



significant value and exceptional charm for them. The seven wonders of the Prešov region represent a combination of the most enchanting natural and human creations of this area. So if you have set aside seven days to explore this region, your itinerary should definitely include the historical centre of Bardejov, Lubovňa castle, the Tatra National Park, the Altar of Master Pavol of Levoča, the Wooden Churches, Pieniny National Park and the historical centre of Levoča.



THE MAGICAL 7



According to the first written reference from 1241, medieval Bardejov was a fast developing and important town. Its strategic location on the intersection of trade routes between the Kingdom of Hungary and Poland made it an important trading centre that received many royal privileges. In 1352, King Louis the Great of Anjou granted the town the right to hold an eight-day market as well as to build fortifications, so that by end of the 14th century this trade- and craft-gifted town already benefited from a perfect



fortification system consisting of a stone city wall with three main city gates and a moat with drawbridge. Reinforcing bastions were added in the first half of the 16th century. The Archival, Renaissance, Great, Broad, Royal, Square and School bastions are well-preserved to this day and are a symbol of one of the most impeccable Gothic-period fortifications in Slovakia.

BARDEJOV

A picturesque square with colourful townhouses, a monumental neo-Gothic basilica with beautiful furniture, the Renaissance mural paintings in the town hall or the mysterious Jewish suburb. This town will not let you doubt its proud and rightful nickname “the pearl of the Upper Šariš Region” even for a moment.



Since 1376, Bardejov benefited from the privileges of a free royal town. This period of its history can be described as its 'golden age'. At the time, there were more than 50 guilds with 64 craft specialisations. A great number of well preserved sacral and secular buildings from the 14th and 15th centuries give testimony regarding these times of prosperity and, thanks to them, the town has maintained its medieval charm. Perhaps the most impressive of these testaments is the **Radničné námestie (Town Hall Square)**, the centre of the town's activity, embraced by forty-six typical townhouses, and which after reconstruction in 2002 is the same as it was seven centuries ago.



The striking **Basilica of St Giles** dominates the square both sacredly and architecturally. Originally a Gothic building from the 14th century, it is of special note due to its interior where a unique collection of eleven gothic wing altars with panel paintings and a lot of other precious sacral furniture are situated. The building underwent reconstruction several times under the leadership of noted builders, among them the famous royal builder Štefan from Košice, who worked on the St Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice. In 1878, after a fire that almost destroyed the entire town, the church underwent major reconstruction in which many



Renaissance features were removed. In the spirit of the neo-Gothic styling of the 19th century, a tower, a neo-Gothic main altar, a pulpit and interior paintings were added. The exterior design of the church was meant to evoke the original stonework. How the basilica looks today is the result of 20 years of reconstruction. **One of the most significant objects that complete the sacredness of the space is without a doubt the main neo-Gothic altar with carvings of St Giles, St Stephen and St Ladislaus**

from 1878, which was made to order by Móric Hölzel, a woodcarver from Prague, with paintings by Gyula Aggházy, a Hungarian artist. **The Golgotha sculptures, depicting the crucified Christ and two thieves, dating from the end of the 15th century, is interesting for its incredible anatomical precision.** The sacral significance of this monumental and spiritual place was recognised in 2000 by Pope John Paul II when he elevated it from a church to a basilica minor.



The secular opposite of the basilica and another dominant feature of the Town Hall Square is the **Town Hall**, dating from the beginning of the 16th century, in which the first Renaissance influence can be identified in architectural and fine arts features. The building is a surviving symbol of the flourishing economic and social life of the time, which brought with it the need to build a more representative place for meetings of the town council. The final aesthetic of the Town Hall has



ornamental decoration and home to an impressive Hebrew poetic chronogram with dedicatory inscription. A gathering place during Midrash and Mikveh, for the performing ritual baths, is also a part of the suburb. There was also a ritual slaughterhouse in the area in the past. In 2000, Bardejov was rewarded for its long-term efforts to preserve its historical monuments and entered onto the UNESCO World Heritage List.



been achieved thanks to the participation of many great builders. Painted decorations including shields, coats of arms and the divine retribution were done by the local master Theofil Stancel. The top of the southern gable of the Town Hall bears a replica of the legendary Knight Roland holding a halberd, the protector of the town privileges. Architectural details such as decorated portals, decorative paintings on shields, a beamed ceiling in the Council Hall and oak period furniture increase the artistic value of the premises, which currently houses the Šariš Museum.

Behind the historical city walls, another important cultural heritage site can be found. In accordance with regulations that for centuries made it impossible for Jews to reside within free royal towns, a **Jewish suburb** has grown there. A group of buildings including a nine-vault synagogue dating from 1836, rich with





ĽUBOVŇA CASTLE

Legend says that when Prince Lubina and his sons reached the top of a 548 m hill, he was so stunned by the beauty of the surrounding countryside, the view of the river Poprad and the hills of Ľubovnianska vrchovina (Ľubovňa highlands), that he decided to build his residence there and sold his soul to do so...

According to this legend, builders worked hard building the castle walls every day but overnight someone pulled them down. The Prince figured that some evil forces were responsible, so he ventured into a cave and found an evil spirit there who promised him he would let him finish the castle in exchange for his soul. When the Prince realised what he had done he supposedly asked local monks for advice. They offered him shelter in their monastery where he was meant to free himself from the evil forces by praying. That made the evil spirits so angry they



decided to throw a boulder on the castle. When the prince learned about that he started praying even more ardently and ringing the bell, which took the evil spirit's power away. However, supposedly the evil spirit still appears below the castle in the form of a strong north wind and local residents drive it away in same way as the Prince, with a prayer. It has never been confirmed whether this legend is true or not but the fact remains that the boulder meant to bury the castle dominates the waters of the river Poprad near a village called Hajtovka to this day..

Those who don't believe the legends could be interested that according to documented archaeological excavations, the castle was built at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries as a border castle with a mission to protect trade routes to Poland. It was probably the Polish Prince Boleslav, King Bela IV's son-in-law, who started building it. A round tower and a Gothic palace on the highest rock come from this period.



There was also a storage room, a prison, a room with two cannons and at the top a bugler's room that currently serves as a lookout tower from which visitors can admire the scenery of the Tatras and Pieniny's Three Crowns Massif.



A newer palace was later added, which together with the original buildings made up the upper castle with courtyard. Other historical sources date the castle almost a whole century later and attribute it to King Charles Robert of Anjou. In the following years, the owners of the castle changed frequently. Its current and partly preserved form, with numerous interesting features, displays several building styles. When you walk up the chestnut alley, consisting of

23 hardy chestnut trunks with an average circumference of 198 cm, and rest in the courtyard for a while in the shade of a maple tree with a respectable age of 350–400 years and trunk circumference of unbelievable 450 cm, you can start your journey through history...

