



PREŠOVSKÝ
SAMOSPRÁVNÝ
KRAJ

A GOTHIC JOURNEY

The first Slovak thematic cultural journey has been uniting cities, villages, localities and sights since 1996. Throughout the journey, you can explore sights of Medieval and Gothic times in their most authentic and preserved form, telling the legacy of the extraordinarily skilled medieval craftsmen who dwelled and worked in the Spiš and Gemer regions. This Gothic journey consist of four main routes and will show you around the Prešov region, unveiling the historical hearts of picturesque medieval towns and behind the gates of majestic castles and portals of churches and chapels.



The Spiš-Gemer route

Levoča:	the church of St Jacob, the Town hall and museum
Dravce:	the Gothic stone bridge, the church of Antonites
Spišský Štvrtok:	the church of St Ladislaus, the chapel of the Zápolya family
Spišská Nová Ves:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and tower
Markušovce:	Dardanelly manor house, summer residence and museum
Dobšiná:	the Evangelical Church and the possibility to visit Dobšinská ice cave
Stratená:	the church of St Augustine
Muráň:	Muráň castle (ruins)
Revúca:	the church of St Lawrence
Chyžné:	the church of Annunciation of the Virgin Mary
Štítnik:	the Evangelical church
Ochtiná:	the Evangelical church and the possibility to visit Ochtinská aragonite cave
Koceľovce:	the Evangelical church
Betliar:	Betliar manor house, museum and park
Rožňava:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Evangelical church and watchtower
Krásnohorské Podhradie:	Krásna Hôrka Castle and the Andrassy family Mausoleum
Smolník:	the church of St Catherine
Gelnica:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and tower, the mining museum
Krompachy:	the church of St John the Apostle and Evangelist
Spišské Vlachy:	the church of St John the Baptist
Žehra:	the church of The Holy Spirit
Spišské Podhradie:	Spiš Castle, the church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary
Spišská Kapitula:	St Martin's cathedral
Spišský Hrhov:	the neo-Baroque manor house

The Spiš-Tatra route (since 2000)

Vrbov:	the church of St Servatius
Ľubica:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary
Kežmarok:	the Evangelical wooden church, Basilica of The Holy Cross, and Kežmarok Castle and museum
Veľká Lomnica:	the church of St Catherine of Alexandria
Poprad:	the church of St. Giles, Podtatranské museum
Poprad-Spišská Sobota:	the church of St George
Poprad-Matejovce:	the church of St Stephen the King

The Spiš-Pieniny route (since 2000)

Strážky:	the manor house and gallery, the church of St Anne
Spišská Belá:	the church of St Anthony the Hermit
Slovenská Ves:	the church of the Purification of the Virgin Mary
Spišská Stará Ves:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary
Červený Kláštor:	premises of the Carthusian monastery with the church of St Anthony the Hermit
Stará Ľubovňa:	Ľubovňa Castle and museum, the church of St. Nicholas
Hraničné:	the church of the Virgin Mary
Podolíneč:	the church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Piaristic church and monastery

The Gemer-Rimava route (since 2000)

Tisovec:	the Evangelical church
Rimavské Brezovo:	the Evangelical church
Kyjatice:	the Evangelical church
Kraskovo:	the Evangelical church
Rimavská Baňa:	the Evangelical church
Rimavská Sobota:	Gemer-Malohont regional museum
Číž:	the spa
Žíp:	the Evangelical church



decorations and furniture, including the famous altar made by Master Paul of Levoča, several well-preserved wall paintings, tombstones of famous individuals and figurative stained glasses.

The church bears the name of St Jacob the Apostle, the well-known guardian of pilgrims and workers, and the patron of the town since time immemorial. As we can see from the structure, the project itself was rather ambitious and demonstrated the prosperity of the town and the high living standard of its citizens. The significance of the sacral structure and the amount of investment it required tell us about the high level of learnedness and artistic maturity of the citizens of Levoča.



The main construction phase took place throughout the entire 14th century.

The sanctuary and chapel of St George were built during this phase, the latter of which served as a burial chapel for Juraj Ulenbach, a citizen of Košice. The following period included feverish work on the interior decoration, dominated by the main altar of the Virgin Mary and St Jacob the Apostle and which is ranked as the tallest late-Gothic wooden altar in Europe at 18.62 m. The church has been housing liturgical services for more than 500 years. The altar is carved out of a soft linden wood, richly furnished with woodcarvings and paintings and its superiority fills the space from the floor right up to the vault of

LEVOČA

The church of St Jacob

This Gothic structure from the 14th century is the biggest sacral structure in the Spiš region and the second biggest within Slovakia. It is located in the middle of the main town square and serves as the Roman Catholic parish church. The church is furnished with rare and highly valuable





the church. The altar was made by Master Pavol of Levoča, a skilful woodcarver and a honourable citizen of the town.

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 a scallop 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 depict stories from the New Testament. The opening scene is dedicated to the Last Supper, which marks the beginning of the week of Passion according to the liturgical calendar. 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. 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, and the right altar wing is dedicated to St John the Evangelist. 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. In addition to the main altar, Master Pavol is believed to have made the statues of St John the Almsgiver, St Nicholas and St Anne, the sculptures of

St Leonard and the Madonna on the altar, as well as the groups of sculptures called 'birth' and 'crucified'.

