

Bratislava



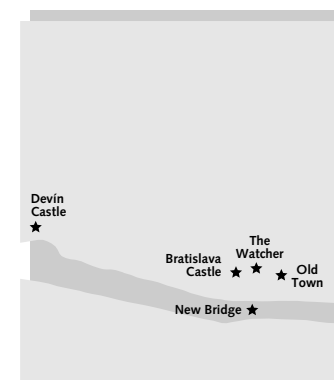
If you focus on the compact historic centre, you'll see cobblestoned roads, pedestrian plazas, pastel 18th-century rococo buildings and street cafés galore. Expand your gaze and you can't miss the institutional housing blocks and bizarre communist construction beyond. An age-old castle shares the skyline with a 1970s UFO-like bridge. And that's Bratislava: a mix of new, old and older. All of which is worth a look.

As post-EU-membership investment pours in, the whirl of construction equipment in all quarters signals that Slovakia's capital is growing. The city has a buzz to it: beautiful people wearing black flock to the newest chichi eatery as soon as it opens. Weekend nights it'd be odd if you didn't see a gang or two of non-Slovak-speaking blokes wandering around the streets of the old town. There's something a bit reckless about the development, though. Zoning laws are largely ignored, and an odd mix of antireform-minded parties took control of the parliament in June 2006.

Who knows what the town will be like in a few years, but for now the old centre is supremely strollable. Amble around the mazelike pedestrian alleys, stopping for a coffee – or an adult beverage or two – in cafés along the way. Hike up to the city castle (or head out to the suburbs to see Devín castle). You may want to pop into a museum if it's raining, but otherwise the best thing to do is just to take in the different views, even as it all changes before your eyes.

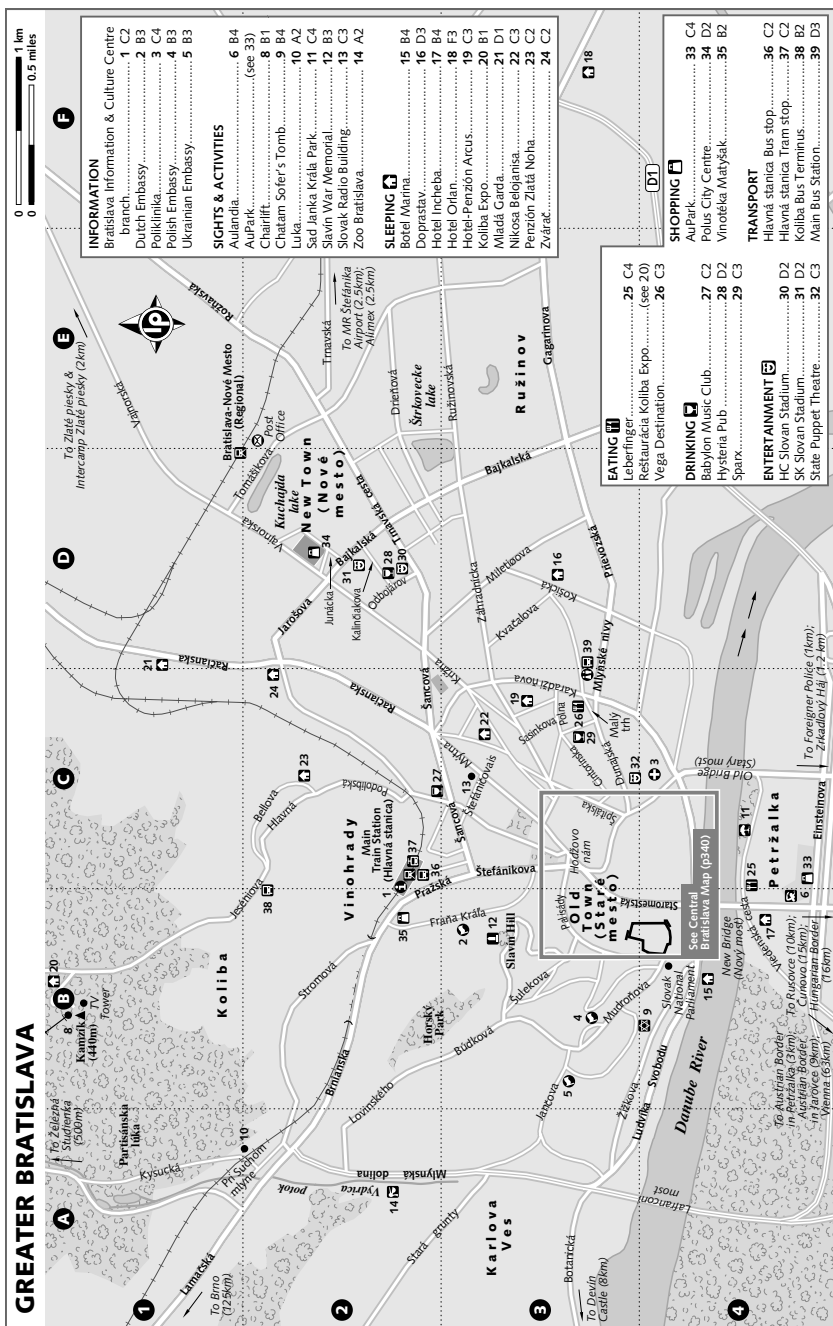
HIGHLIGHTS

- While away the hours at one of the many **street cafés** (p350) in the 'rabbit warren' old town
- Have your picture taken with **The Watcher** (p352) statue near Hlavné nám
- Cruise along the Danube from Bratislava to below the clifftop ruins of **Devín castle** (p353)
- Climb up to **Bratislava castle** (p343) to contrast old-town architecture with the communist-era New bridge and Petržalka



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 02

■ POPULATION: 421,155



HISTORY

It's hard to believe the capital of Slovakia hasn't been Slovak for very long. Officially, 'Bratislava' came into existence only in 1919; for 700 years preceding that it was known as Pressburg (in Austrian German) or Pozsony (in Hungarian) and the population had a very international flair.

The site of the city has been inhabited, more or less, for the past 4000 years. In the 2nd century AD it was the Romans, in the 5th century the first Slavs arrived, and by the 10th century the Magyars (Hungarians) had taken over (and would stay until WWI).

In 1465 King Matthias Corvinus founded the first university in the Hungarian Kingdom, the Academia Istrpolitana, in Bratislava. Then came the invading Turks, and the Hungarian capital was hurriedly moved from Budapest to Bratislava in 1536. Wealthy burghers and Viennese aristocrats built grand palaces, many of which still stand today. Musical life flourished; frequent visitors included Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and, later, Liszt. Although the Austrian Hapsburgs finally retook Budapest in 1686, Hungarian royalty continued to be crowned in Bratislava's St Martin's Cathedral until 1830.

It was in the 19th century that Slovak national awareness began to grow; one of its leading literary figures, Ľudovít Štúr, lived and published in this city. In 1848 Ferdinand V signed his name to one of Štúr's demands: the abolition of serfdom.

Despite, or perhaps because of, a subsequent policy of Hungarianisation in schools and government, Slovak intellectuals cultivated ties with the Czechs, and after WWI the city, with its Slovak name Bratislava, became part of the new Czechoslovakia.

Bratislava's dress rehearsal as a national capital came in March 1939, when leaders set up Slovakia as a fascist puppet state and a German ally. It was not, however, a populist move and in August 1944 Slovak partisans instigated the ill-fated Slovenské Národné Povstanie (Slovak National Uprising; SNP), a source of ongoing national pride (and innumerable street names).

In the 1970s Bratislava was ruthlessly modernised. The New bridge (Nový most) overpass was built over the bulldozed remains of the city's old Jewish quarter, and Petržalka's vast tower blocks began to replace the villages on the south side of the Danube.

Bratislava once again became a capital city in 1993 with the creation of the independent Slovak Republic, and the old town got a new coat of paint.

Good thing EU membership came when it did in May 2004, because buildings were already starting to show wear.

Money is once again pumping into the city, though, and new facilities will be going up over the next few years in preparation for Bratislava's hosting of the ice hockey World Cup in 2011.

BRATISLAVA IN...

Two Days

Start the morning by wandering along the ramparts of **Bratislava castle** (p343). Enter through the **Historical Museum** (p343) to climb the crown tower (*korunná veža*) for the highest views of the old town. On your way back down to town, stop at the **Museum of Jewish Culture** (p343) before having lunch at **Prašná Bašta** (p350). Spend the afternoon strolling through the old town, stopping to drink at as many café terraces as you dare. If you schedule it right, you could catch an opera at the **Slovak National Theatre** (p351) or a band at the **Café Štúdio Club** (p351). The following day, take a trip out of town to explore **Devín castle** (p353).

Four Days

Expand the two-day itinerary, spending two days instead of one wandering about the old town and sights such as **St Martin's Cathedral** (p343), the **Slovak National Gallery** (p344) and the **Blue Church** (p344). Then on the third day head out to Devín. On day four you could either head up to the hilltop park at **Koliba** (p345) for some hiking, a chairlift ride, and some traditional Slovak food, or you might consider a day trip into the **Small Carpathians** (p356) where there are wineries and Červený Kameň castle to explore.

