

# Most Beautiful Sites in Slovakia

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SLOVAKIA  
GOOD IDEA





# Slovak Republic

**Date of Formation:** 1 January 1993

**Land area:** 49,035 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 5.4 million

**Capital:** Bratislava

**National language:** Slovak

**Currency:** Euro (from 1 January 2009)

## Bordering countries:

Hungary (655 km), Poland (541 km), Czech Republic (252 km), Austria (107 km), Ukraine (98 km)

## Time zone:

Central European Time (GMT +1 hour),  
summer time (March-November: GMT + 2 hours)

## Distances:

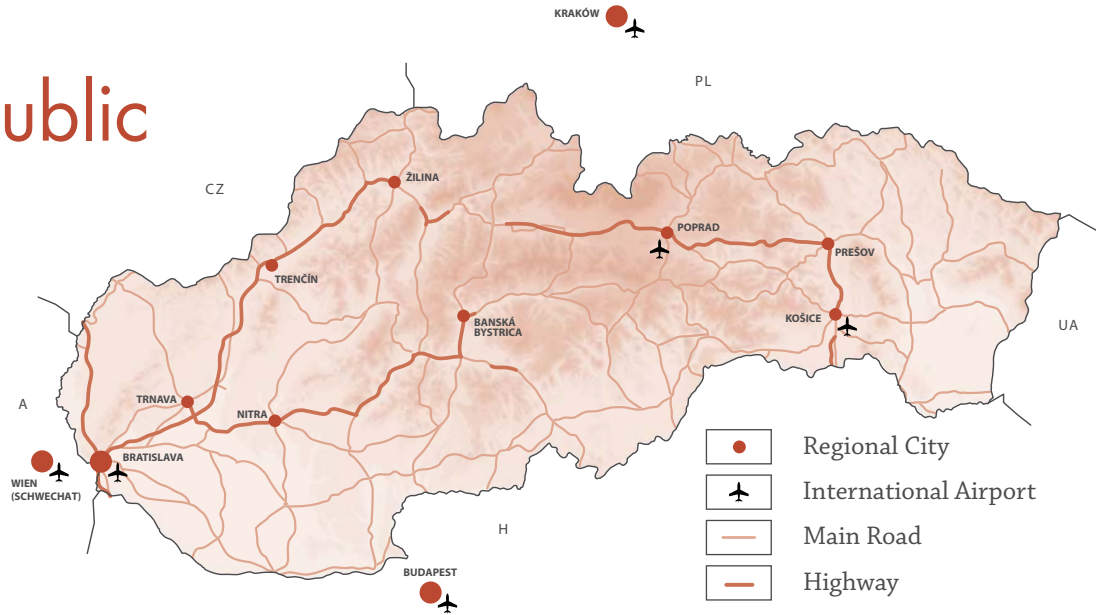
Bratislava – Wien / Schwechat-Airport:  
80 km / 60 km

- Budapest / Airport:  
200 km / 218 km
- Banská Bystrica: 210 km
- Košice: 400 km
- Poprad: 332 km
- Žilina: 202 km

Košice – Budapest-Airport: 268 km

- Poprad: 118 km

Poprad – Kraków-Airport: 156 km



## BEST of Slovak culture...

The most extensive medieval fortress complex in Central Europe – **Spiš Castle**.

The easternmost western-style cathedral in Europe – the Gothic **St. Elizabeth Cathedral** in Košice.

The tallest wooden Gothic altar in the world – in the **St. James Basilica minor of Levoča** (18.6 m).

The oldest mining university in Europe – **Banská akadémia (Mining Academy) in Banská Štiavnica** (1763).

The oldest continuously-producing enterprise – the Kremnica Mint (since 1328).

## BEST of Slovak nature...

One of the largest sinter formations in the world – the dripstone **Kvapel' rožňavských jaskyniarov** (Krásnohorská jaskyňa cave, 34 m tall, with a diameter of 12 m at the base).

The largest river island in Europe – **Žitný ostrov** (132,612 ha), which is also the largest reservoir of drinking water.

The only aragonite cave in Europe – **Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa** (in the karst area of Slovenský kras).

The only coldwater geyser in Slovakia and a rarity in Europe – **the geyser in Herľany** (jetting water to a height of 15-20 m).



# Discover Slovakia

Slovakia is truly a unique country – where else could find just about everything contained within such a relatively small territory. Natural wonders, historical monuments, a rich folk culture and folklore, unique technical attractions, and entertainment right on the busy city streets. Let yourself become enchanted by its beauties, and enjoy the unforgettable atmosphere you're bound to find here. Discover the appeal of its natural scenery and storied history, culture, and traditions. Discover Slovakia. Come and see the country's immense range of natural diversity for yourself. You'll be

amazed by the elegance of its deep valleys guarded by majestic mountain peaks, by its crystal clear mountain tributaries and streams, and by its many wild animals. Revel in the special experience of getting to know the country's picturesque historical towns and impressive world heritage monuments. Taste the unique flavours of its regional specialties and traditional national cuisine. These are just a few lines from the colourful book written by Slovakia itself through its enduring nature, history, culture, and tradition. If you want to discover Slovakia's unique attractions and spend your

free time enjoying the many exciting memorable experiences that await you, take these few lines as your own personal invitation. Good Idea Slovakia.

Let yourself be inspired and visit places that will transform your idea of a perfect holiday into reality. All you have to do is choose from the wide selection of destinations on the national tourism portal at

[www.slovakia.travel](http://www.slovakia.travel)



# Bratislava

The “Beauty on the Danube” is just one of the names given to Bratislava, the Slovak capital. The city spreads along the base of the Malé Karpaty (Small Carpathians mountain range), sitting astride the longest river in Europe, the Danube (Dunaj). Bratislava is one of the youngest capitals in the world, but its rich history has been chronicled for over two thousand years.

Visitors are drawn to the intimacy of this city, which constantly pulses with life and culture. The most attractive part of Bratislava is surely Staré mesto (Old Town), where you can wander the narrow streets and admire the impressive historical monuments. The most visited and popular sites in the city are also its most dominant monuments, namely Bratislava Castle, St. Martin’s Cathedral, the Primate’s Palace, St. Michael’s Gate, the Old Town Hall, Grassalkovich and Mirbach palaces, and the Slavín war memorial. The city centre is full of gorgeous hidden spots, countless cosy cafes, and excellent restaurants offering extraordinary culinary experiences. As a modern metropolis, Bratislava boasts a wide selection of accommodation possibilities up to European standards, even for the most demanding of guests. Throughout the year, the city serves as the venue for a diverse range of cultural, sporting, and gastronomic events that complement the unforgettable atmosphere of this picturesque city. The Coronation Ceremonies, the Bratislava Music Festival, and the Christmas Market are just some examples worthy of mention. The surroundings of the city also offer a wide array of ways to spend your free time. Enjoy a boat cruise

along the Danube to the nearby ruins of Devín Castle or visit the Danubiana Museum of Modern Art in Čunovo, try some fine local wines and culinary specialities from the Small Carpathians region, cycle along any of the leisurely bike paths along the Danube, or take a tour of the enchanting Červený Kameň (Red Stone) Castle. This is just a snapshot of the many things visitors can look forward to in this region, so rich in history.