The famous cathedral library, the 'Bibliotheca Leutschoviensis', was one of the first Renaissance buildings in the town and also dates back to the days of Ján Henckel. Wall paintings in the cathedral are of a high artistic value. The oldest one of them comes from the 14th century. The painting is located on the northeast wall of the sanctuary and depicts two men working on a field. On the eastern wall of the southern aisle, there is a well-preserved painting of the Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and St John and on the third pillar of the northern aisle a painting from the 15th century with a cross motive depicting the Passion. In addition to these are several groups of paintings called 'morality', depicting the 'seven acts of mercy' and the 'seven deadly sins'. There is also an extensive and highly spiritual collection of 20 paintings portraying the life and legend of St Dorothea and in the southern antechamber can be found 'judgement day'.

More than 40 tombstones with epitaphs, dating from the 14th to 18th centuries, are evidence of the importance of the cathedral. The epitaphs include names of the deceased, dates of death, age, titles and ranks, based on which social status can be determined. The most valuable one, from the historical point of view, is the epitaph dated 1621, made by the local stonemason and constructor, Martin Urbanowitz, for his wife Margit. It is obvious from the epitaph that Margit was the granddaughter of Master Pavol the sculptor, who created the main altar. The oldest tombstone in the church is dated to the end of the 14th century and belongs to Juraj Ulenbach, a citizen of Košice and the constructor of the chapel of St George. Thurzo House, however, has the greatest number of such tombstones. The one with the highest artistic value is the Renaissance epitaph of Alexey I Thurzo, dating from the first half of the 16th century. Made of white marble and depicting a cross under which he kneels with his wife and three children. Attention must also be given to the painted Renaissance period epitaph of Georg Buchwald, from 1602. It ranks among the oldest painted-epitaphs in the church.



Stained glasses from the 19th century are an inseparable part of the building and contain a collection of figural scenes of St George fighting the Dragon, St Martin with a beggar, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, St Jacob with a shell and pilgrim's staff, St Joseph with baby Jesus and a lily, and St John the Evangelist with an eagle, chalice and a serpent. Stained glasses that portray of the first Hungarian King, Stephen, and Saint Ladislaus can be found in the cathedral sanctuary.

In 1550, a fire destroyed both the church and the large part of the town with Renaissance stalls, tombstones and epitaphs belonging to the period of restoration afterwards. The religious history of the church is rather interesting. Originally built as a Catholic parish church, it became the property of Lutherans in 1544 and belonged to them for 130 years. The change of religious orientation did not harm the church; on the contrary, there are many interesting construction elements from this period. The Lutheran period introduced a choir organ with a richly decorated body. The church became Catholic again in 1710.



The Town Hall

The secular opposite, 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



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.



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





DRAVCE

The church of St Elisabeth

Our Gothic journey continues to the village of Dravce. Here we can observe the early-Gothic church of St Elisabeth from the second half of the 13th century. The vault over the aisle is a bit younger having been built in the 15th century. The church is considered

highly valuable mainly due to its interior decorations and furniture. There are wall paintings from the end of the 13th century and mid 15th century, altars with Gothic sculptures and a Gothic carved Calvary. The main Gothic altar dates from around 1450, but was unfortunately not well preserved and is now in part housed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. The church was renovated extensively in 1956.

The Gothic stone bridge is most likely dated to the 13th century and is still functioning. The single-arch bridge is made of chipped quarry-stone.

SPIŠSKÝ ŠTVRTOK

The church of St Ladislaus

The sacral Gothic building with well-preserved Romanesque elements replaced (1402) the original and already unsuitable Romanesque building. A Minorite order settled into the church in 1668, with the friars making repeated repairs, adding Baroque style decorations in the interior. The interior furnishings of the church are almost all in a Baroque style and are



dated to the beginning of the 18th century. The furnishings consist of the main altar of St Ladislaus, altars of St Francis and St Anthony of Padua, as well as the pulpit. Gothic period works include a Pietà from the 14th century and a painting of the Dominion of the Virgin Mary from 1450 that decorates the main Gothic altar in addition to an early-Gothic baptistery. The main Gothic wing altar is dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria and is located in the Roman Catholic church in Turany.



follows the tradition of French palace chapels with the Gothic exterior of the building richly decorated by supporting pillars. A neo-Gothic wing altar, dated to the end of the 19th century, is located inside the building. The altar is decorated with a gouache painting of the Death of the Virgin Mary on wood, created around 1450. There is also a late-Gothic relief of the Pietà by Master Pavol of Levoča, dating from the second half of the 16th century. A motif of the Pietà is to be found also in the lower chapel, a late-Baroque



The chapel of the Zápolya family next to the church of St Ladislaus

A Gothic multi-storey burial chapel, dating from 1473 and located on the southern side of the church of St Ladislaus, was built by Stephen Zápolya, the Spiš district administrator and palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary. Finally, the space not used for the intended purpose and he was buried with his family in Spišská Kapitula. The chapel in Spišská Stvrtok



folk woodcarving dated to the end of the 18th century. The window panes of the upper chapel are decorated with stained glass depicting the coats of arms of the Zápolya family, the Kingdom of Hungary, and Upper and Lower Hungary and portraits of Franz Joseph I, Empress Elisabeth, the Archbishops of Esztergom, Ferenc Kolos and Cardinal Vaszary in addition to the Bishops of Spiš region, Pál Szmrecsányi and György Császkó, the Bishop of Banská Bystrica, Arnold Ipolyi-Stummer, the Bishop of Košice, Zsigmond Bubics and the Bishop of Vác, Károly Emmánuel Csáky.



