



Banská Bystrica Region



Little Big Country



Banská Bystrica region is situated in the south of Central Slovakia and by its size of 9,455 km² it is also the largest Slovak region. The ancient settlements were concentrated mainly in the Zvolenská hollow

is race of dog tandems on Donovaly. Five national parks interfere with the territory of region (the National Park Low Tatras, the National Park Slovak Paradise (Slovenský raj), the National Park Muráň



basin. The region is very special due to the original character of mining towns. Krupina, Banská Bystrica and Ľubietová were established thanks to their rich copper-beds. Surroundings of Banská Bystrica town are rich in natural as well as tourist attractions such Badínsky wildwood (Badínsky prales), Harmanec Cave (Harmanecká jaskyňa), skiing resort Donovaly and the Low Tatras (Nízke Tatry). The whole area contains a lot of cycling trails suitable mainly for sportsmen and amateur cyclers. The region excels at perfect conditions for horse riding, cross-country and downhill skiing but also fans of adrenalin sports come into their own here. An interesting winter attraction

Plain (Muránska planina), the National Park Veľká Fatra and the National Park Slovak Carst (Slovenský kras)), 4 protected territories and numerous national natural reservations and protected areas, localities and objects of lower level of protection. Three towns namely Banská Bystrica, Banská Štiavnica and Kremnica were declared to be town landmark reservations while Banská Štiavnica has been even registered in the List of World Cultural Heritage. Špania Valley (Špania dolina), Štiavnica Mines (Štiavnicke bane) and Sebechleby – Staré Hory are monument reservations protecting peasant settlements.



Banská Bystrica

History of Banská Bystrica dates back to times when mining of gold and copper just started in this region. The first written mention about the town is contained in constitutive decree of Hungarian King Béla IV. dating back to 1255, by which Banská Bystrica became the town granted even royal privileges. The standard of life in the town increased together with more busy activities of mining industry. Royal privileges attracted new German migrants. Those migrants were mainly miners and in the second half of the 13th century they built the Church of Madonna Translation, which was constructed in Romanesque style. The most famous chapel is being sacrificed

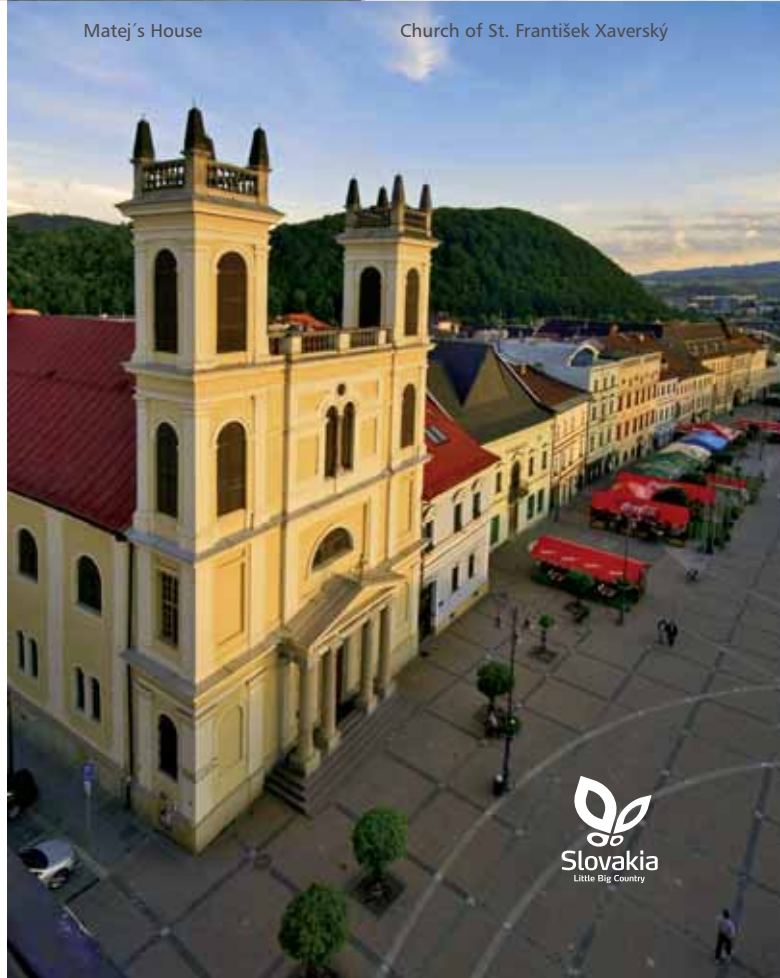
to Saint Barbora – patroness of miners. The altar comes from the manufactory of Master Pavol from Levoča. The Gothic triptych from 15th century, metal baptistery from 1475, sculpture of St. Andrej and saints from Olive Hill and decorations of vaults made by J. Schmidt are beautiful as well. In 1452 Slovak citizens of the town built their Church of Saint Cross right next to this cathedral. Nave and hall were built next to Chapel of St. Michal and so they filled in the space between the chapel and Matej 's House (Matejov dom). On the main altar there are statues of Madonna and Mária Magdaléna made by Vavrinec Dunajský. This is how castle complex with the town hall, barbican and



