

# the high tatra



SLOVAKIA



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# an **invitation** to the **high tatras**

## “The high tatras – the superlatives”

**Few countries can boast of so many natural beauty spots within such a small area as Slovakia. The smallest alpine range in the world – the High Tatras (Vysoké Tatry) are proof of this. The impressive panorama, long forested valleys, sunny southern slopes, moraine lakes and waterfalls are irresistible attractions for visitors from all over the world. It is no wonder the High Tatras have become a symbol of Slovakia.**

The alpine landscape of the Tatras forms the northernmost section of the huge 1200-kilometre Carpathian arc. A wealth of breathtaking sights are to be found concentrated in just 341 sq. km, the area of its highest part, the **Vysoké Tatry mountains**.

The greatest tourist attraction is a trip by cable car to the summit of **Lomnický**

**štít** (2634 m). In a matter of minutes this modern cableway can transport 15 passengers from busy Skalnaté Pleso to the highest inhabited spot in Slovakia – for on the top of this peak there is a meteorological station and an observatory. A 30-minute climb up a gently rising path from Tatranská Kotlina brings you to the entrance to **Belianska jaskyňa**, a cave

at 885 m above sea level. Discovered in 1881, in 1896 it was one of the first caves in the world to be provided with electricity. Richly decorated throughout with colourful karst formations and little lakes, the cave's most interesting parts are the Cathedral of Great Waterfalls (Dóm veľkých vodopádov) and that known as the Concert Hall (Hudobná sieň).

The highest peak in the Tatras is **Gerlachovský štít** (2654 m) and if you want to reach its summit you must do so in the company of a mountain guide. Although the ascent of Gerlachovský štít is not technically demanding, it has many pitfalls. You could easily lose your way on this broad massif, especially when visibility is poor:



**Belianska jaskyňa**

## The Vysoké Tatry mountains



[www.tatry.sk](http://www.tatry.sk)

**Chata pri Popradskom plese - a mountain hut**

The most tempting challenge for mountaineers is the 900 m northern face of **Malý Kežmarský štít**. It is the largest rock face in the High Tatras and can be seen from the Chata pri Zelenom plese – the “Hut beside the Green Lake”. The name of the mountain hut that draws the largest number of visitors - **Chata pri Popradskom plese** (1500 m) - reflects the fact that it stands at the edge of Poprad Tarn. Its predecessor was destroyed by fire, as was the first hut on this site, which was built in 1881 on the initiative of the Carpathian Society of the Hungarian Kingdom. An easy climb from Štrbské Pleso brings you to the present hut, which has a capacity of 124 beds.



**Gerlachovský štít - the highest peak in the Tatra mountains**



**Lomnický štít - the greatest tourist attraction**





# welcome to the **high** **tatras**

The mountain system of the Carpathians, which after the Alps is the second largest and longest in Europe, passes through the territory

total area in Poland. The state border runs along the 26-kilometre main ridge of the High Tatra range. Its peaks are not only the highest in Slovakia, but also in the whole of the 1200-kilometre Carpathian arc. Ten of them are over 2600 metres above sea level and another fifteen exceed 2500m. With no

