

Rocks in the middle

ected monument. On its facade there are embossings showing Mary and Jesus and also a chamber with a small statue of Jesus. The terrace has a balustrade ornate with carved stone pillars.

Near Sirok, on the right side of Tarna River, on the northeastern slope of Darnó Hill, the half a century old forest of hornbeam and oak trees hide the Nyírjes Lake. It is one of the most interesting and unique Hungarian peat-moss bogs. It is a nature conservation area of national significance on 23 hectares.

The bog is 0,9 hectare big. It has a valuable plant association with relict species from the ice age, like Slender Sedge and Downy Birch. The area also has special micro- and macro-fauna, including for example European Peacock Butterfly and Swallowtail.

The Kút völgy Recreation Park is a perfect place for relaxing. It is open all-year round and at the last weekend of July the Sirok Motorbike Festival is also held here with many Hungarian and foreign visitors.



View of the castle from the village

Bükkalja Rock-way Information Point Eger, in the yard of the Fellner block

bukkalja.info.hu

Mayor's Office of Sirok, Borics P. str. 6.
Phone: 36/561-000 • www.sirok.hu

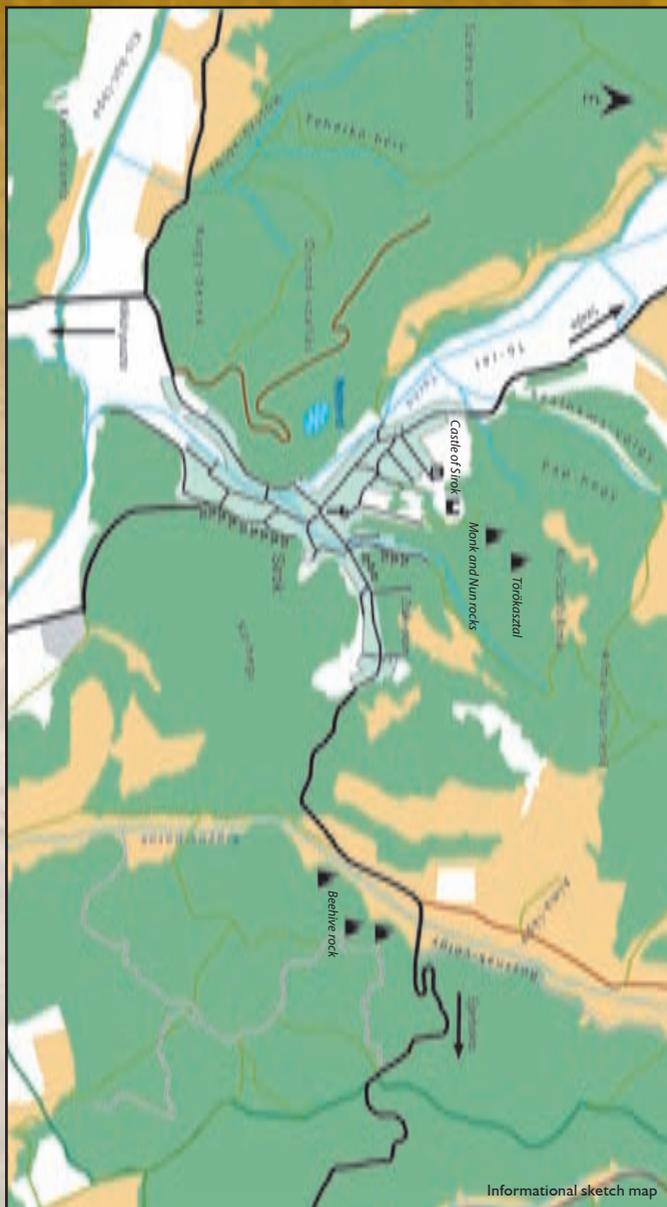


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Sirok





The statue of Saint John of Nepomuk

Sirok is situated 20 km from Eger, on the northeastern boundary of the Mátra Mountains, in the valley where Tarna Stream (from Parád) flows into Tarna River (from Cered). The settlement was the property of the gens of Aba, and its first written record is from 1302 under the name Sirák. At the edge of the present-day village there is a rocky Rhyolite tuff cone at 294 meters above sea level where the Castle of Sirok was built after the Mongol invasion in Hungary. In 1426

there was already a village under the castle, called Sirokálja (Foot of Sirok), which got the privileges of a market town in the 15th century. After the fall of Eger, guards of the castle fled, so the Turkish could occupy it without a battle. Although Turkish people settled down in and round the castle, the village was owned by Hungarian landlords until the middle of the 17th century. When General János Doria besieged the Castle of Eger in 1687, the Turkish guards left the Castle of Sirok to help out in protecting Eger. The destroyed and deserted castle became the property of Marquis Bagni in 1693; he renovated the building and provided it with the guards of the Emperor. Although the castle did not play a role in the rebellion led by Ferenc II. Rákóczi, the soldiers of the



The view of the castle from the Törökasztal (Turkish table) rock



The inner court of the castle

Emperor blew it up in 1713. Today the ruins of the castle make up a protected monument.

From the highest point of the castle you can see a block of Dacite tuff carved into the shape of a tabletop, called **Törökasztal** (Turkish table). The holes, ditches and bowl-like pits could have been used for ritual sacrifices of the ancient Hungarian religion before Christian conversion. Near the Törökasztal there are two lonely rocks, which are aptly called **Monk and Nun Rocks** referring both to their natural shape and the legend woven around them: "King Darnó made a terrible oath that - in revenge for his wife, kidnapped deceptively by Attila, chief of the Hun tribe - he would kill any human approaching his castle. He shot his arrow at the knight Bodony, who was in love with Darnó's daughter, Tarna. However, Tarna jumped in front of Bodony, so the arrow went through the heart of both lovers. It was a magical arrow that immediately hardened the lovers into stone."

At the eastern edge of the village, on the western side of the valley of Kígyós Stream (**Rozsna Valley**) there are several rock towers. Handrails were carved on their top parts and one of them also holds a beehive chamber.

On Széchenyi Street and Fenyves Road we can still see **cave houses**, cut by specialized rock cutters in the first third of the 19th century. The rock was also used for furnishing these houses: benches for sitting and sleeping were carved into the walls.

The Baroque **Roman Catholic Church** (Title: Immaculate Conception) of the village was built in 1757 on a hill under the castle. According to the register of the Papal tithe in 1332 there was already a parsonage, thus also a church, in this place. This is also



Farm "buildings" cut into rock

proved by the stones built into the corner bastion of the castle, which were originally used in a church from the Roman Age. In front of the present-day church there is a stone statue of **Saint John of Nepomuk** from 1823. At 1. Pál Borics Street there is a **Roman Catholic parsonage** built in 1774 in late Baroque style. Today it is a protected monument and it houses a library and an **exhibition about Pál Borics** (1912-1969), a sculptor born in Sirok. He was called "child of the stone" rightly, since he gave life to the stone, and his statues are timeless works of Hungarian art. In the library you can see some of his works, which truly show the everyday life of the people living in the Palóc Land.

The village still has several nice memories of its traditional architecture. Traditional houses were almost exclusively built from stone. Their facades are nicely articulated by string courses, framed and ornate plastered. The country house museum is also placed in a traditional house with long, narrow covered terrace. The building is a protected monument. The exhibition shows the traditions of local architecture and folk art, its furniture comes from donations of local people from their private collections. The house, built in scattered development method and with a double-pitched roof at 38. Széchenyi Street is also a pro-



The country house museum