



## General information

<b>Official name:</b>	Slovak Republic (SR)
<b>State formation date:</b>	1 January 1993
<b>State system:</b>	republic
<b>Political system:</b>	parliamentary democracy (150 members of Parliament elected for 4 years)
<b>President:</b>	Ivan Gašparovič (since 2009), elected for 5 years
<b>Prime Minister:</b>	Iveta Radičová (since 2010)
<b>State symbols:</b>	national coat of arms/ emblem, national flag, state seal and national anthem „Nad Tatrou sa blýska“



**Membership in international organisations:** EU (since 1 May 2004), NATO, UN, UNESCO, OECD, OBSE, CERN, WHO, INTERPOL, etc.

**International codes:** SK, SVK, bar code 858

**Area:** 49 035 km<sup>2</sup>

**Location:** Central Europe (17° - 22° E, 47° - 49° N)

The mid and the North of the country is mountainous (Carpathian curve), lowlands (important agricultural areas) are typical of the South and the East. The most important Slovak river the Danube connects the capital city of the SR Bratislava with two capital cities of the neighbour countries - Vienna and Budapest.

**Time:** Central European Time (+ 1 hour from GMT) Summer time/daylight- saving time from March to November is + 2 hours from GMT

**Elevation:** the highest point is Gerlach Peak (2655 m), the lowest point is the Bodrog river (95 m).

**Climate:** Moderate climatic zone, with changing four seasons, average temperature in winter -2°C (the coldest month January, the coldest area High Tatras), in summer 21°C (the warmest months July and August, the warmest area Danubian Lowland). In some mountain ranges the snow remains on average 130 days per year.

**Border countries:** Hungary (679 km), Poland (597.5 km), the Czech Republic (265 km), Austria (127,2 km), Ukraine (98 km)

**Administrative divisions:** 8 self-governing regions (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Košice region), 79 districts, 138 towns, 2891 municipalities (including towns)



**Capital city:** Bratislava (population 426 091 as at 31/12/2006)  
**Population:** 5 413 548 as at 31/3/2009  
**Population density:** 110/km<sup>2</sup>  
**Official language:** Slovak  
**Nationalities / Ethnic groups:** Slovak (85.8%), Hungarian (9.7%), Roma (Gipsy) (1.7%), Czech (0.8%), Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, Polish and other (2%)

**Religion:**

- believers approximately 84.1% of which:  
Roman Catholic (68.9%), Evangelic (6.9%), Greek-Catholic (4.1%), Reformed Christians (2%), Orthodox (1%)
- other, unspecified 4.1%
- without confession about 13%

**Currency:** EURO (from 1/1/2009)

**National holidays (are also the public holidays):**

- 1 January - Day of the establishment of the Slovak Republic
- 5 July - St. Cyril and Methodius Day
- 29 August - Slovak National Uprising anniversary
- 1 September - Day of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic
- 17 November - Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

**Days off:**

- 6 January - Epiphany (The Three Magi)
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- 1 May - Labour Day
- 8 May - Day of victory over fascism
- 15 September - Lady of Sorrows Day / Blessed Virgin Mary
- 1 November - All Saints` Day
- 24 December - Christmas Eve
- 25 December - Christmas Day
- 26 December - St. Stephen`s Day



## Practical information

### Safety (and security)

The situation in Slovakia is in this aspect similar to all the European neighbouring countries. Especially in places, where many tourists pass by (i.e. The Old Town / Staré mesto in Bratislava, bus and train stations, means of transport), you have to pay attention to your personal stuff and valuables. For motorists the usual measures are valid - it is recommended to park the cars on guarded parking places, not to leave valuables unnecessarily in the parked car. It's the best to keep your valuables in the hotel safe and not to carry too much cash with you.

### Tax and custom regulations

**Within the EU** import and export of goods is not limited in any way, which also applies to goods for private purposes. It is therefore possible to import an unlimited amount of goods for private purposes from other EU-member countries to Slovakia. There is no obligation to pay tax in Slovakia, as the VAT and consumer tax on goods (where applicable) purchased for private purposes has already been included in the purchasing price in the respective country. When certain goods that are subject to consumer tax are purchased (alcohol, alcoholic beverages and tax products), it is the purchaser who has the obligation to transport the products purchased in another EU-member country. It is not allowed to have the goods shipped, and no other person is allowed to transport the goods. It is also forbidden to provide the goods for further sale.

**Outside the EU** it is possible to import or export duty-free the following quantities:

200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250 gram tobacco

1 litre of spirit/alcohol over 22 % vol. or 2 litres of alcoholised vine or sparkling wine

2 litres of non sparkling wine

Perfume - 50 grams

Eau de toilette - 250 ml

Other up to the value 175 €

The limitations are lowered to 90 € for travellers under 15 years of age. Transport of pets is permitted only with the respective veterinary certificate. Weapons can be exported only with firearms certificate. By **export** basically the same limits are valid as by import. Art objects and object of historical value underlie/are liable to licence and custom duty.

### What languages are spoken

English and German are the most often used foreign languages. Less frequent is the knowledge of French, Spanish, Italian or Russian. In the South of Slovakia Hungarian is used many times. Basic phrases in Slovak language are to be found in short vocabulary.



### **What to do and where to go**

For an inspiration or elaboration of a complex program of your stay in Slovakia it is worth to contact some travel bureau or agency. They are located in every larger town and in the most visited tourist areas. They provide mediatory services in the field of accommodation, boarding, traffic, cultural or sport events and can advise and ensure also an interesting way of spending free time. Tourist information offices also provide useful information and can arrange single services such as accommodation, some excursions or transport. If you want to find out about the country as much as possible, and see, what you would hardly find by yourself, contact some professional guide. The safety while you ascend to the peaks of mountains as well as during hiking is ensured by mountain guides.

