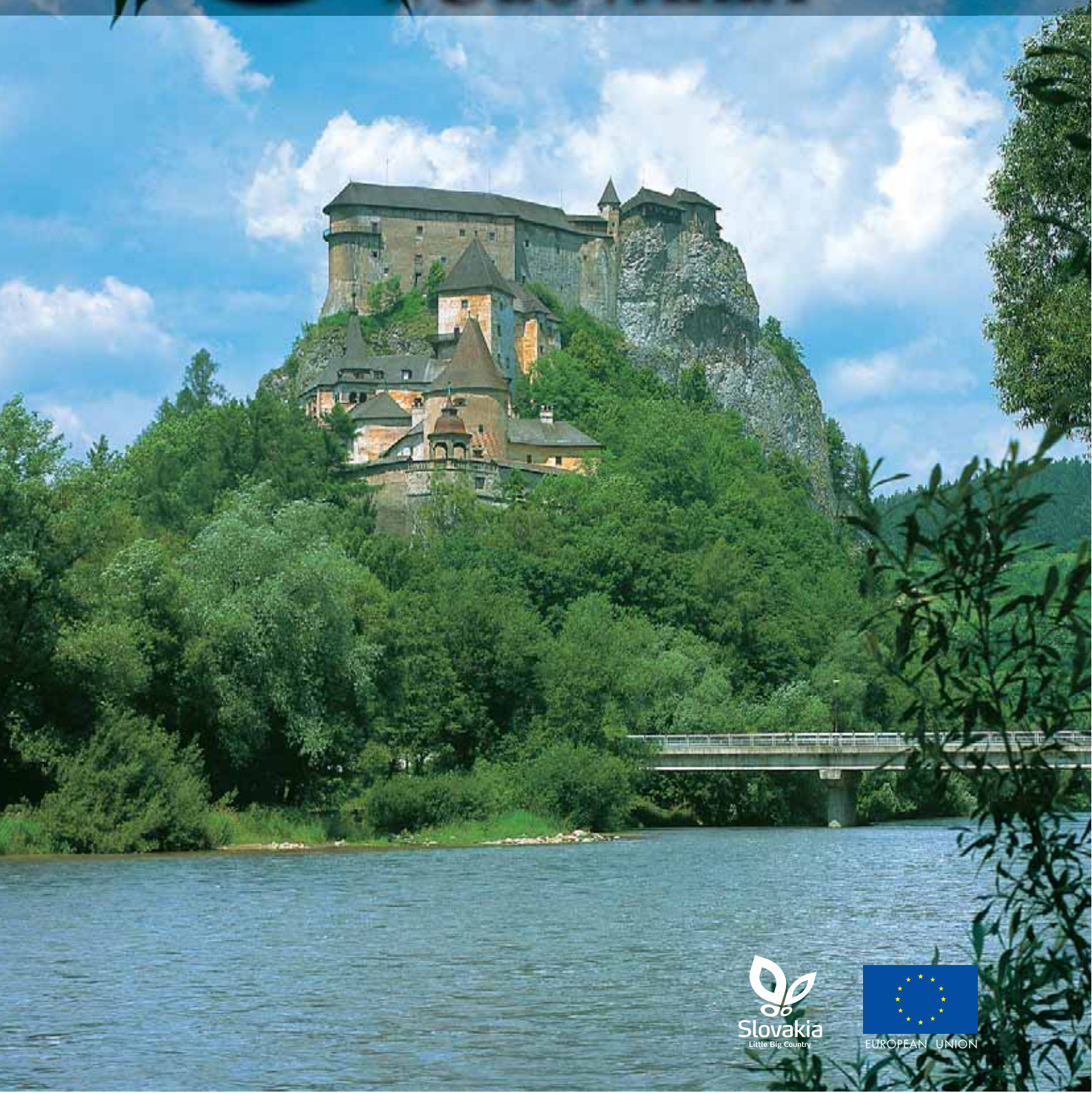
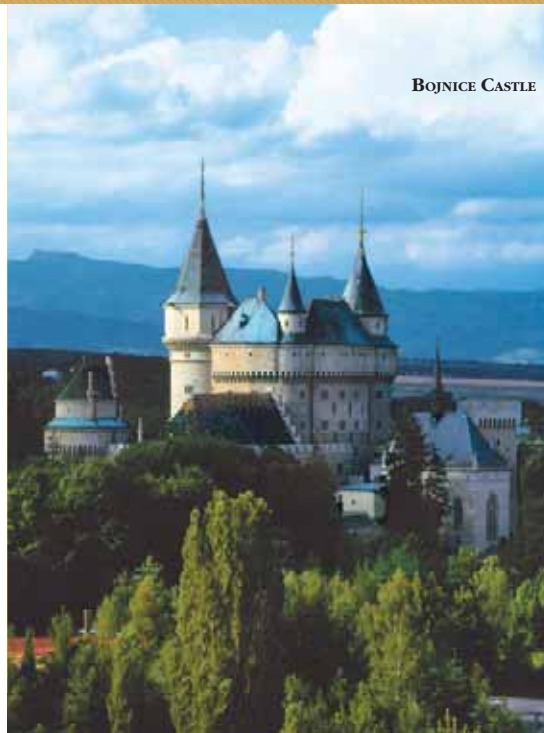


