



# Bratislava Region



# Little Big Country





The Bratislava Region lies in West and Southwest Slovakia, and contains the southern part of the Little Carpathian Mountains, the Záhorie Lowlands and the Danube Lowlands. Its neighbours are the Trnava Region in the north and east, Hungary in the south, and Austria and the Czech Republic in the west. The Slovak capital Bratislava is the natural centre of the region in terms of political, economic and social life.



With a favourable geographical position, the Bratislava Region is an important venue for tourism which has become a crucial part of the local economy. Although relatively modest in size, the region boasts beautiful and diverse nature and excellent infrastructure, which makes it a place offering ample opportunity for the growth of tourism. In particular, Bratislava's tourism

services focus on the local history, culture and traditions, catering, shopping and congress tourism. The area along the river Danube is traditionally associated with water, and the place is ideal for summer holidays, water tourism and fishing.



Bratislava Old Town



SNP Bridge

The Záhorie region is especially known for its natural beauties, historical monuments, and ample opportunities for water sports and relaxation. The Little Carpathian Mountains have a considerable reputation for wine growing and rich traditions of folk art.



The capital of Slovakia, Bratislava was known as Pressburg and Pozsony up till 1919. It is situated on both banks of the river Danube at the feet of the Little Carpathian Mountains. Bratislava is the only capital in the world to border on two other countries: the Hungarian borders run to the south of the city, the Austrian borders to the west. No less importantly, Bratislava is situated only 60 kilometers away from Vienna, which is the shortest distance between two capitals in Europe. Bratislava is home to Slovakia's president, government and all important political bodies and institutions.



Bratislava Main Square



National Bank of Slovakia



The Apollo Bridge



Primatial Palace

It was more than 2,000 years ago that Celts built their fortified settlements in the area, and the site was later turned into a medieval town. The first written records of Bratislava – then called *Bresalauspruch* – date back to 907. Later, the town became part of the Hungarian kingdom. Receiving royal privileges in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Bratislava was made Hungary's capital in 1536. In addition to being home to the Hungarian kings, archbishops and assembly, the town was used for the coronation ceremonies. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw Bratislava

as the biggest and most important town not only in Slovakia, but in the entire Hungarian Empire. This was a time of busy construction, leaving behind a number of spectacular palaces of the Hungarian nobility, churches or monasteries; the new streets bustled with cultural and social life. It was the reign of the Austro-Hungarian Empress Maria Theresia of the Habsburg Family that is known as the golden age of Bratislava.

Bratislava is a city rich in historical monuments. The Bratislava Castle is clearly the dominant feature, and standing next to it are the Slovak Parliament – called the National Council – and St. Martin’s Cathedral. The Main Square boasts a fountain with the statue of King Maximilian II and the Old Town Hall. The internal courtyard of the town hall takes us to another square which is home to the Primatial Palace. Its Mirror Hall hosted the signing of the Peace Treaty of Pressburg in 1805, whereas these days visitors come to admire its collection of 17<sup>th</sup> century English tapestry. The nearby Hviezdoslav Square is home to the Slovak National Theatre, its design drawing inspiration from Paris architecture. You can still feel the atmosphere of Bratislava’s past in its fine narrow streets.



Michael’s Gate

Grassalkovich Palace

One of the modern features of the city, the New Bridge is famous for having a restaurant on the top of its pillar 85 meters above the ground. The only military cemetery in the city called Slavín commemorates the victims of World War II (1939-1945). With its fine views of the entire city, it is a popular venue for tourists. The city also boasts several large forest parks which draw crowds of local residents as well as visitors to Bratislava.



