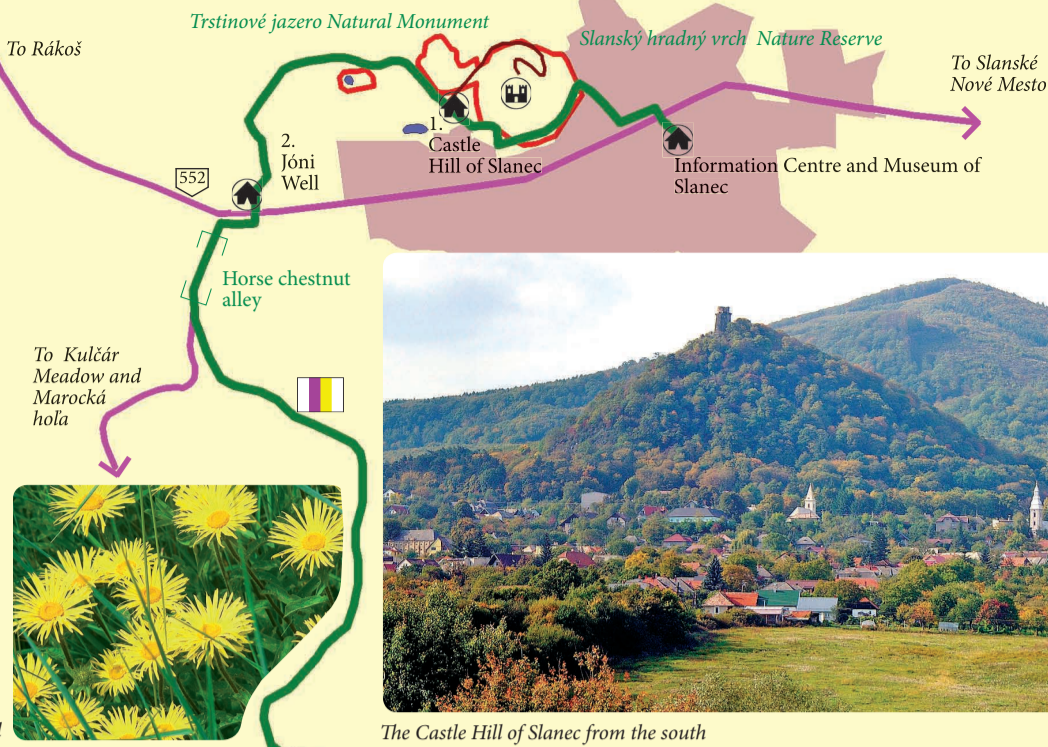


The Great Milic massif rises like a North Carpathian "island" on the border of Hungary and Slovakia. The diversity is secured by habitat mosaics in the region. Forest soils developed on rhyolite and andesite bedrock and the Carpathian-like mountain climate determine this mosaics feature. The mountain meadows abound in protected plants, but have been endangered by the absence of maintenance management (mowing and grazing.) The local society tries to give appropriate answers by creating a nature park organization and strengthening family farms in the region. The starting point of the nature trail is situated at the Information Centre and Museum of Slanec. The trail reaches the southern border of the **Slansky hradný vrch (Castle Hill) Nature Reserve** crossing Highway no. 552, and following the nature park blaze along the mansion's garden to the north. The first resting place is reached by walking along the southern boundary of Castle Hill; from here the marked tourist path leads to the hill and ruins and the lower Reed Lake (Trstinové Jazero) also is observable.