Matej's House

Church of St. František Xaverský

city walls were built. Eloquent testimony about the prosperity and forwardness of material and spiritual culture of Banská Bystrica of 15th and 16th century is bearded by numerous important buildings. The most beautiful of them are located just in the historic centre, which consists of square and adjacent main streets. Ancient houses of moneyed burgesses are built on Gothic basis and they belong to the most valuable Renaissance buildings in Slovakia. The core of Banská Bystrica is a real historical heritage and the area of the castle was declared to be the national cultural landmark.





SNP Square



Barbican



Parish Church



Turzo's House



Parish Church

Another architectonic and art dominant in the zone close to the castle is Matej's House built in the style of late Gothic. It is a five-storey building with gothic portal and stone balcony. The facade bears the coat of arms of King Matej; it is a town coat of arms designed in 1479. The Renaissance town hall was built in 1500 and it contains Gothic, Renaissance as well as Baroque elements. At present the Gallery resides in the town hall. Rich citizens were building admirable houses in Gothic and Baroque style. Some of them such as Turzo's House (Turzov

dom) or Benický's House (Benického dom) are of great art and architectural value. In 1589 the town was completely castellated by stone walls protecting the town from invasions of enemy Turks (about 1526). The remaining of the fortification and walls has been preserved until today. In the past Banská Bystrica was famous for various cultural events which are organized even today. Very famous Radvaň Market (Radvanský jarmok) is celebrating its 350 anniversary. Every year boot makers, ceramists, sellers of draperies, ginger bread, woodcarvers



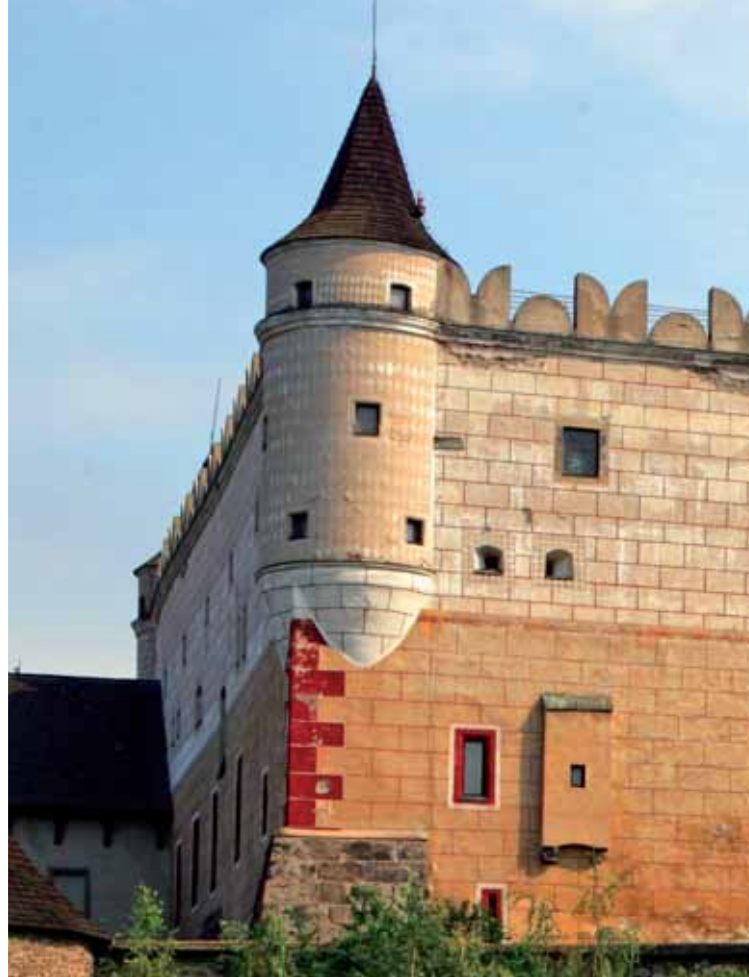
and other craftsmen from broad neighborhood stand their stands here. Somewhere in the past also the original tradition of regaling young girls with scoops which has been preserved until today originated there.