# Bratislava Castle

A dominant feature of the city, the majestic Bratislava Castle is visible from long distances. Starting in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Castle was home to Hungarian kings for two centuries, this is where the Hungarian assembly held their sessions, and the coronation tower was home to the Hungarian coronation jewels. May 1811 saw a disastrous fire that destroyed the castle completely, and the ruins remained untouched for another 150 years. Starting in 1953, the reconstruction gave

the castle its original shape. The interior has retained some features dating back to the Gothic era (such as a knights hall, arcades) and the Baroque times. The festive features such as the grand stairway and the entrance hall with three naves remind of the representative purposes that the Castle has fulfilled for centuries. The only features left behind from the Renaissance times are fragments with rich stucco paintings on the ceilings depicting plants and figures in the southeast



wing. The Bratislava Castle also hosts exhibitions with displays of precious exhibits showing the history of the Slovak nation from time immemorial till today. The main palace is home to the exhibition showing historical furniture and clocks, and jewels from the dawn of Slovak history. The treasury, with a separate entrance from the courtyard, holds a little sculpture of a naked female figure, the 25 thousand-years old Moravany

Venus. The Castle's park contains remnants of a church dating back to the Great Moravian Empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In the summer, open-air concerts and theatre shows are held in the courtyard of the Castle.

# Devín

Sitting on a majestic cliff above the confluence of the rivers Danube and Morava, the Devín Castle is a fascinating sight. The first records about the fortress by the name of Dowina date back to 864 when the place was home to Slavic landlords. When the Great Moravian Empire collapsed, the castle was used to monitor the borders, and went through several reconstructions. The last destruction came in 1809 with the Napoleonic Wars.

The castle has an irregular ground plan which had to adapt to the shape of the cliff. The entry is through the west-facing Moravian Gate built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century on the site of a former rampart. Situated behind the gate are precious remnants from



a massive Roman stone construction dating as far back as 4<sup>th</sup> century. The tourists can then either go to see the site of a former 9<sup>th</sup> century church, or the preserved ruins of a medieval castle. Some of the arched rooms of the palace are now used to display museum exhibitions. Also, the castle boasts a 55-meter deep water well and a viewing gallery with nice views of the river Danube and Braunsberg Hill, Austria.

In the tourist season, the castle holds fencing shows, and the visitors are also invited to try javelin throw, axe throw, or archery. The boat port below the castle is a starting point for boat rides to Bratislava, Hainburg (Austria) or short boat trips along the river Morava.





# St. Martin's Cathedral



St. Martin's Cathedral (also known as St. Martin's Dome) is the biggest and most important church in Bratislava, built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the site of a former church and cemetery from the Romanesque times. When Bratislava was the coronation place of Hungarian kings, Maximilian II was the first to be crowned in 1563. Another eighteen sovereigns followed, including Empress Maria Theresia on 25 June 1741. The tower reaches as high as 85 meters. Sitting on the top

of the tower is a golden pillow the size of two by two meters with a golden copy of the Hungarian royal crown on it. The crown is one meter wide and tall and weighs 300 kilograms. The Cathedral boasts works by numerous artists of world renown. One corner of the south nave contains a jewel of Baroque visual arts: equestrian statue of St. Martin sharing his coat with a poor man, made by Juraj Rafael Donner in 1735. Moreover, the visitors to the Dome admire tombstones from Gothic and Renaissance times, beautiful colourful windows or octagonal columns. Among the people buried in the cathedral are members of the nobility, church leaders, and artists.

Starting in 2003, coronation festivities have been held on the first weekend in September to commemorate the splendid history of Bratislava. The festive parade marching through the streets, knights tournaments, and shows of jugglers, fire throwers and belly dancers entertain visitors to the streets of the old town, reminding of the coronation ceremonies that were associated with Bratislava for two centuries. The very coronation rituals are imitated in St. Martin's Cathedral based on historical documents: the king is anointed and receives the royal insignia, including



# Coronation Festivities



St. Stephen's crown, sword, cloak, sceptre and orb. Other parts of the ceremony follow in the streets of the town: the king appoints knights of the Order of the Golden Spur, swears an oath to the country, rides his horse to the coronation hill and lashes his sword towards all points of the compass. As part of the celebrations, representatives of royal towns come to pay homage to the monarch, artisans present their wares, wine flows from the fountain, knight tournaments and parties are held, with an ox roasted and beer from the royal brewery served in abundance.





