

TRADITIONS AND CRAFTS

SOUTHERN SPIŠ REGION





MILK PROCESSING, DAIRY PRODUCTS

VYSOKÝ VRCH PORÁČ



Welcome to Poráč, a village „at the end of the world“, nestled under the hills of the Galmus carst mountain range. If you’ve come this far, you’re probably serious about getting to know southern Spiš. And for that you will be duly rewarded with authentic experiences.



“

Apart from its rich mining history, Poráč is still a place where the locals – mostly Ruthenians – keep the traditions of their grandfathers and grandmothers still alive. Almost every family here has their own small farm, grows vegetables, fruits, cereals and, of course, breeds domestic animals. Each animal brings something different to man. Meat, eggs, milk, wool, fur or feathers. Everything is utilized. With a dose of skill and experience, perfect home-made meat or dairy products are created under the hard-working hands of Poráčians.



Let’s go for a short walk to Vysoký vrch hill rising above the village. From its top, we have wonderful panoramic views of the entire southern Spiš and the mountains that surround it. In addition, a mountain hut with a flock of sheep stands in the meadows below Vysoký vrch every year. Sheep are grazed on a pasture in spring, mostly in April at Juraj’s day. A sheep-cot is set up and they graze here until late autumn. They are usually milked three times a day – first at four in the morning, then around noon and finally in the evening until half past seven. Sometimes there are 500 sheep in one cot, so here the shepherds and pastors do not really suffer from lack of work. From milked milk, the shepherd then produces “bryndza”, “žinčica” and sheep cheese. In addition to Vysoký vrch, mountain huts and cots can also be found in other localities near Poráč – in Bukovec or at the foot of Holý vrch hill.



” The Poráč masters of crafts and food production present the results of their work every year at the popular community events „Šachtare volajú“ and „AVITUR – Going for agritourism and rural tourism“.

“

TIP FOR YOU

When travelling for a trip to Poráč surroundings, consider carefully the need for driving (or arrange a night here). Unless you are an abstinent, the hospitable Poráčians will certainly not leave you “dry” (sober).



HERBALISM

THE JEWEL OF OUR OLD MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE



We live in an era when advancement of science and technology allows us a much more comfortable life than our ancestors had. It is no different with modern medicine. For most diseases there is a finished medicine, syrup, pill or ointment, just go to the nearest pharmacy. Our grandparents often did not have such an option. Even so, they always knew how to do it.



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From generation to generation, wisdom was passed about the gifts of nature – good herbs against various health ailments. They collected them themselves and made their own medicine for everything that bothered them. Ms. Zuzana Hricová from Spišské Tomášovce is still actively involved in herbal medicine, production of products from medicinal herbs and education on this topic in Spiš to this day. Within a civic association of Verbum Bonum she offers various types of healing baths, ointments, oils, tinctures, soaps and nice souvenirs from herbs of the Slovak Paradise. She collects herbs for these purposes not only in the wild (respecting the rules of its protection), but also in the three herb gardens that she has established in the region and which she actively takes care of. One of them is also located directly in the area of the Carthusian monastery in the Kláštorisko in the Slovak Paradise. In addition, together with her civic association, she organizes various events and creative workshops for the public focused on learning about medicinal plants, with which she popularizes this rare and still very live craft.



” Mowing took place every year until 1975 and was restored by nature conservationists again in the late 1990s, thus saving the variety and diversity of meadows.

“

KOPANECKÉ LÚKY, SEDLO KOPANEC

In the Slovak Paradise National Park, tourists most often look for its wild canyons and gorges with waterfalls. However, fragrant, colourful mountain meadows and pastures with many rare, protected plants are less-known, but equally rare jewels of the park. Among them, the most species-rich Kopanecké meadows in the cadaster of Vernár village stand out. The density and species abundance of plants is one of the largest in the world here. Up to a record 52 of higher plant species have been found on the area of 0.25 square meters in Kopanecké lúky. This is mainly due to the regular manual mowing of meadows with mowers from the entire region, which today is becoming an interesting attraction.



The meadows are located at an altitude of about 1000 meters, near the Kopanec saddle. You can get here on foot, by bike and from spring to autumn also by motor vehicle on a paved road from Hrabušice or Dobšinská Ice Cave. Watching meadows and their changes several times a year is the most interesting. Almost in the spring, they bloom with Spiš saffron, which is complemented by primroses and troll flower. During the summer, white daisies and sword grass are the most abundant. Not to forget the many species of orchids.