SPIŠSKÉ PODHRADIE

The church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary

This Gothic church was built in 1258 in a medieval town with a flourishing religious life. The church tower is a little older, originally built in the Romanesque style with later Classicism modifications, but was extensively redesigned in 1470 when the second aisle of the sanctuary was built. Allegedly, it was the greatest double-aisled church in the Spiš region at that time with a monumental

panel-altar that is now considered one of the greatest medieval painting works. The church outlasted the Reformation without any major changes to the design while under the administration of Lutherans. In 1813, an earthquake and floods had fatal consequences for the church, damaging the structural integrity of the double-aisled building, leading to the need for it to be demolished in 1824. The present-day single-aisled church is dated to the period of 1825–1829 and according to historians, is smaller by one third in comparison to its medieval predecessor.

The main decoration is the main altar of the Virgin Mary with panel paintings dating from 1493–1494. The sculpture of Virgin Mary and six out of twelve panel paintings have been preserved, with the second part belonging to a collection in the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava. The main facade is decorated with a painting of the Nativity of Virgin Mary, dating from



1853. Other well-preserved panel paintings include a scene of a 12-year-old Jesus and the Entrance of a three-year-old Mary into the temple. Panel paintings on the opposite side include scenes of the Escape to Egypt and the Martyrdom of St Ursula. A well-preserved Gothic wing altar from 1521, dedicated to St Barbara, is located in the back part of the church. The main decoration of the altar is a sculpture of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Wisdom and the Queen of Virgins. At the beginning of the 20th century, further sculptures were added of St Stephen and St Ladislaus. The moveable altar wings are decorated with portraits of virgin-martyrs.





investigated. The local priory had been trying to gain independence from the Archdiocese of Esztergom. The plan was fulfilled in 1776, when Maria Theresa issued a bill on the establishment of the Diocese of Spiš. The Diocese was later approved by the capital city, with the districts of Spiš, Liptov and Orava becoming part of it. The establishment of the Diocese is also related to the church of St Martin being promoted to a cathedral. The Episcopal three-aisled Romanesque-Gothic cathedral from the 13th century is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List and is a dominant feature of the town. It is a monumental religious structure with Romanesque and late-Gothic elements.

SPIŠSKÁ KAPITULA

The cathedral of St Martin

Spišská Kapitula was the centre of religious administration in the Middle Ages. The Priory of Spiš with its judicial power over the citizens of the Spiš region was established here at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. In the 13th century, the town acquired the reputation of a trustworthy place and fulfilled the role of notaries in medieval times. Thus bills were issued, verified and kept and the financial status of citizens was



Firstly, the three-aisled cathedral with massive cross vaults and two Romanesque towers was built. Romanesque features include the northern wall with entrance portal and narrow window as well as part of the eastern wall with a Romanesque triumphal arch.

An increasing number of worshippers as well as the deterioration of the structure lead to the first renovation in 1462. The Gothic sanctuary is dated to this period. The construction of additional side aisles alongside the main aisle lead to it being a three-aisled church. The church, with its 11 altars, was consecrated in 1478.

The burial chapel of the Zápolya family was built in the church at the end of the 15th century, based on the architectural styled of the original chapel in Spišský Štvrtok, yet



medieval wall painting is located above the Romanesque portal, and depicts the coronation of Charles Robert as King of the Kingdom of Hungary. Stained glass decoration depicts scenes from life of St Martin and his patron St George. Nowadays, there are three organs in the church, set in neo-Gothic cabinets.

In 2003, the remains of Ján Vojtaššák, the Bishop, were moved to the cathedral.

the elegance and excellence of the original were never achieved. This late-Gothic rectangular structure has a polygonal ground plan and a smooth ribbed vault with high Gothic windows. Neo-Gothic elements and additional buildings to the southern side were added at the end of the 18th century. The western and northern portals were renovated in a neo-Romanesque style. Neo-Gothic refurbishment of the interior includes new plaster, pavement and decoration elements. The original Baroque furniture of the church was replaced by neo-Gothic pieces. Out of the thirteen

Baroque altars only little has been preserved, furthermore, they were re-painted in a negligent way. Only panel paintings on movable and fixed wings have been preserved in the original state. The central motif is represented by sculptures of the Virgin Mary and St Martin. The front side of moveable wings feature figures of royal saints, whereas the other part is decorated with a scene of the Passion. The symbol of a black raven with a ring in its beak tells us that the altar was made upon the decision of Matthias Corvinus, who had the same symbol in his coat of arms.

Sculptures, paintings, epitaphs and burial plaques have been well preserved. The only preserved





SPIŠSKÝ HRHOV

The church of St Simon and Jude

Another survivor of the Middle Ages can be found in the village of Spišský Hrhov, the Roman Catholic church of St Simon and Jude, built in the Gothic style. The church had been modified several times. The church tower, decorated with an attic, was renewed in the Renaissance style in 1708.

The stone bridge

In addition to the church, the village also features a well-preserved vaulted bridge – one of the last in Slovakia. It was built in the 16th century with its present-day form dating from 1803. The bridge is 40 m long and 10 m wide. It is both a historical and technical monument.