C ASTLES, MANORS AND MANSIONS IN SLOVAKIA





BRATISLAVA CASTLE



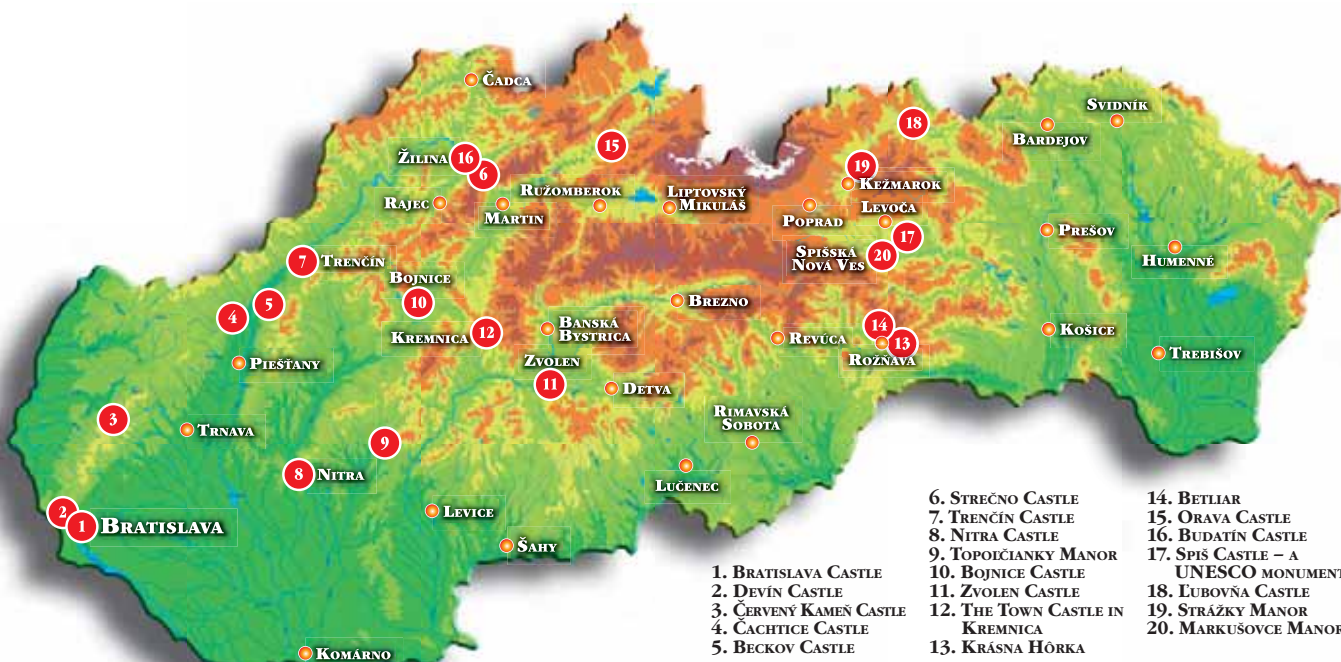
BOJNICE CASTLE

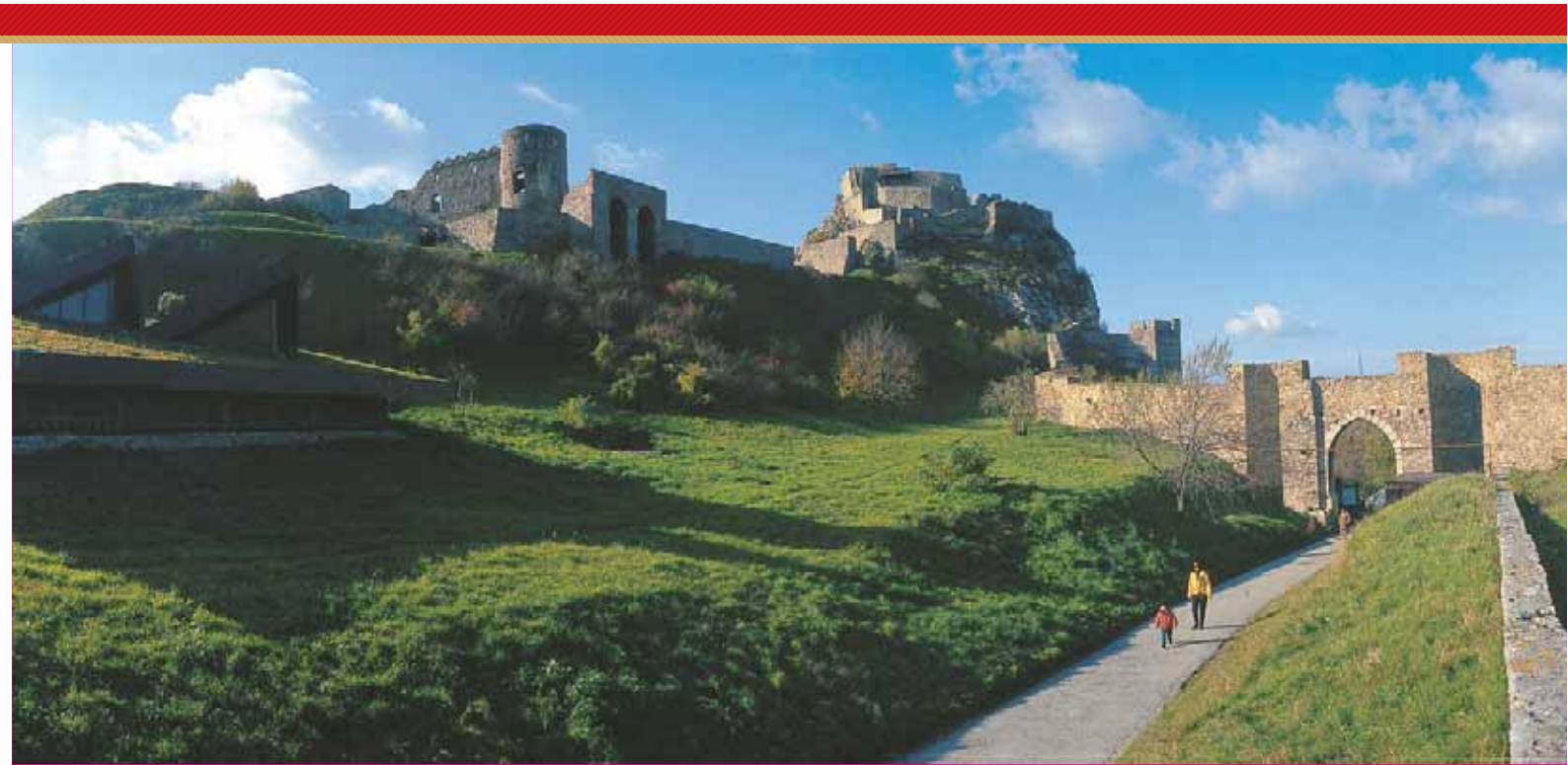


BETLIAR

SLOVAKIA, A COUNTRY OF CULTURAL TREASURES

EVERY NATION TREASURES ITS ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS, FOR THEY BEAR WITNESS TO ITS HISTORY. THEY BECOME SYMBOLS EVOKING LOVE FOR THE COUNTRY OF ONE'S BIRTH. LITTLE SLOVAKIA HAS A GREATER WEALTH OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS THAN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES. IN PARTICULAR WHEN IT COMES TO THE CASTLES, MANORS AND MANSIONS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE REPUBLIC. IN THE PAST THERE WERE ALMOST 200 MEDIEVAL CASTLES, LARGE AND SMALL, STANDING IN STRATEGIC SPOTS. TOWN CASTLES FORM A GROUP OF THEIR OWN, HAVING BEEN BUILT MAINLY TO DEFEND THE RICH MINING TOWNS IN CENTRAL SLOVAKIA. THEY ENCOMPASSED THE MUNICIPAL PARISH CHURCH, THE TOWN HALL AND THE RESIDENCE OF THE MINING CHAMBER COUNT. IN THE LAST THIRD OF THE 16TH CENTURY A NEW KIND OF ARISTOCRATIC RESIDENCE PREVAILED IN THE FORM OF RENAISSANCE MANORS AND MANSIONS. THE NOBILITY BUILT MORE COMFORTABLE HOMES FOR ITSELF, SURROUNDED BY LARGE GREEN PARKS. THE MANOR HOUSES WERE RECONSTRUCTED FROM LITTLE OLD CASTLES, OR BECAME NEW CENTRES OF AGRICULTURAL ESTATES. MANY OF THEM UNDERWENT REPEATED ALTERATIONS. THE BEST PRESERVED ARE THOSE BUILT IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY WITH A MIXTURE OF THE TYPICAL FEATURES OF VARIOUS ARCHITECTURAL STYLES REVIVED FROM THE PAST.





DEVÍN CASTLE

Devín Castle (*Devínsky hrad*) is an impressive landmark on top of an almost vertical limestone cliff overlooking the confluence of the Morava and Danube rivers. It is one of **the oldest castles** for which we have historical evidence and it is the symbol both of the cultural ties between Slavic peoples and of the Slovak national revival. The stronghold of Dowina is mentioned as early as 864 AD. In the period of Great Moravia Devín hill fort was an important stronghold