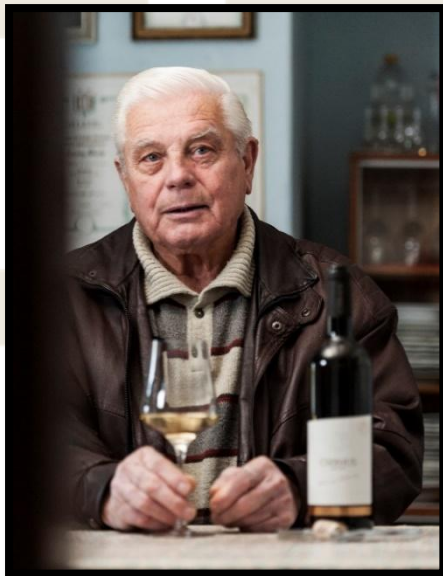




Vinica

The village of Vinica is located in the Banská Bystrica region, in the district of Veľký Krtíš, at the heart of the historical Hont County. It lies between the towns of Balassagyarmat and Šahy, beneath the Krupina Highlands and near the river Ipeľ. The present-day village is composed of former settlements such as Lower Nekiye, Middle Nekiye, Upper Nekiye, Kostolnica, and Leklinec (sometimes spelled Leknynec). Nekiye was first mentioned as a village in 1135, when it appeared on the list of settlements under King Béla II of Hungary. Until 1923, Nekiye was among the largest settlements in the area.



Our Family's History

Our family has been engaged in viticulture and winemaking for generations, and we are proud to say that, while preserving these traditions, our family has lived in Vinica for over 400 years. Although we have not found a complete and continuous family tree during our research into our ancestry, we do have several fragmented records. As confirmed by the national registry of nobility from 1754–55, individuals named István in Heves County, András and János in Hont County, Pál in Nógrád County, and György, István, János, Mátyás, and Pál in Pest County were listed among the officially recognized nobles. These gentlemen were granted noble titles and this is strongly supported by the fact that Emperor Leopold I awarded a coat-of-arms and letters of nobility to brothers György, Bálint, and János Csernus, as well as to György's sons, András and István, on February 14, 1652. This honorable title was officially proclaimed at the county assembly of Hont on February 4, 1662. The coat of arms features a blue background with a green triple hill, upon which a red-sleeved arm brandishes a sword. Above the arm, a waning moon appears on the right and a star on the left. The crest resembles a shield, while the mantling displays blue-gold and red-silver colors. The original document is preserved in the Budapest District IX archives. The history of Vinica reaches back even further – viticulture and winemaking have been practiced here for more than 700 years. Already in the Middle Ages, the village was known as a prominent wine-producing region. Its vineyards were first mentioned in 1354 in a charter issued by the chapter of Eger.



Guard Mountain Educational Trail – Local History House Above Vinica – Volcanic Tour

The educational trail leading to the summit of Guard Mountain, located above the village of Vinica, is the newest project of its kind within the district. Its main circular route is 7.3 km long, with an elevation gain of 200 meters. It features 8 stops and can be comfortably explored in about 3 to 4 hours at a leisurely pace. Among the stops, the former stone quarry is particularly fascinating, where visitors can observe the rock formations and mixing patterns of a several-million-year-old deep-sea volcano. Just above this site stands the Saint Helena Cross, offering a breathtaking panoramic view of the valley Ipel' and the Börzsöny mountain range. Not to be missed is the lookout tower, surrounded by small "caves," and next to it a striking, tangible remnant of ancient underwater volcanic activity. Here, the hot lava that once erupted beneath the sea fused together the displaced rocks, which still remain solidly bonded today, forming unique natural "sculptures" that stretch across several hundred square meters along the ridge.

Opava Lookout Tower

The wooden lookout tower has a total of six floors and seven staircases. The top level offers enough space for many visitors to enjoy the distant views, if the weather conditions are good. Next to the tower, there are wooden seating areas with tables and a fire pit for visitors to use.



Modrý Kameň Castle

The Museum of Puppet Cultures and Toys is located in Modrý Kameň Castle. It is a unique national-level museum dedicated to documenting the history and the present of puppet theatre, the evolution and development of children's toys, and the history of the region in which the castle stands. The museum's cultural-artistic, historical, archaeological, and ethnographic collections—gathered within its specialized focus—are professionally preserved and curated. These are made accessible to the public through permanent exhibitions, displays, and a variety of cultural activities, which are especially popular among children and young visitors. The castle building itself consists of the ruins of an old Gothic fortress and a Baroque mansion, which houses the museum.



