

Bratislava



TOURIST GUIDE

history • sights • walks • information



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Juraj Kucharík

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Bratislava

Tourist guide

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Bratislava is an astounding city. It is the only European capital city the borders of which are at the same time those of two countries – Austria to the west and Hungary to the south. Its location on both banks of the river Danube which is joined by the river Morava in the city district of Devín, and the fact that city is also built on the crossroads of ancient trade routes plus on the foothills of the emerging Malé Karpaty determined Bratislava for its historic significance. No wonder that Bratislava as Celtic oppidum was here as early as at least in the 1st century BC. The southern parts of the present city were later incorporated in the Roman Empire. The Romans called the area north of Danube barbaricum. Bratislava played major role in the 9th century, the period of the Great Moravian Empire. After the year 1000 it was an important frontier point of the emerging Kingdom of Hungary. The coronations of Hungarian monarchs and their spouses that were held here between 1563 and 1830 added extra glamour and glory to Bratislava. The 19th century saw the multinational city the rise of a group of scholars led by Ľudovít Štúr who carried on the legacy of their ancestors and laid the foundations of the Slovak nation. Since 1993 Bratislava is the capital of the Slovak Republic. This guide is intended to introduce Bratislava as an attractive destination for weekend breaks or, even better, for longer tourism. It is divided into five parts that correspond with the five areas of the Old Town, the former historic Bratislava. The sixth part presents sights in the areas surrounding the city centre and slightly farther afield (the Greater Bratislava). Additional chapters tell you a bit about history and culture, give you tips for themed walks, and offer some practical information. Do explore the spirit of the old Bratislava, her sights, quiet romantic corners, nature, museums, galleries, as well as culture events. Bratislava is lately referred to as the “little big city”. Indeed, you are bound to find here everything that is on the smorgasbord of large European capitals, though here it is veiled in peaceful, chamber-like atmosphere.

Enjoy the reading and exploring Bratislava!

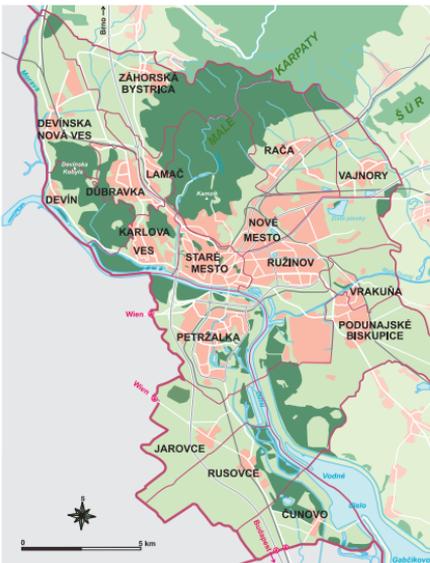
Juraj Kucharík





Bratislava on the map

Bratislava is the capital city of the Slovak Republic. The city enjoys favourable locations, as it is based on the border of three countries – Slovakia, Hungary and Austria, with the Czech border just a few miles away. It also stretches across both banks of the river Danube and along the foothills of the Malé Karpaty. Bratislava is the political, administrative and cultural centre of Slovakia. With the area of 367.6 km² and population of 417,389 (as of 31.12.2013) it is the largest city in Slovakia and one of the largest ones in Central Europe.



Facts & figures

Area: 367,6 km²

Population: 422 932

Height above sea level: 126 – 514 m

Location: 48° 09' north

17° 07' east

Number of districts: 5

Number of boroughs: 17



Table of distances:

Amsterdam	1,270 km	London	1,600 km	Warsaw	660 km
Athens	1,680 km	Madrid	2,500 km	Vienna	65 km
Belgrade	570 km	Moscow	1,950 km	Zagreb	390 km
Bern	950 km	Oslo	1,700 km	Trnava	50 km
Budapest	200 km	Paris	1,360 km	Žilina	200 km
Bucharest	1,020 km	Prague	320 km	Banská Bystrica	210 km
Helsinki	1,725 km	Rome	1,200 km	Poprad	340 km
Kiev	1,230 km	Sofia	960 km	Košice	440 km
Lisbon	3,040 km	Stockholm	1,735 km		



Getting to know Bratislava

Location

Bratislava enjoys truly unique geographical location, which has always kept it in the at the centre of attention. In the past it laid by the crossroads of ancient trade routes between the North to the South, and the West and East. Danube has become an important transportation artery. Today the western and southern frontiers of the city are also national borders between Slovakia and Austria, and Slovakia and Hungary, respectively. Bratislava is the only capital in Europe to border with two countries; and it is only 70 km away to the border with the Czech Republic. Bratislava and Vienna, which are just 65 km apart, are the closest-based capitals in Europe.