## “The smallest alpine range in the world”

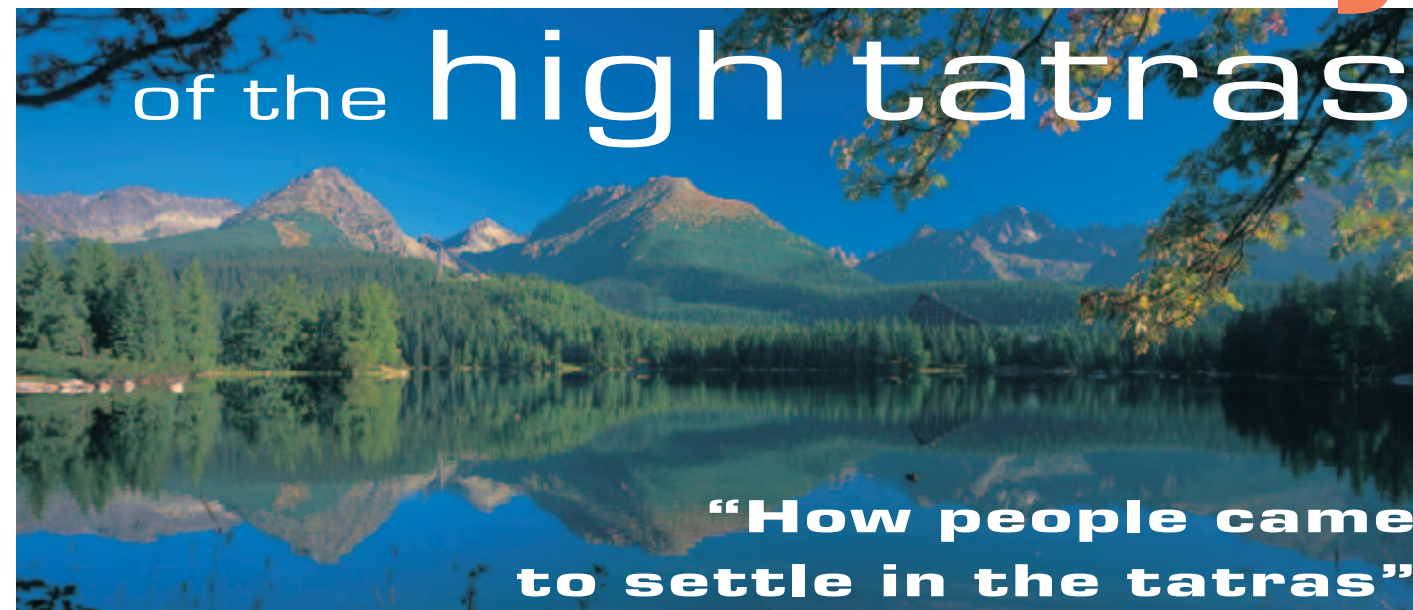
of Slovakia. It includes the world's smallest alpine range, the Tatras, which has three parts: the Západné Tatry (Western Tatras), Vysoké Tatry (High Tatras) and the Belianske Tatry. The larger part lies in Slovakia and just under one fifth of its

foothills, they rise straight from the Poprad basin to gigantic heights, from which you can see almost the whole of Slovakia.

The High Tatras are the only mountains of an alpine character between the Alps and the Urals. This is a relatively young range, which began to take on its present form 15 to 20 million years ago as a result of tectonic movements and glaciers that carved out broad valleys and left magnificent tarns of all sizes reflecting glistening rock faces that tower up above the line of dwarf pines.



# from the **history** of the **high** **tatras**



## “How people came to settle in the tatras”

The traces of the earliest known inhabitants of the region at the foot of the Tatras that were found in a travertine mound in Gánovce near Poprad are 80 thousand years old. However, our predecessors preferred to avoid the alpine landscape with its harsh climatic conditions. It was not until the 17th century that the hunters, gold-diggers, woodcutters and herdsmen were joined by geologists, botanists, hikers, mountaineers and later holidaymakers and patients.

By the 18th century it was not unusual for people to climb the Tatra peaks, especially Kriváň and the summits in the Belianske Tatry. In addition to small hunting lodges, tourist hostels were built and in 1863 also the first one-room stone shelter; Rainerova útulňa, still in use in a reconstructed form in a clearing, Starolesnianska poľana, at the mouth of Veľká Studená dolina (“Great Cold Valley”).

The tourist industry in the Tatras began to flourish after 1871, when the first train arrived at Poprad Station. Thanks to an increased interest in climatic spa treatment, the oldest Tatra village of Starý Smokovec was joined by others – Štrbské Pleso, Nový Smokovec, Dolný Smokovec, Tatranská Lomnica, Tatranská Kotlina, Tatranská Polianka and Vyšné Hágy.

