



Nitra Region



Little Big Country



The Nitra Region lies in the southwestern part of Slovakia and the city of Nitra is its administrative and social centre. This region is characterised by its lowlands with fertile soil, thanks to which this territory is known mainly for its good quality agricultural products. The concentration

important historic period for Nitra was the age of the Great Moravia Empire, the first Slavic state to be established in today's territory of Slovakia. The many archaeological findings from this period include also various important written documents that confirm the importance of the city and the region



of educational and scientific research institutions in the field of agricultural make the city of Nitra the main agricultural centre of Slovakia. For visitors to the city, this opens up the possibility to see scientific centres, the exhibition facility Agrocomplex, the world's largest specialised festival Agrofilm, as well as the Slovak Agricultural Museum, or the many surrounding villages with their own specific offers of rural tourism. Nitra lies at the crossroad of the fertile lowlands and mountain regions that further to the northeast and east continue along the arc of the Carpathian Mountains. The strategic importance of this location and its advantages were the reason why fortresses and settlements were built up here already in ancient times. Archaeological findings confirm the presence of dwellings in this location dating back 30,000 years. A very

in the history of Europe at the time. In addition to the ever-important agricultural production, the region is well known also for its thermal springs, which provided the foundation for the establishment of spa and relaxation resorts in various locations in the region, as well as for its well-preserved historic buildings and interesting excursion destinations. Nitra is also an important hub of culture with a very rich menu of cultural activities for visitors to the region throughout the whole year.



Nitra

Few places have been so blessed by nature with such beautiful scenery and an ideal location as Nitra. They say that it was founded (just like Rome) on seven hills – Zobor, Castle hill, Kalvaria, Čermánia, Borina, na Vříšku and Martinský vrch. Its name is associated with the birth of Slovak history, and with the names of Pribina, Svatopluk, and saints Cyril and Methodius. It is even linked to a chronicle of the first Christian church in the territory of Slovakia, as well as to the adoption of the first Slavonic alphabet. The very beginnings of the Nitra settlement go back to prehistory as it was documented by numerous archaeological findings in the territory of the city. It was a densely populated region some 30,000 years ago.

The first peasant settlements were here some 6,000 years ago. In the 4th century B.C. this area was settled by the Celts for a long time. They were skilful smelters and smiths whose huts and workshops have been discovered under Martinský vrch. Also the Daci, or Getae, left some traces in this area. Slovak history of Nitra dates to the end of the 5th century when the first Slavs arrived to this territory. Already in the first half of the 7th century, western sources mention the state formation of Slavs, Samo's Empire. Samo's Empire was a kind of predecessor of the next state formation – Great Moravia, with the area of Nitra constituting one of its centres. It has been confirmed by exceptionally precious documents from the 9th century



The Agricultural open-air museum



The Church of St. Emmeram



The Church of St. Emmeram



Nitra Castle

that it was in the period of the Great Moravia Empire that the foundations of the renowned old Christian Nitra fame were laid. In the first half of the 9th century Nitra was the metropolis of the Nitra principality, the existence of which is chronicled in ancient documents. The oldest written proof on Nitra and the Nitra Principality is from the document "Conversione Bagoariorum et Carantanorum", which originated around the year 871. It is documented here that during his mission to Pannonia, Adalram, the Archbishop of Salzburg, consecrated a church on the property of Prince Pribina in Nitrava (Nitra). This is precious evidence on the origin of the oldest known Christian church in Central Europe and at the same time it is the oldest

mention of Nitra. To top it off, it is the oldest preserved name of a city and settlement in the territory of Slovakia. Nitra was at the peak of its fame during the reign of King Svatopluk. In one of the most valuable written documents for Slovak history – a letter of Pope John VIII to Svatopluk, dated 880, "Industriae tuae", Svatopluk is referred to as king and the Pope informs him of the appointment of Viching to the post of Bishop of Nitra. Nitra probably already at that time had a municipal character and consisted of five fortified settlements and over twenty communities with flourishing crafts.

