

WOODEN CHURCHES IN SLOVAKIA



GEMS OF RELIGIOUS FOLK WOODEN ARCHITECTURE

Slovakia is a hilly country, with thick coniferous and deciduous forests covering 38% of its area. No doubt that is one of the reasons why our ancestors came to have such a feeling for wood and excelled in the use of this natural material. The traditions of working with wood going back hundreds of years are most clearly to be seen in tangible form in the sphere of folk architecture. Even today there are charming little villages with wooden cottages and a striking wooden church. For the most part the churches are separate from other secular buildings, situated on higher ground or in places that provide natural refuge. They are often in small cemeteries and surrounded by carved wooden or cast-iron crosses. Ingenious carpentry techniques were used to build the churches without any metal or nails. Their style was a fusion of western and eastern, Byzantine, culture.

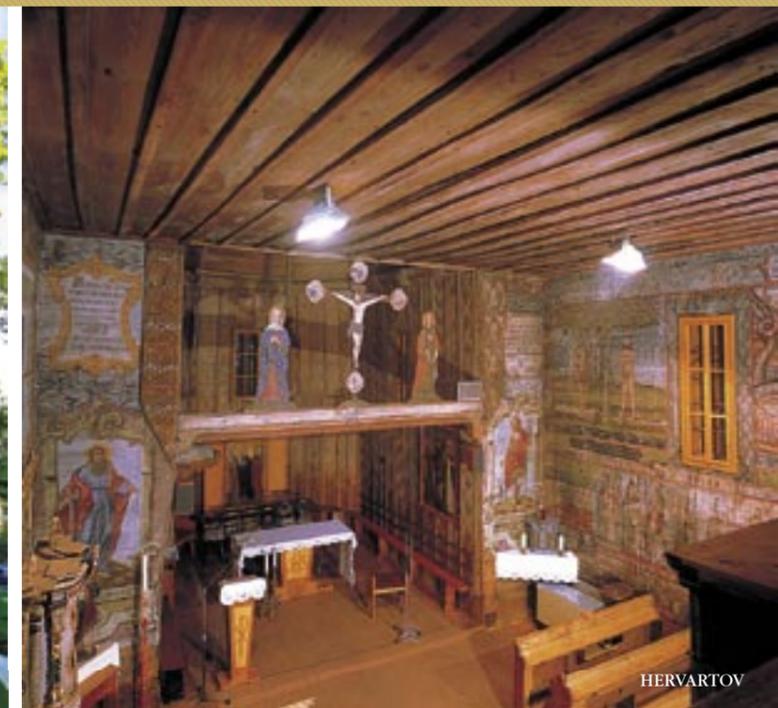
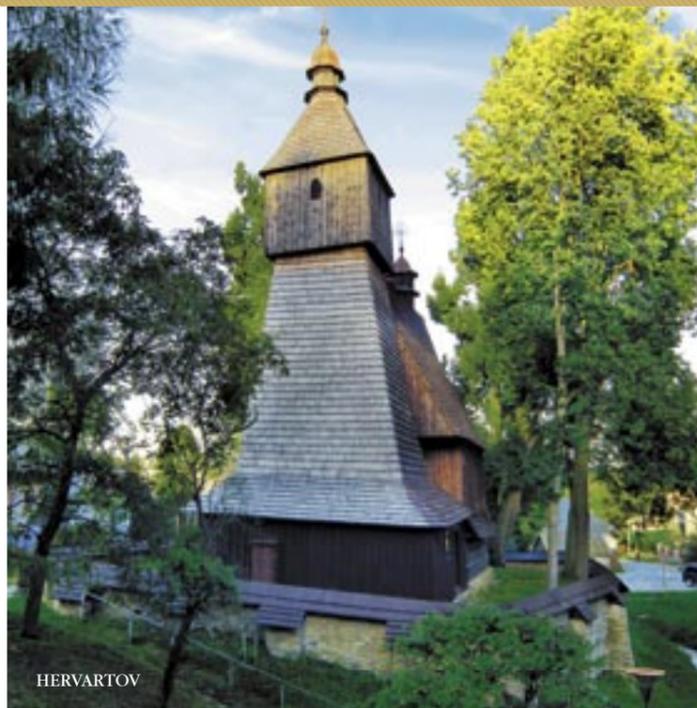
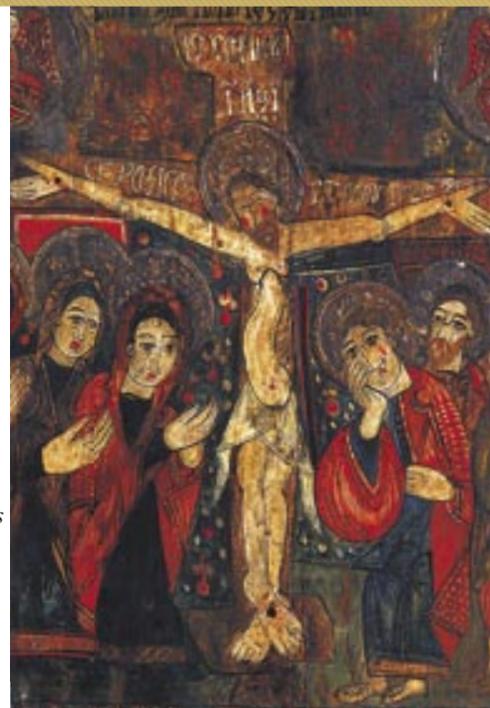
Although the overall design of the buildings was determined by church regulations and religious traditions, the timber construction of the walls, the domes and other parts were the work of carpenters, folk craftsmen. Great emphasis was laid on the interior of the church, which had to be decorated in such a way as to satisfy the taste of the local population and the artistic aspect of the church interiors adds to the value of these historical buildings.

The wooden churches in Slovakia served and still serve a variety of denominations. They were built by Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, as well as Orthodox believers or Protestants. According to the surviving records, there were originally about

300 wooden religious buildings here. Many of them were wiped out by wars, or they were built of less durable wood and were mercilessly destroyed by the ravages of time.