## Tips for events

- Christmas Market
- Bratislava Marathon
- Slovak Food Festival
- Gourmet Fest Bratislava
- Cultural Summer and Castle Festival Bratislava
- Viva Musica!
- Summer Shakespeare Festival
- Festival of Historic Fencing, Music, Dance and Crafts, Devín Castle
- ÚLUV Craftsmen Days
- Bratislava Music Festival
- Vinobranie (Grape Harvest Fest)
- Bratislava Jazz Days
- New Year’s Celebration in Bratislava
- Day of Open Cellars

[www.visit.bratislava.sk](http://www.visit.bratislava.sk)





# Cultural heritage

An ideal position at the heart of Europe, a history spanning millennia, and the influence of neighbouring nations have all left Slovakia with a rich cultural heritage as Celtic settlements, Roman fortresses, ancient Slavonic cult sites, and chateaux and fortified castles of the Hungarian nobility are all to be found here. You can also visit medieval mining sites, renaissance and baroque palaces, Greek-Catholic and Orthodox wooden churches, and Jewish synagogues and cemeteries. This tour of periods and styles is complemented by the interwar functionalism and socialist realism of the developing towns, as well as contemporary works reflecting the latest architectural trends. The traces of Slovak history lead to cities and towns where the entrance gateways, massive bulwarks, watchtowers, and preserved medieval architecture bear historic reference to their distant past. The oldest free royal town, which was for centuries also the main clerical centre of the former Kingdom of Hungary, is the town of Trnava – referred to as “Little Rome” thanks to its many beautiful churches. Rare historic wealth can be discovered in the 18 heritage conservation areas that produce an unforgettable atmosphere through their unique history and beauty, including Bratislava, the towns of Trenčín, Žilina, and Nitra, and the metropolis of Central Slovakia – Banská Bystrica. The most easterly western-

style Gothic cathedral in Europe, St. Elisabeth Cathedral, which is also the largest church in Slovakia, is situated in Košice. Košice was also the European Capital of Culture in 2013. A stunning view of the town of Spišská Nová Ves and its surroundings awaits visitors from the tower of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which is the tallest church tower with the most clock faces in Slovakia.

A visit to a Slovak museum or gallery promises many rare treasures – from ancient archaeological excavation sites to Pop Art at the Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art in Medzilaborce, which is the only museum of its kind in Europe, and the works of contemporary artists. The four Slovak royal towns of Kežmarok, Stará Lubovňa, Bardejov, and Levoča embody their shared past and glory of medieval revival. Each is home to many cultural and historical monuments, and together serve an ideal destination for a family holiday surrounded by the history and atmosphere of the Middle Ages.



Bardejov



Kežmarok



Levoča



Spišská Nová Ves

# Treasures of the past

Majestic gems set impressively against stunning natural scenery concealing the secrets of an ancient past. These are the castles, chateaux, and their ruins, and together they have comprised an integral part of Slovak history for time immemorial. As many as 180 castles and 425 chateaux were once the strongholds of famous noble lords who would resist the onslaughts of enemies and witness key historic events from inside the safety of their dwellings, which still to this day maintain their atmosphere of glory, elegance, and romance. The diverse architecture and artistic styles reflecting various historical epochs guarantee visitors a memorable experience. Each has its own mythical stories and legends to tell. One of the most beautiful and best-preserved castles is just a few dozen kilometres from Bratislava – Červený Kameň (Red Stone) Castle. Thanks to its inimitable charm, it has been recently used as a shooting location for many films and fairy tales. The castle cellars are the most extensive underground cellar areas in all of Central Europe. History lovers and incurable romantics will be in seventh heaven at the fairytale-like Bojnice Castle, which hosts the International Festival of Ghosts and Spirits each year when the castle becomes a meeting place for ghouls, witches, and vampires from all over the world. Orava Castle, the most-visited Slovak



monument sitting high atop a rock face above the Orava River, was where the first Dracula film *Nosferatu* was filmed. Stunning Betliar Manor House is a representative hunting lodge on English-style grounds with an artificial cave and waterfall. It will charm visitors with its imperial interior and extensive library.

You can also soak up the unique atmosphere of the castles, chateaux, and manor houses through nightly tours and at the many regularly-organised events. Many of these enchanting places now also offer accommodation, and full service for wedding receptions as well.



Oravský hrad



Bojnice



# UNESCO heritage monuments

The uniqueness of the most precious treasures from Slovak history has ensured them a place on the UNESCO World Heritage List. By 1993, three locations in Slovakia were listed: Spiš Castle and its surroundings, Banská Štiavnica, and Vlkolínec. In 2000, they were joined by the historic Town of Bardejov in the Šariš region, and in 2008 by the wooden churches of the Carpathian arc. The unique complex of monuments from the Spiš region was boosted with the inscription of the Town of Levoča to the list in 2009. The best-preserved conservation reserve of folk architecture in Slovakia, Vlkolínec, lies with its distinctive original wooden buildings in an area surrounded by the gorgeous nature of the Liptov region. It gives visitors the chance to feel the magic of Slovakia's marvellous traditions and unrepeatable history. Banská Štiavnica, situated at the centre of an extinct volcano among the Štiavnické vrchy Mountains, is a magical and mystical place. Visitors who have had enough of the noise of the big cities are drawn to its intimate, family-like atmosphere. A truly distinctive rectangular town square, complete with the stunning Basilica minor of St. Egidius, can be found in Slovakia's most Gothic town, Bardejov. The Spiš region is home to countless unique monuments. Its most dominant historical feature is undoubtedly Spiš Castle, the largest fortress ruin complex in all of

Central Europe, together with its surroundings. The tallest wooden altar in the world is made from lime tree wood and is 18.62 m tall. It was the work of the most renowned Slovak woodcarver and sculptor, Master Pavol from Levoča, and visitors can see it in the St James Basilica minor of Levoča. Some of the most interesting and important reflections of the past in Slovakia can also be seen in its sacral architecture. In addition to the many fine examples in towns, visitors will be enchanted by the picturesque wooden churches mostly found throughout rural Eastern Slovakia. The oldest is the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Hervartov (15<sup>th</sup> century), with its stunning Gothic icons and wall murals. The preserved condition and uniqueness of these monuments, surrounded by the astounding Slovak environment, guarantees an unforgettable experience for visitors.



# Monuments of folk architecture

The lives of our ancestors, their creativity, and their art are primarily conserved in Slovakia through open-air museums – the so-called monument reserves of popular architecture. Thanks to these exceptional expositions, today you can still see the unique elements contained in traditional folk building methods and folk culture. They provide a glimpse into what Slovak dwellings from different regions looked like in the past. These architectural treasures were made using simple tools, but with unbelievable technical precision, artistic inventiveness, and sophisticated functionality. Visitors will be captivated by the exceptional wooden log structures, wooden churches built without nails, houses carved into rocks, and extraordinary underground galleries. A true rarity among the monument reserves of popular architecture is the delightful village of Vlkolínec. The one-of-a-kind village of Čičmany will charm you with its fairytale wooden houses with distinctive white decorations, as will the historic town of Banská Štiavnica with its open-air Mining Museum and many other sites of interest. The Slovak Village Museum in Martin offers some overall insight into the traditional building culture and housing produced throughout Slovakia. It is the largest outdoor ethnographic exposition of its kind. When touring Slovakia, be sure to visit the Orava Village Museum in Zuberec, the Liptov Village Museum in Pribylina, the Kysuce



Čičmany

Village Museum in Vychylovka, the Šariš Museum in Bardejov, and the Vihorlat Museum in Humenné. Just about every region in Slovakia boasts its own folk tradition treasures. Here's a tip: sites with folk architecture are ideal for an all-day excursion as a way to enrich your holiday in Slovakia.



## Tips for events

- Meeting of the melodeon players or the National Festival of Fujara Players in Čičmany
- Turčianske folklórne slávnosti (Folklore Festival), Slovak Village Museum in Martin
- Podrohácke folklórne slávnosti (Folklore Festival), Orava Village Museum in Zuberec
- St. Hubert's Sunday, Liptov Village Museum in Pribylina
- Night at the Museum at the open-air Bardejov Spa exposition





# Exceptional folklore and folk traditions

For time immemorial, the people of Slovakia have lived in harmony with nature and with respect and humility for their predecessors, customs, and traditions. This also influenced their way of life, folk culture, and folklore. Many unique traditional customs have been preserved through Slovak folk architecture, music, song and dance, traditional customs, and traditional arts and crafts.

