past,

Štiavnica was a kind of El Dorado that attracted gold and silver prospectors from Europe, the Turks and also marauding knights. For centuries the town was a treasury of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and one of the best known towns in Europe. The riches extracted from the ground here paid for grandiose palaces in Vienna and Budapest, for the flamboyant lifestyle of the emperor's court, boosted science, education and culture, and financed wars.

As the third largest town in the former Kingdom of Hungary, Štiavnica could also boast the highest level of education. The mines here were the first in the world to use

gunpowder to blast rock, and it was here that Queen Maria Theresa established the first technical university in the world. This also led to creation of the unique system of sixty interconnected manmade lakes called 'tajchy', where the power of water drawn out from the flooded mines served also to drive the equipment for processing the ore. The rich residents of Štiavnica would invite leading architects to the town to build them mini palaces dug into the steep slopes. The hills of Štiavnické vrchy are full of holes just like the Swiss cheese, and actually every house in the town centre has its own entrance to the underground. A truly mystical and powerful place.



Tips for trips

Manor House of St. Anton – erst-while residence of the Bulgarian tsar, housing a collection of furniture from all over the world, as well as a hunting exposition.

Sklené Teplice Spa – bath in thermal water in a natural cave.

Kremnica – ancient mining town that is also home to the oldest perpetually operating mint in the world.

Information Centre: Informačné centrum mesta Banská Štiavnica

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www.banskastiavnica.sk
www.banskastiavnica.org
N 48°27'34.79" E 18°53'34.04"

You can go down the mines directly from the town or at the nearby mine entrance, then search for minerals or listen to some old “mining” stories from the good old days. A clearly dominant structural feature of the town is the Štiavnická Kalvária, which is one of the most beautiful baroque buildings of its kind in Europe, lying on Ostrý vrch, at the very epicentre of the volcano.

Cultural life in Banská Štiavnica is also of an extremely high standard, with unique small film and music festivals, concerts and all kinds of interesting events for children. The scenic surrounding coun-

tryside, criss-crossed with marked hiking paths and bike trails offering stunning views, is just as enchanting as the town itself. The unique system of mining lakes called ‘tajchy’ now serves for recreational bathing and rowing, or skating in winter, while the gutters that were formerly used to channel rainwater down to the ponds are now used as hiking and biking trails. You should definitely take a walk in the surrounding countryside, which conceals countless romantic beauty spots. With every step you will come across the traces of the mining past here, which now has harmoniously blended in with the countryside.



Vlkolínec

Pulsing with tradition

Vlkolínec is a gorgeous village at the heart of the stunning countryside of the Liptov region, where visitors can sample a unique atmosphere until their heart's content, full of strong traditions and unrivalled history. The village is the best preserved example of the heritage reservation of folk architecture in Slovakia. Thanks to its unique original wooden buildings, it was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993.

This distinctive foothills village, shielded by the rocky cliffs of Sidorovo peak, can be found below the ridges of the Veľká Fatra National Park, roughly three kilo-

metres from the town of Ružomberok. Legends say that the name Vlkolínec is taken from the presence of wolves in this area, as the Slovak word 'vlk' means wolf. Other sources cite the village being named after the ditches that were discovered here, called 'vlčia jama'. These were dugout camouflaged holes in the ground with stakes at the bottom, being used in the past mostly to catch wild game or as a form of defence against unwanted visitors. The residents of this exceptionally scenic village would live off the land, with agriculture, sheep farming and woodcutting. They would apply their woodcutting skills also in the construction of

their homes, many of which have been preserved in their original state to the present day. This small village appears to have resisted the passage of time and change, as can be seen from more than 40 preserved idyllic wooden homes here – charming log houses on stone foundations with clay covered walls and shingle roofs.

Vlkolínec has some pretty distinctive monuments like the two-storey wooden belfry from 1770 on rock foundations, the rare wooden log well from 1860 or the Baroque classicism Roman Catholic Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary. The enchanting atmosphere is com-



Tips for trips

Havránok open-air archaeology museum with exposition of a Celtic settlement on the banks of Liptovská Mara – the largest water dam reservoir in Slovakia, and a prime location for all kinds of water sports.

Malinô Brdo – tourist resort with various attractions all year round (skiing, bike park, rope park, and so on).

Thermal swimming baths in Bešeňová and the aqua park in Liptovský Mikuláš – fun and relaxation in warm water all year round.

Information Centre: Informačné centrum Ružomberok

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034 01 Ružomberok
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N 49°02'15.97" E 19°16'34.97"

plemented by the small brook running over wooden gutters through the heart of the village. Here you can find also a typical farmer's log house, which is a part of the exposition of the Liptov Museum, where visitors can find out about the traditional way of life and dwelling of a farming family in the territory of Dolný Liptov.