# Opera and Ballet

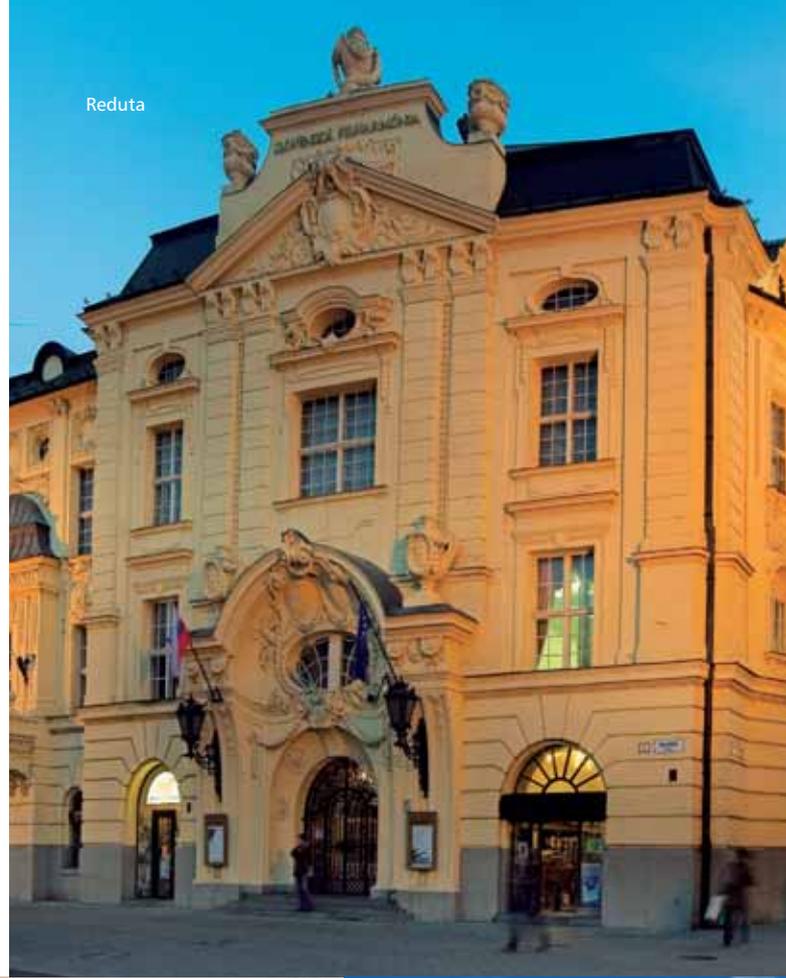


Slovak National Theatre

The Slovak National Theatre, one of Slovakia's most prominent cultural institutions, was established in 1920. These days, the theatre comprises three separate resident companies: drama, opera, and ballet. Opera and ballet performances are held both in the historical building in Hviezdoslav Square and in the new venue in Pribinova Street. The Slovak National Theatre is a repertory theatre, with performances running in all venues every day throughout the season, i.e. from September to June. With first-rate quality of performances, the Slovak National Opera and Ballet are popular among visitors from abroad.

The Bratislava Music Festival is the most important and prominent international festival of classical music in Slovakia, established as early as 1964. Every autumn, the venues at the Slovak Philharmonic and Reduta host a number of soloists, orchestras and choirs from Slovakia and other countries alike.

