



Slovakia

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Traja Mušketieri (p381)
- ➔ Koliba Patria (p386)
- ➔ Republika Východu (p391)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel Marrol's (p380)
- ➔ Grand Hotel Kempinski (p386)
- ➔ Hotel Bankov (p391)

Why Go?

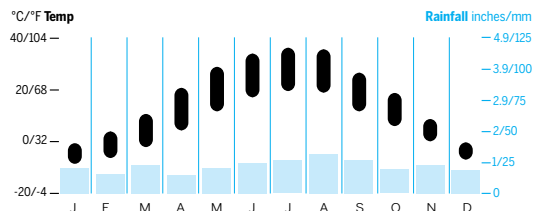
Going strong over two decades as an independent state after the breakup of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, Europe's most castellated country, is a bastion of untrammelled wildernesses, where some of the continent's densest forest coverage gives way to dramatic fortresses and craggy mountains harbouring outstanding hiking. It savours wine over beer and, in its tradition-steeped hinterland, cradles an entrancing folk culture most European nations have lost.

Slovakia's small size is possibly its biggest attraction. You can traipse woody waterfall-filled gorges one day and yodel from 2500m-plus peaks the next.

Dinky capital Bratislava is awash with quirky museums and backed by thick forests, but don't leave without heading east, where fortresses tower over tradition-rich medieval towns such as Levoča or Bardejov and hiking trails lace the hills. Down a *slivovica* (firewater-like plum brandy) and drink a toast for us – *nazdravie!*

When to Go

Bratislava



Jun & Jul Festivals abound across the country, High Tatras hiking trails are all open.

Jan & Feb Peak ski season in the mountains, but many other sights are closed.

Sep Fewer crowds but wine season means it's ripe time for alcohol-themed festivities.

Slovakia Highlights

- 1** Linger over drinks at one of myriad sidewalk or riverfront cafes in old town **Bratislava**.
- 2** Hike between mountain huts in one of Europe's smallest alpine mountain ranges, the **High Tatras** (p384).
- 3** Wander the ruins of **Spis Castle** (p388), among the biggest in Europe.
- 4** Climb creaking ladders past crashing waterfalls in the dramatic gorges of **Slovenský Raj National Park** (p389).