At present, around twenty people live in this unique village, respecting and reviving the traditions of their ancestors. Throughout the year various interesting

cultural and social events are held here, giving visitors a closer insight into the traditional way of life, human creativity, folklore and customs of the local people.

Despite its appearance, the quaint village of Vlkolínec is no museum, because thanks to the persevering resistance to modern times, it is a lively and distinctive village with a charming atmosphere, offering visitors an interesting experience with a taste of authentic history and unique traditions.



Levoča, Spišský hrad and nearby monuments

Jewels of the Spiš region

At the very heart of the stunning Spiš region, which is one of the most visited tourist areas in East Slovakia, we come across a territory of world significance. You can enjoy an astonishing view of the surrounding countryside from the dominant feature of this scenic region – Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle), sitting aloft

a massive limestone hill. History lovers and budding walkers can combine a walk at the castle with a visit to any of the many interesting nearby attractions, which were together with the castle included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. The uniqueness of this complex of exceptional monuments in

the Spiš region was boosted by the inclusion of the historical centre of the region's most important town Levoča to the UNESCO List, together with the work of Late Gothic woodcarver Master Pavol in 2009. There really is a lot to see in this region, which boasts the wealth of cultural heritage.





Levoča

The medieval royal town of Levoča, lying in the east of the Spiš region below the hills of Levočské vrchy, is one of the most precious cultural-historical treasures in Slovakia thanks to its rich past. The many rare architectonic monuments that embody the town's celebrated history are protected by the castle fortifications, preserved through time to the present day.

A stroll through the large rectangular square, which in addition to the stately town houses is also home to one of the most important sacral buildings in Slovakia – the Church of St. Jacob, is certain to produce a truly aesthetic experience. The church interior, resembling a unique

collection of sacral art, is adorned with a wooden Gothic altar from the hand of Master Pavol from Levoča, which at the height of 18.62 m is the highest altar of its kind in the world.

The museum situated in the former Levoča Town Hall building, classed as one of the leading examples of secular Renaissance architecture in Slovakia, is also very popular with visitors. Spiš Museum provides an impressive insight into the town's history, but it also boasts several other interesting expositions, the most visited of which include Spiš Castle and the exposition of Master Pavol from Levoča.

Every year at the beginning of July, Levoča is the destination for the largest

pilgrimage gathering in Slovakia. Tens of thousands of believers make their way up the steep inclines of the hill Mariánska hora, which looms above the town, to share divine worship in the neo-Gothic Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary.

Information Centre: Informačná kancelária mesta Levoča

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054 01 Levoča
Tel.: +421 53 16 188, 53 451 37 63
ikle@levoca.sk
www.levoca.sk
N 49°01'31.60" E 20°35'19.33"



Spiš Castle and surrounding monuments

Without doubt, the dominant historical features of the Spiš region comprise the complex of Spiš Castle, Spišská Kapitula, Spišské Podhradie and the Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra. The preserved condition and uniqueness of this rare grouping of monuments complemented by the surrounding natural travertine band of the Dreveník nature reservation, creates a special place that promises visitors a memorable experience.

Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle)

Covering an area of over four hectares and regarded by many as the national symbol of Slovakia, Spiš Castle represents one of the largest castle ruin complexes in Central Europe.

This national cultural monument standing on top of a travertine hill at 634 m above sea level was built in the 12th century. Since it was constructed, the natural strategic position on Spiš Castle hill predestined the castle to play a predominantly defensive role. Later on, this important border fortification became the centre of royal power in the Spiš region, welcoming a whole array of distinguished dignitaries. The castle enjoyed its greatest boom in the 15th century, when it took on the appearance of a representative residence of the nobility. Thanks to the massive fortress walls, high cliffs and various other defensive elements placed around its periphery, this gallant and uncompromising guard of the Spiš region was never conquered in battle. It took a raging fire in 1780 to reduce this ostentatious castle to ruins.

Thanks to its rich history, excellent position and sheer size, Spiš Castle has not only become the dominant feature of the whole Spiš region and a much sought tourist attraction, but also the object of interest of many filmmakers, photographers and painters.

In the reconstructed premises of the castle complex we can find exhibitions of the Spiš Museum, where visitors can learn interesting facts and see evidence of the castle's rich history, medieval weapons, take a look inside a medieval kitchen, castle bedroom or the dreaded torture chamber. Each year in the summer, Spiš Castle is home to an array of impressive and interesting cultural events in the original period style atmosphere. The displays of historic fighting arts and



falconry always prove highly popular with tourists.

A bird's eye view of this majestic fortification truly is a unique experience. Below Spiš Castle visitors can also admire one of the largest creative works of sculpture in the world. The exceptional geoglyph of an Australian sculpture represents a stylised stone image of a horse from a Celtic coin found during archaeological digs at Spiš Castle.