Calvary of Modrý Kameň

The Calvary of Modrý Kameň, a cultural monument, is situated above the castle, surrounded by one of Slovakia's largest sweet chestnut groves. A wide forest path begins just a few meters from the museum gate and leads pilgrims through a pleasant, fragrant woodland to the chapel. Inside the chapel stands a statue of the Crucifixion. The path continues beyond the chapel, ascending further with five stations along the way until it reaches the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows. These five stations once symbolized the Five Principal Truths of the faith. Above the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows, about 100–150 meters farther up, there is a tall wooden cross that rises above the surrounding bushes and low trees.

Castle of Drégely

The Castle of Drégely stands in the northern part of the mountains Börzsöny, perched atop a 444-meter-high volcanic rock peak, equidistant from the villages of Drégelypalánk and Nagyoroszi. It was built by the Hont-Pázmány clan, which owned the surrounding lands, during the wave of castle constructions ordered by King Béla IV of the Árpád dynasty after the retreat of the Mongol cavalry, as a defense initiative for the kingdom. In 1544, Archbishop Pál Várdai of Esztergom appointed György Szondy as the captain of the castle. Szondy made efforts to reinforce the fortress, which was already considered outdated from a military standpoint. In July 1552, Ali Pasha of Buda marched against the castle with an army of 12,000 men. The garrison at the time consisted of only 146 soldiers.



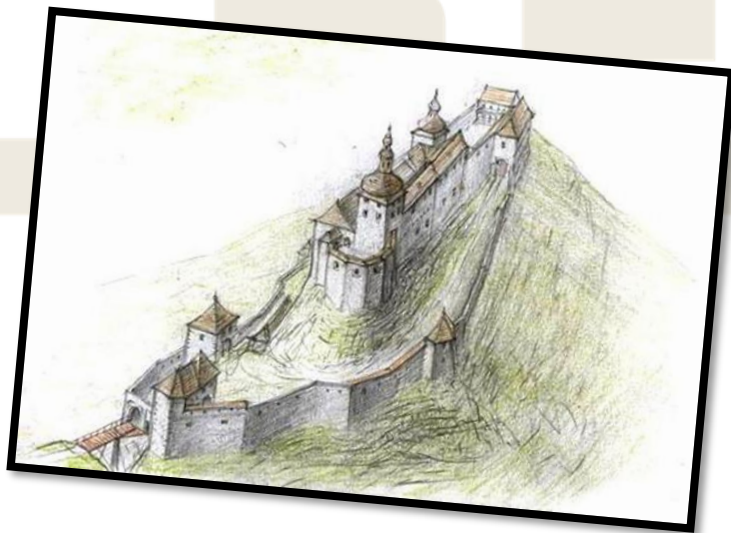
The Heroes of the Castle and Their Memorial Site

After the outer wooden fortification was set on fire, the defenders retreated to the upper castle on the rocky peak. The Turkish artillery quickly demolished the gate tower. Despite this, the Hungarian defenders repelled the infantry assaults. On the third day, the surviving soldiers, led by Captain Szondy, launched a final, fearless breakout and died heroically in bloody close combat. Only two young pages, Libárdy and Sebestyén, survived. Szondy had sent them to Ali Pasha earlier, asking the enemy commander to ensure their safety. The journey to the castle is far from easy—it requires a proper forest hike. Access by car or bus is not possible. The walk from the village to the castle is approximately 3 km and takes around 45 to 60 minutes. However, the spirit of this historic site and the breathtaking panoramic views more than reward the effort.



Castle of Čabrad'

Located 12 km south from Krupina, at an elevation of 305 meters, the village of Čabradský Vrbovok lies on the banks of the Varbók stream, a tributary of the river Litava. The name of the village originates from the stream, which refers to a "willow grove". The castle of Čabrad' was most likely built by King Charles Robert (Károly Róbert) after the death of the powerful noble Matthew Csák (Csák Máté). In 1335, the king granted the castle to the noble family of Dobrakutya in exchange for their fortress of Dobrakutya. After its construction, Čabrad' was referred as the Castle of Litva for some time. This name was derived from the nearby ruined fortress called Litva, located 3 kilometers to the southeast, also in a bend of the Litava stream. That castle was destroyed in the 1320s.