Examples of the skills and artistic feel of the Slovak nation can best be seen at folk architecture conservation reserves and open-air expositions. Be sure to experience them during the folklore festivals and other special events held in the smaller villages of Slovak regions such as Kysuce, Orava, Liptov, Horehronie, Spiš, and Šariš. Visitors can also admire the unique log architecture at heritage conservation reserves in Osturňa, Ždiar, and Podbiel, the rock dwellings of Brhlovce, and the typical winemaking buildings of Stará Hora near Sebechleby.

Slovakia's authentic and exceptional traditional atmosphere can be soaked up at any of the colourful folklore festivals and celebrations in Hrušov, Zuberec, and Heľpa. Folklore music full of the inimitable tones of the 'Fujara,' cimbalom, and melodeon will bring everyone to their feet. The Fujara, a striking musical instrument that emits melancholic tones, had its

unique sound inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2013, the “heavenly” Music of Terchová was also added. This ancient folk music comes from Terchová and surrounding villages in northern Slovakia.

Folklore events are also a unique opportunity to witness some of the traditional arts and crafts typical of Slovaks in the past, such as wire-smithing, lacemaking, basket weaving, and pottery. The European Folk Crafts Festival is one of the best chances to watch the masters of traditional crafts at work, seeing how they present their products and demonstrate how they’re produced. The festival is held in the second week in July in the former free royal town of Kežmarok.

Slovaks attribute a special place in their cultural heritage to local forms of traditional costumes called “kroj.” These costumes still captivate audiences today with their diversity, vibrant colours, plentiful patterns, and artistic handwork. Slovakia currently has 26 folk costume regions with distinctive embroidery motifs, and around 60 different variations of these costumes. Many Slovak folk traditions and customs have survived to the present day, and each year they burst back into life all over Slovakia. For the beginning of the year, we have the characteristic Shrovetide carnival called “fašiangy,” a time of joy and feasting where you can witness a vibrant carnival procession full of inventive masks. It wouldn’t be Easter time without the traditional “šibačka” whipping ceremony, when girls and women are gently whipped and then splashed with water. In the summer there are the bonfires of St. John’s Eve, while Christmas of course remains one of the most magical and richest celebrations in terms of its traditions in Slovakia.

Slovakia’s rich folk culture represents a special and rare treasure that can only be experienced in Slovakia.





# Enchanting nature

With its incredible diversity, the nature of Slovak captivates every visitor who comes here and discovers its stunning and unique nooks and crannies. It not only boasts the smallest mountain range in the world, the most expansive karst territory in Central Europe, and primeval virgin forests, but also offers all kinds of fascinating and special experiences through visits to any of the country's nine national parks.

The oldest, Tatranský národný park (Tatra National Park), which has been classified as a UNESCO biosphere reserve since 1993, is represented by the beautiful mountain flower, the Edelweiss, and one of the rarest endemites, the Tatra chamois. The attractive countryside of plateaux, gullies, and waterfalls is protected at the Slovenský raj national park. The wild mountain countryside of the Muránska planina National Park, with its stunning range of protected species of flora and fauna, ought to be seen from the back of a special breed of horse – the Hucul. The largest karst territory in Central Europe is in Slovenský kras National Park, with over 1,000 caves and ravines, some even inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Visitors can enjoy the striking natural scenery of the smallest park, Pieniny, while rafting along the Dunajec River, which marks the Polish-Slovak border. A typical feature of the Poloniny national park in Easter Slovakia is the unique mountain ridge meadows called “poloniny,” which is where the park gets its name. Here we may also find the exceptional primeval Carpathian beech forests inscribed in the UNESCO World

Heritage List. An interesting feature to note is the “Poloniny dark sky park,” which is the darkest place in Slovakia in terms of its absence of light pollution. The therapeutic serenity and enchanting atmosphere of these romantic spots, undisturbed by the bustle of city life, still offer visitors a true escape from the worries of everyday life. They also represent a perfect getaway for nature lovers to relax and rejuvenate.



Západné Tatry







Jasovská jaskyňa

# Subterranean treasures

Few countries are blessed with such a large volume of diverse underground karst formations as Slovakia. There are over 7,000 known caves, 17 of which are open to the public. These include the most significant and most precious caves of the Slovenský kras (Slovak Karst) and Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (Dobšiná Ice Cave) inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Of particular value is the Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa (Ochtiná Aragonite Cave), the only cave of its kind in Europe. Its rare subterranean chambers are adorned with crystals of aragonite, formed in some places into the shape of fragile corals and snow-white shrubs. In Domica,

visitors can find the largest known cave of the Slovak Karst, where you can experience a trip on little boats down the River Styx. Slovak caves give visitors the chance to experience something different and to discover the treasures of the mysterious gems of the world beneath us.



Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa

## Caves open to the public

Belianska jaskyňa  
Bystrianska jaskyňa  
Demänovská jaskyňa slobody  
Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa  
Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa  
Jaskyňa Domica  
Jaskyňa Driny  
Gombasecká jaskyňa  
Harmanecká jaskyňa  
Jasovská jaskyňa  
Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa  
Važecká jaskyňa

## Restricted access caves

Bojnická hradná jaskyňa  
Jaskyňa mŕtvych netopierov  
(The Cave of Dead Bats)  
Jaskyňa Zlá diera  
Krásnohorská jaskyňa  
Malá Stanišovská jaskyňa  
Prepoštská jaskyňa – primeval museum



## Relax and have fun in the water

Despite all it has to offer, water may in fact be referred to as Slovakia's greatest treasure. The country is home to some of the most substantial natural reservoirs of fresh drinking water in the world. This is mostly thanks to the largest river island in Europe – Žitný ostrov, in the south of Slovakia. In addition to its life-giving vitality, Slovakia's water also provides visitors with opportunities for great fun and pleasant relaxation.

The beauty of the wild mountain tributaries and crystal-clear icy tarns will exalt your stay in the mountains, while bathing in the many natural lakes, dams, rivers, and pools will refresh you on

a hot summer day. Some of the attractions include a rafting trip down the Dunajec River, or a trip along the Váh or Orava rivers on wooden rafts often accompanied by a special programme and tasting of local culinary specialities. White water rafting is also a great thrill on the Belá, Dunajec, and Hron rivers. Modern thermal swimming pools and aqua parks provide an oasis of relaxation all-year-round. Bathing below the snow-capped mountain peaks offers a truly exceptional experience. There are also many opportunities for water sports, and many cultural and sporting events are hosted on bodies of water around the country, mostly in the summer.



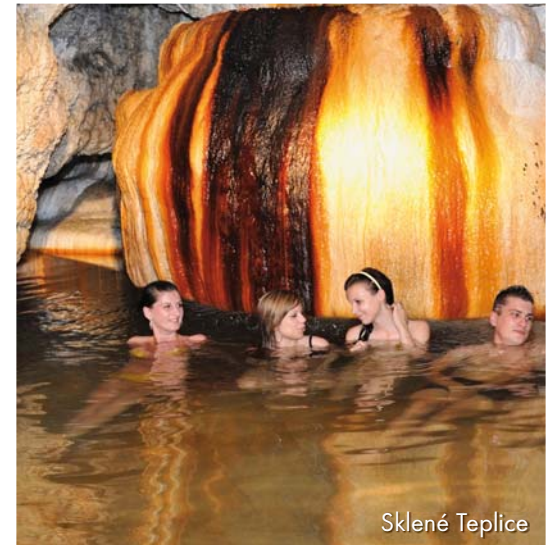
# Natural wellness

Slovakia is a country blessed with underground wealth – the healing powers of the country's nearly 1,500 mineral springs bubble up to the surface to promote many beneficial effects for the human body. Thanks to their curative power to treat diseases and revive health, they have been regarded as miraculous and remarkable for ages.