ORIENTATION

Bratislava's old town (staré mesto) lies on the north bank of the Danube. The pedestrian zone, where you'll probably spend most of your time, starts south of Hodžovo nám. Note that throughout the Slovakia chapters of this book we have used *nám*, the common abbreviation of *námestie* (square). The pedestrian zone is bounded by the castle and the UFO-like New bridge in the west, Tesco and Šafárikovo nám to the east, and the Danube river to the south. The large plaza, Hviezdoslavovo nám is a convenient reference point, with the Slovak National Theatre on its east end.

To the north of the old town is Koliba, a hillside residential district with megamillion mansions and a leafy park at the top. The new

town (nové mesto), with its high-rise blocks and sports stadiums, stretches 9km east to the airport. Petržalka is the massive housing estate south of the Danube.

Bratislava's main train station, Hlavná stanica, is 1km north of the old town. Tram 13 runs from the station to Nám L Štúra, just south of Hviezdoslavovo nám, and bus 93 stops at Hodžovo nám. The main bus station (autobusová stanica) is 1.5km east of the historical centre. Bus 206 shuttles between there and the main train station, stopping at Hodžovo nám in between.

Maps

The best map is VKÚ's 1:15,000 Bratislava (130Sk), complete with street index, tram

and bus routes, 1:5000-scale plan of the city centre and 1:50,000-scale map of the surrounding region.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Artforum (Map p340; ☎ 5441 1898; Koziar 20) Great Slovakia-oriented English-language section, art books and literature.

Interpress Slovakia (Map p340; Sedlárska 2; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Foreign newspapers, and Bratislava periodicals in English.

Knihy Slovensky spisovateľ (Map p340; ☎ 5443 3760; Laurinská 2) Useful maps, hiking guides and picture books.

Next Apache (Map p340; Panenská 28; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) Loads of used English books and a comfy café.

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map p340; ☎ 5443 1074; Panská 17; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Library and café open to public.

Emergency

Emergency (☎ 112)

Main police station (Map p340; ☎ 159; Gunduličova 10)

Foreigner Police (Map p338; ☎ 0961036855; Hrobáková 44; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 1-3pm Mon, 7.30am-noon & 1-6pm Wed, 7.30am-noon Fri)

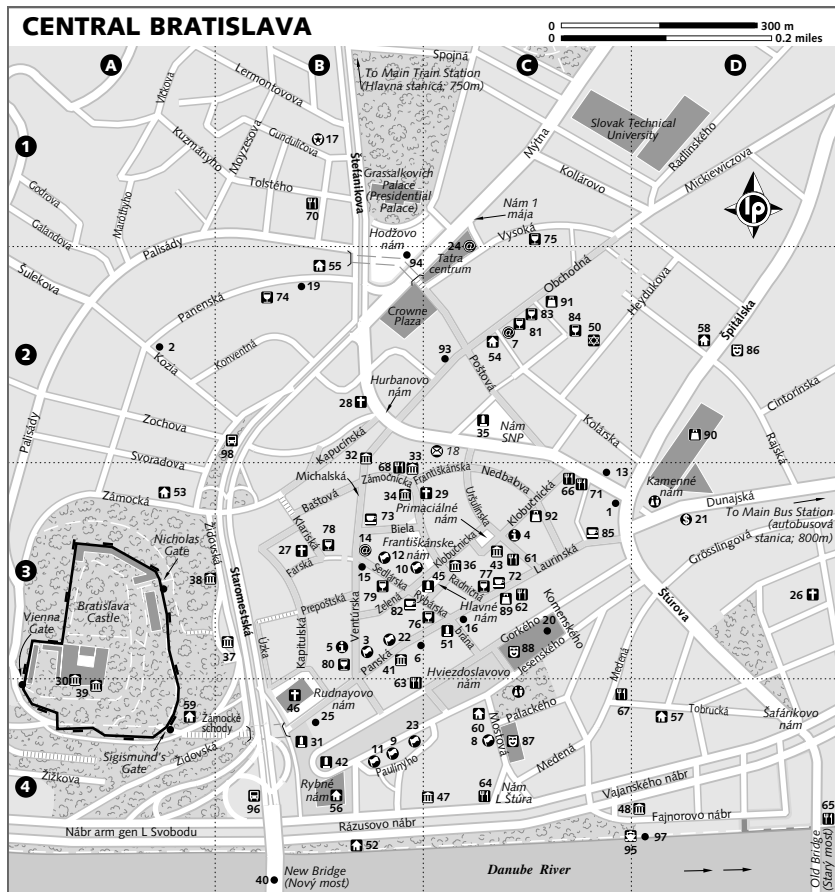
Internet Access

An hour online costs anything from the price of a drink to 120Sk, but 60Sk is a pretty common rate. There are many small 1-café scattered around the old town. Free wi-fi access is available on Primaciálne, Hviezdoslavovo, Hlavné and Františkánske squares. There are also free internet kiosks near the old town hall, the Primate's Palace and in the Bratislava Culture & Information Centre. An increasing number of restaurants, cafés and bars – such as Slovak Pub and Jazz Café – are offering free wi-fi as well.

Café Online (Map p340; ☎ 5464 2277; Obchodná 48; ☎ 9am-midnight) Really a bar that happens to have internet terminals.

Internet Centrum (Map p340; Michalská 2; ☎ 0903693577; ☎ 9am-4am) Six of the eight computers have webcam and Skype access.

Wifi Café (Map p340; Ground fl, Tatracentrum, Hodžovo nám; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Use the flat-screen terminals gratis at this smoke-free café, as long as you have a beverage. Wi-fi too, obviously.



INFORMATION	24-hour Pharmacy..... 1 C3	Monument of the Slovak National	Upisring..... 35 C2	Tesco..... (see 90)
Artforum (bookstore)..... 2 A2	Austrian Embassy..... 3 B3	Museum of Clocks..... 37 B3	Museum of Jewish Culture..... 38 A3	Traja Mušketeri..... 70 B1
Bratislava Culture & Information Centre..... 4 C3	British Council..... 6 B3	Museum of Music..... 39 A4	New Bridge..... 40 B4	U Remeselnika..... (see 91)
Bratislava Tourist Service..... 5 B3	Café Online..... 7 C2	Old Town Hall..... (see 36)	Plague Column..... 42 B4	DRINKING ☎
Canadian Embassy..... 8 C4	Czech Embassy..... 9 B4	Pálffy Palace..... 41 B3	Primate's Palace..... 43 C3	Cajovňa Pohoda..... 72 C3
French Embassy..... 10 B3	German Embassy..... 11 B4	Reduta Palace..... (see 87)	Roland's Fountain..... 45 C3	Cokoládovňa..... 73 B3
Hungarian Embassy..... 12 B3	International House Bratislava (language school)..... 13 C3	Slovak National Gallery..... 47 C4	Slovak National Theatre..... (see 88)	Apollon Club..... 74 B2
Internet Centrum..... 14 B3	Interpress Slovakia..... 15 B3	Slovak National Museum..... 48 D4	Slovak National Theatre..... (see 88)	Barbados..... 75 C1
Irish Embassy..... (see 8)	Knihy Slovensky spisovateľ (bookstore)..... 16 C1	Synagogue..... 50 C2	Treasury..... (see 30)	Café Antik..... 76 C3
Main Police Station..... 17 B3	Main Post Office..... 18 C2	U Anjelov..... 85 C3	U Anjelov..... 85 C3	Café Štúdio Club..... 77 C3
Next Apache (bookstore)..... 19 B2	Slovak National Theatre Booking Office..... 20 C3	SLEEPING ☎	ENTERTAINMENT ☎	Downtown..... 78 B3
Tatra Banka..... 21 D3	UK Embassy..... 22 B3	Botel Gracia..... 52 B4	Charlie Centrum..... 86 D2	Dubliner..... 79 B3
US Embassy..... 23 B4	WiFi Café..... 24 C1	Chez David Penzión..... 53 A3	Reduta Palace..... 87 C4	Jazz Café..... 80 B3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Bibiana..... 25 B4	City Hostel..... 54 C2	Slovak National Theatre..... 88 C3	KJB..... 81 C2
Blue Church..... 26 D3	Church of the Clarissine Order..... 27 B3	Downtown Backpackers..... 55 B2		Roland Café..... 82 B3
Church of the Holy Trinity..... 28 B2	Franciscan Church of the Annunciation..... 29 C3	Hotel Danube..... 56 D4		Slovak Pub..... 83 C2
Historical Museum..... 30 A4	Holocaust Memorial..... 31 B4	Hotel Marrol's..... 57 D4		Spider Club..... 84 C2
Michael Tower..... 32 B2	Milan Dobeš Museum..... 33 B3	Patjo Hostel..... 58 D2		U Anjelov..... 85 C3
Mirbach Palace..... 34 B3	Mirbach Palace..... 34 B3	Pension Castle Club..... 59 A4		SHOPPING ☎
		Radisson Carlton..... 60 C4		Nie je sklo ako sklo..... 89 C3
				Tesco..... 90 D2
				Úľuv..... 91 C2
				Vinotéka sv Urbana..... 92 C3
				TRANSPORT
				Avis..... (see 56)
				DPB Office..... 93 C2
				DPB Office..... 94 B2
				Hydrofol Terminal..... 95 C4
				New Bridge Bus Stop..... 96 B4
				Slovak Shipping & Ports..... 97 D4
				Zochova bus stop..... 98 B2

Internet Resources

Bratislava (www.bratislava.sk) City-sponsored site with loads of tourist info.