The Military and Noble History of the Castle

Following the fall of nearby strongholds such as Nógrád, Drégely, and Szécsény, Turkish troops frequently raided the area around Csábrág, but never succeeded in capturing the castle. At that time, its captain was János Krusich, the husband of Katalin Pálffy. After 1584, the castle was further fortified against the Ottomans. During the early 17th-century military campaigns against Vienna, the castle was repeatedly occupied. In 1622, King Ferdinand II granted Csábrág to Baron Péter Koháry, vice-general of Érsekújvár (Nové Zámky), and his descendants. The Kuruc forces took control of the fortress in 1703, but in August 1709, it was retaken by Count János Pálffy's imperial army using a ruse.

Fortress and Monastery of Bzovík

The Bzovík Abbey was founded in 1135 by Count Lampert of the Hont-Pázmány clan and was donated to the Cistercian Order. It was referred to as “Bozouk” in 1135, “Bozok” in 1245, “Bozook” in 1331, and “Kis Bozok” in 1439. By 1156, the Bzovík estate had become the largest in Hont County. During the middle ages, the abbey was repeatedly devastated due to noble factional conflicts, and in 1433 was destroyed by the Hussites. In the mid-15th century, the commander of the nearby Castle of Krupina laid claim to its estates. In 1530, Zsigmond Balassa expelled the monks and transformed the monastery into a fortress, a process that lasted until 1546. By 1541, the fortress had already successfully repelled a Turkish siege.



Ruined Church – Veľká Čalomija

This church is one of the oldest sacred buildings in our region, dating back to the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. Today, its ruins have been uniquely restored into a striking architectural form. The site is also an important archaeological location—old Slavic graves have been uncovered here, along with rare bronze aquamaniles shaped like a horse and rider (vessels once used by priests for ritual handwashing).

Árpád-Era Church in Balog nad Ipľom

According to a legend, during a succession conflict in the early 14th century between Wenceslaus III and Charles Robert, the royal crown and coronation regalia were secretly guarded for one night within the church of Ipolybalog. The story tells that the crown and jewels were hidden in a hollow within the wall beneath the pulpit. This secret refuge of the Holy Crown became a well-known pilgrimage site, drawing faithful visitors from all corners of the country. In commemoration of this significant event, King Matthias ordered in 1464 that a replica of the royal Holy Crown be placed atop the church tower—a symbol that remains there to this day. On August 14, 2005, a replica of the Holy Crown was also ceremonially placed inside the church.



The Crown of the Church Tower

The crown atop the church tower, replacing the usual cross, is a rare and unique feature. In Slovakia, it can only be found in two places: here at the Balog nad Ipľom church and on St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, where it was placed to honor the coronations of kings and queens held there between 1563 and 1830.

Kálmán Mikszáth Memorial House – Sklabina

The great Hungarian writer Kálmán Mikszáth, author of renowned novels such as *The Umbrella of Saint Peter* and *The Black Town*, was born in Sklabina on January 16, 1847. His homeland, with its inimitable atmosphere, became the most important inspiration for his literary works. Although Mikszáth's actual birthplace was demolished in 1968, another significant house stands at the edge of the village, opposite the cemetery. The writer's parents moved there in 1852, where Mikszáth spent his childhood and school years. Today, this house serves as a memorial dedicated to his life and legacy.



Imre Madách Castle – Dolná Strehová

Dolná Strehová, a village in the Veľký Krtíš District, is home to one of Slovakia's largest literary museums, dedicated to the life and works of Hungarian author Imre Madách, best known for his dramatic masterpiece *The Tragedy of Man*. The current Madách Castle was built at the end of the 18th century by Madách's grandfather, Sándor Madách. The well-preserved Rococo-Classical building still stands today, maintaining much of its original exterior and interior. Like the older family manor, the castle features two corner towers, each housing residential rooms with views to the English-style park. It was within these walls where Imre Madách lived and created his most important works. Visitors can explore his original study, where much of *The Tragedy of Man* was written. The museum also exhibits original furniture, personal items, early editions of his works, and period photographs, offering an intimate look into the author's life and literary legacy.