About 50 churches have survived to the present day, mostly from the 17th to 19th centuries. The greatest concentration of wooden churches is to be found in the north-east of Slovakia. In 1968 twenty-seven wooden churches in this area were declared national cultural monuments. Two of them, in Hervartov and Hraničné, are Roman Catholic and the other twenty-five served religions of the Eastern rite - Bodružal, Miroľa, Prikra, Šemetkovce, Potoky, Korejovce, Hunkovce, Krajné Čierno, Dobroslava, Nižný Komárnik, Ladomirová, Uličské Krivé, Topoľa, Ruský Potok, Hrabová Roztoka, Kalná Roztoka, Inovce, Ruská Bystrá, Brežany, Jedlinka, Kožany, Krivé, Tročany, Frička and Lukov-Veňecia.

In recent years the building skill, impressive beauty and perfect harmony with the surrounding landscape shown in these religious buildings have inspired people to ensure that the most valuable of them do not remain just treasures of Slovak cultural heritage, but are included on the UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES



Roman Catholic churches form the smallest group of wooden religious buildings. They are also among the oldest, being rare Late Gothic monuments from the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. For reasons of security they are open only during the services, but visitors interested in seeing inside can phone the relevant parish office beforehand and they will arrange for local inhabitants to show them around.

Hervartov – Here there is a little church built at the end of the 15th century in the spirit of Gothic principles near Bardejov and dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. The material used is red spruce. The interior is divided into two parts and decorated with wall paintings from 1665. The main altar is the original one dating back to 1460 – 1470.

All Saints' Church (Kostol Všetkých svätých) in the local cemetery in **Tvrdošín** deserves particular attention. It was mentioned in the historical annals as long ago as 1551. It has a remarkable coffered ceiling in the nave of the church, made up of 49 different ornamental rosettes. In the second half of the 18th century the church was renovated and a large Baroque altar added. In 1994 the town of Tvrdošín was awarded the Europa Nostra prize for the exemplary restoration of this heritage site.

The oldest Roman Catholic wooden church to survive is in **Trnové** near Žilina. It is dedicated to the village's patron saint, St. George (sv. Juraj). The earliest written record of the small Gothic church, which has a single nave and a large adjoining tower, comes from 1583. It was first built

in the village of Bytčica, but later moved to Trnové, where it now stands surrounded by the cemetery. Its two large Renaissance bells are dated 1604 and 1606 and the interior of the church is from the Baroque period.

Visiting season

Tvrdošín	
July – September	10 am – 4 pm (except Mondays)
Individual bookings in other months.	



- 1 TRNOVÉ
- 2 HRONSEK
- 3 SVÄTÝ KRÍŽ
- 4 TVRDOŠÍN
- 5 LEŠTINY
- 6 KEŽMAROK
- 7 HRANIČNÉ
- 8 MATYSOVÁ
- 9 STARÁ LUBOVŇA
- 10 LUKOV
- 11 FRIČKA
- 12 KRIVÉ
- 13 JEDLINKA
- 14 BARDEJOVSKÉ KÚPELE
- 15 HERVARTOV
- 16 TROČANY
- 17 BREŽANY
- 18 KOŽANY
- 19 HUMENNÉ
- 20 SVIDNÍK
- 21 DOBROSLAVA
- 22 LADOMIROVÁ
- 23 NIŽNÝ KOMÁRNIK
- 24 PRIKRA
- 25 BODRUŽAL
- 26 KRAJNÉ ČIERNO
- 27 HUNKOVCE
- 28 KOREJOVCE
- 29 MIROĽA
- 30 ŠEMETKOVCE
- 31 KOŽUCHOVCE
- 32 NOVÁ SEDLICA
- 33 TOPOĽA
- 34 RUSKÝ POTOK
- 35 ULIČSKÉ KRIVÉ
- 36 NOVÁ POLIANKA
- 37 POTOKY
- 38 KALNÁ ROZTOKA
- 39 HRABOVÁ ROZTOKA
- 40 INOVCE
- 41 RUSKÁ BYSTRÁ
- 42 KOŠICE
- 43 MARTIN
- 44 ZBOJ
- 45 ZÁBREŽIE
- 46 MIKULÁŠOVÁ
- 47 ZUBEREC
- 48 RUDNO





PROTESTANT "ARTICLED" CHURCHES



The remarkable wooden Protestant churches known as "articled churches" form a special branch of Protestant architecture. They have a Greek-cross plan and were built according to articles issued in 1681 by Emperor Leopold I. In this way the absolutist regime of the Austro-Hungarian Empire hoped to halt the spread of Evangelical Protestantism. Articled churches had to stand at the edge of the village or town and they had to be built within one year. The use of stone and metal was prohibited, wood being the only material allowed. The churches could not have foundations, towers or bells and the entrances had to face away from the village. Separate belfries, adjoining the churches or standing separate like large prism-shaped wooden constructions, are an eye-catching feature of these sites. It was originally planned to build 38 wooden articulated churches in Slovakia, but only nine were actually built and of these only five have survived.

Svätý Kríž - The oldest articulated church from 1773 - 1774, originally stood in the village of Paludza. When the Liptovská Mara dam was built the church was moved, restored and re-erected in its original form in 1982 in Svätý Kríž, 14 km from Liptovský Mikuláš. Covering an area of 658 square metres, it is one of the largest wooden buildings in central Europe. It has 12 doors and 72 windows and can accommodate a congregation of about 6000. The interior furnishings of the church are simple, showing off to best advantage the beauty of the fir wood and the patterns made by the natural light

penetrating the interior of the church. Particularly interesting features include the choir lofts and the paintings on wooden panels depicting scenes from the Bible interwoven with animal motifs and flowers. The belfry was built in 1781.

Kežmarok - The Holy Trinity Church (Kostol sv. Trojice) is the only articulated church whose walls are covered with plaster. It was built in 1717, thanks to a collection in which Protestants from northern Europe also participated. Swedish sailors are said to have helped in its construction and that is why the interior is reminiscent of the upside-down prow of a ship with round portholes. The church was built of yew and red spruce without the use of a single piece of metal. The vaulted ceiling is supported by just four twisting columns with carved capitals. It is somewhat smaller in size, accommodating a congregation of 1500. Of particular interest is the wooden altar from 1727 with rich Baroque figural and ornamental decoration.