WOOD PRODUCTS AND WOOD PROCESSING

KLAUZY TAJCH AND TIMBER RAFTING

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Sophisticated cable car systems and a network of narrow-gauge railways (some with dead ends) were used in the region for logging and transporting timber. Unfortunately, they have not been preserved to this day. However, another important technical work has been preserved, which played an important role in the transport of harvested timber from the Slovak Paradise.

KLAUZY TAJCH AND TIMBER RAFTING

Klauzy reservoir is hidden right in the middle of the national park, on the Biely potok (White Creek). It is surrounded by dense forests and steep hills. It takes a few hours walk from every direction by marked hiking trails to get there. The original reservoir was built here in 1781 and in 1917 it was restored by the aristocratic Csáky family. The reservoir is referred to as a tajch, although its role was not directly related to mining, such as the tajch near Banská Štiavnica. It was used in logging and transporting wood. The harvested logs of wood were collected on the surface of the Biely potok (White Creek) during the winter period and were subsequently floated by the stream of water discharged from the tajch to Smižany towards Smižianská Maša. Here, wood was used in iron-mills to process iron ore from the Spiš mines. Since 1985, the Klauzy tajch has been a cultural relic. At present, it is used mainly for fish farming purposes and it completes the beauty and aesthetics of this locality.

Logging and wood processing have long been among the main work activities of southern Spiš inhabitants. Wood was needed for mining and ore processing, construction, furniture, work tools and for heating homes during hard winters.



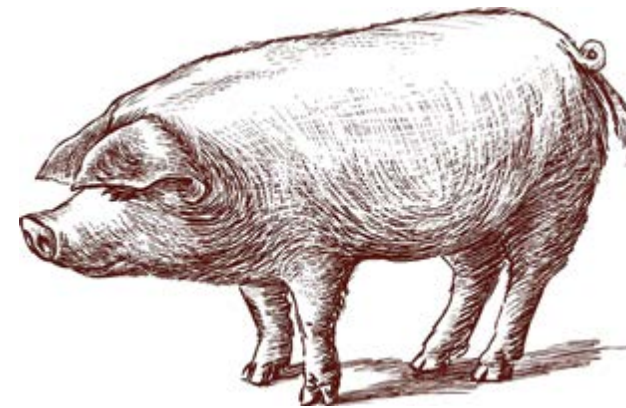


MEAT PRODUCTS SAUSAGES FROM SPIŠ

A TRADITIONAL VILLAGE PIG-SLAUGHTERING IN SPIŠ



The village pig-slaughtering in southern Spiš is one of the most distinctive traditions that have survived to the present day. Pig-slaughtering is, however, not just an ordinary work to make living. Pig-butchering is a small social holiday in the village, with everything that goes with it.



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Many goodmen with their families helped by butchers do their pig-slaughtering on their own, but often the communities also organize public pig-slaughtering for their citizens and guests from the area with a rich accompanying cultural program. In recent years, such pig-slaughtering has taken place, for example, in the villages of Smižany, Harichovce, Jamník and many others.



TOMÁŠOVSKÉ SAUSAGES FROM SPIŠSKÉ TOMÁŠOVCE

Quality butcher's production has been a tradition in Spiš since ancient times. This is also related to the fact that the region once used to be crossed by important international trade routes. Many traders and craftsmen from all over Europe moved along them all year round. And they, on their long and painful transfers for work, could generously appreciate the attentive hospitality services and tasty gastronomy. They rested mainly in incoming inns and carriages, such as in Spišské Vlachy, Klčov, Dravce or Hozelec. Therefore, it is no wonder that the tradition of famous Spiš sausages, also known as "Podracke viršle", began to be written in Spišské Podhradie (not far from Klčov and Spišské Vlachy). Unfortunately, the exact original recipe from the master butcher Štefan Varsányi has not been preserved to this day. But perhaps one of the best and very popular sausages among the Spišs are still produced in the slaughterhouse and meat production in Spišské Tomášovce – PD "Čingov". Thanks to the quality of the raw materials used, the processing and the right ratio of spices, their taste is balanced, they retain their fine consistency, crunchiness and juiciness with each bite. You won't usually find them in large retail chains, but you can get them in several good local butchers in Spiš.

