

SLOVAKIA (*Slovensko*)

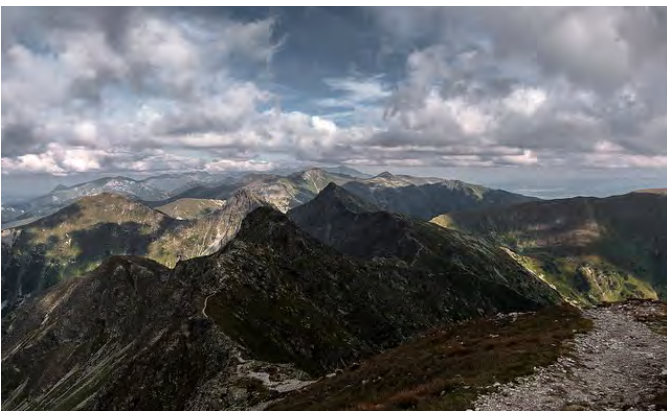


QUICK FACTS

Population: 5.4 million (2014 est.)
Area: 49,035 sq. km (larger than Maryland)
Capital: Bratislava (500,000)
Languages: Slovak

EDUCATION

Education in Slovakia proceeds along lines similar to those in post-Soviet states, with some similarities to Western European practices. The grading system, like the Soviet era system is on a five number scale (1-5). However, in the Slovak system, 1 is the highest mark, opposite of the Russian grading scale. Public primary and secondary education is free in Slovakia, although private institutions have sprung up since the collapse of communism, primarily due to religious efforts. Education is compulsory for 10 years and kindergarten and pre-primary education is offered for a number of years prior to first grade.



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Tatras Mountains from Slovakia.

The Slovak Republic emerged as an independent nation in 1993, simultaneously with its former co-nation, the Czech Republic. Having spent a half-century under communist rule, the Czechoslovak people took the opportunity to bifurcate in what has become known as the “velvet divorce,” as a follow up to Czechoslovakia’s “velvet revolution” against communist rule in 1989-1990. Slovakia is the Eastern and Southern inheritor of Czechoslovakia, including portions of historic Greater Moravia. Slovakia is an advanced European country which has moved away from its twentieth century communist past towards integration in the Western European alliances and unions. It joined the EU and the eurozone in 2004 and 2009 respectively.

RELIGION

Religious practice in Slovakia is notably different from its former partner, the Czech Republic. Whereas Czechs have grown into one of the most irreligious countries in Europe, adherence to Roman Catholicism still dominates the Slovak cultural landscape. Slovaks are more akin to Poles in regards to their Slavic Catholicism than the majority of Orthodox Christian Slavs. Greek Catholics make up a significant minority, as well. About 13% of Slovaks identify as non-religious. The state of Slovakia is secular.

ETHNICITY

Slovaks make up about 80% of the population, while ethnic Hungarians make up an additional 8%. The Czech minority in Slovakia (and vice-versa) is very small, as there has been very little migration back and forth between the two. Slovak and Czech ethnicities differ oftentimes due to the effects of their respective neighbors and their historic overlords. The Slovaks were ruled for centuries by a Hungarian dynasty, while the Czechs had Austrian patronage. Thus, while Czech and Slovak languages are mutually intelligible, there are more germanicisms among the Czechs.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Traditional patriarchal social patterns have become increasingly modernized in ways that are familiar to Western societies. Child-birth rates have dropped, marriages happen later and less frequently, women are more and more significantly represented in work environments of all sorts. Christian heritage, ritual, and practice inform many of the customs, especially those of the Catholic church. Slovakia’s major independence holidays are celebrated on January 1 and November 17. Both commemorate the end of communist rule and the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, known as the “velvet divorce.”



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CONTEMPORARY SLOVAKIA

The government of Slovakia immediately following the velvet divorce was led by Vladimir Meciar. Meciar led a right-leaning populist authoritarian regime which was eventually displaced in 1998 by a coalition of liberals, ethnic Hungarians, and centrists under Mikulas Dzurinda. Since then, the country has pursued a course of integration with Western Europe and attempted to address some of the minority rights issues that it deals with. Slovakia's minority Hungarian and Romany populations are frequent topics of political debate in the country.

Unlike its neighbor, the Czech republic, which has stayed out of the eurozone and ERM II agreements, Slovakia uses the euro currency exclusively, having retired the Slovak *koruna* in 2009. Slovak exports primarily consist of automobiles and visual displays. The nation industrialized rapidly in the early 20th century transitioning away from animal husbandry and continued to pursue heavy manufacturing and industry during the Communist period.



SLOVAKS IN THE USA

Slovak Americans make up a sizeable community in the USA. Close to 800,000 people of Slovak descent makes them the third largest immigrant Slavic ethnic group after Poles and Russians. Slovak groups began coming to America in large numbers during a forced *magyarization* campaign in the Kingdom of Hungary. Exact numbers of immigrants of Slovak descent are not known, but most settled in areas of northern Pennsylvania and upstate New York.



The flag is comprised of three equal horizontal bands of white, blue and red, with a shield bearing a double cross and blue hills in the foreground.



NAMES

Slovak names are similar to Czech names, like Vaclav, Jiri and Josef. Popular female names include: Alzbeta, Beata, and Danica.

FAMOUS SLOVAKS

Famous Americans of Slovak descent include: Andy Warhol (artist), Paul Newman (actor and salad dressing maker), Chief Justice John Roberts, Governor Jesse Ventura (pro wrestler), Angelina Jolie (actress, director), Dave Grohl (musician) and others.

SLOVAK WORDS

Hi	Nazdar
Bye	Čau
Good morning	Dobrý deň
Yes	Áno
No	Nie
How are you?	Ako sa máš
I do not understand	Neviem
I understand.....	Rozumiem
What is your name?.....	Ako sa voláš?
My name is	Volám sa ...
Where are you from?	Odkiaľ si?
Pleased to meet you....	Teší ma
Good Luck.....	Veľa šťastia!
Cheers.....	Na zdravie!

USEFUL LINKS

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17847682

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/lo.html>

<http://www.thedaily.sk/>