



Slovakia

A small, mountainous country in the heart of Europe, with the granite peaks of the High Tatras, many castles, painted wooden villages and a capital on the Danube.

Slovakia is a landlocked country in Central Europe, bordered by Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, Hungary to the south, Austria to the west and the Czech Republic to the north-west. The Carpathian Mountains fill most of its northern half, rising to the High Tatras, while the warm, flat Danubian Lowland in the south-west is farming and wine country. Forests cover more than 40% of the land.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Bratislava

POPULATION

About 5.4 million

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Slovak

CURRENCY

Euro, since 1 January 2009

AREA

About 49,000 km²

GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Gerlachovský štít, 2,655 m, in the High Tatras

LONGEST RIVER IN SLOVAKIA

The Váh, about 406 km, from the Tatras to the Danube at Komárno

NEIGHBOURS

Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. Slovakia has no coast

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+421

A 45-minute trip to Slovakia

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Slovakia together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: AD 179: The Romans at Trenín; 1918: Czechoslovakia is born; 2009: The euro arrives. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Bryndzové halušky and Bryndzové pirohy. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Dobrý de" (Hello, good day), "Dobré ráno" (Good morning), "Dobrý večer" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/slovakia/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Slovakia and its cities



- Bratislava (Bratislava Region): Bratislava Castle above the Danube, St Martin's Cathedral, where Hungarian kings were crowned, Its compact, walkable Old Town
- Košice (Košice Region): The Cathedral of St. Elizabeth, the largest church in Slovakia, Its long main street for walking, Steelmaking
- Prešov (Prešov Region): The ruins of Šariš Castle nearby, Slovakia's only salt mining company, Solivary, The seat of the Greek Catholic Church
- Žilina (Žilina Region): The Privilegium pro Slavis of 1381, Budatín Castle, A large Kia car plant
- Nitra (Nitra Region): Zobor hill above the town, Its role in Great Moravian history, Its long tradition of farming
- Banská Bystrica (Banská Bystrica Region): The Museum of the Slovak National Uprising, Its colourful main square, Easy access to the mountains
- Trnava (Trnava Region): Its many churches, Well-preserved town walls, A large Peugeot and Citroën car plant
- Trenín (Trenín Region): Trenín Castle, A Roman inscription from 179 AD, European Capital of Culture 2026
- Poprad (Prešov Region): The Tatra Electric Railway to the mountain resorts, The historic quarter of Spišská Sobota, Views of the High Tatras

- Levoa (Prešov Region): The main altar by Master Paul of Levoa, Its Renaissance town hall, Its well-preserved medieval town walls
- Bardejov (Prešov Region): Its market square and town hall of 1505, The Basilica of St. Giles, Its spa, one of the best known in Slovakia
- Banská Štiavnica (Banská Bystrica Region): Silver mining, Its Old and New Castles, UNESCO World Heritage status since 1993

A short history of Slovakia

Slovakia is a young state with a long past. Romans, Slavs, Great Moravia, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Habsburgs and Czechoslovakia all shaped the land before it became independent in 1993.

AD 179 The Romans at Trenín

During the Marcomannic Wars, Roman soldiers of the Second Legion carved an inscription on the rock below today's Trenín Castle, naming the place Laugaricio. It is still there.

AD 623 Samo's realm

According to the chronicler Fredegar, a Frankish merchant named Samo led the Slavs in a revolt against the Avars around 623 and became their king. His realm is often called the first Slavic state.

AD 828 A church at Nitra

Prince Pribina of Nitra had a church built and consecrated around 828. It is the first Christian church known from written sources in present-day Slovakia.

AD 863 Cyril and Methodius arrive

At the request of Prince Rastislav of Great Moravia, the Byzantine brothers Cyril and Methodius came to teach in a Slavic language. They created the Glagolitic alphabet, the first used for Slavonic writing.

AD 907 The Battle of Pressburg

Hungarian armies defeated the Bavarians near today's Bratislava. Great Moravia broke up, and over the next two centuries the land was gradually absorbed into the Kingdom of Hungary, where it stayed until 1918.

