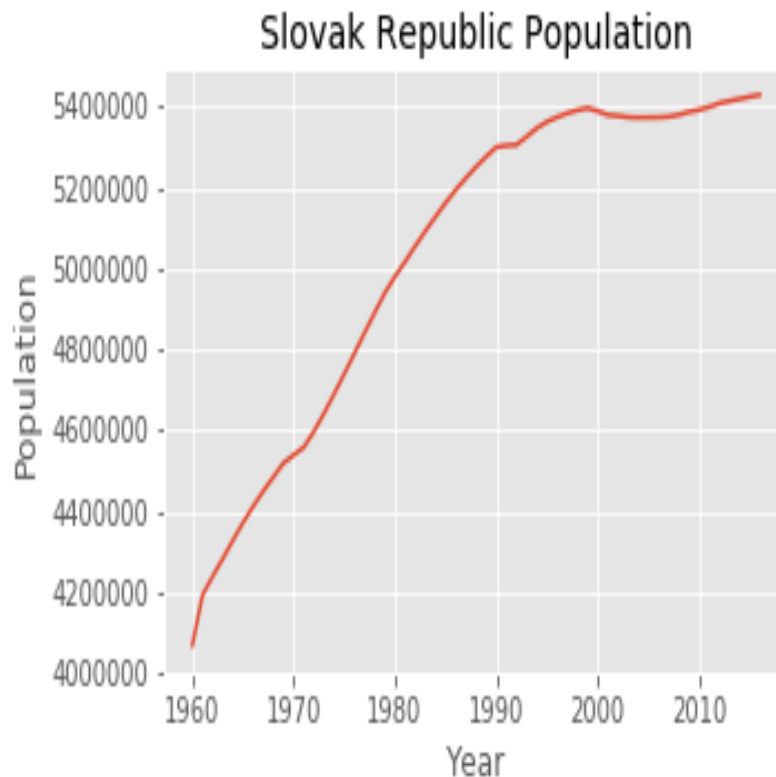


Slovak Republic



Slovakia ((listen); Slovak: Slovensko [sloˈvɛnsko] (listen)), officially the Slovak Republic (Slovak: Slovenská republika, listen), is a landlocked country in Central Europe. It is bordered by Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, the Czech Republic to the west, Hungary to the south, and Austria to the southwest. Slovakia's territory spans about 49,000 square kilometres (19,000 sq mi) and is mostly mountainous. The population is over 5 million and consists mostly of Slovaks. The capital and largest city is Bratislava. The official language is Slovak. The Slavs arrived in the territory of present-day Slovakia in the 5th and 6th centuries. In the 7th century, they played a significant role in the creation of Samo's Empire and in the 9th century established the Principality of Nitra. In the 10th century, the territory was integrated into the Kingdom of Hungary. After World War I and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Slovaks and Czechs established Czechoslovakia (1918–1939). A separate (First) Slovak Republic (1939–1945) existed in World War II as a client state of Nazi Germany. In 1945, Czechoslovakia was re-established and under Communist rule became a Soviet satellite. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution ended Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Slovakia became an independent state on 1 January 1993 after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, sometimes known as the Velvet Divorce. Slovakia is a high-income advanced economy with a very high Human Development Index, a very high standard of living and performs favourably in measurements of civil liberties, press freedom, internet freedom, democratic governance and peacefulness. The country maintains a combination of market economy with a comprehensive social security system. Citizens of Slovakia are provided with universal health care, free education and one of the longest paid maternity leave in the OECD. The country joined the European Union in 2004 and the Eurozone on 1 January 2009. Slovakia is also a member of the Schengen Area, NATO, the United Nations, the OECD, the WTO, CERN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the Visegrád Group. The Slovak economy is one of the fastest growing economies in Europe and 3rd fastest in eurozone. Its legal tender, the Euro, is the world's 2nd most traded currency. Although regional income inequality is high, 90% of citizens own their homes. In 2018, Slovak citizens had visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 167 countries and

territories, ranking the Slovak passport 12th in the world. Slovakia is the world's largest per-capita car producer with a total of 1,040,000 cars manufactured in the country in 2016 alone and the 7th largest car producer in the European Union. The car industry represents 43% of Slovakia's industrial output, and a quarter of its exports.

== Etymology == The first written mention of name Slovakia is in 1586 (German: In Liptau, bei der Stadt Sankt Nikolaus in der Slovakia). It derives from the Czech word *Slováky*; previous German forms were *Windischen landen* and *Windenland* (the 15th century). The native name *Slovensko* (1791) derives from an older name of Slovaks *Sloven* what may indicate its origin before the 15th century. The original meaning was geographic (not political), since Slovakia was a part of the multiethnic Kingdom of Hungary and did not form a separate administrative unit in this period.

== History == Radiocarbon dating puts the oldest surviving archaeological artefacts from Slovakia – found near *Nové Mesto nad Váhom* – at 270,000 BCE, in the Early Paleolithic era. These ancient tools, made by the *Clactonian* technique, bear witness to the ancient habitation of Slovakia. Other stone tools from the Middle Paleolithic era (200,000 – 80,000 BCE) come from the *Prévôt* (*Prepoštská*) cave near *Bojnice* and from other nearby sites. The most important discovery from that era is a *Neanderthal* cranium (c. 200,000 BCE), discovered near *Gánovce*, a village in northern Slovakia. Archaeologists have found prehistoric human skeletons in the region, as well as numerous objects and vestiges of the *Gravettian* culture, principally in the river valleys of *Nitra*, *Hron*, *Ipeľ*, *Váh* and as far as the city of *Žilina*, and near the foot of the *Vihorlat*, *Inovec*, and *Tribeč* mountains, as well as in the *Myjava* Mountains. The most well-known finds include the oldest female statue made of mammoth-bone (22,800 BCE), the famous *Venus of Moravany*. The statue was found in the 1940s in *Moravany nad Váhom* near *Piešťany*. Numerous necklaces made of shells from *Cypraca* thermophile gastropods of the Tertiary period have come from the sites of *Zákovská*, *Podkovice*, *Hubina*, and *Radošina*. These findings provide the most ancient evidence of commercial exchanges carried out between the Mediterranean and central Europe.

=== Bronze Age === The Bronze Age in the geographical territory of modern-day Slovakia went through three stages of development, stretching from 2000 to 800 BCE. Major cultural, economic, and political development can be attributed to the significant growth in production of copper, especially in central Slovakia (for example in *Špania Dolina*) and northwest Slovakia. Copper became a stable source of prosperity for the local population. After the disappearance of the *Ľakany* and *Velatice* cultures, the *Lusatian* people expanded building of strong and complex fortifications, with the large permanent buildings and administrative centres. Excavations of *Lusatian* hill forts document the substantial development of trade and agriculture at that period. The richness and the diversity of tombs increased considerably. The inhabitants of the area manufactured arms, shields, jewellery, dishes, and statues.

=== Iron Age === The arrival of tribes from *Thrace* disrupted the people of the *Kalenderberg* culture, who lived in the hamlets located on the plain (*Sereď*) and in the hill forts like *Molpír*, near *Smolenice*, in the *Little Carpathians*. During *Hallstatt* times, monumental burial mounds were erected in western Slovakia, with princely equipment consisting of richly decorated vessels, ornaments and decorations. The burial rites consisted entirely of cremation. The common people were buried in flat urnfield cemeteries. A special role was given to weaving and the production of textiles. The local power of the "Princes" of the *Hallstatt* period disappeared in Slovakia during the last century before the middle of first millennium BCE, after strife between the *Scytho-Thracian* people and locals, resulting in abandonment of the old hill-forts. Relatively depopulated areas soon caught interest of emerging Celtic tribes, who advanced from the south towards the north, following the Slovak rivers, peacefully integrating into the remnants of the local population.

==== La Tène Period ==== From around 500 BCE, the territory of modern-day Slovakia was settled by Celts, who built powerful oppida on the sites of modern-day *Bratislava* and *Devín*. *Biatecs*, silver coins with inscriptions in the Latin alphabet, represent the first known use of writing in Slovakia. At the northern regions, remnants of the local population of *Lusatian* origin, together with Celtic and later *Dacian* influence, gave rise to the unique *Púchov* culture, with advanced crafts and iron-working, many hill-forts and fortified settlements of central type with coinage of the "*Velkobysterecký*" type (no inscriptions, with a horse on one side and a head on the other). This culture is often connected with the Celtic tribe mentioned in Roman sources as *Cotini*.