Nature

Those who believe Bratislava to be a stone city are quite mistaken. The Malé Karpaty reach into the city, creating its distinctive hills. One of them was transformed into an urban forest park called Horský park. A vast woodland

park, Bratislavský lesný park, is in the northern parts of the city, offering an ideal setting for outings and leisurely tourism. The slopes of Devínska Kobyla in the city borough of Devín have been listed as a national natural reserve. It includes the internationally recognised paleontological site of the sand massive Sandberg. Devínska Kobyla is often referred to as the natural pearl of Central Europe. Unique flora and fauna can also be found along the Danube and Morava rivers. Bratislava is also fortunate to have fine quality potable water.

A blend of cultures

Even though today Slovak nationals make up ninety percent of the residents in Bratislava, there were times when they were a mere minority. Bratislava was long known as trilingual city. The residents spoke fluent German, Hungarian and Slovak, which was not thought

of anything exceptional. Some still speak the three languages. Along with the three ethnic groups, Bratislava was also home to Jews, Czechs, Croats, Bulgarians and, in antiquity, Italians. In terms of religious structure, Roman Catholics represent the majority, followed by Protestants of the Augsburg confession, Calvinists, Russian Orthodox, and Jews. Despite the extensive blend of cultures, the city never experienced any major conflicts. All ethnicities coexisted peacefully what earned Bratislava an epithet of the City of Tolerance.

Diversity of sights

Bratislava prides itself with a vast number of sights dating over two millennia back. Celtic mint was discovered in the Pálffy Palace which now houses an exposition mapping the Celtic period here. Historical reminders of Celts, now beneath





the Mediaeval development, were discovered in a number of houses. Striking findings of Antique buildings were also made at the Bratislava Castle. Specialists deem them to be comparable with the sights of Bibracte in France or Magdalensberg in Austria. The uncovered Roman military camp Gerulata in the borough of Rusovce, along with the adjacent museum, portrays the life in Roman Empire through period artefacts. Roman sites have also been discovered at the Devín Castle and in the borough of Dúbravka. The

artefacts from the periods of Slavs and the later Great Moravian Empire have been revealed at the Bratislava and Devín Castles. The Old Town is open air treasury of Gothic, Renaissance and particularly Baroque architecture. All styles can often be found along the same building. Classicism and Art Nouveau are well represented in Bratislava at the Primičiálny palác [Primate's Palace] and Modrý kostolík [Blue Church] respectively, along with a number of other historic sights. The interwar Functionalism surrounds the Mediaeval city. Buildings from the Communist period are a special category. Finally, contemporary architecture makes quite a presence in the city.

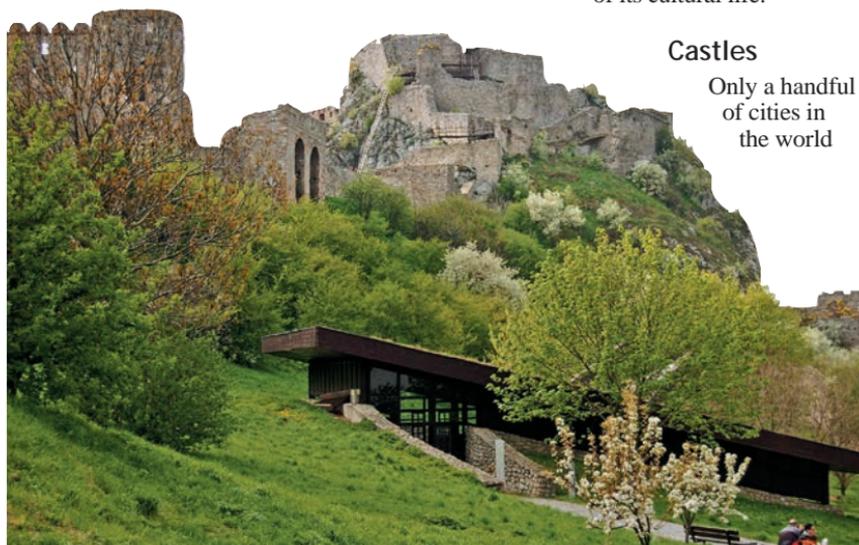
Arts and culture

In part because of its proximity to Vienna, sculpture, painting and music have reached high standards in Bratislava. Distinguished musicians such Ludwig