Museum of the Slovak National Uprising is specialized museum with the archive of extraordinary meaning. It describes the development of the Slovak society in 1938-1945 with the stress on documenting the national liberalization fight. Banská Bystrica with population of almost 100,000 is

an important cultural and administrative centre of Central Slovakia. It is also an important centre of education. Thanks to its favorable position and wide spectrum of possibilities which the town offers for tourism and winter sports, Banská Bystrica is also an important tourist centre of Slovakia. It is a starting point of marked hiking trails into neighboring mountains such as Kremnica Mountains, Starohorské Mountains (Starohorské vrchy), Veľká Fatra, the Low Tatras, Veporské Mountains (Veporské vrchy) and Poľana.

Zvolen

Zvolen town is located in the area of central Pohronie in the south-western part of Zvolen hollow basin, at the confluence of the rivers Hron and Slatina. In the past the town was the most important town of broad neighborhood as well as administrative and economic centre. History lovers can still visit places which served as seats of Hungarian kings. In Zvolen there are just two of them – Pustý Castle (Pustý hrad) and Zvolen Castle (Zvolenský hrad). Large archeological research is being carried out on the Pustý Castle right now; however, it is open also to the public and every year it discloses more and more of its rich history. It is very unique place and also



Zvolen Castle



Zvolen Castle

the largest castle of Europe with the acreage of 7.6 ha. The walls of newer Zvolen Castle are seat of the Slovak National Gallery and its sculpture and painting expositions. Theatre and opera lovers should definitely visit Zvolen at the time of international theatre festival named Zvolen Castle Plays (Zámocké hry zvolenskéé), which is being held at the courtyard of Zvolen Castle every year. In the area surrounding Zvolen town there is a lot of trails for lovers of relaxation and active sport. Sliáč Spa and Kováčová Spa are well-known for their thermal springs with healing effects. Zvolen surroundings offer natural reserves with unique natural formations such as Čertova skala or Zolniansky