Enjoy Bratislava (www.enjoybratislava.sk) City guide with monthly updates.

Slovak Spectator (www.slovakspectator.sk) Online version of the English-language weekly, with current affairs and event listings.

What's On Slovakia (www.whatsonslovakia.com) Entertainment listings for Bratislava and beyond.

Laundry

Bratislava does not have a laundrette, no kidding. Arrangements can be made with most lodgings to do your washing, even if it's not offered as an official service.

Left Luggage

In left-luggage offices, lunch breaks are generally taken from 12.30pm to 1pm, dinner from 6pm to 6.30pm. Items up to 15kg/over 15kg cost 30/45Sk per day.

Bus station (Mlynské nivy; Map p338; ☎ 5.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 6am-6pm Sat & Sun)

Main train station (Hlavná stanica; Map p338; ☎ 6.30am-11pm)

Media

In Bratislava, Fun Radio (94.3 FM) is the popular pop-music station. BBC Worldservice is 93.8 FM.

Kam v Bratislave (Where in Bratislava; www.kamdomesta.sk in Slovak; free) Monthly Slovak-language schedule for exhibits, operas and clubs; easy enough to decipher.

Slovak Spectator (www.slovakspectator.sk; 35Sk) Weekly English-language newspaper.

What's On Slovakia (www.whatsonslovakia.com; 40Sk) Monthly English-language magazine listing cultural events, live music and cinema schedules.

Medical Services

24-hour Pharmacy (Map p340; ☎ 5443 2952; Nám SNP 20)

Poliklinika (Map p338; ☎ 5296 2461; Bezručova 5) Twenty-four-hour emergency services, including dental.

Money

In Bratislava there's an excess of banks and ATMs in the old town, with several convenient branches located on Poštová and around Kamenné nám.

Most banks will cash travellers cheques and exchange foreign currency. There are also ATMs and exchange booths in the train and bus stations, and at the airport.

Tatra Banka (Map p340; Dunajská 4) English-speaking staff.

Post

Main post office (Map p340; Nám SNP 34-35) Address mail c/o Poste restante, 81000 Bratislava 1.

Telephone

Most pay phones these days require a local *telefónna karta* (phonecard), which can be purchased at newsstands. Many also sell international telephone cards, such as those from **EZ Phone** (www.ezcard.sk; 150/300/500Sk), with rates to the UK and US starting at per minute 2Sk. Both local and international phonecards can look a lot like the mobile phone credit cards also hung in the newsstand windows; watch what you're pointing at.

Toilets

Have coins handy; public toilets generally cost between 2Sk and 5Sk.

Tourist Information

Bratislava Culture & Information Centre (BKIS; ☎ 5249 5906; www.bkis.sk) centre (Map p340; Klobučníka 2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat); main train station (Map p338; Hlavná stanica; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat Jun-Sep & 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-May); airport (Map p338; MR Štefánika airport; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) The official central tourist point is a little sterile, and the staff can seem uninterested, but keep pressing and they'll help you.

Bratislava Tourist Service (BTS; Map p340; ☎ 5464 1271; www.bratislava-info.sk; Ventúrska 9; ☎ 10am-8pm) A tiny office, but it has a younger, more helpful staff than the BKIS and lots of maps and knick-knacks.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Bratislava is relatively free of violent crime compared to Western capitals. To avoid annoyances, be as cautious as you'd normally be at home. Pickpocketing scams usually include some sort of distraction followed by someone coming up behind you to grab the goods. Car theft, not of the car but of the things inside, is all too common. Do not leave any valuables in view on car seats, even in a locked car – unless you're trying to get rid of them.

SIGHTS

Bratislava is more about the overall experience than about seeing spectacular, singular attractions. Ambling around the old town

streets is probably how you'll spend most of your time. The main sights are gathered near the castle, on Hlavné nám and along the Danube. Bratislava's pedestrian core is small and easily covered in a day. Don't forget to put some of the many cafés, bars and restaurants onto your itinerary. To be honest, more than a few of the museums are quite boring (we've only listed the best), but the observation towers are worth the views. To explore further a field you'll need public transport. Many buses leave from Hodžovo nám or under the New Bridge.

Bratislava Castle & Around

Lording over the west side of the old town, **Bratislava castle** (Bratislavský hrad; Map p340; grounds admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar) dominates the hill above the Danube. The winding ramparts and grounds provide a great vantage point for comparing ancient and communist Bratislava, the barrel-tile roofs of the old town versus the vast concrete housing estates of Petržalka. There are a couple of cafés and craft shops on the grounds.

The castle looks a bit like a four-poster bed, a shape that was well established by the 15th century. During the Turkish occupation of Budapest, this was the seat of Hungarian royalty. A fire devastated the fortress in 1811 and most of what you see today is a reconstruction from the 1950s (bland white interiors and all). The saving grace of the castle's ho-hum **Historical Museum** (Map p340; ☎ 5441 1441; www.snm.sk; adult/student 100/40Sk; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) is you can climb up the crown tower (*korunná veža*). In good weather you can see Austria (3km southwest) and Hungary (16km south).

At the time of writing, the tiny **treasury** (*klenotnica*) was closed for reconstruction with no certain reopening date. When it does reopen, the highlight will still be the unbelievable 25,000-year-old *Venus of Moravany*, a miniature fertility statue of a headless, naked woman that is carved from a mammoth tusk. Far more interesting than the **museum of Music** (Hudobné múzeum; Map p340; ☎ 5441 3349; adult/student 40/20Sk; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is the chance to walk down into the bastion in the castle wall.

(To see a more historically complete castle, take a bus or boat out to **Devín castle**, p353, 9km outside the centre.)

A series of old homes wind down the castle hill along Židovská in what remains of the former Jewish quarter. The reputedly skinni-

est house in Central Europe contains a little **Museum of Clocks** (Múzeum hodín; Map p340; ☎ 5441 1940; Židovská 1; adult/student 40/20Sk; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Inside the **Museum of Jewish Culture** (Múzeum Židovskej kultúry; Map p340; ☎ 5441 8507; www.chatamsofer.com; Židovská 17; adult/student 200/100Sk; ☎ 11am-5pm Sun-Fri) there are moving exhibits about Slovakia's Jewish community that was decimated during WWII, the buildings that were demolished in the 1960s and on Judaism in general. The staff can help arrange a visit to rabbi **Chatam Sofer's tomb** (Map p338; www.chatamsofer.com; Žižkova; donations accepted; ☎ by appointment only) near the tram tunnel under castle hill.

Cross under the Staromestská highway to the pedestrian old town and there's a small **Holocaust Memorial** (Map p340) near where the old synagogue once stood. A relatively modest interior in the Gothic 14th-century **St Martin's Cathedral** (Dóm sv Martina; Map p340; admission 60Sk; ☎ 9-11am & 1-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) belies the elaborate history of the place. Here 11 Hungarian Hapsburg ruling monarchs were crowned from 1563 to 1830 (10 kings and one queen). The steeple is topped by a golden crown in place of a cross. Inside look for a 1734 statue of St Martin cutting off the corner of his cloak for a beggar; it was created by Georg Raphael Donner, Austria's best-known baroque sculptor. The cathedral is constantly under threat of damage as bridge traffic is shaking it to the core.

CHATAM SOFER

Born Moshe Schreiber in Frankfurt, Chatam Sofer (1762-1839) moved to Bratislava in 1806 to accept a position as a rabbi. Here he founded a yeshiva, a school for rabbis, and in the course of his life trained more than 150 (including his two sons). The school became one of the best known in Europe, and operated up until the first years of WWII when it had to be moved to Israel. Rabbi Sofer was a staunch defender of traditional Judaism and was against reform practices. His tomb became a place of pilgrimage, especially for Orthodox Jews from all over Europe. During the Nazi occupation the cemetery was buried under rubble, but his tomb has a new memorial entrance and is now Slovakia's most important Jewish site.

Along the Danube & Hviezdoslavovo Nám

Plans to make the Danube riverfront more of an attraction are in the works, but for now it's just a large, pleasant, tree-lined place to walk. Waterfront and centre is the **Slovak National Gallery** (Map p340; ☎ 5443 4587; www.sng.sk; Rázusovo nábrežie 2; adult/student 80/40Sk; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which houses the nation's biggest art collection. An 18th-century palace and a Stalinist-modernist building make interesting cohorts for the eclectic showing, which ranges from Gothic to graphic art.

The 1st floor exhibits of the **Slovak National Museum** (Map p340; ☎ 5934 9122; www.snm.sk; Vajanského nábrežie 2; adult/student 60/20Sk; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) provide a superb overview of the folk cultures and customs of Slovakia's regions; skip the tired natural history stuff upstairs.