Spišské Podhradie

Below the majestic Spiš Castle, not far from Spišská Kapitula, at 430 m above sea level, we can find the small provincial town of Spišské Podhradie, known in the past as a hot spot of trade and crafts.

To the present day visitors can still admire the Gothic and Renaissance burgher houses with typical archways and huge gates, which line the streets and squares of Spišské Podhradie, as well as many impressive sacral buildings. The Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary is of interest with its rare Gothic winged altar of St. Barbora. The town also houses a Renaissance Town Hall, a Church of the merciful brothers converted in Baroque style, or the Baroque column Mariánsky stĺp.

The pilgrimage chapel that stands at the top of the low travertine hill near Spišské Podhradie is a natural reservation that offers a captivating view of the Kapitula cathedral and Spiš Castle.

Tips for trips

Sivá Brada – Dreveník learning trail – following the footsteps of history and natural phenomena of the Spiš region.

Slovenský raj National Park – hiking options in the surrounding stunning countryside with many wooden and iron ladders, ravines, waterfalls, or you can take a visit to the fascinating Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa – Ice Cave.

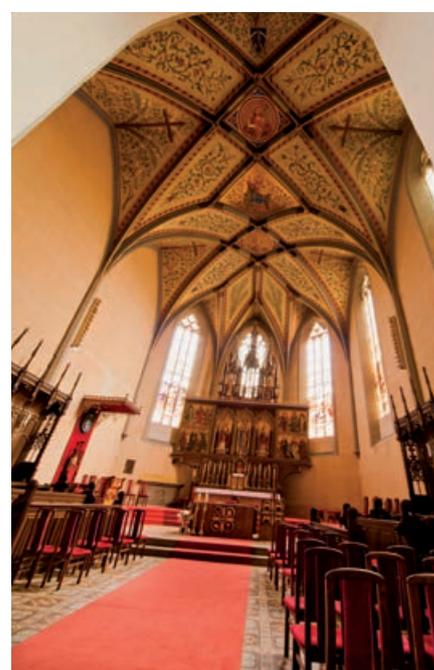
Betliar Mansion – fairytale two-storey representative hunting residence, set in the landscape of a beautiful English park with romantic buildings, artificial cave and waterfall.



Spišská Kapitula

West of Spišské Podhradie we can find an interesting municipal heritage reservation in the shape of Spišská Kapitula. This former clerical town, referred to also as the Slovak “Vatican”, was established at the crossroads of key routes below Spiš Castle. Today it is the revived headquarters of the Spiš diocese.

A rare Gothic treasure of Spišská Kapitula is St. Martin’s Cathedral. The original Romanesque building once served as a royal representative temple and only took on its current noble appearance after many reconstructions, and so now complements this region rich in cultural and historical treasures.





**Information Centre:
Turistické informačné centrum
Spišská Nová Ves**

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tic@spisskanovaves.eu
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Levoča:
N 49°01'31.60" E 20°35'19.33"
Spišský hrad:
N 49°00'01.47" E 20°46'05.81"
Spišské Podhradie:
N 48°59'59.85" E 20°45'06.05"
Spišská Kapitula:
N 48°59'56.20" E 20°45'11.00"
Žehra:
N 48°58'43.46" E 20°47'34.04"
Dreveník:
N 48°58'55.66" E 20°46'28.03"

Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra

The complex of world cultural heritage in the Spiš region is complemented also by the RC Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra, which serves primarily for holy mass, but its unique interiors also draw in many an admiring tourist. The artistically created and unique wall murals dating from various centuries depict different biblical scenes. The typical bulbous roof of this national cultural monument is clearly visible also from Spiš Castle.

The village of Žehra is overlooked by one of the largest and oldest travertine formations in Slovakia, making up the natural reservation Dreveník. The rich archaeological findings here and the presence of rare species of plants, definitely make Dreveník one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the Spiš region. The ascent to the top of the hill offers amazing panoramas of the Branisko mountain massif and the hills of Levočské vrchy, which create the perfect natural backdrop to Spiš Castle.



Bardejov

The Gothic pearl of Šariš region

Only few places in Slovakia can boast such a rich array of rare monuments as the town of Bardejov. In 1986 it was the first place in Slovakia awarded the prestigious European Prize – Gold Medal by the ICOMOS International Foundation Board of Trustees at UNESCO. Then in 2000 the town with over 770 years of history was entered in the UNESCO World Heritage List, thereby ranking the unique historical core of Bardejov and the complex of distinct buildings of the Jewish community among the valued treasures of world culture.