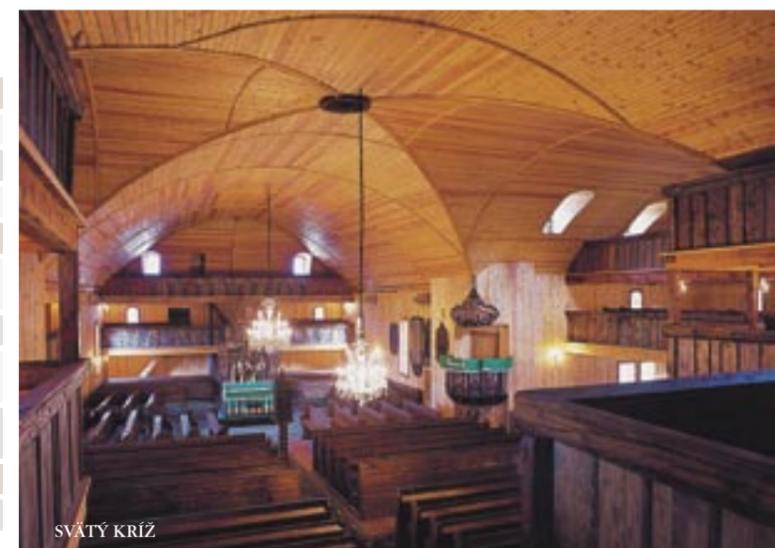
Hronsek - another Protestant church with a belfry near the town of Banská Bystrica dates back to 1725-1726. It was built of oak and spruce and has survived into this third millennium almost unaltered. Here the Greek-cross plan of articulated churches has been reduced and it was intended to hold no more than 1100 visitors. The church is 8 metres high, 26 metres long and 11 metres wide. It has 30 windows. The simplicity of the pews and the panel lining to the walls give the interior a Puritan, Protestant look. The organ from 1764 is still in working order and was made in the workshop of

Master Podkonický. Two of the four enormous lime trees growing in front of the church are said to have been planted on the occasion of the consecration of the church.

The articulated churches in **Itebné** from 1686 and **Leštiny** from 1688 (near the town of Dolný Kubín in the Orava region) are smaller, less sophisticated types. They were built in an area restricted by the terrain and that is why there is only a hint of the shape of a cross. They are more like the older tradition of single-nave churches with oblong ground plans. In contrast to the inconspicuous exterior, their interiors are surprisingly crammed and over-ornate. The Leštiny church has been preserved in an almost authentic form. We can still admire the richly decorated sacristy, the painted marbled coffers in the ceiling and the illusory architecture on the walls. Orava's wooden articulated churches have their own inimitable charm, their artistic expression being very much influenced by folk traditions.

Visiting hours

Svätý Kríž	
1.10. - 31. 5.	daily 9 am - 3 pm
1.6. - 30. 9.	daily 9 am - 5 pm
Services every Sunday	9 am - 10 am
Kežmarok	
1.5. - 30.10.	daily 9 am - 12 am 2 pm - 5 pm
1.11. - 30.4.	8 am - 15 pm
Tuesday, Friday	10 am - 12 am 2 pm - 4 pm
Bookings can be made for organised groups outside the usual opening hours.	
Hronsek	
	daily 10 am - 5 pm