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THE INVITATION TO PIG-SLAUGHTERING IN HARICHOVCE IN 2012 LOOKED AS FOLLOWS (IN LOCAL DIALECT):

- “Made known to all ...
In Harichovce, the management agreed at the plenary that a pig will be being killed.
- ◆ 8:30 – the pig pale as a wall is already standing head up in front of the pub – in the yard
 - ◆ 10:00 – let's start pig carving – the butcher is sharpening knives, guzzles who helps ... - the young, the elder try their best...
 - ◆ 13:00 – 16:00 – pig soup, cabbage soup, hash-and-crumbs sausages, sausages, cracklings and roasted meat will be tasted ... The accordion will be playing in this – funny stories will be told – you can heat yourselves in the pub by a glass – you need to grab your euros ...
 - ◆ 16:00 – the pig no more squeaking, the band is going to play, going dancing who wants ...

... do I have to I tell you, it gonna be as never before in Harihovce ... “

“



POTATO GROWING

IN SPIŠ



Although potatoes are not one of our original crops, since the 18th century their cultivation and processing, especially in the mountainous areas of the then Hungary, has experienced a great boom. The legendary „flying“ monk Cyprián Červený Kláštor (Red Monastery) mentioned them for the first time in his work of „Discourse and Agriculture in Spiš“ in 1768.



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It is said that potatoes were brought to Spiš by young natives studying at universities in Western Europe. One of these students, Tomáš Šváby, had potatoes grown in Veľká Lesná. The dialect name of potatoes – švábka, still used today, is derived from his surname. In her agricultural reforms, Queen Maria Theresa also advocated the cultivation of potatoes. Later in the 19th century, potatoes and dishes made from them became one of the main components of the diet of the population (not only) in Spiš. And this situation persists practically to this day. Potatoes are grown in literally all corners of our region. And we can't even imagine most of the traditional gastronomic specialties of Spiš without potatoes. From traditional stuffed potato pyrgos to Spiš potato chips.



SMIŽANY SLOVCHIPS POTATO CHIPS

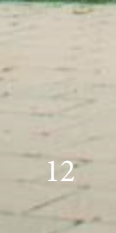
The production of quality potato chips in the village of Smižany in Spiš has been writing its story since 1987. Under the SlovChips brand, we can find them on store shelves to this day, and they are not short of sales. Only special varieties of “chip” potatoes are used for production, with a minimum amount of sugars and a higher starch content. This gives them their pleasant taste and golden colour. In addition, chips are here, unlike by other manufacturers, not boiled before frying, they are only rinsed with cold water, thanks to which they retain most of their vitamins and minerals. Thanks to advanced technology, the length and temperature of frying have been reduced to a minimum so that the finished flakes contain as low amount of carcinogens as possible. They only use first-class colseed oil for frying, which is best suited for this purpose.



” Smižany Slov-Chips potato chips are made purely from 100% potatoes, without any substitute raw materials. “

TIP FOR YOU

In addition to the classic salted chips they also taste their chips in Smižany with high-quality natural flavours, which creates chips with flavours of „pungent pepper“, „sweet pepper“, „bacon“, „cream - onion“, „cheese - onion“, „cheese“, „cep“ and „mustard „. So every crunch lover will get their money's worth.



GOTHIC BELL

MAKING IN SPIŠ



Bells ringing has accompanied the everyday life of the Slovak people since the Middle Ages.

It used to be and still is important not only in the chiming the time signals, but also as a means of informing about various festive and mourning events, situations of danger, and also as a protection against evil powers.



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In today's metropolis of southern Spiš, Spišská Nová Ves, there has been a bustling Gothic bell-making workshop since the 14th century. It was founded by master Konrád Gaal, one of the most famous bell-founders of his time in Europe. The bells from his workshop still ring not only in many villages and towns in Slovakia, but also in the Church of the Virgin Mary on the main square in Krakow, Poland. In 1357, he also cast the bell to order for the Hungarian ruler Ludovít Velký of the Anjou family, to his seat in Vyšehrad near today's Esztergom. Together with his family and brothers, he acquired several privileges as a reward, including possibility to settle anywhere in Hungary and exemption from all royal taxes and fees. It is interesting that the mentioned bell weighed as much as an incredible 13 tons and thus became, according to available sources, the largest and heaviest bell cast in medieval Europe. Konrád Gaal, as well as several generations of his descendants, who operated the workshop for other 170 years, had excellent conditions for their work in Spišská Nová Ves – then Iglov. The region was known for mining and processing quality ores



of various metals, so they had supplies for their production secured. Moreover, at that time there was an extremely dense network of urban settlements associated in the Province of XXIII Spiš towns in the region of Spiš, which allowed them to maintain active contacts with other craftsmen and burghers from the area.

