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Pavúk Restaurant, Mesto Modra
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J. Zúbel, J. Dubovský a kol., Dejiny Modry.
1958 – Dejiny Modry, Mesto 1158 – 1958.



Golden nuggets of Modra history

Modra has a unique, 13 centuries-long past. It can offer the experience of contact with its history, historic forms and stories to a perceptive visitor. These are also written in the irregular shapes and corners of the old square, the winding streets, castle walls, churches, the facades of winery and town houses, the vineyards, bricked cellars, ceramic workshops, and the plaques. It pays to read them.



Modra's story at a glance

As a settlement, Modra has existed since the early Middle Ages. Over the centuries, in addition to the name Modra, it also had other names – Modur, Modor, Moder, Modern, Modorinum.

The existence of the mountain foot Slavic settlement in the 9th century is archaeologically documented. The first written mention of the village of Modra (villa Modor) is from 1256. It gradually developed into a small town and then a larger one.

After the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom it belonged to Bratislava Castle. In the 14th century it was the town of the Hungarian queens (1361 - civitas reginalis de Modur), then a liege town (oppidum), owned by several noble families (Matúš Čák, Stibor's, Ország's). In the 16th century it became a free town, and in the early 17th century it gained the privileges of a free royal town.

German colonists played an important role in the legal, economic and cultural development of the town in the 14th to 17th centuries, along with an extensive trade in wine. In addition to many Hungarian towns, Modra wine went to Moravia, Silesia or southern Austria. The elevation of Modra among the most important Hungarian royal towns was decided by two Habsburg emperors and simultaneously Hungarian kings – Rudolf II and Matej II. Modra citizens called them the town fathers out of gratitude, along with Maximilian II, who left Modra permanently in the royal possession in 1569.

The historic center itself represents a unique urban monument. It is the conserved testimony to the vineyard town's spatial and structural rebirth into a royal town.

Modra's largest construction development took place in the 17th century. The main attention was paid to the con-

struction of the town hall, town tower, and walls with gates and towers. Due to its numerous corners Modra gained the humorous nickname Fieleck ("viel" – numerous, many, and "die Ecke" - corner, edge).

Up to three defense systems protected the citizens against external dangers over the centuries. The Zámčisko refuge fort (9th – 13th century), the old Modra – Altstadt fortification (14th – 16th century) and the Renaissance town walls (from the 17th century). The walls protected the inhabitants from the 150-year danger of Turkish invaders and the anti-Habsburg rebel armies. Turkish troops ravaged the St. John the Baptist Church standing outside the walls and on 3 September 1663 they burned down the newly established unfortified liege settlement of Kráľová. In the years 1741 – 1934 Modra was the seat of 6 superintendents – Evangelical bishops.

Modra has always been perceived as a tolerant and multicultural town. This is evidenced by the permanent peaceful coexistence of townspeople of Slovak, German, Czech, Croatian and Serbian nationality as well as Catholic, and Evangelical a.c. and the Jewish part of the population. Only a short, violent recatholisation in the 17th century and two totalitarian regimes in the 20th century may be mentioned as an exception.

Modra takes a unique place in modern Slovak history. It is permanently connected to the personality of Eudovít Štúr, codifier of standardized Slovak, and Evangelical bishop Samuel Zoch, the first modern-day Slovak governor of Bratislava.



Economic and cultural traditions

It is not possible to learn about the current Modra without becoming familiar with the centuries-enduring traditions. These represent a bridge from the past to the present.

Modra education is one of the oldest in Hungary. The first written mention of a school dates back to 1501. Excellent teachers and students of the Evangelical gymnasium, founded in 1594, spread its good reputation at home and abroad. Masaryk's First State Teaching Institute, the forerunner of today's Educational and Cultural Academy, offered up the first Slovak teachers after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

However, Modra owes its excellent wines for its greatest reputation at home and abroad. Modra has cultivated the vines on the southern slopes of the Small Carpathians since time immemorial, but intense wine trade developed only after the Tatar invasion with the help of German colonists in the 14th century. Modra's dominant position in Slovak viticulture and winery is represented by today's High School for Winemaking and Fruit Cultivation, the only one in Slovakia, as well as several currently top winemakers with an excellent international reputation. In addition to vineyards, forests accounted for another important part of the town's economic base. Part of the allocated Modra forest had the designation of "Royal Forest" in 1569 – 1773. They were owned by Hungarian kings. The reason was the logging of massive oak to build of royal ship fleets.

