

SPECTACULAR SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA

TRAVEL GUIDE



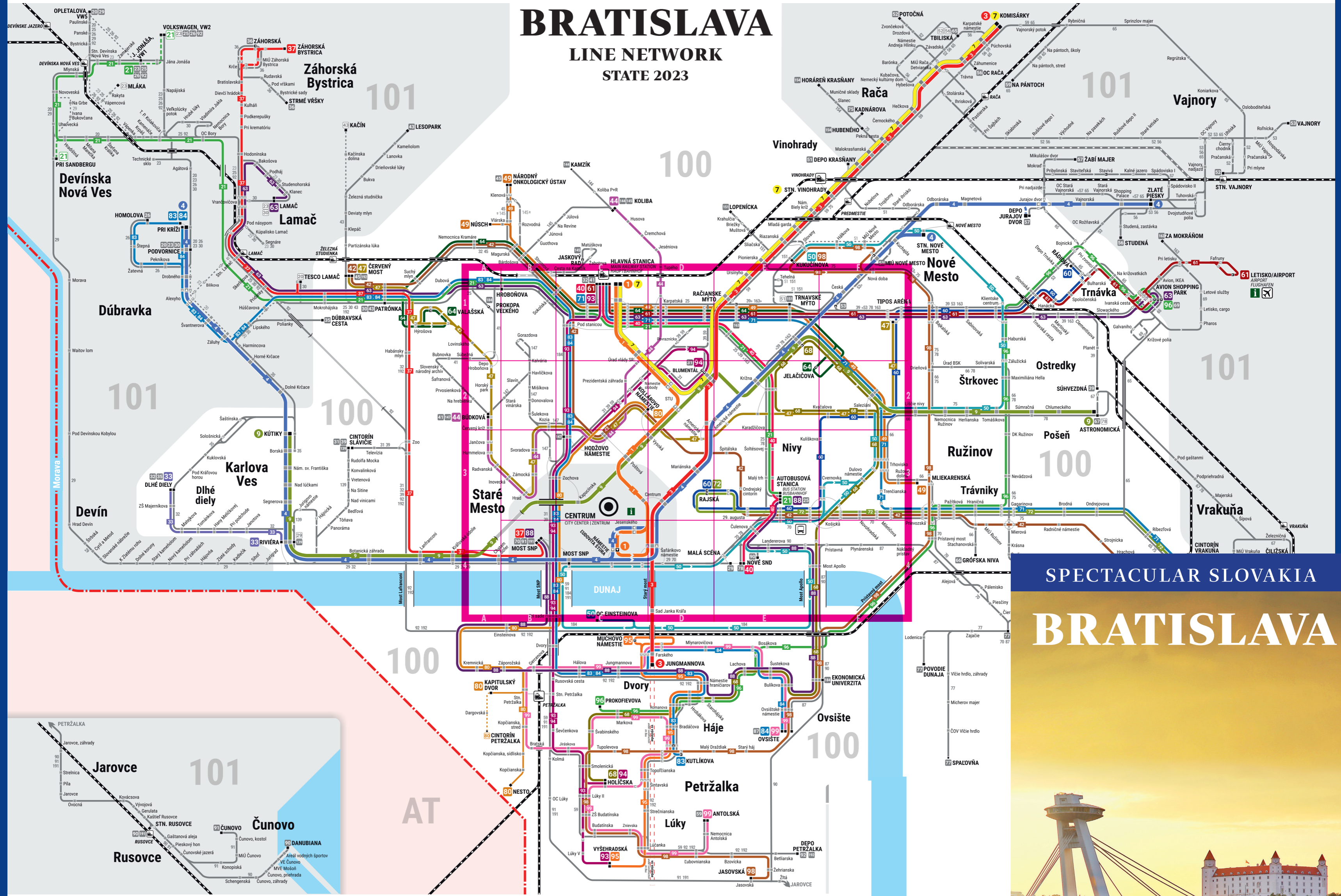
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PULL-OUT MAP

THE
SLOVAK SPECTATOR

BRATISLAVA

LINE NETWORK

STATE 2023



SPECTACULAR SLOVAKIA

BRATISLAVA



CITY MAP

LEGENDA KEY | LEGENDE

- Tram line with stop and terminus
- Backbone bus or trolleybus route with stop and terminus
- Other bus or trolleybus line with stop and terminus
- One-way line and one-way stop
- Limited service
- Tariff zone with number and municipality name (district name)
- Railway without passenger service
- Railway with passenger service
- Station with local train/long-distance train

PUBLIC TRANSPORT
Bratislava's public transport system is well developed and all the important information is available at www.dps.sk. Use app IDS SK to navigate, find stops and buy tickets online. Trams are numbered from 1-9, buses and trolley buses within the city from 20-199, buses 200-300 going to western part of Bratislava Region, 500-700 to eastern part. Public transport tends to run between 5:00 and 23:30. Night buses also run from the main railway station, marked by the letter N. Tickets must be bought before boarding the bus and are available through yellow ticket dispensers near the stops. A 60-minute ticket costs €1.3 (other options: 30 min. / €0.9; 24 hours / €4; 3 days / €9). You will also need to purchase an extra ticket, for €0.45, if you are carrying larger luggage. If you have a mobile phone registered with a Slovak operator, tickets for €1 (€1.3) can be purchased by sending a blank text message to 1140 (1100), which will last 40 (70) minutes. On all journeys, you must validate your ticket in the red markers inside of the vehicles. Passengers without a validated ticket will be subject to a €50 fine. A nonstop hotline available at +421 (0)2 5950-5950.