The convalescent homes and sanatoriums with their characteristic wooden architecture intended for the more exacting clientele were enhanced by the addition of large parks, music stands and playgrounds. The Tatra villages were then connected by the construction of a road known as Cesta slobody, along which the first motor vehicle passed in 1900. The tourist and climatic centres improved in quality, with new luxury hotels and private villas, and the cableways began to be built. The railway network was completed with an electric railway linking Poprad to Starý Smokovec and Tatranská Lomnica or Štrbské Pleso.



**Téryho chata – a mountain hut**



# vysoké tatry

## town

The beneficial alpine climate of this region inspired the establishment of resorts specialising in diseases of the upper respiratory tract and in climatotherapy. Nowadays only four of the fifteen urban areas of the High Tatras have no medical establishment. Patients and guests have at their disposal modern sanatoriums, medical institutes and first-class spa accommodation, offering services of an international standard.

Hotel Patria, Štrbské Pleso



The most important Tatra centres - Starý Smokovec, Štrbské Pleso and Tatranská Lomnica have a large number of catering facilities, from luxury hotel restaurants, traditional Slovak koliba restaurants with an excellent atmosphere and gypsy music, to cosy coffee bars and self-service canteens. Although it cannot be compared to that in the towns, the night life

out thanks to its favourable conditions for climatic treatment. Nowadays it is the venue for top international sporting events. In winter Štrbské Pleso is a popular ski centre, while from spring to autumn it is visited by those who love hiking in the mountains. Most often they set out for the Skok waterfall in the valley of Mlynická dolina or they make their way through Mengusovská dolina to the chalet beside the lake of Popradské pleso and the nearby symbolic cemetery. Well-known features of the Štrbské Pleso scenery are the ski jumps and the triangular silhouette of the Patria hotel. Štrbské Pleso offers a busy sporting, social and cultural scene.

## “Climatic spas in the mountains”

Hotel Panorama, Štrbské Pleso



in the Tatras is provided by discotheques, hotel bars, wine bars and occasional social events, which take place especially during the main seasons.

### ŠTRBSKÉ PLESO

(1335 m above sea level) This is the highest Tatra village, situated beside a lake of the same name. In the past it was sought

### STARÝ SMOKOVEC (1010 m above sea level)

This is the largest and oldest of the four villages bearing the name of Smokovec – Starý (Old), Nový (New), Dolný (Lower), Horný (Upper), which with the exception of Dolný Smokovec have spread to form one town. Starý Smokovec is now the administrative centre of the High Tatras. It is home to the municipal authority for the whole of the Tatra area, the Tatra Mountain Rescue Service, branches of banks, travel agencies, sports equipment hire centres, and so on. The village is an important winter sports resort and the High Tatra transport junction. Roads lead to Starý Smokovec from Štrbské Pleso (15 km), Poprad (13 km) and Tatranská Lomnica (6 km). It is a junction on the Tatra electric railway line and the valley station of the funicular to Hrebienok is to be found here.

Starý Smokovec was built and developed in the 19th century thanks to the local mineral springs. The other Smokovec villages also became famous on account of their wa-



Grand Hotel, Starý Smokovec

ter therapy and climatic treatment, while Dolný Smokovec became the largest Tatra centre for the treatment of children with upper respiratory tract diseases.

### TATRANSKÁ LOMNICA (850 metres above sea level)

In area the largest Tatra village, Tatranská Lomnica is surrounded by green parks. It is a tourist centre, as well as this region's shopping and services centre. It offers visitors a wide range of accommodation facilities, from camping sites to luxury hotels. Tatranská Lomnica is the headquarters of the Tatra National Park administration and of the TANAP Museum. In addition to the museum, the cultural heritage of Tatranská Lomnica is represented by numerous examples of original architecture and facilities, as well as protected heritage areas. It has casinos, fitness centres, swimming pools, cultural and entertainment facilities. There is a picnic site, sports grounds, a sledge run, a skating rink, a race track, golf course and other tourist activities. The cableway to Skalnaté Pleso and Lomnický štít starts here.

