



Slovakia

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Best Places to Eat

- » Bratislavský Meštiansky Pivovar, Bratislava (p1087)
- » Kolkovna, Bratislava (p1087)
- » Reštaurácia Bašta, Trenčín (p1091)

Best Places to Stay

- » Ginger Monkey Hostel, Belá Tatras (p1094)
- » Hostel Blues, Bratislava (p1087)
- » Grand Hotel Kempinski, High Tatras (p1087)
- » Penzión Tatra, High Tatras (p1093)

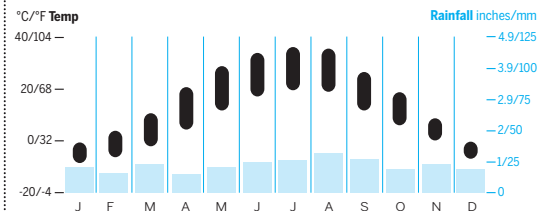
Why Go?

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 an alpine peak one day and see nail-less wooden churches in a village museum the next. The small capital of Bratislava is abuzz with development. It's not as cheap as it once was, but the rabbit-warren Old Town centre is well worth a day or two of cafe-hopping.

Just make sure you also venture east. Prices fall dramatically in the countryside, where fortresses tower over cities and well-preserved medieval towns nestle below the rocky peaks of the High Tatra mountains – great for hiking. Here there's plenty to see and eat on a shoestring. So, pull up a heaping plate of *bryndzové 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 Sep
Few crowds, temperate weather; shoulder-season travel is a breeze.

Jul & Aug
Festivals abound, High Tatras hiking trails are open; just book lodging ahead.

Jan & Feb
Peak ski season in the mountains, but many sights 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
- » **Country code** 421
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.73
Canada	C\$1	€0.73
Japan	¥100	€0.84
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.54
UK	UK£1	€1.14
USA	US\$1	€0.70

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €30–60
- » **Two-course evening meal** €15
- » **Museum entrance** €3
- » **500mL glass of beer** €1.50
- » **City transport ticket** €0.70

Resources

- » **Slovak Tourism Board** (www.slovakia.travel) Comprehensive site listing attractions and lodging.
- » **What's On Slovakia** (www.whatsonslovakia.com) Monthly event tips.
- » **Slovakia Document Store** (www.panorama.sk)

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 super easy to reach. Travelling further east, buses become your best bet. Connect to Zakopane (Poland; two hours) from Poprad, and to Uzhhorod (Ukraine; 2½ hours) through Košice.

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Three Days

Two nights in Bratislava is enough time to wander the Old Town streets, see a museum or two, and stop at a new river-park restaurant. The third day is best spent on a castle excursion, either to Devín or Trenčín. Alternatively, 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 couple of days in the capital and western Slovakia, go east. Spend at least four nights in and around the Tatras so you can hike to a mountain hut and take day trips to the must-see Spiš Castle ruins and medieval Levoča. Then, 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); *žinčica* (a traditional sheep's whey drink, like sour milk).
- » **Schnitzel by any other name** *Vyprázaný bravčový rezeň* (breaded, fried pork steak); *Černo-horský 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).