TAXI SERVICE
Taxi service is still cheap by Western standards. Call for a taxi or use BOLT or UBER application. Getting a taxi from a rank can be significantly more expensive. Some drivers may try to rip off foreigners by not turning the meter on and then claiming an outrageous total, so make sure it's running before he takes off. For a tip, just round up to the nearest €0.5 figure.

AIRPORT
Vienna International Airport
Most visitors to Slovakia fly into Vienna's Schwechat International Airport (63 kilometres/40 minutes away from Bratislava), which is larger than Bratislava's M. R. Štefánik Airport. Taxis from Vienna (if Slovak) start at €50, but could be three times as expensive if they're Austrian. Buses travel frequently between Bratislava bus station and Vienna Airport.

Bratislava International Airport
M. R. Štefánik Airport is 8 km from downtown Bratislava. A taxi into town costs from €6.6 to €12. By bus, take number 61 to the main railway station, not forgetting to buy a €0.9 ticket from the yellow dispenser and mark it in the red punch machine. You will also need a €0.45-ticket for each large bag.

TRAVELLING BY CAR
RUSH HOURS
The heaviest traffic in Bratislava is during traditional rush hours: typically between 7:00 and 10:00 in the morning, and between 15:00 and 18:00 in the afternoon. It is worst on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons when the many Bratislavans who stay only in the city for the working week are either returning or heading away. Sunday evenings can also be busy as commuters return from the weekend trips. Often these periods only mean more cars on the roads, but in the worst cases main routes can grind to a halt delaying your journey by dozens of minutes. The most notorious areas for jams are where several traffic lanes merge (for example both ends of Prístavny Bridge or Račianska Street in the city centre). The main city bypass can also be problematic.

Other traffic black spots include: the crossroads of roads with several lanes, Gagarinova, Rožňavská, Vajnorská, Bajkalská, Trnávská, Račianska, Einsteinova, Karlovska, Nábřežie A. C. L. Svobodu, Pražská, Brnianska, Kramárske Streets, as well as the main routes through the city centre.

DRIVER REQUIREMENTS
All foreign national driving licences are recognised. Visitors driving cars or trucks must be at least 18 years of age. The current traffic regulations are the same as in other European countries.

Some important differences:

- * The use of mobile phones is forbidden while driving.
- * Speed is limited at railway crossings to 30 km/h, while in the city it is 50 km/h, on the highway 90 km/h, and on the freeway 130 km/h. These speed limits are not signposted.
- * Trams turning right have the right of way.
- * There is no right turn on a red light.
- * No amount of alcohol in the blood is tolerated.
- * Headlights have to be turned on at all times while driving.

Fines for some common offences:

- * using a mobile phone while driving €50
- * not wearing a seatbelt €50
- * not stopping at a STOP sign €150
- * speeding in the city, from €50 for driving 6-20 km/h above the speed limit, 21-50 km/h above the limit from €150 - €600, from €500 to €1000 for driving 50 and more km/h above the limit.
- * driving without headlights €20

Motorway stickers: Vehicles using certain sections of freeway and selected highways must purchase a sticker. It can be bought online (e-vignette) on www.eznamka.sk or at most gas stations, and cost €50 for one year or €10 for 10 days.

Breakdown service: The road assistance service can be reached at 18-124. The service operates 24 hours a day.

TAKING THE TRAIN
Trains in Slovakia are the safest, cheapest, and most agreeable way to travel. The most frequent line in the country, the Bratislava-Košice route, costs from €19 to €24 (depends on the type of train) and takes roughly 5.5 hours. For travellers, three web sites with time schedules as well as details of the trip are crucial: www.cp.sk, www.regiojet.sk and www.slovakrail.sk. Tickets bought online and in advance are cheaper. At the train station, tickets can be purchased at the window reading KVC (Komplexné vybavenie cestujúcich). Make sure you're being booked for a fast train (rychlík) rather than a slow train (osobný), as the latter stops at every station on the line and can take hours longer than the rychlík. International trains to Bratislava run from Vienna (1 hour), Budapest (3 hours), and Prague (4-5 hours) several times a day, and from Krakow (8 hours) once a day. International tickets can be bought at the window reading KVC (Komplexné vybavenie cestujúcich). Trains from Vienna often arrive at the Bratislava-Petržalka station, south of the Old Town and across the Danube. Getting there by car to pick someone up can be complicated, but take the Most SNP bridge over the Danube and keep going past the Renault car dealership, hanging right.

Beware of crowded trains, especially on Friday and Sunday evenings when swarms of university students travel to and from school. On those lines it can be nearly impossible to find a seat in the regular cars. To assure a seat, buy a miestenska (seat reservation). Or bypass the crowds altogether and ride first class, where plenty of personal space is a virtual guarantee.

TAKING THE BUS
Bratislava's main bus station (Hlavná autobusová stanica) is in the Mlynské Nivy district, a 15-minute walk from the centre. You can buy international bus tickets either at the ticket office (zahraničná pokladňa) or with Eurolines, which provides service to biggest European towns (open Mon-Sun 6:30-18:30, Tel: 18-211, (0)2 5542-2734 for information, +421 (0)2 5557-1312 for reservations, www.eurolines.sk). When travelling by bus domestically, buy tickets as you board after telling the driver your destination. On crowded routes, drivers will sell tickets to as many people as can be squeezed on, even if it means people have to stand for five hours.

