

UNESCO World Heritage Treasures

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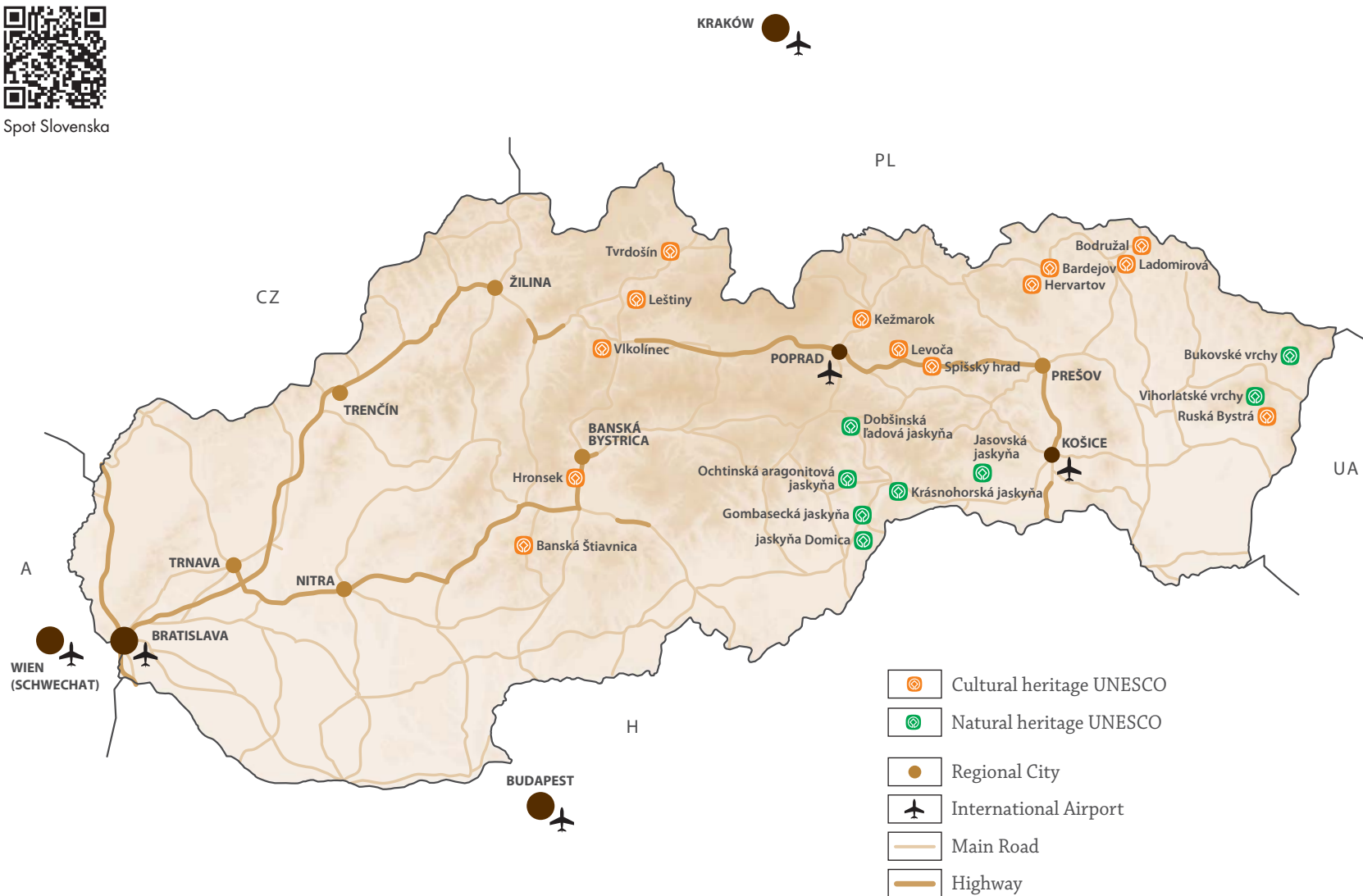