==== Roman Period ==== From 2 CE, the expanding Roman Empire established and maintained a series of outposts around and just north of the *Danube*, the largest of which were known as *Carnuntum* (whose remains are on the main road halfway between *Vienna* and *Bratislava*) and *Brigetio* (present-day *Székesfehérvár* at the Slovak-Hungarian border). Such Roman border settlements were built on the present area of *Rusovce*, currently a suburb of *Bratislava*. The military fort was surrounded by a civilian *vicus* and several farms of the *villa rustica* type. The name of this settlement was *Gerulata*. The military fort had an auxiliary

cavalry unit, approximately 300 horses strong, modelled after the Cananefates. The remains of Roman buildings have also survived in Devín Castle (present-day downtown Bratislava), the suburbs of Dúbravka and Stupava, and Bratislava Castle Hill. Near the northernmost line of the Roman hinterlands, the Limes Romanus, there existed the winter camp of Laugaricio (modern-day Trenčín) where the Auxiliary of Legion II fought and prevailed in a decisive battle over the Germanic Quadi tribe in 179 CE during the Marcomannic Wars. The Kingdom of Vannius, a kingdom founded by the Germanic Suebian tribes of Quadi and Marcomanni, as well as several small Germanic and Celtic tribes, including the Osi and Cotini, existed in western and central Slovakia from 8–6 BCE to 179 CE.

=== Great invasions from the 4th to 7th centuries === In the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, the Huns began to leave the Central Asian steppes. They crossed the Danube in 377 CE and occupied Pannonia, which they used for 75 years as their base for launching looting-raids into Western Europe. However, Attila's death in 453 brought about the disappearance of the Hun tribe. In 568, a Turko-Mongol tribal confederacy, the Avars, conducted its own invasion into the Middle Danube region. The Avars occupied the lowlands of the Pannonian Plain, and established an empire dominating the Carpathian Basin. In 623, the Slavic population living in the western parts of Pannonia seceded from their empire after a revolution led by Samo, a Frankish merchant. After 626, the Avar power started a gradual decline but its reign lasted to 804.

=== Slavic states === The Slavic tribes settled in the territory of present-day Slovakia in the 5th century. Western Slovakia was the centre of Samo's empire in the 7th century. A Slavic state known as the Principality of Nitra arose in the 8th century and its ruler Pribina had the first known Christian church of the territory of present-day Slovakia consecrated by 828. Together with neighbouring Moravia, the principality formed the core of the Great Moravian Empire from 833. The high point of this Slavonic empire came with the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 863, during the reign of Duke Rastislav, and the territorial expansion under Duke Svätopluk I.

=== Great Moravia (830–before 907) === Great Moravia arose around 830 when Mojmir I unified the Slavic tribes settled north of the Danube and extended the Moravian supremacy over them. When Mojmir I endeavoured to secede from the supremacy of the king of East Francia in 846, King Louis the German deposed him and assisted Mojmir's nephew Rastislav (846–870) in acquiring the throne. The new monarch pursued an independent policy: after stopping a Frankish attack in 855, he also sought to weaken influence of Frankish priests preaching in his realm. Duke Rastislav asked the Byzantine Emperor Michael III to send teachers who would interpret Christianity in the Slavic vernacular. Upon Rastislav's request, two brothers, Byzantine officials and missionaries Saints Cyril and Methodius came in 863. Cyril developed the first Slavic alphabet and translated the Gospel into the Old Church Slavonic language. Rastislav was also preoccupied with the security and administration of his state. Numerous fortified castles built throughout the country are dated to his reign and some of them (e.g., Dowina, sometimes identified with Devín Castle) are also mentioned in connection with Rastislav by Frankish chronicles. During Rastislav's reign, the Principality of Nitra was given to his nephew Svätopluk as an appanage. The rebellious prince allied himself with the Franks and overthrew his uncle in 870. Similarly to his predecessor, Svätopluk I (871–894) assumed the title of the king (rex). During his reign, the Great Moravian Empire reached its greatest territorial extent, when not only present-day Moravia and Slovakia but also present-day northern and central Hungary, Lower Austria, Bohemia, Silesia, Lusatia, southern Poland and northern Serbia belonged to the empire, but the exact borders of his domains are still disputed by modern authors. Svätopluk also withstood attacks of the semi-nomadic Magyar tribes and the Bulgarian Empire, although sometimes it was he who hired the Magyars when waging war against East Francia. In 880, Pope John VIII set up an independent ecclesiastical province in Great Moravia with Archbishop Methodius as its head. He also named the German cleric Wiching the Bishop of Nitra. After the death of Prince Svätopluk in 894, his sons Mojmir II (894–906?) and Svätopluk II succeeded him as the Prince of Great Moravia and the Prince of Nitra respectively. However, they started to quarrel for domination of the whole empire. Weakened by an internal conflict as well as by constant warfare with Eastern Francia, Great Moravia lost most of its peripheral territories. In the meantime, the semi-nomadic Magyar tribes, possibly having suffered defeat from the similarly nomadic Pechenegs, left their territories east of the Carpathian Mountains, invaded the Carpathian Basin and started to occupy the territory gradually around 896. Their armies' advance may have been promoted by continuous wars among the countries of the region whose rulers still hired them occasionally to intervene in their struggles. It is not known what happened with both Mojmir II and Svätopluk II because they are not mentioned in written sources after 906. In three battles (4–5 July and 9 August 907) near Bratislava, the Magyars routed Bavarian armies. Some historians put this year as the date of the break-up of the Great Moravian Empire, due to the Hungarian conquest; other historians take the date

a little bit earlier (to 902). Great Moravia left behind a lasting legacy in Central and Eastern Europe. The Glagolitic script and its successor Cyrillic were disseminated to other Slavic countries, charting a new path in their sociocultural development. The administrative system of Great Moravia may have influenced the development of the administration of the Kingdom of Hungary. === Kingdom of Hungary (1000–1918) === Following the disintegration of the Great Moravian Empire at the turn of the 10th century, the Hungarians annexed the territory comprising modern Slovakia. After their defeat on the Lech River they abandoned their nomadic ways; they settled in the centre of the Carpathian valley, adopted Christianity and began to build a new state – the Hungarian kingdom. From the 11th century, when the territory inhabited by the Slavic-speaking population of Danubian Basin was incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary, until 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed, the territory of modern Slovakia was an integral part of the Hungarian state. The ethnic composition became more diverse with the arrival of the Carpathian Germans in the 13th century, and the Jews in the 14th century. A significant decline in the population resulted from the invasion of the Mongols in 1241 and the subsequent famine. However, in medieval times the area of the present-day Slovakia was characterised by German and Jewish immigration, burgeoning towns, construction of numerous stone castles, and the cultivation of the arts. In 1465, King Matthias Corvinus founded the Hungarian Kingdom's third university, in Pressburg (Bratislava, Pozsony), but it was closed in 1490 after his death. Hussites also settled in the region after the Hussite Wars. Owing to the Ottoman Empire's expansion into Hungarian territory, Bratislava was designated the new capital of Hungary in 1536, ahead of the old Hungarian capital of Buda falling in 1541. It became part of the Austrian Habsburg monarchy, marking the beginning of a new era. The territory comprising modern Slovakia, then known as Upper Hungary, became the place of settlement for nearly two-thirds of the Magyar nobility fleeing the Turks and far more linguistically and culturally Hungarian than it was before. Partly thanks to old Hussite families, and Slovaks studying under Martin Luther, the region then experienced a growth in Protestants. For a short period in the 17th century, most Slovaks were Lutherans. They defied the Catholic Habsburgs and sought protection from neighboring Transylvania, a rival continuation of the Magyar state that practiced religious tolerance and normally had Ottoman backing. Upper Hungary, modern Slovakia, became the site of frequent wars between Catholics in the west territory and Protestants in the east, also against Turks, the frontier was on a constant state of military alert and heavily fortified by castles and citadels often manned by Catholic German and Slovak troops on the Habsburg side. In 1655, the printing press at the Trnava university produced the Jesuit Benedikt Szöllösi's *Cantus Catholici*, a Catholic hymnal in the Slovak language that reaffirmed links to the earlier works of Cyril and Methodius. The Ottoman wars, rivalry between Austria and Transylvania, and the frequent insurrections against the Habsburg Monarchy inflicted a great deal of devastation, especially in the rural areas. In the Austro-Turkish War (1663–1664) a Turkish army led by the Grand Vizier decimated Slovakia. Even so, Slovaks from the Principality of Upper Hungary fought alongside the Turks against the Austrians at the Battle of Vienna of 1683. As the Turks withdrew from Hungary in the late 17th century, the importance of the territory comprising modern Slovakia decreased, although Pressburg retained its status as the capital of Hungary until 1848, when it was transferred back to Buda. During the revolution of 1848–49, the Slovaks supported the Austrian Emperor, hoping for independence from the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy, but they failed to achieve their aim. Thereafter relations between the nationalities deteriorated (see Magyarization), culminating in the secession of Slovakia from Hungary after World War I. === Czechoslovakia (1918–1939) === In 1918, Slovakia and the regions of Bohemia, Moravia, Czech Silesia and Carpathian Ruthenia formed a common state, Czechoslovakia, with the borders confirmed by the Treaty of Saint Germain and Treaty of Trianon. In 1919, during the chaos following the break-up of Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia was formed with numerous Germans and Hungarians within the newly set borders. A Slovak patriot Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880–1919), who helped organise Czechoslovak regiments against Austria-Hungary during the First World War, died in a plane crash. In the peace following the World War, Czechoslovakia emerged as a sovereign European state. It provided what were at the time rather extensive rights to its minorities and remained the only democracy in this part of Europe in the interwar period. During the Interwar period, democratic Czechoslovakia was allied with France, and also with Romania and Yugoslavia (Little Entente); however, the Locarno Treaties of 1925 left East European security open. Both Czechs and Slovaks enjoyed a period of relative prosperity. There was progress in not only the development of the country's economy, but also culture and educational opportunities. The minority Germans came to accept their role in the new country and relations with Austria were good. Yet the Great Depression caused a sharp economic downturn, followed by political disruption and insecurity in Europe. Thereafter