SHARING A CAR
Another option for travelling from/to Bratislava is BlaBlaCar, which helps people find available space in other people's vehicles. Through simple registration on www.sk.blaabla.com or via the BlaBlaCar mobile application it is possible to find a driver to a chosen destination. Prices for longer distance are usually cheaper than public transport.

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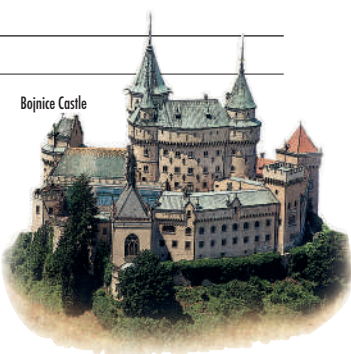
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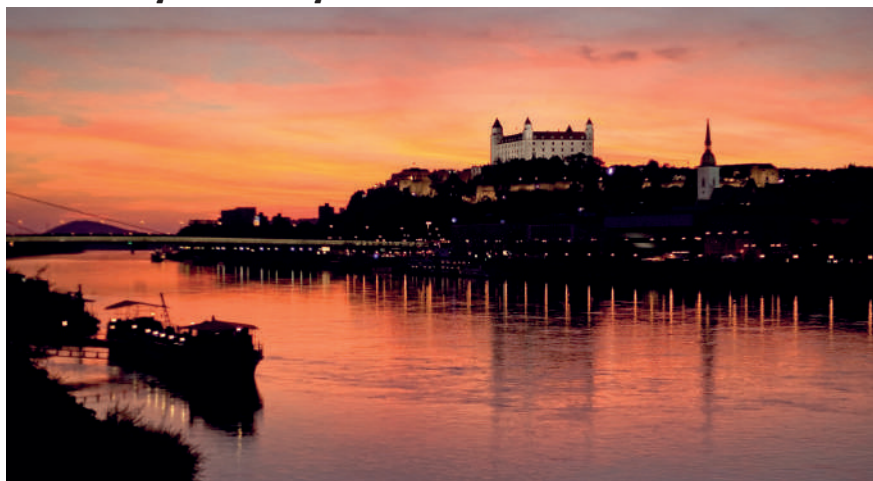
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Seven day itinerary



Bratislava

Slovakia has the advantage of being a geographically small country while also offering diverse possibilities for tourists with different interests including history, nature or gastronomy. The country is accessible, and tourists can enter not only through the Bratislava or Košice airports but also fly into Vienna, a major international airport just a 50-minute drive from Bratislava.

When planning a visit, it is good to remember two things: Monday is the day when most of the monuments and sights are closed, and on the very first Sunday of the month admission into state museums and galleries is free. Look for the rich offering of seasonal events. An overview of some of the best known can be found on page 294.

DAY 1: BRATISLAVA

Start exploring Bratislava by hopping on one of the popular tourist trains (www.tour4u.sk; www.blavacik.sk) which offer rides around the historical part of the

city and its wider surroundings. At the end of sightseeing, a walk through the Old Town can nicely complement the touring experience while St Martin's Cathedral (👁 pg 38), Old Town Hall (👁 pg 30) and the Bratislava Castle (👁 pg 40) should not be missed. In past years, the possibility of boat trips to Devín, a historical castle ruin (👁 pg 44), or Danubiana art museum in Čunovo (👁 pg 205) has been added to the offerings. If a visitor wishes to indulge in the Slovak wine tradition, there is an option to review some of the country's best wines (www.salonvin.sk) directly in Bratislava. Dinner at one of the restaurants (www.u-f-o.sk, www.skybar.sk, www.lindner.de, www.veza.sk) offering spectacular views of the city could be a nice wrap-up to the day.

DAY 2: BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA

Banská Štiavnica (👁 pg 101), in central Slovakia, is a mediaeval city on UNESCO's

World Heritage List. The town represents the region's rich mining tradition, which is reflected in the architecture and several attractions for tourists. There are a number of mines open for visitors while the local open-air museum offers a diverse selection of technical monuments. The town is also famous for its Calvary. Stop by the local brewery Erb or café Divná Pani for a refreshment.

🚗 Bratislava-Banská Štiavnica 170 km / 107 miles (108 min)

DAY 3: CAVES



The earliest entry into the Domatic Cave (👁 pg 180) is at 9:00 in the summer season. We recommend buying the more expensive ticket, which includes a short boat trip in the cave. A visit to the cave may be combined with a tour of the elegant Betliar Manor House (👁 pg 177), lying 34 km / 21 miles from Domatic. We also suggest a visit to the Ochtinská Aragonite Cave (👁 pg 176) or Kráňohorská Cave (👁 pg 181), which are in the same region. At the latter, thanks to the speleological equipment available, a visitor can get a totally different experience. The whole tour lasts about three hours.