The existence of the town of Bardejov,

which is rightfully proud of its medieval monuments was first chronicled back in 1241. At that time, Bardejov was at the junction of key trade routes and so was granted various special rights and privileges. The most important of these was granted in 1376 when Bardejov became a free royal town.

Nowadays, Slovakia's most Gothic town gives visitors the chance to admire one of the best preserved examples of town fortifications, classed by their importance to the European Cultural Heritage fund. Without doubt, the dominant feature of the magical rectangular square,



surrounded by original stately burgher houses with typical gable roofs, is the impressive Gothic Basilica minor of St. Egidius from the 14th century. The interior of the church enchants visitors by the unique set of eleven late Gothic winged altars, some of which are regarded as top examples of European woodcarving. Another unique building on the square is the centrally positioned Gothic-Renaissance Town Hall building with interesting historic exposition of Šariš Museum.

Not far from the town centre you can find what is now a curious novelty of



East Slovakia – the only partly preserved set of former Jewish baths and synagogue, the remains of a suburban centre from the end of the 18th century, built in a planned way and according to the Talmud regulations.

An inherent and inseparable part of the town of Bardejov is the famous Bardejov Spa, which is one of the most beautiful and popular spa destinations in Slovakia. This oasis of health and relaxation has played host to many historical figures, like Marie Louise of Austria, second wife of Emperor Napoleon, Russian Tsar Alexander I, or Empress Elisabeth, wife of Franz Joseph I, known fondly as Sissi.

Bardejov offers its visitors a rich programme of cultural and social events throughout the year. The better known events organised by the town include the Knight Roland Games, the J. Grešák Organ Days – international festival of organ music, and last but not least, the traditional annual market fete in the last week in August, which has a history dating back to the 14th century.



Tips for trips

Wooden churches – a number of architectonic unique wooden churches, some of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Ľubovňa Castle – a castle with a rich history, interesting architecture and attractive programme all summer long.

Levoča, Spiš Castle and surrounding monuments – world architectonic treasures included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Information Centre: Turisticko-informačná kancelária Bardejov

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N 49°17'30.62" E 21°16'35.26"



Wooden churches

Unique sacral treasures

There are over 40 unique wooden sacral buildings scattered throughout Slovakia, with the eight rarest of them being included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. The wooden Roman Catholic churches in Hervartov and Tvrdošín, the articulated Evangelical churches in Kežmarok, Leštiny and Hronsek, and shrines of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Bodružal, Ladomirova and Ruská Bystrá, are among the greatest and most interesting sacral gems that Slovakia has to offer its visitors in the Slovak part of the Carpathian arc.

Many wooden churches still being used today for religious ceremonies were built solely from wood, with not a single metal nail used in their construction. The stunning interiors and the internal decoration of the chapels are also made of wood, underlining further the uniqueness of these rare buildings.

The pride of Orava town of **Tvrdošín** is its oldest preserved monument, the Gothic wooden **All Saints Church** with its rare Baroque altar and stunning arch murals.

The striking Orava region conceals a unique treasure in the shape of the





wooden articulated **church in Leštiny**. The church interior is richly adorned, being dominated by flowery wall mu-

rals, a richly decorated pulpit and a rare Baroque altar with fine wood-carving.

Tips for trips

Orava Castle – one of the most visited castles in Slovakia; raft tours along the River Orava.

Podbiel – folk architecture reservation.

Zuberec – Orava Village Museum with typical architecture of the Orava region.

Information Centre: Turistická informačná kancelária Dolný Kubín

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026 01 Dolný Kubín
Tel.: +421 43 581 44 70
Mob.: +421 915 049 407
tik@orava.sk
www.dolnykubin.sk (only in Slovak)

Tvrdošín:
N 49°20'11.64" E 19°33'29.31"
Leštiny:
N 49°11'18.92" E 19°20'58.85"





The surroundings of the historical former mining town of Banská Bystrica offer visitors a special treat not far from the village of **Hronsek**. A unique feature of the local **wooden articulated church** from 1726 is its framework construction. The interior is adorned with a colourful altar with six exchangeable pictures, the choir benches arranged like an amphitheatre, and it boasts excellent acoustics.

In a perfect setting below the spectacular peaks of the High Tatra mountains (Vysoké Tatry), the historic town of **Kežmarok** is home to a Baroque wooden **Church of the Holy Trinity**, which was built in the shape of an equal-armed Greek cross. One of the most impressive and striking wooden churches, it also conceals fascinating wood carvings, unique frescos, a stunning large wooden altar and a rare church organ with wooden pipes.

Tips for trips

Zvolen Castle – the dominant feature of the town of Zvolen housing collections of the Slovak National Gallery.

Banská Bystrica – historic town with many attractions and events.

Tatranská magistrála – a hiking route along the southern slopes of Vysoké Tatry Mountains (High Tatras).