Climatic sanatoriums are to be found in other Tatra villages as well. For a long time VYŠNÉ HÁGY was one of the most important in Europe and its architecture can be regarded as belonging to the outstanding works of the modern movement. NOVÁ POLIANKA strictly focuses on medical treatment, too. Respiratory disorders are one of the prime concerns of TATRANSKÁ POLIANKA. Overlooking the village is the

highest summit in the High Tatra range and in Slovakia - Gerlachovský štít (2654 m).

In 1881 the cave of Belianska jaskyňa was discovered and a year later another village, TATRANSKÁ KOTLINA, began to grow up below its entrance. In its spa-like buildings non-specific disorders of the respiratory tract are now treated and use is also made of speleotherapy.

Originally a mining village, POĎBANSKÉ is now popular with tourists. It provides a starting point for long hikes and trips into two valleys, Tichá and Kôprová dolina and to the summit of Bystrá (2248 m), the highest peak in the Western Tatras (Západné Tatry). The reward for reaching the top is a magnificent view over the Liptov and Spiš regions.

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Infocentrum SL - TANAP  
059 85 Štrbské Pleso  
tel.: 00421/52/4492391

[www.hotelpatria.sk](http://www.hotelpatria.sk)  
[www.hotelpanorama.sk](http://www.hotelpanorama.sk)  
[www.grandhotel.sk](http://www.grandhotel.sk)  
[www.grandhotelpraha.sk](http://www.grandhotelpraha.sk)



Grandhotel Praha, Tatranská Lomnica



# transport

The Vysoké Tatry town transport system is based on a combination of road and rail transport. The main road is the “Cesta slobody”, which links up the Tatra villages from west to east. Rail transport is provided by the Tatranská elektrická železnica, covering a total of 35 kilometres along two routes: Tatranská Lomnica – Starý Smokovec and Starý Smokovec – Štrbské Pleso. Diesel trains run from Poprad via Eurocamp to Tatranská Lomnica and a 5-kilometre rack railway connects Štrba with Štrbské Pleso. In the High Tatra area there are a number of rare transport facilities.

Funicular railway from Starý Smokovec to Hrebienok



The funicular from Starý Smokovec to Hrebienok was completed in 1908. Its two carriages cover the 354 m difference in elevation in a pendulum fashion. It underwent radical technical modernisation in 1970, when the world championships in classical skiing took place in the High Tatras.

In 1941 a suspended cableway was built, connecting Tatranská Lomnica with Lomnický štít. It has a halfway station at Skalnaté Pleso. The whole route

and skiers, but also by astronomers from the Slovak Academy of Sciences, as well as members of the Mountain Rescue Service who have a workplace in Lomnické sedlo, the mountain saddle below the peak.

At the present time the section of the cabin cableway from Tatranská Lomnica – Skalnaté Pleso is out of operation for technical reasons. It has been replaced by a gondola cableway with an intermediate station, Štart. It has 108 cabins for four persons, covers the 3682 m in 12.4 minutes and is able to cope with the demand for transport to Skalnaté Pleso even during peak periods.

The international gateway to the High Tatras is the Poprad-Tatry airport, only 12 km from Starý Smokovec. It is one of the highest situated airports in Europe, as it lies at an altitude of 718 m above sea level – which is higher than Innsbruck in Austria. It is the gate to 4 national parks, 5 heritage reserves in the nearby surroundings, as well as to the centres of winter sports and summer tourism in the High and Low (Nízke) Tatras, the Spiš and Orava regions. The airport is not only used by international and internal flights, but also by mountain rescue helicopters during rescues in the High Tatras.



Electric rack railway from Štrba to Štrbské Pleso

Cabin cableway from Skalnaté Pleso to Lomnický štít



is 6040 m long, with an elevation difference of 1722 m. Until 1958 its technical parameters were comparable with the best cableways in Europe. In 1986-1989 it underwent radical reconstruction. Although the capacity of the cable car from Skalnaté Pleso to Lomnický štít did not change (15 persons), its parameters were updated to meet modern world standards, its safety increased and level of comfort improved. The services of this transport route are used not only by tourists



Golden Eagle

“The Tatra national park”

The Tatra National Park (TANAP) is the oldest national park in Slovakia. It covers an area of 741 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the Slovak part of the Western and High Tatras and the whole of the Belianske Tatry. The highest peak in the High Tatras and at the same time in Slovakia, Gerlachovský štít (2654m), rises in the middle of this range, but there are also another 25 peaks here that reach a height of over 2500 m.