Czechoslovakia came under continuous pressure from the revisionist governments of Germany and Hungary. Eventually this led to the Munich Agreement of September 1938, which allowed Nazi Germany to partially dismember the country by occupying what was called the Sudetenland, a region with a German-speaking majority and bordering Germany and Austria. The remainder of "rump" Czechoslovakia was renamed Czecho-Slovakia and included a greater degree of Slovak political autonomy. Southern and eastern Slovakia, however, was reclaimed by Hungary at the First Vienna Award of November 1938. === World War II (1939–1945) === After the Munich Agreement and its Vienna Award, Nazi Germany threatened to annex part of Slovakia and allow the remaining regions to be partitioned by Hungary or Poland unless independence was declared. Thus, Slovakia seceded from Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939 and allied itself, as demanded by Germany, with Hitler's coalition. Secession had created the first Slovak state in history. The government of the First Slovak Republic, led by Jozef Tiso and Vojtech Tuka, was strongly influenced by Germany and gradually became a puppet regime in many respects. Meanwhile, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, sought to reverse the Munich Agreement and the subsequent German occupation of Czechoslovakia, and to return the Republic to its 1937 boundaries. The government operated from London and it was ultimately considered, by those countries that recognised it, the legitimate government for Czechoslovakia throughout the Second World War. 75,000 Jews out of 80,000 who remained on Slovak territory after Hungary had seized southern regions were deported and taken to German death camps. Thousands of Jews, Gypsies and other politically undesirable people remained in Slovak forced labor camps in Sereď, Vyhne, and Nováky. Tiso, through the granting of presidential exceptions, allowed between 1,000 and 4,000 people crucial to the war economy to avoid deportations. Under Tiso's government and Hungarian occupation, the vast majority of Slovakia's pre-war Jewish population (between 75,000–105,000 individuals including those who perished from the occupied territory) were murdered. The Slovak state paid Germany 500 RM per every deported Jew for "retraining and accommodation" (similar payment, but only 30 RM was paid by Croatia). After it became clear that the Soviet Red Army was going to push the Nazis out of eastern and central Europe, an anti-Nazi resistance movement launched a fierce armed insurrection, known as the Slovak National Uprising, near the end of summer 1944. A bloody German occupation and a guerilla war followed. Germans and their local collaborators completely destroyed 93 villages and massacred thousands of civilians, often hundreds at a time. The territory of Slovakia was liberated by Soviet and Romanian forces by the end of April 1945. === Soviet influence and Communist party rule (1948–1989) === After World War II, Czechoslovakia was reconstituted and Jozef Tiso was executed in 1947 for collaboration with the Nazis. More than 80,000 Hungarians and 32,000 Germans were forced to leave Slovakia, in a series of population transfers initiated by the Allies at the Potsdam Conference. Out of about 130,000 Carpathian Germans in Slovakia in 1938, by 1947 only some 20,000 remained. As a result of the Yalta Conference, Czechoslovakia came under the influence and later under direct occupation of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact, after a coup in 1948. The country was invaded by the Warsaw Pact forces (with the exception of Romania and Albania) in 1968, ending a period of liberalisation under the leadership of Alexander Dubček. In 1969 Czechoslovakia became a federation of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic. Czechoslovakia was never part of the Soviet Union and remained independent to a degree. === Establishment of the Slovak Republic (after 1993) === The end of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia in 1989, during the peaceful Velvet Revolution, was followed once again by the country's dissolution, this time into two successor states. The word "socialist" was dropped in the names of the two republics, i.e. the Slovak Socialist Republic was renamed Slovak Republic. In July 17, 1992 Slovakia, led by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, declared itself a sovereign state, meaning that its laws took precedence over those of the federal government. Throughout the autumn of 1992, Mečiar and Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus negotiated the details for disbanding the federation. In November the federal parliament voted to dissolve the country officially on December 31, 1992. The Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic went their separate ways after 1 January 1993, an event sometimes called the Velvet Divorce. Slovakia has remained a close partner with the Czech Republic. Both countries co-operate with Hungary and Poland in the Visegrád Group. Slovakia became a member of NATO on 29 March 2004 and of the European Union on 1 May 2004. On 1 January 2009, Slovakia adopted the Euro as its national currency. == Geography == Slovakia lies between latitudes 47° and 50° N, and longitudes 16° and 23° E. The Slovak landscape is noted primarily for its mountainous nature, with the Carpathian Mountains extending across most of the northern half of the country. Among these mountain ranges are the high peaks of the Fatra-Tatra Area (including Tatra Mountains, Greater Fatra and Lesser Fatra), Slovak Ore Mountains, Slovak Central Mountains or