against the expansion of the Frankish Empire and in the 13th century it acted as a strategic bastion for the Hungarian kingdom. It was extended to its present size in the 15th century. In the course of its history it was owned by a number of different noble families, but the neglected castle was already falling into ruins when Napoleon's army destroyed it in 1809. The part of the ruin that has been conserved now houses an exhibition of the **Municipal Museum** in Bratislava.



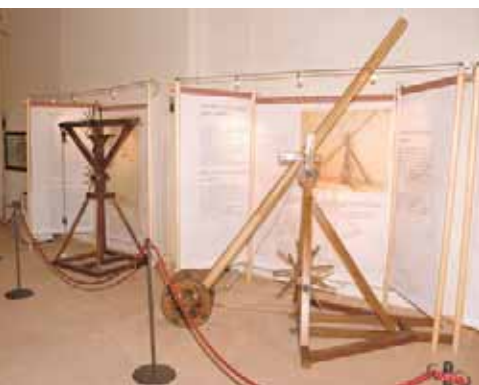
www.muzeumbratislava.sk



BRATISLAVA CASTLE

Bratislava Castle (*Bratislavský hrad*) is a well-known **symbol of the capital of Slovakia**. It was built on a strategically significant site near an important ford over the River Danube. The castle is mentioned in 907 in the Salzburg annals, but traces of settlements from as early as the Late Stone Age have been found on the castle hill. Evidence of the Great Moravian period is to be found in the remains of a magnate's palace and a large 9th century basilica with three naves. The year 1427 was of particular significance for the present appearance of the castle, being the year when King Sigismund of Luxembourg built an extensive two-storey Late Gothic palace fortified with bulwarks and moats filled with water. The castle received its present rectangular ground plan with a central courtyard in the Renaissance and Early Baroque periods. Following the Battle of Mohács (1526) it served as the coronation seat of the Hungarian kings for the next 200 years. It underwent its last extensive reconstruction in 1750-60, when it became the official residence of the Austrian imperial court. Another palace, the Theresianum, was added, containing precious art collections, a library and picture gallery which later formed the core of the now famous Vienna Albertina Art Collection. The castle was surrounded by two ornamental "French" gardens, terraces and summer and winter riding schools. In 1811 Bratislava Castle was burned down and it was not reconstructed until 140 years later.

