

= Gerlachovský štít =

Gerlachovský štít (Slovak pronunciation , translated into English as Gerlach Peak) is the highest peak in the High Tatras , in Slovakia , and in the whole 1 000 km (930 mi) long Carpathian mountain chain , as well as in northern and central Europe (Visegrád Group) .

Usually listed at 2 655 metres AMSL (8 711 ft) , its exact elevation is actually 0 .6 metres (2 .0 feet) lower . The pyramidal shape of the massif is marked by a huge cirque . Despite its relatively low elevation , the about 2 000 m vertical rise from the valley floor makes Gerlachovský štít soar . Mistaken for an average mountain in the rugged High Tatras range in the more distant past , it has since played a symbolic role in the eyes of the rulers and populations of several Central European nations , to the point that between the 19th and mid -20th century , it had four different names with six name reversals . It managed to be the highest mountain of the Kingdom of Hungary , and of the countries of Czechoslovakia and Slovakia within the span of only about two decades of the 20th century .

Gerlachovský štít shares its geology and ecology with the rest of the High Tatras , but provides a worthwhile environment for biologists as the highest ground anywhere in Europe north of the parallel linking approximately Munich , Salzburg , and Vienna . With the travel restrictions imposed by the Eastern Bloc , the mountain was particularly treasured as the loftiest point available to climb to by Czechs , East Germans , Hungarians , Poles , and Slovaks . It continues to attract its share of visitors although the local authorities have been continually adding new restrictions on access .

= = Names = =

= = = Present = = =

Gerlachovský štít means the " Peak (of the village) of Gerlachov " . The Slovak colloquial name is Gerlach . The Polish names are Gerlach or Gierlach , while its Polish colloquial names are Gierlach and Garbuch .

= = = Past = = =

The peak 's earliest recorded name was the Szepes -German Kösselberg (Cauldron Mountain) on a map from 1762 . The Slovak name of the mountain was first recorded as Kotol , also meaning " Cauldron " , in 1821 . Both names referred to the peak 's characteristic cauldron -like cirque .

The name that became common in travel books and other literature in the 19th century , however , is its current name , linking the mountain to the village of Gerlachov at its foot . It echoed the oldest known undifferentiated reference to the peaks on or near Gerlachov 's municipal lands , Gerlachfalvenses montes (Latin with Hungarian elements for the " Gerlachov Village Mountains ") , in a drawing of the High Tatras from 1717 . It also paralleled the name Gerlsdorfer Spitze (Gerlachov Peak) used by the first person to identify it as the highest peak in the Tatras in 1838 (see below) , which was rendered as gerlachovský chochol (Gerlach crest) in a Slovak version of his report in 1851 . Several other mountains in the High Tatras have acquired their names from villages in the foothills .

Once it was determined that the mountain was the highest point in the region , the succession of the authorities that held control over it took an interest in its name and changed it periodically for symbolic reasons . In 1896 , as part of Austria -Hungary , the highest peak of the Carpathians received its first government -sponsored name ? after the contemporary head of state Emperor Francis Joseph I. Guidebooks sometimes did not catch up on these name changes . After the dissolution of the monarchy in 1918 , the mountain continued to be known simply as Gerlachovský štít because it belonged to the village of Gerlachov . The Polish government , claiming the territory of the High Tatras for Poland , simultaneously called the mountain Szczyt Polski (Polish Peak) , but never gained control over it . The new Czechoslovak government changed the name to štít

legionárov (Legionnaires Peak) in honor of the Czechoslovak Legions in 1923 , but the name was dropped in favor of the earlier Gerlachovský štít in 1932 . As a result of the Communist coup d'état in 1948 , the mountain was renamed once more to Stalinov štít (Stalin Peak) in 1949 . Its traditional name Gerlachovský štít was restored yet again a decade later and has remained unchanged through the present .

= = History = =

Gerlachovský štít was not always considered the highest mountain in the Tatras . After the first official measurement of peaks in the Tatras during the period of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 18th century , Kriváň (2 @, @ 494 m) was considered the highest . Other candidate peaks for the status of the highest mountain at that time were Lomnický štít (2 @, @ 633 m) and Ľadový štít (2 @, @ 627 m) . The first person to accurately name Gerlachovský štít as the highest peak was the forester Ľudovít (Ludwig) Greiner in 1838 . Greiner 's measurement was formally confirmed by an Austrian Army survey party in 1868 . However , it was generally accepted only after the Vienna Military Institute for Geography issued a new , authoritative collection of maps of Central Europe in ca . 1875 .

The first confirmed ascent was made by Ján (Johann) Still from the village of Nová Lesná in 1834 . In 1880 , the routes through the Velická próba (Velická Challenge) and Batizovská próba (Batizovská Challenge) were secured by chains .

= = Access = =

Only members of a national UIAA club are allowed to climb the peak on their own . Other visitors have to take a certified mountain guide . The two easiest routes , usually up the Velická próba and down the Batizovská próba named after their respective valleys , are protected by chains . Because of an exposed section along the Velická próba and tricky orientation especially on the ridge , both are among the more difficult scrambling routes in the High Tatras , although it 's rather climbing , since there are many moments when one must rely on ones hands to hold ones bodyweight . With no snow , guidebooks grade the routes as a II or III climb (UIAA scale) or lower . The total elevation gain is about 1 @, @ 000 m (3 @, @ 300 ft) for those who spend the night at the Sliezsky Dom Hotel or are driven there by a mountain guide , and about 1 @, @ 665 m (5 @, @ 463 ft) for those who hike from Tatranská Polianka . In winter , Gerlachovský štít offers a challenging alpine climb , with mixed climbing and a risk of avalanches .