The largest valley, on the south side of the range, is Tichá dolina, which is 16 km long. Among the favourites with visitors are Mlynická dolina, which leads down to a spot just above Štrbské Pleso, the 75 km Mengusovská dolina and Belianska dolina, leading to the ridge of Kriváň (2494 m). Ever since 1841 national ascents to its summit have been organised on a regular basis.

The attraction of the Tatra valleys is heightened by its charming waterfalls. The most popular are Vodopády Studeného potoka and the three-stage waterfall known as Kmetov vodopád in Nefcerka valley, which falls a total of 80 m.

In the Tatra National Park there are about 120 lakes, covering over 3 square kilometres. The highest situated tarn is Modré pleso (2192 m) in Malá Studená dolina (“Little Cold Valley”) and the largest is Hincovo pleso (20.08 hectares), which is over 53 metres deep.

The Tatra National Park is rich in flora and fauna. More than 1300 species of higher plants grow here, but also two dozen species endemic in the Tatras and West Carpathians.

Rare animals that have long been extinct in Western Europe are also to be found here – the brown bear, wolf, lynx, otter

and golden eagle. The chamois is the symbol of the Tatras, or to be more exact, a unique sub-species that developed here in isolation after the end of the Ice Age, which is why it differs from its relatives in the Alps or the Balkans.

The administrative offices of the Tatra National Park are in Tatranská Lomnica, which is also home to the Tatra Nature Exhibition, TANAP’s Research Station and Museum.

The Museum of the Tatra National Park in Tatranská Lomnica has collections from the fields of botany, zoology, history, cartography, geology and ethnography. One of the most valuable exhibits in the history section is the herbarium of medicinal plants collected by Cyprian, an 18th century monk from Červený Kláštor monastery.

Mountain Rescue Service:  
00421/52/4422820,  
00421/52/4422855,  
00421/903/624869

Air Rescue Service:  
00421/18155

Emergency calls to the Office of  
the Mountain Rescue Service in Poprad:  
00421/18300 (all networks)



Tatra Chamois



Malá Studená dolina (Little Cold Valley)





# hiking

**The increasing popularity of hiking required the founding of hiking organisations and the establishment of a team of professional Tatra guides, who made the natural beauties of the Tatras accessible by constructing paths and mountain huts for the use of hikers.**

**Chata pri Zelenom plese (Hut beside the Green lake)**



The oldest stone hut, known as Rainerova útulňa ("Rainer's Shelter"), dates back to 1863 and since its reconstruction it has offered a little exhibition of the history of mountain porters. This hut was followed by the Chata pri Zelenom plese ("The Hut by the

with beautiful views both of the peaks and of Podtatranská kotlina, the basin at the foot of the Tatra mountains, is known as the Tatranská magistrála. It runs parallel to the main ridge and connects the most beautiful spots in the High Tatras: Štrbské pleso, Popradské pleso, Hrebienok, Skalnaté pleso, Chata pri Zelenom plese and the mountain saddle Kopské sedlo. It takes 4 to 5 days to cover the route at a comfortable pace.

For hikers Hrebienok (the top station of the funicular from Starý Smokovec) is the most popular starting point, from which easy mountain trails lead to Zamkovského chata (45 min.), Sliezsky dom (2 hrs.), Studenovodský vodopád (30 min.) and more strenuous ones to Téryho chata (2 hrs.45 min.) and Zbojnická chata. Another popular starting point is Skalnaté Pleso, which can be reached by cable car from Tatranská Lomnica.