Nowadays the palace contains **the official rooms** of the President and Parliament of the Slovak Republic and permanent exhibitions of the **Slovak National Museum**. From the south-west Crown Tower, where the crown jewels were kept and whose 13th century foundations are now the oldest part of the castle, there is an impressive view over the city and its surroundings. The castle's Baroque chapel is used as a concert hall. In the summer months a Summer Shakespeare Festival, castle festivities and knightly tournaments, programmes demonstrating traditional arts and crafts are held in the courtyard.



www.bratislava.sk

ČERVENÝ KAMENŤ CASTLE

In the picturesque hills of the Little Carpathians above the village of Častá stands an irregular four-sided castle called Červený Kameň – “Red Stone”. With its **gigantic underground storerooms** it is one of central Europe’s rare Renaissance strongholds. From the 13th century onwards it was part of the system of defensive border castles. Several noble families contributed to the rebuilding of this monumental royal castle, including the Thurzos and Fuggers, but it was the Pálffy family that turned it into a comfortable Renaissance and Baroque residence in 1588. The impressive interiors have been preserved to this day in a historically authentic form. **One rarity** to be found there is the Zlatý orol (*Golden Eagle*) pharmacy from the 17th century, which was in use until the 19th century, and there is also a valuable picture gallery with portraits of eminent rulers and members of the aristocracy. The positioning of the richly decorated salla terrena from 1656 in the palace interior facing the courtyard is untraditional. Most visitors come here to see the noteworthy exhibitions of Baroque and Empire furniture and furnishings. **Other attractions** to be found at the castle are night tours, concerts in the Rytierska sála (*Great Hall*) and demonstrations of falconry in the courtyard; Little Carpathian wines can be tasted in the castle’s wine cellar, weddings are held in the chapel and finally there is horse and pony riding for children in the extensive park. Family celebrations and social occasions can be organised in the vast castle cellars, which can hold as many as 800 guests.



SALLA TERRENA



BECKOV CASTLE



ČAČTICE CASTLE



WITNESSES TO TIMES LONG PAST



Most of the medieval castles have not survived in their full beauty to the present day. They are no more than ruins creating a mysterious, romantic backdrop for the surrounding countryside. Others were more fortunate and life continued within their walls. Their owners transformed them into grand but comfortable noble residences and nowadays they are used for cultural and social purposes. They can offer visitors not only their interesting history in the form of museum exhibitions, but also interesting programmes such as night tours, castle festivities, theatre and fairytale performances, weddings or feasts in the style of earlier periods.

ČAČTICE CASTLE

The ruins of Čachtice Castle (*Čachtický hrad*) are to be found between the villages of Čachtice and Višňové. The castle was built in the second half of the 13th century and its dominating feature was a pentagonal keep of several storeys overlooking a courtyard and residential palace, all surrounded by strong walls. It still enjoys the interest of visitors on account of its association with the legend of the bloodthirsty countess, Elizabeth Báthory, who is said to have murdered more than 600 young girls over a period of 25 years, in order to bathe in their blood and thus preserve her youthful looks. The legend tells us that she was walled in here and her ghost appears to visitors to the castle.

BECKOV CASTLE

Towering right over the village of Beckov on a 70-metre limestone rock is another of the Váh Valley castles, dating back to the 13th century. The conserved ruins of the castle – the palace's attic, fragments of window frames and the remains of vaults can give us an idea of the one-time architectural value of this impregnable fortress. At the end of the 14th century the former defensive castle was reconstructed by Stibor of Stiborice to serve as a magnificent aristocratic residence. Following a fire in 1715 Beckov Castle was abandoned and allowed to fall into ruins.

STREČNO CASTLE

The castle's history goes back to the middle of the 14th century, but there had been settlements on the castle hill from a much earlier date. In the course of the four centuries that followed the castle had a number of owners and at the end of the 17th century it was demolished on the orders of Emperor Leopold. This picturesque ruin rising above the River Váh has now been partially reconstructed and conserved. Považské múzeum – the **Váh Valley Museum** – has installed there a permanent exhibition of the history of the castle. During the summer months there is a castle school and programmes for children and adults are organised. Weddings take place in the castle chapel. This castle and the ruins of Starhrad (*Old Castle*) opposite, on the right bank of the Váh, make an exceptional pair of medieval strongholds.

STREČNO CASTLE



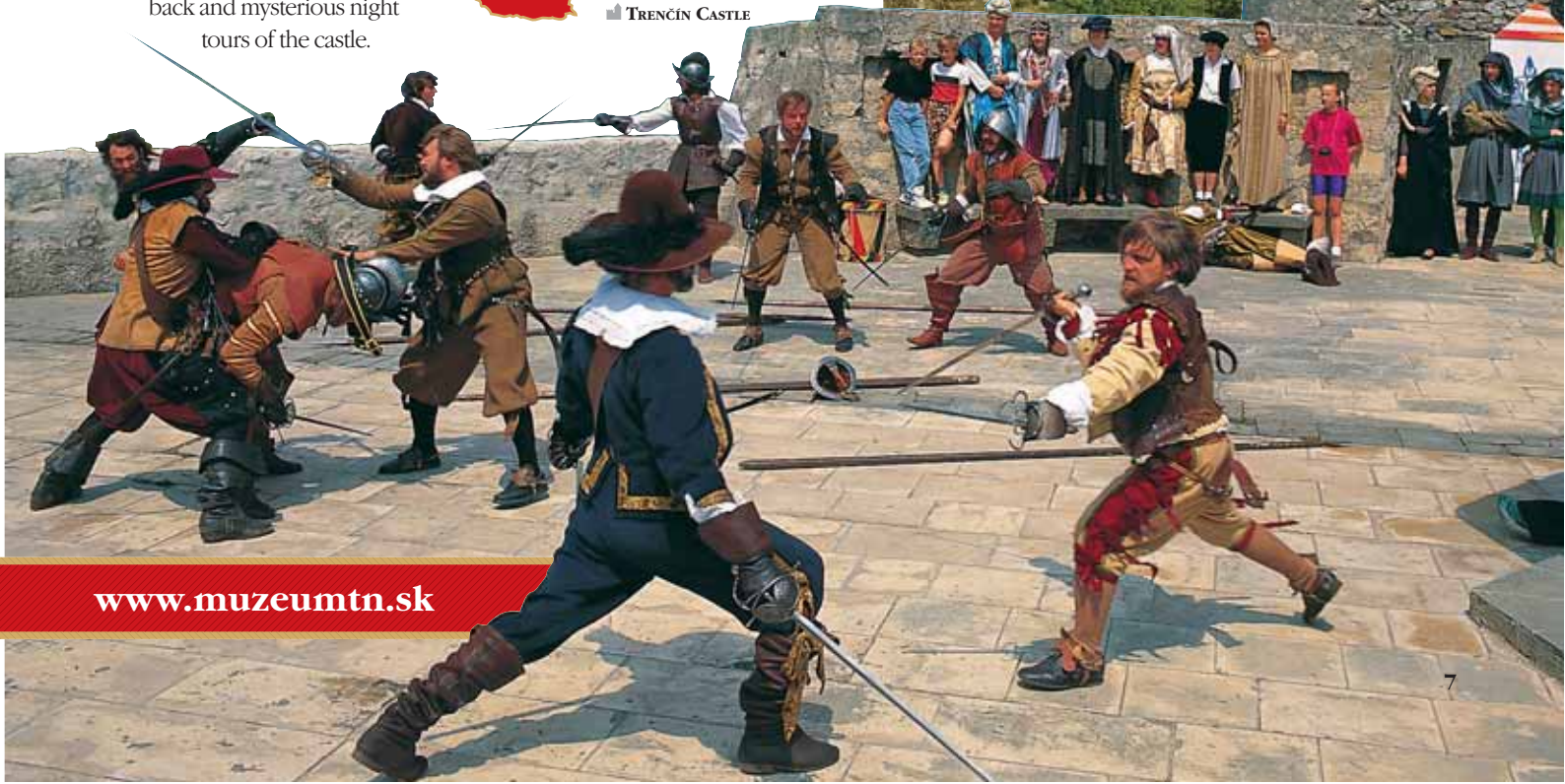
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TRENČÍN CASTLE