Cultural and natural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List

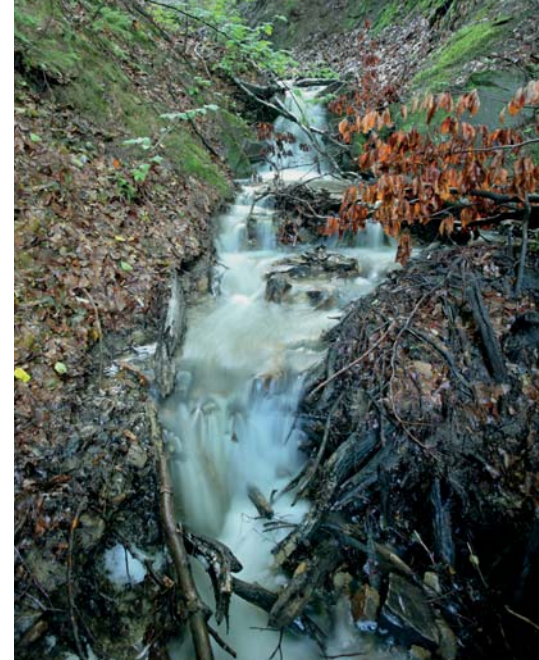
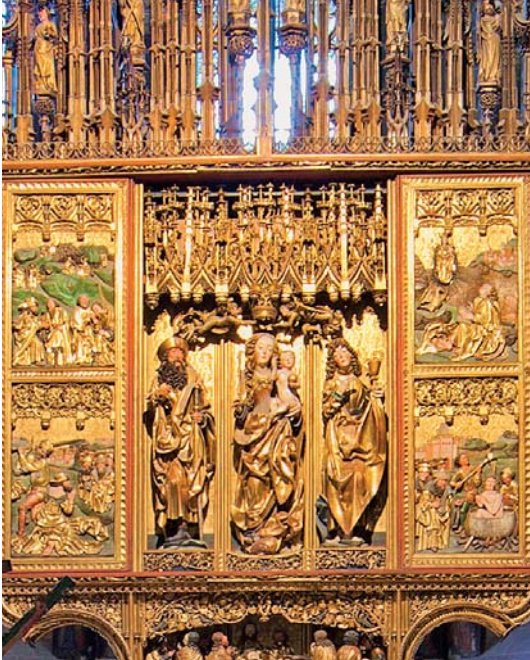
VLKOLÍNEC	Folk architecture heritage reservation
LEŠTINY	Evangelical artiled Church
TVRDOŠÍN	Roman Catholic All Saints church
HRONSEK	Evangelical articular church
BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA	Historical town and technical monuments in the vicinity
KEŽMAROK	Evangelical articular church of the Holy Trinity
LEVOČA	Historical town centre
SPIŠSKÝ HRAD (SPIŠ CASTLE)	Spiš Castle and associated monuments: Spišské Podhradie – village centre, Spišská Kapitula with St. Martin's Cathedral, Žehra – Church of the Holy Spirit
HERVARTOV	Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis of Assisi
BARDEJOV	Historic town centre
BODRUŽAL	Greek Catholic Church of St. Nicholas
LADOMIROVÁ	Greek Catholic Church of St. Michael Archangel
RUSKÁ BYSTRÁ	Greek Catholic Church of the Relics of St. Nicholas
VIHORLATSKÉ VRCHY	Carpathian primeval beech forests (Vihorlatský prales)
BUKOVSKÉ VRCHY	Carpathian primeval beech forest (Stužica, Rožok, and Havešová)
DOBŠINSKÁ LADOVÁ JASKYŇA (DOBŠINÁ ICE CAVE)	Ice cave
OCHTINSKÁ ARAGONITOVÁ JASKYŇA (OCHTINÁ ARAGONITE CAVE)	Aragonite cave
GOMBASECKÁ JASKYŇA (GOMBASEK CAVE)	Karst cave
JASKYŇA DOMICA (DOMICA CAVE)	Karst cave
KRÁSNOHORSKÁ JASKYŇA (KRÁSNOHORSKÁ CAVE)	Karst cave
JASOVSKÁ JASKYŇA (JASOVSKÁ CAVE)	Karst cave



Spot Slovenska







Slovakia, rich in world heritage

Captivating works of art created by nature itself accompanied by fascinating architectural treasures – together they serve to document the storied history and allure of the picturesque country that is Slovakia. A place where exceptionally rich natural and cultural monuments are to be found in every corner of every region.

Slovakia offers the mystical atmosphere of a virgin primeval forest, a unique underground kingdom, and buildings shrouded in legends telling noble stories from eras long past. History beckons from its ancient towns and impressive monuments, and its fine artefacts of folk art are both rare and remarkable.

Eight exceptional Slovak treasures already have achieved a privileged and permanent place among the elite world cultural and natural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO list. Unforgettable and fascinating experiences are surely to be had by tracing back the distant past of some of the country's beautiful historic towns such as Bardejov, Levoča, or Banská Štiavnica. Discover the unique natural works of art concealed in the caves of Slovenský kras (Slovak Karst), or get carried away by the enchanting tones of the traditional Fujara woodwind instrument or the heaven-like music from Terchová. Explore the quaint village of Vlkolínec and the unique wooden churches of the Carpathian arc. The world's majesty and wonder shine bright when viewed from the

romantic ruins of Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle) or during a stroll through the primeval virgin beech forests. The brochure you are holding is your personal guide to these remarkable sites, which will leave you with something special to remember forever after your visit to Slovakia.

Discover a country that enchants with its beauty and its uniqueness. Visit the **national portal** where you can find everything about Slovakia – things that you couldn't even have imagined but have always wanted to know:

www.slovakia.travel



Banská Štiavnica

The silver town

The historic town of Banská Štiavnica can be found right in the centre of a dormant volcano among the peaks of the Štiavnické vrchy. It is a magical and mystical place where humankind and nature have harmoniously merged over the centuries. This process has given a special allure to Štiavnica and thanks to its intimate, almost family-like atmosphere, the town attracts visitors looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Due to the unique charm of its scenic countryside, the town and surrounding technical monuments were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993.

Referred to as the Silver Town in the past, Štiavnica was a kind of central European El Dorado that attracted gold and silver prospectors from Europe, the Turks, and marauding knights alike. For several centuries the town served as a treasury of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and became one of the richest towns in Europe. The riches extracted from the ground here paid for grandiose palaces in Vienna and Budapest, for the flamboyant lifestyle of the emperor's court, boosted science, education, and culture, and financed wars.

As the third-largest town in the former Kingdom of Hungary, Štiavnica also boasted the highest levels of education. It was here that Queen Maria Theresa established the first technical university in the world, and the mines here were the first in the world to use gunpowder to blast rock. This also led to the creation of a unique system of sixty interconnected manmade

reservoirs called 'tajchy.' The power of the water drawn out from the flooded mines also served to drive the equipment for processing ore. The rich residents of Štiavnica would invite leading architects to the town to build them mini-palaces dug into the steep slopes. The hills of the Štiavnické vrchy are full of holes just like Swiss cheese. Actually, almost every house in the town centre has its own entrance to an underground section. It's a truly mystical and powerful place. You can descend into the mines directly in town or at the nearby open-air mining museum, where visitors can search for minerals or listen to some old stories about "mining" from the good old days. A clearly dominant structural feature of the town is the Štiavnická Kalvária (Štiavnica Calvary), which is one of the most beautiful baroque buildings of its kind in Europe, lying on Ostrý vrch at the very epicentre of the volcano.

Cultural life in Banská Štiavnica is also of an extremely high standard. The town offers unique small film, music and literary festivals, concerts, and all kinds of interesting events for children. The surrounding scenic countryside, criss-crossed with marked hiking



paths and bike trails offering stunning views, is just as enchanting as the town itself. The unique system of mining lakes called 'tajchy' now serves for recreational bathing and rowing, or skating in winter. The gutters that were formerly used to channel rainwater down to the ponds are used as modern-day hiking and biking trails. You should definitely take a walk in the countryside, which offers countless romantic and beautiful spots for rest and reflection. With every step you will come across the traces of the town's mining past, which now has harmoniously blended in with the countryside.