Bergfried tower, built between the 13th and 14th centuries, represents the Gothic style of Ľubovňa Castle. Its ground floor was originally used to store ammunition.





roque altars and a baptistry. One of the most interesting features, even though not original, is a replica of the Polish crown jewels, which were hidden at the castle between 1655 and 1661 during the period of the Polish advance

A Gothic gate with a preserved portal, a so-called donkey's back, dating from the 15th century was the entrance to the upper castle. It was rebuilt later and some Renaissance architectural features were added. It currently serves as an outbuilding for storing carts and carriages. The Renaissance bastion, with well-preserved underground tunnels and 16 embrasures, was once a main pillar of the castle's defence.

A Baroque palace with a well-preserved hunting salon and a common room with a lot of valuable art deco period furniture represent the arrival of the Baroque period. The exhibition in the palace maps out the era of the aristocratic Raisz family who resided there in the 19th century. The chapel of St Michael the Archangel and its adjacent cemetery, dating from 1647, is where one of the owners, Juraj Raisz, is buried, also comes from Baroque period. The chapel is decorated with three Ba-



when the castle was a part of Polish Kingdom. Polish King Ján Kazimír hid the jewels there after the Swedes attacked his country.

The lines of a tall bastion with entrance gate from the beginning of the 17th century also follow Baroque styling. It was nicknamed Bierfas, a beer barrel, because of its interesting shape. Visitors can find an interesting exhibition there dedicated to the last private owners of the castle – the aristocratic Zamoyský family.

The Renaissance palace deserves special attention. It went into ruin after 1772, when not even the Hungarian Empress Maria Theresa started renovation. After more than 200 years, reconstruction finally



started and the palace is now almost in its original form, and in accordance with its original use, distilling and beer brewing exhibitions are today located there. For sensitive and innovative restoration of the palace, the museum was awarded the Fénix prize for cultural monument of the year in 2011.

Even though the age of aristocrats and kings is over, Ľubovňa Castle still lives an eventful life all year round. Besides the museum, there are various cultural and social events held within the grounds. A favourite attraction is the falconers' performance, which takes place several times



a day during the summer tourist season. Another much-loved event is Cyril and Methodius fête, held at the beginning of July, during which a Greek Catholic liturgy takes place in the chapel of St Michael the Archangel, as well as the regular Castle fête where Knights in historical costumes enact dramatic fights. In honour of the last private owner of the castle, Count Ján Zamojský, international chess and bridge tournaments bearing his name have taken place at the castle for more than ten years.

The castle has disabled access, with the first courtyard being suitable for visually and hearing impaired visitors thanks to the provision of special guide services. This innovative approach to the museum earned it the main prize from the Town Union of Slovakia (Únia miest Slovenska).

In the immediate vicinity of the castle is **Lubovniansky skanzen (the Ľubovňa Open-air Museum)**, an ethnographic

exhibition comprising 15 well-preserved houses in which Slovaks, Germans, Ruthenians, Gorals and Jews once lived in peace. The museum paints a perfect picture of the variety of cultures and life below the castle. A Greek Catholic church from the village Matysová, built in 1833, dominates the museum. Besides a valuable iconostasis, a visitor's attention is drawn to an object that hangs down from a ceiling in the centre of the nave and was considered to be magical for a long time. Legend says it was made in the time of the plague, sometime around



1633, following a dream. It is a symbolic spatial depiction of the throne of the god Yahweh Ridvan, and its form evokes a biblical revelation of God's throne. In addition to the church, it is possible to see various residential houses, a granary, a farm settlement, a carpentry workshop, a smithy and a mill displaying examples of the traditional technologies used to process grain. In effort to reanimate the village and traditions, a smallholding can be found as part of the museum, where children can see ducks, chickens, geese, rabbits and other traditional domestic animals. The Open-air Museum is the first folk architecture museum in Slovakia that enables blind and visually impaired people to enjoy the unique experience of touching the history.

Young visitors with a sense of adventure can also enjoy a visit or stay in the **medieval military camp** below the castle,

where time stopped in the 16th century and the Knights rule. There, children can improve their crossbow and bow and arrow shooting, practise horse riding, try living like a falconer and at the same time enjoy some medieval meals. A medieval pub, which is a part of the camp, is an all year round refuge for those who like to absorb the medieval atmosphere.





TATRA NATIONAL PARK

"Of all the mountain ranges in the Kingdom of Hungary, the Carpathians must be mentioned first. The highest and steepest ridges of these mountains soar above the clouds in the Spiš area. As they are almost always covered in snow they are also known as the Snowy Mountains. The Slavs call them the Tatras, meaning bare

rocky mountains. They are much steeper and wilder than the Alps and almost impassable, which is why they are so rarely visited by nature-lovers..." wrote Dávid Frälich, a scholar from Kežmarok, in 1639.





The search for the Tatras' highest peak took a few centuries. The first peak measurements date to 1763, when the Viennese Court ordered cartographic processing of the entire Habsburg Monarchy. After the first measuring, the authorised military measurers determined Kriváň to be the highest peak. Their 'mistake' was eight years later confirmed



After more than four centuries, this assertion is no longer valid. The Tatra peaks have been conquered and are now a popular and frequented place. Their roughness and exceptionality has been retained even after such a long time and continues to command respect. For their breath-taking beauty and scenery, they have naturally become a symbol of the Slovak nation and are treated as a most valued treasure. To show due respect and in acknowledgement of the need to protect it for future generations, the Western and Eastern Tatras were declared the Tatra National Park on 1st January 1949. And so the Tatra National Park (TANAP) became the oldest national park in Slovakia. The mission of the park, which covers an area of 1045 km² , is to



preserve the diverse plant and animal life and generally protect nature in the Tatras. From 1993, the High Tatras have been a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. There can be found the highest Carpathian peaks, 35 valleys, more than 100 glacial mountain lakes, more than 300 caves and several waterfalls in as well as 600 km of tourist paths and sixteen sign posted cycle routes.



by mineralogist Ján Fichtel from Bratislava in his measurements. An English traveller, Robert Townson, came up with a new hypothesis, according to which Lomnický štít or Ľadový štít were deemed to reign over the Tatras. Scientists followed his opinion in the 19th century, until, in 1838, further measurements awarded the status of highest peak to Gerlachovský štít, a status undisputed until today.



