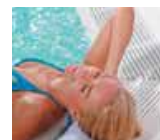




Slovakia



Slovakia, a small country in the middle of Europe, originated in 1993 by peaceful separation of former Czechoslovakia. The area of Slovakia has been settled since ancient times. Various civilizations such as the Celts, the Romans, the Slavs, the Avars and the Hungarians used to live at this area. Archeological findings and many other cultural – historical monuments prove their existence. The oldest ones are castles and chateaux spread around the whole country. Later pretentious mansions, churches, monasteries and medieval towns were built there. Folk architecture monuments made from stone clay and wood also deserve our attention. They are protected at the place of their origination or they were moved to open air museums. Mainly wooden churches at the eastern part of Slovakia are remarkable.

Slovakia also has beautiful nature, fertile lands in the south and the smallest mountain in the world – the High Tatras in the north. Slovakia is also proud to have other mountains which are popular among tourists and skiers. Very attractive are mineral and thermal springs, where recreational complexes and spas were built. Foreign visitors admire our folklore – songs, dances, traditions and folk costumes which can be seen at many summer folk festivals. Slovakia has all tourist attractions beside the sea.

Welcome!



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The capital Bratislava

Bratislava emerged at the crossroads of the Amber Route, joining the Baltic North and the Mediterranean, with the road running from the east to the west of Europe along the Danube. At different times, the wheel of history brought Celts, Romans and Slavs to this area; Bratislava was the coronation city of Hungary and in 1526-1784 the capital of the Hungarian Empire. Many beautiful historical monuments of the past ages have been preserved, including the dominant landmark of the city - Bratislava Castle and, beneath it, St. Martin's Dome where nineteen Hungarian rulers had been crowned with the St. Stephen's crown. The most illustrious was Maria Theresa. The historical centre of the city is adorned by the 15th century Old Town Hall, the Primate's and Grasalkovic Palaces, of which the latter is currently the residence of the president of the republic. Of the four city gates that were part of the 14th century fortifications the only one to have survived is Michael's Gate (Michalska brana). Strolls through the city offer chance to admire the building of the Academia Istrpolitana - the seat of the first university in Bratislava, the National Theatre and many reconstructed palaces.



Bratislava Castle



Primate's Palace



Grasalkovic Palace



Old Town Hall



St. Martin's Dome



Michael's Gate



First university



National Theatre

The Tatras

The High Tatras cover an area of 341 km², of which 260 km² lie on Slovak territory. The highest mountain is Gerlachovsky Peak (2,655m). Twenty-five peaks in the High Tatras are higher than 2,500m. The Tatras present an opportunity for high-mountain hiking and climbing, and also for pleasant walks and bicycle tours. The destination of tours and walks are both the chalets located close to the summits of the Tatra peaks, and the glacial lakes with their crystal clear water. The best known are Strbske, Popradske, Skalnate and Hincovo lakes, the last of which is the largest lake in the Tatras.

The High Tatras are the highest and most massive range in the Carpathian Bend. The shapes of the peaks that had been modelled by glaciers are monumental and with an exciting morphology, the same as the deep valleys and folds that hold the "eyes of the sea" – glacial lakes.

A popular destination is Hrebienok, which can be reached by funicular from Starý Smokovec. A trip by an aerial ropeway without a single supporting column from Lomnické sedlo (fold) to Lomnický štít (peak) (2,632 m) is an exhilarating experience.



Štrbské lake is one of the most modern and famous tourist centres.



Kriváň peak (2494 m a.s.l.) the cross at the peak symbolizes the independence of Slovakia.



Hincovo lake is the largest and deepest lake in Tatras

Come and breathe in the fresh air with us!



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Lomnický peak (2632 m) is the most frequently visited peak in High Tatras. To the peak runs the ropeway from Tatranská Lomnica.



Tatranská Lomnica is one of the most famous centres of international tourism.



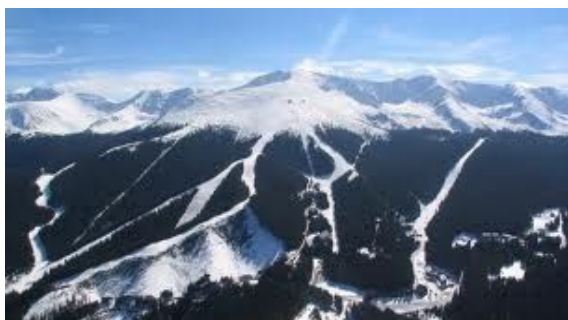
Gerlach peak (2655 m n.m.) is the highest peak of Tatras. By poets was called it „king of Tatras“.



Demanovska Dolina with its peak Chopok (2021 m) is a true winter paradise. It is internationally known ski centre, one of the best skiing destinations for the mountain holiday in Europe.



Ďumbier (2034 m.n.m.) is the highest peak of Low Tatras.