The narrow, tree-lined **Hviezdoslavovo nám** traces a filled-in moat outside the old town walls. It's named after Pavol Orságh Hviezdoslav. Presiding over the square is the neo-baroque **Slovak National Theatre** (p351), the city's premier opera and ballet venue, completed in 1886. Unfortunately, the only way to see the lush interior of the theatre is to attend a performance. At the western end of Hviezdoslavovo nám is an 18th-century **plague column** on Rybné nám (Fish Sq), all that remains of the city's old fish market (yet another victim of the New Bridge).

South of Hviezdoslavovo nám on Mosťová is the beautiful neobaroque **Reduta Palace** (p351) completed in 1914 as a dancehall. It's

home to the city symphony orchestra and open only during performances, but you can get an idea of the extensive gilding from the foyer on your way to the ticket office.

Historic Centre

The historic, pedestrian centre of the old town has some beautiful baroque palaces, built after the Hungarians moved their capital here. Once the centre and main market of the old town, **Hlavné nám** still fills up with craft stalls during the Easter and Christmas markets. Built in 1572, **Roland's Fountain** (Map p340), at the centre of the square, may have originally been a fire hydrant.

Flanking one side of the square is the **old town hall** (1421) containing the **Municipal Museum** (Map p340; ☎ 5920 5130; Hlavné nám; adult/student 50/20Sk; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun). Buzz past the tedious archaeological cases and look for the stairs down to the torture chambers in the cellar; they come complete with illustrated murals.

One of Slovakia's finest neoclassical buildings, the **Primate's Palace** (Primadiálny Palác; Map p340; adult/student 40Sk/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is topped with a 150kg cast-iron bishop's hat. Napoleon and the Austrian emperor Franz I signed the Treaty of Pressburg on 26 December 1805 here in the Hall of Mirrors. The 17th-century English tapestries on display in the 2nd-floor gallery were found hidden under wallpaper during a 1903 reconstruction.

The town's only surviving tower gate, **Michael tower** (Michalská veža; Map p340; ☎ 5443 3044;

Michalská 24; adult/student 40/20Sk; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), has a 14th-century base, a 16th-century top and an 18th-century steeple. Go inside to climb up and see the view across the rooftops. There's also a small display of antique swords, armour and guns.

Milan Dobeš Museum (Map p340; ☎ 5443 2305; www.milandobes.sk; Zámocnícka 13; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is a cool little contemporary museum that hosts international exhibits. The **City Gallery of Bratislava** (☎ 5443 1556; www.gmb.sk; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) has two palatial show spaces: **Mirbach Palace** (Map p340; Františkánske nám 11; adult/student 60/30Sk), built in 1770, is a beautifully restored rococo building housing older baroque art; and **Pálffy Palace** (☎ 5443 3627; Panská 19; adult/student 20/10Sk; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a pre-1715 house built on the site of a 13th-century structure, contains a mix of 19th- and 20th-century Slovak art.

Scattered about the pedestrian centre are numerous churches, the oldest of which is the **Franciscan Church of the Annunciation** (Kostol Zvestovania-Františkáni; Map p340; Františkánske nám). Consecrated in 1297, it was later 'baroquified' by the Jesuits. It's normally open only for services. The **Church of the Clarissine Order** (Kostol Klarisiek; Map p340; Klariská 3) has an ornate 14th-century Gothic tower. No longer active, it is sometimes used as a concert hall. Nearby Kapitulska is one of the oldest and quietest streets in the city. The baroque **Church of the Holy Trinity** (Kostol Trinitárov; Map p340; Župné nám 11; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm) is worth a look for the trompe l'oeil dome painted on the ceiling.

Nám SNP & Around

The central feature of the vast Nám SNP is a bronze **Monument of the Slovak National Uprising**, honouring to the antifascist uprising for which the square is named. In November 1989 huge crowds assembled here in the days leading up to the fall of the communist regime, and it was also here that Slovaks gathered before the Velvet Divorce from the Czech Republic.

Two blocks northeast of Nám SNP is the city's only operating **synagogue** (Map p340; Heydukova 11-13; ☎ closed to the public).

Slavín Hill

On Slavín Hill, northwest of the old town, stand a cemetery and garden with fine views over the city. Towering over them is the **Slavín War Memorial** (Map p338), an enormous pillar

erected in 1960 in memory of the 6000 Soviet soldiers who died pushing the Nazis out of West Slovakia.

To get there, take trolleybus 208 west from Hodžovo nám to the end of the line on Šulekova (20 minutes), and climb for 1km up Timravina and Mišíkova.

ACTIVITIES

Hiking

To get out of the city and into the forest, take trolleybus 203 northeast from Hodžovo nám to the end of the line at **Koliba** (Map p338), then walk up the road for about 20 minutes to the **TV tower** at Kamzík (440m). Maps posted at the trail head outline the many hiking possibilities in the forest surrounds and there are a couple of hotels with restaurants in the park. A **chairlift** (lanovka; Map p338; ☎ 4425 9188; adult/student return 90/60Sk; ☎ 10am-4pm Oct-May) makes the 15-minute journey down to the picnic areas and playgrounds of **Železná studienka**. You might like to hike down and hitch a ride back up.

Cycling

Though cycling is very popular with locals, the dearth of bike-hire agents makes it tough for visitors. **Luka** (Map p338; ☎ 0907683112; Pri Suchom mlyne 84) is the only agency that hires bikes (800Sk per day). A good, but steep, route from the Luka office northeast of the centre is to continue north on Kysucká to the picnic and park area of **Železná studienka**, where there's a chairlift (see Hiking, above). The adventurous can transport themselves and the bike up via the chairlift and ride back down the mountain cycle path. Flatter routes include along the Danube to Devín castle (8km).

Swimming

Zlaté piesky (Golden sands; Map p338; Senecká cesta; adult/student 40/20Sk; ☎ 9am-6pm) is a lake resort 7km northeast of the old town. It's where locals escape the summer heat. You can hire rowing boats and sailboards in summer. Take tram 4 from Kamenné nám, near the Tesco department store, to the terminus (20 minutes) and walk east for a couple of blocks; the lake will be on your right.

Bratislava itself doesn't have any thermal waters, but there is a swimming/spa waterpark complex of sorts on top of the **AuPark** (Map p338; ☎ 6826 6111; Einsteinova) shopping mall. **Aulandia** (Map p338; ☎ 6820 1031; www.aulandia.sk; Einsteinova 18; all day adult/under 12yr 550/400Sk; ☎ 10am-10pm)

ST ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

Born in Bratislava castle in 1207, Elizabeth was the daughter of King Andrew II. She got engaged at the ripe old age of four to a Germanic prince of Thuringia, where she was shipped off to. She and Ludwig didn't actually marry until she was 14, he was 21. While Ludwig was away on business, the bubonic plague and a flood hit their land. Elizabeth took control and started handing out supplies to the poor, including court robes from her castle home in Wartburg.

But her sainthood rises from a time after her husband was killed in a crusade. Legend has it that her in-laws weren't too fond of her charitable inclinations and so she hid under her aprons the bread she took out to peasants. When confronted, she lied and said the bread was roses. When she was forced to show the contents of her aprons, roses miraculously appeared. She was driven from her castle and went to the town of Malburg, where she helped build hospitals and devoted herself full time to the Franciscan order. She died at age 24. Shortly after her death, miracles of healing began to be associated with her grave and the canonisation was initiated.

A mosaic depicting the revelation of the roses hangs at the entrance to the Church of St Elizabeth, more commonly known as the **Blue Church** (Modrý kostol; Map p340); Bezručova 2; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm). The cool sky-blue-and-white church (1911) is an Art-Nouveau fantasy. On Saturdays it acts as a wedding machine – rather appropriate as it does look like an elaborate cake.

has family-friendly pools and water slides, as well as a more adult spa zone where skimpy terry-cloth wraps (and hitting on strangers) are required.

Take bus 80, 83 or 93 from Zochova across the New Bridge one stop to AuPark.

Rafting

You can go white-water rafting on manmade rapids in a Danube channel with Action Land (see p354).

WALKING TOUR

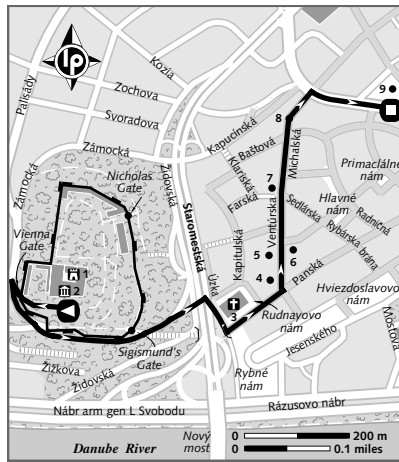
The following is a walk through history. A 5th-century Slav fort – called Brezalaušpurc – grew into an important citadel of the Great Moravian Empire at the site of today's **Bratislava castle** (1; p343), so we start our trip through time here. Peer down onto the east terrace and you can see the outlines of a Great Moravian and basilica foundation from the 9th century. One of the oldest parts of the castle itself is the crown tower (1245) accessible through the **Historical Museum** (2; p343).