One of the **largest** and **most picturesque castle complexes** in Slovakia is Trenčín Castle (*Trenčiansky hrad*). It was erected on the site of a Great Moravian hill fort dating back to the 11th century. The characteristic dominating feature, a residential tower, was built in the 13th century during the rule of Matúš Čák, known as the “Lord of the Váh and Tatras”. Other rulers extended it to include a splendid Gothic palace and chapel. In the 15th and 16th centuries a further palace was added by Štefan Zápoľský. The blaze which spread through the town in 1790 also set fire to the castle. Extensive reconstruction and conservation works were only begun at the end of the 1950s. The castle complex consists of a group of palaces (named after Zápoľský, Barbora and Ľudovít) and an eye-catching 39 m tower, Matúšova veža. There is a **precious Roman inscription** dated 179 AD carved into the rock on which the castle stands. It tells us that the troops of the IInd Roman legion spent the winter here. The castle houses exhibitions of the **Trenčín Museum** – the coats-of-arms of the castle’s owners in Matúš’s Tower, historical weapons and contemporary heraldic work in Ľudovít’s Palace, a family gallery in Zápoľský’s Palace, together with pictures from residences owned by the Illésházy family, former owners of the castle, and on the summer terrace there is an exhibition of the Benedictine Monastery on Skalka hill. Interesting events on offer include authentic reconstructions of knightly tournaments on horseback and mysterious night tours of the castle.