From here you can follow a comfortable trail to Hrebienok or down to Tatranská Lomnica. Apart

## “Among mountain peaks and crystal-clear tarns”

**Téryho chata - the mountain hut in Malá Studená dolina (Little Cold Valley)**



Green Lake", 1551 m), Sliezsky dom (1970 m) next to another lake, Velické pleso and Zbojnická chata ("The Outlaws' Hut", 1960 m) at the upper end of Velká Studená dolina ("The Great Cold Valley"). The highest one is Chata pod Rysmi ("Hut below Risy", 2250 m), which is supplied

mainly by mountain porters. Téryho chata (2015 m) in Malá Studená dolina ("Little Cold Valley"), and Chata pri Popradskom plese ("Hut beside Poprad Tarn", 1500 m), are among those most frequently visited.

A popular trail measuring 70 kilometres,

from pleasant walks around the lake of the same name, Štrbské Pleso also offers hikes to Skok waterfall or to Bystré sedlo saddle, up through the valley of Mlynická dolina, or a walk up to the Chata pri Popradskom plese. At a short distance from this mountain hut there is a symbolic cemetery in a beautiful arolla pine grove, where people can pay their respects to those who lost their lives in the mountains. Well-known features are its hand-carved wooden crosses and the chapel, with its ever-topical motto on the wall: "In memory of the dead – a warning to the living".

For more energetic hikers the greatest attractions are ascents to the Tatra peaks. Those most in demand are Rysy (2499 m) and Kriváň (2494 m). Gerlachovský štít (2654 m), Lomnický štít (2634 m), Ladový štít (2627 m) and others can be ascended if accompanied by a mountain guide.

**Several marked cycling routes have been prepared in the Tatras for fans of this sport:**

**Biela voda - Chata pri Zelenom plese** (910 m - 1560 m), length 7.8 km, very demanding route, only for mountain bikes  
**Tatranská Lomnica - Štart** (910 m - 1140 m), length 2.1 km, of medium difficulty, only for mountain bikes  
**Starý Smokovec - Hrebienok** (1000 m - 1260 m), length 2.3 km, route

for fitter cyclists

**Štrbské Pleso - Popradské pleso** (1325 m - 1500 m), length 4.5 km, of medium difficulty  
**Tatranská Polianka - Sliezsky dom mountain hotel** (990 m - 1663 m), length 6.8 km, very strenuous route, and others.

The tourist trails for visitors to the Tatra National Park are colour-marked (red, green, blue or yellow). Their total length is 600 km and they cover all the important hiking areas in the Tatras. They can be divided according to difficulty into easy walks, valley tours and ascents to higher spots - the saddles and peaks.



**Climbing to the summit with a mountain guide**



**View towards the valley of Dračia dolinka**





[www.parksnow.sk](http://www.parksnow.sk)  
[www.tldtatry.sk](http://www.tldtatry.sk)



# sport

## “A winter sports paradise”

**An important milestone in the more recent history of the Tatras was the year 1970, when the world championships in classical skiing disciplines took place at Štrbské Pleso. To meet the needs of the world championships a modern winter sports centre was built in Mlynická dolina. It was named Areál snov “The Arena of Dreams” and it was one of the best-equipped centres with downhill runs for alpine skiing, cross-country tracks and ski jumps.**

Several international University Winter Games have also been held here. Above **Štrbské Pleso** there are ski slopes of varying difficulty. Interski and Esičko are for more advanced skiers, but even children can manage their lower sections. The Solisko slope is for advanced skiers. The Areal snov has two chair lifts and several ski tows, snowmaking facilities covering 14 hectares and prepared cross-country trails.

The surroundings of **Starý Smokovec** offer a sledge and ski run from Hrebienok and less

demanding slopes at Jakubkova lúka (Nový Smokovec) and beside the Hotel Bellevue (Horný Smokovec). You can reach Hrebienok by a funicular; whose valley station is above the Hotel Grand.

For skiers in the **Tatranská Lomnica** area, Skalnaté Pleso is particularly interesting, it being the highest-situated ski centre in the High Tatras, where people can still ski in May. It can be reached by cable car from Tatranská Lomnica and from there a chair lift takes you to Lomnické

sedlo (2196 m), but this upper section is only for very good skiers. A downhill ski track, the longest in the High Tatras, runs from Skalnaté Pleso to Tatranská Lomnica. The slope known as Jamy in the vicinity of the ski jumps in Tatranská Lomnica is suitable for fairly advanced skiers, while Slnčná lúka (“Sunny Meadow”) and the meadow beneath the Morava Hotel are intended for complete beginners and children.

