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# The Foreigner's Guide To Living In Slovakia



## Synopsis

Newly revised, 2nd edition! Everything a traveler needs to know about the Slovak people, their unique culture, and how to acclimate smoothly within it. Features descriptions of topics such as how to find accommodation and get settled in, applying for a visa, Slovak food, public transportation, and social and business customs. Includes hundreds of addresses and Web sites.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A great source of information on Slovakia. It provides not only the basics, but also answers questions that you would not normally consider or even think of." -- --Frantisek Hudák, Consul General of the Slovak Republic in Los Angeles

Contents include information on the following: The Slovak people: How history and geography have shaped them. How important is it to learn the language. Survival basics: How to find accommodation and get settled in. How to get around on public transportation. What the food is like. Legal matters: How to apply for a visa or for an extended-stay permit. What you need to drive in Slovakia. Folk traditions and culture: The kinds of holidays Slovaks celebrate and the cultural elements that are uniquely Slovak. Social and business customs: Some basic greetings in social or business settings, and what you can expect when being invited to someone's home for dinner. Leisure time: The kinds of different recreational activities. How Slovaks spend their free time through different seasons of the year.

My son is moving to Slovakia and is not a reader. He read this book from cover to cover and has reread the parts that interest him the most. Helped him feel less insecure about going and made him excited for the experience. It was too expensive, but it was the only book like it I could find, so worth it, I guess.

This book met my needs exactly. Tom Stroka

The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.

Did you know that Bratislava is considered one of the major centers of European Judaism? Or that CSA can fly directly from Prague to Zilina or Poprad? Are you up-to-snuff on Slovak cultural traditions? Quick then: what foods shouldn't you eat on New Years Day? This valuable guidebook to Slovakia was written by an English teacher who lived and worked there for 5 years. The author felt there was a dearth of info everyday living for non-natives in Slovakia, hence this 200-page guidebook. Broken down into chapters like Slovak History, Law, Folk Culture, Leisure, Food, Social Customs, it gives you little tidbits of info on just about everything you could imagine. Like any good travel guide, there are ample photos, maps & tables; over 100 websites are proffered as well. TFG is written in a clear, concise manner and all diacritical marks are in place. In the Transportation chapter, a copy of a typical bus schedule is printed with tips on reading it; later, Hurn goes into some detail on the VAT tax. "The Basics" chapter covers holidays, border crossings, currency & conversion equivalents (all info in TFG is current from May 2007). General words/Slovak phrases are provided, as well as a complete calendar of name days, an index and multiple weblinks. If castles are your thing, [...] contains info on about 250 Slovak castles. No subjects are shied away from: "The Tiso question" is handled evenly and fairly as is a subchapter on the Roma. The author even discusses the pro's and cons of living in a panelak such as is found in Petrazalka. This book is packed full of practical info and insiders tips that you won't find in a Frommers or Lonely Planet.

Preface: I've been to four western European countries (France, Italy, Belgium, Ireland), but only one Central European one (Czech Republic). By coincidence two of the people on my team are Slovaks, so I'm naturally interested in learning more about their country and culture. When I heard about The Foreigner's Guide To Living In Slovakia- I jumped at the chance to read it. These are the haphazard notes I took while reading it. (In the interest of full disclosure: the author is the wife of one of my

team members, however I've never met her.)

**Ch1: The Land and Its People** This chapter offers an overview of the country, people, language, economy, religion, housing, and popular recreation.

**Ch2: History** I'm a product of the American educational system, so it was good to see a whole chapter devoted to history-- it was mostly new to me! Before traveling to the Czech Republic, I'm ashamed to admit I read Rick Steves' Prague book (it was the best rated and most up to date at the time). There were maybe a few pages on history, some of which I've since learned its debatable. In this book however, much thought has been given to remaining accurate and neutral on still sensitive topics, given this area's volatile past.

**Ch3: The Basics** This chapter covers the things you should know prior to arriving in a foreign country, such as the various options for getting around from the most convenient/expensive, to the most time consuming/cheap. It was nice to see advice useful for anyone from the business traveller on the corporate charge card to the broke student, and everything between. Also covered are various important facts, for example grocery stores may not supply the bags for your items. After an embarrassing event in Paris involving the attempted purchase of some bananas (you need to weigh and tag them yourself, I've since learned), I really appreciate these sorts of subtle details.

**Ch4: The Law** Although Slovakia is known for its beer, did you know the law allows absolutely no blood alcohol level if your driving? Better read the other important bits in this chapter before your trip-- or you might be writing the next book in the series-- **The Foreigner's Guide to Living in Slovak JAIL!**

**Ch5: Relocating and Settling In** This chapter has a nice breakdown of the 5 major neighborhoods of Bratislava- valuable stuff even if you're just a tourist curious what to expect from the city. And if you're looking to live there, you'll find it interesting to read about the odd laws, for example you're supposed to pay a tax if you have a TV or radio. (I wonder how they enforce that one...)

**Ch6: Culture** I found it interesting to read that the young Slovaks embrace the old traditions, such as the regional dances and music, and continue to keep it alive (as evidenced by the book's cover.) This is quite the opposite from my experience of other places. However there are, ahem, "interesting", Slovak traditions that I'm surprised to read continue to this day. Apparently if you're a young girl and the boys like you, they whip you with willow branches and douse you in cold water. Thats if they \*like\* you! You can read why for yourself...

**Ch7: Leisure** Slovakia is home to the part of Europe's longest cycling route (extending from Germany to Hungary), is home to six UNESCO world heritage sites, and is has tons of caves. Sweeeet.

**Ch8: Food & Drink** Reading this chapter reminded me of my trip to Prague- if you eat out, expect lots of variety... of meat and starch. Although there are plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables available, for some reason they're just not served at most restaurants. This chapter describes what foods are available, and where. (I wish I read something similar for Prague beforehand-- I went crazy by day 3

of meat/starch 3 times a day.) There's also a thorough description of the Slovak beers, which can sometimes be cheaper than bottled water. Its making me thirsty just recounting it...Ch9 and Ch10 Social Customs and Final Words of Advice Rounding out the book are the last two chapters, on how not to stick your foot in your mouth or go crazy as a lonely expat in a foreign land. Overall its a great book- easy to read and very informative. Highly recommended if you plan on visiting or living in Slovakia.

I am sixty year old woman. I was planning a trip to Europe this spring. I have wanted to visit the town that my grandparents came from in Slovakia all my life. I had been in Europe before, and realized that I needed to get to Slovakia before I got older. I researched Slovakia's history, economy and my lineage for months before I left. I just couldn't get up the nerve to go until I read Margarete's book, *The Foreigner's Guide to Living to Slovakia*. I read blogs and emailed Margarete to build up my determination to travel to Slovakia. Even on the day I was to get the train from Vienna to the Tatra Mountains, I was still trying to convince myself that I could do it. I read her chapter on train travel again, but decided that even though I couldn't read or speak the language, I would go. Margarete's description of how to read the train ticket and travel by bus, got me on the train. I even read her book on the 6 hour ride to Spisska Nova Ves. I had the time of my life. I met wonderful people. I want to go back. I will! I will base my next European trip from Slovakia. I feel I can drive, or take public transportation to the North and the South of Slovakia. I have never felt more safe. I enjoyed the food that I remembered Grandma making. I felt at home. Thank you, Margarete

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