Neo-Baroque Manor house

The Manor house in Spišský Hrhov, dating from the end of 19th century, was built on the decision of the Csáky family and has a breath-taking facade and elegant staircase. It was designed by architect Heinrich Adam and built in a French pseudo-Baroque style.

Central heating and electrical lighting was introduced between 1908 and 1910. The Manor house has 365 windows. The interior features beautiful fireplaces, each made of different type of marble, and rich stucco decoration of the ceilings. The wooden compartment ceiling in the Earl's dining room is of an exceptional value. Wall paintings in the lobby were created by Professor Horwater from Vienna, and the lobby features a massive Baroque dining table and other exhibits. The roof of the Manor house is designed in an interesting way as its segmentation and skylights enable the most perfect and natural illumination of rooms from the top of the building. The Manor house is surrounded by 17 hectares of parkland. Nowadays, the Manor house is the home of a youth re-educational institute.





The church of St Servatius

The towers of the church of St Servatius can be seen from afar upon arrival in Vrbov. The church is a naturally dominator of both the central square and the entire town. It is the only church in Slovakia dedicated to St Servatius, who has been the patron of locksmiths and carpenters since 1222. Saint Servatius was a bishop in Belgium, from where he fled from the Huns to Maastricht, where he is buried in the local cathedral. The saint's portrayal can be found stamped four times on the



VRBOV



bronze baptistry in the form of the seal of Vrbov. He can be recognised by a bishop's staff and a key that was, according to a legend, given to him by St Peter. It is said that the key was found upon the discovery of his grave. The church was fully renovated in 2008 and is used by the Catholic church on a daily basis.



ĽUBICA

Parish church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary

The church, dating from the middle of the 13th century, was built by German colonists on a small hill not far from the town. Originally a Romanesque church, it was re-built and enlarged in the Gothic style in 1330. Worshippers of the town still gather for sermons upon the toll of a rare bell that has been consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Two famous bell founders, Pavol Gaal and Ján

Wagner, made the bell in 1475. In 1390, Pope Boniface IX granted indulgences to all those who had contributed to the construction of the church of Ľubica. And thus, a new vault, windows and sacristy were built. The interior of the church was damaged during the Hussite wars. Reconstruction and repair works were carried out in the Gothic style during the 15th and 16th centuries. The altar of St Nicholas is dated to this period. Citizens of Ľubica sent a request to the workshop of Master Pavol in Levoča to create new altars. The reply was positive and, among others, a new main altar was built, of which only the altar cabinet with the sculpture of Virgin Mary, Baby Jesus and one female saint have withstood the ravages of time. In 1546, the Reformation caused that the local Lutherans overtook the administration of the church, in the same way as in other towns in the Spiš

district. It became Roman-Catholic again in 1674 when the number of Evangelists, paradoxically, exceeded the number of Catholics in the town. Another fire in 1708 destroyed both the church and the tower. The main altar was damaged too. A well-preserved illusive painting has been the pride of the church since 1772. The church was enormously stricken during WWI, when, during the period of 1916–1917, three church bells, 80 organ pipes and the copper roof cover were destroyed. After another fire in 1937, the parish started to renovate the church, followed by partial conservation-restoration works in the 1960s and 80s. The body of the main altar with the Gothic altar cabinet including the sculpture of Virgin Mary by Master Pavol of Levoča and side altars have been restored. The majestic 13th century Gothic altar is worth seeing as you can observe six pear-shaped stone pillars with tops decorated with crabs. Instead of the last crab on the left hand side, there is a small head of Adam. The head of Eve has not been preserved.





KEŽMAROK

Evangelical articular church of the Holy Trinity

This Evangelical articular church dedicated to The Holy Trinity is more than exceptional. The church was built in 1717, at a time when the religious oppression of the Protestants ruled in Slovakia. The construction of churches was only possible upon a permit, a so-called 'article' issued by the Sopron Council in 1681.

The article allowed the Protestants to build one church in each free royal town at the expenses of the Evangelical Church. The church had to be located in the suburbs and built from the cheapest material. That is the reason why the articular churches were exclusively built from wood. The construction of the church in Kežmarok was financed by Protestants from all over Europe and partially by both the Danish and the Swedish Kings. Swedish sailors are believed to have helped the local craftsmen with the construction of the church and that is why the upper part of the church resembles the upside-down bow of a ship. Analogous to other Greek Catholic churches, this church has also a ground plan in the form of an equal-armed Greek cross. The modest exterior of the church is balanced out by the grandiose Baroque interior, where well-preserved ceiling paintings depicts



the twelve apostles and four evangelists with a cloudy sky background image. A carving made by the local woodcutter, Ján Lerch, is the central motif of the main altar. He also created the decorated pulpit in the church. Constructors of the church placed the pulpit in a way so as to be visible from every single seat in the church. The precious furniture includes an organ that is considered the oldest and most valuable (and still functional) double-manual instrument in Slovakia. The only stone element in the church is the sacristy with two rooms that used to be the rooms of a Renaissance tavern.