Beskids. The largest lowland is the fertile Danubian Lowland in the southwest, followed by the Eastern Slovak Lowland in the southeast. Forests cover 41% of Slovak land surface. === Tatra mountains === Tatras, with 29 peaks higher than 2,500 metres (8,202 feet) AMSL, are the highest mountain range in the Carpathian Mountains. Tatras occupy an area of 750 square kilometres (290 sq mi), of which the greater part 600 square kilometres (232 sq mi) lies in Slovakia. They are divided into several parts. To the north, close to the Polish border, are the High Tatras which are a popular hiking and skiing destination and home to many scenic lakes and valleys as well as the highest point in Slovakia, the Gerlachovský štít at 2,655 metres (8,711 ft) and the country's highly symbolic mountain Kriváň. To the west are the Western Tatras with their highest peak of Bystrá at 2,248 metres (7,375 ft) and to the east are the Belianske Tatras, smallest by area. Separated from the Tatras proper by the valley of the Váh river are the Low Tatras, with their highest peak of Ľumbier at 2,043 metres (6,703 ft). The Tatra mountain range is represented as one of the three hills on the coat of arms of Slovakia. === National parks === There are 9 national parks in Slovakia, they cover 6.5% of Slovak land surface. === Caves === Slovakia has hundreds of caves and caverns under its mountains, of which 30 are open to the public. Most of the caves have stalagmites rising from the ground and stalactites hanging from above. There are currently five Slovak caves under UNESCO's World Heritage Site status. They are Dobšinská Ice Cave, Domica, Gombasek Cave, Jasovská Cave and Ochtinská Aragonite Cave. Other caves open to the public include Belianska Cave, Demänovská Cave of Liberty, Demänovská Ice Cave or Bystrianska Cave. === Rivers === Most of the rivers stem in the Slovak mountains. Some only pass through and the others make a natural border with surrounding countries (more than 620 kilometres (385 mi)). For example, the Dunajec (17 kilometres (11 mi)) to the north, the Danube (172 kilometres (107 mi)) to the south or the Morava (119 kilometres (74 mi)) to the West. The total length of the rivers on Slovak territory is 49,774 kilometres (30,928 mi). The longest river in Slovakia is the Váh (403 kilometres (250 mi)), the shortest is the Ľadná voda. Other important and large rivers are the Myjava, the Nitra (197 kilometres (122 mi)), the Orava, the Hron (298 kilometres (185 mi)), the Hornád (193 kilometres (120 mi)), the Slaná (110 kilometres (68 mi)), the Lpeľ (232 kilometres (144 mi)), forming the border with Hungary), the Bodrog, the Laborec, the Latorica and the Ondava. The biggest volume of discharge in Slovak rivers is during spring, when the snow melts from the mountains. The only exception is the Danube, whose discharge is the greatest during summer when the snow melts in the Alps. The Danube is the largest river that flows through Slovakia. === Lakes === There are around 175 naturally formed tarns in High Tatras. With an area of 20 hectares (49 acres) and its depth of 53 metres (174 ft), Veľké Hincovo pleso is the largest and the deepest tarn in Slovakia. Other tarns in the High Tatras include Štrbské pleso, Popradské pleso, Skalnaté pleso, Zbojnícke pleso, Velické pleso, Žabie pleso, Krivánske zelené pleso or Roháčske plesá. Other than in the High Tatras there are Vrbické pleso in Low Tatras, Morské oko and Vinné jazero in Vihorlat Mountains or Jezerské jazero in Spišská Magura. The largest dams on the river Váh are Liptovská Mara and Sĺava. Other well-known dams are Oravská priehrada in the north, Zemplínska Šírava and Domaša in the east, Senecské jazero, Zlaté piesky or Zelená voda in the west. === Climate === The Slovak climate lies between the temperate and continental climate zones with relatively warm summers and cold, cloudy and humid winters. Temperature extremes are between -41 to 40.3 °C (-41.8 to 104.5 °F) although temperatures below -30 °C (-22 °F) are rare. The weather differs from the mountainous north to the plains in the south. The warmest region is Bratislava and Southern Slovakia where the temperatures may reach 30 °C (86 °F) in summer, occasionally to 39 °C (102 °F) in Hurbanovo. During night, the temperatures drop to 20 °C (68 °F). The daily temperatures in winter average in the range of -5 °C (23 °F) to 10 °C (50 °F). During night it may be freezing, but usually not below -10 °C (14 °F). In Slovakia, there are four seasons, each season (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter) lasts three months. The dry continental air brings in the summer heat and winter frosts. In contrast, oceanic air brings rainfalls and reduces summer temperatures. In the lowlands and valleys fog is often, especially in winter. Spring starts with 21 March and is characterised by colder weather with average daily temperature of 9 °C (48 °F) in the first weeks and about 14 °C (57 °F) in May and 17 °C (63 °F) in June. In Slovakia, the weather and climate in the spring is very unstable. Summer starts on 22 June and is usually characterised by hot weather with daily temperatures exceeding 30 °C (86 °F). July is the warmest month with temperatures up to about 37 to 40 °C (99 to 104 °F), especially in regions of southern Slovakia – in the urban area of Komárno, Hurbanovo or Štúrovo. Showers or thunderstorms may occur because of the summer monsoon called Medardova kvapka (Medard drop – 40 days of rain). Summer in Northern Slovakia is usually mild with temperatures around 25 °C (77 °F) (less in the mountains). Autumn in Slovakia starts on 23 September and is mostly characterised by wet weather and wind, although the first weeks can be very warm and

sunny. The average temperature in September is around 14 °C (57 °F), in November to 3 °C (37 °F). Late September and early October is a dry and sunny time of year (so-called Indian Summer). Winter starts on 21 December with temperatures around –5 to –10 °C (23 to 14 °F). In December and January it is usually snowing, these are the coldest months of the year. At lower altitudes, snow does not stay the whole winter, it is changing into the thaw and frost. Winters are colder in the mountains, where the snow usually lasts until March or April and the night temperatures fall to –20 °C (–4 °F) and colder. == Biodiversity == Slovakia signed the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity on 19 May 1993, and became a party to the convention on 25 August 1994. It has subsequently produced a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which was received by the convention on 2 November 1998. The biodiversity of Slovakia comprises animals (such as annellids, arthropods, molluscs, nematodes and vertebrates), fungi (Ascomycota, Basidiomycota, Chytridiomycota, Glomeromycota and Zygomycota), micro-organisms (including Mycetozoa), and plants. === Fungi === Over 4000 species of fungi have been recorded from Slovakia. Of these, nearly 1500 are lichen-forming species. Some of these fungi are undoubtedly endemic, but not enough is known to say how many. Of the lichen-forming species, about 40% have been classified as threatened in some way. About 7% are apparently extinct, 9% endangered, 17% vulnerable, and 7% rare. The conservation status of non-lichen-forming fungi in Slovakia is not well documented, but there is a red list for its larger fungi. == Politics and government == Slovakia is a parliamentary democratic republic with a multi-party system. The last parliamentary elections were held on 5 March 2016 and two rounds of presidential elections took place on 15 and 29 March 2014. The Slovak head of state and the formal head of the executive is the president (currently Andrej Kiska), though with very limited powers. The president is elected by direct, popular vote under the two-round system for a five-year term. Most executive power lies with the head of government, the prime minister (currently Peter Pellegrini), who is usually the leader of the winning party, but he/she needs to form a majority coalition in the parliament. The prime minister is appointed by the president. The remainder of the cabinet is appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister. Slovak highest legislative body is the 150-seat unicameral National Council of the Slovak Republic (Národná rada Slovenskej republiky). Delegates are elected for a four-year term on the basis of proportional representation. Slovak highest judicial body is the Constitutional Court of Slovakia (Ústavný súd), which rules on constitutional issues. The 13 members of this court are appointed by the president from a slate of candidates nominated by parliament. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic was ratified 1 September 1992, and became effective 1 January 1993. It was amended in September 1998 to allow direct election of the president and again in February 2001 due to EU admission requirements. The civil law system is based on Austro-Hungarian codes. The legal code was modified to comply with the obligations of Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and to expunge the Marxist–Leninist legal theory. Slovakia accepts the compulsory International Court of Justice jurisdiction with reservations. === Foreign relations === Slovakia joined the European Union and NATO in 2004 and the Eurozone in 2009. Slovakia is a member of the United Nations (since 1993) and participates in its specialised agencies. The country was, on 10 October 2005, elected to a two-year term on the UN Security Council from 2006 to 2007. It is also a member of the Schengen Area, the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and part of the Visegrad Four (V4, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland). The Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic entered into a Customs Union upon the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, which facilitates a relatively free flow of goods and services. Slovakia maintains diplomatic relations with 134 countries, primarily through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As of December 2013, Slovakia maintained 90 missions abroad, including 64 embassies, seven missions to multilateral organisations, nine consulates-general, one consular office, one Slovak Economic and Cultural Office and eight Slovak Institutes. There are 44 embassies and 35 honorary consulates in Bratislava. === Military === The Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic number 14,000 uniformed personnel. Slovakia joined NATO in March 2004. The country has been an active participant in US- and NATO-led military actions. There is a joint Czech-Slovak peacekeeping force in Kosovo. From 2006 the army transformed into a fully professional organisation and compulsory military service was abolished. Slovak Ground Forces are made up of two active mechanised infantry brigades. The Air and Air Defence Forces comprise one wing of fighters, one wing of utility helicopters, and one SAM brigade. Training and support forces comprise a National Support Element (Multifunctional Battalion, Transport Battalion, Repair Battalion), a garrison force of the capital city Bratislava, as well as a training battalion, and various logistics and communication and information