Tips for trips

Manor House of St. Anton – Erstwhile residence of the Bulgarian tsar, housing a collection of furniture from all over the world as well as a hunting exposition.

Sklené Teplice Spa – Bathe in thermal waters of a natural cave.

Kremnica – Ancient mining town that is also home to the oldest continuously-producing mint in the world.

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Vlkolínec

Pulsing with tradition

Vlkolínec is a gorgeous village set amidst the stunning backdrop of the Liptov region. Visitors can sample its unique atmosphere to their heart's content, full of strong traditions and unrivalled history. The village is the best-preserved example of the heritage reservation of folk architecture in Slovakia. Thanks to its unique original wooden buildings, it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993.

This distinctive village set in the foothills and shielded by the rocky cliffs of Sidorovo peak can be found below the ridges of the Veľká Fatra National Park, roughly three kilometres from the town of Ružomberok. Legend says that the name Vlkolínec is taken from the presence of wolves in this area, as the Slovak word 'vlk' means wolf. Other sources cite the village being named after the ditches that were discovered here, called 'vlčia jama.' These were camouflaged holes dug into the ground with stakes at the bottom and used in the past mostly to catch wild game, or as a form of defence against unwanted visitors. The residents of this exceptionally scenic village lived off the land through agriculture, sheep farming, and woodcutting. They also applied their woodcutting skills in the construction of their homes, many of which have been preserved in their original state to the present day. This small village appears to have resisted the passage of time and change, as more than 40 preserved idyllic wooden homes may be seen from here. These charming log houses are set on stone foundations with clay-covered walls and shingled roofs.

Vlkolínec also is home to several distinctive monuments, like the two-storey wooden belfry built in 1770 on rock foundations, the rare wooden log well from 1860, or the Baroque classical Roman Catholic Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary. The village's enchanting atmosphere is complemented by the small brook running over wooden gutters through the heart of the village. Here you can also find an example of a typical farmer's log house, which is a part of the Liptov Museum exposition where visitors can learn more about the traditional ways of life and dwelling on a family farm in the Dolný Liptov territory.

At present, around twenty people live in this unique village, respecting and reviving the traditions of their ancestors. Throughout the year various interesting



cultural and social events are held here, giving visitors further insight into the traditional way of life, human creativity, folklore, and customs of the local people.

Despite its appearance, the quaint village of Vlkolínec is no museum – thanks to the residents' persevering resistance to modern times, it remains a lively and distinctive village with a charming atmosphere. It offers an interesting experience with a taste of authentic history and unique traditions for all of its visitors.

Tips for trips

Havránok open-air archaeology museum with an exposition featuring a model Celtic settlement on the banks of Liptovská Mara – the largest water dam reservoir in Slovakia, and a prime location for all kinds of water sports.

Malinô Brdo – Tourist resort with various year-round attractions (skiing, bike park, ropes course, and so on).

Thermal swimming baths in Bešeňová and the aqua park in Liptovský Mikuláš – Fun and relaxation in the warm water all-year-round.

Information Centre: Informačné centrum Ružomberok

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Levoča, Spišský hrad, and nearby monuments

Jewels of the Spiš region

At the very heart of the stunning Spiš region, which is one of the most visited tourist areas in Eastern Slovakia, we come across a land of worldwide significance. You can enjoy an astonishing view of the surrounding countryside from the dominant feature of this scenic region – Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle), sitting aloft a massive limestone hill. History lovers and budding exercise enthusiasts can combine a walk at the castle with a visit to the many interesting nearby attractions, which together with the castle were included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. The uniqueness of this complex of exceptional monuments in the Spiš region was supplemented by the inclusion of the historical centre of the region's most important town, Levoča, onto the UNESCO List in 2009, together with the work of the Late Gothic woodcarver Master Pavol. There is a tremendous amount to see in this region, which boasts a profound wealth of cultural heritage.

Levoča

The medieval royal town of Levoča, lying to the east of the Spiš region below the hills of the Levočské

vrchy, is one of the most precious cultural-historical treasures in Slovakia thanks to its rich past. The many rare architectural monuments that embody the town's celebrated history are protected by the castle fortifications, preserved until the present day.

Take a stroll through the large rectangular square, which in addition to its stately town houses is also home to one of the most important sacral buildings in Slovakia – the Bazilika minor of St. Jacob, certain to produce a truly memorable experience. The church interior, with its unique collection of sacral art, is adorned with a wooden Gothic altar from the hand of Master Pavol of Levoča himself, which at the height of 18.62 m is the highest altar of its kind in the world. The museum situated in the former Levoča Town Hall building, classified as one of the leading examples of secular Renaissance architecture in Slovakia, is also very popular with visitors. Spiš Museum provides impressive insight into the town's history, but it also boasts several other interesting expositions, the most visited of which include Spiš Castle and the exposition of Master Pavol of Levoča.

Every year at the beginning of July, Levoča is the destination for the largest pilgrimage gathering in Slovakia. Tens of thousands of believers make their way up the steep inclines of the Mariánska hora (Maria Hill), which looms above the town, to share in divine worship in the neo-Gothic Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary.

**Information Centre:
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N 49°01'31.60" E 20°35'19.33"



Master Paul's altar in Levoča



Spiš Castle and its surrounding monuments

Without a doubt, the dominant historical features of the Spiš region are comprised of Spiš Castle, Spišská Kapitula, Spišské Podhradie, and the Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra. The well-preserved conditions and uniqueness of this rare grouping of monuments, complemented by the surrounding natural travertine band of the Dreveník nature reservation, creates a truly special place that promises visitors an unforgettable experience.

Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle)

Covering an area of over four hectares and regarded by many as the national symbol of Slovakia, Spiš Castle represents one of the largest castle ruin complexes in Central Europe.

This national cultural monument was first constructed in the 12th century and stands on top of a travertine hill at 634 m above sea level. Since its construction, the natural strategic position of Spiš Castle predestined the castle to play a predominantly defensive role. Later on, this important border fortification became the centre of royal power in the Spiš region, welcoming an array of distinguished dignitaries in its halls. The castle enjoyed its greatest boom during the 15th century, when it served as a representative residence of the nobility. Thanks to the massive fortress walls, high cliffs, and various other defensive elements located around its periphery, this gallant and uncompromising guard of the Spiš region was never conquered in battle. It took a raging fire in 1780 to reduce it to ruins.

Thanks to its rich history, excellent position, and sheer size, Spiš Castle has not only become the dominant feature of the entire Spiš region and a much sought-after tourist attraction, but also the object

of interest of many filmmakers, photographers, and painters. On the reconstructed premises of the castle complex visitors may find expositions of the Spiš Museum, where visitors can learn interesting facts, see testaments to the castle's rich history and medieval weapons, and take a look inside a medieval kitchen, castle bedroom, or the dreaded torture chamber. Each summer, Spiš Castle is home to an array of impressive and interesting cultural events in the style and atmosphere of the original period. Live displays of historic fighting arts and falconry always prove to be highly-popular with tourists.

The bird's eye view from this majestic fortification is truly a unique experience. Below Spiš Castle, visitors can also admire one of the largest creative works of sculpture in the world. The exceptional geoglyph created by an Australian sculpture represents a stylised stone image of a horse from a Celtic coin found during one of the archaeological digs at Spiš Castle.

Spišské Podhradie

Below the majestic Spiš Castle, not far from Spišská Kapitula and at 430 m above sea level, we can find the small provincial town of Spišské Podhradie, known in the past as a hot spot of trade and crafts.

Even to this day visitors can still admire the Gothic and Renaissance burgher houses with their typical archways and huge gates lining the streets and squares of Spišské Podhradie, as well as the town's many impressive sacral buildings. The Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary is a site to note, with its rare Gothic winged altar of St. Barbora. The town also houses a Renaissance Town Hall, the Church of the Merciful Brothers converted to a Baroque style, or the Baroque Mariánsky stĺp (Marián Column).

The pilgrimage chapel standing at the top of the lower travertine hill near Spišské Podhradie is a natural reservation that offers both captivating views of the cathedral in Spišská Kapitula and Spiš Castle.

Tips for trips

Sivá Brada – Dreveník learning trail – follows the footsteps of history and the natural phenomena of the Spiš region.

Slovenský raj National Park – hiking options in the stunning surrounding countryside with many wooden and iron ladders, ravines, and waterfalls, or you can take a visit to the fascinating Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa – Dobšinská Ice Cave.

Betliar Mansion – Fairytale, classic two-storey hunting residence set in the landscape of a beautiful English park with romantic buildings, an artificial cave, and a waterfall.

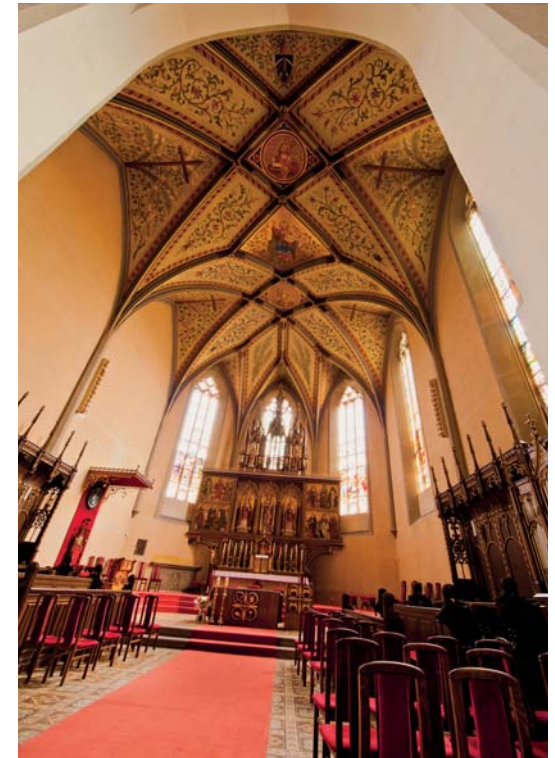




Spišská Kapitula

West of Spišské Podhradie, we find the interesting municipal heritage reservation of Spišská Kapitula. This former clerical town, also referred to as the Slovak “Vatican,” was established at the crossroads of the key routes passing below Spiš Castle. Today it serves as the revived headquarters of the Spiš Diocese.

The rarest Gothic treasure of Spišská Kapitula is St. Martin's Cathedral. The original Romanesque building once served as a royal representative temple. It only took on its current noble appearance after many renovations, now serving as a complement to this region rich in cultural and historical treasures.



The Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra

The Spiš region's complex of world cultural heritage is further complemented by the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra, whose primary function is to offer holy mass, but its unique interiors also attract many tourists passing by. The artistically designed, extremely unique wall murals dating from various centuries depict different biblical scenes. The typical rounded roof of this national cultural monument is also clearly visible from Spiš Castle.

The village of Žehra is bordered by one of the largest and oldest travertine formations in Slovakia making up the Dreveník Natural Reservation. Here, the rich archaeological findings and the presence of rare species of plants definitely make Dreveník one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the entire Spiš region. The ascent to the top of the hill offers amazing panoramas of the Branisko mountain massif and the hills of the Levočské vrchy, which create the perfect natural backdrop to Spiš Castle.