British yellowhead



The Castle Hill of Slanec from the south



Marocká Meadow

The protected upper **Trstinové jazero (Reed Lake) Natural Monument** lies along the way when approaching the Jóni Well Rest Place (no. 2). After crossing Highway no. 552 again, we walk to reach the Milic Massif. The Ortáše Rest Place (no. 18) follows the alley of horse chestnut trees and follows the road leading to the Izra Lake. After the crossing of Highway no. 552 to Izra Lake, our way is identical with both the Elisabeth Cycling Route and Ferenc Rákóczi II International Cycling Tour. After passing the junction to Slanská Huta, the northern lava flow area of the **Malý Milič (Little Milic SK) Nature Reserve** becomes visible at the foothill. After the "Big Tree" Rest Place (no. 17) the trail continues to Izra Lake (no. 16) Rest Place. The emergence of Izra Lake was caused by landslides and is the largest continuous water surface in the Milic area. A stabilized road leads to the Bodnár Well (no. 15) Rest Place from Izra Lake. As an option, the **Malá Izra (Little Izra) Nature Reserve** can be reached by going west from here. Our way is surrounded predominantly by beech stocks in the direction of the national border. We can view the **Tolvaj-hegy (Thief Hill) Strictly Protected Area** at the Tílalmas (Forbidden Area, no. 14) Rest Place in Hungary.



