

Bratislava castle

Let us go back to the historical sites of Bratislava. The pride of every Christian city is its churches and monasteries and Bratislava is no exception. The city's biggest, oldest and most spectacular church is the St. Martin's Cathedral. It was in fact the coronation Church of Hungarian kings (1563-1830). During those days, the crowning ceremony lasted the whole day and the path of the king was paved with small bronze crowns still visible on the stone roads of the town streets. One of the towers of this church, Baroque Tower, was destroyed by lightening in 1833 and then reconstructed with a new Neo-Gothic face.

The monumental ensemble of Bratislava castle stands on an isolated rocky hill of the Little Carpathians directly above the Danube River in the middle of Bratislava and cannot be confused with any other building in the city. From there you clearly see the Old Town separated by the blue waters of the Danube which connects ten European countries and empties its flow into the Black Sea. We could see this edifice looking like a fortress from our hotel room; in fact the castle has a similarity with an overturned table and is visible even from a long distance. This majestic building, known as King's place and Presidents' Headquarters, is connected to many legends and events of the Slovak history, the most recent is not however a legend: the Bush-Putin Bratislava summit in February 2005 took place here, in the Knights Hall, where the new Constitution of independent Slovakia was signed in September 1992.

If we look back to the documentary sources, we find that the castle's life started as early as the 10th century. Initially there was a pre-Romanesque stone palace in the 11th and 12th centuries. After withstanding Mongol attacks in 1241 and 1242, the castle was reconstructed in 1423 and turned into a Gothic castle called Sigismund's castle. Finally, in 1765, the castle was transformed into a royal palace by the order of Hungarian Queen Marie-Theresia. It became the main castle of the Hungarian Empire called then Therasian.

Invaders and fires were frequent visitors of castles and fortresses of medieval time. While the Therasian resisted quite successfully and even managed to withstand the bombardment by canons of Napoleon troops in 1809, it couldn't escape from the last disaster. In May 1811, the castle burst into devastating flames due to the carelessness of Austrian and Italian soldiers stationed there. The fire soon spread to neighbourhood settlement. As a consequence all precious furniture, wall paintings and hundreds of historical objects of art were destroyed and the castle stayed empty for 150 years. It was reconstructed again in 1877 and renamed Bratislava castle. One part of the castle has been turned into the Slovak National museum and is open for public now. Neighbour to the modern building of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Slovak parliament), the castle with its preserved Classic, Baroque, Gothic and Renaissance parts and English garden provides an excellent view of Bratislava, of Austria and, when there is good weather, of Vienna and Hungary.

Moving through the Old town I saw a bronze statue of a man half out of the well where he was sitting. "A man at work", the name of the statue is one of the attractions in the