1536 Bratislava becomes Hungary's capital

With the Ottomans advancing, Pressburg (Bratislava) was made the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary. It stayed the capital until 1783, and most Hungarian parliaments from the 17th century to the 1840s met there.

- 1563** **The first coronation in St Martin's**
Maximilian II was crowned King of Hungary in St Martin's Cathedral. Coronations were held there until 1830, including that of Maria Theresa.
- 1843** **Štúr sets out written Slovak**
Ján Štúr and his friends agreed on a standard written Slovak based on the central Slovak dialects. With small changes, it is the Slovak written today.
- 1918** **Czechoslovakia is born**
As Austria-Hungary collapsed after the First World War, Czechs and Slovaks formed a common state, Czechoslovakia.
- 1939** **The wartime Slovak State**
Under pressure from Nazi Germany, Slovakia broke away from Czecho-Slovakia and became a one-party state allied with Hitler, led by Jozef Tiso. In 1942 the regime itself deported about 57,000 Jews to Nazi camps in occupied Poland, and in all most of Slovakia's Jews were murdered.
- 1944** **The Slovak National Uprising**
On 29 August 1944, parts of the Slovak army and partisans rose against the German occupation and the Tiso regime, with Banská Bystrica as their centre. After 60 days of fighting the uprising was crushed, but resistance went on in the mountains.
- 1968** **The Prague Spring**
The Slovak Alexander Dubek led Czechoslovakia's communist party and promised 'socialism with a human face'. In August, Warsaw Pact armies invaded and ended the reforms.
- 1989** **The Velvet Revolution**
Peaceful mass protests brought an end to communist rule in Czechoslovakia.
- 1993** **An independent Slovakia**
On 1 January 1993, Czechoslovakia split peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a separation often called the Velvet Divorce.
- 2004** **Slovakia joins NATO and the EU**
Slovakia joined NATO on 29 March 2004 and the European Union on 1 May 2004.

2009

The euro arrives

On 1 January 2009 Slovakia replaced the koruna with the euro, becoming the 16th member of the eurozone.

What people eat in Slovakia

Slovak food grew out of village life in the mountains: potatoes, flour, cabbage, pork and above all sheep's milk cheese. The south adds Hungarian touches such as paprika and goulash, and the lowlands grow wine. Lunch is traditionally the main meal of the day and usually means a soup followed by a main course.

Bryndzové halušky

Mountain regions of central and northern Slovakia, now eaten all over the country

Small, soft boiled lumps of potato dough, tossed with bryndza, a soft and tangy sheep's cheese, and topped with crisp fried bacon. It is considered the national dish.

Bryndzové pirohy

Across Slovakia

Half-moon dumplings filled with bryndza cheese mixed with mashed potato, served with more bryndza thinned with milk or sour cream, and topped with bacon or fried onion.

Strapaky

Across Slovakia

The same potato dumplings as halušky, but mixed with stewed sauerkraut instead of bryndza cheese.

Kapustnica (sauerkraut soup) (kapustnica)

Across Slovakia, above all at Christmas

A thick, sour soup of fermented cabbage, usually with smoked meat, sausage and dried mushrooms. Every region, valley and village cooks it a little differently.

Segedínsky guláš (segedínsky guláš)

Hungarian in origin, a favourite in Slovak and Czech canteens

A stew of pork and sauerkraut finished with cream or sour cream, usually served with slices of steamed bread dumpling (kneda).

Vyprážený syr (fried cheese) (vyprážený syr)

Slovakia and the Czech Republic

A thick slice of cheese dredged in flour, dipped in egg, coated in breadcrumbs and deep-fried until golden, with a soft, melting inside.

Zemiakové placky (potato pancakes) (zemiakové placky)

Across Slovakia

Pancakes of grated potato fried in oil until crisp and golden, eaten hot on their own or as a side dish.

Lokše (lokše)

Western Slovakia, especially Slovenský Grob

Thin flatbreads of cooked potato and flour baked dry on a hot plate. They are spread with goose fat, filled with sauerkraut or goose liver, or served with a goose feast.