### **Electricity**

230 V/50 Hz, standard socket with safety pin

### **Smoking**

In catering facilities, in trains and at workplaces smoking is allowed only in areas reserved for smokers. Smoking prohibition is valid in closed public areas (covered bus stops, closed sports fields), in publicly accessible spaces (stations, cinemas, theatres, museums, galleries, exhibition grounds and similar) and at schools.

### **Where to get further information**

In any **tourist-information office** or foreign representation office of The Slovak Tourist Board. They will gladly plan your journey in some travel office. You get **tourist information** also under the phone number **16 186** (paid). For information about other town and its surrounding than where you are at the moment, enter the city code before this number (i.e. you are in Bratislava and need info about Trenčín - so dial 032/16 186). In all larger towns there is internet access possible in internet cafés located mostly in malls, larger bus or train stations, but also in smaller streets close to the town centre. Even some libraries provide this service.

### **When to travel**

The **main tourist season** lasts in Slovakia from **May to September**. We recommend visiting towns in spring or autumn months (May, June, September or October). In this period it is usually not too hot and besides, out of the main summer holiday are less local tourists moving around in the tourist areas. The **spas** are traditionally most occupied at the beginning of the year (January, February, arch). The **skiing season** starts in December and lasts approximately to March - April.



### **Vaccination and medical measures**

Before the arrival to Slovakia no special health precautions or medical measures are necessary. We recommend a tick vaccine, especially in case, that you plan to spend a lot of time in the woods. It is also suitable to carry with you some insect repellents, because in areas close to water can be an increased occurrence of gnats.

### **Drinking water**

There is drinking water from the taps, besides some exceptional cases, when a notification warns about the possible defect.

### **Insurance**

Except for the usual travel insurance it is necessary to close a **mountain search and rescue insurance** when mountain hiking. In some areas this insurance is part of the tourist fee. Closer information about the insurance and also its purchase is mediated by tourist information offices.

### **Post offices**

Post offices are at your service in all villages and provide bank services (Poštová banka), too. The post offices are open from Monday to Friday 8:00 - 18:00 and on Saturday to 13:00. The main post offices in larger towns or shopping malls are open daily to 20:00 h. It is possible to buy post stamps for post cards and letters directly in the post offices or in some newspaper stands.

### **About the Slovak cuisine**

The Slovak national dish is "**bryndzové halušky**" - a sort of potato dumplings (halušky) with special sheep cheese (bryndza) and usually also topped with fried bacon. You can get this specialty in regular restaurants, too. But it tastes best in typical wooden sheds or chalets, where also other **traditional Slovak meals** are on the menu. The entire atmosphere completed with Gypsy music is an unforgettable experience. However, the hungry stomach can be satisfied also by other catering facilities. In the restaurants and bars it is usual to leave some **tip** for the waiter by rounding up the resulting amount, in the majority it is about 5-10% of the bill. It is not obligatory and the amount should within the possibilities reflect the guests satisfaction with the service.



### How to make (phone) calls

**International country code of SR:** 00421

**Mobile operators on the area of SR:** Orange, T-mobile, Telefónica O2

Slovakia really well covered by mobile phone networks, which enable calls also from some peaks of Tatras. Only very distant areas are without signal. In towns it is possible to use **public phone cells/booths**, which accept coins or phone cards. The cards can be purchased in post offices or some newspaper stands.

### Visas and necessary documents

For the citizens of the European Union a valid personal ID is sufficient. The list of countries, the citizens of which need a valid visa to enter Slovakia, you find on the home page of the Ministry of foreign affairs of SR or you can get informed directly at the competent Embassy.

### Health services

There are **hospitals** in all larger towns. In smaller towns and tourist areas **outpatient clinics** and **pharmacies** are available. Pharmacies are open usually on workdays from 8:00 to 18:00, during weekends and holidays there is always one pharmacy in town non stop on duty. It is recommended to close a health insurance contract before coming to Slovakia, which is usually a part of the travel insurance package. When needing emergency health care call **112** or **specialised rescue service/ambulance**.

### Habits and customs

When entering a Slovak dwelling the residents change their shoes in the entrance hall and offer some house slippers to the guests as well. In many households it is considered as misbehaviour, if you move in the dwelling space in shoes, which is used outside. To offer the guests a tot of slivovica (a strong, colorless alcoholic beverage primarily made of distilled fermented plum juice, often referred to as plum brandy) or similar distilled liquor (spirits) is considered here as a demonstration of hospitality and respect and if there is not a cogent reason, it is impolite to refuse such an offer. This is especially true in the country, when the residents offer distilled liquor of own production (home made liquor). When meeting/welcoming the acquaintances are shaking hands. Close friends or family members usually kiss once on the cheek or both cheeks and hug slightly. When introducing strangers it is polite to shake hands, in a more informal atmosphere also to give peck (fleeting kiss). In Slovakia it is a custom to eat 3-times daily, whereby the most is consumed usually in the lunch time between 11:30 - 13:30. The dinner consists of soup and main course, sometimes also a dessert. For supper warm meals are served often, as well, generally between 18 - 21 h. It is a habit in Slovakia to use the formal second person plural "vykanie" in official relations and meetings, the informal "tykanie", is usual in families and among friends, eventually close colleagues( and is similar to being on first name with someone).

Source: [www.slovakia.travel](http://www.slovakia.travel)