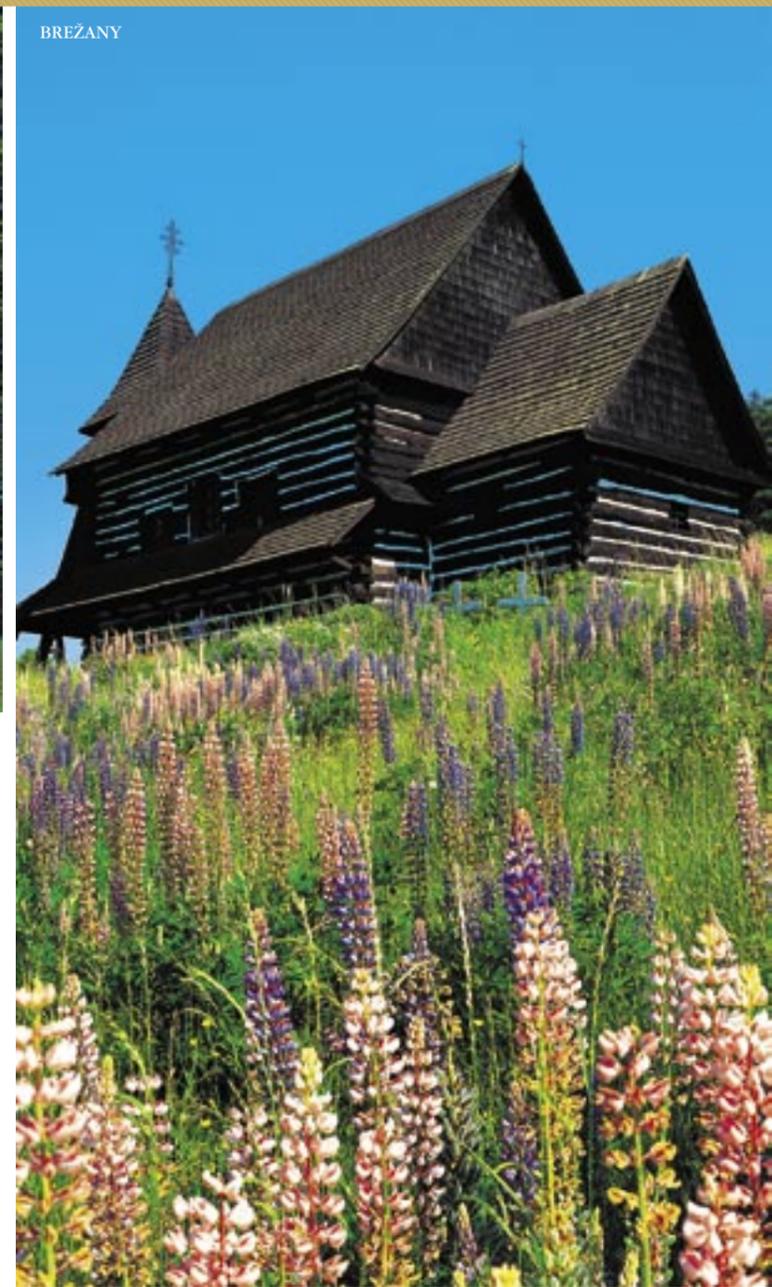
FRICKA



JEDLINKA



TROČANY



BREŽANY

LUKOV-VENÉCIA

CHURCHES OF THE EASTERN RITE



The most numerous group of wooden churches is that formed by the churches of the Eastern rite. Little Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches are scattered all over north-eastern Slovakia in little villages with just a few dozen inhabitants. The characteristic feature of these religious buildings is the emphasis on the number three, symbolising the Holy Trinity. This can be seen not only in the three domes, but also in the ground plan, with three areas arranged lengthwise (from west to east). The women congregated in the babinec [babinets], the area nearest to the door, the men in the nave - the largest part of the church - and the sanctuary was for church rites. One striking feature in the interior was the iconostasis - a wooden screen with panel paintings, dividing off the altar from the rest of the church. The arrangement, number and themes of the icons in it was laid down by the strict rules of the liturgy and the appeal of the interior was enhanced by the three richly decorated and carved doors. The middle one, known as the royal door, was used by the priest, the other two by the deacons and the lay congregation. Originally the churches were richly decorated with paintings on the walls and ceiling, depicting scenes from the Gospels. Churches of the Eastern rite, known as cerkvi (tserkvas), were mainly built in the period between the 17th and 19th centuries.

THE PREŠOV DISTRICT

Brežany - St. Luke's Church (Kostol sv. Lukáša) is the only wooden church to have been preserved in this district. It is an eye-catching atypical dark brown building with white pointing from 1727, standing on higher ground. Originally

it was used by Greek Catholic congregations, but now Roman Catholic masses are served there. It is surrounded by a historical cemetery with iron crosses, many of which are over a hundred years old.

THE BARDEJOV DISTRICT

Tročany - Not far from Bardejov, the Church of St. Luke (Cerkva sv. Lukáša) from the end of the 15th century is the oldest surviving church of the Eastern rite in Slovakia of the type made of timber and divided into three parts. Sadly, the unique wood carvings that used to be part of its interior have not been preserved. The church stands in the middle of the village, surrounded by wooden cottages.

Jedlinka - The Mother Mary Church (Cerkva Ochrany Bohorodičky - literally, the Church of the Protection of the Mother of God). This typical triple-part and triple-dome church of the Eastern rite was built in 1763. Its impressive interior decoration includes a Rococo iconostasis, wooden Baroque candlesticks and above all a rare liturgical book from the 17th century, printed in Cyrillic.

Kožany - he Church of the Meeting of the Lord with Simon (Cerkva stretnutia Pána so Simeonom), built in the second half of the 18th century. The complicated shape of its shingle roof is of particular interest. In contrast to those in other churches, the iconostasis from the beginning of the 18th century has only two doors. The wall paintings depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament were added between 1793 and 1797.

Krivé - The Church of the Evangelist Luke (Kostol evanjelistu Lukáša) from 1826 seems to have defied the

usual strict division of a church of the Eastern rite into three parts. However there are still three areas in its interior. The iconostasis consists of paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries.

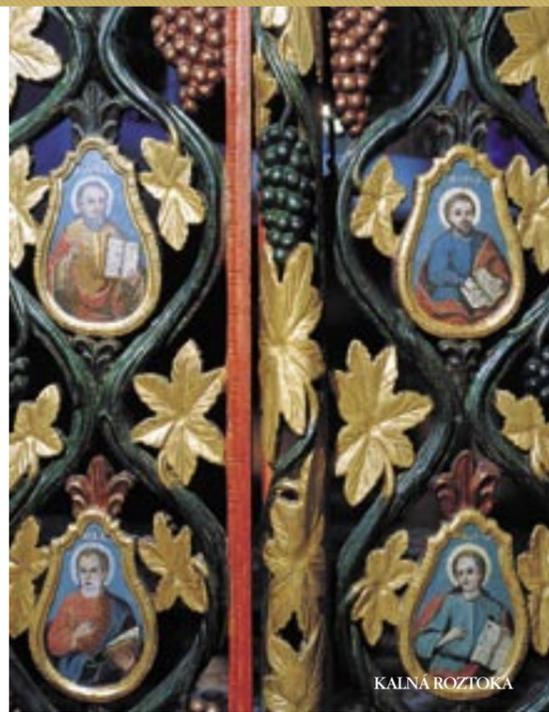
Fricka - The Church of Michael the Archangel (Kostol archanjela Michala) with the main dome above the babinec is one of the best-preserved wooden churches. It was built in the 18th century. The oldest part of the iconostasis is from 1830 and the altar from 1716. The interior of the church was painted in 1933.

Lukov-Venécia - The Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian (Chrám sv. Kozmu a Damiána) from 1708-1709 is remarkable for its untraditional architecture, making it unlike other such tserkvas. It is the only one of the churches to have a cellar and it was built on top of a high underpinning foundation that compensates for the steep terrain. The church's icons are from the 16th and 18th centuries.

