



Slovakia

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Best Places to Eat

- » Café Verne (p1009)
- » Cactus (p1021)
- » Bistro St Germain (p1009)

Best Places to Stay

- » Ginger Monkey Hostel (p1014)
- » Skaritz (p1009)
- » Relax Farma Marianka (p1018)

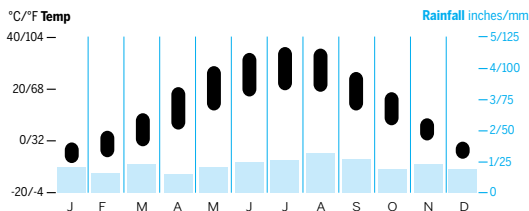
Why Go?

No, it isn't a province of the Czech Republic. Now an independent state for more than two decades since the breakup of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia out-trumps the Czechs for ancient castles and boasts nature far wilder than its western neighbours. It savours wine over beer and, in its bashful heartland amid myriad mountains and forests, cradles an entrancing folk culture most European nations have lost.

Slovakia is small: hike woodsy waterfall-filled gorges one day and yodel from peaks soaring more than 2500m the next. From dinky capital Bratislava, with its rabbit-warren Old Town and hilly, thickly forested backdrop, head east to fortresses towering over tradition-rich medieval towns and hiking trails that lace the hills. Down a *slivovica* (firewaterlike plum brandy) and drink a toast for us – *nazdravie!*

When to Go

Bratislava



Sep Fewer crowds but clement weather, wine season means it's time for alcohol-themed festivities

Jun & Jul Festivals country-wide, High Tatras hiking trails are all open

Jan & Feb Peak ski season in the mountains; 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 fewer than 90 days

Fast Facts

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

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82
Canada	C\$1	€0.77
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78

Set Your Budget

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

Resources

- » **Slovak Tourist 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 well-connected Vienna International Airport. By train from Bratislava, Budapest is three hours and Prague five hours. By bus, connect to Zakopane in Poland (two hours) from Poprad, and to Uzhhorod in Ukraine (2½ hours) through Košice.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Spend two nights in Bratislava exploring the Old Town's streets and museums, then take a castle excursion on your last day: either to Devín or Trenčín. Better yet, spend all three days hiking in the High Tatras, staying central in Starý Smokovec resort town or in more off-beat Ždiar in the Belá Tatras.

One Week

After a day or two in Bratislava, spend at least four nights around the Tatras so you have time to hike to a mountain hut as well as take day trips to Spiš Castle ruins, medieval Levoča or Slovenský Raj National Park. Or forge further east to Bardejov to see its complete Renaissance town square and nearby wooden churches.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Bountiful bryndza** Slovakia's signature mountain sheep cheese: sharp, soft and spreadable.
- » **Meat and one veg** *Vývar* (chicken/beef broth served with *slížiky*, thin pasta strips, or liver dumplings); all-hail Slovakia's favourite vegetable, the potato, best enjoyed as *lokše* (potato pancakes) complemented by duck/goose fat or sauerkraut.
- » **Dumplings** Potato-based goodies such as *halušky* (often in *bryndza* sauce topped with bacon).
- » **Fruit firewater** Homemade or store-bought liquor, made from berries and pitted fruits, such as *slivovica* (from plums)