The most significant and most valuable landmark in Nitra is the Castle, towering on the rocky limestone hill surrounded by the river at the foothill of the mythic Zobor hill. The Castle is a monument of many centuries. It has been connected to important historical, political and social events, and as one of just a few Slovak castles, in spite of frequent catastrophes, this castle has preserved the nature of a settlement until the present day. It also did not change its architectural appearance that it obtained in the 17th century. The appearance

of the castle today is the result of construction and artistic activities spanning several centuries. It is comprised of four individual parts with different characters, forged into an integral whole: The Cathedral, The Bishop's Palace, administrative buildings and the well-preserved exterior fortifications with single entrance gate to the inner Castle area. In 1248 King Béla IV in appreciation of the protection against the Tatars promoted the status of Nitra to a free royal town with privileges similar to those enjoyed by Belgrade (Szekesfehervar). Medieval Nitra was divided into the Upper Town and Lower Town, the latter being further divided into several individual quarters with their own reeves and municipal seals. From the middle of the 18th century Nitra was spared from military hardship, which resulted in the restoration of the city and the renovation of the castle, especially The Cathedral. An important step in construction development of the Lower Town was the building of Župný dom (Region House) at the border of the Lower and Upper Towns. At the same time, in the southern part of the town a judicial palace was built for the whole Nitra region.



St. Ladislav's Piarist Church



Dražovce

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The peaceful conditions enabled the construction of other buildings in the Upper Town – Kluch Palace with the sculpture of Atlas on its corner from the years 1818-21 (known as Corgoň) and the completion of the Seminary with a very unique diocese library. In the 19th century the administration of the town became more complex because as a result of construction development the number of inhabitants grew to over 10,000. In 1873 Nitra became a city with established City Hall presided over by the City Mayor and numerous municipal representatives. The further development of the city was strongly influenced by two World Wars. In the new Czecho-Slovak Republic,

Nitra Gallery



Nitra Gallery

The Coat of Arms

the city of Nitra became the seat of the administrative region. After World War II there was a period of construction boom, although during this time many architectural landmarks were destroyed. Nevertheless, thanks to this development Nitra became the centre of Slovak agricultural education, research and production and the location of the largest exhibition premises in Slovakia. Every year on a total exhibition area of 100,000 square meters, half a million visitors have the opportunity to visit several trade fairs of European importance. Thanks to two universities and to the number of students attending them, Nitra is a city of young people.

Various cultural institutions offer the possibility of a rich cultural life, and theatres especially come up with excellent quality production. Following the reconstruction of the Synagogue there is now a permanent exhibition of the Museum of Jewish Culture and this space also serves as an exhibition and concert hall. Thanks to the municipality's cooperation with the bishopric, many valuable historic monuments can be made accessible to visitors to the city.

The most significant and most valuable landmark of Nitra is the Castle, a national cultural monument, towering on the rocky limestone hill surrounded by the river at the foothill of the Zobor hill. The Castle is a monument of many centuries. It has been connected to important historical, political and social events, and as one of just a few Slovak castles, in spite of frequent catastrophes, this castle has preserved the nature of a settlement until the present day. It also did not change its architectural appearance that it obtained in the 17th century.

According to the latest archaeological research, the Castle hill was settled already in the 9th century although the history

Historic Nitra – the Castle

of the rocky castle construction goes back to the period of the Great Moravia Empire. The Castle Cathedral is, thanks to its architecture and artistic works, one of the most significant and valuable cultural monuments not only in Nitra, but in all Slovakia. The Cathedral consists of three parts. Each of them was constructed at different periods and has features typical for the corresponding style of that period. The oldest part of The Cathedral is the Church of St. Emmeram built in the 11th or to the beginning of the 13th century in Romanesque style and only until recently this church was considered to be Pribina's Church. The upper Church was built at the beginning of the 14th century and it is formed by a single nave chapel in Gothic