Gerlachovský štít (Gerlach peak) rises to 2654 metres above sea level and has the largest footprint of all the Tatra peaks. Perhaps the absence of a slim elegance, on which its neighbours pride themselves, was the reason for such a long delay in its acceptance as the highest. One thing however can't be denied, the peak's shape and size gives it an appropriate majesty. Moreover, thanks to its accessibility and beautiful mountain scenery, it has become one of the most visited peaks. Its name comes from the village into which nature put it. It is assumed that its first visitors were hunters and botanists, however it is hard to say whether any of them reached

the top. This achievement is documented to belong to Ján (Johann) Still, a German teacher from the Spiš area, who accomplished the hike with his brother-in-law, his friend who was a miller and two unknown chamois hunters. Later, Ján Ruman Driečny Jr. and Ján Paterňák,

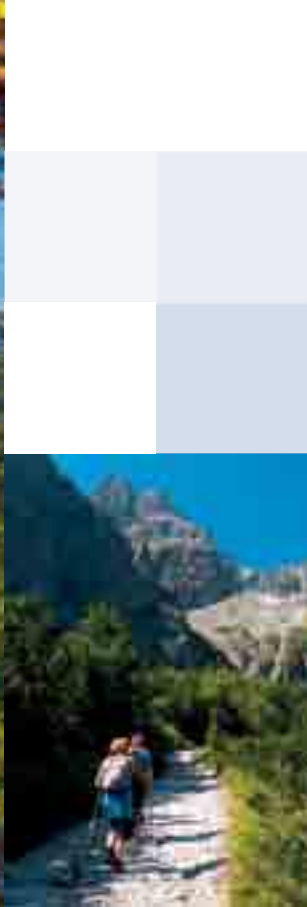


Slovak mountain guides from Štôla, climbed the majestic mountain in 1875. Despite the fact that Gerlachovský štít seems innocent from a distance and climbing it is not considered the most arduous, it is still only allowed with the assistance mountain guide even today, as, although the terrain is technically undemanding, it hides many pitfalls along with sudden weather changes. Once you are at the top, listen carefully, and you may hear the voice of Golan, the protector of the mountain, who calls upon everybody from here to follow the path of goodness...

Lomnický štít (Lomnický peak), for many years the competitor of Gerlachovský štít in the battle for the honour of highest peak, rises up to 2633.8 metres above sea level. Its slender and steep silhouette makes it easily recognisable but difficult to conquer. It was conquered, however, for the first time in the second half of the 18th century by a cobbler and amateur miner Jakub Fábry. In 1793, the afore mentioned English traveller, naturalist and doctor, Robert Townson, followed. He managed to measure almost exactly its height with a barometric measuring device and soon after wrongly declared it the highest peak of the mountain range. But Lomnický štít has not lost all its superiority as its top is

accessible by cable car, making it one of the most visited peaks. At the top, visitors can find an observatory with astronomical and meteorological stations, a TV relay station and, surprisingly, even a natural botanic garden! Right there on the rocks you can admire more than 100 types of lichens, 40 types of bryophytes and one type of fern as well as some 34 types of flower, all of which are remarkably resistant to long winters and short summers. Many of them have origins in previous geological eras, and as many as ten are endemic, which means you will not find them anywhere else in the world. The main asset of the second highest peak in the Tatras is that, when the weather is good, there is a magical view of the neighbouring summits and deep valleys between them. You will need luck on your side to appreciate this spectacle, however, as the summit is often hidden by clouds and a thick fog, so that even its guard and protector Belan has to tilt his head down to see what is happening below...





With its height of 2494.7 metres above sea level, **Kriváň** can't keep up with its companions. It occupies only seventh place in the Tatras mountain range but is nevertheless an extremely important symbol of national awareness and identity for the people of Slovakia. That is one of the reasons why, since 2005, you have been able to see it on the back of Slovak one, two and five cent coins. At first glance, Kriváň attracts attention for its atypical shape with a bent top, which, according

to legend, was once was just as straight and magnificent as the neighbouring peaks but an angel hit its top and broke it. Kriváň inherited its blue tint from its protector, Modroň, a tint that changes colour according to its patron's mood. That is why it sometimes it glows sky-blue and other times royal blue or a sinister ink blue. When following a route up the south or southwest slopes to the top, visible signs of mining, which was on the rise between the 15th and the 18th

centuries, can be observed. Mining tunnels and the remains of miners' houses can still be found there, and it was probably those miners who first reached the top of the broken summit. In any case, the first recorded ascent occurred in 1722, when A. Czirbesz, an Evangelical priest and a scientist from Spišská Nová Ves, visited the area. Kriváň acquired its symbolic value during the times when Slovak national awareness increased in 1841, when national revivalists, concentrated around Ľudovít Štúr, started organising regular national appearances. However, additional to its cultural and symbolic value, Kriváň is an ideal place for mountain hiking and skiing.



From the more than 100 glacial mountain lakes located within the TANAP area, there are a few that stand out. One of them is undoubtedly **Velké Hincovo pleso**. With a surface covering 20.08 hectares and a depth of 53.7, it is the biggest and deepest mountain lake in Slovakia. Ice covers its surface for an average of 270 days a year.

On the western side, under Malý ľadový štít (Small Ice peak), at 2192 metres above sea level, is the highest situated lake in Central Europe, **Modré pleso (Blue mountain lake)**. Its oval shape is supposed to be an image of the face of a woman who found her husband frozen there, and the azure waters the tears she cried for him.

In the High Tatras, the most visited lakes are **Štrbské and Popradské pleso**, both of which are bustling with tourists and have a sensitively built infrastructure of hotels and restaurants around them.





There are more than 300 caves in the TANAP. The biggest and only one opened to public is **Belianska jaskyňa (Belianska cave)**. It is located in Belianske Tatry at 890 metres above sea level. According to the charcoal inscriptions on the walls, miners as far back as 1826 knew of its existence but it remained secret until



The nature protecting activities of the Tatra National Park focus on the Tatra's unique fauna and flora, many species of which are endemic. For that reason you will not be able to admire the agility of a **Tatra Chamois**, or humble beauty of a **Bird's-eye Primrose**. Some of the rarest species living in the Tatras are the **European snow vole**, **Alpine Marmot**, **Grey wolf**, **Brown bear**, **Eurasian lynx**, **Golden eagle** and **Eurasian eagle-owl**. Rare flowers such as **Ranunculus glacialis (Alpine buttercup)**, **Dianthus nitidus (Carpathian Pink)**, **Ranunculus reptans (Prostrate buttercup)**, **Delphinium oxysepalum (Larkspur)** and **Saxifraga wahlenbergii (Rockfoil)** bring a colourful variety to the Tatra peaks.



1881. From its total known length of 3.5 km, there is a 1135 m long trail open to public where visitors can view a waterfall, pagoda shaped stalagmites, one of which looks remarkably similar to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and smaller lakes. When you visit the cave, be mindful of the presence of its current residents, including three types of bats, plain dormouse and *Bathynella chappuisi* Delachaux in the lakes.



How the Tatras got their name...