1678–1687 and 1705–1709, the church belonged to the Evangelists. A Renaissance belfry with a square plan, featuring battlements and coats of arms of the House of Habsburg, Kingdom of Hungary and the town of Kežmarok, is located in the vicinity of the basilica. The belfry, built in 1591, is considered the most beautiful belfry within the Spiš district. It is connected to the building of a former Catholic school that was rebuilt in the 18th century

Basilica of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

The church, which was elevated to a basilica minor in 1998, was constructed in the first half of the 13th century. Later, between 1444 and 1498, the town, along with the lord of the Kežmarok Castle, Zápolya, initiated an extensive enlargement of the church that resulted in a Gothic structure with triple vault (a reticulated, star and cross vault). The interior is mainly Gothic, including the side altars, baptistery and choir stalls. The Renaissance stall under the big choir, which was built at beginning of the 16th century, was intended for the town council members and the mayor. The main altar is decorated with a scene of the crucified Christ, made by Veit Stoss. During the Reformation period the entire town, mostly inhabited by Germans, converted to Protestantism and much of the time, 1531–1673,



as part of the chapel of The Holy Trinity. Maximilian Petzval (1807–1891), a physicist, scientist and the founder of modern photography, used to visit this school. The basilica of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is the first non-Marian basilica in Slovakia.



Kežmarok Castle

Kežmarok Castle is the only well-preserved medieval castle in the Spiš district. It belongs to a group of so-called town castles, all of which were built directly in the town in order to protect it against enemies. The first written evidence of the castle dates from 1463. The castle is

located under Castle Hill in the eastern part of the town. Tourists can visit both the museum and the historical exhibitions that document the evolution of the town of Kežmarok and its surroundings. An exhibition of historical and fire-fighting vehicles include unique cars and motorcycles, such as the only remaining Škoda 154 fire-fighting car in Europe, from 1929, and a Praga Alpha Phaeton, built in Svit, the car that Tomáš Baťa used for regional travelling while looking for a spot for his factory. Sightseeing of the castle goes hand in hand with the visit to the castle chapel, dungeon and watchtower.





VEĽKÁ LOMNICA

Parish church of St Catherine of Alexandria

A Romanesque Gothic single-aisled church built in a fortified place by the main road between 1270 and 1280. Its Romanesque origin can be seen in several well-preserved architectural elements, mainly the unified windows. The local parish in the Spiš district was highly respected, with the local priest being a

member of Fraternity of 24 royal priests from the Spiš locale. The first fresco decoration of the church was done right after the church was built. A painting of St Nicholas, located on the southern wall, bears late-Romanesque features. The painting also features a peculiar portrayal of a saint with a group of four young men, the sons of Rikolf from Lomnica, patron of the church and, presumably, the requester of the painting. In the mid 14th century, the sanctuary was decorated



with wall paintings that depict a scene of Salvation with the face of Christ, an Old Testament scene of Moses with his hands raised, thanks to which the Jews won the battle. The scene is dominated by the image of Jesus' face on the Mandylion. A monumental fresco from the 14th century, located on the Northern wall of the sacristy is of a high artistic value. Its main motif is a part of the legend of the fight of St Ladislaus against Kumán under the Kerlés hill. The creator of the fresco is believed to be an artist with Italian origins. This fresco is one of the oldest Gothic wall paintings in Slovakia. The fresco was restored between 1960 and 1966 and its real size copy has been placed in the Eastern Slovakia Museum in Košice. The church was also furnished with several neo-Gothic altars, two side altars of which have been preserved until today – the wing altar of St Nicholas from 1490 and an altar consecrated to the Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus from 1949.





POP RAD

The church of St Giles

Originally a Gothic sacral structure with later Baroque modifications, it is located in the historical centre of Poprad. Together with the adjacent Renaissance belfry from the end of the 16th century, plague pillar with motif of Immaculate Virgin Mary and the Evangelical church of The Holy Trinity, is formed the core of the most valuable sights in the city. According to written evidence, the church was built in 1245.

Originally, it was a single-aisled structure with an even presbytery. Later on, in the 14th century, the church was rebuilt with two aisles. The sacristy and altar of St Valentine from the 14th century was damaged and lost in a devastating fire in 1708. The eighteenth century is connected with Baroque style interior enhancements. The additional building of the southern hall, sacristy and interior furniture and main altar, consecrated to St Giles, were built during this period. Emperor Joseph II donated money for the reconstruction of the church. The church was closed down in 1942, for 50 years, due to unacceptable technical and safety conditions. The present-day appearance of the church, after extensive restoration and reconstruction work, resembles its appearance from the end of the 19th century. The dominant feature of the square nave is a strong ten-sided pillar that bears the arch of the roof with pronounced ribbing.

Almost the entire area of the inner walls is covered with rich fresco decoration with Christian motifs and scenes from the lives of the saints. Noteworthy are the paintings of a triumphal arch with the oldest illustration of the High Tatras. The Renaissance baptistry of red marble, Baroque pulpit and late-Baroque main altar are well-preserved items of the church. There are two especially precious artefacts: a chalice from the second half of the 14th century and panel painting of the Virgin Mary from 1484, both of which are now located in the Slovak National Gallery.



Podtatranské Museum

The history of this museum dates back to the second half of the 19th century when it was founded in Starý Smokovec by the first tourist association, the Hungarian Carpathian Society. The museum's collection includes more than 47 thousand items in addition to over 18 thousand books in the museum library. The museum is located across two buildings: 72 Vajanského Street in Poprad and on Sobotské square in Spišská Sobota. There are nine permanent exhibits that will lead you through the life of the Neanderthal, prehistory and the Middle Ages in the High Tatras, the history of Poprad across the centuries, history of blueprinting, guilds and crafts, and the households of the citizens and famous people of Spišská Sobota. A warlord's tomb, discovered in Poprad during the construction of an industrial park in 2006, ranks among the most unique exhibits of the museum.