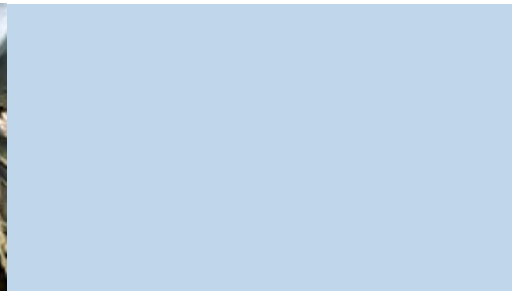
Nitra Castle





The Church of St. Emmeram

style. In the 18th century this space was transformed from the foundations up according to the plans of Italian architect, Domenico Martinelli. You enter the Cathedral through the Lower Church, which is the youngest part of the Cathedral. This, otherwise separate church nave, was added to the southern wall of the Upper Church with its length and the width of the Romanesque church. It is connected with it by a very wide staircase that covers 160 cm in height. During alterations in the first half of the 18th century, the interior of the Lower Church was annexed to the Baroque complex of the Cathedral. The Diocesan museum is part of the castle complex. This museum lets the public see the Cathedral treasure, which was



Nitra Castle

The Church of St. Emmeram

hidden from the public eye and locked away in the vaults. It is made up of golden and silver chalices, bowls, crosses, monstrances, reliquaries, rings, candle holders, pictures and other artefacts from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. One part is also a book of the gospel from the 11th century, known as the Nitra codex, which is the only written document of its kind in the whole territory of the former Kingdom of Hungary. The Zobor Deeds from 1111 and 1113 are also present here. Inside the fortification of the castle there are casemates, containing remnants of the original castle fortification going back over 1,000 years. They are now open to the public as well.





The Priest Seminary and Diocese Library



Pribina



The Canon House

It is the architecturally dominant feature of Pribina Square. In addition to the fact that a large part of the premises serves the St. Gorazd Priest Seminary in Nitra, there is also the Diocesan Library (*Bibliotheca dioclesiana*). It is the most valuable collection of original literature in Slovakia. The beginnings of the library go back to the 12th century. Even at that time there was the Cathedral collection of manuscript codices. Today this library consists of over 66,000 volumes. Apart from theological literature, there are also works from history, geography, natural sciences, philosophy, pedagogy, bibliography, law, literature, encyclopaedia, linguistics, and also historic manuscripts and magazines. The most valuable part of the collection comprises early printed books from before 1500, with the oldest one dating to 1473.

Corgoň



The Classicistic palace building with the statue of Atlas on the corner was built in 1818 – 1821 for the canons by Bishop Jozef Kluch. Later it was rebuilt in an imperial style. There is a legend connected to the statue of “Corgoň”. The legend describes “Corgoň” as a strong blacksmith who defended the city against the raids of the Turks and it is said that he threw huge boulders with his bare hands directly at the attacking Turks.



Synagogue

The building of the Nitra Synagogue was built in 1910 – 1911 in the Moorish – Byzantine style. Its facade is segmented with highlighted oriental elements. Its interior is made up of a hall space that leads to a cupola. On the sides there are 4 columns that support from 3 sides the gallery. Lateral additions are filled with winding staircases. In the middle of the eastern wall of the central space of the chapel there is an arch (today without the sacraments). Oriental elements are highlighted by floral



and geometrical ornaments made by modelling. The whole interior is in white. Since 1991 the building has been under the administration of City Hall. After a general overhaul in 2003 this space started to be used also as a concert and exhibition hall. It also houses a permanent exposition of the holocaust of the Museum of Jewish Culture. This exhibition recalls the unsettled history of the Jewish community in the territory of the Nitra region.



Divadelná Nitra (Theatrical Nitra)



The Pedestrian zone

The Andrej Bagar Theatre has one of the best quality ensembles in Slovakia. Apart from drama productions of the house ensemble, this modern theatre building offers its premises also to theatre experts from all over the world at the Divadelna Nitra festival. This international theatrical festival ranks among the most significant international events of Slovakia's cultural calendar. It is a selective and non-competitive event

of European theatre, mostly drama, extending also to other areas of performance art. A traditional part of the festival is the presentation of the prestigious DOSKY awards. Each year theatre critics and experts honour the best actors, dramatists and directors for their exceptional results in the field of drama creation.