” In honour of Master Konrád, a memorial „Tribute to Konrád Gaal – a place of wishes“ was unveiled in front of the Spišská Nová Ves' town Hall in 2012. The monument also includes an original bell from Konrád's workshop, cast by his successor Ján Wagner at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, which visitors can symbolically ring. Its sound is said to fill every secret wish.

“

THE CENTRE OF SPIŠSKÁ NOVÁ VES FULL OF CULTURE AND HISTORY

The historic Town Hall Square in Spišská Nová Ves boasts a number of cultural and architectural gems, certified by several “BESTs”. The square itself is the longest lenticular square in Central Europe. Its dominant feature is the tallest church tower in Slovakia with a height of 87 meters, belonging to the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. And there is the highest Gothic bell tower in Spiš inside the church tower. If you have enough time, the staff of the local Tourist Information Centre will be happy to take an interesting tour of the tower, which will take you to its four balconies facing all the cardinal points, with panoramic views of the city and the surrounding area. Right next to the tower we can admire the magnificent classicist building of the New Town Hall dated in second half of the 18th century. The western tip of the square is also decorated with the Evangelical Church built in the same period as the Town Hall, and in the park next to the church there is also an attractive fountain, which is the work of the domestic academic sculptor Ladislav Kacvinský. The eastern part of the square is dominated by the Art Nouveau Reduta building, which houses the Spiš Theatre, as well as a concert hall used for various festive occasions. We cannot forget the so-called Provincial House with the famous Levoča Gate, which once housed Province of XIII, later XVI Spiš towns. Today, it houses the expositions of the Spiš Museum. A pleasant half-hour walk around the Spišská Nová Ves square will reveal a large piece of the turbulent history of this region to the attentive observer.



TINKERS

IN SPIŠ



If you visit the popular Folk Crafts Market at the end of a summer as part of the Days of Spišská Nová Ves Town, be sure to visit the stalls of still active Spiš tinkers. Although in the past, tinkers from Kysuce in particular have been fabled in the territory of today's Slovakia, many Spišes made their living by home-to-home tinkering until the 1950s.

“

Tinkers in Spiš developed most in poorer Ruthenian villages. In terms of product quality, the Spiš tinkers did not lag behind their better-known colleagues from the vicinity of Žilina and often used to wander along the Tisa river and around closer Poland areas at our northern neighbours. To this day, Mária Staňová Michalková from Spišská Nová Ves, for example, devotes herself wire work, producing various decorative baskets, bowls, plates, candlesticks and even jewellery from wire.



The distinctive village of Hnilčák stretches along the Železný creek valley and smaller side valleys. Due to its length, it is one of the longest villages in Slovakia. We will start the trip on a mini-ferrata in the Jerohuta part of Hnilčák and continue along the green tourist sign towards the Ráztoky valley. Along the way we can visit the permanent museum exhibition on the history of the village and mining in the building of the municipal school, as well as the underground spaces of the Ludmila adit, which in the past served as an explosives storeroom. We walk around the popular Banská klopačka apartment-hotel and architecturally valuable buildings of the original mining houses. At the crossroads of hiking trails above the valley, we continue to the right along the sign of the nature trail, in the direction of Kamenná osada (settlement). From here, after less than three kilometres, a slight ascent leads to the mentioned ferrata. From its top, in good weather, there are wonderful panoramic views of the High Tatras, the Slovak Paradise and the Volovské hills. Return is possible either back along the same route or by descending to the upper part of the Hnilčák village called Zimná dolina (Cold valley).



TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AROUND HNILČÍK

Even the tinkers could not perform their craft had it not been the results of skilled miners work, mining and processing metal ores from the bowels of the Spiš hills. The expansion of mining in Spiš to this day is evidenced by the extremely frequent occurrence of terms such as “Huta”, “Maša”, “Hámor” in the names of villages and their parts, according to the ore processing facilities of the same name. In honour of the region's famous mining history, several interesting mining open-air museums (Poráč, Gelnica) and mining nature trails (Dobšiná, Poráč, Gelnica, Hnilčák) have been built here in recent years. The four routes of the History of Mining Nature Trail in Hnilčák are very interesting. Few people know that there is an attractive mini-ferrata in one of the routes. It is ideal for families with children, or less able tourists who do not dare to see the more famous ferrata in the Kysel gorge in the Slovak Paradise, but would still like to experience something similar on their own.