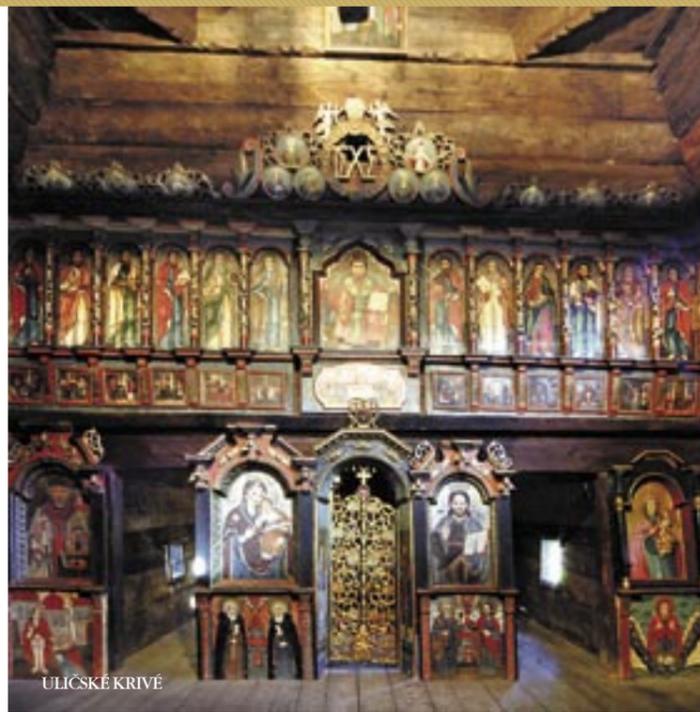




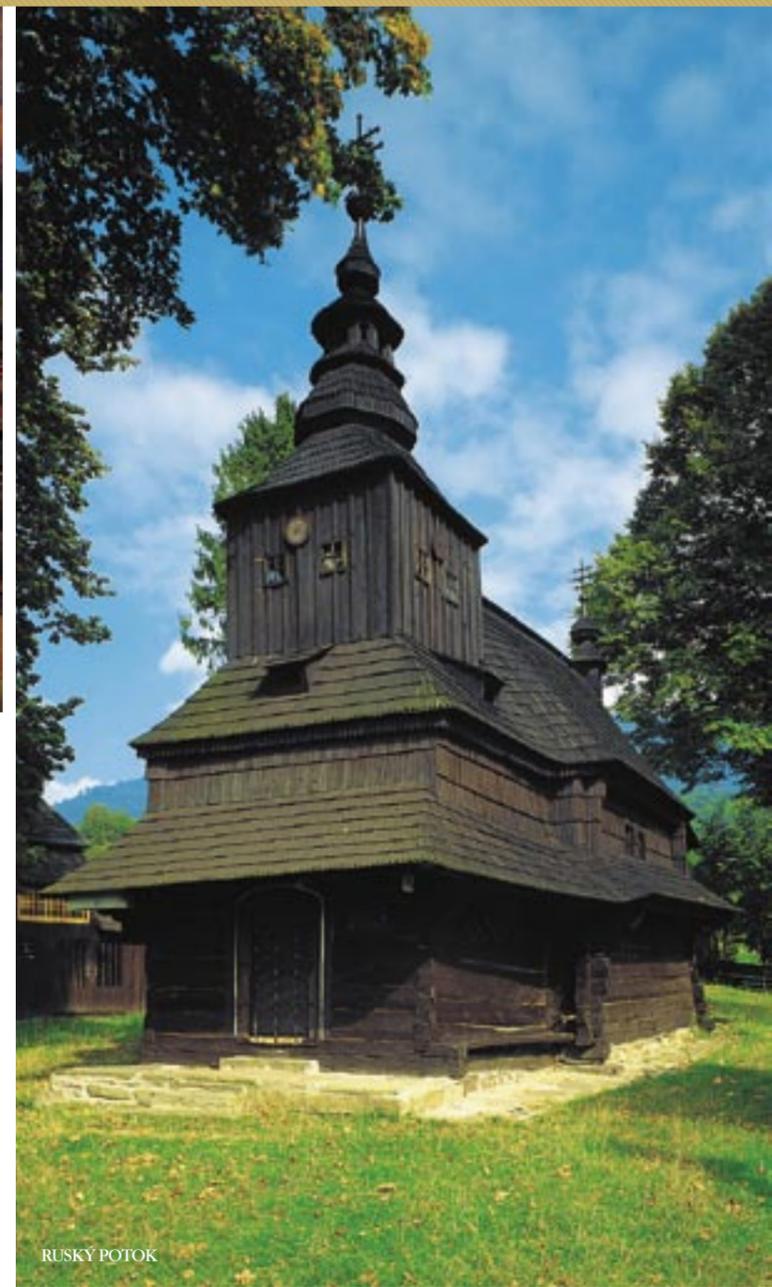
BODRUŽAL



KALNÁ ROZTOKA



ULIČSKÉ KRIVÉ



RUSKÝ POTOK

THE SNINA DISTRICT

Uličské Krivé – The Church of Michael the Archangel (Cerkva archanjela Michala) from 1718 is a tourist attraction in the middle of the village. Its large and complicated shingle roof makes it one of the most impressive churches of its kind. It has a richly decorated Baroque interior and some of the icons date back to the 16th century.

Topoľa – The little Church of Michael the Archangel (Kostolík archanjela Michala) was built by its congregation around 1700 on a hill overlooking the village. Surrounded by an old cemetery, it is one of the oldest wooden churches of the Eastern rite.

Visiting hours

Uličské Krivé

Monday - Saturday
9 am - 5 pm

Ruský Potok – Another church dedicated to the archangel Michael, who was clearly particularly venerated in the Poloniny area. The church was built in 1740 and its iconostasis is the original one. Ruský Potok also attracts visitors on account of its valuable liturgical documents printed in Cyrillic from the mid 17th century.

Kalná Roztoka – The Church of St. Basil the Great (Cerkva sv. Bazila Veľkého) from the end of the 18th century, restored in 1839, looks like a masonry building, as the outside is covered in whitewashed clay. Inside there is an 18th century iconostasis and an icon of Christ from 1773. Within the grounds surrounded by a fence there is also a 20th century belfry.

Hrabová Roztoka – An interesting feature of the Church of St. Basil the Great (Cerkva sv. Bazila Veľkého) from the middle of the 18th century is the panelling of the walls both on the inside and outside of the church. An untraditional cupboard in Gothic style is part of the otherwise Baroque interior.

THE SVIDNÍK DISTRICT

Bodružal – The Church of St. Nicholas (Cerkva sv. Mikuláša) is one of the most beautiful and oldest of the churches of the Eastern rite in Slovakia. It was built in 1658 and recently completely reconstructed. This large building, divided into three areas and dominated by three onion domes of varying heights, stands out in the southern part of the village. It is surrounded by a wooden fence with a little shingle roof and an entrance gate. In the nineteen nineties the white and gold Baroque interior of the church was renovated and the iconostasis and altar restored.