Chopok (2024 m.n.m.) is the second highest peak in Low Tatras. On the both slopes of Chopok peak is situated Jasna. Area of Jasna ranks among the most popular and largest winter-sport and tourist resorts in Slovakia. Jasna is open for tourists **all-year long**. In summer, spring and autumn the visitors enjoy hiking, cycling and mountain-biking, water sports and fishing.

Come to ski with us!



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Castles and chateaux

Magnificent castles with impressive fortifications that remember the times of mediaeval feasts, jousting tournaments and numerous wars. Sightseeing tours of castle chambers and walks in the gardens are part of a remarkable experience.

The Orava Chateau is one of Slovakia's most beautiful castles. The castle is a pronounced dominant of the Orava region; the highest part of the castle rises 112m above the level of the Orava River. It was founded in the mid-13th century and served as one of the strategic points on the Hungarian-Polish border. The castle has never been conquered.

The romantic Bojnice Chateau with its partly preserved Gothic and Renaissance features lies on the western outskirts of the small town of Bojnice, where it can be viewed from a large part of the Upper Nitra region. First mentions of the Chateau date back to the beginning of the 12th century. Its silhouette is emphasised by the steep roofs of the palaces, chapel and spires and turrets. The romantic image of the mediaeval castle is complemented by details like the pattern of the various openings, portals, walls, attic gables and metal fittings.



Bojnice chateau



Orava chateau



Nitra Castle



Castle Devín

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Natural sights

The beauty of the landscape is complemented by jewels hidden under the ground; caves and their wonderful nooks are such jewels. There are fortyfour caves in Slovakia; twelve are open to visitors. Walks with majestic slopes on all sides, the sound of music in an open-air auditorium, boat rides on underground rivers – all these are experiences that add to the beauty of the natural landscape.

One of the most famous European ice caves is Dobsina in Slovak Paradise. It is interestingly located at a low level above the sea and has gorgeous ice tunnels, columns and waterfalls sleeping in the ice.

The Slovak Ore Mountains (Slovenske Rudohorie) conceal the Ochtina Aragonite Cave with walls covered in fascinating shapes and forms reminiscent of iron flowers and shrubs; the aragonite continues to grow, giving the flowers a breath of freshness and delicate fragility.

The Demanovska Cave in the Low Tatras was created by the Demanovka stream cutting through limestone rock and is now a large system of cave tunnels. The luxurious colours and forms are reflected in names like Emerald Lake, Pink Chamber, Black Gallery or Gold Gallery and Lake.



Dobsina ice cave



Ochtina aragonite cave



Demanovska cave of Liberty



The Low Tatras – Vrbicke lake



Šaffron



Slovak paradise

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The gothic route

The Gothic Route is 267 km long. An integrated circuit, it presents the most interesting and valuable treasures of the Spis and Gemer regions – castle monuments rising high on top of the hills, generally well-preserved historical town centres, museums and cathedrals, as well as smaller gems like rural churches, burghers' and craftsmen's houses and picturesque stone bridges. The Gothic Route is about the fascinating traces left here by the past cultural and historical epochs. The Gothic heritage of the region is complemented by the towns sought out by tourists – the castle at Krasna Horka or the Manner House in Betliar with a magnificent park spread out on 70 hectares of land, boasting exotic plants from different parts of the world.



Krasna Horka



Fire on Krasna Horka 10.3.2012. It is on reconstruction.



Zehra – church of the Holy Spirit



Betliar



Kosice – St.Elizabeth Cathedral



St.James church in Levoca – wooden altal by Master Pavol of Levoca

Come to cognize with us!



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Gold and silver in the Middle Ages

Since ancient times gold and silver had been considered a symbol of wealth and power. The throne of the Hungarian rulers was sustained by the royal mining towns where these minerals were mined. Walks through Kremnica and Banska Stiavnice evoke the era of their greatest fame and power.

Kremnica, once a free royal town, is called the Gold Centre of Europe due to the large deposits of gold and silver which at the time of the greatest boom in the 14th century were an important pillar of the Hungarian Empire. The era of the town's greatest

development and glory can be evoked on public tours of the mining galleries where the valuable minerals used to be extracted with the help of the technical inventions of the time. Besides the lovely historical town centre with its many monuments, interesting sites include the mint. It has been in operation since the 14th century when gold fl orins were struck there. Slovak euro coins are minted there now. The mint contains an exposition of historical currencies and unique steam-driven stamp machines.

Banska Stiavnica is another “golden” gem of mediaeval Hungarian mining where with every step the visitor can feel the air of past glory. The exhibition of minerals, the historical expositions at the Old and New Chateaux, tours of mining galleries and a unique outdoor museum with preserved period buildings – all this completes the image of the town and its surroundings as they were at the time of its greatest mining glory. Guides in historical miners’ costumes bring closer the history of the hard mining craft. The effect is strengthened by the miners’ hard hats offered to visitors at the site. Banska Stiavnica has been included on the UNESCO World Heritage list and is visited by more than 40 thousand tourists a year. In 2008 the town celebrates the 770th anniversary of the bestowal of municipal privileges.