Topolčianky

On the foundations of the original stone architecture from the 13th century a classicist mansion was built, being inserted into the English park in line with the plans of Viennese architect Alois Pichl. It is regarded as the most beautiful and pure architectural display of Classicism in Slovakia. After the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, the mansion became the summer seat of president of the republic. Especially our first president, T. G. Masaryk, liked to come here and spend whole summers here. Today it partially serves as a museum of historical furniture and interior design. It contains pictures, old clocks, pottery, rugs, embroidered oriental draperies, and guns. All the chattels of the mansion are original and are just the way they were left by the last aristocratic owners.

The National Stud Farm is the centre of horse rearing and breeding in Slovakia. In addition to the writing of the Lipizzaner breed book, it is also entrusted with writing the breed records of Hucul and Arabian horse breeds, and it keeps the central records of all horses in Slovakia. It is the only institution authorised to draw up documents on the origin of all recognised horse breeds in Slovakia.

Its specialised buildings with their architecture, planning and sensitive approach to the placement of historical buildings into the surrounding scenery are proof of the architects' and builders' good taste and skill. In over 80-years of the farm's history, the workers, riders and horses of the Topoľčianky National Stud Farm have represented Slovakia in the most important breeding and sports events. The showcases of the National Stud Farm are full of the most important awards and trophies from these events.