🚗 Banská Štiavnica-Domica 163 km / 101 miles (133 min)



Banská Štiavnica

DAY 4: KOŠICE

The Košice Gold Treasure is an interesting start to a tour in Slovakia's second largest city (👁️ pg 174) and the Kunsthalle / House of Contemporary Arts (👁️ pg 174) and the St Elizabeth's Cathedral (👁️ pg 170) are also must-see attractions. By buying a combined ticket for entrance



St Elizabeth's Cathedral

to the cathedral, visitors can get into the main nave, the crypt, the royal gallery, two church towers, and the adjacent St Michael's Church and its ossuary. While in Košice Region, do not miss out on a Tokaj wine tasting (👁️ pg 182). 🚗 *Betliar-Košice 76 km / 47 miles (63 min)*

DAY 5: SPIŠ REGION

Spiš Castle (👁️ pg 134) is the country's most extensive castle complex, while offering picturesque scenery. It has

caught the attention of foreign filmmakers. The castle along with the town of Levoča (👁️ pg 130) and Spišské Podhradie (👁️ pg 133) are UNESCO protected. Levoča boasts many examples of well-preserved gothic architecture, particularly altars.

🚗 *Košice-Spiš region 91 km / 56 miles (75 min)*

DAY 6: HIKING

Physically active tourists can opt for hiking (👁️ pg 252-255) in northern Slovakia in such places as Slovenský raj with its waterfalls, canyons and ladders or nearby Liptov and Orava regions, which offer a number of trails. Those who prefer a more passive natural beauty can opt for a number of cable cars available in the High and Low Tatras. We advise ending the day with a soak at one of the aquaparks in the region.

🚗 *Levoča-the High Tatras 50 km / 31 miles (67 min)*

DAY 7: ARCHITECTURE

Visitors can spend their last day by touring Slovakia's wooden churches or by visiting one of the traditional villages to observe folk architecture and art. There are also a number of castles that can be visited on



Čičmany

the way back to Bratislava. One option is to visit the village of Vlkolínec (👁️ pg 149), then the wooden church in Leštiny (👁️ pg 152). It is worth making a stop at Orava Castle (👁️ pg 152), about a three-hour ride from Bratislava. A second alternative for this day is to visit the wooden church in Svätý Kríž (👁️ pg 146) then the village of Čičmany (👁️ pg 164) while making a stop in Bojnice (👁️ pg 76) to see the castle. One of the stops in both alternatives can be replaced by rafting on wooden rafts in Strečno (👁️ pg 157) or nearby Orava Castle (👁️ pg 152). Be aware that you will need to wake up very early and move quickly to fit either of these itineraries into a single day. 🚗 *the High Tatras-Bratislava 334 km / 207 miles (240 min)*



Spiš Castle (Photo: Yuri Dorj)

Early history

The oldest relics of people living on current Slovak territory are from the Early Stone Age. The best known relic is Venus of Moravany, a small female figurine made from mammoth ivory dated to around 22800 BC. Remains of settlements, ceramics and religious objects from the early Stone Age indicate that several cultures were living here later. Even more people lived here during the Bronze Age and left for archaeologists several burial places and hill forts, as well as numerous bronze sickles and the remains of wooden buildings constructed without nails.



Venus of Moravany
Photo: Archeologický ústav SAV

Danube in the west, making some of the land that is now Slovakia part of the Roman Empire.

Slovak predecessors probably first appeared in what is now Slovakia as part of the great migration of Slavs into central Europe sometime after 500 AD.

There is archaeological and limited written evidence that between the 7th and 10th centuries a series of proto-states emerged in parts of what is now Slovakia. One of the best known rulers is Frankish merchant Samo, who established an empire on the territory of present-day Slovakia which lasted

only for the period of his reign (623-658).

9TH CENTURY – GREAT MORAVIA

The national mythology which developed in the era of the romantic national movement (from around 1848) depicts this period as the golden age of the Slovak nation, though the modern nation was not formed until more than a millennium later. One of the most significant Great Moravian sovereigns, Svätopluk, is portrayed in national mythology as a wise ruler, but his death brought an end to the empire.

863 – CYRIL AND METHODIUS ARRIVED IN GREAT MORAVIA

These brothers were Greek monks who are believed to have spread Christianity in the region and codified the Old Slavic language and script (Glagolitic).

1000 - SLOVAKS IN THE HUNGARIAN KINGDOM

After the fall of Great Moravia, the

territory of present day Slovakia gradually became part of the Kingdom of Hungary (Uhorsko, in Slovak), formally established by King Stephen I (1000-1038), who is also regarded as a saint by the Catholic Church. His kingdom was multicultural and remained so until well into the 19th century. Slovaks were one of a myriad of ethnic groups that lived within the kingdom. References specifically to Slovaks emerge during this era.



Great Moravian church in Kopčany

1526 - BATTLING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The forces of the Kingdom of Hungary were defeated by the Ottoman Empire on August 29, 1526, near Mohács in present-day Hungary. After the battle, Bratislava Castle in the Slovak capital became the coronation residence of Hungarian monarchs, who had been dislodged from the original capital in Buda by the Ottoman army. Present day Slovakia became a place of major military frontier conflicts between the Ottomans and the Hungarians, who created a line of castles and fortifications to defend the territory.

By 1526, the Ottoman Empire occupied the entire lower part of the Kingdom of Hungary, up to the Danube River. To ward off Ottomans, several castles were erected or fortified in the 16th and 17th centuries on the soil of today's Slovakia.