The legend

Where the majestic peaks of the highest mountains in the Carpathians now stand, there was said to once be a plateau from where it was possible to see Poland. Legend says that it was to this plateau that a horde of bloodthirsty Tatars came looting and robbing to such an extent that life there was unbearable for seven long years afterwards. The devastation was such that Slovak soldiers decided to stop the Tatars advancing further. The first battle showed the soldiers to be more skilled with whips and scythes than at fighting the Tatars with their sword and sabre skills. However, the soldiers did not back down and thought to die rather than run from battle, so planned an attack on the Tatar camp at dawn of the next day with the element of surprise on their side. During the night before the attack, a great storm started at midnight accompanied by a terrible roaring and finishing with a flying comet. At dawn the soldiers arrived at the Tatar camp as planned, but to their surprise, there was no camp but instead tall and rocky mountains, which they named the Tatras to commemorate victory over the bandits. It was only some time later than the name was changed to its modern form of the Tatras

The reality

Historians have confirmed that the Tatars really were in Slovakia in the 13th century, but probably never in the Tatras. They purposefully and successfully looted mainly areas the southern part of Slovakia and when there was a danger that they would advance northwards people sought refuge in the mountains.

However, the Tatras were here long before the Tatars appeared. The mountains were first documented in 1086 and referred to as the Tryti, the name for a cliff or steep rock. Other documents have referred to the same mountains by other names such as Tyrtur and Turtur. The modern version of the name was first mentioned in a deed from Prince Boleslav from Krakow in 1255.

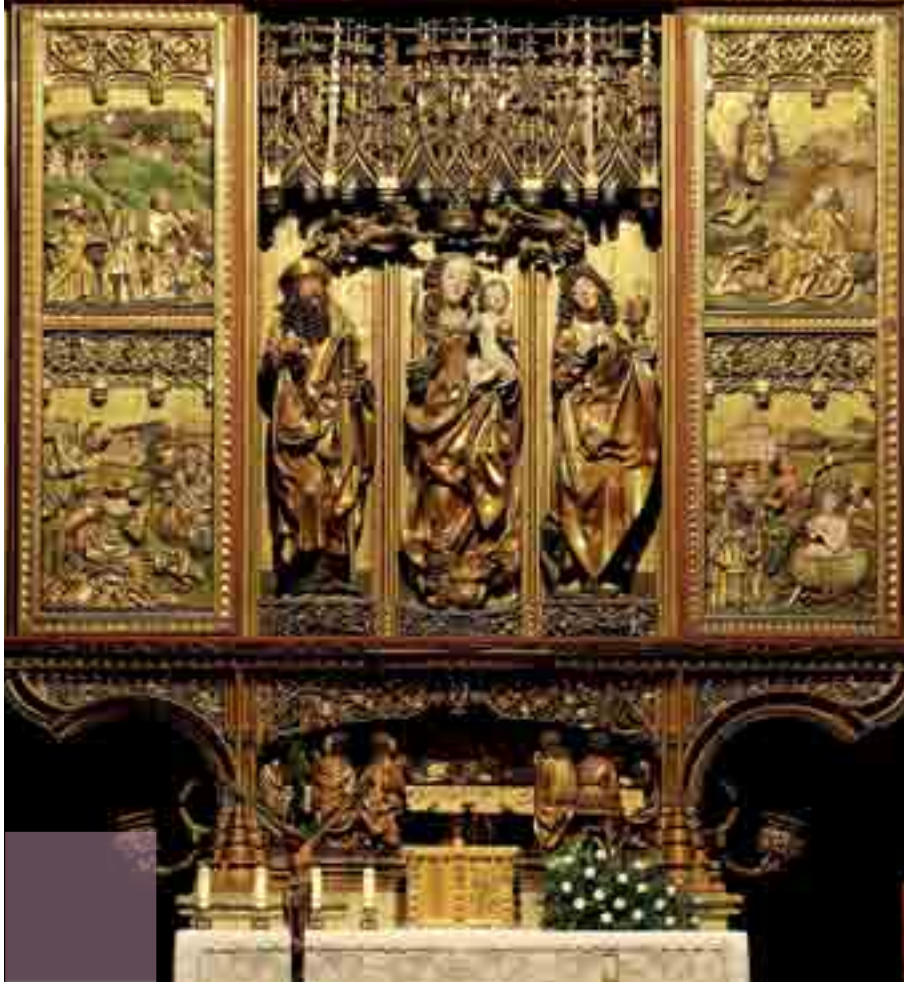


research in the area of the national park; the historical section covers colonisation of the mountain area and the influence of human activity on the natural environment; and the ethnographic section, called 'From a cradle to grave', is collection of references to the material and spiritual culture of the people the areas both in and below the Tatras. There is also the Tatra Nature Exhibition, a botanical garden located in the terrain near the museum.



In 1957, the TANAP Museum was established and is today is located at Tatranská Lomnica. The museum collection includes many botanical, zoological, historic, cartographic, geological and ethnographic items. There are four main exhibitions: the natural sciences section focuses on the geological structure, fauna and flora of the Western, High and Belianske Tatras; the nature preservation section maps the history of nature preservation development in the High Tatras, mountain rescue activities and current





godliness of its creator. It has been fulfilling its liturgical purpose in the church of St James in Levoča for more 500 years now. Wars, uprisings, the Protestant Reformation or the arrival of Baroque sensibilities have not damaged it. Thanks to an invisible protecting hand and the painstaking attention of its restorers, it still speaks the spiritual language until today...



THE ALTAR OF MASTER PAVOL OF LEVOČA

The Gothic altar of the Virgin Mary and St James The Apostle intrigues with its impressive dimensions and enormously appealing adaptation, which demonstrate the skills and

Carved from soft maple wood, richly decorated with artistic carvings and paintings, it fills the sanctum of the Church of St James with its magnificence from the floor right up to the vault. Thanks to its honourable dimensions – a height 18.62 m and width 6.2 m – it is the tallest wooden Gothic altar in the world. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St James The Apostle, it tells many familiar stories.



The personality of its creator is, however, still a bit of a mystery.

Very little is known about where Master Pavol of Levoča was born, where he grew up and studied the art of carving. We don't even know his surname. But, judging by the influence evident in his work, it can be assumed that he was educated in one of the carving workshops in southern Germany, maybe Nuremberg or Passau. Evidence of his arrival to Slovakia around 1500 can be found in Sabinov and Banská Bystrica. He came to Levoča sometime after 1500, where he created his monumental work of art, the only one with his evident signature, and spent the rest of his working life here. At that time, Levoča was a rich royal town with a strong economic and cultural back-



ground, which probably secured him enough orders requesting high artistic value. According to written sources that were not destroyed in a fire in 1550, which completely destroyed the town's archive, Master Pavol was a respectable citizen who actively participated in town affairs. A document from 1506 mentions his acceptance into a religious-social alliance, The Brotherhood of Christ's Body, as well as confirming, along with another document from 1515, that Master Pavol was later elected its chair.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Master Pavol received an order to build a new main altar from priest, Ján Henckel of Levoča. The altar was requested to be the pride of the church's sanctuary as well as a symbol of the town's wealth. It was to be based on the altar in the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Krakow, made by recognised Nuremberg sculptor, Veit Stoss, and considered his masterpiece. Work began on the altar in Levoča in 1507 and continued until 1518. The result is a so-called triptych or

three-part altar. Its centre part is a reredos with statues of the Virgin Mary, St James and St John the Evangelist, all created in larger than life size and with a realistic finish. The slim statue of the Virgin Mary, with the face of a beautiful middle-aged woman and baby Jesus in her arms, is 2.47 m tall. A sceptre in her right hand and a crown held above her head by angels ordains her as Regina Coeli, the Queen of heaven. St James, to her right, is 2.32 m tall. He can be identified by scallops on his hat and pilgrim's staff.