van Beethoven, Joseph Haydn or Franz Liszt gave concerts here. The city gave the world three major composers and pianists: Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Ernest von Dohnányi and Franz Schmidt were born here. Béla Bartók studied at the secondary school in Bratislava. It was here that the major artists of the 18th century, Georg Rafael Donner and Franz Xaver Messerschmidt made their chef d'oeuvres. The city was also the birth place of some acclaimed 19th century sculptors including Viktor Oskar Tilgner and Ján Fadrusz, or Arthur Fleischmann. His works are on display in a museum in his house at the street Biela ulica. Bratislava has a range of galleries and museums. The grand buildings of the Slovak Philharmonics and the Slovak National Theatre highlight fine musical and theatre tradition of the city. A number of cultural events are held in Bratislava throughout the year, many of which have become an established part of its cultural life.

Castles

Only a handful
of cities in
the world



can pride themselves with a castle. Bratislava has two! Though the Bratislava Castle in the city centre is better known, the Devín Castle in the borough of Devín, is no less attractive and popular. Moreover, the surroundings of the city pride themselves with quite a few additional castles. The Pajštún Castle is on the hill above the town of Borinka. The cellars of the castle Červený Kameň that is above the town of Častá are among the largest compounds of the kind in Central Europe. The castle Plavecký hrad oversees the town of Plavecké Podhradie.

Capital city

Bratislava has always been an important administrative centre. It played major administrative role as early as in the times of Celts and of the Great Moravian Empire. During the reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg, Bratislava was home to high European politics. It first acquired the title of the capital city in 1536 when it became the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary. 1563 launched the history of Bratislava as the



coronation city. In modern times, between 1939 and 1945 Bratislava was the capital of the Slovak wartime state. After the federation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Bratislava became the capital city of the Slovak Socialist Republic. Since 1993, following the split of Czechoslovakia, Bratislava is the capital of the Slovak Republic.

Trams

The sounds of Bratislava are distinctive for the ringing of electric trams that are part of public transportation network. Trams were introduced here in 1895, making Bratislava the first city on continental Europe to have trams. During summer or cultural events, historic trams are paraded through the city. Those dating back to the 1980s still service some of the tram lines.

Historic names of Bratislava

The name Bratislava is used since 1919. It is derived from the older forms of the name. The city was called Prešporok in Slovak, Pressburg in German, Poszony in Hungarian, and

Pozonium in Latin. These linguistically relevant forms are still used in some parts of the neighbouring countries. After World War I an initiative was launched to name the city the Wilson City, as a tribute to US President Woodrow. One of the popular nicknames of the city is Danubian Beauty. Bratislava also prides itself with the epithet the City of Peace, referring to the peace accords that had been signed here. The City of Tolerance refers to the peaceful co-existence of the individual ethnic groups in the city.