Mirola – The Mother Mary Church (Cerkva Ochrany Bohorodičky) is the main landmark in this little village in east Slovakia. It has been preserved in almost the original form since 1770. Below the iconostasis with four rows of icons there is a striking, richly decorated royal door, which is used exclusively by the priest when passing from the nave to the altar.



KALNÁ ROZTOKA



MIROĽA



MIROĽA

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(Municipal Office)
tel.:+421-57-769 41 81

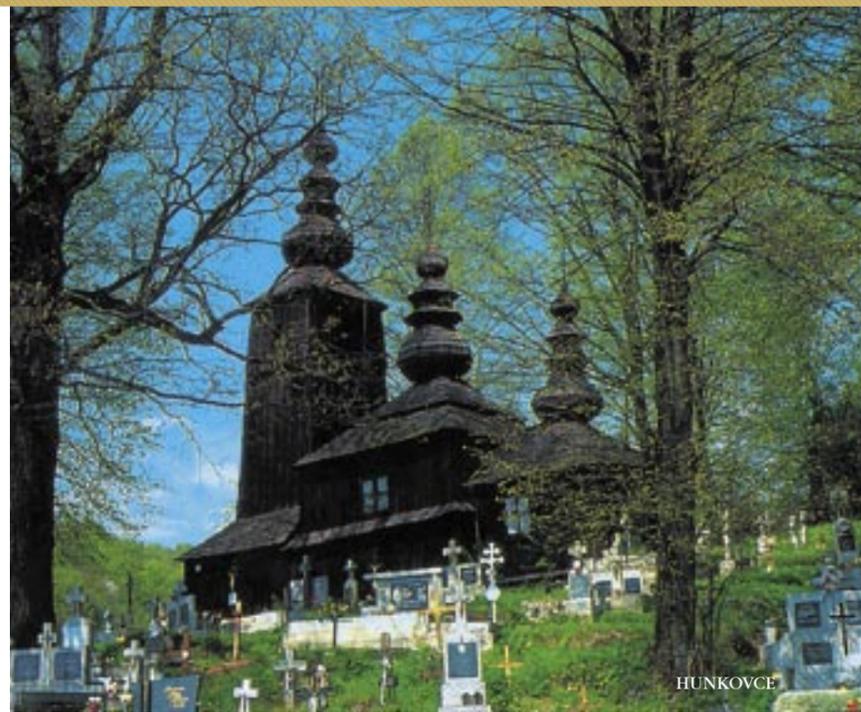
Obecný úrad Topoľa, 067 65 Topoľa
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tel.:+421-57-769 81 19

Obecný úrad Ruský Potok, 067 66 Ruský Potok
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Obecný úrad Kalná Roztoka, 067 72 Kalná Roztoka
(Municipal Office)
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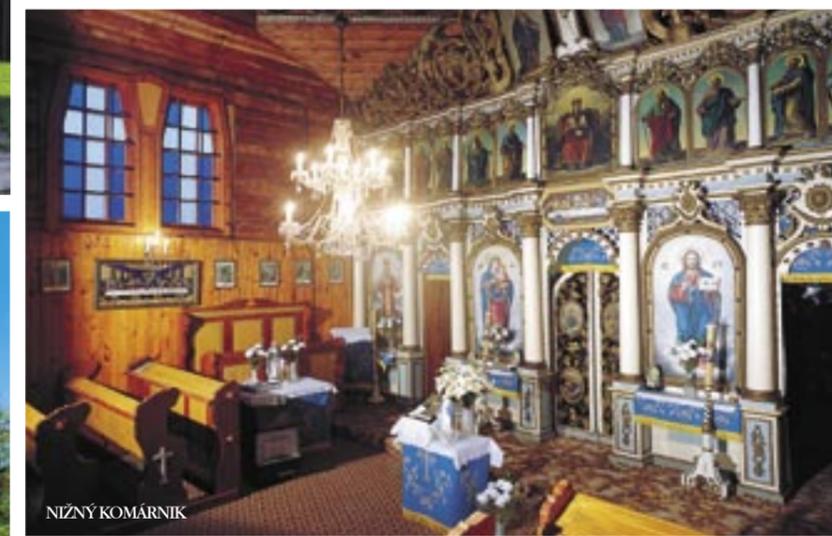
KOREJOVCE



HUNKOVCE



NIŽNÝ KOMÁRNIK



NIŽNÝ KOMÁRNIK

A further three wooden churches were dedicated to the archangel Michael in the villages of **Príkra** (from 1777), **Šemetkovce** (from 1752) and **Ladomirová** (from 1742), which is unusual in that it was built without the use of a single nail. It is surrounded by a cemetery with interesting wooden, metal and stone crosses. An iconostasis with five rows of icons and an altar from the middle of the 18th century, as well as other liturgical objects are valuable cultural relics.

Korejovce - The Mother Mary Church (Chrám Ochrany Bohorodičky) dates back to 1764. Unfortunately the iconostasis has not survived intact. Inside the church there are interesting plant decorations on the royal door. Near to the church there is a wooden belfry that has three bells dating 1769, 1771 and 1835.

Nižný Komárnik - Here you can find one of the most impressive, but also one of the most recently built of the

wooden tserkvas (cerkva) in north-eastern Slovakia. The Mother Mary Church (Chrám Ochrany Bohorodičky) from 1938 was designed by the outstanding Ukrainian architect and researcher into folk architecture V. Sichynsky (1894-1962).

