

## **ABOUT BRATISLAVA**

Located on the River Danube, Bratislava is easily accessible. It's a great place to hang out. The city is safe, friendly, hassle-free and there is always something worth doing whether you're here for an afternoon, a week or a year.

Bratislava has always been a flourishing and prosperous town, making the most of its position on the Danube and being at the intersections of important European trade routes. In the Mediaeval period and later in the 18th century, it was a significant economic centre and later, a cultural and political centre of Central Europe. In the 16th Century, due to its location, Bratislava not only became the capital and coronation town of the Hungarian Kingdom but also the place where its crown jewels were kept. It was remote from the invading Turks, yet close to imperial Vienna, from where the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was governed for nearly 500 years.

Historically, Vienna and Bratislava were very closely connected economically, culturally and politically.

The strategic location of the town had long been considered an advantage. Suddenly in the middle of the 20th century it became a major disadvantage when Bratislava had to pay heavily for its unique position. After the communists came to power in 1948, an Iron Curtain, an electric fence, between Czechoslovakia and Austria, visible from the city centre, was drawn. It brutally divided what had once been a single economic and cultural region.

Following the fall of communism in 1989, Bratislava could at last develop as a free town and re-establish its close relations with Vienna.

So, why Bratislava? The answer is simple – because it's all here. History, architecture, tradition, culture, art, drinks, food and nightlife.

### **GETTING AROUND**

Public transport in Bratislava is managed by a city-owned company. The transport system employs buses, trams and trolleybuses. An additional service, links train and bus routes in the city with points beyond.

### **SIGHTS**

Cultural buffs will not be disappointed. The city walls and the wonderful St. Michael's Gate remind visitors that town fortifications were essential in the 1300s. The architecture ranges from gothic to Renaissance, baroque, rococo to neo-classic and empire. The coronation route of Hungarian Kings is marked out in plaques with gilded crowns hammered into the cobblestones. Visitors seeking the inside story need only take the tour through the Old Town Hall, including its climb to the top of the bell tower and the castle, which Maria Theresa used as her favourite residence.

Culture vultures will find world-class modern art and fabulous international ballet and opera companies with rock-bottom ticket prices.

### **FOOD**

Foodies can indulge tasting the full range of Middle Europe's renowned cuisine in the charming and atmospheric restaurants, a heritage of shared Austrian-Hungarian history. Choices range from traditional Slovak cuisine to Austrian schnitzel and Hungarian goulash soup.

Wines from the Bratislava Region are, a reason enough to come to the area. Denizens of the dark will find many night-time hangouts offering enough diversity to suit every taste. The music scene is fresh and the club scene vibrant and very laid back.

### **TRANSPORTATION TO BRATISLAVA**

You can reach Bratislava by plane, train, bus, car, boat or even on bicycle.

There are a number of airlines that operate direct routes to Bratislava. The Bratislava Airport (BTS) can be accessed from the city centre in 15-20 minutes. A taxi to the city center costs around 15 EUR.

The airport at Vienna-Schwechat is only 40 km west of Bratislava. It is one of the main gateways to Slovakia. Buses to Bratislava depart at 30 to 60 min intervals. Tickets can be bought on the bus.

By train, Bratislava connects to the main lines from Prague, Budapest, Vienna and various regions in Slovakia. Bratislava has two railway stations – the Main Station and Petržalka.

Due to its position on the river Danube, Bratislava has regular connections by boat with Vienna. The centre of Vienna (Schwedenplatz) is connected with Bratislava by a fast catamaran Twin City Liner and another fast hydrofoil, which is berthed at Vienna Handelskai.

If you are bringing your own car, you need to display a valid motorway tax sticker (known as 'diaľnicka znamka'), available at borders or petrol stations. The minimum validity period is ten days (costs around EUR 10). Bratislava is situated at the intersection of several important motorways. The distance to Prague is 330 km, Budapest 200 km and Vienna 65 km.