Information Centre: Informačné centrum Banská Bystrica

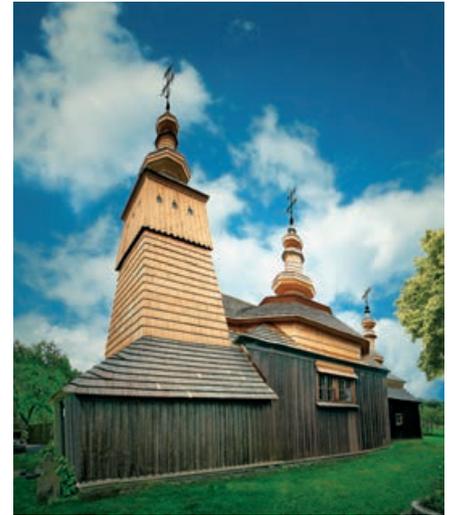
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Hronsek:
N 48°38'56.72" E 19°09'18.56"
Kežmarok:
N 49°07'59.17" E 20°25'42.65"



The picturesque Šariš village **Hervartov** is home to the oldest and best preserved wooden churches from the 15th century, **the Church of Francis of Assisi**, where visitors can admire the beautiful pure Gothic icons and wall murals.

The territory of East Slovakia can boast several unique wooden churches, but the **Church of St Nicholas in Bodružal** is one of the oldest and best preserved temples of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Slovakia. This impressive three-section log structure contains a unique iconostasis, which is painted from both sides.

One of the most beautiful wooden churches of the Orthodox Church in Slovakia, the Greek Catholic **Church of Archanĝel Michael**, can be found near the town of Svidník, in the charming village of **Ladomirová**. A look at the interior of the church offers a rare artistic iconostasis and altar from the 18th century.

Right next to the border with Ukraine in the charming village of **Ruská Bystrá**, a log Greek Catholic wooden **Church of the relics of St. Nicholas** was built in 1730, which differs from the other temples of the Orthodox Church architectonically. The interior is decorated with a rare and unique icon of the Crucifixion.

Tips for trips

Bardejov – Gothic town (UNESCO) with spas and open-air exposition of folk architecture.

Medzilaborce – Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art.

Humenné – Exposition of folk architecture, cultural monuments.

Information Centre: Turisticko-informačná kancelária Bardejov

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Hervartov:
N 49°14'47.64" E 21°12'14.68"
Bodružal:
N 49°21'09.05" E 21°42'28.81"
Ladomirová:
N 49°19'42.04" E 21°37'34.80"
Ruská Bystrá:
N 48°51'24.18" E 22°17'48.35"

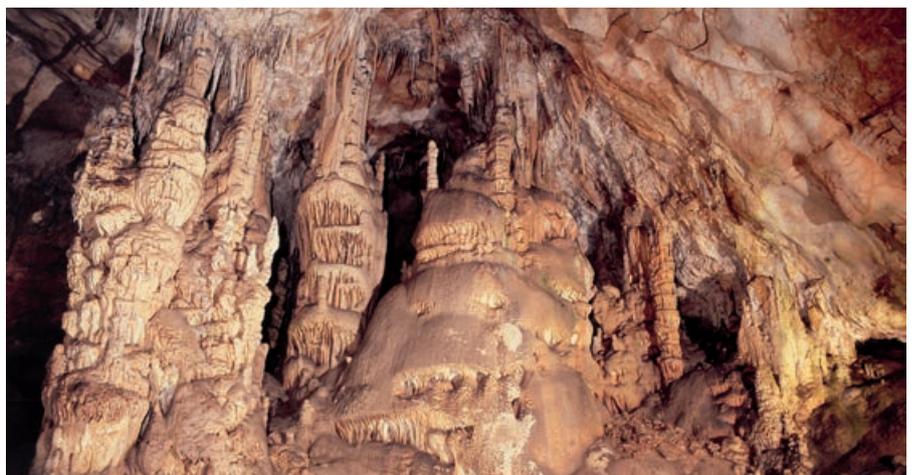


Caves

Slovakia's underground treasure

Slovakia offers its visitors the opportunity to see the beauty of unique works of art created by the most talented master of all – nature. Stunning exhibition chambers adorned with mysterious and breathtaking decorative gems, to be found at the very spot they were created over thousands of years, under the surface of this picturesque landscape.

