

EUROPE · MOUNTAINS · HIKING · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · WINTER SPORTS



Slovakia

Slovakia fits a great deal into a small country: the granite peaks and glacial lakes of the High Tatras, the vast ruin of Spiš Castle, medieval mining towns and Bratislava's castle hill above the Danube, an hour from Vienna. Prices are lower and crowds thinner than in its neighbours, and one main railway runs from the capital to the mountains and the east.

Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Slovakia and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 28 August 2026.

CAPITAL Bratislava	CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	LANGUAGE Slovak, Hungarian	BEST TIME May-Sep
DAILY BUDGET £45-£190 ££ Moderate	PLUGS Type C, E 230V · adapter needed	FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 10m direct ~£50-£220 return	TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Slovakia became independent on 1 January 1993, when Czechoslovakia split peacefully, and it packs a surprising amount into a country you can cross by train in about five hours. A first trip usually follows the main railway east: Bratislava and its castle on the Danube, the Váh valley lined with castle ruins, the Malá Fatra hills around Žilina, then the High Tatras above Poprad. Beyond lie the Spiš region, with Levoča and Spiš Castle, the ladder-strung gorges of the Slovak Paradise and finally Košice. A detour south to the old silver town of Banská Štiavnica rewards anyone with two spare days.

Slovakia is cheaper than neighbouring Austria and far quieter than Prague, and guesthouses, mountain huts and weekday set lunches (denné menu) keep costs down. Trains and buses are punctual and inexpensive, though services to villages and castles thin out at weekends. In July and August Slovak, Czech and Polish hikers fill the Tatras, so book huts and Štrbské Pleso hotels early; in June and September the trails are much quieter. English is widely spoken by younger people in Bratislava and the mountains, less so in the rural east. It suits hikers, castle lovers and anyone who wants Central Europe without the queues.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

NATURE

High Tatras

Slovakia's jagged granite range rises to 2,655 m at Gerlachovský štít. Walk from Štrbské Pleso to Popradské pleso, climb Rysy past its high mountain hut, or ride the cable car up Lomnický štít. Trails above the huts close from November to mid-June.
- 2

HISTORY

Spiš Castle

One of Central Europe's largest castle complexes, a white ruin sprawling across a limestone hill above the Spiš plain. Combine it with nearby Levoča, where Master Paul's early 16th-century carved altar is the tallest Gothic wooden altar in the world.

3

ARCHITECTURE

Banská Štiavnica

A UNESCO-listed silver-mining town spilling down the sides of an ancient volcanic caldera, with two castles, a hilltop Baroque Calvary and Renaissance burgher houses. The surrounding tajchy, artificial lakes built to power the mines, are now popular for summer swimming.

4

ADVENTURE

Slovak Paradise National Park

Narrow limestone gorges climbed by steel ladders, chains and footbridges over waterfalls, most famously Suchá Belá and the Hornád river canyon. Some gorge routes are one-way uphill, so plan a loop, and go on a weekday to avoid queues at the ladders.

5

ARCHITECTURE

Bojnice Castle

A fairy-tale castle of turrets and steep roofs, rebuilt between 1889 and 1910 by Count Ján Pálffy in the style of the Loire châteaux. Guided tours show off his collections, and a spring festival of ghosts and spirits takes over the castle.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Bratislava

≈ 481,000 people

A compact old town of Baroque palaces and wine bars below the castle, with the UFO viewing deck on the Danube bridge and Devín Castle nearby. Two days is plenty.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Košice

≈ 222,000 people

Slovakia's second city centres on a long pedestrianised main street dominated by the Gothic St Elisabeth Cathedral, the country's largest church. Good cafés and prices make it the natural base for the east.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Prešov

≈ 81,000 people

A relaxed eastern town with a long, lens-shaped main square of colourful burgher houses and the historic Solivar salt works; worth half a day from Košice, 35 km to the south.

Figures are rounded city-proper estimates for the end of 2025, as Slovak metropolitan figures vary with the definition used. Žilina is only just behind Prešov.

