

The rebellions of the Hungarian estates in 17th century also had an impact on the town's appearance. After the defeat of Turkish forces and Hungarian rebels, the Counter-Reformation took hold in Levoča, with the Emperor forcing Protestants to return to the Catholic Church. It was not until the beginning of the 19th century that permission was granted to build a Protestant church in the main square. During the 18th century the town was marked by declines in trade and in craft industry. Attempts to establish mass production of linen were unsuccessful. On the other hand, the town's stagnation in the 19th helped ensure the preservation of its architectural heritage.



Lutheran church



District House



Cage of Shame



Master Paul's House



The School Church



Interior of the School Church



Interior of St James's Church

The fortified medieval town centre contains unique heritage structures that reflect Levoča's rich history. In recognition of its outstanding cultural value, this part of the town was declared a national heritage site in 1955.



The Last Supper carved into the predella of the high altarpiece - by Master Paul

### Coin details

<i>Denomination:</i> €20
<i>Composition:</i> Ag 925/1000, Cu 75/1000
<i>Weight:</i> 33,63 g
<i>Diameter:</i> 40 mm
<i>Edge inscription in relief:</i> NAKRAJŠIE HISTORICKÉ MESTÁ (Most beautiful historical towns)
<i>Issuing volume:</i> up to a maximum of 11,000 (including brilliant uncirculated and proof coins)
<i>Designer:</i> Pavel Károly
<i>Engraver:</i> Dalibor Schmidt
<i>Producer:</i> Kremnica Mint

The obverse depicts the three central figures of the high altarpiece in St James's Church, Levoča, only here they are shown partly finished, as if emerging from blocks of wood. The wooden block of the right-hand figure bears the coat of arms of the Slovak Republic. The block of the central figure is inscribed, on separate lines, with the year of issuance "2017", the denomination "20", and the currency "EURO". Below them are the mint mark of the Kremnica Mint ("MK") and the stylised initials "PK", the initials of the designer Pavel Károly. The wooden block of the left-hand figure is inscribed with "1517", the year when the high altarpiece was completed, and, below that, the signature mark of Master Paul. The name of the issuing country "SLOVENSKO" runs along the lower edge of the central field.

The reverse features part of St James's Church (including the steeple) and the Old Town Hall. The composition is set in front of a Gothic window, below a trefoil at the top of the window and above altar decorations at the bottom of the window. To the left of the composition is the coat of arms of Levoča. Inscribed above the lower edge of the central field, on two lines at left, are the words "PAMIATKOVÁ REZERVÁCIA" (Heritage site), and, at right, the town name "LEVOČA".



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Photo: Wikimedia (Detlef Lange, Martin, Ing. Mgr. Jozef Kotulič, Patrik Kunec), Pavol Breier, the town of Levoča, Progress Promotion

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## Levoča Heritage Site

and the 500th anniversary of the completion of the high altarpiece in St James's Church

Silver Collector Coin



The town of Levoča grew up at an intersection of trade routes below the Levoča Mountains in eastern Slovakia. Along with the nearby sites of Spiš Castle, Spišská Kapitula, Žehra and Spišské Podhradie, the national heritage site in Levoča forms a remarkable and well-preserved legacy of medieval buildings and settlements, the likes of which are not found anywhere else in the world. As a result, this group of sites has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The prestige of the site is further enhanced by exceptional woodcarvings by Master Paul of Levoča.

The area now occupied by Levoča was originally settled in the Early Stone Age. The town grew rapidly in the Middle Ages, benefiting from its location on trade routes. The first written record of the town, referring to it as "Lewcha" dates from 1249, and in 1271 Levoča was made the capital of the area's Saxon colonial settlement. In 1321 it was granted the privilege of 'storage rights' and in 1323 it attained the status of a royal free town. The town's prosperity was based mainly on trade with Cracow and Venice and with Silesian, Austrian and German towns. The products of Levoča craftsmen were sold at markets and fairs throughout the Hungarian Kingdom. Levoča was an economic, political, military and administrative centre, a hub of cultural and artistic life, a seat of learning and a place of pilgrimage. The extent of its wealth is evident from the rectangular town square, containing finely preserved buildings dating from the 13th to the 15th centuries. The edge of the square is lined with opulent townhouses, harmoniously juxtaposed with the lower-class housing of neighbouring streets situated on the inner side of the fortifications. The broad layout of the town and its fortifications were adapted to

St James's Church



Main altarpiece arch with open wings - by Master Paul

the natural conditions. The town is situated on a hill and is protected on its northern and eastern flanks by high escarpments. The start of construction on the town fortifications is documented on a seal of the Spiš Saxons dating from the end of the 13th century. The fortifications went on to be extended and modernised in line with the evolution of military technology. The result was an advanced and complex fortification system, a prime example of medieval engineering.

Thurzo's House



Around 80% of the system has been preserved, including six bastions and three town gates.

Master Paul Square in the centre of the town, surrounded by grand houses built by leading townsmen (for example, Thurzo House, Krupek House and Master Paul House), gradually came to be populated with public buildings. In the 14th century, St James's Church was built in the middle of the square and, at a later date, the Town Hall was built

Historical houses in Master Paul Square



to the south of the church. Behind them is a Lutheran church. The town's former prosperity is also reflected in a Minorite church and monastery, which have undergone several modifications since the 14th century.

Master Paul's woodcarving work in Levoča was particularly significant. His workshop produced numerous outstanding pieces, most notably the high altarpiece in St James's Church – the tallest late-Gothic winged altarpiece in the world, carved from lime wood between 1507 and 1517. The predella of the altarpiece includes a scene of the Last Supper in which one of the Apostles is said to be an image of Master Paul himself. The church interior features other works of the Master Paul workshop, notably the carved and sculpted elements of several altarpieces, including those dedicated to St Anne, St Nicholas, the Nativity, and St George, and one dedicated to four saints by the name of John. The humanisation of the holy figures in these works was a precursor of Renaissance art in Slovakia.

In the 16th century Levoča was scourged by fighting against the Turks and over the Hungarian throne, as well as by military conflict between the town and neighbouring Kežmarok. When it came to renovating the Old Town Hall and townhouses after a destructive fire in 1550, the town committed itself to following the Renaissance style of architecture. The original late Gothic building of the Old Town Hall was enlarged to include a Renaissance arcade and a bell tower (built between 1656 and 1661). The Old Town Hall as it appears now dates back to a renovation carried out between 1893 and 1895, which included adding another floor – a Romantic modification typical of the spirit of the Polish Renaissance. The Old Town Hall is now the main building of the Spiš Museum.

Town fortifications