Excellent conditions for cross-country skiing on prepared tracks can be found at the Areál snov at Štrbské Pleso and other trails lead along the



path beside the Cesta slobody road from Nový Smokovec to Nová Polianka, as well as through the wider surroundings of Tatranská Lomnica. Around 15 trails of varying difficulty have been marked out for ski-mountaineering tours in the Tatra National Park.

Apart from the sports already mentioned, you can go horse riding and practice paragliding and tandem flights from Predné Solisko (2093 m), as well as other extreme sports.

Sightseeing flights with breathtaking bird's-eye views over the snow-covered peaks of the Tatras offer an unforgettable experience.







**Spiš Castle**



**Ždiar - a typical Goral village**

# the **tatras** and their surroundings

## “From snow to thermal waters, culture and sightseeing”

**In the surroundings of the Tatras there are many other protected natural parks, such as Pieniny, with its famous attraction of a trip down the River Dunajec on a traditional raft, and the Slovenský raj (“Slovak Paradise”), which offers hiking tours through magnificent limestone ravines.**

Several kilometres further away the Liptov region attracts visitors on account of its 24-kilometre cave system, where the two most famous Demänová caves – Demänovská jaskyňa slobody and Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa (an ice cave) are open to the public.

The Spiš region has an abundance of protected historical monuments. It has urban heritage reserves with ancient medieval architecture in Levoča, Kežmarok and Spišská Sobota, while the castle Spišský hrad and Spišská Kapitula have been added to the UNESCO Heritage List. The wooden church in Kežmarok was built in 1717 according to Counter-Reformation regulations without the use of a single nail. The parish church of St. James (kostol sv. Jakuba) in Levoča can boast of the highest

Gothic winged altar in central Europe, the work of the craftsman known as Master Pavol. Orava is another picturesque region in the north of Slovakia, abounding in natural beauties as well as historical sights. Orava Castle (Oravský hrad) is one of the most frequently-visited Slovak castles. The geothermal waters of Oravice Meanderpark thermal pools provide an all-year-round attraction, as does the Island of Art (Slanický ostrov umenia) in the middle of Orava reservoir. The heritage reserves of folk architecture are also popular with tourists. Podbiel has the largest complex of surviving log cottages in Orava, partly used for tourist purposes, and there is an outdoor Orava Village Museum at Zuberec-Brestová. For folk traditions you can also go to the quaint Goral village of

Ždiar, or to Pribylina, where you will find the Liptov Village Museum. Tourists can appreciate the healing power of the underground thermal waters twelve months in the year at the Tatralandia Aquapark near Liptovský Mikuláš and in AquaCity, Poprad. Last but not least, there is the Slovak cuisine with its national specialities. One of the popular traditional Slovak dishes is cabbage soup and the traditional Slovak halušky is to be found on menus in a variety of forms under various names: furmanské (drayman’s), bryndzové (sheep’s cheese),



**A trip down the River Belá**

čipkárske (lacemaker’s) and so on. Meat specialities with interesting names include the “burning hachet” (horiaca valaška), hunter’s (poľovnícke) or farmyard pig-feast (zabíjačkové) specialities. We shouldn’t forget the traditional Slovak plum brandy (slivovica) and the delicious Slovak wines with their original bouquet, which are an essential highlight of every feast.

So bon appetit, have a wonderful time and come back soon to the smallest high mountains in the world – the High Tatras!



**Aquacity Poprad**

[www.ssj.sk/slovak/index.htm](http://www.ssj.sk/slovak/index.htm)  
[www.levoca.sk](http://www.levoca.sk)  
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[www.oravahrad.sk](http://www.oravahrad.sk)  
[www.spisskyhrad.sk](http://www.spisskyhrad.sk)  
[www.muzeum.sk](http://www.muzeum.sk)  
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