bases. Miscellaneous forces under the direct command of the General Staff include the 5th Special Forces Regiment. === Human rights === The US State Department in 2015 reported: "The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Notable human rights problems included official corruption; a judiciary that was inefficient and engendered low public trust; and widespread discrimination against Roma minority. Other human rights problems included: excessive use of police force against migrants, physical mistreatment of detainees; lack of independent oversight of police; targeting of the press for civil defamation suits by members of the political, judicial, and financial elite; expressions of anti-Semitism by right-wing groups; and demeaning statements and demonstrations against refugees and migrants." Human rights in Slovakia are guaranteed by the Constitution of Slovakia from the year 1992 and by multiple international laws signed in Slovakia between 1948 and 2006. Slovakia excludes multiple citizenships. === Administrative divisions === As for administrative division, Slovakia is subdivided into 8 krajov (singular – kraj, usually translated as "region"), each of which is named after its principal city. Regions have enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy since 2002. Their self-governing bodies are referred to as Self-governing (or autonomous) Regions (sg. samosprávny kraj, pl. samosprávne kraje) or Upper-Tier Territorial Units (sg. vyšší územný celok, pl. vyššie územné celky, abbr. VÚC). The "kraje" are subdivided into many okresy (sg. okres, usually translated as counties). Slovakia currently has 79 districts. The okresy are further divided into obcí (sg. obec, usually translated as "municipality"). There are currently 2,891 obcí. In terms of economics and unemployment rate, the western regions are richer than eastern regions. Bratislava is the third richest region of the European Union by GDP (PPP) per capita (after Hamburg and Luxembourg City), GDP at purchasing power parity is about three times higher than in other Slovak regions. == Economy == The Slovak economy is a developed, high-income economy, with the GDP per capita equalling 77% of the average of the European Union in 2016. The country has difficulties addressing regional imbalances in wealth and employment. GDP per capita ranges from 188% of EU average in Bratislava to 54% in Eastern Slovakia. The OECD in 2017 reported: "The Slovak Republic continues exhibiting robust economic performance, with strong growth backed by a sound financial sector, low public debt and high international competitiveness drawing on large inward investment." In 2017, Slovakia was ranked by the International Monetary Fund as the 39th richest country in the world (out of 187 countries), with purchasing power parity per capita GDP of \$32,895. The country used to be dubbed the "Tatra Tiger". Slovakia successfully transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven economy. Major privatisations are completed, the banking sector is almost completely in private hands, and foreign investment has risen. The Slovak economy is one of the fastest growing economies in Europe and 3rd fastest in eurozone (2017). In 2007, 2008 and 2010 (with GDP growth of 10.5%, 6% and 4% retrospectively). In 2016, more than 86% of Slovak exports went to European Union, and more than 50% of Slovak imports came from other European Union member states. The ratio of government debt to GDP in Slovakia reached 52% by the end of 2016, far below the OECD average. Unemployment, peaking at 19% at the end of 1999, decreased to 5.95% at the end of 2017, lowest recorded rate in Slovak history. Inflation dropped from an average annual rate of 12% in 2000 to just 3.3% in 2002, an election year, but it rose again in 2003–2004 because of rising labour costs and taxes. It reached only 1% in 2010 which is the lowest recorded rate since 1993. The rate was at 4% in 2011. Slovakia adopted the Euro currency on 1 January 2009 as the 16th member of the Eurozone. The euro in Slovakia was approved by the European commission on 7 May 2008. The Slovak koruna was revalued on 28 May 2008 to 30.126 for 1 euro, which was also the exchange rate for the euro. Slovakia is an attractive country for foreign investors mainly because of its low wages, low tax rates and well educated labour force. In recent years, Slovakia has been pursuing a policy of encouraging foreign investment. FDI inflow grew more than 600% from 2000 and cumulatively reached an all-time high of \$17.3 billion in 2006, or around \$22,000 per capita by the end of 2008. In March 2008, the Ministry of Finance announced that Slovakia's economy is developed enough to stop being an aid receiver from the World Bank. Slovakia became an aid provider at the end of 2008. === Industry === Although Slovakia's GDP comes mainly from the tertiary (services) sector, the industrial sector also plays an important role within its economy. The main industry sectors are car manufacturing and electrical engineering. Since 2007, Slovakia has been the world's largest producer of cars per capita, with a total of 1.040.000 cars manufactured in the country in 2016 alone. There are currently three automobile assembly plants: Volkswagen's in Bratislava (models: Volkswagen Up, Volkswagen Touareg, Audi Q7, Audi Q8, Porsche Cayenne, Lamborghini Urus), PSA Peugeot Citroën's in Trnava (models: Peugeot 208, Citroën C3 Picasso) and Kia Motors' Žilina Plant (models: Kia Cee'd, Kia Sportage, Kia Venga). In 2018, Jaguar Land Rover is set to open the country's fourth automobile assembly plant in Nitra. From

electrical engineering companies, Foxconn has a factory at Nitra for LCD TV manufacturing, Samsung at Galanta for computer monitors and television sets manufacturing. ESET is an IT security company from Bratislava with more than 1,000 employees worldwide at present. Their branch offices are in the United States, Ireland, United Kingdom, Argentina, the Czech Republic, Singapore and Poland. Bratislava's geographical position in Central Europe has long made Bratislava a crossroads for international trade traffic. Various ancient trade routes, such as the Amber Road and the Danube waterway, have crossed territory of present-day Bratislava. Today, Bratislava is the road, railway, waterway and airway hub. === Energy === In 2012, Slovakia produced a total of 28 393 GWh of electricity while at the same time consumed 28 786 GWh. The slightly higher level of consumption than the capacity of production (- 393 GWh) meant the country was not self-sufficient in energy sourcing. Slovakia imported electricity mainly from the Czech Republic (9 961 GWh – 73.6% of total import) and exported mainly to Hungary (10 231 GWh – 78.2% of total export). Nuclear energy accounts for 53.8% of total electricity production in Slovakia, followed by 18.1% of thermal power energy, 15.1% by hydro power energy, 2% by solar energy, 9.6% by other sources and the rest 1.4% is imported. The two nuclear power-plants in Slovakia are in Jaslovské Bohunice and Mochovce, each of them containing two operating reactors. Prior to the accession of Slovakia to the EU in 2004, the government agreed to turn-off the V1 block of Jaslovské Bohunice power-plant, built in 1978. After deactivating the last of the two reactors of the V1 block in 2008, Slovakia instantly stopped being self-dependent in energy production. Currently there is another block (V2) with two active reactors in Jaslovské Bohunice. It is scheduled for decommissioning in 2025. Two new reactors are under construction in Mochovce plant. The nuclear power production in Slovakia sometimes draws attention to Austrian green-energy activists who occasionally organise protests and block the borders between the two countries. === Transportation === There are four main highways D1 to D4 and eight express ways R1 to R8. Most of them are still in the planning phase. The D1 motorway connects Bratislava to Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Žilina and beyond, while the D2 motorway connects it to Prague, Brno and Budapest in the north-south direction. A large part of D4 motorway (an outer bypass), which should ease the pressure on Bratislava's highway system, is scheduled to open in 2020. The A6 motorway to Vienna connects Slovakia directly to the Austrian motorway system and was opened on 19 November 2007. In Bratislava there are currently five bridges standing over the Danube (from upstream to downstream): Lafranconi Bridge, Nový Most (The New Bridge or Most SNP), Starý most (The Old Bridge), Most Apollo and Prístavný most (The Harbor Bridge). The city's inner network of roadways is made on the radial-circular shape. Nowadays, the city experiences a sharp increase in the road traffic, increasing pressure on the road network. There are about 200,000 registered cars in Bratislava, (approximately 2 inhabitants per car). Bratislava's M. R. Štefánik Airport is the main international airport in Slovakia. It is located 9 kilometres (5.6 miles) northeast of the city centre. It serves civil and governmental, scheduled and unscheduled domestic and international flights. The current runways support the landing of all common types of aircraft currently used. The airport has enjoyed rapidly growing passenger traffic in recent years; it served 279,028 passengers in 2000, 1,937,642 in 2006 and 2,024,142 in 2007. Smaller airports served by passenger airlines include those in Košice and Poprad. The Port of Bratislava is one of the two international river ports in Slovakia. The port connects Bratislava to international boat traffic, especially the interconnection from the North Sea to the Black Sea via the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal. Additionally, tourist boats operate from Bratislava's passenger port, including routes to Devín, Vienna and elsewhere. === Tourism === Slovakia features natural landscapes, mountains, caves, medieval castles and towns, folk architecture, spas and ski resorts. More than 5 million tourists visited Slovakia in 2016, and the most attractive destinations are the capital of Bratislava and the High Tatras. Most visitors come from the Czech Republic (about 26%), Poland (15%) and Germany (11%). Slovakia contains many castles, most of which are in ruins. The best known castles include Bojnice Castle (often used as a filming location), Spiš Castle, (on the UNESCO list), Orava Castle, Bratislava Castle, and the ruins of Devín Castle. ■achtice Castle was once the home of the world's most prolific female serial killer, the 'Bloody Lady', Elizabeth Báthory. Slovakia's position in Europe and the country's past (part of the multicultural Kingdom of Hungary, the Habsburg monarchy and Czechoslovakia) made many cities and towns similar to the cities in the Czech Republic (such as Prague), Austria (such as Salzburg) or Hungary (such as Budapest). A historical center with at least one square has been preserved in many towns. Large historical centers can be found in Bratislava, Trenčín, Košice, Banská Štiavnica, Levoča, and Trnava. Historical centers have been going through restoration in recent years. Historical churches can be found in virtually every village and town in Slovakia. Most of them are built in the Baroque style, but there are also many examples of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, for example Banská

