



Slovakia

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Best Places to Eat

- » Bratislavský Meštiansky Pivovar (p868)
- » Kolkovna (p868)
- » Salaš Krajinka (p878)
- » Reštaurácia Bašta (p876)

Best Places to Stay

- » Ginger Monkey Hostel (p887)
- » Grand Hotel Kempinski (p885)
- » Apartments Bratislava (p865)
- » Hostel Blues (p865)

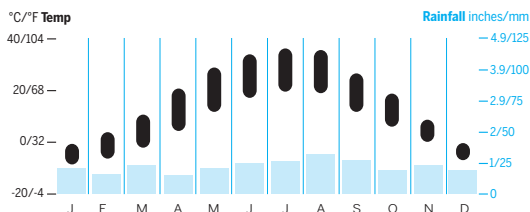
Why Go?

Ancient castle ruins, traditional villages and mountainous national parks: visiting Slovakia is about experiencing a place where age-old folkways and nature still hold sway. In this compact country you can hike beside a waterfall-filled gorge one day and see nailless wooden churches in a village museum the next. The small capital, Bratislava, may not have the superlative sights of nearby Prague or Budapest, but it's abuzz with development, each new riverfront dining and entertainment complex vying to outdo the next. The rabbit-warren Old Town centre is well worth a day or two of cafe hopping.

Just make sure you also venture east. In the countryside, fortresses tower over cities and rivers, hiking trails cover the hills and well-preserved medieval towns nestle below rocky peaks. Pull up a plate of *bryndzove halušky* (sheep's-cheese dumplings) with a glass of *slivovica* (firewater-like plum brandy) and drink a toast for us – *nazdravie!*

When To Go

Bratislava



May & late September Fewer crowds make shoulder-season travel a breeze.

July & August Festivals abound across the country, High Tatras hiking trails are all open.

January & February Peak ski season in the mountains, but many other sights are closed.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** euro (€)
- » **Language** Slovak
- » **Money** ATMs widely available in cities
- » **Visas** Not required for most visitors staying less than 90 days

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 49,035 sq km
- » **Capital** Bratislava
- » **Telephone area code** 02
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.72
Canada	C\$1	€0.71
Japan	¥100	€0.82
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.54
UK	UK£1	€1.12
USA	US\$1	€0.69

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €30-60
- » **Two-course meal** €15
- » **Museum entrance** €3
- » **Beer** €1.50
- » **City transport ticket** €0.70

Resources

- » **Kompas Maps** (www.kompas.sk)
- » **Slovak Tourism Board** (www.slovakia.travel)
- » **Slovakia Document Store** (www.panorama.sk)
- » **What's On Slovakia** (www.whatsonslovakia.com)

Connections

Though few airlines fly into Slovakia itself, Bratislava is just 60km from the well-connected Vienna International Airport. By train from Bratislava, Budapest (three hours) and Prague (five hours) are easy to reach. Travelling further east, buses become your best bet. Connect to Zakopane, Poland (two hours) from Poprad, and to Uzhgorod, Ukraine (2½ hours) through Košice.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Two nights in Bratislava is enough time to wander the Old Town streets, stop at a new river-park restaurant and see a museum or two. The following day is best spent on a castle excursion, either to Devín or Trenčín. Or, better yet, spend all three days hiking in the rocky High Tatras mountains, staying central in the Starý Smokovec resort town or in more off-beat Ždiar in the Belá Tatras.

One Week

After a day or two in the capital, venture east. Spend at least four nights in and around the Tatras so you can both hike to a mountain hut and take day trips to the must-see Spiš Castle ruins and medieval Levoča. You might also make time for a gentle raft ride in Pieniny. Then, for the last night or two, continue on to Bardejov to see a complete Renaissance town square, icon art and the neighbouring folk village and wooden churches.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Sheep's cheese, and more sheep's cheese** *Bryndza*, sharp, soft and spreadable; *oštiepok*, solid and ball-shaped; *korbačik*, 'little whips' or long, smoked strands; *žinčina*, a traditional sheep's-whey drink (like sour milk)
- » **Schnitzel by any other name** *Vyprázaný bravčový rezeň*, breaded, fried pork steak; *Černoňorský rezeň*, potato batter-coated and fried, with cheese; *gordon blu*, fried pork or chicken cutlet stuffed with ham and cheese
- » **Assorted potato pancakes** Various sautéed meats, onions and peppers are stuffed *v zemiakovej placke* (in a potato pancake), like *diabolské soté* (devil's sauté), or they're topped with *bryndza* cheese and sour cream
- » **Fruit firewater** Homemade or store-bought liquor, made from berries and pitted fruits, such as *borovička* (from juniper) and *slivovica* (from plums)