Lajos Simonyi Gallery and Hont Museum – Šahy

The institution was originally founded in 1902 in Šahy as the County Museum of Hont, initiated by the Hont County Museum Society under the leadership of Elemér Pongrácz. Due to the administrative reorganization of the country, the museum ceased operation in 1924. Its last curator was Alajos Szokolyi, the first Hungarian Olympic medalist. The museum was re-established as a municipal institution in 1992. Since 1995, it has operated in two locations: at 13 Rotarides János Street (Hont Museum), and until 2009 at 1 Pivničná Street (Lajos Simonyi Gallery, formerly known as the Hont Gallery). In 2009, the gallery was moved to the former county house, now the municipal office building at 1 Main Square. This relocation made it possible to expand the permanent exhibition dedicated to the life and works of Lajos Simonyi, an academic painter. Sculptures are exhibited in the historic synagogue building.



Hont Calvary – Šahy

The Hont Calvary celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2007. It was built in 1907 as a regional pilgrimage site for the people of the area. After 1989, the paintings in the individual chapels were replaced with relief sculptures. The construction of the station chapels was supported by local families from Šahy. At the top of the Calvary stands a group of wrought iron statues depicting Christ and the two thieves, created in Graz. A plaque commemorating Aladár Schreiber, the organizer of the Calvary's construction, is mounted on the retaining wall below the crosses. Behind the crosses are the graves of the Calvary's patrons, the Totovits family. Their son Kálmán was a member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The Calvary offers a panoramic view of Šahy, the Ipeľ Valley, the Börzsöny Mountains with the ruins of Drégely Castle, the rolling hills along the Ipeľ, the Krupina Plateau, and the Štiavnica Mountains, crowned by Mount Sitno.

Dudince Spa

Dudince Spa is one of Slovakia's leading providers of therapeutic spa services. The core of its treatments lies in its uniquely composed mineral water, which has no parallel in the world. Thanks to its high concentration of carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, the water is particularly effective in treating a variety of health conditions—even when these ailments occur in combination. These include:

- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Nervous system disorders
- Occupational overload-related conditions



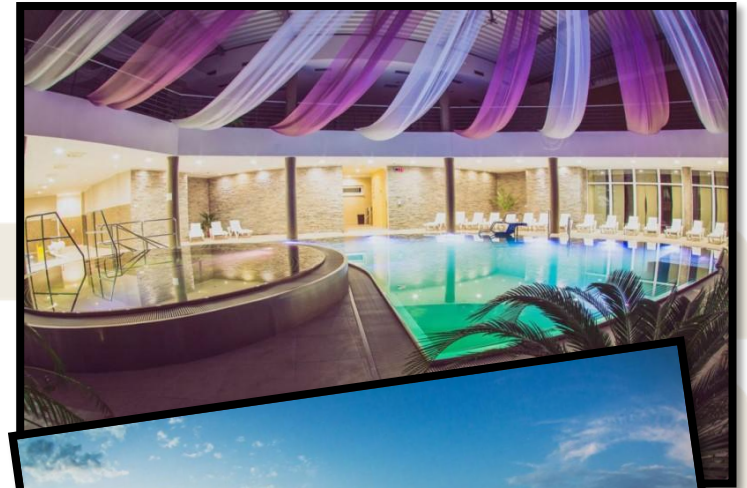
Healing Effects and Services

Dudince Spa (Kúpele Dudince a.s.) is officially licensed to operate as a natural healing spa by the State Spa Commission of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. Medical treatments are available only to individuals over the age of 18. The spa company manages a range of facilities including Hotel Rubín, Hotel Smaragd, and since 2017, the wellness and spa hotel Minerál. These establishments provide guests with various options for accommodation according to their preferences, all offering comfortable lodgings and top-tier services. Continuous upgrades and renovations ensure that Dudince Spa remains an enjoyable and relaxing experience for all visitors.