Ss Cyril and Methodius

The beginnings

Origin of Venus of Moravany	Arrival of the Celts	Arrival of the Slavs (5 th -6 th century)	The first mention of Nitra, the oldest town in Slovakia	Arrival of Cyril and Methodius	Hungarian tribes are defeated near Lech River	Stephen I conquers Principality of Nitra	Tartar invasion
22500-22800 BC	500 BC	400	623	833	907	1000	1241
			(623-658) Samo's empire	Rise of Great Moravia	Hungarian tribes defeat Slavs / End of Great Moravia	Stephen I becomes the first Hungarian king	(12 th -15 th century) German colonisation



The Death of Tomary at the Battle of Mohács by Jozef Hanula.
(Photo: Property of the Slovak National Gallery)

In 1547, both sides declared peace, however, Ottoman commanders continued to assault the region, focusing primarily on mining towns like Kremnica and Banská Štiavnica. These towns were among the first to react to the threat by fortifying themselves.

Besides the mining towns, the cities and towns of Trenčín, Bratislava, Zvolen, Komárno and Levice, as well as the Muráň, Šariš and Víglaš castles, played the most important role in fighting the Ottomans. The Long War (also named the Thirteen or Fifteen Years' War), which took place from 1591 or 1593 to 1606, was one of the most significant offensives by the Habsburg Monarchy against the Ottomans. Habsburg forces claimed several lost fortresses, including Filakovo, Devín, Modrý Kameň, Sečany, Parkan, Sobotka, Šomoška and many others.

The Long War ended with the Peace of Zsitvatorok on November 11, 1606, confirming the Ottomans' inability to

penetrate further into Habsburg territories and stabilising conditions on the Habsburg-Ottoman frontier.

The Ottomans were pushed back in 1683 after they lost the Battle of Vienna.

Some castles and fortresses also played a significant role during the anti-Habsburg uprisings of Transylvanian or Hungarian earls, which took place throughout the 17th century. Because the uprisings ended, many castles and fortresses lost their strategic importance.

One of the best-preserved castles opened to the public from this period is the Červený Kameň or Red Stone Castle, rebuilt from a mediaeval castle into a Renaissance fortress by the Fugger family. The castles of Bratislava, Filakovo, Šariš, Zvolen, Levice, Banská Štiavnica and Trenčín, as well as Komárno's fortress, are also

open to the public. The remains of anti-Ottoman defence may be seen in Bzovík, Nové Zámky, Modrý Kameň and Krásna Hôrka. Many anti-Ottoman fortresses are currently under reconstruction or in ruins.



Vartovka watchtower in Krupina

KEY HISTORICAL FIGURES

Svätopluk (ruled 870-894)

Perhaps the most important sovereign of the Great Moravia. National mythology portrays him as a wise ruler, whose death brought an end to the golden age of the empire.

Cyril and Methodius

Two monks from Thessaloniki who helped spread Christianity to what is now Slovakia in 863. Their contribution was not only the religion they brought to the pagan Slavs, they also designed and codified the Old Slavic language and script (Glagolitic).

King Stephen I (ruled 1000-1038)

After the fall of the Great Moravian Empire Slovakia gradually became part of the Kingdom of Hungary, formally established by Stephen I, who is also regarded as a saint by the Catholic Church. His kingdom was multicultural and remained so until well into the mid-1840s. His message was that a country where people have only one set of traditions and speak only one language is weak and fragile.

Matthias Bel (1684-1749)

Slovak encyclopaedist, philosopher and a pioneer of the Enlightenment in Slovakia. He was among the most important scientists of his day and is regarded as the founder of modern geography in what was then Hungary.

Maria Theresa (1717-1780)

One of the first enlightened emperors, the Austrian archduchess, Hungarian queen and the only woman to rule the Czech lands, introduced many reforms.



Adam František Kollár (1718-1783)

This philosopher, librarian and historian, also called the Slovak Socrates, served as an advisor to ministers and to Queen Maria Theresa. He was behind the school reforms she introduced.

Joseph II (1741-1790)

The son of Maria Theresa whose reign continued the age of Enlightenment. He abolished serfdom in the Habsburg Empire and issued the Tolerance Patent, which did away with the monopoly of the Catholic Church and legalised Protestant religions.

Establishment of Universitas Istropolitana		Esztergom Archbishopric and canonry moved to Trnava		(1604-1711) Anti-Habsburg uprisings	(1780-1790) Reign of Joseph II		
1396	1465	1526	1543	1563	1604	1740	1780
Ottoman invasion		The Battle of Mohács	Bratislava becomes coronation city of the Kingdom of Hungary			(1740-1780) Reign of Maria Theresa	



Bratislava's advantageous location on the banks of the Danube, and its close proximity to Vienna and Budapest, has made it one of the most important cities in central Europe for hundreds of years, especially during the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Indeed, the single most significant period in Bratislava's history was from 1563-1830, when it became the coronation city of the Hungarian Kingdom.

At the time, Bratislava was a well-developed, multilingual city, with a population comprised of a German-speaking majority and solid minorities of Hungarians and Slovaks. Society was divided into several classes: the upper aristocratic class provided the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, but the middle and lower classes remained strong,

The centre of the kingdom

comprised as they were by the craftsmen and merchants crucial to the city's business development, as well as servants and manual labourers. There were many job opportunities in Bratislava and in local vineyards, and it attracted workers from far and wide.

CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE

Bratislava's fame rapidly grew after the Battle of Mohács in 1526, when Sultan Suleiman I defeated King Louis II of Hungary. In the aftermath of the battle, the Ottoman army occupied the Hungarian capital Buda as well as



Small crowns mark the route of the coronation march in Bratislava

the primary coronation city of the kingdom, Székesfehérvár. In 1543, the displaced rulers of a newly founded empire made Bratislava its capital. While besieged by the Ottomans, it was never conquered.