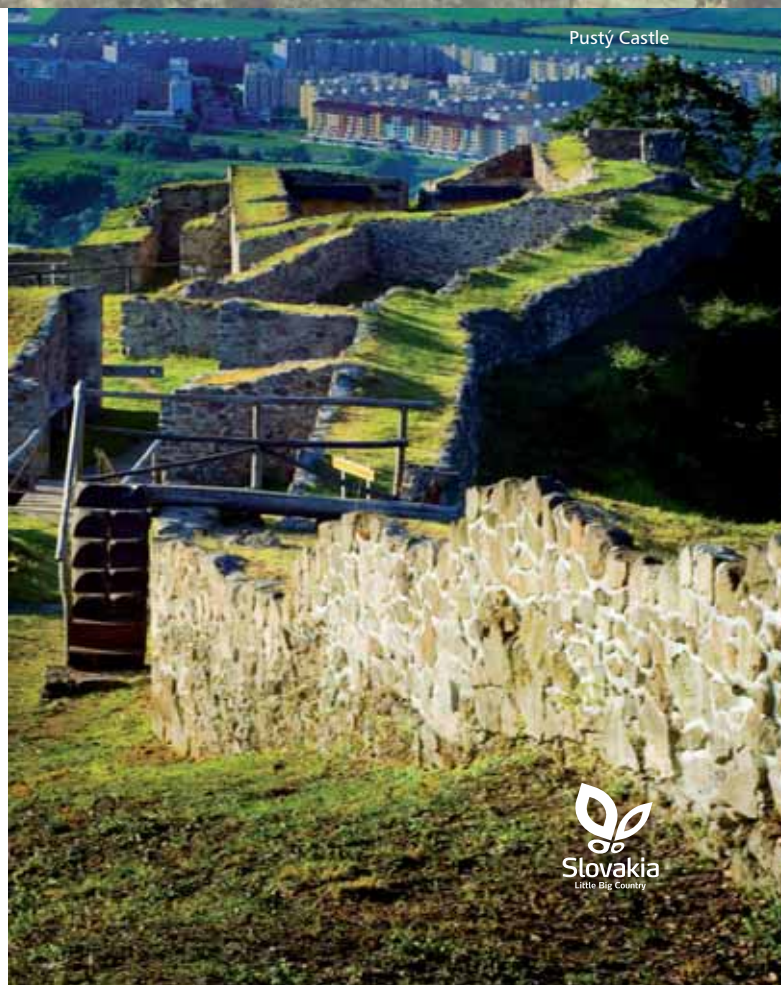


Theatre of J.G. Tajovský

Lahar to its visitors as well as cyclist tourists. Očová village belongs to very important ethnographic localities with its specific folk's culture. It is famous for embroideries and clothes of Detva type, production of pastoral musical instruments and playing the fujara (traditional Slovak musical instrument), catcalls, dances and cymbal music. Since 2004 the folklore festival named Music of Očovo (Očovská hudba) takes place there always in August. If you want to try traditional Slovak meal which is potato dumplings with sheep cheese, you will find several restaurants around Zvolen – typical chalets which offer the best dumplings in Slovakia.



Pustý Castle





Kremnica belongs to ancient towns which represented the centre of attention of kings; at the time of their highest fame the kings tried to get such towns into their ownership. The main objects of their attention were rich gold mines. According to a legend, in the mountains where Kremnica is located, a hunter shot a grouse long time ago. In its struma he found grains of gold. Marching against the flow of the stream he found a bed of ores with high volume of gold and silver. Those precious metals have been mined in Kremnica and its surrounding since 10th century; however, the real mining expansion occurred not sooner than in 14th century. In 1328 the Hungarian King Karol Róbert from Anjou granted the village Cremnychbana (today's Kremnica) privileges of free royal mining and coin town. He also established a small mint here, which has produced a huge number of golden and silver coins during the centuries of its

existence and it supported the thrones of many king as well. The oldest part of present mint is located in the northern part of the square and it was built in the 15th century. The area of the mint has been changed from its original Renaissance style mainly at the end of the 19th century after the demolition of the Upper Gate in 1872. The new building was built at the site of the previous one in 1882-1889 and subsequently in 1891 the northern and north-eastern parts of the premises were enlarged. In 1958 the western part of the building was added. The old mint in the northern part of the city began to mint Hungarian grosches in 1329 and in 1335 the golden florins known also as Kremnica ducats and also silver grosches and small dinars. Kremnica ducats belonged to the most valuable and most sought-for coins in Europe. Kremnica mint has been working constantly since its establishment until today and so it is a real rarity among other European mints.