Horse breeding in Topoľčianky



National Stud Farm

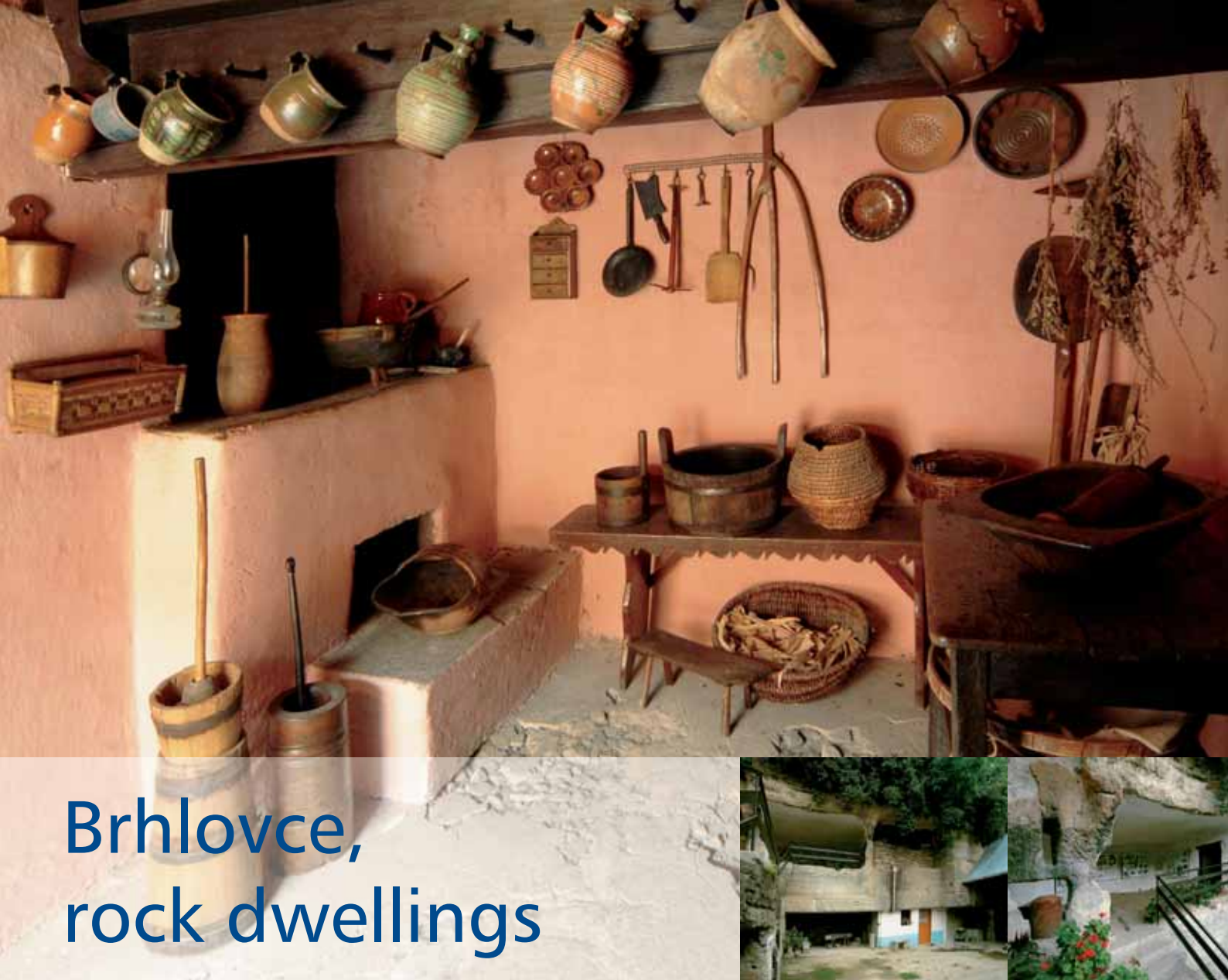




Arboretum Mlyňany



In the beautiful park spread out in the village of Vieska nad Žitavou we can find over 2,300 rare species of trees and shrubs from the world over. A characteristic feature is the extensive representation of evergreen wood species. These have their origin in foreign, climatically different parts of the world. The Arboretum was founded in 1892 by Dr. Štefan Ambrózy - Migazzi. He managed to collect foreign tree species and adapt and acclimatise them to our conditions. The range of this unique collection of wood species makes the arboretum one of the biggest in Central Europe.



Brhlovce, rock dwellings

Folk legends that still are alive today say that the local rock dwellings have their origin in the protection of local inhabitants from the Turks in the 16th and 17th centuries. There are well settled ashes and dust here as a result of volcanic activity in the Cainozoic era. Local inhabitants carved out unique dwellings and farm buildings into these tufaceous and tufa residues. Rock was a well suited material not only for the creation of original dwellings, but it also provided the population with a source of income. In the 19th century stonemasonry became the most important means of existence for local people. They learnt the technology of mining and rock working from the Italian builders of the local mansion.



Komárno Fortress



Komárno is the biggest, most important and best preserved fortress complex in Slovakia. Komárno Fortress is a unique sample of fortification architecture from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Here you can see bastion, polygonal and fort systems of fortification. In its time it was the biggest fortification building of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Accounting for its monumental size and the degree of its preservation, it is unique on a European scale.



The Courtyard of Europe



Komárno

The town of Komárno situated over forty buildings on its Courtyard of Europe, built to a scale of 1:1. These buildings represent the architecture and building styles typical for different European countries. You can admire and maybe compare colourful buildings from Finland, Wales, the Vatican, Iceland or Greenland, or you can rest on benches next to the Millennium fountain. The authors managed to create a kind of harmonious combination of sometimes totally different architectural features.

When looking at the colourful buildings do not forget to take a look at the sculptures of the patrons of Europe. The sculptures of Sigismund of Luxembourg, Matthias Corvinus, the Virgin Mary or Maria Theresa create the atmosphere of the courtyard, which is a favourite stopping point of tourists because of its special and pleasant character.



Active tourism



The Observatory in Hurbanovo

The southern part of the region is comprised of lowlands with minimum elevations. Together with the many beautiful niches of the floodplain forests and attractive tourist locations, this makes planning interesting trips easier. You can visit the Observatory in Hurbanovo, technical and historical watermill in Kolárovo or you can admire nature scenery on the Danube bicycle path between Komárno and Štúrovo. Climbing Zobor hill, which towers over Nitra, will award you with the beautiful scenery of the vast panorama. You can follow hiking paths through forests and visit some castle ruins - Gýmeš, Hrušov, Oponice or Topolčianky Castle.