Descend into the old town down Zámocké Schody, part of the former Jewish quarter. Most of Bratislava's Jewish residents (10% of the city's pre-WWII population) were deported to concentration camps. Cross under the New bridge to get into the pedestrian centre and you are at **St Martin's Cathedral** (3; p343), where Maria Theresa of Austria was crowned in 1740.

Skirt around the church and head north on Ventúrska, at No 3 is the **Academia Istrpolitana** (4; ☒ closed to the public) building. Founded in 1465 as the first university in the Kingdom of Hungary, it lasted only until King Mathias Corvinus' death in 1490. The building is now the Academy of Music & Drama.

In 1762 six-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart performed at a Pálffy family residence generally known today as **Mozart house** (5; Mozartov dom; Ventúrska 10; ☒ closed to the public). Up the street at **Leopold de Pauli Palace** (6; Ventúrska 13; ☒ closed to the public), now a university building, nine-year-old Franz Liszt gave one of his early recitals in 1820.

Further north is the 1756 **Palace of the Royal Chamber** (7; Michalská 1; ☒ closed to the public). Now a university library, it was formerly the seat of the Hungarian parliament, or diet, from 1802 to 1848. At the last meeting held there, town deputy Ľudovít Štúr spoke out for Slovak rights and the elimination of serfdom.



At the head of Michalská is the city's only remaining gate, **Michael Tower** (8; p344). From here the watchman called out the hour. It's rumoured that the bubonic plague entered through this gate in 1711.

Turn right and in a few steps you are at **Nám SNP** (9), the square where on 31 December 1992, more than 200,000 people gathered towards midnight to celebrate not only the New Year, but a new nation – an independent Slovakia. For more, see the boxed text, p32.

BRATISLAVA FOR CHILDREN

Bratislava isn't overly populated with playgrounds, or restaurants with children's menus for that matter, but there are a couple of places to keep the little ones entertained. **Bibiana** (Map p340; ☎ 5443 1308; www.bibiana.sk; Panská 41; admission free; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) calls itself an 'International House of Art for Children'. There's an art gallery aimed at little ones and it sponsors frequent puppet and musical performances and craft classes. The fun **State Puppet Theatre** (Štátne Bábkové Divadlo; Map p338; ☎ 5292 3668; www.babkovedivadlo.sk; Dunajská 36) also puts on shows, pretty much daily at 10am, and sometimes again at 2pm.

Zoo Bratislava (Map p338; ☎ 6542 0985; www.zoobratislava.sk; Mlynská dolina 1; adult/under 15yr 100/60Sk; ☒ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-3pm Nov-Mar) covers 96 hectares. Take bus 30 or 37 from under the New Bridge to the Slávičie údolie stop (five to 10 minutes). Closer to the centre, across the Danube from the old town, is **Sad Janka Kráľa Park** (Map p338) with paths and a few sorry amusement rides.

Nearby restaurant **Leberfingler** (p350) has indoor and outdoor playgrounds and a kid-sized menu.

QUIRKY COMMUNIST BRATISLAVA

Forty-five years of communist rule was bound to leave a mark. An obsession with modern functionalism resulted in many odd, sometimes depressing, structures.

The **New bridge** (Nový most; Map p340; ☎ 6252 0300; www.u-f-o.sk; Viedenská cesta; observation deck 100Sk; ☒ 10am-11pm), or the UFO (pronounced *ew-fo*) bridge, in Bratislava is a modernist marvel from 1972. After a three-year renovation, the UFO-on-a-stick reopened in 2006. There's an overhyped nightclub aloft, in addition to the prerequisite overpriced restaurant and viewing platform.

And, no, you're not seeing things – there is an upside-down pyramid in the new town; that's the **Slovak radio building** (Slovenský rozhlas; Map p338; nr Mýtna & Štefanovičova).

The entire **Petržalka** (Map p338) concrete-jungle housing estate is a good example of the communist egalitarian ethics of old. These ugly buildings all look identical. (We couldn't find any studies reporting how many people go to the wrong flat after a drink or two...)

On Slavín Hill, northwest of the old town, the **Slavín War Memorial** (Map p338) is one of the few remaining testaments to socialist realism as an art. A soldier holds a romantically waving flag atop an obelisk.

If you're still nostalgic for the good old days, down a brewsky or two with Stalin, Lenin and the boys (or at least their statues) at the **KGB bar** (p351).

TOURS

BTS (p342) and BKIS (p342) both lead two-hour daily **walking tours** (450Sk; ☒ 2pm) of the historical centre departing from their respective offices. The former also has themed walks, including one that follows the coronation route of Hungarian royalty.

A 45-minute Bratislava return-trip **boat tour** (adult/under 15yr 105/65Sk; ☒ 11am & 3.30pm May-Aug), run by **Slovak Shipping & Ports** (Slovenská plavba a prístavy; Map p340; ☎ 5293 2226; www.lod.sk; Fajnorovo nábrežie 2), takes you past the city's five bridges. The tour must have 30 passengers to depart, so book ahead.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Bratislava's best events are arts related:

Cultural Summer Festival (Kultúrne leto; ☎ 5441 3063; www.bkis.sk) Brings a smorgasbord of operas, plays and performances to the streets and venues around town from June to September.

Bratislava Jazz Days (Bratislavských jazzových dní; ☎ 5293 1572; www.bjd.sk) Swings for three days in September.

Bratislava Music Festival (Bratislavské hudobné slávnosti; ☎ 5443 4546; www.bhsfestival.sk in Slovak) Classical music takes centre stage at this event running from late September to mid-October.

Christmas market Usually begins 26 November on Hlavné nám. Craft and food vendors fill the square and there are weekend evening performances beneath the twinkly lights.

SLEEPING

Bratislava's lodging is no longer dirt-cheap, but there is a full range of places to stay – from 600Sk backpacker hostels to high-end hotels, where prices can be as much as in Prague or

GAY & LESBIAN BRATISLAVA

Bratislava has the biggest gay and lesbian scene in Slovakia, but that's not saying much. Websites of interest include www.gay.sk and www.gayinfo.sk, which both have listings in Bratislava.

Ganymedes (☎ 5022 8704; www.ganymedes.info in Slovak; PO Box 4, 830 00 Bratislava) is the local gay-rights organisation. The lesbian organisation is **Museion** (☎ 0905804456; www.lesba.sk in Slovak; PO Box 47, 840 02 Bratislava).

For up-to-the-minute gay and lesbian info, you'd probably do just as well asking around at the café **U Anjelov** (p350). Another mixed gay/lesbian/straight hang-out is **Café Antik** (Map p340; ☎ 5443 0260; Rybárska brána 2; ☒ 8am-midnight Sun-Thu, until 1am Fri & Sat).

The gay dance club in town is **Apollon Club** (Map p340; ☎ 0915480031; www.apollon-gay-club.sk; Panenská 24; ☒ 6pm-3am Mon-Thu & Sun, 6pm-5am Fri & Sat), with two bars and three stages. Thursdays are for boys only. **Spider Club** (Map p340; ☎ 0903758096; Jedlíkova 9; ☒ 6pm-2am Mon-Thu & Sun, 6pm-4am Fri & Sat) is a bar during the week and a disco on the weekend. **Barbados** (Vysoká 20; ☒ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, until 1am Fri & Sat) is a popular little gay bar.

Budapest (and not always with comparable quality). Good midrange guesthouses aren't in abundance and rooms at these book up fast year-round. Breakfast is either included in the price at hotels and *penzións*, or can be added for 100Sk to 200Sk; ask before you agree to take the room.

Budgetwise, your best bet is to visit in summer when student dormitories open to travellers. With a few exceptions, these and other budget digs tend to require public transport to get to the centre. BKIS can help with somewhat unreasonably priced private rooms (1100Sk per person) and a complete list of student dorms.

Central Bratislava BUDGET

Patio Hostel (Map p340; ☎ 5292 5797; www.patiohostel.com; Špitálska 35; dm 450-550Sk, d per person 860-900Sk; ☎ ☒ ☑) Clean and fresh and like a university dorm – that is if you were allowed to paint the concrete-block walls with bright colours and stylised graffiti at university. Each floor in this 100-bed hostel has a kitchenette, and there's a courtyard patio in addition to the computer room and basement rec room. The latter has TV and *foosball* (table football).

Downtown Backpackers (Map p340; ☎ 5464 1191; www.backpackers.sk; Panenská 31; dm 500-600Sk, d per person 1000Sk; ☎ ☒) If you'd rather have lively conversation and laid-back Bohemian charm than a lock on your door, you've found your place. Some of the eight- and 10-bed dorm rooms act as a corridor to one another. The communal lounge room has a bar.

MIDRANGE

Private apartments (generally €60 to €90), mostly in the old town, can be booked with the owner through www.bratislavahotels.com.

City Hostel (Map p340; ☎ 5263 6041; www.cityhostel.sk; Obchodná 38; s/d 1050/1650Sk; ☎ ☒) Small, modern singles, doubles and triples really resemble a basic hotel more than a hostel. Each has its own facilities, but TV costs extra. You could always watch the flat screen in the mod reception area. No breakfast available.

