

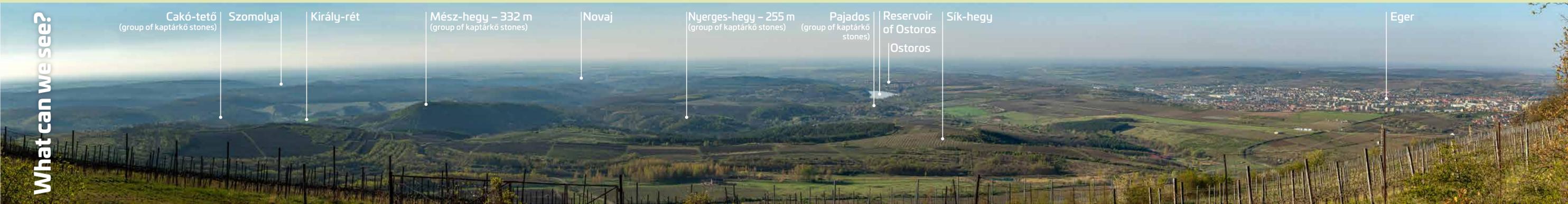
## NATURE AND LANDSCAPE STUDY TRAIL ON NAGY-EGED HILL

# Landscape cultivation and viticulture



What can we see?

Cakó-tető (group of kaptárkő stones) Szomolya Király-rét Mész-hegy – 332 m (group of kaptárkő stones) Novaj Nyerges-hegy – 255 m (group of kaptárkő stones) Pajados (group of kaptárkő stones) Reservoir of Ostoros Ostoros Sík-hegy Eger



The highest grape growing area in Hungary plays a strategic role not only in the history of Eger, but also in the history of the Hungarian viticulture and viniculture. This hill is regarded the best wine-growing area of our country by local winemakers: the hillside is absolutely ideal for this kind of activity, and the angle of the sunshine almost approaches 90°. The limestone in the soil reflects the sunshine, therefore the air layer close to ground can be several degrees warmer. This feature contributes also to the acid structure and the relatively long lifespan of the wines, so the characteristics of the wines cultivated here differs a lot from wines of other wine regions, that are mainly cultivated on rhyolite.

The hillside ahead of us – the Low – Bükk – is one of the most spectacular areas of our country. This interim territory, situated between the foot of the southern side of the Bükk mountains and the saline rangelands of the Alföld, is easy to be overlooked, though the villages, hidden in the valleys of the small streams running down from the Bükk, and the hillsides, covered with forests, stubbles and orchards, hide many natural and cultural values, rarities.

The basic stone of the Low-Bükk is textured of agglomerated volcanic tuff extending on 3500 squaremeter, and is also the biggest area

of Middle Europe covered in rhyolite and rhyodacite. Unique architectural methods have been developed in the Low – Bükk creating a specific „stone-world” by entirely utilizing the characteristics of the volcanic tuff. The Low – Bükk is the land of wine cellars scooped in tuff, cave dwellings, stone shelters, stone bridges arching over streams and ditches, stone walled houses with fences, cemeteries full of carved gravestones, statues and the misterious hivestones, and owing to its extraordinary natural character this area has been awarded to be a Hungaricum in the category of natural resources.



The documents of the medieval times have provided us with relatively small and sometimes not satisfying amount of information about the wine region of Eger, nevertheless it is sure, that in the era of Saint Stephen the settled Val-lons – from the present Belgium, the surroundings of Liège – recognized the excellent quality of the natural conditions of these hills and started to benefit their oenological knowledge, skills, experience and practice. Among the written records currently known today a decree from the 13th century refers to their grape cultivation in this region. In fact, the first reference of the Eged hill as a vineyard in the form of ‘mons Eged’ dates back to 1434. Sufficient amount and accurate information about the wine region of Eger has been available since the Turks were evaded. It is well esteemed from the contemporary written records, that at the end of the 1690’s the hillsides were already named as today (eg. Nagy-Eged / Big-Eged/, Kis-Eged /Small-Eged/).

By the 18th century the hegemony of grapes planted on the Eged hills was obvious in this region. The success of the city’s ‘Holy Mountain’ was basically determined by two main factors. On the one hand based on the experience this area provided the best quality wines – the south sides were considered to be the finest red wine areas, and were mentioned among the most excellent regions all over the country as well. In addition to that it also was stated by old documents that in case of excellent weather conditions Kadarka grape got even Noble Rot until harvest. On the other hand the quantity of the grapes grown here has always been a considerable factor.



Usually, as every upswing is followed by a downturn, the same happened to the whole wine region of the Eged hill. At first the customs restrictions executed by the Habsburgs hindered back the wine trade, then the quality of the soil started to deteriorate in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries owing to the erosion, as a consequence of heavy rains. The Phylloxera – shipped in from the USA and blasting the whole of Europe – brought forth the final push, appearing in the Eger region in 1886. This was the most extended devastation in the country, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> / by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – except for the Kadarka – all the grape varieties became completely extinguished from the Nagy-Eged hill.



During the 20th century the vineyards were subtracted from cultivation several times. The steep sides demanded manual workforce and special agricultural machines and this meant irreconcilable differences in the socialist economic system totally favouring mass production. By the end of the 1970’s the area became entirely uncultivated and nature humbled back this territory. It was only at the beginning of the 2000s, that the re-cultivation started again on the south and south-east sides of the hill. Nowadays grapevine has been grown on more than 40 ha. With its 450 m height – these used to be the highest terroirs in the country. Today these fields reach even 500 m height – and by this they are also the absolute winners in Hungary.

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