The therapeutic spas in Slovakia are among the oldest and highest quality in all of Central Europe. Possibly the best known spa resort is Piešťany, which became



Trenčianske Teplice



Sklené Teplice

renowned not only for its unique thermal mineral waters, but also for its therapeutic sulphuric mud. Rajecké Teplice surprises visitors with its exclusive old-fashioned atmosphere, while the Turčianske Teplice spa will pamper you with its unique procedure – called the “Golden Cure.” Two Slovak spas stand out from their European contemporaries: Sklené Teplice offers it spelaean steam pool, appropriately named “Parenica,” and Trenčianske Teplice is renowned for its Hammam Turkish baths. The exceptionally clean mountain air of the Vysoké Tatry (High Tatra Mountains), which are home to several climatic spas, help the treatment of respiratory diseases for adult and child patients alike. The unique atmosphere of the Slovak spa towns is complemented by their attractive surroundings and opportunities for active leisure time and cultural experiences.





# Cycling around Slovakia

Enthusiasts of active and healthy leisure can discover Slovakia's nature and its rich array of fascinating experiences from the seat of one of the most ecological means of transport – a bicycle. The many cycling paths pass through breathtaking rock massifs, canyons and ravines, magical mountain valleys, amazing caves of worldwide significance, and meandering streams. They also pass by cascading waterfalls and other irresistible natural sites that harbour the rare Slovak fauna and flora. In addition to the astonishing natural beauty surrounding them, cyclists in Slovakia will discover all kinds of unique cultural heritage along the way. Enjoy medieval towns, romantic castles, chateaux and ruins, glorious manor houses, and exceptional archaeological findings from the seat of your bicycle. One of the most attractive cycling routes is the long-distance cycling trail

“Cycling across Slovakia.” Along this route, visitors will come across many unique monuments and natural wonders. The route leads from the lowlands around the River Danube, along the vineyards of the Malé Karpaty Mountains (Small Carpathians), and through the picturesque regions of Považie and Kysuce and the mountain regions of Orava and Liptov before heading below the Nízke Tatry (Low Tatras) and Vysoké Tatry (High Tatras) mountain ranges to Poprad, or straight on to Slovenský raj National Park. The route is about 750 km long and is made up of long-distance marked cycling trails. They offer many opportunities for discovering the special spots in Slovakia from the comfort of your bike, and for detours onto regional cycling trails. Visitors who enjoy an adrenalin rush can try the freeride or downhill courses at the bike parks in the Nízke Tatry and Vysoké Tatry mountain

ranges, Bachledova dolina valley, Malinô Brdo, and Oščadnica.

## Across Slovakia (bike trails)

Dunajská cyklistická cesta  
Hornádska cyklomagistrála  
Kysucká cyklomagistrála  
Liptovská cyklomagistrála  
Malokarpatská cyklomagistrála  
Moravská cyklistická cesta  
Oravská cyklomagistrála  
Popradská cyklomagistrála  
Vážska cyklomagistrála

[www.vitajtecyklisti.sk](http://www.vitajtecyklisti.sk)

# Active leisure

The natural environment of Slovakia provides many ways for active holidaymaker to enjoy their free time through sports. This includes mountain hiking, rock climbing, adrenalin sports, and exhilarating activities in the water or in the air... anyone who loves activity, adventure, and active relaxation will be spoilt with an abundance of choices.

Visitors can discover the hidden gems of the Slovak regions on over 14,000 km of marked hiking trails, or through the same amount of marked bike trails. They can admire the impressive canyons, waterfalls, gullies, and rock faces of Slovenský raj. The tourists can also discover the unique karst formations of the Muránska planina and Slovenský kras, Jánošíkove diery in the Malá Fatra mountain range, and the virgin primeval forests in Poloniny. More-skilled climbers can conquer one of the peaks of Slovakia's highest mountain range, but the world's smallest – the Vysoké Tatry, with 25 peaks over 2,500 m. Every passionate tourist will also appreciate the exciting experiences of Slovakia's most beautiful, second-highest mountain range, the Nízke Tatry, which span almost 100 km. Hiking trips in the great hiking environment of the Chočské vrchy, Strážovské vrchy, or Súľovské vrchy highlands are also popular.

Adrenalin sport lovers will appreciate the captivating scenery of picturesque Slovakia from an air balloon, hang-glider, or skydiving. Water sports enthusiasts can test their skills on the white waters of Čunovo or in Liptovský Mikuláš. Golfers can improve their swing, accuracy, and patience

at Slovakia's several perfectly-tended golf courses, set in beautiful surroundings near towns and mountain resorts. One thing's for sure – all fans of active leisure and living a healthy lifestyle can surely satisfy their impulse for adventure while on holiday in Slovakia.





# Winter sports paradise

Winter sports lovers can enjoy ski runs designed for all ability levels – not just for advanced skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts – on the mountains of Slovakia. During winter, Slovakia's majestic, snowy mountain slopes are also suitable for winter hiking that lets visitors fully engage with the scenery of the snow-capped mountain peaks. Whether in the Vysoké or Nízke Tatry, or the Malá Fatra or Veľká Fatra mountain ranges, visitors will find large and modern tourist resorts, as well as smaller, quainter areas with family atmospheres ideal for beginners, children, and recreational skiers alike. Ski-alpinists can test their limits on the demanding winter terrain, away from the crowded pistes and surrounded by the total silence of the mountains where they can ski on virgin snow. In addition to their organised ski runs, Slovak ski resorts also have cross-country trails, snowboard areas, ski schools for the young and old, and ski equipment rental services. If skiing is not for you, be sure to try one of the many adrenalin attractions like snowtubing, kitewing, toboggan and sledge runs, or skating. Most resorts have artificial snow equipment, with the option of night skiing. The best resorts also have many restaurants, après ski bars, and fun attractions with regular interesting events. One of the most popular winter sports is dog sledding, as Slovakia provides perfect conditions for the sport. The mountain village of Turecká is the regular venue for the Krňáčkové preteky races, where visitors

can ride in a traditional wooden sleigh and turn simple sledging into an exhilarating experience.





# Interesting events

Visitors to Slovakia will be spoilt for choice by the many unique sporting, cultural, and folklore events, which regularly guarantee an unforgettable atmosphere for guests.

Each year, the Slovak capital, Bratislava, is host to the Coronation Ceremonies, which depict life in medieval times through kings and queens, nobility, troubadours, and thousands of enthusiastic onlookers. For a presentation of the top musical compositions from both home and abroad, there is no better choice than the most prestigious international festival in Slovakia – Bratislava Music Festival (BHS). When it comes to open-air summer music festivals, the Pohoda festival in Trenčín is the largest in Slovakia and is held at Trenčín's airport area. The Art Film Fest in Košice ranks among the most significant film events in Central Europe. For a display of the folk music and customs of Slovakia's individual regions, pay a visit to any one of the many folklore festivals. The largest are held in Východná, Myjava, Terchová, and Detva, where visitors are immersed in traditional folk art and folklore. A haunting atmosphere and good fun is guaranteed at the International Festival of Ghosts and Spirits at Slovakia's most picturesque castle, Bojnice. If you prefer good humour and satire from some of the top drama performers around, with cabaret and music acts from home and abroad alike, the unique Kremnické gagy festival is for you. The ÚLUV Craftsmen Days in Bratislava, presenting the traditional arts and

crafts of Slovakia, is one of the largest and most important events in the country. Top artisans demonstrate their traditional artistic skills directly in front of festivalgoers. If you are an avid theatregoer, you should visit the Zámocké hry zvolenské (Zvolen Castle Games), which take place in the unique atmosphere of the castle's historical courtyard. When it comes to the top annual sporting events in Slovakia, one of the most prominent is the International Peace Marathon, which has taken place in Košice since 1924 – making it the oldest marathon in Europe.