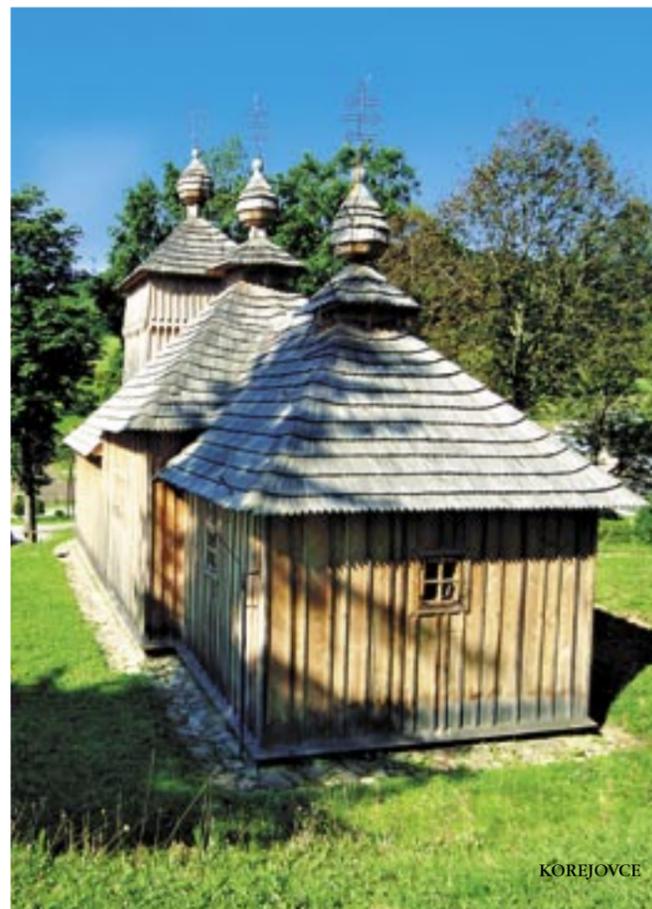
Hunkovce - The Church of the Decease of the Mother of God (Cerkva Zosnutia Bohorodičky) is from the end of the 18th century. Three domes of varying heights are crowned by poppyhead-shaped constructions and ornamental crosses. The church is surrounded by a cemetery and can be seen only from the outside. It is no longer in use.



LADOMIROVÁ



ŠEMETKOVCE



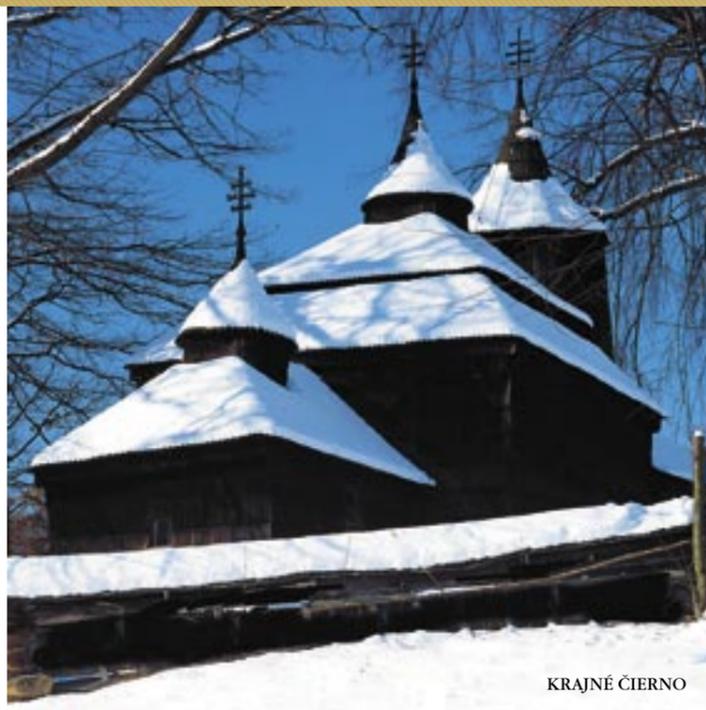
KOREJOVCE



ŠEMETKOVCE



INOVCE



KRAJNÉ ČIERNO



DOBROSLAVA

Krajné Čierno – The 18th century Church of St. Basil the Great (Cerkva sv. Bazila Veľkého) has an atypical Baroque iconostasis with just two doors, above which hang pictures depicting scenes from the New Testament. Not only the roof, but also the timber walls of the building are covered with shingles.

Dobroslava – the core of the Church of St. Paraskieva is its oldest part, dating back to 1705. Following alterations in 1880 and 1932 it now has a ground plan in the shape of a cross. The most striking feature in the interior is the 18th century iconostasis, which has restored icons on themes from the New Testament.

archanjela Michaela) in this east-Slovakian village, almost on the Ukrainian border, has two striking towers. It dates back to 1836. A “Pieta” signed by Michal Mankovič in 1842 forms part of the iconostasis from the middle of the 19th century.

Ruská Bystrá – the hexagonal altar space in St. Nicholas’s Church (Kostolík sv. Mikuláša) is particularly interesting. The roof of this church with two domes makes it look more like a peasant’s cottage than a tserkva. It was built at the beginning of the 18th century and its Baroque and Rococo interior also comes from the same period.



THE SOBRANCE DISTRICT
Inovce – the Church of Michael the Archangel (Kostol

THE STROPKOV DISTRICT
Potoky – The Church of St. Paraskieva (Chrám sv. Paraskievy) was built on an eastern slope of the village in 1773. The interior and its iconostasis with three rows of icons also comes from this period. The visitor’s attention is drawn to the fragments of wall paintings with plant motifs. The separate belfry is from 1839.

THE STARÁ LUBOVŇA DISTRICT
Hraníčné – The Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (Cerkva Nepoškvrneného počatia Panny Márie) from 1785 is used for Roman Catholic religious services, as well as those of the Eastern rite. In the second half of the 19th century it was reconstructed and nowadays sacral relics in a variety of historical styles can be seen in its interior.