Town Castle



Old Castle



Banská Štiavnica



Old Castle

Mining industry was a main source of wealth and later fame of Banská Štiavnica town. The first conquerors of underground wealth of the region were the Celts, who came here marching against the stream of water flow. The first mentions about the region named Terra banensiu (Land of Miners) originated in 13th century. The importance of Banská Štiavnica is being confirmed also by granting it the town privileges in 1238 according to existing reports. Preserved objects such as tunnels, channels, mining towers, stacks, industrial and specific objects relating to mining activities commemorate the past periods. Natural conditions of Banská Štiavnica and its surroundings

did not provide sufficient source of water energy therefore the miners needed to create a system of water tanks there. Water from atmospheric precipitation accumulated in the tanks and subsequently its energy potential was used for drive of mining equipment. The first attempts to build artificial water tanks were made at the beginning of 14th century, anyway, it was not sooner than at the beginning of 16th century when the large building of artificial water tanks really started; a sophisticated mining water-management system was built and it not only saved mining industry in Banská Štiavnica but it was also reported to develop mining pumping technique



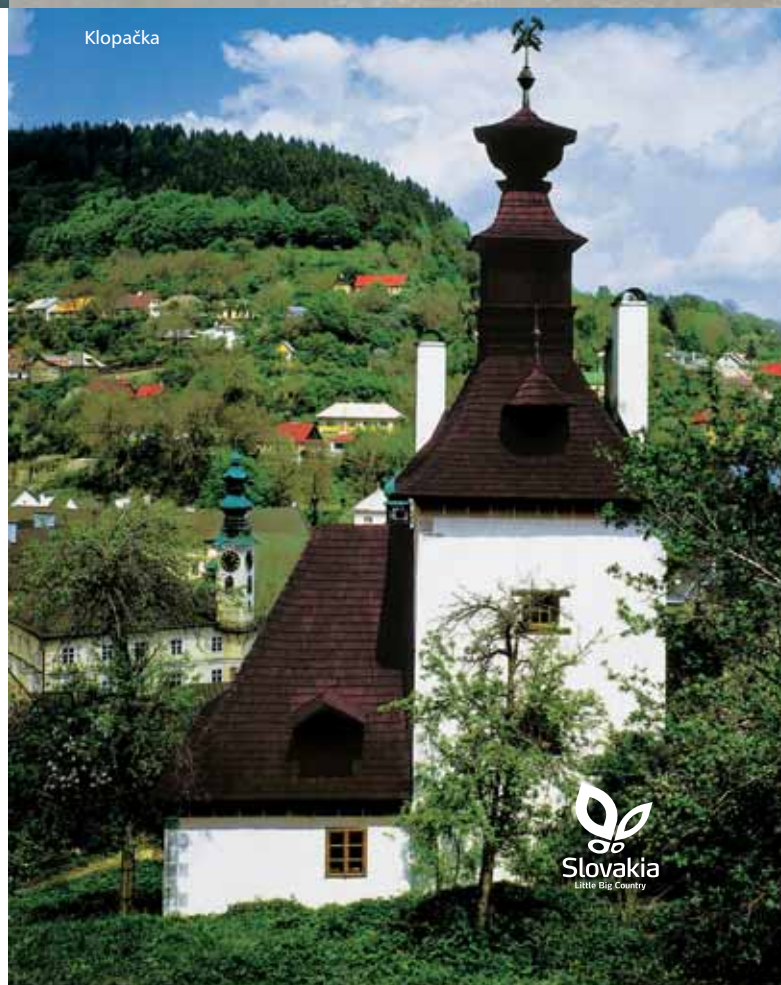
Piargská Gate

Kammerhof

Plague Pillar

at the energy basis of the referred system, which later became the paradigm of other mining territories. Documents testifying the development of mining activities and also former technology equipment may be seen in the Slovak Mining Museum. It has seven expositions in total – The Mining Museum in Nature - open-air museum (Banské múzeum v prírode), the Old Castle (Starý zámok), the New Castle (Nový zámok), Berggericht – mineralogic exposition, Kammerhof – mining industry in Slovakia, Gallery of Jozef Kollár and hereditary de-watering channel named Glanzenberg.

Klopačka





Sv. Anton



Manor-house in Sv. Anton

Baroque-classicistic building of manor-house in Sv. Anton includes also elements of calendar symbolism – the manor-house has 4 entrances, 7 arcades, 12 chimneys, 52 bedrooms and 365 windows. Today this symbolism cannot be observed so clearly since most of it was destroyed by further building adjustments of 19th century. In the manor-house one can visit reconstructed parts of several lounges, offices, dining rooms and chapels. In the exposition one can admire paintings of famous painters, marvelous furniture of 18th and 19th century, hand-painted textile wall papers and other valuable items brought from all

over the world. The hunting exposition of the manor-house is the only specialized exposition with nationwide reference. Already in 1808 the subject hunting started being taught in Banská Štiavnica; owners of the manor-house were passionate hunters and nature lovers. The hunting exposition extends in 12 bedrooms and it documents the historical development of hunting until today.