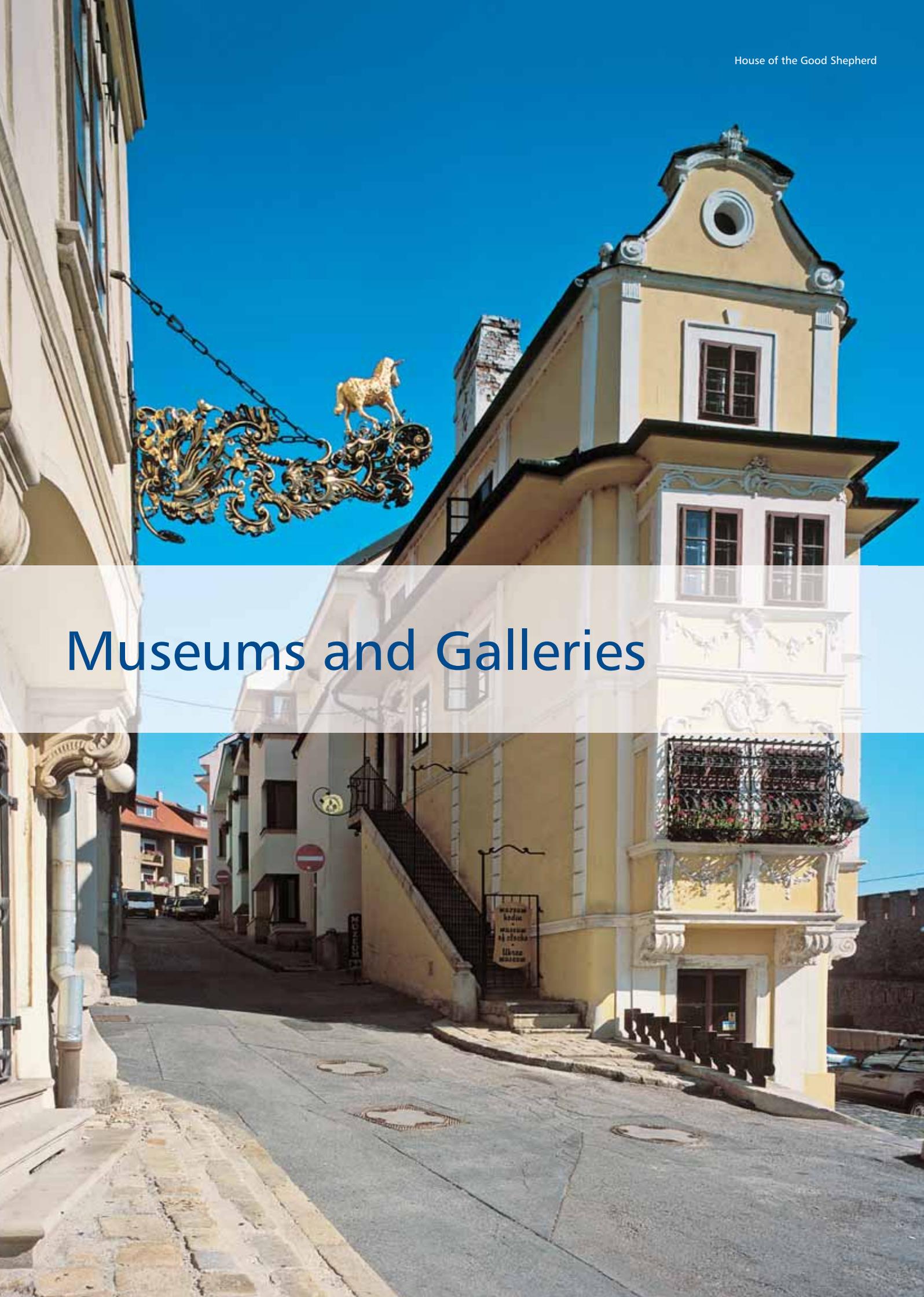
Reduta



# Bratislava Music Festival



# Museums and Galleries



Bratislava boasts a number of museums and galleries showing exhibitions of historical as well as modern art. The Slovak National Museum is situated in Vajanského nábrežie on the quayside, and offers several permanent exhibitions of history and natural sciences. Exhibitions of the Museum of Music are on display at Bratislava Castle. The history of Bratislava is shown in the various exhibitions of the Bratislava City Museum, located in the Old Town Hall at Primaciálne Square. In addition to the exhibitions featuring the city's history and feudal justice, it has a section on wine-growing and wine-making.



Danubiana



Slovak National Museum



Michael's Gate



Slovak National Gallery

A local specialty, the Museum of Clocks – situated at the House of the Good Shepherd in Židovská Street – focuses on clocks made in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by Bratislava-based masters. The Museum of Arms is housed at Michael's Gate, and in addition to exhibitions of arms and history of the town fortifications, it offers fine views of the Old Town.

Mirbach Palace





Slovak National Gallery

## Slovak National Gallery

With the total number of works amounting to 55 thousand, the Slovak National Gallery specializes in the Slovak cultural heritage in the field of visual arts. The gallery also hosts displays of Gothic and Baroque art in Slovakia and a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovak paintings.