The warlord was of a Germanic origin and the tomb itself is dated to the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries BC. The tomb consists of a covered chamber with a wooden sarcophagus and other items including the clothes of the deceased, remains of food in bronze and ceramic pots and household items made of bronze, silver and gold were found.



SPIŠSKÁ SOBOTA

Parish church of St George

This church, dating from the first half of the 12th century, is the oldest well-preserved structure in the village. It is a part of the city of Poprad. The church is located on a small hill on the north-eastern edge of great triangular town square.



unknown is located to the left of the main altar. The altar of St Anthony the Hermit from 1503 includes exceptional paintings of a very high artistic value painted on the wing panels. One exceptionally precious item is a carved organ from 1662 that has 814 organ pipes and is 780 cm wide. There is also a Renaissance belfry from 1588– 1589 in the vicinity of the church.



Its interior is furnished and decorated with the best-preserved and most precious items in Slovakia. The original structure, before Gothic renovation, was built in the late-Romanesque style. Fragments of this style can be found on the southern portal, external walls and angular tower. Six well-preserved Gothic altars are dated to the period between the 15th and 16th centuries. The main altar of St George from 1516 was made by Master Pavol of Levoča. The oldest altar of the Virgin Mary from 1464 and whose creator is



MATEJOVCE

Parish church of St Stephen the King

The church of St Stephen the King was built in the Gothic style in the first half of the 14th century, and is a single-nave structure with sanctuary and a double

crossed vaulted roof and ogival triumphal arch. The nave is arched over two polygonal pillars by means of a ribbed vault. A walled organ loft is located on the western part of the aisle. The church was renovated in the Baroque style in the 18th century, when the Gothic round window was walled.



STRÁŽKY

Manor house and gallery

The village of Strážky was founded in the second half of the 12th century. Originally, it belonged to the Berzeviczy family and since 1556 to the Horváth-Stansith family based on a deed for the protection of Sihoť Castle against the Turks. Members of the latter family had built the Renaissance castle and a school of humanities with library for Hungarian noblemen.

The renovated Manor house is located in a beautiful, well-kept English park. Several styles can be observed on the Manor house, from late-Gothic and Renaissance to Baroque and Classical. The nineteenth century owners of the Manor house were the Medňanský and Czóbely families. After the death, in 1972, of the last owner Baroness M Czóbely, administration of the Manor house was taken over by the Slovak National Gallery. Nowadays, there are several stunning exhibitions in the Manor house. You can find here a unique collection of historical furniture, interior items, works of art, historical chinaware and glass, carpets and clocks. An exhibition called 'a portrait of the 17th to 19th centuries in Spiš' consists of works of art that belonged to the owners of the Manor house. Many of those portrayed were significant persons in the cultural, historical, political and economical life of the Spiš district. The family gallery also includes a collection of portraits from the 19th century that is related to the given artistic environment. The permanent exhibition 'Strážky and Ladislav Mednyánszky' is very popular. It is the only exhibition of its kind in Slovakia, which maps the work of one of the greatest representatives of Central European painting from the last third of

the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The exhibition is located in Strážky for good reason, as the painter was very fond of the place and he depicted its surroundings in his works of art. The 'historical library' is a visitor experience of its own, exploring the history of both the village and Manor house. The beginnings of the Slovak historical library, which is part of the natural cultural heritage, goes back to the last quarter of the 16th century. The library has been



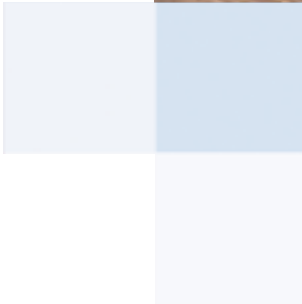


The church of St Anne

This late-Gothic church, dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, will strike you by its lacking a tower, the function of which has been replaced by a separate Renaissance belfry with attic. The church has one aisle with a square floor plan. The well-preserved interior furniture is of a neo-Gothic style, three items of which are panelled wing altars of exceptional artistic workmanship. The main altar is consecrated to the patroness of the church and of further interest are sculptures of St Anne, the



growing for 400 years and is now home to around 8500 volumes, journals and maps. There is a permanent exhibition in the park displaying sculpture from the 20th century, including the most significant works of art by Slovak sculptors. The Manor house games, organised every year by the Slovak National Gallery in Strážky, is a very popular event.



Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus. The altar cabinet is decorated with panel paintings that portray St Joachim and St Joseph. The moveable wings of the altar are decorated with the scene of the Passion and life of St Anne. Rich woodcarvings and decorations are on the side altar of St Simon and Jude. Sculptures of the saints are accompanied by others of the Man of Sorrows (Vir Dolorum), the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. Here, the moveable wings are decorated with eight scenes from the lives of the saints. An extension of the altar is richly decorated with carved ornaments that were typical for the late-Gothic period. The precious side altar, consecrated to the Virgin Mary, is decorated with a torso

sculpture of the Madonna and dressed up Baby Jesus on a fantasy dragon, accompanied by St Catherine and St Barbara. The interior includes newly revealed and restored wall paintings that were covered with a lime coat during the Reformation period. They are wet frescos dated to the second decade of the 16th century, depicting scenes from the Passion and are based on the works of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach. A red marble baptistery from 1593, covered with polychrome folk woodcarvings from the 18th century, is a well-preserved witness to the Renaissance period. One part of the moveable property belongs to a collection of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava.