RUSKÁ BYSTRÁ



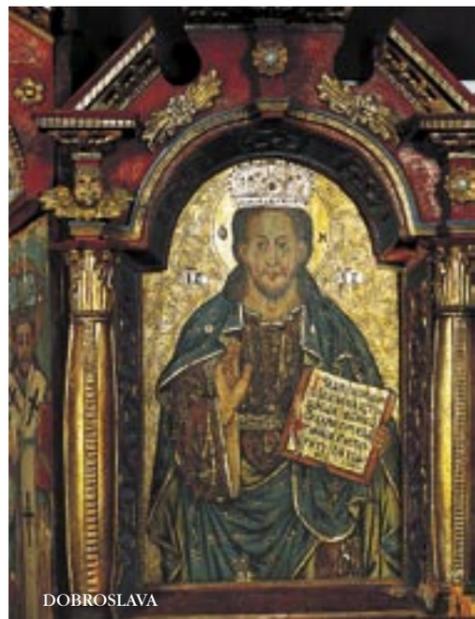
KRAJNÉ ČIERNO



POTOKY



HRANIČNÉ



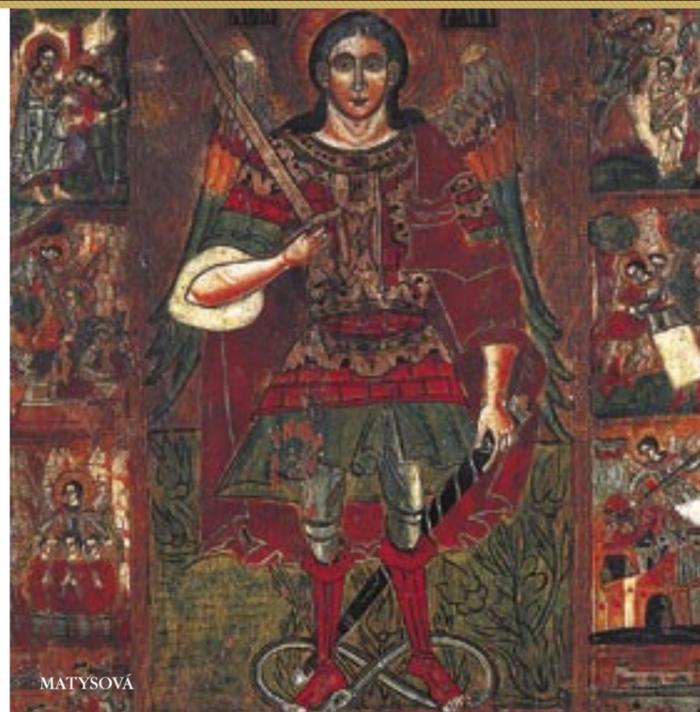
DOBROSLAVA



ZBOJ



ZÁBREŽIE



MATYSOVÁ



MATYSOVÁ

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS IN OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS



In order to protect them and possibly use them for their original purpose, some churches have been moved to new sites, most of them to open-air museums. St. Nicholas' Church (kostolík sv. Mikuláša) from 1775 was moved to the Šariš Museum's open-air exhibition in **Bardejov Spa** from **Zboj** in the easternmost valley in Slovakia. A church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God from the village of **Mikulášová – Niklová** near Bardejov was also moved here in

1926 – 1931. On a beam in the now renovated church there is an inscription from 1730. It is one of the few churches to have decorative wall paintings. Greek-Catholic services are held here on a regular basis. Ever since 1927 visitors have been able to view a church that came from the village of **Kožuchovce** near Stropkov, now standing in the grounds of the Museum of East Slovakia in **Košice**. It was built in 1741 from fir, with part of the iconostasis being carved out of linden. Unfortunately, incorrect techniques were used for the reconstruction of the interior, which led to the disappearance of the wall paintings.

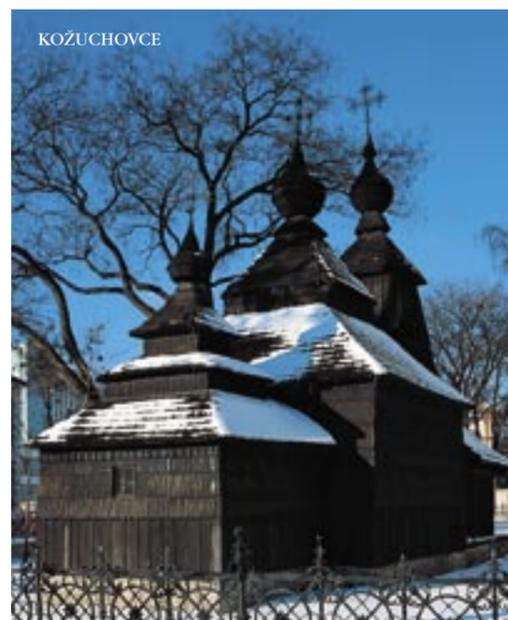
Lubovnianske múzeum in **Stará Lubovňa** has become the new home of the Church of St. Michael the Archangel (Cerkva sv. Archanjela Michala) from **Matysová**. The church from the second half of the 18th century has a rare altar picture of the Mother of God dated 1693. After being newly consecrated in 1990, services of the Eastern rite take place here on important church feast days. A church from **Nová Polianka** dated 1766 and dedicated to St. Paraskieva has found its way to the Museum of Ukrainian-Ruthenian Culture in **Svidník**. Since being consecrated once more in 1993 it has served for occasional religious services. The Vihorlat Museum's open-air exhibition in **Humenné** acquired the Church of Michael the Archangel (Kostol archanjela Michala) from **Nová Sedlica** in 1977. It dates back to 1794 and has a valuable Baroque iconostasis and a bell in its tower from 1811. In the Orava Village Museum we can see St. Elizabeth's Church from **Zábřežie** dated 1647, which has an interesting Late Gothic painted ceiling with impressive flower ornamentation. Finally, in the Slovak Village Museum in **Martin** there is a rebuilt Church of Stephen the King (Kostol Štefana – kráľa) from the village of **Rudno**, in which wedding ceremonies are also held.



ZBOJ



NOVÁ POLIANKA



KOŽUCHOVCE



NOVÁ SEDLICA

Múzeum slovenskej dediny - Martin
Slovak Village Museum
tel.: +421-43-413 26 86, 423 94 91, 422 06 12
fax: +421-43-413 26 86

Múzeum oravskej dediny - Zuberec
Orava Village Museum
tel.: +421-43-539 51 49
www.zuberec.sk

Šarišské múzeum - Bardejovské Kúpele
Šariš Museum
tel.: +421-54-472 20 72
www.muzeumbardejov.sk

Lubovnianske múzeum - Stará Lubovňa
Lubovna Museum
tel.: +421-52-432 24 22, 432 20 30, 432 3982,
fax: +421-52-432 23 02, www.muzeumsl.sk

SNM - Múzeum ukrajinsko
- rusinskej kultúry, Svidník
Open-Air Museum
of Ruthenian-Ukrainian Culture

tel.: +421-54-752 29 52, www.muk.sk

Vihorlatské múzeum - Humenné
Vihorlat Museum
tel.: +421-57-775 22 40

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