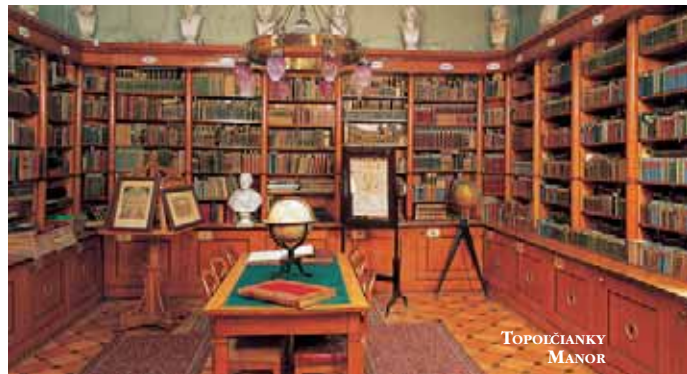




TOPOIČIANKY MANOR



NITRA CASTLE



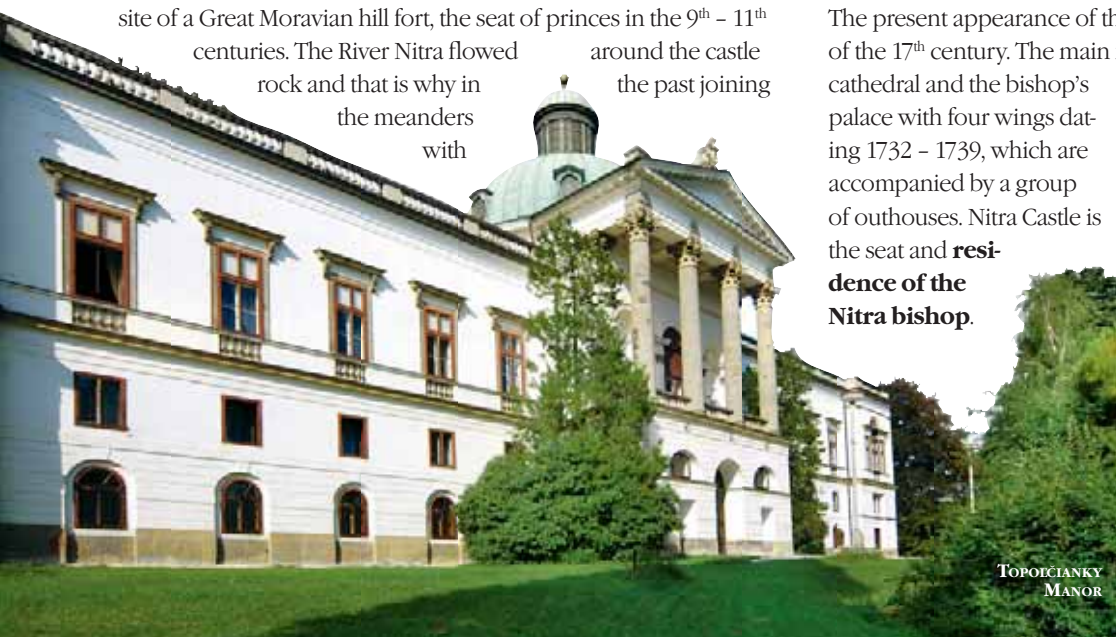
TOPOIČIANKY MANOR

TOPOIČIANKY MANOR

This monumental Renaissance building – *Topolčiansky zámok* – which has an irregular ground plan with four wings, an arcade courtyard and Classical facade, dates back to the 15th century. It is surrounded by a large landscaped park with precious trees and shrubs from foreign countries. Topolčianky Manor was the favourite summer residence of the Habsburgs and later also of the presidents of the republic (1923 – 1950). Its southern wing now houses an exhibition of period furniture and porcelain and a valuable historical library with 14 000 volumes. The remaining parts of the manor serve as a hotel.

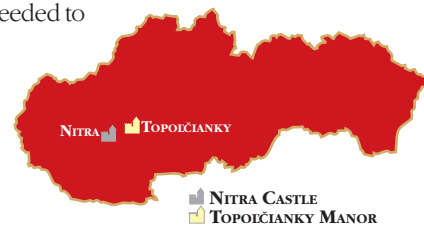
NITRA CASTLE

Nitra Castle (*Nitriansky hrad*) is one of the oldest castles in Slovakia of whose existence there is written evidence. It was built on the site of a Great Moravian hill fort, the seat of princes in the 9th – 11th centuries. The River Nitra flowed around the castle rock and that is why in the past joining the meanders with



TOPOIČIANKY MANOR

a moat was all that was needed to create a natural defence for this strategically important site. The oldest castle building still standing is the 11th century Romanesque



NITRA TOPOIČIANKY

NITRA CASTLE TOPOIČIANKY MANOR

Church of St. Emmeram,

which became part of a Gothic church when this was built at a later date. A Lower Church (*Dolný kostol*) was added in 1642. These three adjoining buildings form the castle cathedral. Its patrons are Saints Svorad and Benedikt, whose remains are kept in the Romanesque part of the cathedral. The castle is fortified with massive walls built to protect it from the Turks in the 15th century. In 1673 – 1674 new entrance gates and three bastions were added to the complex. The present appearance of the castle dates back to the second half of the 17th century. The main features of the castle complex are the cathedral and the bishop's palace with four wings dating 1732 – 1739, which are accompanied by a group of outhouses. Nitra Castle is the seat and **residence of the Nitra bishop.**