To her left, with a typical feminine face and wavy hair, is the 2.32 m tall St John holding a chalice with a snake climbing out of it. Above these sculptures are four smaller ones of the western church fathers, St Gregory the Great, St Jerome, St Augustine and St Ambrose.

Woodcarvings on the inner side and paintings on the outer side of the altar were used by Master Pavol to tell famous biblical stories from the New Testament. The first story is the Last Supper, which according to the liturgical calendar, is the start of the Passion. The twelve Apostles are sitting at a table, positioned around a central, under a canopy decorated with ivy and bird motifs. When creating Jesus' facial expression, Master Pavol decided to capture the key moment of his tragic realisation that one of his Apostles is about to betray him. In Master Pavol's interpretation of the Last Supper on the woodcarving, only Peter, who is sitting to the left of Christ, and Judas, who is sitting opposite but can be identified by a money pouch on his back, are fully aware of the weight of these words. The remaining Apostles are pictured in a good mood whilst eating and drinking. According to art historians and restorers, Master Pavol made a small joke in the design when he supposedly made one of



the Apostles in his own image. This claim is based on a cap worn by woodcarvers at that time, which, according to the hierarchy of the Apostles is worn by who would be St Andrew the fisherman, the first to be called. If this assumption were correct, it would be the only preserved image of Master Pavol from Levoča.

The epic story continues on the left altar wing with scenes from St James' life. It contains a scene of the Dispersion of the Apostles who after Jesus' death parted and went to spread the Word of God around the world, as well as a scene picturing the decapitation of St Jacob. The artist dedicated the right altar wing to



St John the Evangelist, the fate of whom is represented by two scenes. The martyrdom of St John illustrates the story of how John refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods in Rome for which they tortured him in a cauldron with boiling oil. But once the oil turned into a pleasant bath, the Romans sent him to exile. The second elaborated scene shows St John on the island of Patmos writing his Revelations at the moment of experiencing Virgin Mary's apparition.



Paintings on the outer side of the fixed and moveable altar wings show another eight scenes from New Testament in the form of a continuous story about Jesus, starting on the left with Jesus in Gethsemane followed by the whipping, his coronation with thorns, Ecce Homo, Christ before Pilate's court, Christ falling under the weight of the cross, the crucifixion and his resurrection.



According to the findings of restorers who worked on the altar, the very bottom part as well as the statues of the Twelve Apostles on the tall extension at the top come from the 14th century. It is assumed that they came from the original main altar that was later replaced by the new Gothic one. The altar has undergone extensive reconstruction in recent years.





of different cultures between the 16th and the 18th century. Unique Roman Catholic, Protestant churches and Eastern Rite churches built without a single nail.



According to historians, there were around 300 wooden churches at some point. Most of them have been lost over time but those that remain are an important demonstration of the variety of cultures and influences that met on our soil. In the Prešov region, 27 of these spiritual testimonies can be found in the

THE WOODEN CHURCHES

The Carpathians. The crossroad of eastern, western, southern and northern cultural influences and various religions. 61 unique sacral buildings – wooden churches, the living witnesses of a peaceful coexistence and mixing



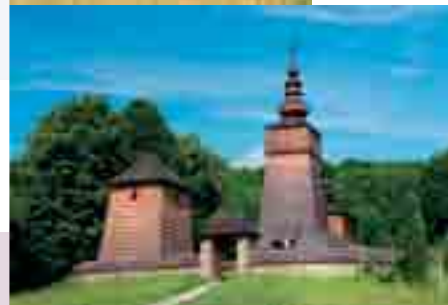
form of Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Rite churches. Since 1968 they have been proudly adorned with the status of national cultural monuments, with most of them still serving their spiritual purpose. As a precious symbol of the Love of God, symbiosis between life and nature and compliment to Old Slavic traditions, they also represent hundreds of years of the history of our ancestors.



From an architectural point of view, they are almost without exception timber buildings built between the 16th and 18th centuries. Interestingly, they were all built without using a single metal nail. In most cases there is a small cemetery in their immediate vicinity. The buildings have a right-angled or polygonal footprint in the shape of a Greek cross. A common feature is that their interiors are designed in three parts, a reference to the Holy Trinity. The Trinity symbolism is often reinforced



with three towers that ascend towards the west. The roofs are covered solely by shingle and decorative works consisting of geometrical ornaments made by carpenters and carvers or the specific profile of the shingles. Even though the buildings are not reinforced with any metal, it can be found there in the form of decorative iron crosses or functional features such as lattices or ironwork. The connection of function with art in the interior of the churches is particularly noteworthy in the case of the precious iconostasis' that divide the altar from the rest of the space. Icons, arranged in a strict order, depict scenes from the Old and New testaments that are meant to simply and understandably communicate biblical content to believers.



Their architectural authenticity unspoilt by reconstructions and extensions, the original positioning of the buildings, their utilisation as a sacred space according to their original purpose, the preservation of the interior furnishings as well as representation of four different religions have brought a tribute to four of the churches located in the Prešov region, which have been entered onto the UNESCO World Heritage List. Important spiritual and cultural message are still passed on to believers and visitors in Hervartov, Bodružal, Kežmarok and Ladomirová.



Hervartov

A Gothic-styled Roman Catholic church dedicated to the St Francis of Assisi, dating from the end of the 15th century. Its interior is decorated with Gothic paintings from between 1665 and 1805. The church's dominant feature is the altar of St Catherine accompanied by two side altars dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St Barbara. There are also Gothic paintings of St Francis of Assisi, St Christopher and St Catherine of Siena. The interior underwent various modifications in the times of the Reformation and Anti-reformation but original paintings were restored during the 1970s.