# Traditional tastes of Slovakia

Apart from the rich choice of cultural events, historic monuments, and wealth of sporting and social possibilities, Slovakia is also well qualified to satisfy even the most demanding culinary connoisseurs. Traditional Slovak cuisine will especially appeal to lovers of cheeses and dairy products. The most typical Slovak national dish is “bryndzové halušky so slaninou” (Bryndza gnocchi with diced bacon), which is best complemented with a carved wooden mug of thick “žinčica” (fermented sheep whey, like sour buttermilk). Many other Slovak foods are also well worth trying, like lard with onions on bread, homemade smoked and non-smoked cheeses, and much more. Visitors should try a typical bean or garlic soup served in a bowl made from a large bread roll called a “bosniak,” or the ever-popular sauerkraut soup with smoked meat, sausage, and mushrooms. To end on a sweet note, be sure to try the first-ever Slovak product protected by the EU – the Skalica Trdelník – or a Bratislava roll with rich poppy seed or walnut fillings. Fantastic gastronomic experiences await you at goose feast time, celebrated most vibrantly in the village of Slovenský Grob. Enjoy tasty Slovak specialities in the typical atmosphere of a wooden “koliba” or “salaš,” the ideal place to combine your culinary experience with enchanting surroundings. Quality food is not only served up in these traditional environments, which surely offer excellent regional specialties, but also in Slovakia’s modern first class restaurants. A culinary feast is best topped off with a fine Slovak wine from any of the Slovak wine-producing regions – from the Tokaj region in Eastern

Slovakia to the Small Carpathian winemaking region in the west.

## Gastronomic tips

- Slovak Food Festival Bratislava
- Grilliada Banská Bystrica
- Gourment Fest Bratislava
- Gourment Fest Košice
- Trdlofest Skalica
- World championship of cooking and eating Bryndza halušky in Turecká and Terchová

## Wine routes

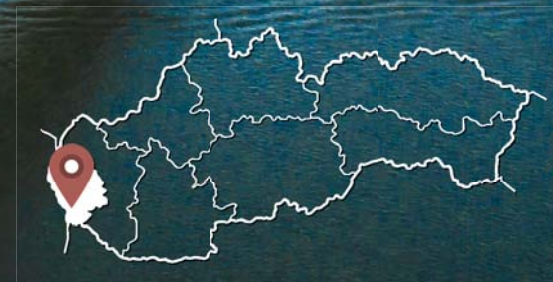
Malokarpatská vínna cesta  
Nitrianska kráľovská vínna cesta  
Tokajská vínna cesta  
Hontianska vínna cesta  
Požitavská vínna cesta  
Vínna cesta Záhorie





# BRATISLAVA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Bratislava and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: Bratislava, City full of History

The capital of Slovakia attracts visitors with its rich history and landscape, as well as its modern buildings. Visitors can't miss **Bratislava Castle**, with its own Historical Museum and surprisingly quaint gardens overlooking the city. Stroll down the picturesque streets of the district under the Castle towards the **Old Town**, featuring the remarkable **St. Martin's Cathedral**. This Gothic Cathedral witnessed the coronation of 19 Austro-Hungarian kings and queens, including Maria Theresa, whose importance was felt throughout Europe. The **Main Square (Hlavné námestie)**, extremely rich in historical and cultural monuments, draws visitors in with its charming atmosphere. Here, you can also find several palaces, the **Bratislava City Museum**, the **Old Town Hall (Stará radnica)**, and Roland's Fountain, all serving to enrich the atmosphere. Visit the Primate's Palace, with precious English tapestries from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and beautiful displays in its Art Gallery. We must mention the nearby



**Blue Church (Modrý kostolík)**, an Art Nouveau gem with blue plaster and roof. For sightseeing in Bratislava, you can also hop on the small **historical train** and explore the entire city, beginning from the Castle and ending in the streets of the Old Town. This train runs throughout the year. On the right bank of the Danube, relax in the oldest public park in Central Europe called **Sad Janka Kráľa**, which was founded by Maria Theresa. At the end of the park, you will see the suspension **Bridge of Slovak National Uprising (Most SNP)**, whose UFO café offers amazing views of the city's surroundings. Enjoy a trip down the **Danube (Dunaj)** on a sightseeing boat. You can choose from among several different routes, like a cruise around Bratislava, one up to **Devín**, or a cruise on the other side to **Gabčíkovo**.

## Tip 2: From Gothic to Štúr

In the urban conservation area of **Svätý Jur**, check out the Gothic church dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Familiarise yourself with the history of the region's viticulture and oenology in the **Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok**, with the largest collection of unique wine presses. In the cellars of the Renaissance chateau, with its own English park, there is a permanent exhibition – the **National Wine Salon**, which offers visitors a chance to enjoy a wine-tasting. For hiking and skiing in winter, head out to **Pezinská Baba**. Besides its wine, **Modra** is also famous for the Museum of Ľudovít Štúr and the Museum of Slovak Ceramic Plastic Art. Then, climb up to **Veľká Homoľa**, a tourist observation point on top of a 709.2-metre-high peak in the **Little Carpathians (Malé Karpaty)**. The most beautiful castle in the Little Carpathians – **Červený Kameň** – features a museum on the housing culture of the

aristocracy and bourgeoisie classes and historical weapons. Apart from the uniquely preserved defence system belonging to the former Renaissance fortress, you can also see the system of extensive underground cellars, which is the largest in Central Europe.



## Tip 3: Fall in Love with Záhorie

Check out the English park in **Malacky**, as well as **Pálffy's mansion**, which features a renovated version of Pálffy's original room decorated with furniture from his lifetime. Then continue to the Franciscan church and Monastery with the Chapel of the Holy Stairs. Here, you can also see the crypts belonging to the Pálffy family and several Franciscan friars. Another interesting site is **Mariánka** – the oldest **Marian pilgrimage** site in the former Kingdom of Hungary. For a refreshing time, plunge into the Borovica organic pool at the **Kamenný Mlyn** swimming pool. If you feel like exploring some history, set out on a trip to **Pajštún** – the ruins of a medieval defensive castle above the village of **Borinka**, or to the **Plavecký hrad**, whose ruins mark the former medieval defensive castle at the western foothills of the Little Carpathians. Last, but not least, don't miss **Veľké Leváre** with the **Habánsky Dvor**, a Folk Architectural Reserve and **Museum dedicated to the Habaner Craft**.



# TRNAVA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Trnava and its Surroundings

## Tip 1:

### A Sweet Temptation Reached by Water

The Trnava region is connected to the South Moravian region by a shared attraction – a unique waterway called the **Baťa Canal**. It can be accessed from **Skalica**. It was built in the 1930s for irrigation purposes. Currently, it's used for tourism and lets visitors combine water sports, cycling and active recreation. On the route between Skalica and Sodoměřice, you can also see the **exceptional Výklopník technical monument and Observatory tower**. In **Skalica**, you can also see the **13 Skalica sights** during a guided tour that will help you get to know the city. Taste the typical **Skalický trdelník** (a unique kind of sweet pastry). Liven up your stay by taking a **cycling trip from Skalica to Zlatnícka dolina** (7 km), which is crossed by several biking paths. If you are a hiking fan, take a trip along an educational trail called **Smolenický kras**. A pleasant walk will take you through the **Hlboča** karst valley, through the Vlčiareň meadows to the **Driny Cave**, and from there to the **Jahodník** area. The **Driny Cave** is the only publicly-accessible cave in western Slovakia. The guided tour is 450 metres long, with an ascent of 10 metres where you'll have to climb 151 steps. The air temperature ranges from 7.1 to 7.8 °C. In its narrow corridors and halls, you will be enchanted by the magical stalagmite formations and sinter curtains with serrated facings.