Information Centre: Turistické informačné centrum Spišská Nová Ves

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Levoča: N 49°01'31.60" E 20°35'19.33"
Spišský hrad: N 49°00'01.47" E 20°46'05.81"
Spišské Podhradie: N 48°59'59.85" E 20°45'06.05"
Spišská Kapitula: N 48°59'56.20" E 20°45'11.00"
Žehra: N 48°58'43.46" E 20°47'34.04"
Dreveník: N 48°58'55.66" E 20°46'28.03"





Bardejov

The Gothic pearl of the Šariš region

Only a few places in Slovakia can boast such a rich array of rare monuments as the town of Bardejov. In 1986, it was the first place in Slovakia awarded the prestigious Gold Medal European Prize by the ICOMOS International Foundation Board of Trustees at UNESCO. Later in 2000, the town with its more-than 770 years of history was entered into the UNESCO World Heritage List, which ranked the unique historical core of Bardejov and the complex of distinct buildings belonging to the town's Jewish community among the valued treasures of worldwide culture.

The existence of the town of Bardejov, rightfully proud of its medieval monuments, was first chronicled back in 1241. At that time, Bardejov lay at the junction of key trade routes and was accordingly granted various special rights and privileges. The most important of these was granted in 1376 when Bardejov became a free royal town.

Nowadays, Slovakia's most Gothic town gives visitors the chance to admire one of the best-preserved examples of town fortifications, and now deemed worthy of European Cultural Heritage funding. Without a doubt, the dominant feature of the magical rectangular square, surrounded by original stately burgher houses with their typical gable roofs, is the impressive Gothic Basilica Minor of St. Egidius from the 14th century. The interior of the church enchants visitors with its unique set of eleven late-Gothic winged altars, some of which

are regarded as preeminent examples of European woodcarving. Another unique building on the square is the centrally positioned Gothic-Renaissance Town Hall building, whose Šariš Museum presents an interesting historical exposition on the region.

Not far from the town centre, visitors can find what is now a curious novelty of Eastern Slovakia – the only partially-preserved set of former Jewish baths and synagogue, the remains of a suburban centre from the end of the 18th century planned and built according to the regulations of the Talmud.

An intrinsic and inseparable part of the town of Bardejov is the famous Bardejov Spa, which is one of the most beautiful and popular spa destinations in Slovakia. This oasis of health and relaxation has played host to many historical figures, like Marie Louise of Austria, the second wife of Emperor Napoleon, the Russian Tsar Alexander I, and the Empress Elisabeth, wife of Franz Joseph I and known fondly as Sissi.

Bardejov offers its visitors a rich line-up of cultural and social events throughout the year. Some of the better-known events organised by the town include the Knight Roland Games, the J. Grešák Organ Days – an international festival of organ music, and last but not least, the traditional annual market fete in the last week in August, whose history dates back to the 14th century.

Tips for trips

Wooden churches – A number of architecturally unique wooden churches, some of which are included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Ľubovňa Castle – A castle with a rich history, interesting architecture, and engaging offerings all summer long.

Levoča, Spiš Castle, and surrounding monuments – Global architectural treasures included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Information Centre:

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Tvrdošín

Wooden churches

Unique sacral treasures

There are over 40 unique wooden sacral buildings scattered throughout Slovakia, with the eight rarest being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. The wooden Roman Catholic churches in Hervartov and Tvrdošín, the articular Evangelical churches in Kežmarok, Leštiny, and Hronsek, and the shrines of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Bodružal, Ladomirová, and Ruská Bystrá are among the greatest and most interesting sacral gems that Slovakia has to offer its visitors in the Slovak portion of the Carpathian arc.

Many wooden churches are still used for religious ceremonies to this day. They were built solely from wood, with not a single metal nail used in their construction. Their stunning interiors and chapel decorations are also made of wood, further emphasising the uniqueness of these rare buildings.

The pride of Orava – the town of **Tvrdošín** and its oldest preserved monument, the Gothic wooden **All Saints Church** – attract visitors with its rare Baroque altar and stunning arch murals.

The striking Orava region is home to a unique treasure in the form of the wooden articular **Church of Leštiny**. The church interior is richly adorned, dominated by flowery wall murals, a richly decorated pulpit, and a rare Baroque altar with fine woodcarving.



Leštiny

Tips for trips

Orava Castle – One of the most visited castles in Slovakia; rafting tours along the River Orava.

Podbiel – Folk architecture reservation.

Zuberec – Orava Village Museum, with exhibitions on the typical architecture of the Orava region.

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Tvrdošín:

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Leštiny:

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Tvrdošín



Kežmarok

Not far from the village of **Hronsek**, the surroundings of the historical, former mining town of Banská Bystrica offer visitors a special treat. The framework construction of the village's **wooden articular church**, dating from 1726, contains some incredibly unique features. The interior is adorned with a colourful altar of six interchangeable pictures, the choir benches are arranged as an amphitheatre, and it boasts especially excellent acoustics.

In a perfect setting below the spectacular peaks of the High Tatra Mountains (Vysoké Tatry), the historic town of **Kežmarok** is home to the Baroque wooden **Church of the Holy Trinity**, which was built in the shape of an equal-armed Greek cross. One of the most impressive and striking wooden churches, it also contains fascinating wood carvings, unique frescos, a stunning large wooden altar, and a rare church organ with wooden pipes.

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Kežmarok: N 49°07'59.17" E 20°25'42.65"



Hronsek

Tips for trips

Zvolen Castle – The dominant feature of the town of Zvolen, housing collections from the Slovak National Gallery.

Banská Bystrica – Historic town with many attractions and events.

Tatranská magistrála – A hiking route along the southern slopes of the Vysoké Tatry Mountains (High Tatras).





Bodružal

The picturesque Šariš village of **Hervartov** is home to the oldest and best-preserved wooden church from the 15th century, **the Church of Francis of Assisi**, where visitors can admire its beautiful Gothic icons and wall murals.

Eastern Slovakia boasts several unique wooden churches, but the **Church of St Nicholas in Bodružal** is one of the oldest and best-preserved Eastern Orthodox churches in all of Slovakia. This impressive three-section log structure contains a unique iconostasis painted on both sides.