Bystrica, Bardejov and Spišská Kapitula. The Basilica of St. James in Levoča with the tallest wood-carved altar in the world and the Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra with medieval frescos are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The St. Martin's Concathedral in Bratislava served as the coronation church for the Kingdom of Hungary. The oldest sacral buildings in Slovakia stem from the Great Moravian period in the 9th century. Very precious structures are the complete wooden churches of northern and northern-eastern Slovakia. Most were built from the 15th century onwards by Catholics, Lutherans and members of eastern-rite churches. Typical souvenirs from Slovakia are dolls dressed in folk costumes, ceramic objects, crystal glass, carved wooden figures, hrpáks (wooden pitchers), fujaras (a folk instrument on the UNESCO list) and valaškas (a decorated folk hatchet) and above all products made from corn husks and wire, notably human figures. Souvenirs can be bought in the shops run by the state organisation ÚUV (Ústredie ľudovej umeleckej výroby – Centre of Folk Art Production). Dielo shop chain sells works of Slovak artists and craftsmen. These shops are mostly found in towns and cities. Prices of imported products are generally the same as in the neighbouring countries, whereas prices of local products and services, especially food, are usually lower.

Science The Slovak Academy of Sciences has been the most important scientific and research institution in the country since 1953. Slovaks have made notable scientific and technical contributions during the history. The list of important scientists and their inventions include: Jozef Murgaš (1864–1929), contributed to development of wireless telegraphy Ján Bahýľ (1856–1916), constructed the first motor-driven helicopter (four years before Bréguet and Cornu) Štefan Baniš (1870–1941), constructed the first actively used parachute Aurel Stodola (1859–1942), created a bionic arm in 1916 and pioneered steam and gas turbines John Dopyera (1893–1988), constructed a resonator guitar, an important contribution to the development of acoustic string instrument Eugen Benka (1934–2017), American astronaut of Slovak origin was the last man to visit the Moon Ivan Bella (1964), first Slovak in space, having participated in a 9-day joint Russian-French-Slovak mission on the space station Mir in 1999. Daniel Gajdusek (1923–2008), (of Slovak ancestry) won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1976 for work on Kuru Slovakia is currently in the negotiation process of becoming a member of the European Space Agency. Observer status was granted in 2010, when Slovakia signed the General Agreement on Cooperation in which information about ongoing education programmes was shared and Slovakia was invited to various negotiations of the ESA. In 2015, Slovakia signed the European Cooperating State Agreement based on which Slovakia committed to the finance entrance programme named PECS (Plan for the European Cooperating States) which serves as preparation for full membership. Slovak research and development organizations can apply for funding of projects regarding space technologies advancement. Full membership of Slovakia in the ESA is expected in 2020 after signing the ESA Convention. Slovakia will be obliged to set state budget inclusive ESA funding.

Demographics According to the 2011 census, the majority of the inhabitants of Slovakia are Slovaks (80.7%). Hungarians are the largest ethnic minority (8.5%). Other ethnic groups include Roma (2%), Czechs (0.6%), Rusyns (0.6%) and others or unspecified (7.6%). Unofficial estimates on the Roma population are much higher, around 5.6%. In 2007 Slovakia was estimated to have a total fertility rate of 1.33 (i.e., the average woman will have 1.33 children in her lifetime), which is significantly below the replacement level and is one of the lowest rates among EU countries. The largest waves of Slovak emigration occurred in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the 1990 US census, 1.8 million people self-identified as having Slovak ancestry.

Languages The official language is Slovak, a member of the Slavic language family. Hungarian is widely spoken in the southern regions, and Rusyn is used in some parts of the Northeast. Minority languages hold co-official status in the municipalities in which the size of the minority population meets the legal threshold of 15% in two consecutive censuses. Slovakia is ranked among the top EU countries regarding the knowledge of foreign languages. In 2007, 68% of the population aged from 25 to 64 years claimed to speak two or more foreign languages, finishing 2nd highest in the European Union. The best known foreign language in Slovakia is Czech. Eurostat report also shows that 98.3% of Slovak students in the upper secondary education take on two foreign languages, ranking highly over the average 60.1% in the European Union. The deaf community uses the Slovak Sign Language. Even though spoken Czech and Slovak are similar, the Slovak Sign language is not particularly close to Czech Sign Language.

Religion The Slovak constitution guarantees freedom of religion. In 2011, 62.0% of Slovaks identified themselves as Roman Catholics, 8.9% as Protestants, 3.8% as Greek Catholics, 0.9% as Orthodox, 13.4% identified themselves as atheists or non-religious, and 10.6% did not answer the question about their belief. In 2004, about one third of the then church members regularly attended church services. The Slovak Greek Catholic Church is an Eastern rite sui iuris Catholic Church. The pre-World War II population of the country

included an estimated 90,000 Jews (1.6% of the population). After the genocidal policies of the Nazi era, only about 2,300 Jews remain today (0.04% of the population). In 2016, Slovak parliament passed a new bill that will obstruct Islam and other religious organisations from becoming state-recognised religion by doubling the minimum followers threshold from 25,000 to 50,000. The law passed by a two-third majority at the parliament. In 2010, there were an estimated 5,000 Muslims in Slovakia representing less than 0.1% of the country's population. Slovakia is the last member state of the European Union without a mosque.