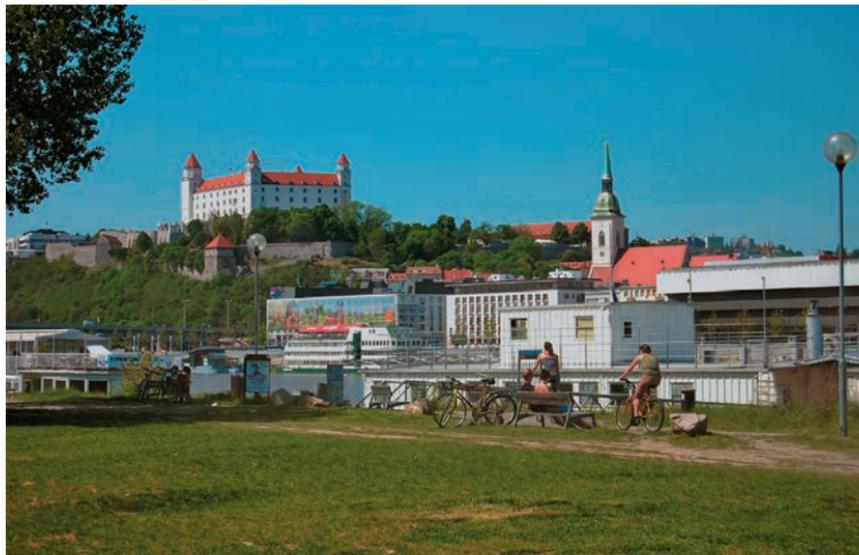
Discover

If you want to get to know the genius loci of Bratislava, keep on exploring. Many gems are concealed in the courtyards or in the narrow streets of the Mediaeval city. Don't stick just to the traditional tourist routes. Explore additional, unexplored sites, such as the southern slope underneath the Bratislava Castle at Žižkova Street, Kapitulská Street, historic cemeteries, museums and galleries, parks, Bratislava hills or the boroughs of Devín, Rusovce or Čunovo.



Crème de la crème

It is indeed not enough to come to Bratislava for a day. If you really want to get the feel of the city, you should plan on spending at least three to four days here, though weekend tourism in Bratislava is quite popular. The following pages highlight the very best of Bratislava.



TOP sights

Bratislava Castle (pp 94 – 103)

St. Martin's Cathedral (pp 62 – 71)

Primate's Palace (pp 84 – 89)

The Old Town Hall (pp 38 – 41)

The Chatam Sofer Memorial (pp 112 – 115)

The Most SNP Bridge (pp 138 – 139)

The Slovak National Gallery (pp 134 – 135)

Historic Building of the Slovak National Theatre (pp 128 – 129)

Slavín (pp 174 – 175)

Devín Castle (pp 182 – 185)

Gerulata (pp 196 – 197)

The prettiest churches

Franciscan Church (pp 48 – 49)

Trinitarian Church (pp 122 – 123)

Clarissian Church (pp 56 – 57)

Blue Church (pp 148 – 149)

Elisabethan Church (p. 164)

The prettiest palaces and historic buildings

Mirbach Palace (pp 46 – 47)

Pálffy Palace (pp 80 – 81)

Grassalkovich Palace (pp 156 – 157)

Apponyi Palace (p. 42)

The Good Shepherd House (p. 106)

Michael's Gate (pp 50 – 51)

The prettiest parks and historic cemeteries

The Janko Kráľ Gardens (pp 140 – 141)

The Grassalkovich Garden (pp. 158)

Medical Garden (p. 152)

St. Andrew's Cemetery (pp 150 – 151)

Goat Gate Cemetery (p. 120)

The prettiest in Greater Bratislava

Devínska Kobyla (p. 180)

Danubiana Gallery (pp 192 – 193)

Bratislava Zoo (p. 179)

Bratislava Forest Park (pp 188 – 189)

Dúbravka and Villa Rustica (p. 186)

Wine Route through Malé Karpaty (pp 190 – 191)

History

Prehistoric and ancient Bratislava 5000 BC – 4th century AD

Prehistoric Bratislava (5000 – 2000 BC)

The first inhabitants of Bratislava lived here during the younger Stone Age. Traces of their dwellings date back some 7,000 years. The settlements of Neolithic farmers dotted the valley Mlynská dolina. Here they enjoyed water supply from the creek Vydrica and were protected by the waters of river Danube. Animals from the hills of the mountain range Malé Karpaty would get all the way down. The findings of artefacts from the people of the Cannel ceramic culture date back over 4,200 years. Members of the tribe had already mastered different crafts, selling their products. Bronze Age dawned c. 2,000 years BC. Items made of bronze found on the territory of Bratislava are among the oldest in Central Europe. People of the Kalenderberg culture arrived in Bratislava in the older Iron Age. Their settlements spread across the lowlands and on the foothills of Malé Karpaty. One of the settlements was also located in the hill of Bratislava Castle.