When to go to Slovakia

Best time: **May-Sep.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

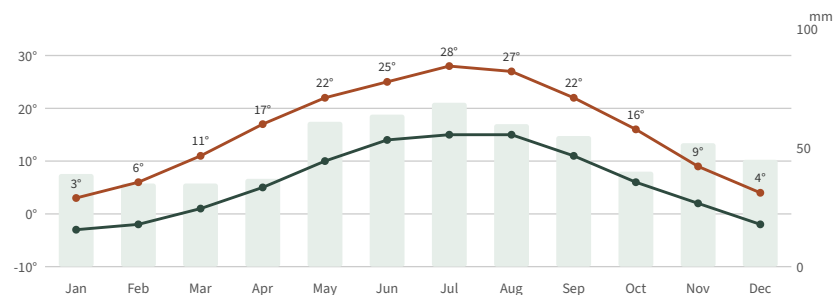
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Bratislava

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jul	Východná Folklore Festival Slovakia's oldest and biggest folk festival, held since 1953 in the village of Východná below the Tatras, with costumed dance troupes, fujara flutes, crafts and food over an early-July weekend.
Jul	Pohoda A large and well-regarded multi-genre music festival held each July at Trenčín airport, mixing international headliners with Slovak bands, theatre, film and debates.
Nov-Dec	Bratislava Christmas Market From late November the old town's Main Square and Franciscan Square fill with stalls selling lokše potato pancakes, mulled wine, punch and medovina honey wine.

How much does Slovakia cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ €53.57 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £95 per person / day ≈ €113 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £190 per person / day ≈ €226 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Bryndzové halušky The national dish: small, soft potato dumplings tossed with bryndza, a tangy sheep's cheese, and topped with crisp fried bacon. Best at a koliba, a rustic mountain restaurant.	Kapustnica Sauerkraut soup with smoked sausage and dried mushrooms, sometimes sweetened with prunes; served year-round but the centrepiece of the Christmas Eve meal.	Vyprážený syr A thick slab of breaded, deep-fried cheese served with chips and tartar sauce; cheap, filling and on almost every pub menu in the country.
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Getting around

Trains are the backbone: state-run ZSSK and private RegioJet services link Bratislava, Žilina, Poprad and Košice, with Bratislava-Košice taking around five hours. From Poprad, the Tatra Electric Railway climbs to the mountain resorts. Buses fill the gaps to villages, castles and Banská Štiavnica; search timetables at cp.sk. Hire a car for the castle country of the west and east. Ride-hailing apps such as Bolt work in Bratislava and Košice.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  C E 230V — bring a UK-to-C/E adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 155 Fire: 150 Police: 158 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
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DIALLING CODE

+421

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Round up or leave about 10% in restaurants. Say the total you want to pay as you hand over money, rather than leaving coins on the table.

ETIQUETTE

Say *dobrý deň* when entering shops and small lifts, and take off your shoes in people's homes. When toasting, say *na zdravie* and look each person in the eye as you clink glasses.

MAIN AIRPORTS

M. R. Štefánik Airport (BTS), Bratislava; Košice International Airport (KSC), Košice

Visas & entry for Slovakia

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Slovakia, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

If you're travelling to other Schengen countries as well, make sure your whole visit is within the 90-day limit. Visits to Schengen countries in the 180 days before you travel count towards your 90 days.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Rabies

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Slovakia

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Thu 24 Dec 2026	Christmas Eve
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Second Day of Christmas
Fri 1 Jan 2027	Day of the Establishment of the Slovak Republic
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany (Three Kings' Day and Orthodox Christmas)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sat 8 May 2027	Day of Victory over Fascism
Mon 5 Jul 2027	Saints Cyril and Methodius Day
Sun 29 Aug 2027	Slovak National Uprising Anniversary
Wed 15 Sep 2027	Day of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Slovak

ENGLISH	SLOVAK	SAY IT
Hello	Dobrý deň	DOH-bree dyen
Thank you	Ďakujem	DYAH-koo-yem
Please	Prosím	PROH-seem
Excuse me	Prepáčte	PREH-pahch-tyeh
How much is this?	Koľko to stojí?	KOL-koh toh STOH-yee

Know before you go

- Vienna airport, about an hour from Bratislava by direct bus, often has more flights from the UK than Bratislava itself, and Vienna pairs easily with a Slovak trip.
- Motorways need an electronic vignette (e-známka) bought online before you drive; cameras read number plates, and cars hired in Austria often lack the Slovak one.
- Mountain rescue in Slovakia can be charged to the person rescued, so check your travel insurance covers hiking in the Tatras, or buy local cover before setting out.