In 1563, the new King Maximilian II became the first Hungarian monarch to be crowned in St Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, and the church would continue to serve the same function for nearly 300 years. Even today, it still has a 300 kilogramme gilded copy of St Stephen's crown (the Holy Crown of Hungary) at the top of its cathedral tower. After the era of coronations in Bratislava ended, the crown jewels were moved from the city. At the moment, the original crown is in Hungary, while Bratislava has only a copy.

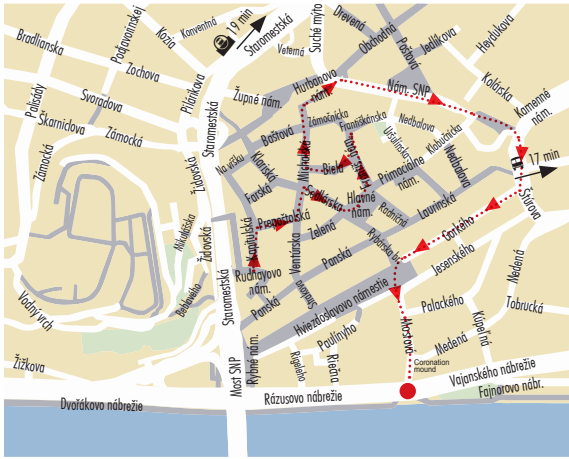
The gothic St Martin's Cathedral is now one of the most popular sites on the Bratislava tourist trail, and contains numerous fascinating artefacts in its main building and catacombs. There is a permanent exhibition of relics and liturgical objects that were once used in the coronation ceremonies, as well as a list on the cathedral wall of the 19 monarchs – ten kings, one queen and eight consorts – who were crowned there.

MARIA THERESA

Queen Maria Theresa was crowned in Bratislava in 1741 and became one of the most significant figures



Crowds packed the Bratislava streets for the coronation procession



The route taken by monarchs on their coronation day

- MONARCHS CROWNED IN BRATISLAVA**
 1563 - King Maximilian II and his wife, Mary of the Spain
 1572 - Rudolf II
 1608 - Matthias II
 1613 - Anne of Tirol, wife of Matthias II
 1618 - Ferdinand II
 1622 - Eleonora Gonzaga of Spain, second wife of Ferdinand II
 1638 - Maria Anna of Spain, first wife of Ferdinand III
 1647 - Ferdinand IV Habsburg
 1655 - Maria Eleonora Gonzaga, third wife of Ferdinand III
 1655 - Leopold I
 1687 - Joseph I
 1712 - Charles III
 1714 - Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, wife of Charles III
 1741 - Maria Theresa
 1790 - Leopold II
 1808 - Maria Ludovika of Austria-Este, third wife of Francis II
 1825 - Caroline Augusta of Bavaria, fourth wife of Francis II
 1830 - Ferdinand V

in central European history. Maria Theresa acceded to the throne after the death of her father, Charles III, and only after he had successfully campaigned for what became known as the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, which allowed a female to inherit the possessions of the Habsburgs. Although Maria Theresa took charge of the empire when it was still recovering from the plague epidemic of 1712, and her rule was blighted by conflicts in the region, including the war of Austrian Succession (1740-48) and the Seven Years' War (1756-63), her influence over the empire was largely positive. Bratislava, in particular, underwent a period of significant economic and social improvement. Late historian Pavel Dvořák, an expert on the history of Slovakia and particularly Bratislava, saw the interesting feature of Maria Theresa in her being an enlightened ruler: "She made several appealing changes," said Dvořák. "For example, she introduced compulsory school attendance and forbade torture."

JOURNEY TO HISTORY

These days, the royal history of Bratislava is best remembered by the annual coronation march through the city, which remains as close as possible to the route taken by the Hungarian monarchs on their coronation day. The new monarch would have led a parade on foot through the streets, via the Main Square and past Maximilian's fountain, which was placed there in 1572.

The tour continued into the Franciscan Church, where the king or queen would confer on selected noblemen the prestigious Order

of the Golden Spur. The procession would then proceed along Michalská Street towards Michael's Gate, where the monarch would climb aboard a waiting charger and gallop to the banks of the Danube. He would wave his sword to the north, east, south and west, promising to defend his kingdom from all directions. In those days, the route would have been covered by red canvas, which was torn down by citizens after the celebration. Today's residents of Bratislava get to enjoy the festivities every year, in June, when actors play the parts of the courtiers and monarchs, dressed in period costume. Pavel Dvořák used to say it is good that Bratislava remembers its history: "A lot of buildings from that era have been demolished, such as the towns' gates, and old buildings have been replaced by new ones. There were even plans to bring down Bratislava Castle during the first republic [1918-1939]. This is why it is very important to recall the glorious times of Bratislava."



Recent history

Photo: Courtesy of SMN - Historické múzeum



Ludovít Štúr at the Hungarian Assembly by Gejza Szalaj

1840 – THE SLOVAK NATIONAL AWAKENING

The Slovak language was codified in a form very close to the version still used today by the leader of the nationalist movement, Ludovít Štúr, in 1843. The generation of Štúr and his followers represented the romanticist movement in Slovak literature. The Slovak National Movement emerged during the first half of the 19th century and was influenced by similar movements across Europe. The movement, led by Štúr in Slovakia, culminated in the era known in Europe as the Spring of Nations and in the revolutionary upheavals of 1848. The Slovak national movement was also a response to Magyarisation, the encouragement and sometimes coercion of different ethnic groups of Hungary to become Hungarians, which lasted until World War I.