One of the most beautiful wooden Orthodox churches in Slovakia, the Greek Catholic **Church of the Archangel Michael**, can be found near the town of Svidník in the charming village of **Ladomirová**. A look at the interior of the church offers a rare chance to see the church's artistic iconostasis and 18th-century altar.

Right next to the border with Ukraine, in the charming village of **Ruská Bystrá**, is the wooden Greek Catholic **Church of the Relics of St. Nicholas** built in 1730, which differs from the other temples of the Orthodox Church in its architecture. The interior is decorated with a rare and unique icon of the Crucifixion.

Tips for trips

Bardejov – Gothic town (UNESCO) with spas and open-air folk architecture expositions.

Medzilaborce – Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art.

Humenné – Exposition of folk architecture, cultural monuments.



Ruská Bystrá

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Bodružal:

N 49°21'09.05" E 21°42'28.81"

Ladomirová:

N 49°19'42.04" E 21°37'34.80"

Ruská Bystrá:

N 48°51'24.18" E 22°17'48.35"



Ladomirová



Caves

Slovakia's underground treasures

Slovakia offers its visitors the chance to witness the beauty of unique works of art created by the most talented master of all – nature. Under the surface of this picturesque landscape, stunning exhibition chambers adorned with mysterious and breathtaking decorative gems await visitors in the very same spot they were created ages ago.

Only a handful places in the world have such an exceptional number of diverse karst formations as Slovakia. There are over 7,000 known caves here, of which 17 are publicly accessible. The best known and rarest of the caves are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. They include the caves of the Slovenský kras (Slovak Karst) and Aggtelek kras (Aggtelek Karst) ranges, which were classed among the world's natural rarities back in 1995. In 2000, Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (Dobšinská Ice Cave) also received this hallowed privilege.

There are just three accessible aragonite caves in the world. Alongside Mexico and Argentina, Slovakia boasts one of its own. **Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa** (Ochtinska Aragonite Cave) has an exceptional aesthetic value and is the only cave of its kind in Europe. It's found underneath the hills of the Revúcka vrchovina on the northern flank of Hrádok Hill, about 26 km from the town of Rožňava. The cave presents unique natural phenomena, which are exceptional by the variety, richness, and beauty of the aragonite creations. Its underground chambers, accessible over

Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa

a length of roughly 300 m, are adorned with aragonite crystals, as the formations are reminiscent in some places of fragile corals and elegant sea flowers floating on the arches of the cave. The oldest part of this aragonite spectacle is estimated to be an unbelievable 138,000 years old. The astonishing beauty of the cave, formed over millennia, now presents visitors with their own storybook experience.

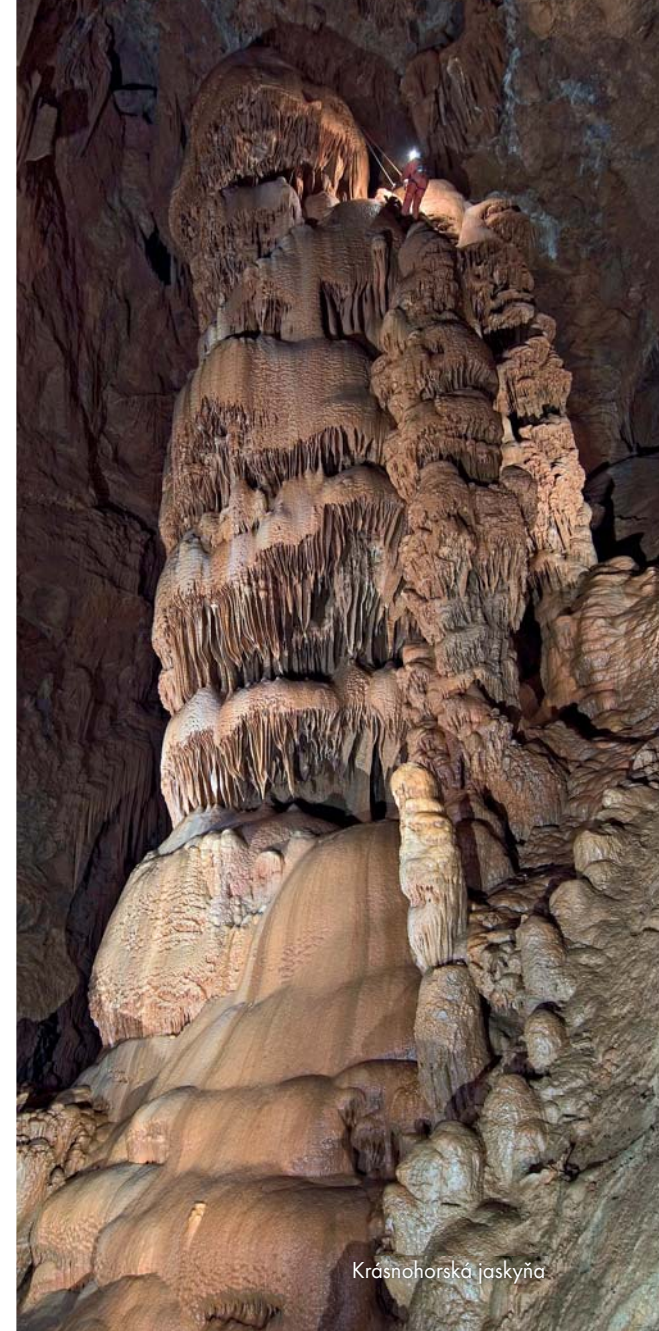
Domica cave is the largest known cave of the Slovak Karst, which is one of the most extensive karst territories in Central Europe. The cave can be found along the Slovak-Hungarian border about 25 km from the town of Rožňava. Its inner chambers, carved by the waters of the River Styx and the Domica Stream, were discovered by humans 35,000 years ago. In addition to the beautiful, rich sinter decor, surrounding peaks, hills, and attractive waterfalls, visitors can also enjoy an exciting trip down the Styx (provided the water level is high enough).