Museum aims at marionette culture and toys, their history and presence in Slovakia as well as abroad. One can admire traditional marionettes of Slovak stroller marionettists, family marionette theatres with original decorations but also artifacts from performances of present Slovak professional marionette theatres. Not only children will be excited to see the exposition of development of child toy in 19th and 20th century. Folks toys,

Modrý Kameň



Toy Museum

Modrý Kameň Castle



which were made by the relatives for children or they were made by children themselves represent a large group of imitated toys. The collection of toys contains the oldest exhibit dating back to 19th century. Also toys of 20th century are represented in the collection – dolls, transport toys, child furniture, animals, games and brain-teasers.

Hron Meander



The Low Tatras Mountains extend in total length of 80 km from the west to the east between picturesque valleys of the Váh and Hron Rivers. The main crest achieves the height of 2,000 m by three peaks while the highest one is Ďumbier (2,043 m). After the High Tatras, the Low Tatras are the second most visited mountains in Slovakia. Lately a lot of new hotels

The Low Tatras



Kráľova hoľa



Ďumbier

have been built here, as well as new camping sites, cable cars and ski lifts, hiking and tourism centers. Despite all the above-mentioned mainly in the eastern part of the mountains between the saddlebacks of Čertovica and Kráľová hoľa there still exist real wildwoods where a lot of animals live, for example bears. In these almost untouched forests one can organize a lot of interesting hiking tours. For tourists mainly the part of saddleback starting at Chopok leading to Čertovica is very attractive since it offers amazing views of the Low Tatras valleys at the north as well as south.





The most visited locality of the Low Tatras is Donovaly. The village is gradually being turned into the tourist centre of summer and winter sports. The area provides 11 km of downhill skiing routes, 25 km of cross-country skiing routes, cable cars, ski lifts and it offers also numerous possibilities of mountain and recreational hiking. Every year very attractive event is organized in Donovaly – world championship in sprint race of dog tandems of pedigreed Northern dog races.

Donovaly





Tále



Golf Playground

The eastern parts of the Low Tatras Mountains offer mainly attractive localities for hiking. In the recreational area of Tále there is built also a golfing area with 18 holes on total acreage of 60 ha. The playground is of high difficulty (SSS). High-quality infrastructure and nice mountain environment promise also perfect relax besides excellent sport possibilities.



Poľana



Poľana belongs to the largest dead volcanoes in Europe and it is also the largest volcanic mountain chain in Slovakia. It is well-known for its extraordinary natural wealth. The development of the relief with super elevation of 1,000 meters, climate, variation of minerals and soil types enables the presence of various thermophilic and mountain plants species and animals. Due to the referred natural values one part of territorial unit was declared to be a protected territorial area and world biosphere reserve of UNESCO. The territory is a protected hunting territory.

Wood cutting and wood processing industry has always belong to one of the main sources of welfare of people living in or close to the Slovak mountains. For smooth and high-quality transport of wood all year round also the forest railways have been build in Slovakia. Actually such railway represents kind of a mixture of regular railway – however, their track gauge was narrower, usually only 760 mm. In the first half of 20th century about 40 railway systems of various categories were built at the territory of present Slovakia – starting with a several kilometers long “horse-tram” up to large transport systems with regular public passenger transport. Today most of them do not

exist anymore, only fragments of several railways and some historical cars have been preserved. In Čierny Balog fans of such historic technical monument can enjoy the drive and sense of the atmosphere of 100 years ago.