## Tip 2: Little Rome and Worldwide Wines

In Trnava, or **Tirnavia – the region of world wines**

– taste the drink of kings. Another highlight is a visit to any of the hidden vaulted cellars and top local wineries. Trnava is also called **Slovakia's "Little Rome"**. There are **eight churches** here and **two synagogues**. Among the most valuable religious monuments is the first early Baroque church in Slovakia – the **Cathedral of St. John the Baptist**. The oldest church in Trnava is the originally Romanesque **Church of St. Nicholas**. Take a non-traditional journey **in the footsteps of mead**, which is considered a Slavonic drink. Our ancestors considered it to be an exceptional and festive drink, and drank it only on important occasions. Then, head to **Dolná Krupa**, where you can **taste up to 8 kinds** of this drink. In the mansion there, **Beethoven** is said to have composed his beautiful **Moonlight Sonata**.



## Tip 3: In the Region of Water

The **water mill in Tomášikovo** is a unique building dating from 1895. It's located in a beautiful countryside on the banks of the **Little Danube (Malý Dunaj)**. It has kept its original shape, without any alterations to its structure and with still-operative milling machinery. In **Jahodná**, you can rent a boat and enjoy **rafting**

**along the Little Danube**. There's entertainment for the whole family at the thermal pools in **Veľký Meder – Thermal Corvinus**, which is located 35 km from Tomášikovo. There are 9 pools here, with water temperatures ranging from 25 to 37 °C. The thermal water is suitable for treating musculoskeletal diseases. In the complex, you will also find the **Tarzánia rope park**, which offers fun for the whole family, including young "Tarzans."

## Tip 4:

### The Charm of a World-famous Spa

Relax in the world-famous **spa town of Piešťany**, located in the northeast part of the Trnava region. The spa is known for its unique sulphur thermal water springs and inimitable healing mud that's mainly used for the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. You can take a walk along the longest indoor **Colonnade Bridge** (156 meters), marked by the world-renowned symbol of the spa – **Barlolámač** (the Crutchbreaker). Visit the **Balneological Museum**, the only of its kind in Slovakia, where you can learn about the history of balneology. Also, taking trips to the surroundings, with many bike trails and in-line skating around the **Sĺňava water reservoir**, is a pleasant way to spend your time.





# TRENČÍN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Trenčín and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: Adventures in Kopanice

In **Myjavské Kopanice**, you can visit the **village of Košariská** – the **birthplace of the famous General Milan Rastislav Štefánik** – which commemorates his birth with a memorial room. Hop on your bike and set out along the red route of the **Kopaničiarska cyklomagistrála** (cycling path) through Brezová pod Bradlom to Bukovec. The town of **Myjava** can be seen in its entirety from the 60-metre tall **Myjavská Tower**, the site of the local evangelical church. Afterwards, visit the **Brestovská distillery**, where you may familiarise yourself with the **process of fruit distillation** and try some of the local fruit spirits. The distillery is part of the so-called **Kopaničiarska fruit-distillate path**, where you can take a break at any of the other 10 stops. For a refreshing time, head to the **Stará Myjava dam** in the recreation area of the same name. Be sure to check out the Rope Centre.

## Tip 2: Legends by Bike

Do you know the legend of the “Bloody Countess”? Explore **Čachtice Castle** in combination with tasting the Blood of Bátorýčka – the red wine created by local producers. For information about the history and personalities of the town, visit the renaissance **Draškovičovský Manor House** in Čachtice. On your way to Trenčín, don't miss **Beckov Castle**. It rises on a steep, 60-metre high cliff above the village of Beckov. This castle was the home of kings, powerful nobles and knights, and also resisted the Tatars and Turks. About 20 km from Beckov, the last site in this triangle

of castles is found in the **ruins of Tematín Castle**. Soaring to a height of nearly 600 metres above sea level, it is a remarkable dominating feature of the Central Považie region. After concluding the historical part of your journey, experience a little bit of adrenaline in the **Kálnica Bikepark**. It offers 18 tracks of different difficulty levels, and also a bike school and a bike kindergarten for kids. Rent a bike and take a **cycling trip to Beckov, Tematín and Čachtice**.

## Tip 3: At the Castle of the Lord of the Váh and Tatras

In **Trenčianske Teplice Spa**, relax at the **Zelená žaba** (Green Frog) **swimming pool**. In addition to the swimming, sports activities and entertainment here, unwind in its sauna world with 4 saunas located in the forest – a unique feature in Central Europe. After you are well-rested, catch a **night tour of the Trenčín Castle** (please check the dates on the castle website). Take a peek into the **Well of Love**, which, according to the legend, was dug by Omar, who wanted to free his love Fatima by building the well. Then climb up to **Matthew's Tower**. On the 3rd



floor, you can find a working room of the Lord of the Váh and Tatras – Matúš Čák Trenčiansky. Allegedly, he owned up to 50 castles. From the terrace of the **historic hotel Elizabeth**, you'll see the **Roman inscription** in Latin on the castle rock. It is the northernmost preserved Roman monument in Central Europe north of the Danube.

## Tip 4:

### Romance at the Castle and the Zoo

The **oldest Slovak zoological garden** is located in **Bojnice**. It celebrated its 60-year anniversary and is one of the most precious zoos in Slovakia, with almost three thousand animals. You just cannot miss **Bojnice Castle**. Experience its remarkable



atmosphere during one of its many unique events and programmes (please see its website for further information). During tours, you will pass the **Golden Hall** with its golden ceiling, as well as the **Oriental** and the **Blue Salon** and **Marble** and **Crest Halls**. Familiarise yourself with the history of mining in the region by going down the shaft of the **Cígel brown coal mine** in the open-air mining museum **Hornonitriansky banský skanzen**.





# ŽILINA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Žilina and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: The Much-Admired Wooden Houses and Bethlehem

The picturesque mountain village of **Čičmany** is famous for its wooden houses and their white ornamental exterior decorations. In nearby **Rajecká Lesná**, you can admire a unique **wooden movable Bethlehem**, one of the largest woodcarvings of its kind in the world. If you are looking for an oasis



of relaxation, visit the **Rajecké Teplice Spa**. Its thermal mineral springs, with typical temperatures of 38 °C, provide therapeutic treatment but also a pleasant, restful and reenergizing environment. Throughout the whole year, two indoor and three outdoor pools are available to visitors, as well as the sauna world and a double Turkish bath. A unique feature of the atmosphere of Žilina comes from the square floor plan of the historical square, as well as its many buildings with arcades. Take a look at the city and its surroundings from **Burian's Tower** or

the Tower of the **Budatín Castle**. Using your mobile phone, you can learn more about the historical buildings of the city thanks to the 81 anticorrosive markers with QR codes posted throughout the city.