MILOJ

A TRIP THROUGH TIME TO THE MYSTERIOUS MEDIEVAL VILLAGE



On the way by car between Spišská Nová Ves and Spišské Vlachy, many motorists marvel at the mysterious ruins of a church with a tower extending in the middle of the field above the village of Spišský Hrušov. It is a frequent destination for hikers, cyclists and a favourite object of photographers too. However, you cannot read much about it on the Internet. So what story is behind this unusual monument of the past?

“

Let's go back to the deep Middle Ages, specifically to the middle of the 13th century. At that time, the village of Milož was located here. Early Gothic Church of St. Stanislav, whose tower we admire to this day, was part of it. According to available sources, at that time it was a monastery church with a nave with a rectangular layout and a sanctuary with a built-up sacristy. The church was surrounded by a burial ground, part of which, according to archaeologists, was located here before the church was built, that is before the village of Milož itself was founded. The last written reference of the village is dated in 1547. What fate befell it then is not exactly known. A legend tells that the inhabitants of Milož lived in sin, danced during the fasting period, and therefore the whole village fell underground. Only the church remained of it – a holy place – as a memento for future generations. Scientists believe that



the village may have come under fire or a plague epidemic. Today we probably won't know what the real truth was. Later, when nobles from the Mariásky family built their manor house in nearby Spišský Hrušov, they also used stones from the Milož church for construction. They probably didn't want to break down the tower, so we can admire it here to this day. Definitely do not hesitate to make your trip here. Along the way, you can visit, for example, the beautiful Renaissance manor house and the Dardanelles summer house in the village of Markušovce, which was also connected with the aforementioned aristocratic Mariásky family.



TIP FOR YOU

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MOBAKE BAMBOO TOOTHBRUSHES

“TRADITIONAL
-NON-TRADITIONAL”



The fact that the craft with a touch of tradition can also be focused on really non-traditional products from non-traditional materials is proved by the MOBAKE workshop from Spišská Nová Ves, which produces engraved ecological toothbrushes from bamboo.



“

The workshop was founded in 2016 by Patrik Jakš and he called his first products “motivational brushes”. An inspirational motivation idea was engraved on each of them. Later, he began engraving various other patterns and original graphics on his brushes to the customer’s order. The key idea of the company is the ecology and sustainability of its products, in order to reduce plastic waste. According to Mr. Jakš ‘s own words, bamboo is the plant of the future. It is an ecological material, grows quickly, has excellent strength and is easily processed. With their bamboo products, MOBAKE strives to strengthen the moral values of our company and contribute to the global transition to sustainable materials.



” The current new series of “EarthBrush” brushes is dedicated to the traditional regions of Slovakia – for almost every region or city, their own toothbrush was created with its original motif based on tradition. They become not only a great gift for the loved ones, but also an ideal souvenir for visitors to the region.

“

THE STORY OF HOW MAN’S ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ALMOST “WON” IN THE GORGES OF THE SLOVAK PARADISE OVER NATURE

Before the Slovak Paradise became a protected landscape area in 1964 and a national park in 1988, human economic activities predominated in its territory. Regardless of the natural and aesthetic value of karst plains, gorges and canyons, intensive logging took place even in the now strictly protected localities. In some gorges, such as Malý Sokol or Piecky, a total cut had been performed as a matter of fact. In order to simplify the removal of wood, even waterfalls and cascades were blasted off with dynamite in Malý Sokol in the 1920s and 1930s. At present, this gorge is inaccessible to tourists and the nature in it is gradually recovering from insensitive human interventions. The same fate would probably strike Piecky and possibly other straits, if it were not for the groups of local nature conservationists who literally worked “at twelve o’clock” to ensure that other waterfalls were not destroyed. Despite the fact that logging in the Slovak Paradise in accordance with applicable legislation in the designated zones is still taking place today, we are very grateful to all projects and initiatives that try to protect the nature of Spiš as much as possible and preserve it for future generations. The idea of MOBAKE bamboo brushes is a prime example of how you can do business and create value without negatively impacting our environment.



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