Celtic Bratislava (4th – 1st century BC)



*Celtic coins
of Bratislava*

Celts were the first ethnic group on the territory of Bratislava whom we were able to identify, with the the Celtic tribe of Boys arriving here. Abundant archaeological findings offer evidence that Celts founded in Bratislava a major centre (oppidum) that was, at the time, among the largest in Central Europe. It emerged on what is today the Castle Hill and further to east. Oppidum spread through the present day streets of Palisády, Svoradova ulica, the squares Hurbanovo námestie and Námestie SNP, and the streets Panská ulica and Laurinská ulica. All the way to the southern slopes of the Castle. Clay ovens were discovered in the area of what is today square Námestie slobody. The size of the Celtic oppidum was larger than the later mediaeval town. Its prominence has been multiplied by the discovery of the Celtic mint in the area of Panská Street. Celts minted coins based on Macedonian tetradrachms. The coins bear inscriptions in Latin which was used, for the first time, on our territory. Biatec is the most frequent inscription, most likely referring to the name of the local Celtic chief. The rise of Celtic oppidum ended on the break of millennia when German tribes gained increasing influence over the region. Discoveries of scattered skeletons and bodies laid to rest without pious ceremony indicate likely violent end of the oppidum in about mid-1st century BC.

Celts had risen Bratislava to European standard. From 2008 to 2010 and between 2013 and 2014 archaeological works were carried out at Bratislava Castle bringing new discoveries that further enhanced the significance of the oppidum. The excavated buildings were probably made by Roman builders and commissioned by Celtic nobility to enjoy the standards of Roman comfort. Additional noteworthy discovery involved gold and silver coins that also bore the inscription Biatec. It is the Celts because of whom we can speak of Celtic Bratislava with its large oppidum that was here over 2,000 years ago.



"Celtic feast"

Roman Bratislava (1st – 4th century AD)

Romans reached the Danube basin in the 1st century AD. Here they built the famed border Limes Romanus to protect the Roman Empire against alien attacks from the North. Danube was the main line alongside which the frontier was delineated. The town of Carnuntum in Lower Austria, just 15 kilometres from Bratislava, was the administrative centre of Upper Pannonia. Limes Romanus was safeguarded by a network of fifteen Roman camps. A smaller one, Gerulata, with an adjacent Roman settlement was based on the right bank of Danube in the present-day Bratislava. In the sophisticated system of fortification the Romans incorporated the castle of Devín, using it as bridgehead fortification point in Barbaricum. Emperor Valentinian I resided at Carnuntum in 375. He repelled Barbarian attacks from the “nearest fort”. The report probably refers to the castle of Devín. Later, around the break of centuries, the mid-Danubian Roman border started to disintegrate. A number of traces suggest that Romans were on the territory of mediaeval Bratislava, though that remains hypothetical.

Exploring prehistoric and ancient Bratislava

Traces of Celts and Romans are patchy and were found in a number of objects. Abundant artefacts of prehistoric and ancient Bratislava are in museums, particularly in the Museum of Archaeology of the Slovak National Museum (p. 110). The Pálffy Palace houses an exposition of Celtic mint (p. 80). Remarkable discoveries of an ancient stone dwelling from Celtic times were made in the area of Bratislava Castle (pp 94 – 103). The military camp Gerulata (pp 196 – 197) is the prettiest historic monument, located in Rusovce. A museum documenting the life of the Romans in Bratislava was opened by the Roman excavations. The remains of Roman brick buildings can still be seen in the area of Devín castle (pp 182 – 185). Villa Rustica (p. 186) is a remarkable artefact of Roman Empire is in the district of Dúbravka.

Historic calendar

- 5000 BC – the oldest settlements
- 2200 BC – the culture of Cannel ceramics
- 2000 BC – bronze items
- 750 BC – Kalenderberg culture
- 4th century BC – arrival of Celts
- 1st century AD – arrival of Romans
- 21 – 50 – The Kingdom of Vannius
- 166 – 180 – Marcomannic Wars
- 375 – Emperor Valentinian dies
- 476 – the fall of West Roman Empire



Roman stamped bricks discovered in Bratislava

Emperor Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) incorporated Pannonia to the Roman Empire



The camp Gerulata in Rusovce is identified on the map as 14 Roman miles away from Carnuntum



Tabula Peutingeriana, the mediaeval transcription of a map from Roman Empire that also shows the area of central Danube