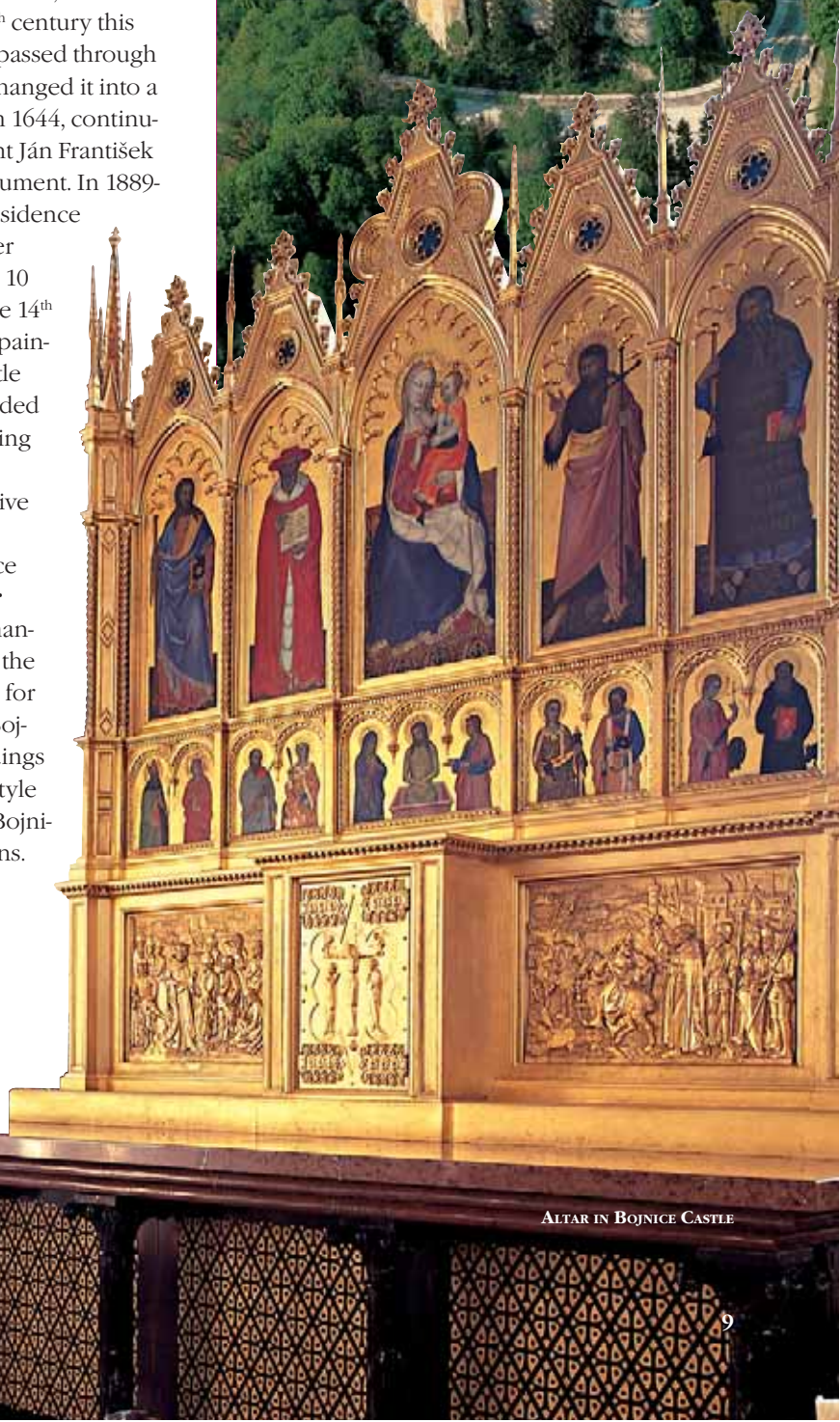


THE CASTLE CATHEDRAL, NITRA



BOJNICE CASTLE

One of the castles with **the largest number of visitors** in Slovakia is Bojnice Castle (*Bojnický zámok*). The present charmingly romantic castle stands on the site of a medieval castle, probably made of wood, which is mentioned in written documents dating 1113. In the 13th century this was rebuilt as a Gothic stone castle and as a royal castle it passed through the hands of a succession of owners. The Thurzo family changed it into a Renaissance residence and the Pálffys, who owned it from 1644, continued with the alterations. Credit goes to the last owner, Count Ján František Pálffy, for the present cohesive style of this historical monument. In 1889-1910 he had the castle rebuilt as a magnificent romantic residence on the model of the French castles in the valley of the River Loire. Some of **the most valuable items** in the castle are 10 Gothic paintings by Nardo di Cione from the middle of the 14th century, the only complete surviving work by this master painter from Florence. Particularly valuable features of the castle include the carved "Angel Ceiling" in the Golden Salon gilded with genuine gold leaf, the castle chapel with stucco vaulting and frescoes from 1662, the picture gallery with works by European painters from the 16th - 19th centuries, an attractive underground cave at a depth of 26 metres and finally the "weeping" sarcophagus of Count Pálffy, who in accordance with his last will and testament rests in the castle. **Further mysteries** of the castle can be discovered during the romantic night tours in the light of burning torches and candles, the festival of spirits and ghosts, the fairytale tour of the castle for children, the Knights' Days or Nobleman's Christmases. Bojnice Castle invites you to its Valentine's Weekend or weddings in the local chapel with wedding receptions in historical style and a wedding night in the castle's splendid apartments. Bojnice Castle is a popular venue for official and social occasions.



ZVOLEN CASTLE



ZVOLEN CASTLE



ZVOLEN CASTLE

Zvolenský zámok is a Gothic hunting castle established in 1370 by the then ruler, Louis the Great. This impressive building with four wings surrounding an inner courtyard and an architecturally interesting royal chapel belonged to the Thurzo family from the 16th century. The rich mining entrepreneurial family turned it into a splendid Renaissance manor with corner towers and strengthened its fortifications. Visitors are particularly attracted by its Baroque room on the first floor with a wooden coffered ceiling with the likenesses of 78 Holy Roman emperors and Habsburg monarchs. The castle houses exhibitions belonging to the **Slovak National Gallery**, concerts are held in the Royal Hall, Roman Catholic masses in the castle chapel, wedding ceremonies in the Grand Hall and an open air festival, *Zvolenské zámocké hry*, in the courtyard.

THE TOWN CASTLE IN KREMNICA

The town castle is a complex of medieval buildings surrounded by a double wall with a gate and three bastions, which were added between the 13th and 15th centuries. The oldest building at the castle is **St. Andrew's Church** (*Karner sv. Ondreja*), a two-storey round

building with a crypt. The tallest building is the **Roman Catholic church dedicated to the patron of the town, St. Catherine** (*Kostol sv. Kataríny*).

This is a Late Gothic building from the middle of the 15th century with two naves and a southern and northern chapel. The tower of the church with a Renaissance gallery dating 1579 is a characteristic feature in the silhouette of the town. The movables inside the church are from the end of the 19th century. Originally a four-storey town hall also stood within the castle walls, but as it became unsafe, it was reduced to two floors. Between 1976 and 1996 restoration work was carried out on the whole complex. Within the castle grounds the **Museum of Coins and Medals** has exhibitions of the history of the castle, the town's system of fortifications, Kremnica bells and bell-founders, two self-contained sculpture exhibitions and the underground charnel-house is open to the public.





BETLIAR

THE ART NOUVEAU MAUSOLEUM

BETLIAR

The Renaissance and Baroque mansion not far away in Betliar that belonged to another branch of the Andrassy family has also been preserved in the spirit of the original. In 1880 - 1886 it was rebuilt to make it a luxury hunting lodge. It has a grandiose entrance hall with a coffered ceiling, sumptuously furnished reception rooms, a valuable historical library (20 000 volumes), a gallery with pictures by foremost European painters and hunting trophies and exhibits from various exotic countries in the world. The mansion in Betliar is surrounded by 80 hectares of natural parkland, where there are a further 16 listed buildings. For its exemplary reconstruction of the mansion between 1989 and 1994, the Slovak National Museum was granted the **Europa nostra** award.

KRÁSNA HÔRKA

Towering above the village of Krásnohorské Podhradie is one of **the best-preserved medieval castles**. The noble Bebek family began to build it at the beginning of the 14th century. In the 16th century it passed into the ownership of the Andrassys, who were the lords here for four centuries. Following a disastrous fire in 1817 they partially reconstructed the stronghold. The last owner, Dionyz Andrassy, established a family museum here in 1906. The interior of the castle houses a rare collection of historical furniture, the original castle kitchens, a large collection of weapons, rare basset horns, of which only 8 have been preserved in Europe and 3 of them are to be found at Krásna Hôrka. Two of the castle's attractions are a glass coffin with the mummified body of Žofia Seredy, the wife of one of the heirs to the castle, and the largest collection of original bronze cannons (the oldest dating from 1547). The museum exhibition includes an unusual **Art Nouveau mausoleum**, which the last owner of the castle, Dionyz Andrassy, had built in memory of his wife and where he himself is buried.