Only a few places in the world have such an exceptional number of diverse karst formations as Slovakia. There are over 6,200 known caves here, of which 18 are publicly accessible. The best known and rarest of the caves are included in





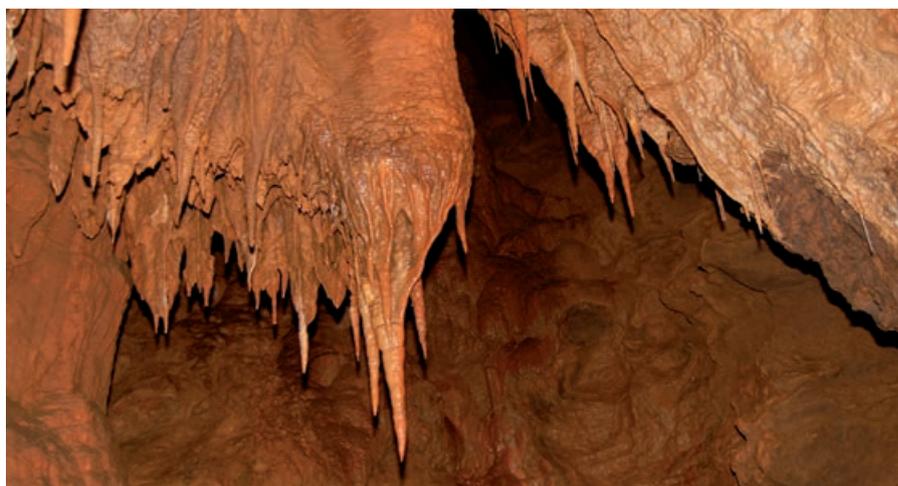
the UNESCO World Heritage List. They include the caves of the Slovenský kras (Slovak Karst) and Aggtelek kras (Aggtelek Karst) ranges, which were classed among the world natural rarities back in 1995. In 2000, Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (ice cave) also received the privilege.

There are just three accessible aragonite caves in the world, and alongside Mexico and Argentina, Slovakia also boasts one of its own. **Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa** (aragonite cave) has an exceptional aesthetic value and is the only cave of its kind in Europe. We find it underground below the hills of Revúcka vrchovina on the northern flank of Hrádok hill, about 26 km from the town of Rožňava. The cave represents a unique natural phenomenon, which is exceptional by the variety, richness and beauty of the aragonite creations. Its underground chambers, accessible over a length of roughly 300 m, are adorned with aragonite crystals with the formations reminiscent in some places of fragile corals and elegant sea flowers floating on the arches of the cave. The oldest part of the aragonite spectacle is

estimated to be an unbelievable 138,000 years old. The astonishing beauty formed through millennia now presents visitors with a fairytale experience.

Domica cave is the largest known cave of the Slovak Karst, which is one of the most extensive karst territories in Central Europe. The cave can be found at the Slovak-Hungarian border about 25

km from the town of Rožňava. Its inner chambers, carved out by the waters of the river Styx and Domica stream were discovered by people already 35,000 years ago. In addition to the beautiful rich sinter decor, surrounding peaks, mounds and attractive waterfalls, visitors can also enjoy an exciting trip down the river Styx provided the water level is high enough.







Gombasecká jaskyňa cave can be found at the foot of the plain Silická planina, approximately 10 km from the town of Rožňava. It has two floors, which were created by the action of the stream Čierny potok. The underground temple 1 525 m in length excels with the unusual sinter decor in the shape of unique thin tubular stalactite formations. In some places they are up to three metres long and thanks to their sheer number give the impression that it is raining rock.

Jasovská jaskyňa cave is to be found on the outskirts of the village of Jasov in the hills of Medzevská pahorkatina, in the western part of the Košice basin. Parlours, domes, rock waterfalls and corridors with rich sinter decorations in white, greyish brown and brownish red colours were created here by the Bodva stream. Thanks to 90-98% humidity in the cave, it is used for therapeutic speleo-climatic stays.

Krásnohorská jaskyňa cave is located on the northern edge of the plain Silická planina and is accessible only when accompanied by a speleologist. Its distinctive unique feature, a monumental column – so-called Dripstone of Rožňava Cavers (Kvapeľ rožňavských jaskyniarov), is 32.6 m in height and 12 m in diameter at the base, making it one of the largest sinter forma-

tions in the world, while also being the largest in the moderate climate band.

Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (ice cave) is one of the most significant caves in the world thanks to its icy nature. Its uniqueness is further boosted as it is the lowest positioned of all world renowned ice caves. It lies at an altitude of just 920 m above sea level, roughly 20 km from the village of Dobšiná in the Spišsko-Gemerský kras (Spiš-Gemer karst) in the territory of the National Park of Slovenský raj. The amazing icy decor, made up of more than 110,000 cubic metres of ice, is up to 25 m thick in some places, and occupies an amazing 10,000 square metres. The main part of the cave represents a huge hollow dropping down from the cold north opening down to a depth of 70 m. This huge subterranean glacier gives visitors the chance to admire the floor ice, gorgeous ice columns, magical icefalls and stalagmites. The air temperature in the lower parts of the cave remains below freezing point all year round.