In the early 18th century, German loggers moved into the most remote corners of Modra's forests in the last colonization wave. They called themselves "Waldleute" (forest people). Their descendants still live here today. Seekers of metal and those with gold fever did not avoid the Small Carpathian mountain areas of the Modra forest district either over the centuries. However,

written records of mining exist only from the beginning of the 19th century, when two mining companies operating 14 quarries were created in Modra. Gold and silver ore were located deep underground and only lead-ore mining became more effective for a short time. The town had good conditions for the work of craftsmen. The activity of eleven guilds had already been approved in the early 17th century. In the early 19th century, more than 500 artisans operated their business in 41 various crafts. Written records of the milling industry date back to the 14th century. The existence of this technically demanding craft was related to the use of the natural energy of mountain streams. The milling guild united millers from 13 mills in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The origins of pottery date back to the inception of Modra. A pottery guild was founded in 1636. The State Pottery Workshop was founded here in 1883. The emergence of the Slovak Folk Majolica production team dates back to 1952. The history of Modra pottery and ceramics is full of excellent masters of this craft. Master Ignatius Bizmayer was honored with the Slovak national artist title for his exceptional figural production. Many ceramists currently run private workshops. In addition to the vineyards, ceramics and history, Modra's "family jewels" include urban forests and a forest park with typical flora and fauna. Due to the quality of the environment, Modra is a seat of administration for the Protected Landscape Area of the Little Carpathians, the Bratislava UK observatory, two hunting associations, and the outlook on Veľká Homola, a popular destination for tourists. The beginnings of organized tourism date back to 1892.

Personalities that in the past contributed to the development and glory of the town

Michael Ritthaler – rector of the Modra Evangelical Gymnasium. In times of violent recatholisation he was forced to go into exile. From 1681 he was the librarian in Wolfenbüttel for Duke Rudolph Augustus.

Martin Schreiber – author of the oldest Modra history book entitled "Description of the Free Royal Town of Modra", from 1719.

Pavel Jakobei – he came from a family of Czech exiles from the Battle of White Mountain. In 1722 he began to teach biblical Czech at the Modra Evangelical Gymnasium. He was the author of one of the first Czech-Slovak grammar books from 1742.

Jozef Hajnóczy – Modra native, Hungarian enlightenment lawyer, reformer of modern liberal and civil society. On 20 May 1795 he was executed on the Bloody Field below Buda Castle, together with four other leaders of the Hungarian Jacobins.

Franz Raffelsperger – Modra native, father of the idea of establishing the first travel agency in the world (he asked for the concession on 10 October 1828).

Eudovít Štúr – codifier of standardized Slovak, editor and publisher of the first Slovak political newspaper, a leading figure of the Slovak national movement in the 1840s.

Karol Štúr – the older brother of Eudovít Štúr, poet, publicist, teacher, translator and politician. In Modra he served as a professor and rector of the Evangelical Gymnasium and later as an Evangelical pastor.

Dionýz Štúr – director of the Imperial Geological Institute in Vienna, a prominent geologist, naturalist, zoo- and phyto-paleontologist, mountanist, hydrogeologist.

Samuel Zoch – Evangelical bishop, co-author of the Declaration of the Slovak Nation in 1918, the first modern Bratislava governor, supporter of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Samuel Jurkovič – leading figure of modern Czechoslovak architecture. In Modra he designed the orphanage building.

Gejza Dusík – composer, pioneer of modern Slovak pop music, co-founder of Slovak operetta.

Many generations of today's personalities grew up on the fertile Modra's historical mycelium. The unique atmosphere of the town has inspired such important Slovak writers in the recent past like Janko Kalinčiak, Ján Smrek, Lýdia Vadkerti-Gavorníková, Vincent Šíkula and contemporary poet Jozef Mihal'kovič. It is possible to meet these current personalities – winemakers, ceramists, painters, sculptors, writers, musicians and photographers – during a visit to our town. Whether in the vineyards, cellars, workshops, studios, workshops... You will be most welcome!