Oštiepok (oštiepok)

The mountain regions of central and northern Slovakia

A traditional smoked cheese from Slovakia, firm and salty, with a golden smoked rind. It was first made from sheep's milk, and today cow's milk is often added.

Parenica (parenica)

Slovakia

A mild, steamed cheese made in long strips and rolled into a snail-shaped spiral, usually lightly smoked. A typical roll weighs about 100 g.

Šúance (šúance)

Across Slovakia

Little finger-shaped potato dumplings rolled by hand, boiled, then served with sugar or with ground poppy seeds.

Skalický trdelník

Skalica, in western Slovakia

A hollow, tube-shaped cake of dough wrapped around a wooden roller, baked on a turning spit over an open fire and topped with sugar and walnuts.

Slovak Tokaj wine (Tokajské víno)

Seven villages in the far south-east, near the Hungarian border

White wines, many of them naturally sweet, made from Furmint, Lipovina and Yellow Muscat grapes. The small Slovak part of the historic Tokaj region has about 908 hectares of vineyards.

Kofola

Czechoslovakia, created in 1959

A dark, herbal cola made from a syrup of 14 herbal and fruit ingredients. It is often poured on draught in Slovak restaurants.

At the table

- Before eating, people wish each other 'Dobrá chu' (enjoy your meal).
- When glasses are raised, everyone says 'Na zdravie' (to your health).
- Lunch, usually eaten between about 11:30 and 13:30, is traditionally the main meal of the day: a soup followed by a main course.
- If you are invited to someone's home, it is customary to bring a bottle of wine or other drink as a gift.
- In restaurants and bars, people usually round up the bill or leave around 5 to 10%, but it is not compulsory.

Bryndzové halušky

Small, soft boiled lumps of potato dough, tossed with bryndza, a soft and tangy sheep's cheese, and topped with crisp fried bacon. It is considered the national dish.

Ingredients

- 1 kg floury potatoes, peeled
- About 250 g plain flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 250 g bryndza (or a mix of soft goat's cheese and feta mashed with a little milk)
- 150 g smoked bacon, diced
- Chopped chives or spring onion to serve

Method

1. Finely grate the raw potatoes and mix them with the salt and enough flour to make a thick, sticky dough.
2. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Press the dough through a halušky grater or a colander with large holes, or cut small pieces off a wet chopping board with a knife, straight into the water.
3. Stir gently. When the dumplings rise to the surface, cook for 2 to 3 minutes more, then lift them out with a slotted spoon and drain.
4. Meanwhile fry the bacon until crisp.
5. Mix the hot dumplings with the bryndza, a spoonful of the bacon fat and a splash of the cooking water. Serve topped with the bacon and chives.

Kapustnica (sauerkraut soup)

A thick, sour soup of fermented cabbage, usually with smoked meat, sausage and dried mushrooms. Every region, valley and village cooks it a little differently.

Ingredients

- 800 g sauerkraut with its juice
- 300 g smoked pork (ribs or shoulder)
- 200 g smoked sausage, sliced
- 20 g dried mushrooms, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes
- 1 onion, chopped, and 1 tablespoon lard or oil
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika, 2 bay leaves, a few peppercorns and allspice berries
- 2 litres water
- 150 ml sour cream (optional)

Method

1. Put the smoked pork in a large pot with the water, bay leaves, peppercorns and allspice. Simmer for about 1 hour, until tender. Take out the meat, cut it into pieces and keep the stock.
2. Soften the onion in the lard, take the pan off the heat and stir in the paprika.
3. Add the onion, sauerkraut with its juice and the soaked mushrooms with their water to the stock. Simmer for 30 minutes.
4. Add the sausage and the pork pieces and cook for 15 minutes more. Taste for salt: the sauerkraut is already salty.
5. Serve hot with bread. Stir in a little sour cream if you like it milder.

Zemiakové placky (potato pancakes)

Pancakes of grated potato fried in oil until crisp and golden, eaten hot on their own or as a side dish.