Čierny Balog



Folks Traditions



Wooden Cross



Cowbells

Folklore

Carrying out Morena

High segmentation of Slovakia, difficult access and various economic situations of individual regions were reasons of much diversified cultural development. In various parts of Slovakia folk songs, playing untraditional musical instruments and special clothing style – costumes reflecting the customs of given region have remained even until today. Mainly in Detva, Hľpa and Šumiac the visitors can see a lot of those traditions. In several towns of Slovakia folklore festivals are hold during summer months; usually they represent something like an exhibition of folk art creativity. Very special clothes were used in Detva region. Young man with the fujara dressed in traditional Detva costume is a typical picture of the region of the Upper Hron.

Sad and slow sound of fujara has gone along with folks songs at happy as well as sad occasions of the life. Not only playing this instrument but also its production requires great skills what even enhances the value of the instrument. The former pastoral instrument gradually turned into favorite folk musical instrument. Despite the fact that fujara has only three holes by which it is possible to change the length of tone signal, tones of this royal whistle are really amazing. Today fujara is included in a lot of folk bands and it enjoys great population and reverence.

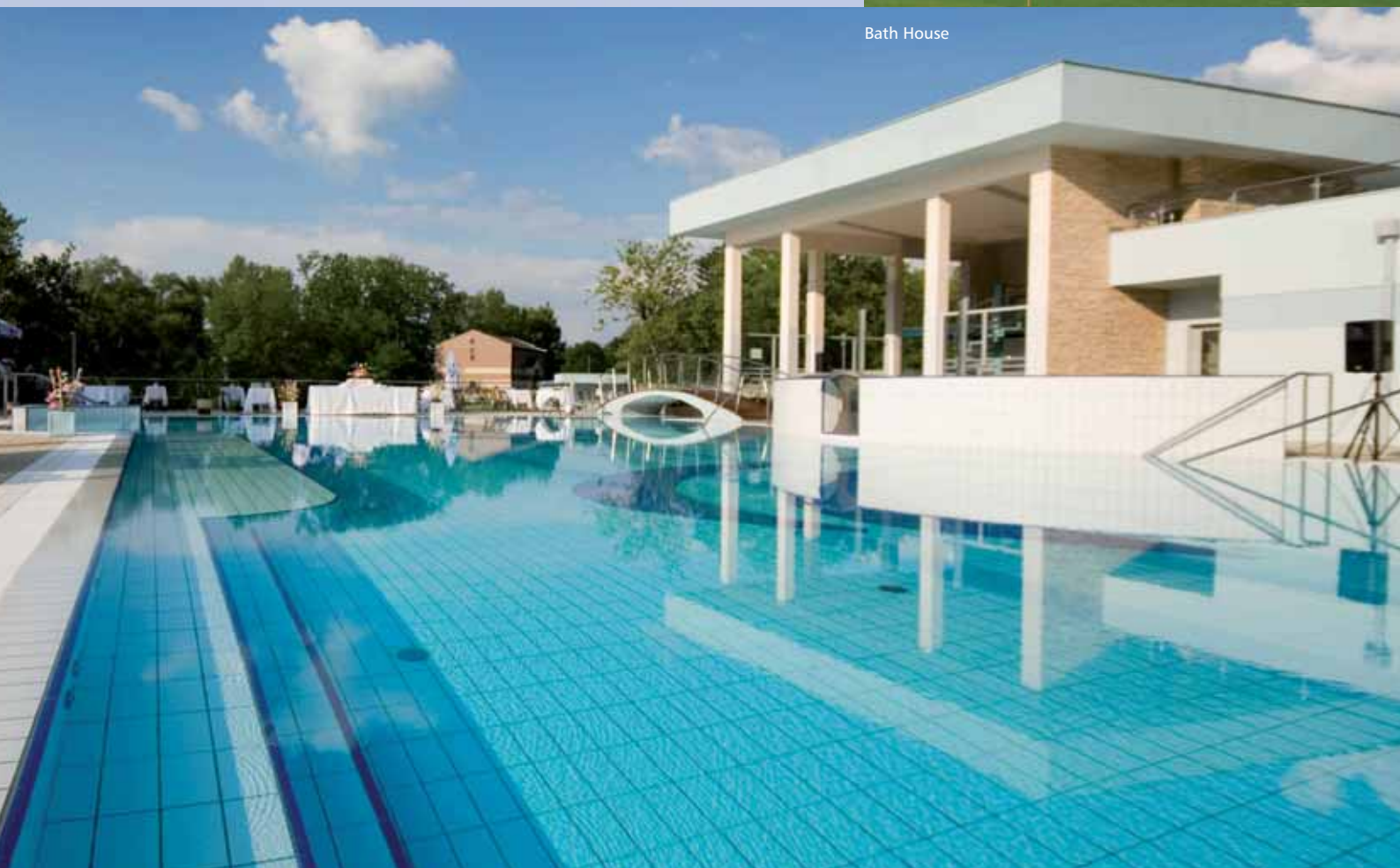
The unique water coming from Dudince is greatly used while treating the disorders of locomotive system and neurological disorders as well as cardiovascular, managerial and civilization diseases. The water of similar composition is said to be found only in Japan and famous French spa named Vichy. The water is strongly mineralized and every liter contains almost 1,600 mg of CO₂ and at the same time also almost 6 mg of hydrosuphide. Its natural temperature is 28 °C (for therapeutical purposes it needs to be heated up to the level of 33 - 37 °C). Dudince Spa is aimed at providing spa health care to patients with disorders