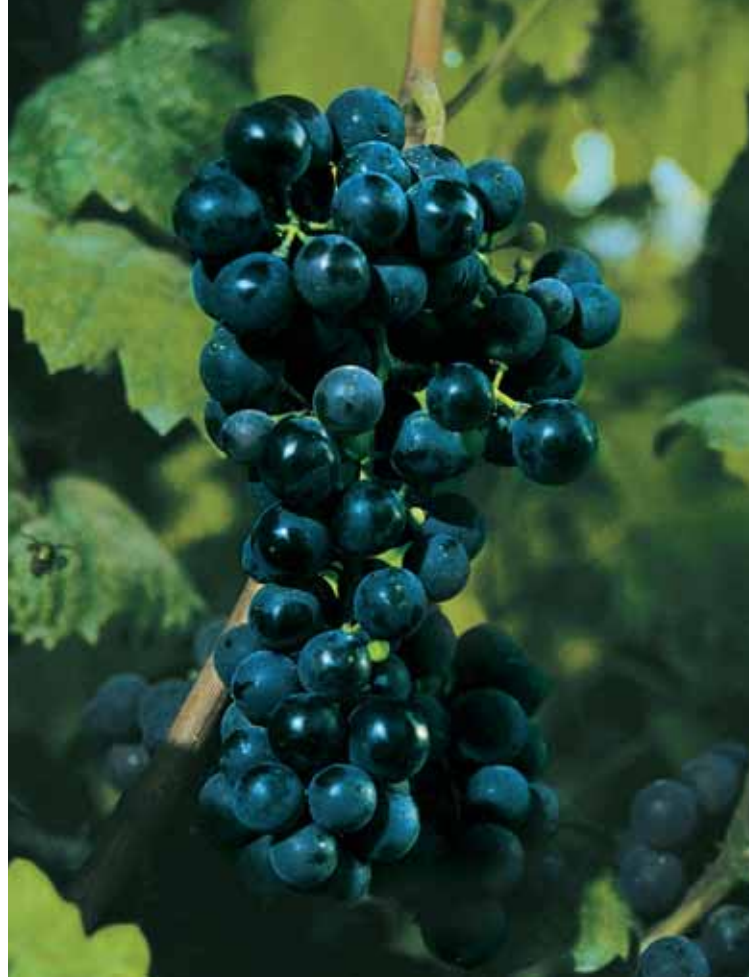


Bison reserve

The European bison game preserve was founded on 140 hectares of land in 1958. Its mission was to contribute to the protection of the European bison from extinction because at the time it was set up there were only 150 animals of this species left in the world. The European bison is the biggest European mammal. It can grow to 2.7 m in length and 1.9 m high. The bull can reach a weight of 1500 kg and may live up to 30 years. This animal used to be a natural feature of European forests. Even in the 19th century it was possible to find it in nature. Some local place names prove its presence: Zuberec, Zubrohlava, Zubrá etc. In the red book of endangered