Aquatermal Resort in Dolná Strehová

Located between Lučenec and Veľký Krtíš, the Aquatermal Resort Dolná Strehová offers an inviting combination of relaxation and family-friendly fun. The resort encompasses the Aquatermal Hotel, a comprehensive wellness center, and the popular Strehová Summer Thermal Bath. The Aquatermal Hotel provides premium services and attentive care, making it the perfect destination for guests seeking to unwind, recharge, and escape the stress of everyday life. Here, guests are encouraged to leave their obligations behind and enjoy quality time with friends and family. The hotel is particularly welcoming to families with children. As a baby-friendly facility, it features spacious family rooms, a children's play corner, cribs, and specially prepared kids' meals. In the wellness area, children can enjoy their own dedicated pool. During the summer months, little ones can have fun at the large outdoor playground, complete with climbing frames and swings. Whether you're looking for tranquility or family adventure, Aquatermal Dolná Strehová promises a refreshing and enjoyable experience for all ages.



Castle of Hollókő

Rising above the rolling hills of the Cserhát Mountains, the castle of Hollókő dates back to the 13th century. It was originally built after the Mongol invasion as a defensive fortress. During the Middle Ages, it played an important strategic role, though its military significance gradually diminished, leading to its decline and eventual ruin. Today, the restored castle is a popular tourist destination. Its interior exhibitions vividly showcase aspects of medieval life, and during the summer, visitors can enjoy knightly tournaments and historical reenactments. From the castle walls, guests are treated to breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside and the famous Old Village of Hollókő.



Hollókő Old Village – Living Folk Heritage

The Old Village of Hollókő (Ófalu) is a uniquely preserved Palóc settlement, offering a glimpse into rural life at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987, the village consists of 55 traditional peasant houses characterized by whitewashed walls, arcaded porches, and thatched roofs. Some of these homes are still inhabited, while others have been converted into museums, craft workshops, souvenir shops, and guesthouses. The village is a vibrant hub of folk traditions, regularly hosting folk art events, cultural festivals, and heritage programs. One of the most beloved celebrations is the Easter water-splashing festival, attracting thousands of visitors each year. Hollókő's Old Village is more than a historical site – it is a living museum, where visitors can immerse themselves in the rich culture of the Palóc people.



A Haven of Comfort and Relaxation

Nestled within the charming heritage environment, the four-star Hotel Castellum Hollókő provides contemporary comfort in harmony with tradition. With 68 elegantly designed rooms, a fully equipped wellness area including sauna and indoor pool, and a restaurant focused on locally sourced ingredients, the hotel is an ideal destination for a peaceful retreat, a romantic getaway, or corporate events in a culturally rich setting. Whether you're seeking serenity, tradition, or a luxurious stay surrounded by history, Hotel Castellum Hollókő offers a truly unforgettable experience.



Hotel Castellum Hollókő****

Hotel Castellum Hollókő**** is more than just a wellness hotel – it offers a unique blend of modern luxury and cultural immersion. Located in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage village of Hollókő, guests can indulge in premium services while enjoying breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape and wandering among the timeless Palóc-style houses of the historic Old Village.

Bánk Lake & TÓ Wellness Hotel***

Nestled in the picturesque village of Bánk, Lake Bánk spans 7 hectares with an average depth of 4 meters, reaching up to 6–7 meters in some areas. This serene lake is a beloved destination for both locals and tourists – ideal for fishing, swimming, and sunbathing during the summer months. The lakeside beach, open from June 1 to August 31, offers designated swimming areas, changing cabins, and the option to rent rowboats or pedal boats. In winter, once the lake freezes over, it transforms into a charming spot for ice skating. Right by the water's edge, surrounded by lush greenery, stands the TÓ Wellness Hotel*, a modern retreat, offering comfortable accommodations, high-quality wellness services and seasonal dishes featuring local specialties. Whether you're strolling around the lake, enjoying a concert in the open-air amphitheater, or dining in a traditional tavern, quick eatery, or local restaurant, Bánk Lake offers year-round relaxation. Visitors can also enjoy ropes course with varying levels of difficulty, tennis and badminton courts, a playground and sandbox for children, and a relaxation center for unwinding after a day of adventure.



Nyírjes Botanical Garden and Wildlife Park

Just outside Balassagyarmat, the Nyírjes Ecological Center is easily accessible by foot or bicycle and offers a meaningful experience for visitors of all ages. The center includes a 22-hectare botanical garden showcasing native and exotic flora, a 15-hectare wildlife park with local animal species, a forest playground and outdoor educational areas. Perfect for family outings, school trips, or quiet nature walks. Nyírjes combines environmental education with fun and relaxation in a peaceful forest setting.