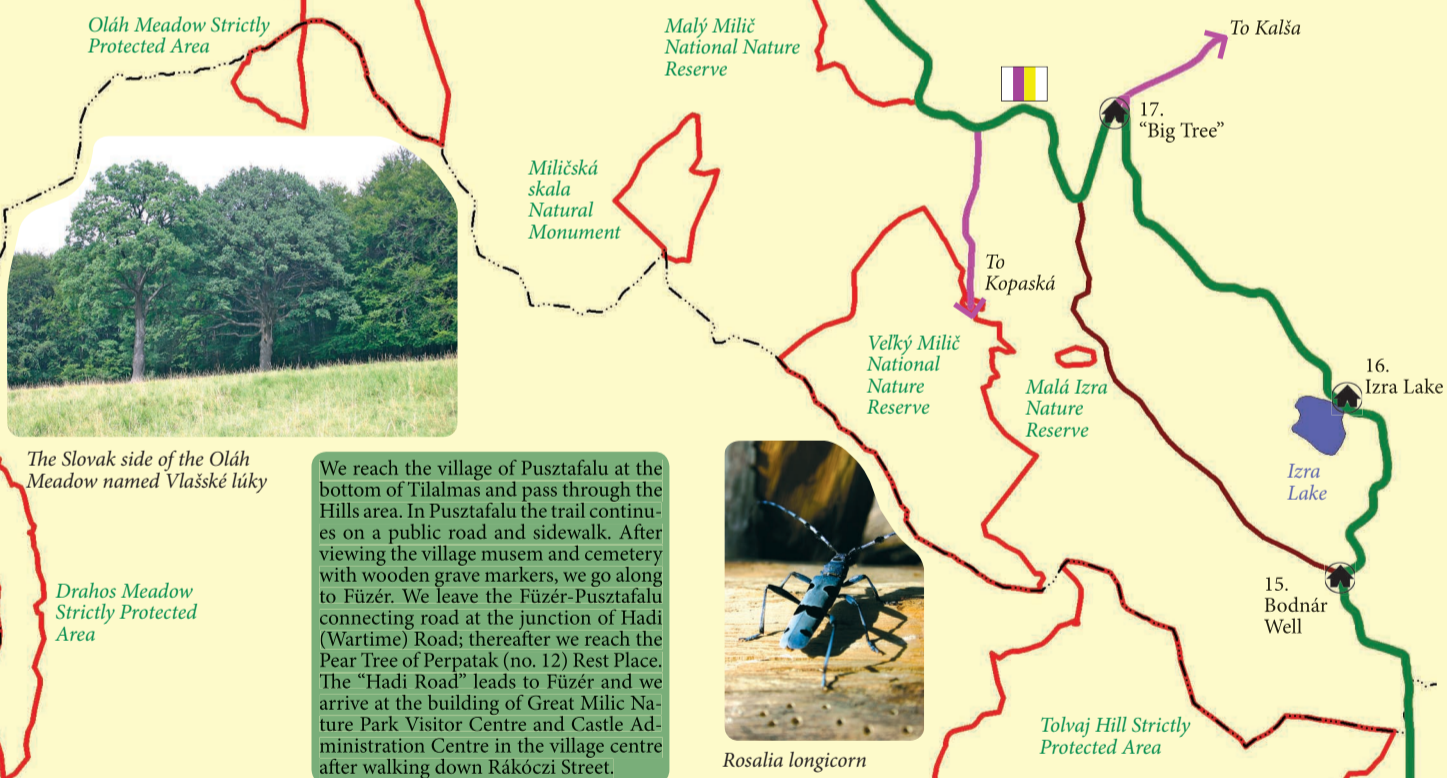
Woodland strawberry



Red viper's bugloss

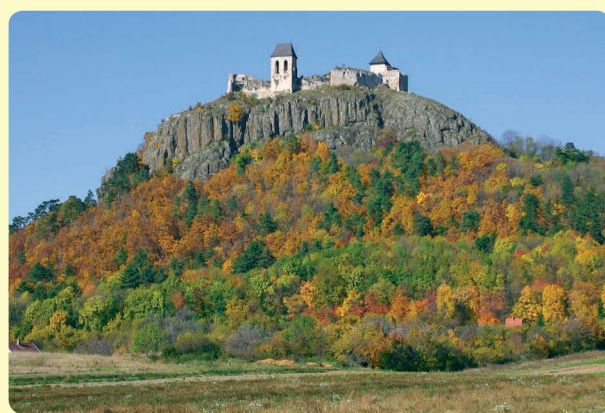
Legenda:

- rest place
- nature trail
- strictly protected areas in Hungary and the national nature reserves in Slovakia
- asphalt road
- stabilized road, dirt road
- State boundary (Hungary-Slovakia)
- Nature trail and hiking route network in Great Milic Nature Park



The Slovak side of the Oláh Meadow named Vlašské lúky

We reach the village of Pusztafalu at the bottom of Tílalmas and pass through the Hills area. In Pusztafalu the trail continues on a public road and sidewalk. After viewing the village museum and cemetery with wooden grave markers, we go along to Füzér. We leave the Füzér-Pusztafalu connecting road at the junction of Hadi (Wartime) Road; thereafter we reach the Pear Tree of Perpatak (no. 12) Rest Place. The "Hadi Road" leads to Füzér and we arrive at the building of Great Milic Nature Park Visitor Centre and Castle Administration Centre in the village centre after walking down Rákóczi Street.



The Castle Hill of Füzér in autumn



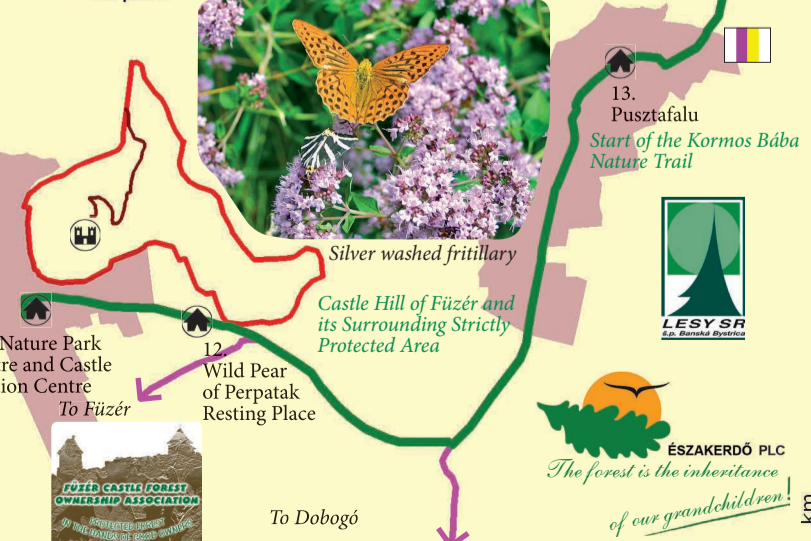
Rosalia longicorn



IZRA LAKE NATURE TRAIL

Length: 21.066 m
Greatest change in elevation: 285 m

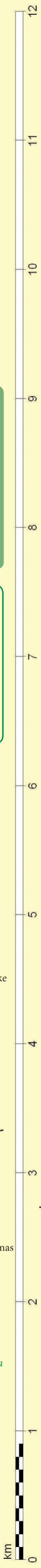
The basis of the ecotourism development program is the creation plan (2004) of the Great Milic Nature Park founded in 2003.