Jasovská jaskyňa (Jasovská Cave) is found on the outskirts of the village of Jasov in the hills of the Medzevská pahorkatina, in the western part of the Košice basin. Here parlours, domes, rock waterfalls, and corridors with fascinating sinter decorations of white, greyish-brown, and brownish-red colours were formed by the Bodva Stream. Thanks to the 90-98% humidity in the cave, it is often used for therapeutic speleoclimatic stays.

Krásnohorská jaskyňa (Krásnohorská Cave) is located on the northern edge of the Silická planina plain and is accessible only when accompanied by a speleologist. Its distinctive feature, a monumental column – the so-called Dripstone of Rožňava Cavers (Kvapel rožňavských jaskyniarov) – is 34 m in height and 12 m in diameter at the base, making it one of the largest sinter formations in the world and the largest in a moderate climate zone.



Domica



Krásnohorská jaskyňa



Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa

Gombasecká jaskyňa (Gombasek Cave) can be found at the foot of the Silická planina plain, approximately 10 km from the town of Rožňava. Stretching over two separate floors, which were both created by the flows of the Čierny potok Stream. The sinter decor of this underground temple 1,525 m in length truly impresses through the shape of its unique, thin tubular stalactite formations. In some places the formations are up to three metres long, and thanks to their sheer number give the impression that it's raining rocks.

Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (Dobšinská Ice Cave) is one of the most significant caves in the world due to its icy nature. What's more, its uniqueness is further boosted as it's the geographically lowest-positioned of all of the world-renowned ice caves. It lies at an altitude of just 969 m above sea level, roughly 20 km from the village of Dobšiná in the Spišsko-Gemerský kras (Spiš-Gemer karst) in the territory of the National Park of Slovenský raj (Slovak Paradise). Its amazing icy interior, made up of more than 110,000 cubic metres of ice, is up to 25 m thick in some places and occupies an amazing 10,000 square metres. The main part of the cave contains a huge hollow that

Tips for trips

City of Košice – See the gothic St. Elizabeth Cathedral, with a distinctive historical square home to many cultural monuments and events.

Štós Spa – Climatic spa in the heart of the scenic countryside.

Slovenský kras National Park – Hiking and cycling alongside some unusual creations of the karst mountains, with panoramic views of the surroundings.

descends from the cold north opening to a depth of 70 m. This huge subterranean glacier gives visitors the chance to admire the ice floor, gorgeous ice columns, magical icefalls, and stalagmites. The air temperature in the lower parts of the cave remains below freezing all-year-round.

These are the unique caves of Slovakia – stunning natural beauties shrouded in unforgiving darkness, where only beams of light allow visitors the chance to discover these mysterious subterranean splendours and appreciate the unique artistic creations of nature.



Gombasecká jaskyňa

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Jasovská jaskyňa



The beech wildwoods of the Carpathians

The enchantment of unspoilt nature

Undisrupted peace, healing silences, picturesque romantic spots, and the beauties of unspoilt nature – this is what the territory of the **Carpathian beech wildwoods**, lying in Eastern Slovakia, has to offer. This unique and enchanting atmosphere is enhanced by the abundance of wild game, which you can easily spot throughout this beautiful, untamed environment.

The protected localities of the preserved beech forests in **Stužica**, **Rožok**, and **Havešová** are located in the Poloniny National park, which spreads out over the beech-covered peaks of the Bukovské vrchy. The wildwood **Vihorlatský prales** lies in the most protected forested area in Slovakia called Vihorlat, bursting forth from the hills of the Vihorlatské vrchy. All four unique territories, with their rare and untouched nature, were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007 alongside some of the top natural features around the world, like the world-renowned Yellowstone National Park and Grand Canyon in the USA, the Galapagos in Ecuador, the Sagarmatha in Nepal, the Himalayas, and Kilimanjaro in Africa.

The Carpathian beech wildwoods represent distinct forests that have been untouched by civilisation and the uncompromising hand of mankind. Here you can

experience the unforgettable – and now also unique – atmosphere of the natural environment of a true forest teeming with life and mystical natural treasures. They are a prime example of how forests would have looked thousands of years ago. The dominant species here is beech, which grows up to 40 m in height and lives an impressive 250 years. For centuries, these silent witnesses of times long past have provided protection for the homes of its residents and a sanctuary for the many rare fauna and flora found here, now frequently endangered or even extinct. The high peaks, stunning deep valleys, and characteristic small reservoirs also create a safe and undisturbed haven for rare animals such as the brown bear, the grey wolf, and Eurasian lynx – and even for the European bison.

The beauty of the unusually scenic countryside here can only be enjoyed along the marked hiking paths and educational trails or by the accompaniment of an expert tour guide with a special licence.

One of the main entryways to these impressive ancient wildwoods is the easternmost village in Slovakia – Nová Sedlica, the starting point of a hiking trail that leads through the **Stužica** state nature reserve. This is a wild forest of the Carpathians with countless gigantic beech trees, fir trees, and maples. The silver fir, known for having a lifespan of up to 500 years, is rightfully referred to as the queen of this forest. The oldest piece of silver fir here, standing almost 50 m high, is more than 300 years old and has a base diameter of 5 m.



For those who love nature and admire its perfect harmony, for those who know how to find peace in the sounds, smells, and rich colours of the forest, the Carpathian beech wildwoods are the perfect place to be. Fill yourselves with pure, clean air, relax in an exceptionally calm environment surrounded by therapeutic silence, and discover the still-unknown nooks and crannies of this area.

Tips for trips

Sninské rybníky bio water park – Natural spa resort utilising water recycling technology through plants and seaweeds.

Astronomical observatory on the Kolonické sedlo hill with the largest telescope in Slovakia.

Wooden churches in the villages of Ruský Potok, Uličské Krivé, Topoľa, and Kalná Ráztoka – Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches with unique wooden architecture.