dated to 1928. The Northern part of the church includes a wooden altar of the Virgin Mary of Lourdes. The Gothic baptistry is dated to the 15th century. A calvary with an 'arbor vitae' (Tree of Life) Cross dates from 1380 and a sculpture of Christ with a moveable arm were installed in the interior of the church during its general reconstruction. The side chapel of St Valentine includes a Baroque calvary. The main altar is decorated with a crystal chandelier, donated by Baroness Czobelová from Strážky. The Lutherans administered the church during the Reformation period and in 1674 was returned to the Catholics, to the hands of piarist friars overtook from Podolíneć.



SPIŠSKÁ BELÁ

Parish church of St Anthony

The Roman Catholic parish church of St Anthony the Abbot and Hermit with the chapel of St Valentine is dated from around 1260. Allegedly, it was built on the foundations of an older church, from which late-Romanesque features can still be seen. The main altar is consecrated to St Anthony the Hermit. The neo-Gothic side wooden altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is





The church of the Purification of the Virgin Mary

The church is located on a hill with a height of 650 m, meaning that you cannot miss it when entering the village. Few written records regarding the church have been preserved, but according to visible architectural elements we can state that the church was built in the first half of the 14th century. In the 18th century the church was a single-aisled structure with a tower, sanctuary and sacristy. Its medieval appearance was slightly put aside by a Baroque-styled reconstruction in 1769, when new windows and additional buildings were added. However, the robust medieval structure, Gothic cross-ribbed vault and ogival portal with pear-shaped



supports on the southern wall remain. Of three Gothic windows, only one has remained in the eastern wall of presbytery, its tracery being very valuable and is preserved until today. There is a well-preserved Gothic stone relief of Christ's head in the presbytery. The preserved Gothic elements of the church also include interior furnishings and furniture.

The main altar is of the Baroque style, but the central late-Gothic sculpture of Madonna, from around 1510, was made by Master Pavol of Levoča. There are other medieval sculptures and polychrome woodcarvings of St John and the Virgin Mary on the altar of the side chapel. The Gothic bell from the 15th century is the Medieval heart still beating in the church tower. The bronze Gothic-styled baptistery, made by the famous metal foundry in Spišská Nová Ves, is rather impressive. Originally placed in the church of Ruskinovce, after the destruction of which the baptistery was relocated to Slovenská Ves.

SLOVENSKÁ VES





SPIŠSKÁ STARÁ VES

The church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary

This Roman Catholic church was originally a Gothic double-aisled structure from the middle of the 14th century). The vault of the church collapsed during its reconstruction in 17th century and was replaced with a Baroque style vault. Traces of the Baroque style started to appear at the beginning of the 18th century. Gothic elements include the presbytery with ribbed vault, external walls of the

aisle, sacristy with early-Gothic window, two Gothic-styled portals and Gothic windows with original tracery. The church tower, with parallel supports that lean against the wall of the adjacent cemetery, is of an interesting construction style. The late-Baroque main altar from 1765 is decorated with a motif of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and woodcarvings of St Stephen and St Vladislav. Two side altars with carvings, dating from the end



of the 19th century, are consecrated to the Mother of God. To left side is a picture of a seated Madonna from 1490, and to the right side and image of the Lady of Sorrows from 1520. The Baroque style stone baptismary is dated to the second half of the 17th century. The Rococo style ambon with a painting of the Good Shepherd is dated 1750. A marble panel and an information board can be found upon entrance to the church. The board includes information on the life and the canonisation of Alojz Mária Chmeľ, the barefooted Augustinian that was born in Spišská Stará Ves and dedicated his life to God by helping the ill.





ČERVENÝ KLÁŠTOR

Carthusian monastery with church

The village bears its name after this red-roofed structure. According to legend, the monastery was built in consequence of the violent death of the Prior of Chmeřov, who was killed by Master Kokoš, a member of a famous family. He had to establish six monasteries in order to redeem his sin. Allegedly, he managed to establish only two. The second one was built in the valley of St Anthony in

the village of Lechnice, which was later renamed Červený Kláštor. According to historical sources, construction of the monastery began in 1320 right after the approval of King Charles Robert of Anjou. The history of the monastery is related to fraternities of ascetic Carthusians and Camaldoleses monks. The Carthusians lived there in silence, moderation and isolation from the secular population. The monastery was conquered by the Hussite army in the first half of the 15th century



and the monks were forced to leave in the beginning of the 16th century, and before it again became a religious property in the 18th century, of the Benedictine and Camaldoleses friars, the monastery was owned by several secular owners. Along with the new era came an expansion of the monastery is related to the arrival of these fraternities, and new Baroque style



elements were added to the structure when the monks reconstructed the main monastery and church of St Anthony the Hermit. Despite the reconstruction, the exterior of the monastery is predominantly Gothic, but the inner walls and vaults have a Baroque overtone thanks to newer decorative paintings. One of the most famous members of the fraternity was Frater Cyprián (František Ignác Jäschke), who resided there in the 18th century. He was a Camaldolese monk and a reputable traveller, healer, collector and a constructor and believed to be obsessed with flying. It is said the he had constructed wings and was flying around the monastery of Červený Kláštor. There is written evidence of this in the form of an archival document from around 1760, in which a



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. The monastery was in a state of deterioration from 1820 to 1945, with full restoration works starting in 1956. 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.