Ingredients

- 1 kg floury potatoes, peeled
- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons plain flour
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram, salt and black pepper
- Oil or lard for frying

Method

1. Finely grate the potatoes, put them in a sieve or clean cloth and squeeze out as much liquid as you can.
2. Mix in the eggs, flour, garlic, marjoram, salt and pepper.
3. Heat a thin layer of oil in a large frying pan. Spread spoonfuls of the mixture into thin rounds.
4. Fry over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden and crisp and cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper.
5. Serve hot, on their own or with sour cream.

Šúance

Little finger-shaped potato dumplings rolled by hand, boiled, then served with sugar or with ground poppy seeds.

Ingredients

- 800 g floury potatoes, unpeeled
- About 250 g plain flour
- 1 egg and a pinch of salt
- 80 g butter
- 100 g ground poppy seeds and 3 tablespoons icing sugar

Method

1. Boil the potatoes in their skins until soft, then peel and mash or grate them while still warm. Leave to cool.
2. Mix in the egg, salt and enough flour to make a soft dough that does not stick to your hands.
3. Take small pieces and roll them on a floured board into little fingers about 5 cm long, thinner at both ends.
4. Cook them in batches in boiling salted water. When they float, cook for 2 minutes more, then lift out and drain.
5. Toss in melted butter, then in the poppy seeds mixed with the sugar. Serve warm.

Useful phrases

Dobrý de

DOH-bree dehn · Hello, good day

Dobré ráno

DOH-breh RAA-noh · Good morning

Dobrý veer

DOH-bree VEH-chehr · Good evening

Dobrá noc

DOH-broo nohts · Good night

Do videnia

doh VEE-deh-nyah · Goodbye

Ako sa máte?

AH-koh sah MAA-teh · How are you?

akujem, dobre

JAH-koo-yehm DOH-breh · Fine, thank you

Volám sa ...

VOH-laam sah · My name is ...

Teší ma

TYEH-shee mah · Pleased to meet you

Prepáte

PREH-paach-tyeh · Excuse me, sorry

Hovoríte po anglicky?

HOH-voh-ree-teh poh AHN-glits-kih · Do you speak English?

Nerozumiem

NEH-roh-zoo-myehm · I don't understand

Koko to stojí?

KOHL-koh toh STOH-yee · How much is this?

Kde sú tu záchody?

kdeh soo too ZAA-khoh-dih · Where are the toilets?

Dobrú chu

DOH-broo khootch · Enjoy your meal

Na zdravie!

nahz DRAH-vyeh · Cheers! (literally 'to your health')

Bolo to vynikajúce

BOH-loh toh VIH-nih-kai-oo-tseh · It was delicious

Pomoc!

POH-mohts · Help!

Things you might not know

1. As of 2023, Slovakia made more cars per person than any other country in the world: about 1.08 million cars in that year, from a country of about 5.4 million people.
2. Bratislava is the only national capital that borders two other countries, Austria and Hungary. Vienna is only about 55 km away, so apart from Rome and Vatican City, they are the closest pair of capitals in Europe.
3. Eleven Hungarian rulers, including Maria Theresa, and eight of their consorts were crowned in St Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava between 1563 and 1830. A replica of the Hungarian crown still sits on top of its spire.
4. Jozef Murgaš, a Slovak priest and painter who emigrated to Pennsylvania, received his first US patents for wireless telegraphy in 1904. President Theodore Roosevelt visited his laboratory in 1905.
5. Štefan Bani, a Slovak coal miner in the United States, was granted a US patent for an early parachute design on 25 August 1914.
6. Andy Warhol's parents came from the village of Miková in north-eastern Slovakia. A museum of his work opened in nearby Medzilaborce in 1991.
7. The fujara is a shepherd's flute from central Slovakia that is 160 to 200 cm long and has only three finger holes. UNESCO added it to its list of intangible heritage in 2005.
8. The Kremnica Mint, founded in 1328, is one of the oldest mints in the world. It still makes Slovakia's euro coins.
9. Juraj Jánošík (1688 to 1713) was a real highwayman who became a legendary Slovak 'Robin Hood'. A 7.5-metre statue of him stands above the Vrátna valley near his home village of Terchová.
10. The white double cross on Slovakia's coat of arms stands on three blue hills. They represent three mountain ranges: the Tatra, the Fatra and the Matra, which lies in Hungary.
11. The national anthem, 'Nad Tatrou sa blýska' (Lightning over the Tatras), was written in 1844 by the student Janko Matúška to the tune of a folk song.
12. Name days (meniny) are widely celebrated in Slovakia, at work often more

than birthdays. Most calendars show whose name day it is, and flowers can sell out for popular names.