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The Music and Tradition of Terchová

Celestial Archaic Folk Music

When the music of Terchová was listed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO in 2013, it marked a tremendous moment of appreciation for traditional Slovak culture. At the same time, it is a tribute to all generations coming from Terchová and its surroundings, who have kept their ancestral treasures alive for the world today.

The exact formation of the music of Terchová as a form of folk expression is unknown, because it is orally transmitted from generation to generation in a natural setting. One ancient legend says that the music of Terchová is a relic from a stray star of heaven, whose court musicians – celestial musicians – were the first settlers of Terchová, a village in northern Slovakia. Although it is only a legend today, the fact remains that the music from Terchová is still referred to as the music of heaven. Experts admit that perhaps nowhere else in the world do as many musicians exist in such a small territory as in Terchová. This is confirmed by the fact that every house has a musician, and each of the region's settlements used to have its own characteristic music.

The “heavenly” music of Terchová is an archaic folk music brought to life in Terchová and its surrounding villages. It is characterised by 3 to 4-member string

ensembles with a small two-string bass. Another distinct feature is the musicians' strong polyphonic singing. The music of Terchová was originally closely-linked to a dance, so its musical style is lively and earthy with quick interludes “to jump” and slower singing passages called “dragged.” The term “the music of Terchová” refers to the entirety of the town's musical tradition. Therefore, it can only be complete with a song repertoire, a folk dance called csardas (Terchovská krútená), its own music style and its own traditional performers.

Due to its unusual musicality and original and imaginative composition, the music of Terchová has become a unique artistic phenomenon that renders Terchová famous not only in Slovakia, but virtually throughout Europe, North and South America, Australia and even on the African and Asian continents.

Tips for events

The Jánošík's Days (Jánošíkove dni) - International folklore festival, taking place at the end of July in Terchová.

Worship of Bethlehem (Jasličková pobožnosť) - Occurs annually in the Church of St Cyril and Methodius in Terchová on December 25.





The Fujara and its music

A treasure concealed within the wood

We could not talk about Slovak history and its rich folk culture without mentioning the typical woodwind instrument called the 'Fujara' – a 3-hole fipple flute that, along with its wistful melodic tunes, was inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

The birthplace of this queen among traditional folk instruments is accredited to the regions of Central Slovakia. It is said that the Fujara was originally intended for shepherds to send signals to one another, but its impressive, characteristic tones led the Fujara to be used more widely as a musical instrument. Shepherds would send notes out through the valleys by playing this extremely long 3-hole flute while grazing their sheep, but the instrument was also used at all kinds of special celebrations or sadder occasions. The original motifs of Fujara tunes were based on everyday life, with melodies on topics like shepherding, love, and outlaws still known today.

This imposing musical instrument is mostly produced from elderberry wood, which has soft pith, is easily workable, and has excellent acoustic properties. In addition to its fantastic, distinct sound, the Fujara contains a tremendous amount of artistic value. Apart from being complicated to produce, its unique and fascinating decorations also require a lot of skill and creativity. The traditional decorative motifs, most often inspired by nature, are burned into the wood with a special acid solution.

You can witness the enchanting, yet melancholy tones coming forth from the Fujara at many folk festivals that are held regularly around the country from spring to autumn.



Tips for trips

Celoslovenská prehliadka fujerášov (National Fujara Festival) – Folklore event held in July in the village of Korytárky devoted to Fujara and its music.

National meeting of Fujara players in Čičmany – Folklore event held in September in the picturesque, distinctive village of Čičmany, surrounded by the town's uniquely-painted log houses.

Folklorne slávnosti pod Poľanou (Folklore Festival Poľana) – Folklore festival in Detva, held annually during the second week of July.





Bagpipes and Bagpipe Culture in Slovakia

An Instrument not just for Shepherds, but also for Dancing

Bagpipes (**gajdy**) represent the long musical tradition of the mostly peasant and shepherd population of Slovakia. Slovak bagpipes, whose roots date back to the 14th century, have thankfully been preserved to this day. In 2015, the bagpipes and the bagpipe culture of Slovakia were included on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The oldest bagpipe piece in Slovak museums dates from the 18th century. Bagpipes have long been a shepherd's instrument, but beginning in the Middle Ages, they also became an important instrument for dancing. The bagpipe's repertoire provides a rich melody for monophonic and polyphonic accompaniment and distinct rhythmic and metrical accents. The music of the bagpipe is the simplest folk musical grouping, consisting only of bagpipes and string instruments – historians note a bagpiper and a violinist depicted on an illustration from the 17th century. Bagpipes were heard on practically all religious and secular holidays and occasions. They were simply an integral part of holidays such as Christmas, New Years, Shrovetide, Easter, Pentecost, John's Night, and many other different festivities.

Bagpipes are a polyphonic type of clarinet instrument. Its pipes are connected to a bag, which serves as an air reservoir. In Slovakia, they are composed of two pipes: a three- to four-part drone pipe with a length of 50-80 cm, and a double (or even triple or quadruple) pipe, having one melodic pipe with 5(6) +1 holes and one contra-pipe with one hole. Other pipe channels have tactile holes or enclosures, through which the air can be released from the bag to the pipe.

Slovak bagpipes have pipes carved from plum wood or other hardwood, and are shaped into a tube or a double tube. They end in a single or a double decorative tail block or baffle board made of brass or carved from horn. The pipe heads are carved into the shape of a goat's head (with horns) and have brass ornaments, small glass, or other decorative accessories.

The history of bagpipe music is older, as documented by the Wedding and National Dances of Slovaks from the border regions of Moravia, Austria, and Slovakia in 1819, a piece performed by bagpipes with two violins.

Tips for events

Gajdošské fašiangy (Bagpipe Shrovetide) – international meeting of bagpipers and bagpipe music bands in Malá Lehota, in the district of Žarnovica (date varies according to the date of Shrovetide).

Gajdovačka – international bagpipe festival associated with the international competition of young bagpipers, Oravská Polhora (September).

Ozveny hradných múrov (Echoes of the Castle Walls) – festival at the Slovenská Ľupča Castle (at the end of August).

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