These are the unique caves of Slovakia – stunning natural beauties, places shrouded in unforgiving darkness, where beams of light let visitors discover mysterious subterranean beauties and the unique artistic creations of nature.

Tips for trips

City of Košice (EHMK 2013) – with Gothic St. Elizabeth Cathedral in the distinctive historical square, home to many cultural monuments and events.

Štós Spa – climatic spa in the lap of scenic countryside.

Slovenský kras National Park – hiking and cycling along some unusual creations of the karst mountains with panoramic views of the surroundings.

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The beech wildwoods of the Carpathians

The enchantment of virgin nature

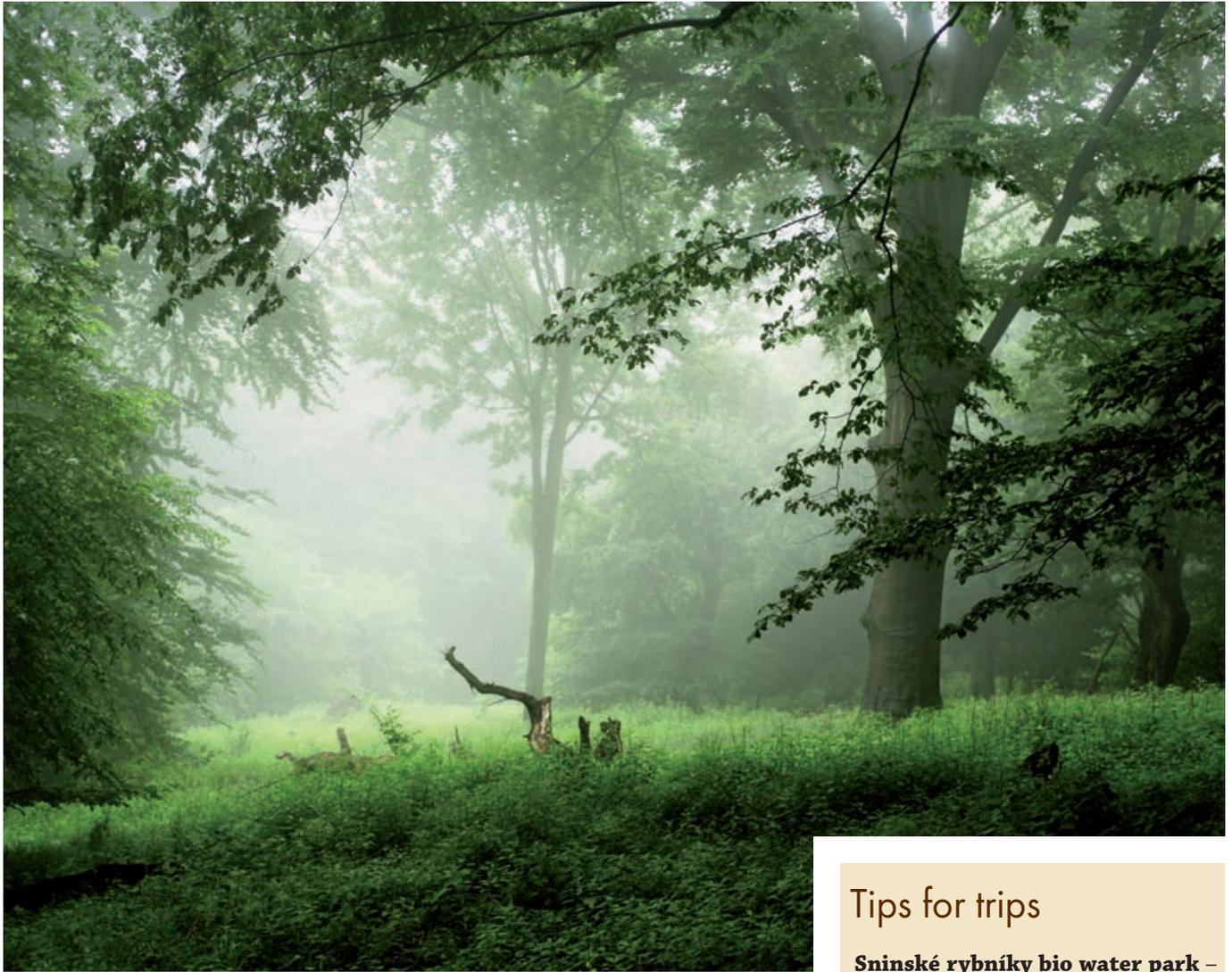
Undisrupted peace, the healing of silence, picturesque romantic spots and the diversity of beauties produced by virgin nature with a unique and enchanting atmosphere, can all be found in the beautiful environment of the **Carpathian beech wildwoods**, lying in East Slovakia.