Bicycle Museum in Balassagyarmat

The Bicycle Museum and the Ipoly Hiking Center represent a unique initiative aiming to operate as a politics-free, open-minded cultural institution that connects cycling sport with Hungarian and Central European culture. Their goal is for the institution to become a pilgrimage site for the domestic and international cycling community along the Ipoly region in the Palóc World. Visitors can learn about the technical and design evolution of bicycles, the natural, historical, and cultural treasures of the region and the cross-border shared Palóc heritage. This museum is not just a collection but an interactive meeting place linking the past with present-day sports culture.



Museum in Balassagyarmat

The Palóc Museum is the ethnographic hub of Nógrád county with roots tracing back to the late 19th century. Its founding was made possible by the generous financial and collection support of Iván Nagy (1824–1898), a historian and genealogist. Its archaeological, ethnographic, and numismatic collections laid the foundation for the institution's current collecting activities. The museum focuses on Palóc folk art, including traditional folk costumes, woven textiles and embroidery, Shepherd's crafts, and in recent decades, religious ethnography, which has become a special research field. The Palóc Museum also houses a local history collection offering insights into the life of Balassagyarmat in the 19th and 20th centuries, including a collection of over three thousand posters and placards. This museum not only preserves the past but creates a living connection between Palóc culture and the present, providing visitors with an authentic and rich understanding of the region's traditions and history.

Palóc ring – Patvarc

Hungary's longest electric karting track

- The track is 1.2 km long
- Certified by the FIA
- Unique in Eastern Europe
- Features an E-track and GoKart system with intelligent track control, simulator, and electric GoKarts



Military Paintball – Opatovská Nová Ves

The owners' goal was to create a playground where both sports enthusiasts and combat-style players can fully enjoy their passion. Strategically placed towers at multiple points on the field help to locate the enemy, enable faster advancement for team members, and facilitate communication between players. At the same time, the playground offers surprises for adrenaline seekers, as you never know if you are truly alone. Spectators and eliminated players can also watch the game progress from a tower next to the field. From time to time, the playground changes, expanding its area with new obstacles, providing more and more opportunities to outsmart or attack the opponent.

Zsigmond Winery – Vinica

For the Zsigmond family, wine is a lifestyle. For over three decades, they have passionately crafted their wines, seeking to reveal the unique local terroir. The idea to establish the Zsigmond family winery and vineyard was built on more than 100 years of experience in grape growing and winemaking. The cellar and vineyards are located in the village of Vinica, meaning “vineyard.” The name itself shows the strong connection the residents have with winemaking, and for the people of Vinica, owning vineyards is natural. Vinica is part of the Central Slovak wine region, where the local climate and soil are excellent for cultivating grapes and producing fine wines. The foundations of the vineyard and winery were laid by László Zsigmond Sr. and his son, László Zsigmond Jr., in the 1990s when they planted 1.5 hectares of vines. Their diligent work has expanded the vineyards to 75 hectares today.



Đurík Family Winery – Opatovská Nová Ves

When hobby and livelihood began to intertwine, the initial grapevine cuttings flourished into 16.9 hectares of cultivated vineyards. They planted all grape varieties authorized in the Slovak Republic, believing that many types of grapes can grow even in a small area. Thanks to this, the small family winery welcomes guests with a wide selection of wines. To make the experience even more comfortable, they created a small guesthouse right above the winery so visitors don't have to travel far after wine tasting.

NATURAL VÍNO Domin & Kušicky – Vel'ký Krtíš

After gaining many years of experience in viticulture and winemaking, Ing. Ján Domin began applying his knowledge in the 1990s by building a family winery. His goal was to produce terroir-driven wines that reflect the local conditions and to share them with as many people as possible. This vision was always tied to a clean, chemical-free environment—without additives or pessimism. In his work, he always strived for harmony and elegance. For him, "organic" (BIO) was never a marketing buzzword—it was a belief. Until 2017, he was actively involved in developing the winery, never wanting to define the wines with words but letting them speak for themselves. Today, NATURAL VÍNO Domin & Kušicky is run by his daughter Diana and her husband Tibor.



The Tradition of Viticulture in Vel'ký Krtíš

The climatic and natural conditions of Vel'ký Krtíš have supported viticulture since the Middle Ages. The vineyard located above the town, is mentioned in written records as early as the 14th century under the name "Na viničke" (hon Viničky).