of locomotive system such as chronic diseases of spine, joints and soft parts of locomotive system, post traumatic conditions following serious accidents and surgeries of locomotive system, inborn or acquired orthopedic disorders of axial organ, neurological disorders, after-inflammation and after-accident conditions of central or peripheral neurological system and cardiovascular diseases such as myocardium infarct, ischemic heart disease and disorders of peripheral veins, rheumatic disorders of heart and lappets, hypertonic disease and post traumatic conditions following the surgeries of vascular system.

Dudince Spa



Bath House



14 springs spring out in Sklené Teplice. However, also artificial deep bores and water wells are used for water therapy. The springs belong to the most important springs of volcanic belt. Their temperature ranges from 37 °C to 52.3 °C, when speaking about artificial bores the temperature reaches even the level of 59 °C. Due to their chemical composition the springs belong to the category of natural, light mineralized and sulfated,

calcium-magnesium, hot, hypotonic waters. This composition predestinated Sklené Teplice Spa to treat mainly disorders of locomotive system. It is sought for by patients with neurological disorders, joint pain, muscle disorders and rheumatism but also by patients suffering by post traumatic conditions after the surgery of locomotive system.

Sklené Teplice Spa





Brusno Spa



Brusno Spa

The natural healing source of Brusno Spa is its natural healing water. Treatment of gastro-intestinal system disorders is based on the quantified drinking programs of natural healing waters. Their content is rich in minerals which positively impacts and also treats disorders of glands with internal secretion, disorders of liver of toxic origin or conditions after overcoming virus hepatitis and diseases of blood circulation apparatus. For their healing effects the mineral waters are applied also to patients

in form of sitting pool, bath and Jacuzzi. Gas elements of carbon oxide and hydrosulphide represent the main means of treatment indications. Treatment by natural water is absolutely natural therapy which has very positive impact on the human body and it does not cause any side effects.



Sliac Spa



Sliac Spa

Sliac Spa is rich in history and traditions. The first written mention dates back to 1244 to the period of reign of King Bela IV. Balneo-therapeutical complex is currently used mainly by adult patients for healing so-called civilization diseases and diseases of locomotive system. For all let us mention for example high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, disorders of peripheral arteries and veins, cases of rheumatic inflammation of myocardium muscle and lappets, myocardium and vein post traumatic conditions following cardiovascular surgeries.

Very good results of the spa have been achieved also by healing ischemic heart diseases, angina pectoris, vein disorders of lower limbs and therapy of the patients after infarct of myocardium. Besides cardiovascular disorders also feminine diseases and disorders of locomotive system are treated in the spa. The basis of spa therapy represents pool and Jacuzzi baths (temperature of mineral water is 33,3 °C) which is appropriately supplemented by physical therapy which includes water therapy, electro-therapy, massages, peat and paraffin poultices and treatment exercises. The specific procedures of the spa include gas injections and vacuum-press.



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