## Tip 2: In the Footsteps of the Slovak Bandit

**Terchová** – the birthplace of Juraj Jánošík (the Slovak Robin Hood) – is a gateway to the most beautiful parts of the **Malá Fatra National Park**. The most attractive part contains the **Jánošíkove diery** (Jánošík's Holes), a system of canyons with ladders and benches that's even suitable for families with children. In the winter, the waterfalls form wonderful ice cascades. The surrounding area has the densest network of cycling paths in Slovakia (over 600 km). A tip for skiers: check out the **Vrátna Free Time Zone**. As they walk through the historical halls of the **Orava Castle**, the most-visited castle in Slovakia, visitors will become acquainted with the numerous fairy tales and movies filmed at the castle. For example, the first film about Dracula – Nosferatu – was shot here 1922, and Dragonheart II. was filmed more recently at the castle. Another view of this dominant feature of Orava can be enjoyed on the wooden raft. Skiers will enjoy the **Ski Park Kubínska hoľa** and the **Ski Resort Roháče-Spálená**. Hiking fans should definitely pay a visit to the Orava portion of the Tatra National Park, called **Roháče**. Families with kids will surely enjoy a stroll to the former **Ľatliaková chata** (hut), where one can continue along to the **Roháčske plesá** (tarns) and admire the **Roháčsky vodopád** (waterfall). The **Museum of the Orava Village in Brestová**, which seems like a real village from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is among the most beautiful museums of folk architecture in all of Europe.

## Tip 3: Beauty and Ice Under the Ground

In the summer, enjoy hiking and the many biking trails and paths, as well as relaxation and fun at the **Liptovská Mara Dam**. The **Liptov Village Museum** documents the folk architecture of Liptov and reflects the most important cultural monuments of eleven represented settlements. In **Demänovská dolina** (valley), be sure to visit the magnificent caves. The **Demänovská jaskyňa slobody** (Cave of Freedom) is a karst cave. It is the most visited cave in Slovakia. You will see amazing stalactites of various colours, the mysterious underground flows of the Demänovka stream, as well as enchanting lakes. Just 2 kilometres away, you will find one of the first discovered caves in the world – the **Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa** (ice cave). Admire its beautiful icefalls, ice stalagmites



and column fillings. Also, be sure to take a trip to **Vrbické pleso** (tarn), the biggest natural lake in Nízke Tatry (Low Tatras). It has glacial origins and its formation is similar to the tarns of Vysoké Tatry (High Tatras).



# PREŠOV AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Prešov and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: The Tatras, Kingdom of Silence

The **High Tatras (Vysoké Tatry)** await you with a wide range of possibilities for adventure. Rent a boat at **Štrbské pleso** from a boathouse with more than 130 years of history. During your boat trip, you'll enjoy wonderful views of Solisko that will surely inspire you



to continue on to other fantastic trips around the area, such as riding the **cable car** out to **Skalnaté pleso**. Once you're there, observe the skies with the astronomical telescope at the local Observatory. The red cable car will take you up to peak **Lomnický štít**, the second highest peak of the Tatras – the Kingdom of Silence. In addition to some exceptional views, spending a night at this peak (in a comfortable apartment) is another memorable experience. Take a walk from Štrbské pleso to the more-than 80 Tatra

mountain tarns – like **Jamské pleso**, which you can reach in 2 hours. On your way to **Popradské pleso**, which takes about half an hour, you will learn about the origin of the Tatras and about the trees, animals, and plants that call the mountains home. More than 600 km of hiking trails provide an interesting experience for all ages and experience levels. Another way to explore the Tatras and the Prešov region is from the seat of a bike. Choose from more than 300 km of marked cycling paths designed for all – families with children, fans of mountain and road cycling, athletes, and beginners alike.

## Tip 2: Treasures of history in Spiš and Šariš

In these regions you will discover precious history with an honourable place on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The gothic road will lead you into the heart of Spiš – **from the historical square in Poprad – Spišská Sobota**, via **Levoča**, with **the highest wooden altar** in the world, into the main attraction of the region



– **Spišský hrad** (castle) with **Spišská Kapitula** and the outstanding **church** in Žehra. In nearby **Kežmarok**, the **articular church** made without a single nail will attract your interest. The Slovak gothic pearl in the Šariš region – **Bardejov** – is amazing too. The square – with historical town hall and Basilica of St. Giles, city walls with bastions, and Jewish suburb – is also inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List due to its uniqueness. In the nearby famous spa you can recharge your energy and relax – its famous visitors included Empress Sisi. **The open air museum** in **Bardejov Spa** is a very interesting place with two wooden churches from the villages of Zboj and Mikulášová. Continue to a **castle with open air museum** at **Stará Ľubovňa**.

## Tip 3: At proud Goral's

**Červený Kláštor** is connected with many legends about the flying monk Cyprián who was a famous herbalist. A visit to the museum will show you how monks used to live here in the past. You will find refreshments at **Spa Smerdžonka**. The beautiful nature of **Pieniny National Park** is the ideal place for healing the body and nourishing the soul. In Pieniny you can cruise on **wooden rafts** along the **Dunajec** border river and enjoy the amazing national park scenery. The distinctive goral village of **Ždiar** lies in the north of Slovakia between Belianske Tatry and Spišská Magura, famous for its folk traditions and architecture. The wooden houses have blue jointing, while the window frames and wooden beams are ornamentally decorated. Until quite recently people in Ždiar used to wear traditional goral clothing on Sundays and during the feast season.



# KOŠICE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Košice and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: Historical Košice

Vibrant **Main Street**, with its charming side streets, is a great way to get acquainted with Košice. You just cannot miss the **St. Elisabeth Cathedral**, the biggest gothic church in Europe with a capacity of up to five thousand worshippers. At the same time, it is the easternmost gothic cathedral constructed in the western style in all of Europe. **Urban Tower**, the second oldest monument in Košice, dates back to the



first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was formerly used as the Cathedral's bell tower. The **Mikluš Prison**, with its famous torture chamber, is situated on the premises of two patrician houses in the vicinity of the Main Street. It also features the **Executioner's Flat**. An oriental structure, constructed as a replica of the Turkish house **Rodosto**, is the dominant feature of its courtyard. From 1720-1735, the last leader of anti-

Habsburg uprising – František II. Rákóczi – lived and died here in exile. You should also draw your attention to **Jakab's Palace**, a neo-gothic building at the corner of Mlynská and Štefánikova streets. It's the house of the master builder Jakab, who also designed the city's **State Theatre**. Each hour, between the St. Elisabeth Cathedral and the State Theatre, you can listen to the sounds of a **Glockenspiel** and its 22 bells. During the summer, the music is also accompanied by the **Singing Fountain**.

## Tip 2: A Trip to Paradise and Some Sightseeing

The **Spiš Region** is a centre of important monuments and beautiful surroundings. There are many historical and cultural sights inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List and also the most beautiful Slovak Paradise National Park (Slovenský raj) in this region. **Spišský hrad (Spiš Castle)** belongs among the most remarkable monuments in Europe. The **Church of Holy Spirit** in nearby Žehra, the **Manor House in Markušovce**, the **Dardanelly Summer Palace** and the Roman-Catholic **Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Spišská Nová Ves** with the biggest church tower (87 m) in Slovakia, are all can't-miss sights. Slovenský raj features a dense web of hiking and bike paths, lasting more than 300 km. It also offers 33 km of educational trails and 110 km of cycling paths. It can be described as an indented karstic territory with a lot of gorges, ravines, narrow valleys and canyons such as the **Prielom Hornádu Suchá Belá, Kysel', Tomášovský výhľad** (view), **Kláštorko, Palcmanská Maša, Hrabušice, Čingov, Dedinky, Mlyny, Stratená** and so on. Its peculiar hiking atmosphere is accented by various built-in ladders, small bridges, catwalks, risers and

chains, which are absolutely necessary for crossing some of the gorges.