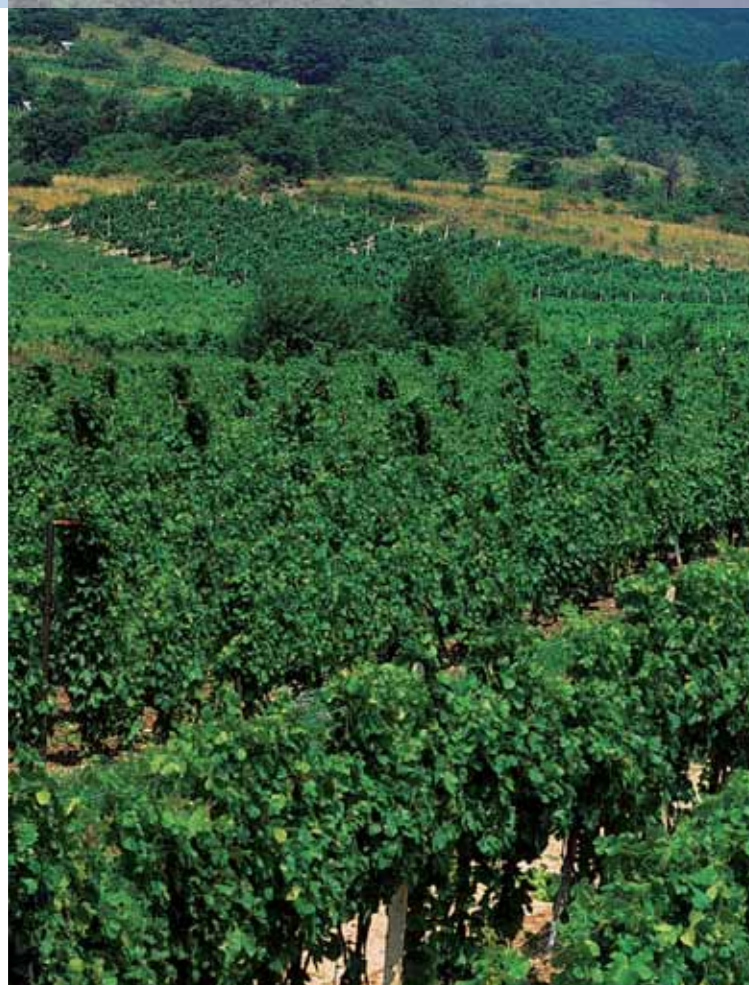
species it has been evaluated as a preserved species and it is classed as a highly protected animal worldwide. Today it is bred mainly in Poland and other breeding stations throughout Europe. In Slovakia you may see it only in the bison reserve in Topoľčianky. The European bison thrives in the reserve, which has already reared over 120 animals. Some of the animals were sent to zoos, different parks and private farms.

According to historical sources wine has always been grown on the sunny slopes of the Zobor hills. The grounds for viticulture were laid by the Benedictine monks of the Zobor monastery probably around the 9th century. Talk about Nitra wine started to spread around the world in the 18th and 19th century when the local burghers started trading with wine and exporting it to neighbouring countries. The Nitra wine region covers most of the region territory in the south from Štúrovo up to Radošina in the north. This Slovak wine region, climatically the warmest, combined with the suitable soil of the Tribeč hills, create the best conditions for the production of rich, characteristic



Wine and Nitra, Nitra and Wine

varieties of wines of a high quality. Among the best known and the biggest producers of good quality wines in this region are Víno Nitra, Vinanza Vráble, Vinárske závody Topoľčianky, Vinohranické družstvo Dvory nad Žitavou, Vinárstvo Sv. Peter, Pivnica Radošina. Excellent natural conditions and the quality work of local producers is confirmed also by the story of how Radošina wine was served at the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II. At the beginning of the 1950s a British ambassador was also welcomed to the Bishop's office in Nitra. Radošina wine from



an exceptionally good year of 1947 was served and it met with a great reaction from the guests. The British guest wished to get this wine for the wedding of the British Queen, which was about to take place (and did) in 1953. As a result, 500 litres of Grey Rulander made its way to the British Royal Court. Radošina wine was very successful with the wedding guests although it was not served at the toast, since according to the etiquette of the Royal Court, French wine has to be served on such an occasion.





Thermal spas

Podhájska

Podhájska thermal spa lies close to the town of Šurany and is open all year long. The thermal water is salty and has similar effects to that of the Dead Sea. It has a beneficial effect on disorders of the locomotive apparatus, the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, as well as on gynaecological and urological illnesses. Children can play in the playground with rocking horses, sandbox and slide. Adults can enjoy beach football and volleyball, bike hire, sauna, the fitness gym or a massage. In and around the village there are ample possibilities for accommodation of various standards.

Štúrovo

The recreation complex VADAŠ THERMAL with its capacity of over 10,000 visitors, renovated swimming pools of different sizes, indoor pool, new fast food buffets and sporting opportunities, offers the perfect conditions for relaxation for lovers of water and sun. Its swimming pools are filled with thermal water from a depth of 130m below the land surface and its exit temperature reaches 39 °C. The swimming pool is open all year with adequate accommodation right on the grounds. One of the biggest attractions is the enormous "Lagoon" pool with artificial waves and a water surface measuring 3,800 square meters.