Pension Castle Club (Map p340; ☎ 5464 1472; www.stayslovaquia.sk; Zámocké schody 4; s/d with shared bathroom €60/75, q €120; ☎) It's quite the uphill hike to this town house B&B near the castle. The few basic rooms book up fast. An attic quad (more stairs!) has en suite bathroom, high-speed internet connection and two double beds.

Penzión Chez David (Map p340; ☎ 5441 3824; www.chezdavid.sk; Zámocká 13; s €64-74, d €78-88; ☎ ☒) A cool-blue colour scheme, great old photos of synagogues on the walls, and a primo location. You'll hardly even notice the building's boxy functionalism (although the rooms are small).

Several boat hotels line up along the Danube shore:

Botel Gracia (Map p340; ☎ 5443 2132; www.botel-gracia.sk; Rázusovo nábrežie; s/d 2045/2790Sk; ☎) It isn't the most updated but it's the closest to the old-town centre.

Botel Marina (Map p338; ☎ 5464 1804; www.botelmarina.sk; Nábrežie arm gen L Svobodu; s/d 2250/2900Sk; ☎ ☒ ☑) This is the most stylishly nautical (white, navy and red trim, cherry-wood cabin panelling and brass lamps) but is 1.5km east along the river from the old town.

TOP END

Hotel Danube (Map p340; ☎ 5934 0000; www.hoteldanube.com; Rybné nám 1; s €189-225, d €209-250; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☑) A business behemoth, the Danube has serious services and can-do staff. Oh, and the riverfront location is nice. Weekend rates and online packages can bring the price way down.

Radisson Carlton (Map p340; ☎ 5939 0500; www.radissonsonas.com; Hviezdoslavovo nám; r €240; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) The Carlton cruises like a big luxury liner on one of Bratislava's main squares, across from the Slovak National Theatre. The traditional rooms (think Louis-the-something reproductions) seem to fit the 1837 building better than the hypermodern ones done in black and red.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Marrol's (Map p340; ☎ 5778 4600; www.hotelmarrols.sk; Tobručká 4; s 7000Sk, d 7300-9600Sk; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) Black-and-white movie stills, sleek leather chairs, sumptuous fabrics: Hotel Marrol's is straight off the silver screen, c 1940. It's hard to imagine more retro refinement being packed into one cultural-landmark town house. White-gloved doormen greet returning guests by name and usher them into the parlour that serves as reception. Downstairs the Jasmine spa has a neoclassical look created with columns and trompe l'oeil. Only one word of warning: avoid the small 'ladies chamber' singles unless you like flowers – they're on the walls, covering the bedspread, in the bath salts...

Greater Bratislava BUDGET

Intercamp Zlaté piesky (Map p338; ☎ 4425 7373; www.intercamp.sk; Senecká cesta 2; sites person/tent 100/70Sk) Bratislava's camping ground sits astride Zlaté piesky lake. Here you can rent water bikes, play minigolf and lie on the beach. Bungalows (1050Sk for two) have bathrooms; chalets (500Sk) share tent-site facilities.

Zvárač (Map p338; ☎ 4924 6000; www.vuz.sk; Pionierska 17; s/d with shared bathroom 700/1100Sk) This perfectly functional four-storey worker's hostel isn't much on looks, but it's clean enough. Two double rooms with twin beds share a bathroom. The receptionist has a handy refrigerator stocked with beer (36Sk) and champagne (150Sk). Take tram 3 seven stops from the main train station.

Doprastav (Map p338; ☎ 5557 4313; www.doprastav.sk; Košická 52; dm 280-360Sk, s/d 700/1100Sk) Another worker's lodging, men and women's hostel sections are separate here. You can also opt for more upscale 'hotel' rooms with bathrooms. Being near a shopping complex (grocery store, restaurant, bakery) has its advantages. Take trolleybus 201 from the main train station nine stops to Miletičova.

Student dorms (open to travellers July and August only):

Mladá Garda (Map p338; ☎ 4425 3065; www.mladagarda.info; Račianska 103; s/d 360/520Sk) A little noisy because of trams; take tram 3 from the main train station.

Nikosa Belojanisa (Map p338; ☎ 5249 7169; eliska.tissova@stuba.sk; Wilsonova 6; s 300-500Sk, d 600-1000Sk) Located a 1.5km walk from the main train and bus stations.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Orlan (Map p338; ☎ 4363 3704; www.hotel-orlan.sk; Strojnícka 99, Rusinov; s/d 1190/1500Sk; ☎ ☒ ☑) More home than hotel, this pale green guesthouse is quite the suburban slice. Each simple but cheery room is slightly different (a sunset-coloured wall with gerbera-daisy art, for example). The attached restaurant has good Hungarian and Slovak food at low prices (80Sk for a lunch menu). Take trolleybus 201 from the main train station 14 stops to Ondrejova.

Penzión Zlatá Noha (Map p338; ☎ 5477 4922; www.zlata-noha.sk; Bellova 2, Koliba hill; without breakfasts 1350Sk, d 1700-1900Sk; ☎ ☒ ☑) Tranquillity and family-orientation make up for the steep driveway at this homy modern *penzión* above town. The owners even rent out horses. If you want to use the wi-fi, ask for a room near the recep-

tion. Take bus 203 from Hodžovo nám and get off at the fifth stop, Jeseniova.

Hotel-Penzión Arcus (Map p338; ☎ 5557 2522; www.hotelarcus.sk; Moskovská 5; s 1400-1800Sk, d 2600Sk; ☎ ☒) This friendly, popular hotel near the main bus station is only 15 minutes' walk from the old town. Although updated in 2001, the various rooms (some with balcony, some with courtyard views) still seem a little outmoded.

TOP END

Koliba Expo (Map p338; ☎ 5920 0620; www.koliba-expo.sk; Kamzíkovo vrch; r 3000Sk, ste 4000-5500Sk; ☎ ☒) Perch among the trees in the peaceful, forested park above the city. Local flower and bird motifs decorate honey-coloured wood beds; a sheer canopy drapes over a dark four-poster, complemented by dusty-rose walls. Think folk art at its most romantic. A grill restaurant and large terrace are part of the package.

EATING

The old town certainly isn't lacking in dining options. Foreign restaurant names and cuisines are dead giveaways that prices are going to be higher than in the rest of Slovakia. Compared to Western Europe, however, prices still aren't bad. The poshest places are in and around Hviezdoslavovo nám and Hlavné nám. With a university campus at one end, it's no wonder that Obchodná (shopping street) has a string of small, reasonable eateries selling Chinese dishes, pizza and sandwiches).

Central Bratislava BUDGET

Old Market (Stara Tržnica; Map p340; Nám SNP 25; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-6pm Sat, 1-6pm Sun) The landmark Old Market has been restored and once again welcomes vendors. Fresh fruit and veggie stands are in the centre and fast-food storefronts line the perimeter. Upstairs there's a bar-restaurant and a cafeteria.

U Jakubu (Map p340; ☎ 5441 7951; Nám SNP 24; mains 59-65Sk; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Point and pay: all the Slovak standards are laid out for you behind the glass at this large self-service restaurant. A soup-and-main menu costs as little as 80Sk.

Divesta diétna jedáleň (Map p340; Laurinská 8; mains 60-80Sk; ☎ 11am-3pm Mon-Fri) People have been queuing up for the veggie tucker at this central buffet every day for more than 10 years; the staff must be doing something right.

Samoobsluha reštaurácie, jedáleň and *bufet*, all self-service cafeterias, cater to office

workers and are great places to eat during the day (they close early). The downtown **Tesco** (Map p340; Kamenné nám) has a supermarket in the basement and a cafeteria on the 2nd floor, tucked behind the garden department. Food stands surround the department store.

MIDRANGE

Pizza Mizza (Map p340; ☎ 5296 5034; Tobrucká 5; mains 99-160Sk) The city's best slice. This modern, multistorey pizzeria is extremely popular, especially with expats, so you may want to book ahead. English is spoken here.

Prašná Bašta (Map p340; ☎ 5443 4957; Zámocnícka 11; mains 105-215Sk) Good, reasonable Slovak food with even a few vegetarian options such as risotto with mixed vegetables and cheese. The round-vaulted interior oozes old Bratislava charm. Hopefully the courtyard terrace (under construction at this writing) will reopen soon.

Mýtny domček (Map p340; ☎ 0911433763; Starý most; mains 109-209Sk) Pictures of old Bratislava decorate the walls of the restaurant in the former toll house on the Old bridge. All the typical grilled and fried meats are on the menu, but there are also meal-sized salads with chicken or tuna.

U Remeselníka (Map p340; ☎ 5273 1357; Obchodná 64; mains 109-209Sk) This tiny folk-craft-centre café may be the best place in town to have traditional home-style dishes. Little old ladies meet here for a lunch of a *halušky* for two, a trio of dumplings with sheep's cheese and bacon, with *kolbasa* (sausage) and cabbage.

Archa (Map p340; ☎ 5443 0865; Uršulínska 6; mains 180-320Sk) Chicken sautéed with avocado? This is Slovak cuisine gone international. The interior is designed to look like a ship (an ark), and there are a few tables outside.