KRÁSNA
HÔRKA





BUDATÍN CASTLE



ORAVA CASTLE

BUDATÍN CASTLE

The impressive building of Budatín Castle (*Budatínsky zámok*), protected by the waters of the Váh and Kysuca rivers, was built in the second half of the 13th century as a defensive castle where tolls were collected. It is one of the oldest surviving monuments of the town of Žilina. At the present time it is the seat of the **Váh Valley Museum - Považské múzeum**, which has brought together a rare collection of tinker's works, the largest of its kind in the world, with 1200 exhibits.

ORAVA CASTLE

Orava Castle (*Oravský hrad*) is a **striking landmark** in the Orava region. It towers over the village of Oravský Podzámok on a limestone rock 112 metres high. Built between the middle of the 13th and the beginning of the 17th centuries on the upper terraces of the castle rock, the upper, middle and lower castles form a unique trio. In the written records dated 1235 Orava Castle is mentioned as a royal castle. In the centuries that followed it frequently changed hands - its owners included the Balaš family, Matúš Čák, Matthias Corvinus, the Zápoľskýs and from 1556 it belonged to František Thurzo, who built a Renaissance palace here. In 1800 the castle was destroyed by fire. It took on its present appearance at the beginning of the 20th century, when Jozef Pálffy had part of the castle reconstructed in a romantic style. Interiors from the Gothic and Renaissance periods have also been preserved. Restoration work on the castle is continuing even now. **St. Michael's Chapel** (*Kaplnka sv. Michala*) from 1752 has undergone complex reconstruction and was only recently opened to the public. Since 1868 visitors have been able to view exhibitions installed in Orava Castle by the **P.O. Hviezdoslav Orava Museum**, one of the oldest museums in Slovakia.



ORAVA CASTLE



ORAVA CASTLE



www.oravamuzeum.sk
www.pmza.sk



SPIŠ CASTLE - A UNESCO MONUMENT

The ruins of Spiš Castle (*Spišský hrad*) form **one of the most extensive medieval fortified complexes** in central Europe. It covers 4 hectares and ruins dating from 13th - 18th centuries have been preserved within the walls of the five courtyards. The oldest part consists of a three-storey Romanesque palace and a massive round tower on the highest point of the travertine castle rock. In the second half of the 15th century the original royal county castle passed into the hands of aristocratic families, when it grew to its present large size. It belonged to the Zápoľský family, who had the Late Gothic chapel and west Late Gothic palace built; the Thurzo family carried out Renaissance alterations and the Csákys owned it until 1945. The partially inhabited castle was destroyed by fire in 1780. It was only in the 1970s that conservation work was begun on the ruins. Exhibitions have been installed here by the **Spiš Museum** and during the summer months there are programmes of historical swordsmanship, as well as theatrical performances and concerts. In 1993 the site was included on the UNESCO Heritage List.



www.spishrad.sk



LUBOVŇA CASTLE

Another landmark in the north of the Spiš region is the partially preserved Lubovňa Castle (*Lubovniansky hrad*) overlooking the town of Stará Lubovňa. The first written record of this royal border stronghold dates back to 1311. During the 14th century it became a frequent venue for meetings between monarchs. In 1412 Sigismund of Luxemburg and Władysław II Jagiellon signed a treaty, on the basis of which the castle and thirteen Spiš towns came under the administration of the Polish monarchy for a period of 360 years. In the years 1656 – 1661 the Polish coronation jewels were even kept at Lubovňa Castle. The oldest part of the castle includes a round tower and a Gothic palace. Reconstruction work in the 16th and 17th centuries turned it into a Renaissance stronghold. The restored parts now house the **Lubovňa Museum** (*Lubovnianske múzeum*). In the castle halls there are exhibitions of the castle's history, one showing how people used to live in earlier times, another the trades and guilds and also an exhibition about the last owners, the Zámoyškýs, a Polish aristocratic family. At the foot of the castle there is an open-air museum with a rare 18th century **wooden church from Matysová**. During the summer the castle comes to life with theatre performances, demonstrations of falconry and historical swordsmanship and festivals showing the folklore of the ethnic minorities in the Spiš region.



www.muzeuml.sk

STRÁŽKY MANOR



STRÁŽKY MANOR



STRÁŽKY MANOR

One of the Spiš region's architectural gems is the manor in Strážky, together with the Church of St. Anne and its belfry. As it stands nowadays, we can see the development of architectural styles from Late Gothic through Renaissance reconstructions to Baroque and Classical alterations. The **Slovak National Gallery** has installed a permanent exhibition of historical furniture here, a portrait gallery of aristocratic families and an exhibition of an outstanding central European painter from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Ladislav Mednyánszky, one of the owners of the manor. The building is surrounded by a landscaped park whose border is marked by the River Poprad.

MARKUŠOVCE MANOR

The Spiš village of Markušovce on the banks of the River Hornád belonged to the noble Mariássy family, who built a castle here in the second half of the 13th century and completed a Renaissance manor in 1643, which was later altered in the Rococo style. Its restored rooms now offer an exhibition of historical furniture belonging to the **Spiš Museum** in Spišská Nová Ves. The manor is surrounded by an ornamental park with three terraces, in which there stands a **Rococo folly** named Dardanely (*Dardanelles*). This is the home of the only specialised museum of keyboard instruments in Slovakia.

MARKUŠOVCE MANOR



„DARDANELY“ - A ROCOCO FOLLY



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