1918 - 1939 CZECHOSLOVAKIA BETWEEN THE WARS

The end of World War I saw the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrate. One of the states established in its place was Czechoslovakia, the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Historical ties between the two

peoples were relatively weak (the Czech lands had been part of Austria prior to the war), but their languages were close and cooperation between the Slovak and Czech diaspora communities in the US, Russia, and France during the war provided the foundation for one of Europe's more successful experiments in 20th century multinational statehood. The most outstanding personalities from this historical era are the trio Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who served as president until 1935; Edvard Beneš, who became foreign minister; and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, the pre-eminent military leader, who became war minister.



1939-1945 – THE WARTIME SLOVAK STATE

Czechoslovakia ceased to exist on March 15, 1939, with the complete occupation of Bohemia and Moravia by Hitler's Germany.

The Slovak leadership came to an agreement with the Nazi ruling power in Germany and established the first independent Slovak State, a puppet of the Third Reich. Catholic priest Jozef Tiso became leader of the state, and his government followed the German example by imposing a series of anti-Semitic laws, codes,

and regulations which culminated in the arrest and deportation of approximately 59,000 Slovak Jews to Nazi death camps during 1942. In 1944 a broad range of Slovaks resolved to launch an armed uprising, which later became known as the Slovak National Uprising, one of the key events of the country's modern history. It erupted in late August 1944 but was rapidly crushed by the Wehrmacht and SS, with thousands of Slovaks being executed in a series of reprisals that continued until the Red Army liberated the country in May 1945. Several thousand more Jews were deported to death camps during this period.



The Slovak National Museum in 1945

1948 - 1989 COMMUNIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

After World War II, Czechoslovakia was re-established, but within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. The Communist Party seized complete power in February 1948. The decade that followed was characterised by show trials and executions, in which the party purged its own ranks and liquidated opponents, and by collectivisation and industrialisation. Klement Gottwald, the first communist president of Czechoslovakia, was the pre-eminent figure in the early part of this period in Czechoslovakia's history. The pressure for social change later led communist leader Alexander Dubček to propose 'socialism with a human face', a revised form of communism which resonated in the Prague Spring movement in the late 1960s. This

Photo: Courtesy of Múzeum mesta Bratislava

The modern era

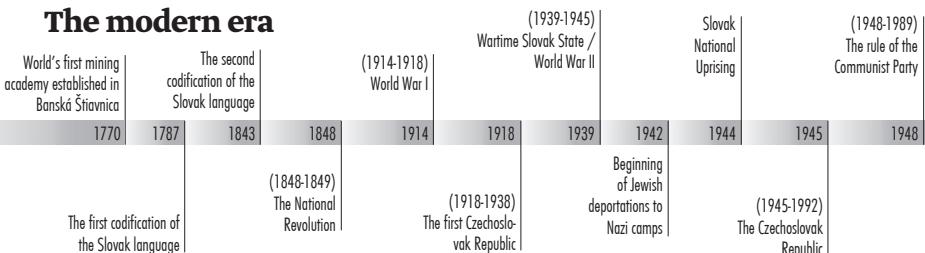


Photo: TASR



The Velvet Revolution in Bratislava

brief period of liberalisation was followed by the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the persecution of Dubček and his followers. In the normalisation years that followed, free political expression was suppressed, Gustáv Husák succeeded Dubček as the party leader. He remained president of the country until the fall of the regime in 1989.

1989 – THE VELVET REVOLUTION

Communism collapsed in Czechoslovakia in November 1989, in a series of events that became known as the Velvet Revolution. Dissidents, most famously Václav Havel who later became the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia, provided a focus for the wider, previously apathetic majority to join anti-regime protests.

1993 – INDEPENDENT SLOVAKIA EMERGES

The first years of democratic transition quickly gave rise to a debate about the distribution of power between Czechs and Slovaks, which was resolved in



Slovakia adopted the euro in 2009

1992 when the nations' respective prime ministers, Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar, agreed to a peaceful break-up. The Slovak Republic was born on January 1, 1993, with little fanfare. The 1990s were marked by most of the problems faced by a country in transition, including corrupt privatisation of public property and an increasingly authoritarian rule by then-prime minister Mečiar. Slovakia became a member state of the United Nations (UN) on January 19, 1993, shortly after independence. However, Slovakia, alone among the countries of central Europe, began to face serious problems in accession talks to join the European Union and NATO. Strong opposition to Mečiar's government formed around centre-right leader Mikuláš Dzurinda. On October 1, 1998, the EU viewed the parliamentary elections in Slovakia, in which the country's three-time prime minister Mečiar and his government (widely viewed as having pushed Slovakia to the verge of international isolation) was ousted from power, as a positive turn in Slovakia's efforts to join the EU. After the opposition's victory, Dzurinda formed a government which undertook drastic reforms and steered Slovakia into the EU and NATO. The EU, at its summit in Helsinki in 1999, decided to initiate accession talks with Slovakia, with the actual talks commencing in February 2000. In May 2003, 92.46 percent of the participants in a referendum voted 'yes' to Slovakia's entry to the EU, and on May 1, 2004, Slovakia entered the union. Slovakia became a member of NATO in March 2004. On December 21, 2007, Slovakia also joined the Schengen Area after foreign ministers of EU member states decided that Slovak border security was up to the EU standards.