Silver washed fritillary



ÉSZAKERDŐ PLC
The forest is the inheritance of our grandchildren!



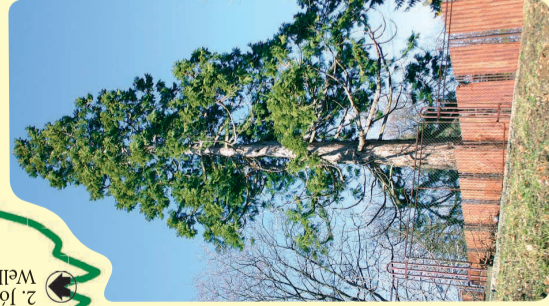
Description of the nature trail:

The starting point of the nature trail is the **Slanec Information Center and Local History Museum**. After crossing the Highway no. 552, our route progresses along the mansion's park fence. The mansion garden's special tree specimen is a giant sequoia, a protected tree. The nature trail continues along the southern boundary of Castle Hill and reaches the first rest place. From here, a marked tourist path gives a view of the ruins of Slanec Castle.

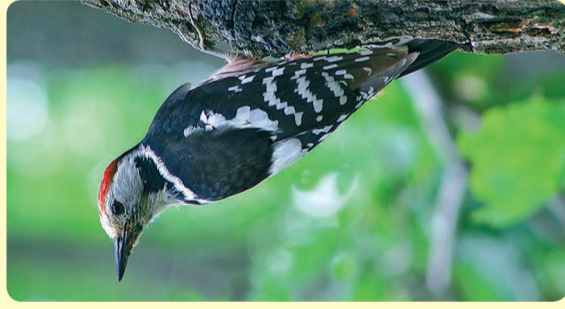
Two protected areas are located around the castle which dominates the panorama. The Castle Hill of Slanec is a tongue of the Slanec Mountains and emerges above the village. The 15.81 ha **Slanský hradný vrch (Castle Hill) Nature Reserve** was declared a nature protection area in 1931, and classified as protectable area with thermophile flora and fauna.

The 0.83 ha **Trstinové jazero (Reed Lake) Natural Monument** is situated at the foot of Castle Hill of Slanec. It consists of two lakes. The nature trail route follows the protected upper lake. The lower lake under the Castle Hill was partially reconstructed. Plays a significant role as an amphibian and reptile habitat, the species richness within this habitat is extremely high. Among the most characteristic plants are species from aquatic and coastal communities: the cattail, narrow-leaved cattail, yellow iris, European white water lily.

We cross the Highway no. 552 again at the Jóni Well Rest Place (no. 2), pass below the alley of horse chestnut trees and afterwards go east to Izra Lake and reach the Ortaše Rest Place (no. 18). It is situated in the neighborhood of a former hunter's lodge which hasn't any visible imprints anymore. Strolling into the nearby Slanská Huta, we see the former orchard fruit trees. Up to the junction of Slanská Huta our road leads into beech forest associations.



Giant sequoia of Slanec



Middle spotted woodpecker



Common toad

18. Ortaše

We continue the trip on the asphalt road going south. After the junction of Slanská Huta, the northern foothill part of the **Malý Milic (Little Milic SK) National Nature Reserve** is visible, densely spotted with stones of a lava flow. The 14.05 ha area was protected to preserve the typical ancient woodland vegetation and the different species of prey birds, which found suitable breeding conditions in the Milic area. Beech associations are typical along the asphalt road and the foothill and mixed oak forests on rocky ridges.

There is a very nice exhibition place at the boundary of the forest and forest clearings showing an example of the "Big Tree" (Velké Drevo no. 17). The remnant trees – like the 300 year old common oak "Big Tree" become a symbol in the course of time. The spatial order of the present-day land use has been oriented to this natural landmark, which marks village boundaries, different cultivated areas and crossings.