Kežmarok

This Evangelical church dedicated to the Holy Trinity is unique in many respects. Built in 1717, during a period when Protestants did not have religious freedom in our country, their churches could only be built based on a special permission, an article issued by the Šoproňa council, which in this case was given in 1681. The article allowed the Protestants to build one church in each free royal town at the Evangelical Church's expense. The church had to be situated in a suburb and





built from the cheapest materials, which is why Evangelical churches were built entirely from wood. Protestants from all over Europe contributed financially to the building of the church in Kežmarok, with it being partly covered by the collections ordered to this purpose by Swedish and Danish Kings in their respective countries. Supposedly, Swedish sailors helped the local craftsmen to build the church and that is why the upper part of the interior resembles an upside down ship's bow. Similar to the Greek Catholic wooden churches, this one also has a footprint in the shape of a Greek cross. Its discreet exterior is compensated for by its beautiful Baroque interior. A well-preserved ceiling painting depicts the twelve Apostles and four Evangelists on a background of heaven with clouds. The primary motif of the main altar is a depiction of Calvary by a local woodcarver, Ján Lerch, who was



also creator of the ornamented pulpit, which the builders placed it in such a way that it is visible from everywhere in the church. Valuable furnishings include also an organ, which is considered the oldest and most valuable working double-manual instrument in Slovakia. The only stone object in the church is a sacristy with two rooms converted from an original renaissance pub.

Bodružal

A stunning Greek Catholic church of a Byzantine Rite dedicated to St Nicholas the Wonderworker, archbishop of Myra in Lycia. Built in 1658, it has white gold Baroque interior decorations and is one of the oldest sacral wooden buildings of the 'wooden' Carpathians. The church's external architecture bears features inspired by Byzantine sacral art. The main altar and iconostasis inside are also typical for a Byzantine Rite but the Baroque paintings and decorative objects indicate also the influence of Latin Rites. Wall paintings from the late 18th century depict biblical scenes from the Apocalypse and Crucifixion. A three-row iconostasis from the same period bears Rococo features.

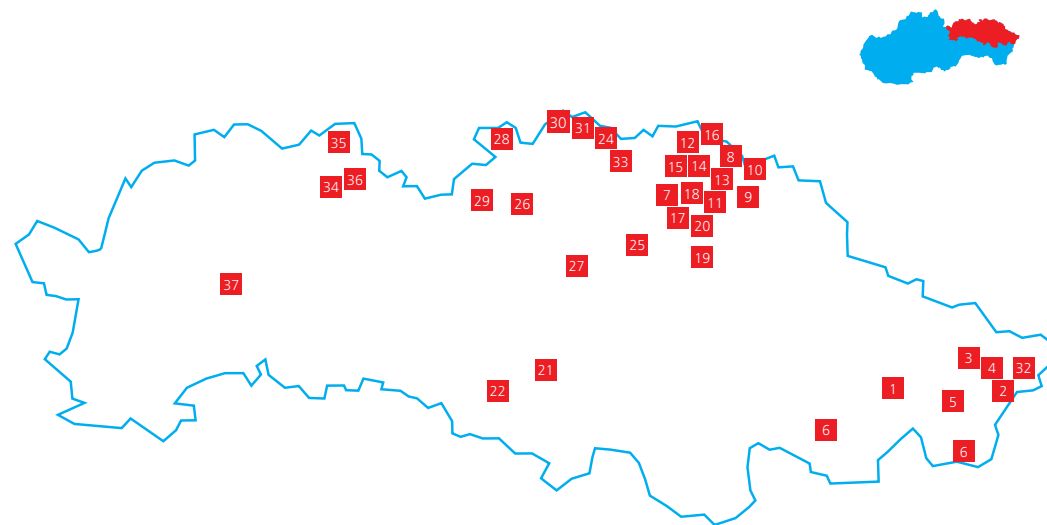


Ladomirová

A church of a Byzantine Rite with belfry, dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, it dates from 1742. It is one of a specific type church, the so-called 'lemkovsky' type, inspired by the sacred architecture of the Carpatho-Rusyns ethnic group. This influence can be seen in their positioning and the addition of a belfry above the church's hall. A five-row iconostasis from the 18th century is one of the most valuable artistic furnishings in the interior of the church. In its main row



are icons of St Nicholas the Bishop, Virgin Hodegetria, Jesus Christ the Teacher and St Michael the Archangel. The second row depicts the content of important religious holidays and images of the Apostles were placed on the third row. Pairs of characters in the fourth row are completed by Christ rising from the dead in the fifth row. As well as the iconostasis, wall paintings, painted by the monks Filion and Cyprián, and various liturgical items also have a high artistic and aesthetic and cultural value.



Carpathian wooden arch in the Prešov region

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Snina | 12 Korejovce | 26 Krivé |
| 2 Uličské Krivé | 13 Hunkovce | 27 Tročany |
| 3 Topoľa | 14 Krajné Čierno | 28 Frička |
| 4 Ruský Potok | 15 Dobroslava | 29 Lukov-Venécia |
| 5 Kalná Rostoka | 16 Nižný Komárnik | 30 Vyšná Polianka |
| 6 Hrabová Rostoka | 17 Nová Polianka | 31 Varadka |
| | 18 Ladomirová | 32 Zboj |
| | 19 Stropkov | 33 Mikulášová |
| | 20 Potoky | |
| | 21 Prešov | 34 Stará Ľubovňa |
| | 22 Brežany | 35 Hraničné |
| 7 Svidník | | 36 Matysová |
| 8 Bodružal | | |
| 9 Miroľa | 23 Bardejov | 37 Kežmarok |
| 10 Príkra | 24 Jedlinka | |
| 11 Šemetkovce | 25 Kožany | |



mostly at the end of autumn, with the colour of lime trees, ashes and maples. This diverse mosaic is completed by rare types of juniper (*Juniperus sabina* L.) and yew tree (*Taxus baccata*).



PIENINY NATIONAL PARK

3749 hectares of astounding beauty lay in the northern part of Slovakia along the Polish border on the banks of the foamy river Dunajec. For centuries, it has been carving its way underneath the limestone cliffs covered in the original fir, beech and spruce forest competing,



The nature around Pieniny, a part of Beskids, was established a National Park in 1967. In addition to a rare forest and protected endemic fauna and flora, the river Dunajec with its lovely canyon naturally dominates the whole area. In contrast to the neighbouring Tatra National Park, there are no majestic peaks in Pieniny, but the scenery unfolding before visitors' eyes is no less dramatic or beautiful. Moreover, the easily accessible and tourist-friendly terrain allows for exploration of the National Park via hiking trails, cycle paths or over water by boat or raft.





One of the most romantic and sought out places in the National Park is the **Dunajec river canyon**, a gorge, which on its way to the Baltic sea, is fed by water from the Lesnický potok stream and later made stronger still by the its biggest source, the River Poprad. Covering an area of 360 hectares, the Pieniny National Park is the smallest in Slovakia and home to many rare species of flora and fauna, represented by Carpathian and Western Carpathian endemic flora species such as the *Arabis pieninica* (Alpine rock-cress), *Dendranthema zawadskii* (a type of chrysanthemum), *Erysimum pieninicum*

(a genus of the wallflower) and *Taraxacum pieninicum* (a special type of dandelion), and fauna species such as Alpine shrew, Rufous-tailed rock thrush and wallcreeper. The river canyon is also home to the black stork, lesser spotted eagle and Eurasian eagle-owl. And in the waters you can find brown trout, grayling and the European otter.