TOP END

Traja Muškietieri (Map p340; ☎ 5443 0019; Sládkovičova 7; mains 350-600Sk) This stylised, up-market version of a medieval tavern comes complete with a poetic menu ("Traitorous Lady de Winter" is a skewered chicken stuffed with Parma ham). The staff excel at courteous service. Reservations recommended.

Of the many spiffy global-food alternatives in the old town, **Kogo** (Map p340; ☎ 5464 5094; Hviezdoslavovo nám 21; mains 260-650Sk), for Italian seafood, is among the newest; and **Malecón** (Map p340; ☎ 0910274583; Nám L Štúra 4; mains 269-459Sk) has the most-praised Latino fare (and mojitos).

Greater Bratislava

Vega Destination (Map p338; ☎ 3352 6994; Malý trh 2; mains 120-180Sk; ☒) Space-age décor complements the artistic presentation of the mostly vegetarian meals here. Dishes include tofu sautéed with a redcurrant sauce, pastas and risotto. There are even a few choices with meat.

Reštaurácia Koliba Expo (Map p338; ☎ 5920 0610; Kamžíkov vrch; mains 180-300Sk) Typically a *koliba* is a rustic restaurant, but an overhaul in 2006 overlegantised the interior (brocade chairs and candlelight). Never mind, you can eat on the wooden deck outside among the trees of the city park on Koliba hill.

Leberfingér (Map p338; ☎ 6231 7590; Viedenská cesta 257; mains 209-359Sk) Murals of historic Bratislava enliven this house across the river from the old town. Napoleon is supposed to have stopped here. Veal goulash, grilled fish and stuffed aubergine may seem upscale, but the restaurant is entirely family-friendly (kids' menu and playgrounds).

DRINKING

Bratislava doesn't have a concentrated entertainment district, but there are plenty of places in the old town pedestrian centre to poke your head into. From mid-April to October, street cafés sprout up on every corner – any one will do for a drink.

The college-age crowd heads to the bars on Obchodná; in fact, the whole street acts as a gathering place. There are a few atmospheric, artsy cellar bars along the north side of Hviezdoslavovo (you'll see them through the window grates at your feet).

Cafés

Čokoládovňa (Map p340; ☎ 5433 3945; Michalská 6; ☒ 9am-9pm) This tiny 'chocolate café' has cocktails, coffees and desserts made with the dark ambrosia.

Roland Café (Map p340; ☎ 5443 1372; Hlavné nám 5; ☒ 9am-1am) It seems like Roland café has been on the main square forever. This institution has a full menu as well as alcoholic beverages, and coffee and cakes.

Čajovňa Pohoda (Map p340; ☎ 5443 3103; Laurinská 3; ☒ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & 11am Sun; ☒) Exotic teas, and more potent brews, are on offer in this nonsmoking tearoom.

U Anjelov (Map p340; ☎ 5443 2724; Laurinská 19; ☒ 9am-midnight Mon-Thu, until 1.30am Fri, 1pm-1.30am Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Bratislava's gay café serves

creative mixed drinks, sometimes garnished with a candied marshmallow, while Frank Sinatra croons overhead.

Bars & Pubs

KGB (Map p340; ☎ 5273 1279; Obchodná 52; ☒ 10am-2am Mon-Fri, 4pm-3am Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun) Drink a dark and smoky toast to a statue of Stalin under a Soviet flag at KGB bar.

Downtown (Map p340; ☎ 5443 4317; Klariská 8; ☒ 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat) Lime green is the refreshing colour of this urban cocktail lounge. About a million liquors line the bar wall.

Slovak Pub (Map p340; ☎ 5441 0706; Obchodná 62; ☒ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) We'd be remiss if we didn't mention the number one English-advertised hang-out. The historic theme rooms are appropriately pubby, and it's popular with local college students (cheap food and beer) as well as foreign travellers.

Dublínér (Map p340; ☎ 5441 0706; Sedlárska 6; ☒ 11am-3am Mon-Sat, until 1am Sun) If you want to meet other English speakers, head to this Irish sports pub. If you don't, you may want to avoid it.

Clubs

Admission into clubs ranges from zip to upwards of 100Sk.

Café Štúdio Club (Map p340; ☎ 5443 1796; cnr Laurinská & Radničná; ☒ 10am-1am Mon-Wed, until 3am Thu & Fri, 4pm-3am Sat) Bop to the oldies, or chill out to jazz; most nights there's live music of some sort. A 1950s vibe prevails.

Jazz Café (Map p340; ☎ 5443 4661; Ventúrska 5; ☒ 10am-2am) Live jazz from Thursday to Saturday nights in a packed cellar pub. Get here before 8pm if you want a table.

Hysteria Pub (Map p338; ☎ 0910447744; Odbojárov 9; ☒ 10am-1am Mon-Thu; until 5am Fri & Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) Comical murals depict inebriated cowboys downing tequila at this fun-loving restaurant-bar-disco. It's multigenerationally popular.

Sparx (Map p338; ☎ 0903403097; Cintorínska 32; ☒ 11am-midnight Mon-Wed, until 1am Thu, until 3am Fri & Sat) This cavernous bar (once a big beer hall) has live music Thursdays and becomes a disco at the weekend.

Babylon Music Club (Map p338; ☎ 0915769230; Karpatská 2; ☒ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, until 4am Fri & Sat) Live music acts range from hip-hop to reggae to ska to local folk-rock.

ENTERTAINMENT

Here you'll find opera, ballet and theatre as well as traditional folk performances, all at much lower prices than across the border in Vienna. See p342 for entertainment publications with listings.

Performances & Concerts

Opera and ballet are performed at the ornate **Slovak National Theatre** (Slovenské Národné Divadlo; Map p340; www.snd.sk; Hviezdoslavovo nám). Get tickets in advance at the **booking office** (pokladňa; Map p340; ☎ 5443 3764; cnr Jesenského & Komenského; ☒ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) behind. A new theatre has been under construction since 1988.

Reduta Palace (Map p340; cnr Nám L Štúra & Medená; ☒ ticket office 1-7pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am-2pm Wed) houses a theatre where you can see the state orchestra, the **Slovak Philharmonic** (Slovenská Filharmonia; ☎ 5920 8233; www.filharmonia.sk).

Folk-dance and music ensembles such as **Sluk** (☎ 6285 9125; www.sluk.sk) and **Lúčnica** (☎ 5292 0068; www.lucnica.sk) perform at various venues around town. Groups such as **Muzička** (☎ 0905213638; www.muzicka.sk) play traditional folk music for dances at local culture-centre clubs, for instance **Zrkadlový Háj** (☎ 6383 6776; www.kzp.sk in Slovak; Rovniankova 3, Petržalka).

Sport

New ice-hockey and football stadiums are in the works. At least until 2008, Bratislava's hallowed ice-hockey team, HC Slovan, plays at the **HC Slovan stadium** (Map p338; ☎ 4445 6500; www.hcslovan.sk in Slovak; Odbojárov 3) northeast of the old town. Nearby, the home-town football team, SK Slovan, kicks at **SK Slovan stadium** (Map p338; ☎ 4437 3083; Junácka 2). You can buy tickets for both online at www.ticketportal.sk.

Cinema

Charlie Centrum (Map p340; ☎ 5296 8994, Špitálska 4) is a cinema that occasionally shows Czech and Slovak classics; next door is an associated night club.

SHOPPING

Bratislava is not a major shopping city, but there are several crystal, craft and jewellery stores selling garnets in and around Hlavné nám.

Nie je sklo ako sklo (Map p340; ☎ 5441 1296; Laurinská 6) sells gorgeous modern-art glass in sleek shapes and vibrant colours. Upstairs is a showroom for Rona, one of Slovakia's most popular glassmakers.

LOOKING FOR A MAN AT WORK

What's the most photographed sight in Bratislava? The castle? The New bridge? Nope, it's a bronze statue called **The Watcher** (Čumil; Map p340). He peeps out of an imaginary manhole at the intersection of Panská and Rybárska brána, below a 'Men at Work' sign. And he's not alone. There are other quirky statues scattered all around the old town. See if you can find them: **The Frenchman**, a replica of one of Napoleon's soldiers who passed through in 1809, leans on a park bench; **The Photographer** stalks his subject paparazzi-style around a corner; **Schöner Náci**, a 20th-century dandy, tips his top hat to the square he stands on; and a **soldier** stands guard in front of a water fountain. Look up for other questionable characters, such as a timepiece-toting monk and a rather naked imp, decorating building façades.

Úľuv (Map p340; ☎ 5273 1351; www.uluv.sk; Obchodná 64) Serious art-buying folk head to this big craft-cooperative, where there are two stores and a courtyard filled with artisans' studios.

Vinotéka sv Urbana (Map p340; ☎ 5433 2573; Klobučnícka 4) has a virtual library of *vino* for sample and sale, so if you're not going to the Small Carpathians this is a good place to buy regional wine.

Vinotéka Matyšák (Map p338; ☎ 2063 4001; www.vinomatysak.sk; Pražská 15) has an ancient cellar with room for 45,000 bottles. A large selection is available for tasting at the store, and there's a restaurant and hotel associated with this vintner.