The next resting place is Izra Lake (Jazero Izra, no. 16), which is 448 meters above sea level and has now a surface of 3.70 ha and an outstanding role in recreation. The clay layers have a high content of the mineral montmorillonite. This impervious layer causes landslides whose most conspicuous example is the emergence of Izra Lake, the largest fresh surface of water in the Milic Massif. We reach the Bodnár Well Rest Place by advancing further eastward and southward (Pramen Bodnár, no. 15).

The water sources originate in the region basically from split rocks. The springs emerge to the surface at the border of debris at the foot of the hill and impermeable clay layers. In the surroundings of the nearby Bodnár forester's house, young black alder groups indicate the subsurface water course on the former meadow area.

The **Malá Izra (Little Izra) Nature Reserve** can be reached from the Bodnár Well as an optional opportunity. The rare lowland-like swamp alder stand occurs at the rather unusual elevation of 530 meters above sea level.

We walk across the Hungarian-Slovak border and along the bottom of the Tílalmas (Forbidden Area) towards the village of Pusztafalu. The lava dome habitat mosaic of the **Tolvaj-hegy (Thief Hill) Strictly Protected Area** can be seen from the Tílalmas Rest Place (no. 14). On the steeper eastern and south-eastern slopes and steep ridges, there are closed forest stands like the hornbeam-oak forests, beech forests and mixed relic forests on soil formed from rocks. As they recede there is a transition to acidophilous oak forests growing on the highly acidic bedrock formed in the region. The relict rock forest (*Sorbo-Quercetum*) is a unique plant association in Hungary on these uplifted silicate rocks. The siliceous open rocky grasslands of the Tolvaj-hegy occur in smaller patches than the rocky grassland of Castle Hill of Füzér. There are both open and closed silicate rocky grasslands vegetation.

There are less favorable soils in agricultural parcels at higher elevations in the following Dombok-dűlő (Hills Area), typical of the Upper Hegyköz region. In Pusztafalu, old country houses with verandahs, a cemetery with wooden grave markers and the local history exhibition are noteworthy. The Öreg Bence Guest House is the starting point of the Kormos Bába Nature Trail towards Füzérkajata.

Leaving Pusztafalu, we see that the Hegyköz Basin is largely under agricultural use. The land use is primarily adapted to the topography. The arable, meadow and pasture areas were created by deforestation. Thus, the low-lying marshy areas along the streams are used as meadows; arable farming takes place on the slightly hilly but homogenous slopes of foothills. Pasture-land use is practiced on the steepest parts of slopes which are most endangered by erosion. The traces of narrow strips of land cultivation are observable. Looking into the Pusztafalu valley from the Füzér-Pusztafalu connecting road (before the



Snowball tree

16. Izra Lake

15. Bodnár Well

14. Tílalmas



Mowed narrow strips of land

junction to Füzér), we see the narrow strips of the vineyards. This vineyard view is the best preserved example for former landscape use of the Hegyköz Region.

Orchard meadows represent the most common form of traditional land use which is mostly abandoned now. The old, rotting fruit trees are a secure habitat for many insects and birds. The old specimens under Castle Hill in the extensively used village margins are sites of old landraces conservation.

We see wooded hillsides while passing on the southern side of Castle Hill of Füzér and its Surrounding Strictly Protected Area. On the hilltop there is a castle of picturesque beauty surrounded by retreating rocky grassland. The slopes were clear-cut in the Middle Ages because of defensive reasons and later they became barrens due to overgrazing. A special pioneer vegetation has formed on the rock and debris surfaces – the rocky grassland. Grazing also had a special role in the formation of the silicate rocky grassland.

The barren land afforestation of Castle Hill took place in the 1910s with the seedlings of Scotch pine, Austrian pine and flowering ash. Today we see a strong appearance of broadleaved woody plant admixture on the south side, in the former pine plantations.



13. Pusztafalu

12. Wild Pear of Pèratak Resting Place

11. Great Milic Nature Park Visitor Centre of Castle Administration

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