The unmarked trailhead is on the green @-@ marked trail leading up Velická Valley near the southern edge of the first plateau (Kvetnica) above the Sliezsky Dom . The equally unmarked , indistinct route to Gerlach veers off north @-@ west towards the mountain 's eastern slopes at the elevation of ca . 1 @, @ 815 m (5 @, @ 955 ft) , but occasional cairns begin to appear farther on . The fastest and easiest descent is down the Batizovská próba . Mountain guides always follow the route in the east @-@ west direction , ascending from Velická Valley and descending into Batizovská Valley , in order to reduce logjams .

Two most popular multi @-@ pitch routes for technical climbing are on the eastern and south @-@ western walls . Both are exceptionally long and situated on solid granite walls . The best season for climbing is mid September to mid October or until the snow falls . Another good season lasts from late June to early August .

The route to Gerlachovský štít falls under the Tatra National Park ordinance , according to which hikers who depart from marked trails may be subject to fines unless they are UIAA members , or are led by an IFMGA @-@ certified mountain guide . Camping is subject to similar restrictions . Rangers and some mountain guides are authorized to collect fines on the spot . Cairns that hikers build to mark the trailhead are periodically taken apart .

= = Conditions at the summit = =

=== Human response ===

Although authors estimate that at least some of the manifestations of altitude sickness may appear at elevations as low as 1 @, @ 500 ? 2 @, @ 400 m (4 @, @ 900 ? 7 @, @ 900 ft) and it affects the fit and unfit in equal measure , its incidence is reported as lower than 1 % even at elevations of 4 @, @ 600 m (15 @, @ 100 ft) and has not been reported in the Tatras . Low air pressure begins to have marginal but detectable effects at the summit (2 @, @ 654 @. @ 4 m ; 8 @, @ 709 ft) . Water boils at about 91 @. @ 5 ° C (196 @. @ 7 ° F) and arterial oxygen saturation is about 8 % lower than at most visitors ' places of residence , but it is difficult to distinguish slight oxygen deprivation at the summit from fatigue caused by the exertion required to reach it . Authors speak of possible minimal sensory impairment above 1 @, @ 500 m (4 @, @ 900 ft) . Unlike fitness , age in itself is not a determinant factor in reaching the highest point in the Tatras . The famed Tatra guide Ján Poľuvaj took clients to the summit of Gerlach until the age of 76 .

=== View ===

Like a 19th @-@ century comment in a British guidebook , " impressive and picturesque " , modern hikers usually appreciate the panoramic view of the highest and many other peaks in the High Tatras , from Krivá? in the west to ?iroká in the north and Lomnický ?tít in the east . Farther on , but often visible , are the eastern Low Tatras in the south and part of the Belianske Tatras in the east . Better than usual visibility , a rare occurrence except in the fall and winter , is needed to see the Stolické vrchy , Volovské vrchy , the Slovak Paradise region , and Branisko . Quite exceptionally , visibility may extend to the Austrian Alps and the Polish ? Czech Giant Mountains hundreds of miles away .

Hikers ' reported enjoyment of the view is at least partly attributable to their awareness that they are at the highest point in all of northern and central Europe (Visegrád countries) . Visibility is merely 10 km (6 @. @ 2 mi) or less on most summer afternoons because of the amount of water vapor in the air or because of cloudiness (fog) . Days with afternoon visibility of 50 km (31 mi) or more are common only later in the fall and in winter . The view is partly blocked by the long ridge of Kon?istá in the west , areas near the mountain towards the south and north are obscured by the Gerlach massif itself . Several other summits in the High Tatras , including some with marked trails , offer more spectacular views with precipitous drops , varied scenery , and encompassing vistas .

=== Weather ===

The effects of high @-@ altitude weather on those who ascend Gerlachovský ?tít may be more pronounced than its altitude alone . The temperature gradient between the Tatra mountain resorts (900 ? 1 @, @ 350 m or 2 @, @ 950 ? 4 @, @ 430 ft) and the summit can be steep . Low air temperature higher up can be masked by high insolation under clear skies , but will take its effect with increased cloud cover . Combined with windy conditions , the impact may be considerably detrimental even without rain or snow . The summit disappears in the clouds for periods of time on most days , which translates to fog at that elevation and possible disorientation as well as anxiety .

While temperatures are somewhat lower on Gerlachovský ?tít because of its elevation , the weather and its potential impact on visitors is little different from other summits in the High Tatras both with and without marked trails . The typical daily weather pattern in the summer is a clear morning , clouds gathering by mid @-@ morning ? noon , occasional showers and storms in the afternoon . The chance of rain is lowest between 9 ? 10 am and peaks between 2 ? 3 pm , with a drop @-@ off after 6 pm . The frequency of storms with lightning (as opposed to rainstorms) on Gerlach 's summit and on the other highest ridges is little different from lower elevations , too , but people exposed to wind , (sometimes freezing) rain , and lightning have greater difficulty to cope . The nearest shelter for those who ascend Gerlach is the Sliezsky Dom Hotel , there are no natural shelters along the route .

== Climate ==