Tesco Department Store (Map p340; Kamenné nám) It may not soothe your socially conscious soul, but this big downtown store has just about everything you could need – crystal, wine, *slivovitz* (a clear plum liquor that's a lot like firewater), jewellery, maps, groceries – at prices that undercut other stores.

The city's biggest shopping malls are **Polus City Centre** (Map p338; ☎ 4910 2031; Vajnorská), north-east of the city, and **AuPark** (Map p338; ☎ 6826 6111; Einsteinova), south across the Danube.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For details on going beyond the Czech and Slovak Republics by air, hydrofoil (you can take one to Budapest and Austria), bus or train, see p452.

Air

Bratislava's **MR Štefánika Airport** (BTS; Map p338; ☎ 3303 3353; www.airportbratislava.sk) is 7km north-east of the centre. **Sky Europe** (☎ 4850 4850; www.skyeurope.com) has two to three daily flights to Košice (50 minutes, three daily) for as little as 190Sk (plus 300Sk in taxes) if you book ahead. **Czech Airlines** (ČSA; ☎ 5296 1042; www.czechairlines.com) flies to Prague three times per day.

Bus

The **main bus station** (autobusová stanica, AS; Map p338; ☎ reservations 5556 7349; www.eurolines.sk) is 1.5km east of the old town. Locals call it Mlynské Nivy, after the street it's on. Buses leaving from here head to towns across Slovakia, including Žilina (203Sk, three hours, seven daily), Poprad (345Sk, seven hours, four daily), Košice (441Sk, eight hours, nine daily) and Bardejov (491Sk, nine to 11 hours, three daily).

Eurolines (☎ 5556 7349; www.eurolines.sk) buses go from Bratislava to Prague's Florenc station (410Sk, 4½ hours, seven daily), Brno (200Sk, two hours, eight daily) and other Czech cities.

For schedules, check out <http://cp.zoznam.sk/ConnForm.asp>; click on the British flag for the English-language version.

Car & Motorcycle

Numerous international-chain rental agencies have offices at the airport. The local **Alimex** (Map p338; ☎ 5564 1641; www.alimex.sk) charges from 699Sk per day (if you're willing to drive with advertising on your car). **Avis** (Map p340; ☎ 5341 6111; www.avis.sk; Rybné nám 1) has a desk in the Hotel Danube, but prices are high (from 1200Sk per day).

Two 24-hour border crossings to Austria are at Petržalka and Jarovce.

Train

The **main train station** (Hlavná stanica; Map p338; www.zs.sk) is about 1km north of the centre. At least 11 express trains per day connect Bratislava to Košice (518Sk, 6½ hours), most via Trenčín (180Sk, two hours), Žilina (268Sk, three hours) and Poprad (420Sk, five hours). Intercity (IC) trains (four daily) are slightly faster and require seat reservations.

All express trains to Prague (755Sk, 4½ hours, six daily) pass through Brno (305Sk, 1½ hours).

Walking into Austria

The Austrian border is about 4km beyond the New bridge along Viedenská cesta. Take bus 81 southbound across the bridge from Hodžovo nám and get off at the next stop after high-rise Hotel Incheba. Walk 2km to the border.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Bus 61 links the airport with the main train station (18Sk; 20 minutes).

Taking a taxi from the airport is more expensive than taking one in town; and, as everywhere, drivers are able to set their meters at different rates. There seems to be an unofficial English-language surcharge. Before you get in the cab, show the driver the address and ask *'Kolkto to bude?'* ('How much will it be?') or motion them to write down a price on your notepad. To the centre it really shouldn't cost much more than 500Sk, but we've heard of travellers who've been charged as much as 1800Sk. You may not succeed in haggling the price down beforehand, but at least maybe the driver won't try to cheat you as badly.

Boat

Slovak Shipping & Ports (Slovenská plavba a prístavy; Map p340; ☎ 5293 2226; www.lod.sk; Fajnorovo nábrežie 2; adult/student return 150/95Sk; ☎ 10am & 2.30pm Tue-Sun May-Aug) runs a ferry from Bratislava to Devín castle (right). Boats depart at 1.30pm and 6pm from the hydrofoil terminal (Map p340) in Bratislava. The trip takes 90 minutes upriver but only 30 minutes back down from Devín.

Car & Motorcycle

Headaches for drivers include pedestrian areas around the old town, numerous (and poorly marked) one-way streets, limited parking and sharp-eyed traffic police. Parking in the city centre is fairly restricted, so consider paying around 50Sk an hour at a private car park. Those car parks with free spaces are listed at www.parkovanieba.sk. Better yet, park at your hotel and walk.

Public Transport

Dopravný Podnik Bratislava (DPB; ☎ 5950 5950; www.dpb.sk) runs an extensive tram, bus and trolleybus network. You can buy tickets (14/18/22Sk for 10/30/60 minutes) at newsstands, and some big stops have ticket-vending machines; validate on board. *Turistické cestovné lístky*

(tourist passes) cost 90/170/270/310Sk for one/two/three/seven days and are sold at the **DPB Office** (☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri). There's one below Hodžovo nám and another at Obchodná 14. To search for routes and schedules, go to www.imhd.sk.

Bratislava Culture & Information Centres sell the **Bratislava City Card** (1/2/3 days, 200/300/370Sk), which covers you for city transport and provides discounted museum admissions among other benefits.

Trams and buses run from 5am to 11.30pm, but there are a few night-service lines (numbered in the 500s); schedules are posted at stops. Be aware that politeness is the norm on public transport in Bratislava – give up your seat for the elderly and mothers with young children or expect to be glared at.

Taxi

Bratislava's taxis have meters, but drivers can set them to run at different rates. Cheating is becoming less common; going anywhere in the old town should cost more than 300Sk. Call **Transtel Taxi** (☎ 16 301) or **Super Taxi** (☎ 16 616).

AROUND BRATISLAVA

Most of West Slovakia (p355) can be considered a day trip from Bratislava, especially the Small Carpathian mountains. The sights listed in this section are accessible by Bratislava city buses.

DEVÍN CASTLE

One of the best sights in town is actually 9km west of the city centre. The first wall buildings at **Devín castle** (☎ 6573 0105; Muranská; adult/student 80/30Sk; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, until 6pm Sat & Sun mid-Apr-Oct) date from Roman times, remnants of which you can still see. As ownership passed from Prince Rastislav and the Great Moravian Empire in the 9th century to the Hungarian Kingdom, more buildings and defences were added. It was Napoleon's army, rather than the Turks, that breached the defences and blew the place up in 1809. Extensive excavations and some reconstruction have taken place in recent years.

Climb up the hill and you pass vestiges of various historical periods: a 15th-century guardhouse, a 16th-century gate, and reconstructed foundations of a 9th-century church. Just across the castle moat is a partially

reconstructed 16th-century palace, with an extensive exhibit of artefacts on the lower level. At the western end of the complex is a restored 13th-century citadel.

The precipitous turret mounted atop a spirelike rock is known as the Virgin Tower. Legend has it that the lord of Devín castle fell in love with a noble lady who shared his sentiment, and he brought her to the castle. When her uncle took to arms to get her back, she leapt to her death from this perch rather than live without love (yeah, right).

Frequent festivals are held on the castle grounds; check with Bratislava's information offices. There are several food stands and a hotel at the base of the castle hill.

On weekdays and summer weekends, local bus 29 departs from Bratislava about every half-hour from the New bridge bus stop; the terminus is at the castle's car park (20 minutes). Better yet, take the ferry (p353).

ČUNOVO

Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum (☎ 6252 8501; www.danubiana.info; Vodné dielo, Čunovo; adult/child 60/30Sk; 🕒 10am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Apr), 15km south of Bratislava, is a temple to modern art. It opened in 2000 on a spit of land jutting into the Danube, as part of a millennial celebration. The red, blue and silver construction houses some of the more cutting-edge art in Slovakia, and the exhibitions constantly

change. The museum is surrounded by a landscaped park, also used as exhibition space, and has a great little outdoor café.

Less cerebral fun is also available in Čunovo. **Action Land** (☎ 6252 8077; www.actionland.sk; Aréal VS Čunovo; 1 ride €5, 2hr pass €35; 🕒 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 2-7.30pm Sat & 10am-3pm Sun Apr-Oct) has white-water rafting on a dammed channel in the Danube. Action Land provides the equipment and training; you provide the adrenaline.

Unfortunately it's not easy to get to Čunovo without a car. Take bus 91 from under the New bridge to the terminus (35 minutes) in front of the Čunovo city office. Cross Hrianičarska and walk east on Rača. You have to turn north (left) for a block on Na hrádzi before turning east (right) again onto the road through the forest that leads to the peninsula in the Danube (about 3km for both).

RUSOVCE

This small suburb 10km south of Bratislava contains the excavations of an ancient Roman fort. A garrison was long known to be stationed here from the 1st to the 4th centuries, but it wasn't until 1965 that the **Antic Gerulata** (☎ 6285 9332; Gerulatská 69, Rusovce; adult/student 40/20Sk; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) was found.

Take bus 91 or 191 from the New bridge bus stop to the Miú Rusovce bus stop (15 minutes) and walk towards the church. The archaeological site is at the end of the road.