FATHERS OF THE NATION

Anton Bernolák (1762-1813)

A Catholic priest, he created the first comprehensive grammar of the Slovak language. It was based on the vernacular, primarily the dialect around Trnava, but never won acceptance among all Slovaks.

Ludovít Štúr (1815-1856)

The leader of the first Slovak National Movement. In 1843 he codified the Slovak language in a form very close to the one now used and also served as a deputy in the Hungarian assembly. He became an icon of the fight for the independence of Slovaks from Hungary.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937)



The son of a Slovak, he became president of the first Czechoslovak Republic established after WWI.

Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880-1919)

He studied astronomy in France but during WWI worked as the leader of the Czech-Slovak legions in Serbia, Romania, Russia and Italy, which fought on the side of the Allies. He was one of the founding members of the National Council in Paris and after the war served as Czechoslovakia's minister of war.

Jozef Tiso (1887-1947)

One of the most controversial characters in Slovak history, he was president of the Nazi-allyed Slovak republic during WWII under which thousands of Slovak Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps in Poland and Germany.

Klement Gottwald (1896-1953)

The first communist president of Czechoslovakia who oversaw Stalinist repression, including purges and show trials.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992)

The communist leader who proposed 'socialism with a human face' and led the Prague Spring movement. This brief period of liberalisation was followed by the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the persecution of Dubček and his followers.

Gustáv Husák (1913-1991)

In the 'normalisation' years following the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Dubček was succeeded by Husák, who remained leader of the Communist Party and president of the country until the fall of the regime in 1989.

Václav Havel (1936-2011)

The most prominent Czech dissident, who after the revolution in 1989 became the first president of the newly democratic Czechoslovakia until its dissolution at the end of 1992.

Michal Kováč (1930-2016)

The first president of independent Slovakia, from 1993 until 1998.

Current president **Zuzana Čaputová** (from 2019).

	The Velvet Revolution		Slovakia joins NATO		Slovakia enters the Schengen Area	
	1989	1993	2004	2004	2007	2009
Warsaw Pact invasion		The establishment of an independent Slovak Republic		Slovakia joins the European Union		Slovakia adopts the euro

Slovakia has come a long way



What Rick Zednik, an American with Slovak roots, loved about Slovakia back in 1994 was that money was not as important as it is today.

"I was stunned to learn that a government minister still lived in a Petržalka panelák, [a suburban concrete apartment block] and didn't consider it to be a terrible fate," Zednik, one of the founders of *The Slovak Spectator*, said. "I remember a young colleague from a middle-class family, who had never had dinner in a restaurant. Now, even teenagers hang out spending money in hip cafés and bars."

Zednik, who has since published a book about Slovakia called *A Country Lost, Then Found*, recalls that one could spot a foreigner in Slovakia from across the street just by looking at their clothes. "Now, Slovaks of all ages are more fashion-conscious," he said.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

A lot of Slovaks still think that their wages buy less today than before the 1989 fall of the communist regime. They are wrong.

Data of the Financial Policy Institute showed the average net monthly wage in 1989 was 3,142 Czechoslovak crowns (approximately €104).

In the first quarter of 2021, the monthly average salary in Slovakia was €1,124.

Food products are cheaper and more widely available now than under the communist regime.

Older generations can still easily recall images of half-empty shelves at the grocery store.

To buy a basket containing 10 basic foodstuffs, Slovaks had to work one-quarter less in 2014 than they did under communism. The difference is even more visible in the case of clothing and home appliances. While in the 1990s only two-thirds of households had an automatic washing machine, by 2014 the rate went up to 90 percent.

Of course, under communism unemployment was basically non-existent; jobs, even if artificially created, were taken for granted.

After a difficult three decades of high unemployment, the unemployment rate is a lot lower and the country needs to import work forces from abroad.



The Trabant, the iconic car of the communist regime

SAFER THAN BEFORE

Slovakia is one of the safest countries in the world, according to Eurostat. While the number of murders has been dropping,

crime trends changed dramatically at the turn of the century, when the gangster-style politics of three-time prime minister Vladimir Mečiar ended and Slovakia began pursuing European Union membership.

Slovak roads have become safer as well. In 2020, as many as 224 people died on the country's roads, while in 1998 that number stood at 819. The improvement comes amid stricter rules and heavier fines for violations.

It is true that economic crimes have increased in Slovakia by 60 percent since 2011, with roughly



Offerings at stores are incomparably wider today

one-third of the surveyed 76 Slovak companies encountering fraud over the past two years, as indicated by a recent PwC survey. Though travelling from Bratislava to Košice, the major city in eastern Slovakia, might take a long time as Slovakia has not completed its cross-country highway, the travel-time has considerably shortened over the years. In 1993, the train ride took seven hours, and in 2018 an intercity train could take travellers from one city to another in just over four and a half hours. The driving time from Bratislava to Košice is shorter by 30-45 minutes, depending on the route. From 1969 to 1993, during the rise of independent Slovakia, 198 kilometres of highways were built. As of 2020, Slovakia had 482 kilometres of highway and 287 kilometres of speedway. Before 1989, only a limited number of car brands drove on Czechoslovakia's streets, mostly the former Czechoslovak-made Škoda, East Germany's Trabant and Wartburg, Romania's Dacia, the Polish-made Polski Fiat, and the Soviet Volgas and Ladas, among others. While some of



The construction of Eurovea was still on in 2007