== Education == Education in Slovakia is compulsory from age 6 to 16. The education system consists of elementary school which is divided into two parts, the first grade (age 6–10) and the second grade (age 10–15) which is finished by taking nationwide testing called Monitor, from Slovak language and math. Parents may apply for social assistance for a child that is studying on an elementary school or a high-school. If approved, the state provides basic study necessities for the child. Schools provide books to all their students with usual exceptions of books for studying a foreign language and books which require taking notes in them, which are mostly present at the first grade of elementary school. After finishing elementary school, students are obliged to take one year in high school. They are able to pick from Gymnasium, which is seen as the highest level of high-school education and usually considered as a preparatory school for attending a university, although anyone can apply to any university. Besides Gymnasiums, Slovakia has specialised high schools with bacalaureat and specialised highschools without bacalaureat. Schools with bacalaureat take 5 years to complete while the ones without usually take less. Gymnasiums and many other high schools require passing an entry exam, consider previous study results or perform a combination of both before accepting a new student. A student may apply to two high schools at once. If student fails to get accepted in any high school, the student can submit an appeal or seek a third high school with an empty slot for one more student outside of the standard application process. Parents and students prefer to avoid this uncertainty and tend to choose at least one high school with a high chance of acceptance. Most high-schools are finished by passing a matura exam, which consists of Slovak language and literature, one foreign language and one specialised subject. If school offered multiple specializations or taught multiple foreign languages, student may choose which subject he or she wants to do the matura exam in. If student wants and the school allows it, it's possible to do matura exam in more than three subjects. After finishing a high school, students can go to university and are highly encouraged to do so. Slovakia has a wide range of universities. The biggest university is Comenius University, established in 1919. Although it's not the first university ever established on Slovak territory, it's the oldest university that is still running. Most universities in Slovakia are public funded, where anyone can apply. Every citizen has a right for free education on public schools. If student has to repeat a year or attends a second school after obtaining a degree, or is older than 26 years and attending Bachelor's or Master's courses or is older than 30 years and attending Doctorate's courses, student has to pay the expenses. Students of Doctorate's courses receive a scholarship. Students of Bachelor's and of Master's courses can apply for a scholarship depending on their study performance. The limit for applying for performance scholarship is set individually by each university. Slovakia has several privately funded universities, however public universities consistently score better in the ranking than their private counterparts. Universities have different criteria for accepting students. Anyone can apply to any number of universities. The limiting factor is the cost of application fees, which can range from a few € to over 100 € per one application. The student may apply for a social discount for the application fee. Several universities, including some the best ranking in Slovakia, accept all applicants and perform a screening process during the study, which results in a higher dropout rate among the students compared to universities that require passing an entry exam. Other methods of acceptance may include weighting past study results from high school, passing an entry test or a combination of both. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Slovak secondary education the 30th in the world (placing it just below the United States and just above Spain).

== Culture == == Folk tradition == Folk tradition has rooted strongly in Slovakia and is reflected in literature, music, dance and architecture. The prime example is a Slovak national anthem, "Nad Tatrou sa blýska", which is based on a melody from "Kopala studienku" folk song. Manifestation of Slovak folklore culture is the "Východná" Folklore Festival. It is the oldest and largest nationwide festival with international participation, which takes place in Východná annually. Slovakia is usually represented by many groups but mainly by SĽUK (Slovenský ľudový umelecký kolektív – Slovak folk art collective). SĽUK is the largest Slovak folk art group, trying to preserve the folklore tradition. An example of wooden folk architecture in Slovakia can be seen in the well preserved village of Vikolínec which has been the UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1993. The Prešov Region

preserves the world's most remarkable folk wooden churches. Most of them are protected by Slovak law as cultural heritage, but some of them are on the UNESCO list too, in Bodružal, Hervartov, Ladomirová and Ruská Bystrá. The best known Slovak hero, found in many folk mythologies, is Juraj Jánošík (1688–1713) (the Slovak equivalent of Robin Hood). The legend says he was taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Jánošík's life was depicted in a list of literature works and many movies throughout the 20th century. One of the most popular is a film Jánošík directed by Martin Friš in 1935.

=== Art === Visual art in Slovakia is represented through painting, drawing, printmaking, illustration, arts and crafts, sculpture, photography or conceptual art. The supreme and central gallery institution displaying Slovak art nowadays is the Slovak National Gallery, established in 1949. Medieval time Well-known sculptor of the 15th century Late Gothic era in Slovakia is the Master Paul of Levoča. Although his work can be found in many places (Banská Bystrica, Spišská Sobota or Lomnička), his most famous is a wooden altar in the Church of St. Jacob in Levoča. With its height of 18.62 metres (61 ft), it is the tallest Gothic altar in the world. Well-known painters of that time are the Master from Okoličné, author of the altar in St. Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice, and Master M.S. of the 16th century, whose statue of Madonna can be seen in the Saint Catherine Church in Banská Štiavnica. The statues of Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara are in the art gallery of the Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica.

19th century The 19th century in Slovakia was a turbulent period of time when Slovaks began experiencing their national revival in the kingdom of Austria-Hungary. Romanticism of Jozef B. Klemens (1817–1883) and Peter Michal Bohúň (1822–1879) was represented in the portrait paintings of Slovak national protagonists of that time (Štefan Moyses, Andrej Sládkovič, Karol Kuzmány or Ľudovít Štúr), depicting the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1840s in the background. Other important painters of the 19th century were mainly portraitists Vojtech Angyal, Dominik Skutecký (1849–1921), J. Štetka, E. Ballo, Jozef Hanula (1863–1944), landscapist Karol Miloslav Lehotský (1846–1915) and impressionists Maximilián Schurmann (1863–1944) and P. Kern. Sculpture in the 19th century was dominated by a sacral sculptor Vavrinec Dunajský (1784–1833) and his son Ladislav Dunajský, author of Ján Hollý memorial in Dobrá Voda. Another important sculptors were Ján Koniarek (1878–1952), Alajos Stróbl (1856–1926), János Fadrusz (1858–1903) and Alojz Rigele (1879–1940).

20th century Painters Mikuláš Galanda (1895–1938), Martin Benka (1888–1971), Janko Alexy (1894–1970), Miloš Alexander Bazovský (1899–1968), Gustáv Mallý (1879–1952) and Jan Hála (1890–1959) are considered to be the ones who laid foundations of the Slovak modern art in the first half of the 20th century. The inspiration of their work stems mainly from the lives of everyday people in Slovak rurals which they admired and idealised. The painters influenced by Art Nouveau, symbolism and expressionism are Zolo Palugyay (1898–1935), Anton Jasusch (1882–1965), Edmund Gwerk (1895–1956) or Július Jakoby (1903–1985). Important also is Blažej Baláž (1958). Some of the most distinguished Slovak artists, whose work was closely linked to modern European art streams are Koloman Sokol (1902–2003), who became a professor of graphic techniques at the Escuela de las Artes del Libro and at the University of Mexico City from 1937 to 1941, Ľudovít Fulla (1902–1980) who received many international prizes for his work and Imro Weiner-Kráľ (1901–1978). The generation of 1909 is represented by Cyprián Majerník (1909–1945), Ján Želibský, Ján Mudroch (1909–1968), Ladislav Nemický (1909–1968) and Ester M. Šimerová (1909). Slovak graphic art experienced its peak during the 20th century. The most notable print-makers are Koloman Sokol (1902–2003), Vincent Hložník (1919–1997), Albín Brunovský (1935–1997), Jozef Jankovič (1937), Dušan Kállay (1948), Vladimír Gažovič (1939), Karol Ondreička (1944–2003) Blažej Baláž (1958) or the young generation of artists Katarína Vavrová, and Matej Krén. Andy Warhol (1928–1987), a leading figure in the 20th century visual art movement known as pop art, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as Andrej Varchola to Slovak parents Ondrej Varchola (1889–1942) and Júlia (née Zavacká, 1892–1972). A museum dedicated to him is in Medzilaborce, where his parents lived. Notable Slovak photographers in the 20th century are Martin Martinček (1913–2004) and Karol Kállay (1926–2012). Both Martinček and Kállay received the EFIAP (Excellence de la Fédération Internationale de l' Art Photographique) price in 1970. Sculpture in the 20th century is represented by Ján Koniarek (1878–1952), Július Bártfay (1888–1979), Tibor Bártfay (1922) Ján Mathé (1922), Jozef Kostka (1912–1996), Ladislav Snopek (1919–2010), Rudolf Uher or Rudolf Hornák. 21st century Notable Slovak artists of the 21st century include Cyril Blažo (1970), and Viliam Loviska (1964)

=== Literature === For a list of notable Slovak writers and poets, see List of Slovak authors. Christian topics include: poem Proglas as a foreword to the four Gospels, partial translations of the Bible into Old Church Slavonic, Zakon sudnyj ljudem. Medieval literature, in the period from the 11th to the 15th centuries, was written in Latin, Czech and Slovakised Czech. Lyric (prayers, songs and formulas) was still controlled by the Church, while epic

was concentrated on legends. Authors from this period include Johannes de Thurocz, author of the *Chronica Hungarorum* and Maurus, both of them Hungarians. The worldly literature also emerged and chronicles were written in this period. There were two leading persons who codified the Slovak language. The first was Anton Bernolák whose concept was based on the western Slovak dialect in 1787. It was the codification of the first ever literary language of Slovaks. The second was Ľudovít Štúr, whose formation of the Slovak language took principles from the central Slovak dialect in 1843. Slovakia is also known for its polyhistorians, of whom include Pavol Jozef Šafárik, Matej Bel, Ján Kollár, and its political revolutionaries and reformists, such as Milan Rastislav Štefánik and Alexander Dubček. Famous globetrotter and explorer, Count Mór Baross had Slovak ancestors. === Music ===