STARÁ ĽUBOVŇA

Lubovňa Castle

According to archaeological research, the castle was built at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries and served as a border control fortification that defended trade routes to Poland. Polish Count Boleslav, son-in-law of the Hungarian king, Béla IV, started to build the castle. The round tower and Gothic palace, both located on the highest spot, are dated to that period.



A newer palace, including the upper castle and courtyard, was built later on. Other historical sources say that the castle was built a century later by Charles Robert of Anjou. The castle went through the ownership of many through the years to come and its present day, partly preserved appearance along with the great number of interesting exhibitions houses within reflect many architectural styles. After climbing up a hill and walking through a horse chestnut alley, where can be found 23 impressively large and rare horse chestnuts with a trunk circumference of 198 cm on average, you can relax under the shade of a 350–400 year old linden tree with an unbelievable trunk circumference of 450 cm. There you can start discovering the history...



Bergfried tower, built between the 13th and 14th centuries, represents the Gothic style of Lubovňa Castle. Its ground floor was originally used to store ammunition. 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 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 Baroque altars and a baptistery. 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 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, Lubovňa 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 Zamoyský, international chess and bridge tournaments bearing his name have taken place at the castle for more 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).



HRANIČNÉ

The Church of Immaculate Conception of The Virgin Mary

A one bay log building of a Roman-catholic church has been the village's adornment since 1785. The church is one of the most important sacral wooden buildings in Slovakia and was originally built without using a single metal nail. Some nails have been used since the church's restoration to hold shingles in place. Metal materials are also used for decorative metal crosses

and functional features such as lattices and ironworks. The buildings have a right-angled or a polygonal footprint in a shape of a Greek cross. A three part interior division is a common feature that is a reference to the Holy Trinity. The symbolism of the triunity is often reinforced with three towers which increase in height



towards the west. The fusion between the functional and artistic objects in the interior of each of the wooden churches is represented mainly by a valuable iconostasis, a wall dividing the altar from the rest of the church. The icons arranged in a strict order depict scenes from the Old and the New Testament. They were meant to communicate the biblical content to the believers in a simple and easy



to understand way. As well as the valuable iconostasis, fragments moved from the Church of St. Nicholas in Stará Ľubovňa are a part of the interior. The church's main altar, the altar of Virgin Mary comes from 1670. A decorated sacrificial table, side altars and a pulpit from the 17th century are also a part of interior furnishings.





PODOLÍNEČ

The church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary

Originally a 13th century Gothic building, the church has many architectural modifications of various styles, with Baroque and Classical features easily recognised.



The single-aisled structure was expanded in the 18th century when two chapels were attached to the aisle by means of semi-circular colonnades. The sanctuary has a square floor plan with a polygonal closure and a Gothic vault. It is decorated with medieval paintings from between 1360 and 1430, all of them arranged in three rows. The medallions of the vault decoration depict the saints in accordance with Byzantine iconography. Two Gothic style sedilia and Gothic portals on the northern and southern walls have been preserved. The church tower was rebuilt in the Baroque style and most of the inner furniture bears a Baroque hue. The main altar of St Metercia is a Baroque polychrome woodcarving portraying



St Anne Metercia. The side altars of St John the Baptist and St Michael the Archangel are also made in the Baroque style. A painted wooden pulpit from 1658 is a Renaissance-Baroque work of art, richly decorated with the figures of saints and herbal ornaments. The sculpture 'Christ on the cross', with a skull under Christ's feet, was made by an unknown folk artisan.

Piaristic monastery and church

This multi-storey building with four towers and a double-spired church in the centre was built in the early-Baroque style between 1642 and 1648. From the point of view of its size and the height of the church spires, the structure dominates over Podolíneč. The church is consecrated to the bishop of Krakow, St Stanislaus the martyr. His portrait can be found upon the entrance to the church. The church has

impressive 44 m high spires. The interior of the church is furnished in the Baroque style. The main altar of St Stanislaus consists of a 10 m high painting depicting the saint calling Peter, the nobleman, out of his grave to prove to King Boleslav II 'the Bold' that the nobleman dedicated his property to the church. Side Altars of the Virgin Mary and The Holy Cross, St Philip Neri and St Catherine. The late-Baroque pulpit will strike you thanks to the sculpture of 'Christ resurrected'. Visitors should not miss the large hanging paintings of St George on horseback fighting against the Dragon, St Ignatius and St Ján Nepomucký. A polychrome sculpture of 'Christ on the cross' with the exalted and bent posture of the crucified can evoke dramatic feelings.

The square-structured building of the monastery, which winds around the church, used to be the seat of one of the most significant Piaristic colleges in Central Europe that educated more than 50 thousand young noblemen from the upper classes of Poland, Hungary and Germany. Due to its scholarly excellence, the college was known as the 'Oxford of Spiš' or 'Athens above Poprad'. The Piarists sold the monastery to the Redemptorists in 1941. In 1950, after the operation known as the 'night of the barbarians' when all fraternities in Slovakia were meant to be disbanded, the communist regime established here one of the most heavily guarded prisons, guarded by armed sentries and dogs.





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