Kremnica – town square and chateau



Centre of Europe



Banska Stiavnica – New chateau



Banska Stiavnica – Trinity square

Modern Art

Slovakia breathes history and has a dense network of museums and art galleries. Nonetheless, old artefacts are supplemented with modern art by contemporary Slovak artists, both renowned and beginning. Elements of modern art can be admired in the open air or on walks in the capital city.



Slovak National Theatre – new building



Bratislava – Hviezdoslav square



Wine route

There are six viticulture regions in Slovakia. The most exclusive of them all is the Tokai region along the border with Hungary; but the most popular are the Small Carpathian vineyards, stretching from the hills of the Small Carpathians at Raca, which is a part of Bratislava, across Svätý Jur and Pezinok to Modra, which is famous for its ceramics. In the 18th century, the red Frankovka wine from this region was a favourite of the Empress Maria Theresa. Delicious food is inextricably linked to wine; the most sought after delicacies are traditional goose dishes from Slovenský Grob. Wine is celebrated traditionally in the autumn during the wine festival when vine-growers celebrate the end of the harvest. The first produce of the season – young wine, but also more ancient gems hidden in individual cellars, may be tasted in November, during the traditional open-cellar days. In May, lovers of good wine may enjoy St Urban's Day, the feast of the patron of wine and vine-growers, joined with presentations of wines and regional traditions.



Small Carpathian wine route



Frozen grape for producing of ice wine



St. Urban's Day



Wine salon

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Slovak Sea

Slovakia lies in the heart of Europe and that is why direct access to the sea is compensated by a large range of dams and reservoirs. Liptovská Mara was formed by the submersion of the whole valley and is now the reservoir with the largest volume of water. As such, it is referred to as the Slovak sea.

Due to its crystal clear water, the Orava Dam is a popular tourist destination in northern Slovakia. Eastern Slovakia boasts the Zemplin Dam, which is of a natural origin. It is the destination of especially those who love fishing, swimming and the increasingly popular water sports. In the southern part of Slovakia, not far from the capital, there is the Gabčíkovo complex. Besides hydroelectric plants and ship locks it also offers facilities for swimmers, sight-seeing boat rides, wildwater canoeing and boating on the calm side channels as well as active water sports – water scooters, water-skiing and windsurfing.



Water mill at Kolarovo



Liptovská Mara



Zemplínska Širava



Danube - Gabčíkovo

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Wellness and aquaparks

Slovakia has rich sources of mineral springs, many with therapeutic properties. The geological structure of the area is also the source of thermal springs used in spa treatment as well as swimming for leisure.

Year-round operating thermal baths are located close to the Tatras, thus offering relaxation to visitors after mountain tours or winter skiing. Traditional swimming pools are equipped with modern amenities and offer wellness programmes – saunas, various types of massage, aromatherapy and hot compresses. The offer of spa towns like Piešťany, Dudince, Trenčianske Teplice, Brusno, Sliac, Lúčky and Bardejov includes

new aqua parks. The spas have been modernised and are a very popular destination, not only for their therapeutic waters.

Health spa Piešťany



Trenčianske Teplice spa





Healt spa Lúčky



Bardejovské spa





Spa Brusno



Health spa Dudince



Spa Sliac





Be healthy with us!



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UNESCO in Slovakia

There are many beautiful and interesting things in the world. Slovakia might be a small country but that cannot be said about the importance and the number of interesting sights found here.

Slovakia is endowed with a diverse natural beauty, ranging from the fertile valleys running towards the foothills of tall rocky mountains to the scenic caves hiding inside them. Our ancestors have left present generations a whole spectrum of monuments ranging from mighty castles and parks in bloom to scientific and cultural artefacts. It is not only the tangible heritage that has been preserved; it is also the customs, the music and the stories that make up our national identity. Some of these gems were recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO and they were inscribed on its World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.

Slovak Karst

Beauty is not to be found only on the outside, it often remains concealed; and for us to admire it, we need to go deep under the surface. The beautiful caves of the Slovak Karst mountains are a proof that to find beauty we need to undertake such a journey.



Slovak Karst – Zadielska canyon



Ochtina aragonite cave



Jasovska cave



Cave Domica

The Spiš castle

On a limestone hill towering at 200 m above the surrounding area, the Spiš Castle reigns supreme over the Spišská basin. Its size, spreading over four hectares, is recognized as one of the largest and best preserved castle complexes in Central Europe.



Vlkolínec

The conservation reserve site of Vlkolínec is a preserved village with typical wooden architecture and farmstead yards. It was named after an ancient myth and the abundance of wolves living in Liptov woods at the time.



