



UNESCO IN SLOVAKIA



Little Big Country



There are many beautiful and interesting things in the world. Slovakia might be a small country but that cannot be said about the importance and the number of interesting sights found here.



Slovakia is endowed with a diverse natural beauty, ranging from the fertile valleys running towards the foothills of tall rocky mountains to the scenic caves hiding inside them. Our ancestors have left present generations a whole spectrum of monuments ranging from mighty castles and parks in bloom to scientific and cultural artefacts. It is not only the tangible heritage that has been preserved; it is also the customs, the music and the stories that make up our national identity. Some of these gems were recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO and they were inscribed on its World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.



Slovak Karst



Domica Cave

Beauty is not to be found only on the outside, it often remains concealed; and for us to admire it, we need to go deep under the surface. The beautiful caves of the Slovak Karst mountains are a proof that to find beauty we need to undertake such a journey.



Ochtinská Aragonite Cave

Jasovská Cave

Slovak caves, which are part of the World Heritage List, are of varied origins and are found with different shaped and coloured formations. The Ochtinská Aragonite Cave represents a unique natural phenomenon attracting interest due to the richness of its aragonite ornamentation. The iron flowers and bushes are the most well-known. Jasovská cave is famous for its calcite formations and rocks of different shapes. The stones and rocks are complemented by the occurrence of several kinds of bats that live there. Dobšinská ice cave with its location at low altitude is among the most important ice caves in the world. It is a much visited cave due to the beauty of its ice pillars, waterfalls and lakes.



The Spiš Castle

On a limestone hill towering at 200 m above the surrounding area, the Spiš Castle reigns supreme over the Spišská basin. Its size, spreading over four hectares, is recognized as one of the largest and best preserved castle complexes in Central Europe.

The rocky hill, on which the castle stands, was already settled in the early Stone age and a massive fortification was built here at the turn of the first millennium AD. Later on in the 11th century, the fortress had started to resemble a mediaeval fortified castle and subsequently a provost's castle was built here. Gradually the towers were added, and more buildings continued to be built, initially in the Romanesque style and later in the Gothic and Renaissance styles.

The castle had, over time, several important aristocratic, as well as royal owners. They all left a trace in the form of various architectural





renovations of the castle, for example the building of a delightful Gothic chapel. Part of the Spišské Podhradie area is Spišská Kapitula with its dominant late-Romanesque St. Martin's Cathedral dating from the 13th century, with the characteristic two towers. The tabernacle and nave were expanded by several Gothic additions. The Cathedral's interior is particularly valuable, especially for its Gothic altars, statues, gravestones, tombs, chalices, bells and frescoes. The Spiš Castle has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1993.



Vlkolíneec

The conservation reserve site of Vlkolíneec is a preserved village with typical wooden architecture and farmstead yards. It was named after an ancient myth and the abundance of wolves living in Liptov woods at the time.

Vlkolíneec ("vlk" means wolf in Slovak) is a small and hilly village whose inhabitants were mostly farmers and worked on the surrounding fields and meadows. For such a small village, there were a lot of families in the iron business which helped develop the hamlet. It entered the annals of history by participating in a dispute with the town of Ružomberok in the 14th century. The typical architecture found in mountainous regions marries the simplicity of wood and the yearning for beauty in the form of





the pastel colours of the walls. Until today, distinctive period buildings have been preserved here. The most famous ones are the two-floor wooden belfry, the village well, and the stone church of The Visitation of the Virgin Mary. In the village, it is possible to visit the Farmer's house, where one can see a typical household with period objects.

There are many preserved hay-lofts and other farm buildings in the village's vicinity.

The village has about 35 permanent residents living there throughout the year and the number rises, especially in summer, when cottage owners from the city or neighbouring towns join them, together with visitors from around the globe. Vlkolíneč was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. Traditionally, a lot of tourists visit especially in the summer months when lots of tourist-friendly events are organized here.



Bardejov

The historical centre of Bardejov is unique in the number of exceptionally well-preserved burgher houses encompassing the market square which has been the centre of activity in the region since the Middle Ages. The town was the mediaeval centre of trade and thanks to its famous markets it became the destination for many merchants of the time.



Bardejov – the Town Hall Square

A lack of arable land in the town's vicinity led to its orientation towards craft production and trade. During the golden age of the town in the 14th and 15th centuries, one could count up to 64 artisan specializations and 50 different guilds. The Bardejov masters' products were sold far and wide beyond the region's borders and brought lots of development and wealth to the town. Many disputes took place between the Polish and Hungarian rulers as they fought for this wealthy and blossoming town.