13. The log houses of the village of imany are painted with white geometric patterns. After a great fire in 1921 the village was rebuilt as it had been.
14. Dobšiná Ice Cave holds ice up to 26.5 metres thick all year round, and it was lit by electricity as early as 1887.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Slovakia, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Bryndzové halušky or Bryndzové pirohy? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The Velvet Revolution (1989). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- An independent Slovakia (1993). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Bratislava Castle, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Slovakia, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Slovakia?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. You see a sign to the 'hrad'. What will you find there?

- A) A market
- B) A hospital
- C) A castle
- D) A railway station

2. What do Slovaks say to each other before eating together?

- A) Do videnia
- B) Dobrú noc
- C) Dobrú chu
- D) Na zdravie

3. Why should hikers in the Slovak mountains check their travel insurance?

- A) Trains to the mountains require it
- B) Mountain huts only accept insured guests
- C) Hiking is forbidden without it
- D) Mountain rescue can cost up to 1,000 euros

4. Which Slovak town's trdelník is protected by the European Union?

- A) Skalica
- B) Poprad
- C) Levoča
- D) Komárno

5. Devín Castle stands where the Danube meets which river?

- A) The Hron
- B) The Morava
- C) The Váh
- D) The Tisza

6. One of the three mountain ranges shown by the hills on Slovakia's coat of arms lies in Hungary.

- A) True
- B) False

7. Which town was the centre of the Slovak National Uprising of 1944?

- A) Trnava
- B) Košice
- C) Bratislava
- D) Banská Bystrica

8. What is a fujara?

- A) A kind of cheese
- B) A very long shepherd's flute
- C) A wooden church
- D) A folk dance

9. In Slovakia, drivers may legally drink one small beer before driving.

- A) True
- B) False

10. What is the capital of Slovakia?

- A) Bratislava
- B) Košice
- C) Nitra
- D) Žilina

11. Part of the historic Tokaj wine region lies in Slovakia.

- A) True
- B) False

12. Which town is nicknamed 'Little Rome' because of its many churches?

- A) Trnava
- B) Prešov
- C) Trenín
- D) Poprad

Quiz answers

1. C) A castle

A castle: 'hrad' means castle, as in Spišský hrad, Spiš Castle.

2. C) Dobrú chu

'Dobrú chu' means enjoy your meal. 'Na zdravie' is cheers, 'Dobrú noc' good night and 'Do videnia' goodbye.

3. D) Mountain rescue can cost up to 1,000 euros

Mountain rescue can cost up to 1,000 euros if the Mountain Rescue Service (HZS) has to help you, so check that your insurance covers it.

4. A) Skalica

Skalica: Skalický trdelník was registered as a protected geographical indication in December 2007.

5. B) The Morava

The Morava flows into the Danube below Devín Castle, on the border with Austria.

6. True

True. The hills stand for the Tatra, the Fatra and the Matra, and the Matra is in Hungary.

7. D) Banská Bystrica

Banská Bystrica was the centre of the uprising, which began on 29 August 1944 and was crushed after 60 days of fighting.

8. B) A very long shepherd's flute

A very long shepherd's flute, 160 to 200 cm long with only three finger holes, recognised by UNESCO as intangible heritage.

9. False

False. Slovakia has a zero limit: any alcohol in a driver's blood can bring a fine of up to 1,300 euros and the loss of the licence.

10. A) Bratislava

Bratislava is the capital and largest city, on the Danube in the far west of the country.

11. True

True. Most of the Tokaj region is in Hungary, but seven villages in south-eastern Slovakia make Tokaj wine, and EU rules allow both countries to use the name.

12. A) Trnava

Trnava, 47 km north-east of Bratislava, has so many churches inside its walls that it is

called 'Little Rome'.

Slovakia visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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<https://worldstroll.com/countries/slovakia>