Classical music The most important Slovak composers have been Eugen Suchoň, Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský, Ján Cikker, Ján Levoslav Bella, Alexander Moyzes and Dezider Kardoš, in the 21st century Vladimír Godár and Peter Machajdík. **Pop music** Popular music began to replace folk music beginning in the 1950s, when Slovakia was still part of Czechoslovakia; American jazz, R&B, and rock and roll were popular, alongside waltzes, polkas, and czardas, among other folk forms. By the end of the 1950s, radios were common household items, though only state stations were legal. Slovak popular music began as a mix of bossa nova, cool jazz, and rock, with propagandistic lyrics. Dissenters listened to ORF (Austrian Radio), Radio Luxembourg, or Slobodná Európa (Radio Free Europe), which played more rock. Due to Czechoslovak isolation, the domestic market was active and many original bands evolved. Slovakia had a very strong pop culture during the 1970s and 1980s. This movement brought many original bands with their own unique interpretations of modern music. The quality of socialist music was very high. Stars such as Karel Gott, Olympic, Pražský výběr (from the Czech Republic) or Elán, Modus, Tublatanka, Team (from Slovakia) and many others were highly acclaimed and many recorded their LPs in foreign languages. After the Velvet Revolution and the declaration of the Slovak state, domestic music dramatically diversified as free enterprise encouraged the formation of new bands and the development of new genres of music. Soon, however, major labels brought pop music to Slovakia and drove many of the small companies out of business. During the 1990s, American grunge and alternative rock, and Britpop have a wide following, as well as a newfound enthusiasm for musicals. **Jazz** Peter Lipa (born 1943) is a well-known Slovak singer, composer and promoter of modern jazz. He is one of the main organisers of the "Bratislava Jazz Days" festival, which takes place in the capital city at the end of October each year since 1975. It is the biggest jazz venue in Slovakia. Martin Valihora (1976), having been awarded a scholarship on the Berklee College of Music in Boston, he established himself as a part of the New York's jazz scene. He has been playing with the world's famous Japanese jazz pianist Hiromi Uehara. Other notable Slovak jazz players are Laco Déczi (1938) – composer, jazz trumpeter, Marián Varga (1947-2017) – composer, organ player === Cuisine ===

Traditional Slovak cuisine is based mainly on pork meat, poultry (chicken is the most widely eaten, followed by duck, goose, and turkey), flour, potatoes, cabbage, and milk products. It is relatively closely related to Hungarian, Czech and Austrian cuisine. On the east it is also influenced by Ukrainian and Polish cuisine. In comparison with other European countries, "game meat" is more accessible in Slovakia due to vast resources of forest and because hunting is relatively popular. Boar, rabbit, and venison, are generally available throughout the year. Lamb and goat are eaten but are not widely popular. The traditional Slovak meals are bryndzové halušky, bryndzové pirohy and other meals with potato dough and bryndza. Bryndza is a salty cheese made of a sheep milk, characterised by a strong taste and aroma. Bryndzové halušky must be on the menu of every traditional Slovak restaurant. A typical soup is a sauerkraut soup ("kapustnica"). A blood sausage called "krvavica", made from any and all parts of a butchered pig is also a specific Slovak meal. Wine is enjoyed throughout Slovakia. Slovak wine comes predominantly from the southern areas along the Danube and its tributaries; the northern half of the country is too cold and mountainous to grow grapevines. Traditionally, white wine was more popular than red or rosé (except in some regions), and sweet wine more popular than dry, but in recent years tastes seem to be changing. Beer (mainly of the pilsener style, though dark lagers are also consumed) is also popular. === Sport ===

Sport activities are practised widely in Slovakia, many of them on a professional level. Ice hockey and football have traditionally been regarded as the most popular sports in Slovakia. Among the popular are also tennis, handball, basketball, volleyball, whitewater slalom or athletics. **Ice Hockey** One of the most popular team sports in Slovakia is ice hockey. Slovakia became the member of IIHF on 2 February 1993 and ever since has won 4 medals in Ice Hockey World Championships, consisting of 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medal. The most recent success is a silver medal from 2012 IIHF World Championship in Helsinki. Slovak national hockey team made five appearances in the Olympic games too, ended up 4th in the 2010 Winter Olympics in

Vancouver. The country has 8280 registered players and is ranked 7th in the IIHF World Ranking at present. Prior to 2012, Slovak team HC Slovan Bratislava joined the Kontinental Hockey League, considered the strongest hockey league in Europe, and the second-best in the world. Slovakia organised the 2011 IIHF World Championship in ice hockey, where Finland won the gold medal. Competitions took place in Bratislava and Košice. Notable Slovak hockey players who played or are still playing in the NHL are Stan Mikita, Peter Šťastný, Marián Šťastný, Anton Šťastný, Peter Bondra, Zigmund Pálffy, Marián Gáborík, Marián Hossa, Pavol Demitra, Zdeno Chára, Miroslav Šatan, Ľubomír Višňovský, Tomáš Kopecký, Andrej Sekera and Jaroslav Halák. Football Association football is the most popular sport in Slovakia, with over 400,000 registered players. Since 1993, Slovak national football team has qualified only once to the FIFA World Cup in 2010, in which they proceeded into the Last 16, where they were defeated by Netherlands. The most notable result was the 3–2 victory over Italy. In 2016, the Slovak national football team qualified to the UEFA Euro 2016 under head coach Ján Kozák which helped the team reach their best ever position of 14th in the FIFA World Rankings. In club competitions, only three teams have qualified to UEFA Champions League Group Stage, namely MFK Košice in 1997–98, FC Artmedia Bratislava in 2005–06 season, and MŠK Žilina in 2010–11. FC Artmedia Bratislava has been the most successful team after finishing 3rd at the Group Stage, therefore qualifying for the Round of 32 of the UEFA Cup. They also remain the only Slovak club that has won a match at the group stage. Famous Slovak players include Marek Hamšík, Martin Škrtel, Juraj Kucka, Peter Dubovský, Karol Dobiáš, Anton Ondruš, Marián Masný, Ján Švehlík, Ján Pivarník, Jozef Ľapkovič, Adolf Scherer, Andrej Kvašňák and Jozef Adamec. == See also == == Notes == == References == == Bibliography == Julius Bartl et al., *Slovak History: Chronology & Lexicon*. Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2002. Olga Drobna, Eduard Drobny, and Magdalena Gocnikova, *Slovakia: The Heart of Europe*. Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1996. Pavel Dvorak, *The Early History of Slovakia in Images*. Budmerice, Slovakia: Vydavateľstvo Rak Budmerice, 2006. Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility*. London: Routledge, 2002. Rob Humphrey, *The Rough Guide to the Czech and Slovak Republics*. New York: Rough Guides, 2006. Michael Jacobs, *Blue Guide: Czech and Slovak Republics*. London: A.&C.; Black, 1999. Owen V. Johnson, *Slovakia 1918–1938: Education and the Making of a Nation*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985. Lil Junas, *My Slovakia: An American's View*. Martin, Slovakia: Vydavateľstvo Matica slovenskej, 2001. Stanislav Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. Eugen Lazistan, Fedor Mikovič, Ivan Kušma, and Anna Jurešková, *Slovakia: A Photographic Odyssey*. Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2001. Elena Mannová, *A Concise History of Slovakia*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2000. Anton Spiesz and Dusan Caplovic, *Illustrated Slovak History: A Struggle for Sovereignty in Central Europe*. Wauconda, IL : Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2001. == External links == Government Government Office of the Slovak Republic President of the Slovak Republic Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic Tourism and living information Official Slovak National Tourism Portal Railways of Slovak Republic Slovakia at Lonely Planet Maps Wikimedia Atlas of Slovakia Geographic data related to Slovakia at OpenStreetMap General Information "Slovakia". *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency. Slovakia profile from the BBC News Slovakia from UCB Libraries GovPubs Slovakia at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Key Development Forecasts for the Slovak Republic from International Futures