Bardejov

The historical centre of Bardejov is unique in the number of exceptionally wellpreserved burgher houses encompassing the market square which has been the centre of activity in the region since the Middle Ages. The town was the mediaeval centre of trade and thanks to its famous markets it became the destination for many merchants of the time.



Banská Štiavnica

From time immemorial, gold and silver were considered the symbols of wealth and power. The thrones of Hungarian kings were supported by the royal mining towns which produced these precious metals. A walk through Banská Štiavnica will remind us of their former glory.



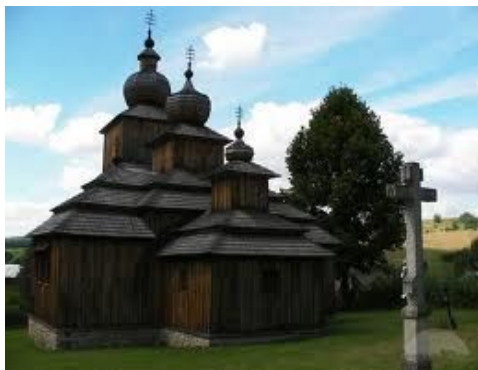
Beech forests

The Carpathian primeval forests contain within a small area an extraordinary number of trees, plants and fungi. They are home to rare species of animals, mainly endangered bird species. This pristine natural beauty gives us a chance to see the forest as it used to be, centuries ago before human intervention.



Wooden churches

Wooden churches are to be found in countries where wood was the basic building material. What makes the Slovak wooden churches unique is their authenticity, precision of work, the preservation of most of the external and internal elements and the fact that they are still used for religious purposes.



Dobroslav



Hervatov

Fujara

Fujara, also called “the queen of pipes”, was used to while away the time in our ancestors’ lives. Its melancholy and lingering sound accompanied folk songs in sad, as well as merry events of life. A great deal of skill was needed not only to play it, but to make it too and that made it even more valuable.



Come to play on fujara with us!



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Slovak culture and folklore

Music has a very important place in the Slovak culture. It used to be and still is an inseparable part of life - **rites, amusement, relax**, part of peoples universe of thinking and feeling. Man used to sing when **working**, in **happiness** and in **sorrow** and that helped him go through the struggles of life. The folk song is one of the oldest artistic expressions. It used to reflect the life of people against the historical background. Historical songs, and especially highwaymens songs and folk ballades, used to hide in themselves ideas of freedom and liberty. Especially lyric is precious (love songs, lullabies, hay-harvesting songs) because it reflects the emotional life of the Slovak man. **Folklore music** continues the tradition of folk songs. It is enlivened in annual **folklore festivals**. Slovak folk music has a **regional character** - songs and orchestras differ from region to region. It is not rare that songs exist in regional variations, music motives are often copied and texts are taken over to be used with a different melody. Also music in particular regions is different as well as the composition of music groups /in some regions string instruments prevail, in others brass bands are more frequent/. A specific instrument, originally from the region of Detva, is a tall shepherd's pipe, the so called **fujara**. For its singularity, a genial simplicity of shape and easiness of basic playing /that one should not be misled by/, it was inscribed into the List of the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity of the UNESCO.

Slovakia is a country rich with **folklore tradition** that reflects various aspects of our ancestors' way of life. The folk art represents **human culture** that includes not only clothing, crafts and food, but also folk songs and **dances**. Traditional **Slovak dances**, our pride, presented in folk costumes reveal rich, diverse and manifold dancing interpretations. Despite showing common features, they vary from region to region. Artistic ensembles, folklore ensembles and children's folklore ensembles present not only **folk dances** and **folk songs**, but also **live scenes**. They present the silent beauty of **folk clothes** and restore the **traditions of Slovak folklore** that belongs among the richest cultures of the world.



The world famous folklore and dance group Lúčnica



The most important folklore festivals are organized in Detva and Východná.



Juraj Jánošík – slovak hero, was borned in village Terchova. Every year is organized here the festival „Janosik’s days“



Raising a Maypole - symbol of protection, green and life (May 1st)



On early Easter Monday morning young men come and whip the girls or sprinkle them with fresh water.

Come in our midst!



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Are you hungry?

Why not to taste something originally slovak? Traditional slovak restaurants (chalets) are situated near the tourist centres as well as in the middle of the beautiful natural surroundings. Traditional slovak dishes are prepared usually near the clients by the tones of folk music.



Typical slovak chalet welcomes you as early as you outside.



Would you like to eat appetizer? slovak cheese dish.



Noodles with sheep cheese with bacon – slovak national dish.



Rather something meat? bush-rangers nedele.



Baked trout from szlovak rivers.



Or something sweet? noodles with poppy-seed.



...and flush it down with fine wine.

Cheer!



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