Podhájska



Podhájska



Štúrovo



Štúrovo



Štúrovo

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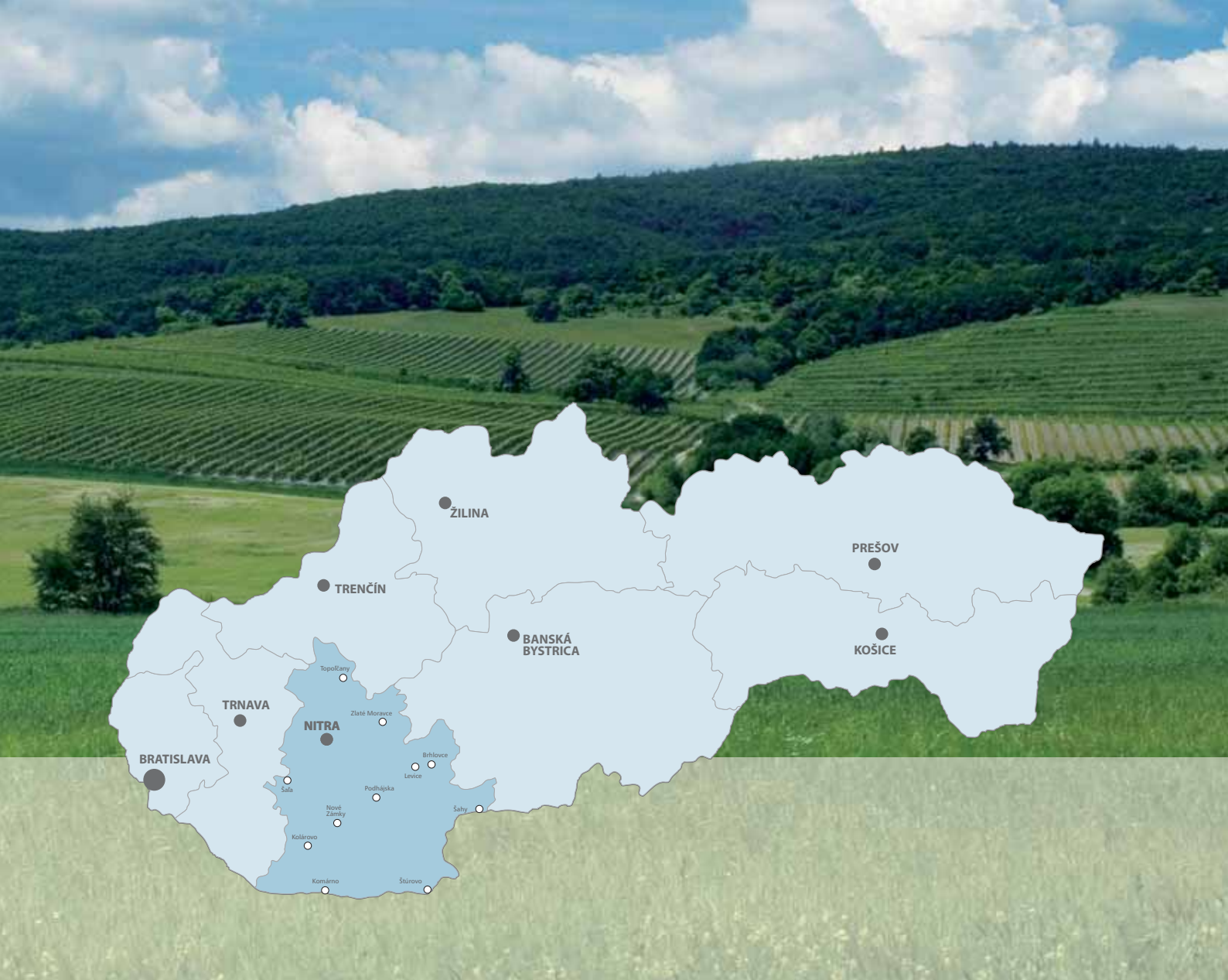
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