Protected localities of the preserved beech forests in **Stužica**, **Rožok** and **Havešová** are located in Slovakia's youngest national park, Poloniny, which spreads out over the beech-covered peaks of Bukovské vrchy. The wildwood **Vihorlatský prales** lies in

the most forested protected area in Slovakia called Vihorlat, in the hills of Vihorlatské vrchy. All four unique territories with rare and untouched nature were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007, alongside some top natural features like the world-renowned Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Canyon in USA, the Galapagos in Ecuador, the Sagarmatha in Nepal – Himalayas or Kilimanjaro in Africa.

The Carpathian beech wildwoods represent distinctively original forests that were not touched by the civilisa-

tion and uncompromising hand of humankind. Here you can experience an unforgettable, and now also unique, atmosphere of the natural environment of a true forest bursting with life and mystical treasures of nature. They are a prime example of how the forests looked thousands of years ago. The dominant species here is beech, which grows up to 40 m in height and lives impressive 250 years. For centuries these muted witnesses of times long past have provided protection for the homes of its residents and a sanctuary for the many rare fauna and flora here, now often threatened or even extinct.



Tips for trips

Sninské rybníky bio water park – natural spa resort using the technology of self-cleaning of water with the help of plants and seaweeds.

Astronomical observatory on the mound Kolonické sedlo with the largest telescope in Slovakia.

Wooden churches in the villages Ruský Potok, Uličské Krivé, Topoľa and Kalná Ráztoka – Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches with unique wooden architecture.

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The high peaks, stunning deep valleys and typical small basins create a safe and undisturbed haven also for such rare animals as the brown bear, the grey wolf or Eurasian lynx, or even the European bison and Eurasian elk.

The beauty of the unusually scenic countryside here can only be enjoyed from the marked hiking paths and learning

trails or accompanied by an expert tourist guide with a special licence.

One of the main entryways to these impressive ancient wildwoods is the most eastern village in Slovakia – Nová Sedlica, the starting point of a hiking trail that leads through the state nature reserve Stučica. This is an ancient forest of the Carpathians with countless gigantic beech trees, fir trees and maples. The silver fir, typified for its lifespan of up to 500 years, is rightfully referred to as the queen of this forest. The oldest piece of silver fir here, standing almost 50 m high, is more than 300 years old and has a base diameter of 5 m.

For those who love nature and admire its perfect harmony, who know how to revel in the sounds, smells and rich colours of the forest, who want to fill themselves with pure clean air, relax in an exceptionally calm environment surrounded by therapeutic silence, and those who like to discover unknown nooks and crannies, the Carpathian beech wildwoods are the perfect place to be.





Fujara and its music

A treasure concealed in the wood

We could not talk about Slovak history and its rich folk culture without mentioning the typical wooden wind instrument called 'Fujara', which together with its wistful melodic music was included by UNESCO in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

The birthplace of this king among traditional folk instruments is accredited to the regions of Central Slovakia. It is said that Fujara was originally intended just for sending out signals, but the impressive sombre tones led the instrument to be used more widely as a musical instrument. Shepherds would send tones out over the valleys with this extremely long 3-hole flute while grazing their sheep, but also at all kinds of special celebrations or sadder occasions. The original motives of Fujara tunes were based on everyday life, with tunes on topics like shepherding, love and outlaws still known today.

This imposing musical instrument is produced mostly from elderberry wood, which has soft pith, is easily worked and has excellent acoustic properties. In ad-



dition to the fantastic distinct sound, the Fujara has a huge artistic value, because apart from being complicated to produce, it also requires a lot of skill and creativity. The traditional decorative motifs, most often inspired by nature, are burned out using acid.

You can witness the enchanting melancholic tones exuding from Fujara at any of the many folk festivals that are held regularly around the country from spring to autumn.

Tips for trips

Celoslovenská prehliadka fujerášov (National Fujara Festival) – folklore event held in July in the village of Korytárky devoted to the Fujara and its music.

National meeting of Fujara players in Čičmany – folklore event held in September in the picturesque distinctive village of Čičmany, surrounded by the uniquely painted log houses.

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Issued: 3/2013

Autor: Slovenská agentúra pre cestovný ruch

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Images: archív SACR L. Struhár, R. Buga, A. Vojček, M. Sabo, D. Bugár, M. Nikolaj, J. Lacika, M. Črep, A. Jiroušek, B. Schreiber

Design and Print:

Slovenská Grafia, a.s., Bratislava

Project Coordinator:

Cortes, Smith & Co. Slovakia, s.r.o., Bratislava



This material was co-financed by the European Communities via the Operational Programme – Competitiveness and Economic Growth.



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