## The City Gallery of Bratislava

Housed in the Mirbach Palace in Franciscan Square, the City Gallery offers permanent displays of Central European Baroque paintings and sculptures. The Pálffy Palace in Panská Street shows permanent displays of Gothic table paintings and 19<sup>th</sup> century Central European paintings and sculptures. The City Gallery of Bratislava is also housed in the Primatial Palace – known for a fine collection of English tapestry – with several smaller displays including 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch and Flemish genre paintings and Italian paintings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the Bratislava Region, the second half of September is traditionally associated with wine harvest festivities, the best known being the Little Carpathian Festivals in Pezinok and Modra. The festivities pay tribute to the hard work of the local wine growers, wine makers and the wine they produce. Visitors are invited to enjoy a nice glass of wine, try the semi-fermented young wine called burčák, a wide range of meat and sweet dishes, buy some fine examples of traditional crafts, or simply enjoy folk music, dances and entertainment. More fun comes with the traditional merry-go-rounds and fireworks.

## Modra

The town of Modra has a long-established reputation for growing and making first-rate wine and pottery called Modra majolica. With a wide spectrum of shapes, unique aesthetic form and top-quality production methods, the pottery is a typical example of folk art in Slovakia.

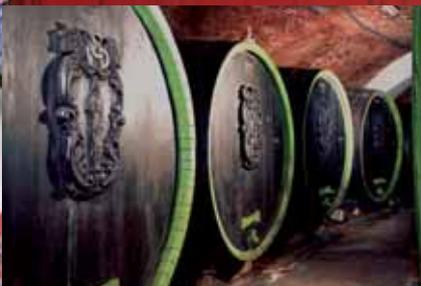
# Wine Harvest

Svätý Jur





Goose feast



Pezinok



Modra Majolica



## Pezinok

The old town of Pezinok with a rich winery tradition is part of a tourism project called Little Carpathian Mountains Wine Route which connects all major wine producing villages and towns in the area, starting in Bratislava and going as far as Smolenice fifty kilometers to the north. Visitors to Pezinok are invited to try some of the local wine and food specialties, and watch traditional winery shows.

## Slovenský Grob

The village of Slovenský Grob is famous for its fine dishes consisting of roast goose and thin potato pancakes called lokše. The goose feasts have a tradition of more than one hundred years and draw crowds of tourists: every season, up to 70 thousand visitors eat about 15 thousand geese with half a million pancakes.



# Gabčíkovo Reservoir



The Gabčíkovo Reservoir was originally intended as part of a joint Slovak-Hungarian project of Danube water reservoirs called Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros. The construction started in 1977 but – with Hungary giving up the project – Slovakia finished the reservoir on its own in 1992. The boat trips across the dam give visitors the opportunity to admire the natural beauties of the Danube region, and the regular boat rides include destinations such as the Slovak towns of Čunovo or Štúrovo, or Hungary’s Esztergom and Budapest.

The area along the river Danube between Bratislava's neighborhoods of Petržalka and Čunovo is a magnet for cyclists and inline skaters especially in the summer. The place boasts a modern water sports centre with two artificial canals for competitions in water slalom and rafting. The centre is open from May to October, and is used both by professional sportsmen and complete beginners.

The peninsula running into an artificial lake near the town of Čunovo is home to a gallery of modern art called Danubiana Meulensteen Museum housed in a futuristic building. The large hall on the second floor hosts shows of leading artists from all over the world. The ground floor is used for selling exhibitions of contemporary art. Especially in the summer, the visitors to the Art Café will appreciate the wonderful opportunity to enjoy their cup of coffee right on the bank of the river Danube.

# Čunovo



Danubiana





# Senec



Situated in the southwest of Slovakia, 25 kilometers from the capital Bratislava, the town of Senec is an ideal destination for family holidays with children. The area is known for having a higher amount of sunlight, resulting in the popular name of Sunny Lakes.

The Senec Aquapark is a round-the-year venue for the lovers of water, offering 9 inside and outside swimming pools with different temperatures. The inside also features a children's pool and a toboggan, saunas and massage facilities.



# Golf in Bernolákovo



Established in 1995, the Golf Club in the town of Bernolákovo is the oldest golf club in Slovakia, situated in the premises of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque manor house not far from the capital Bratislava. The championship golf course with 18 holes is considered as one of the most challenging courses in Europe. The players will appreciate the historical park, hilly landscape with a variation of 30 meters, and water areas with finely designed shores..

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