Several sacral buildings have been preserved from the mediaeval times, most notably the Basilica of St. Egídius (St. Giles). Its 11 Gothic winged altars with board paintings are unique in Europe. The walk through the historical centre of Bardejov is undoubtedly a powerful experience and thanks to this it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000.



Banská Štiavnica

From time immemorial, gold and silver were considered the symbols of wealth and power. The thrones of Hungarian kings were supported by the royal mining towns which produced these precious metals. A walk through Banská Štiavnica will remind us of their former glory.



St. Catherine's Church

Square of the Holy Trinity

Banská Štiavnica is the "golden" treasure of mediaeval mining in Central Europe. The spirit of the past glory of this town is present on every step. There is a large collection of mining artefacts in the historic part of the Mining Museum. Among the most interesting objects are the measuring equipment, functioning models of water pump machines, the original ceremonial mining coats dating from the 18th century and the miners' insignia.

Another interesting piece is the vast collection of minerals located at the old site of the Mining Office. You might be interested in paying visits to the Old and New Chateaux where many period objects have been preserved. A tour of the mining galleries and a unique open-air museum

with well-preserved period buildings will give an idea of the way of life in the town and surrounding area in the times of its greatest mining glory. The tour guides, dressed in period mining costumes, will acquaint you with the history of the tough job of mining. During the tours, the visitors are provided with miners' helmets and lamps for a more authentic experience. Banská Štiavnica has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1993 and it welcomes more than 40 000 visitors every year.



Beech forests



The Carpathian primeval forests contain within a small area an extraordinary number of trees, plants and fungi. They are home to rare species of animals, mainly endangered bird species. This pristine natural beauty gives us a chance to see the forest as it used to be, centuries ago before human intervention.



The Carpathian primeval beech forests are unique in the way they create a chain of islands of the original natural forest – from the lowest vegetation level of the lowlands to the highest forest vegetation level in the highlands. It is a unique example of forest vegetation including a wide array of primeval forest samples in a relatively small area. There are centuries-old pines, beeches, maples and plenty of dead wood which feeds the thousands of

fungi that grow here. Fauna is abundant, too – many rare birds such as the red-breasted flycatcher, the Ural owl or the white-backed woodpecker found refuge here. Many protected species which are either endangered or have died out elsewhere, are still in existence here.



Wooden churches

Wooden churches are to be found in countries where wood was the basic building material. What makes the Slovak wooden churches unique is their authenticity, precision of work, the preservation of most of the external and internal elements and the fact that they are still used for religious purposes.



Kežmarok



Inovce



The protected wooden churches can be found in the Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Košice and Prešov regions. From the religious point of view, they serve the Roman Catholic Church, Greek Catholic and Protestant Churches. Most of them date from the 16th and 17th centuries and were built in different styles and used various technical methods but they all have one thing in common and that is wood. The beauty is in the variety and the value is in their preservation. Inside them we can find

period decorated altars, paintings, masterfully carved pulpits or confessional booths and other religious artefacts. Apart from the nine of the protected churches which were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008, there are more than 20 other similar gems to be found in eastern Slovakia



Fujara



Fujara, also called “the queen of pipes”, was used to while away the time in our ancestors’ lives. Its melancholy and lingering sound accompanied folk songs in sad, as well as merry events of life. A great deal of skill was needed not only to play it, but to make it too and that made it even more valuable.



From the humble origins as a shepherd’s instrument, over time it has become a much-loved folk music instrument. To play such an instrument, a lot of skill was needed. Despite the fujara having only three holes which are used to alter the length of the sound, the tones of this kingly pipe are hauntingly beautiful. Today, fujara is often part of many folk groups and enjoys not only popularity but respect as well. It has been part of the World Heritage List since 2005.



Back to the future





Slovakia is unique in its history and has many surviving witnesses to remind us of their glory days. By visiting the castles, chateaux or museums, we show our respect to the ancestors who created this beauty.



Levoča – Radnica



History is not dead - it is not only the cold walls of ruins and the objects behind the museum glass. History is the stories that make us laugh, teach us and inspire us. Only those who can perceive the beauty of nature are the people rich in spirit; only those who listen to history can take the walk towards the future.

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