Pieniny National Park holds several treasures that may only be viewed from a distance. One of them is the **Haligovské skaly rocks reserve**. A karst rock massif divided by five furrows can be observed from selected surrounding tourist trails and because its development was isolated from the rest of the Tatras, numerous endemic flora species are found here. The forests consist of beech-fern with a fragment of relict pine alongside trees including spruce, larch, fir and pine. In the cliff formation of the Haligovské skaly rocks, at 750 metres above

European otter (*Lutra lutra*)

This protected inhabitant of Pieniny National Park can be seen very rarely. It is a shy and careful animal that is active mostly at night. But the footprints from their short limbs with webbed paws and a heavy tail print can be found on the banks of the Dunajec. There, close to the river, under the tree roots, it digs a 2 to 3 metre longholt (den) littered with moss. Otters are very skilled but easy to please hunters. In fact, they are comfortable with whatever they can catch with the least possible effort. Their choice delicacy is an eel but they can sufficiently satisfy their hunger with fish, lobster, smaller water mammals, amphibians or invertebrates. The European otter was once very populous but due to being widely hunted for their fur and damage caused to the environment their numbers have been decimated. For that reason, law has protected this animal since 1948.





A village called **Červený Kláštor** is at the vibrant centre of Pieniny. It got its name from a dominant building of the same name, a Carthusian Monastery with an eye-catching red roof. According to legend, the monastery was established as a result of the violent death of a leader from Chmeľov, who was killed by a member of a prominent family, magister Kokoš. To redeem himself from this crime he was ordered to establish six monasteries. He managed only two. The second one in St Anton valley, in a village called Lechnice, which was later renamed as Červený Kláštor.



sea level, there a typical karst cave called **Aksamitka**, which was established as a protected natural site in 1976 and later declared a National Natural monument. There was a time when its domes with many stalagmites could be admired by visitors. However, in order to protect it, the cave is now closed to the public due to repeated damage to the interior. The result of the now uninterrupted peace of the cave and its microclimate is that several types of bat have taken up residence in this unique habitat.





According to historical sources the construction of the monastery probably started in 1320 after approval by King Charles Robert I of Anjou. Its history was later connected to Carthusian and Camaldolese hermit orders. The Carthusians lived there in isolation from secular inhabitants in silence and temperance. In the first half of the 15th century, the Hussite army conquered the monastery and in the beginning of the 16th century the monks were forced to leave. In the following time period the monastery had several secular owners and was not returned to the church until the beginning of the 18th century when it was acquired by the Benedictine Camaldolese order. With their arrival, a new era of monastic expansion started. Associated with its redevelopment, several Baroque



features were added to the architecture. The monks similarly rebuilt the main monastery church, the Church of St Anton. However, the exterior retained its Gothic character even after the restoration but the interior arches were given a new decorative Baroque paint finish.

Frater Cyprián stands out the anonymous crowd of monastery occupants. His real name was František Ignác Jaschkeho and he lived there in the 18th century. He was a Camaldolese monk and a generally respected traveller, healer, collector and constructor. He was supposedly obsessed with a desire to fly. It is said that he made himself a set of wings and used to fly around Červený Kláštor. A written record actually exists in the form of an archive document from around 1760, in which a certain professor from Rimavská Sobota wrote: "Frater Cyprián attached a devil's



machine to himself on top of the Three Crowns and with its help flew over to the Morské oko lake. The Bishop was not present at the execution and we did not manage to see the monk who was taken to a place from where he will not see the mountains anymore and will not be tempted to fly again...". The legend about the flying monk Cyprián has been keeping writers, historians and technicians busy for over 200 years and slightly overshadows the contribution of this honourable

monk to many scientific fields, especially medicine, pharmaceuticals, alchemy and botany. He was sought out by people from far away for his healing skills. He was making and selling the medicines himself and the money he made was used to establish a fund to develop a community pharmacy. One of his best-written and encyclopaedic works is a herbarium with 283 pressed plants from Pieniny and Belianske Tatry



mountains area, with commentaries in Greek, Latin, Polish and German. The herbarium can be admired today in a pharmaceutical exhibition in the monastery. A collection of original medical cabinets from the early 18th century, medical scales, made in Amsterdam in the 17th century, and a copy of the first Slovak pharmacopoeia text, the so called Bratislava Torkoš pharmaceutical tax from 1745, can also be found there.

From 1820 until 1945 the monastery systematically declined. Then in 1956, comprehensive reconstruction started. It currently houses a museum exhibition that maps out the history of the monastery and its various orders of monks. A part of the exhibition is the restored church of St Anton the Hermit and valuable artistic and historic relics from Červený Kláštor and the northern part of the Spiš Region. The village of Červený Kláštor and its architectural dominance coexist in perfect harmony.



Pieniny

This 35 km long and 6 km wide mountain range is shared with neighbouring Poland. In Slovakia it takes up parts of the Kežmarok and Stará Ľubovňa districts and in Poland the Nowy Targ district. Most of Pieniny's high peaks – Tri koruny (Three crowns) at 982 metres above sea level, Nová Hora (new mountain) at 902 metres above sea level and Čertežik at 774 metres above sea level – are located in Poland. However, the highest peak, Vysoké skalky (high rocks) at a height of 1050 metres above sea level, is located in Slovakia. The Pieniny are divided into three parts: the Spiš Region Pieniny, Central Pieniny and Little Pieniny. The Spiš Region Pieniny are bounded by Bialka and Niedzica rivers and lie completely on Polish soil. The Central Pieniny are divided further into Czorsztyn Pieniny (Poland), the Tri Koruny Massif with the Haligovské skaly rocks and Pieninky with a picturesque canyon of the Lesnický potok stream.

The Little Pieniny is a wide mountain range that runs along the country border above Lesnica village from the canyon of the Lesnický potok stream to the gap above Litmanová village. Pieniny's highest peak is a part of this massif.

Osturňa

In the middle of Pieniny's mountain landscape lays one of the biggest reserves of folk architecture in Slovakia, the village of Osturňa, often called a 'living open-air museum'. The original villagers were mainly Ruthenian shepherds. The village itself spans a length of almost 9 km and is filled with traditional timber houses with ornamental paintings on the corner logs and window frames. They are built as a chain with closed square yards. The dominant building of the village is the Greek Catholic church dating from 1796, located on a hill behind a village brook. In Osturňa, time goes much slower and it is an ideal location for enjoying hiking in unspoilt nature where mushrooms, raspberries, blueberries and other treats can be picked in handfuls.



place create an atmosphere that cannot be compared with any other Slovak town.