## Tip 3: On the Way to UNESCO Monuments and the Drink of Kings

Many of the unique sights inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List are located in the region of **Dolný Zemplín**. The first of note is the charming **Greek-Catholic wooden church** in **Ruská Bystrá** with its glorious baroque iconostasis. During your nature walks, you will come across **Vihorlat** and **Morské Oko** – a mountain lake of volcanic origin. In this part of Slovakia, you definitely should not miss a truly exceptional area – the **primeval beech forests** inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Here, beeches as tall as 40 metres usually live up to 150-200 years. Afterwards, go and have some fun and relax in **Thermalpark Širava** at Zemplínska širava or **Vinianske jazero** (lake). Your evening program will be catered by the **viniculture region of Tokaj**. It's futile to resist taking part in Tokaj wine tastings in the local wine cellars, as well as sampling the local and regional specialties in the towns of Malá Tŕňa, Veľká Tŕňa and Viničky. Also be sure to visit the barrel-shaped observatory tower in the vineyard.





# BANSKÁ BYSTRICA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Banská Bystrica and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: The History and Surroundings of the Copper City

**Banská Bystrica** is the centre of the significant mining tradition and lasting monuments to mining in the former Central Slovak mining region. It became famous thanks to the mining of copper, which is why it's also referred to as the Copper City. In the centre of this city, you can find **Slovak National Uprising Square (Námestie SNP)**, surrounded by old bourgeois houses. The City Hall



has been located in the same building for almost a quarter of a millennium. The history of the Stone Fountain in the middle of the square dates back to the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when a wooden duct was first built there. The Stone Fountain was replaced in 1895 by a modified water jet, which was gradually surrounded by rocks. Banská Bystrica also boasts a **Barbican**, which served as the town's main fortification and provides the most visible landmark

of the area – Petermann's Bell Tower. Citizens of Banská Bystrica will also gladly show you the local **"Leaning Tower"**, deviating from its axis by up to 68 cm. In the **Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary**, you can admire the altar designed by Master Paul of Levoča in the Chapel of St. Barbara. The contemporary cityscape is completed by the **SNP Memorial Complex** and its external and interior exhibitions. Set out on foot or by bike for a trip along the educational trail to the village **Špania Dolina**, where the first mines were opened in 1006. In addition to the sights, you can admire the skilful hands of the local women as they make bobbin lace.

## Tip 2: The Place where Coins are Minted

Have a pleasant break at the Minor Basilica in the town of **Staré Hory**, where mining experts from Germany were invited by Hungarian King Belo IV in response to the discovery of silver. During the hot summer months, we recommend that you stop at the nearby **Harmanecká jaskyňa** (cave), in the **Harmanecká tisina** Nature Reserve. The oldest species of *Taxus baccata* (or European yew) are an incredible 600 years old. In Central Slovakia, you can access the geographical centre of Europe. This point can be found marked on the rock next to the ancient Church of St. John the Baptist, in the town of **Kremnické Bane**. In **Kremnica** – the Golden City – there is the oldest continuously-functioning minting operation in the world, where coins have been minted for seven hundred years already. In the past, it was one of the wealthiest cities in the Kingdom of Hungary. The city castle, with the Gothic **Church of St. Catherine** from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is a dominant feature of this city. The oldest building is the Romanesque crypt dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The castle also has other parts of note,

including the Clock Tower, remains of the former Town Hall, three bastions, and the northern Gate Tower. In the **Coin and Medal Museum**, visitors can try coin minting themselves.

## Tip 3: The Silver City

We can't forget to mention another jewel, **Banská Štiavnica** – the Silver City. In its historical centre, which is a conservation zone, you can see up to 360 artistic and historical monuments. In 1993, the city and its surroundings were included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The **Calvary** of Banská Štiavnica is among the most important Baroque monuments in Slovakia. As a unique technical feature, we have to mention the so-called **Štiavnické tajchy** – the special water reservoirs constructed for the mining and engineering companies of the city, which today serve as recreational areas. This UNESCO site also includes the beautiful **Manor House of St. Anton**, with artistic and historical collections and a hunting exposition. If you're feeling adventurous, take a little more challenging tour of **Pustý hrad** (Deserted Castle), which is one of the largest fortress complexes in Central Europe.







# NITRA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Tips for trips



# Nitra and its Surroundings

## Tip 1: The Hidden Treasures of Nitra

The **Nitra Castle** soars on top of the castle hill, as if it was placed in the middle of the city itself. The dominant elements of the complex are the **Cathedral**, the **Basilica of St. Emerám**, the **Bishop's Palace** and the **massive fortifications**. An interesting part of the Cathedral is its baroque decoration – one of the most beautiful designs from this period in Slovakia. The fortification walls contain the **casemate**, the corridor and a smaller room that originally provided for the protection of the castle's entrance gate and the bridge. The corridor was dug by imperial troops during the siege of the castle in 1664. The **Upper Town** grew in the shadow of the castle. On **Pribina Square (Pribinovo námestie)**, you can see the bronze statue of the prince Pribina, but also the **Small and the Large Seminar with the Diocese Library** and the **Franciscan church of St. Peter and Paul with a Monastery** and the **District House (Župný dom)**. In nearby **Drážovce** (6 km), you will find the unique Romanesque **Church of St. Michael the Archangel**. The **Apponnyi castle in Oponice** (20 km) features an outstanding unique historical library and an English park. The library contains 9,000 titles and 12,000 volumes in ten languages. The most valuable piece in the collection is a work of Socrates dating from 1508.

## Tip 2: Hiking and Exploring

Set out for some nice hikes to the ruins of the **Gýmeš Castle** near Jelenec or the gothic **Hrušov Castle**

near Topoľčianky. If you are directly in **Topoľčianky**, we recommend that you visit the monumental classicist **manor house** with a large English park. The original furniture remains in the castle, as it was left by Archduke Joseph August Habsburg and his wife Archduchess Augusta, a granddaughter of Emperor Franz Joseph I., after their departure in 1918. The **National Stud Farm in Topoľčianky**, breeding 550 horses of four types of breeds, is a European rarity. An interesting experience for visitors is a tour of the **Winery**, with a storied history and offering wine-tastings of the famous Topoľčianky wines. Only 6 km from Topoľčianky, you will find the only **Bison Park** in Slovakia containing European bison.



## Tip 3: Into Nature, with a Little History

Cyclists may try the 55-km-long **Nitra bikeway (Ponitrianska cyklomagistrála)**. It starts in the town of Vinodol, passes through the Žitavská downs and ends in Topoľčianky. Stop in **Beladice** to admire the **baroque-classical mansion** and the adjacent park with Beladice linden, around 300 years old, as well as Gingko Biloba, Amur cork tree and other trees. For a more varied



offering of rare plants and trees, visit the **Mlyňany Arboretum**. Here, you will find more than 2,300 plants from all over the world in the richest and most valuable collection of exotic, mainly evergreen wood species in Slovakia. This Arboretum is a unique park also on a global scale, as such a collection does not exist anywhere else in similar climate conditions.

## Tip 4: Hurray for Water, All Year Round

The Nitra region is also a region of water. The Thermal Pool **Vadas** in **Štúrovo** is the largest thermal pool in Slovakia. In the Lagoon swimming pool, you can also enjoy an artificial wave pool. **Podhájska**, in the district of **Nové Zámky**, is a sought-after place, with pools filled with heavily mineralized saltwater rich in iodine. In **Patince**, in the Komárno district, you can swim all-year-round as its thermal spring reaches temperatures of 27 °C. Close to **Levice**, you can visit the thermal **Margita-Ilona** swimming pool, which is one of the oldest in Slovakia. For family fun, head to the **Thermal Park Nitrava** in **Poľný Kesov**, near Nitra.

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