LEVOČA

If there is a Slovak town that can speak to you with a special poetry, it will certainly be Levoča. The well-preserved city walls and historical centre with the sacral dominance of the church of St James, charming townhouses and the general urban character of this



The first written reference to the town comes from 1249, where it is mentioned as 'Leucha'. It was a German colonisation centre and in 1271 became capital of the Spiš community (Spoločenstvo spišských Sasov) and a residence of its Count. For a very long time the town benefited from its strategic position on the trade route Via Magna and very quickly profited from various privileges. Gradual weakening of the Spiš

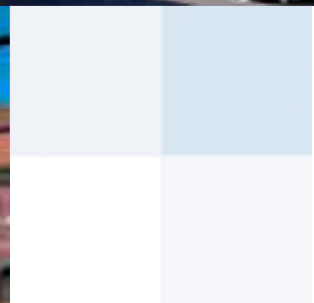




community's influence resulted in Levoča being designated a free royal town in 1323. The 14th century is considered the town's economic peak. King Charles Robert I of Anjou was partly responsible for this when he granted the town the right to store goods, later strengthened with a privilege that allowed the people of Levoča to deliver goods, toll-free, all around the country regardless of the storage rights in other towns. The result was a trading fever on an international level. Levoča was trading with Krakow, German Hanseatic League towns and Venice. Merchants were exporting precious metals, furs, leather, wax, wine and prunes to Poland and importing lead, salt, textiles, hops and fish. Many craft

guilds and carving workshops operated in town. The expansion was disrupted by various external circumstances beginning with a big fire in 1550, through dynastic disagreements between aristocrats and finally Turkish attacks. Well-preserved architectural and cultural monuments remind us today of the town's golden era and they have rightfully brought tribute to the town in the form of entry onto the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2009.

The Town Monument Reserve is a set of 354 cultural and historical monuments located inside the almost completely preserved 2.5 km city wall system. Most of these items can be found in the central square, the biggest medieval square in Europe. The square is dominated by the three-nave **church of St James**, from the late 14th century, with a set of eleven gothic and renaissance altars and many sacral relics. The church's dedication to St James the Apostle, patron saint of pilgrims and workmen, may not have been coincidence. Worshipping St James had a long tradition in the town and his image appeared on the big town seal from 1409. Historical documents state that the three-nave church with a sanctuary and a chapel of St James was finished in 1400 and all other building work was





there. The church underwent various restorations that reflect the growth and prosperity of the town. The most appealing ones occurred in the 16th century when the town council, together with the priest and humanist Ján Henckel, decided to refresh the old fashioned furnishings and ordered a new main altar from Master Pavol. Individuals, artisan guilds, religious orders, associations and even the town itself voluntarily participated in the renovation, which included restoration of the interior and

considered an addition. The contracting authorities focused their attention on the use of grand interior furnishing from the beginning. During the first stage, the church walls were covered by paintings, of which ones from the sanctuary depicting the Apostles and saints have been preserved. Distinct and moralistic depictions of The Seven Works of Mercy and The Seven Deadly Sins on the northern side of the lateral nave and scenes from the life of St Dorothy are also preserved



addition of one of the first Renaissance buildings, a library above the chapel of St James' Chapel. The biggest attraction, however, continues to be Master Pavol's main altar, which, thanks to its height of 18.62 m and width of 6.2 m, is the tallest wooden late-Gothic altar in the world and his only artwork with his district signature. The church of St James was protected with an aura of the untouchable, even during the periods of Reformation in 1620s, during which the originally Roman Catholic church, that had been under Lutheran control for 130 years, was not negatively affected by the change of religion. Instead, it was the afore mentioned fire that proved fatal for the church when it significantly damaged the interior. The process of restoration brought with it several Renaissance fea-



tures for the interior. The current version of the church was finalised in the 18th and 19th centuries. Amongst Levoča's sacral **monuments of national importance**, as well as the church of St James, **is a preserved cloister found in the Minorite monastery**, which is a one of a kind in our country.

One of the secular opposites, which contributes to the unique character of the town, is the Renaissance town hall, built between the 15th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. The original Gothic building, together with the town's archive, was destroyed in the big fire along with most of the town. The current





Renaissance Town Hall was finished in 1616 with the Renaissance tower, used as a belfry, added later. The Town Hall building features beautiful facade paintings that present civic virtues: moderation, prudence, bravery, patience and justice. At present, the Spiš Museum is housed within the Town Hall premises and the council hall is used for representative purposes. A sought out and interesting object in front of the Town hall is **Cage of Shame** from the 16th century, which was used for punishing less serious crimes. Originally it stood where today stands an Evangelical church, and after becoming the property of the Probstner family, stood where you will today find the hospital. However, the family gave it to the town as a gift in 1933 and since then it has been an essential part of the square.

The square's character is thanks to the presence of more than **50 town and aristocratic houses**, from among which **Turzo house** stands out. It is a Renaissance palace from the 15th century with charming attic decorative features and rich sgraffito features. It belonged to one of the most important Hungarian families of the time, the Turzo family, who intensively

traded metal in Krakow and Levoča in the 15th century. They were also active in the metallurgical business and mining in the Spiš and Gemer regions and central Slovakia as well as Poland, Transylvania, the Czech Republic and Germany. In 1494, they established the Turzo-fugger company, which is often referred to as the first company in Europe from the early modern period. The company soon gained monopoly of the copper market and opened numerous European branches. At the beginning of the century, they completely took over the precious and non-ferrous metal market in the Kingdom of Hungary. Their residence in Levoča is a State Area Archive at present.



The White Lady of Levoča

The legend

The lovely Julia fell madly in love with a man from an enemy army. After dark, she opened a secret door in the city wall with a key stolen from the town's guardian in a hope they would seal their love. But the enemy army rushed in with him, too. For treason, Julia was put in prison and sentenced to death by decapitation. The last time she saw daylight was in 1715, and since then her soul cannot find peace and sometimes she walks along the city walls feeling sad...

The reality

The Legend of Levoča is based on true events. Juliana Korponaiová-Géciová was a Hungarian aristocrat accused of treason. During the anti-Habsburg uprising of František II. Rákoci, she was the mistress of a military leader, Baron Štefan Andráši. In 1712, she supposedly accepted a letter from emigrants with a notice about a new anti-imperial uprising that was addressed to the uprising's leaders. When questioned, she claimed she had burnt the letters. She was arrested and imprisoned at Červený Kameň Castle and later moved to Hungarian Győr, where she was tortured and tried. She was executed at a market in Győr on 25th September by decapitation. As for the alleged treason against Levoča she was supposed to have committed, it is clear from the historical information that she did not open the gate to the town. Štefan Andráši only delivered the notice to the town and letters about preliminary negotiations about capitulation to its defenders. The town apparently capitulated voluntarily after an agreement between the Town Council and imperial general.



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