



Žilina Region



Little Big Country





The Žilina Region is situated in the northwest of Slovakia, bordering on the Czech Republic and Poland. The region comprises the historic counties of Kysuce, Orava, Liptov and Turiec. The river Váh and its tributaries, the rivers Kysuca, Orava and Turiec, are the region's dominant feature. In the hilly landscape, these rivers have created deep valleys of fertile land. In the past, agriculture, forestry and woodworking were the local people's main activities. In addition, the region benefited from its strategic position at the crossing of several important trade routes. The twentieth century saw a number of major industrial investments made in the region, and the area has changed its face as a result of this.

These days, tourism plays an indispensable role in the local economy. Visitors are attracted by numerous castles (Orava, Strečno, Lietava, Hričov), water bodies and thermal spas (Liptovská Mara, Orava Dam, Tatralandia Aquapark, Bešeňová, Oravice). But the venues of the highest value for tourism are the mountains with enormous natural beauties and a network of centres of summer and winter tourism (the Javorníky, the Beskydy, the Strážov Hills, the Lesser and Greater Fatras, the West Tatras, the Low Tatras).



Žilina



Žilina is a vital railway and road crossing, situated on the major European roads of E50, going west to east, and E75, going north to south. Of equal importance to the town and region is the international airport at Žilina - Dolný Hričov, catering for the needs of the entire northwest of Slovakia. The first written records of the town date back to 1208 when



the region was known as the Terra de Selinan. Once it was granted the privilege of a free royal town, Žilina developed into a fine medieval town with typical town architecture. But the fire of 1678 left almost the whole town in ruins, and the earthquake of 1858 destroyed many of the town's fine buildings. Despite these unfavourable natural forces, the town always managed to regain its central position in the region.



What gives the historical centre of the town its distinctive face is the original medieval ground plan and buildings from the Gothic times. The place of the greatest historical and architectural value is Mariánske Square. Its square design with preserved cloisters has no parallel in the whole of Slovakia, giving the visitors a unique experience. Ever since the dawn of the town's history, the square has been the venue for local markets, seat of the local officials, and home for the wealthiest townsfolk.



Mariánske Square





Budatín

The chateau was built on the site of a former water castle protected from two sides by the rivers Váh and Kysuca. Water from the rivers was used to fill in the ditches, which was a very effective way of protecting the castle. The 17th century reconstruction added a couple of Renaissance features to the place. Following a fire in the revolutionary years of 1848-1849, the castle was rebuilt again in the latter half of the 19th century and given the shape we know today. The chateau hosts a gallery and a regional ethnological museum with a huge collection of tinkers' works from the Žilina region.

National Cemetery



Martin



Matica slovenská



Slovak National Museum



Martin has played a very important role as the very centre of the Slovak nation. The local features – reminding of the times when Slovaks were making their mark as an independent nation in the 19th century – include the cultural institution called Matica slovenská, the Slovak National Museum and the National Cemetery, a piece of national cultural heritage with precious tombstones, where over 300 major personalities of Slovak cultural, scientific and political life are buried.



Orava Castle



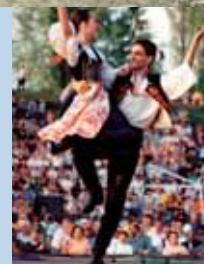


The Orava Castle is one of the most beautiful castles in Slovakia. The castle clearly dominates the Orava region and has a very important place among Slovakia's castles. Its highest part rises 112 meters above the nearby river Orava. Built at a strategic point on the trade route from Poland to Hungary, in close vicinity to the Tvrdošín customs station, the castle was appointed the county centre in 1370. The construction spanned from the mid 13th century to the early 17th century, and the castle was built in several stages, each of the three parts erected on a separate level of the rocky hill. The defensive system was so good that the castle was never defeated. Its unparalleled silhouette and internal design draw huge numbers of tourists as well as film crews who like to make historical movies around and in the castle.





Folk Traditions and Architecture



Východná



Zuberec
Open-air Museum

The diverse landscape and people's lifestyle in the region made it possible to preserve some of the long-established customs and folk traditions. Scattered all over the Žilina region are well-kept examples of folk artistry, houses and constructions of unique appeal. The places where many of the houses have survived intact and have continued to serve their inhabitants to this day, include the villages of Vlkolínec and Čičmany. The open-air museums show preserved constructions, mostly made of wood, used for living and farming. They testify to the skills and artistry of our ancestors, and provide ample evidence of the region's history. In a similar vein, the Museum of Orava Village Life in Zuberec shows how folk architecture developed over the centuries.



Martin – Open-air Museum

Vlkolínec

Pribylina

Based in Pribylina, the Museum of the Liptov Village brings together some of the houses that had to give way to the water reservoir called Liptovská Mara and other places of the region known as Liptov. The constructions showing the typical life of the local people include the houses of a tailor, blacksmith or wheelwright, or a school building. The museum's highlight is the Church of Virgin Mary from Liptovská Mara dating back to the Gothic times.

All over Slovakia, folk traditions have survived to the present day, including songs, unique musical instruments and intriguing costumes that reflect the region's wealth of customs. Every year, the village of Východná hosts a parade of folk culture and traditions with singing, dancing, plays, tale-telling, poetry, costumes, embroidery and other examples of folk art.



Active Summer and Winter Tourism



The Žilina Region offers tourists ample opportunities for active holiday making in the mountains in summer and winter alike. Of all Slovakia, this region boasts the highest number of tourist centres which provide assistance for top sporting performances as well as relaxing family holidays.

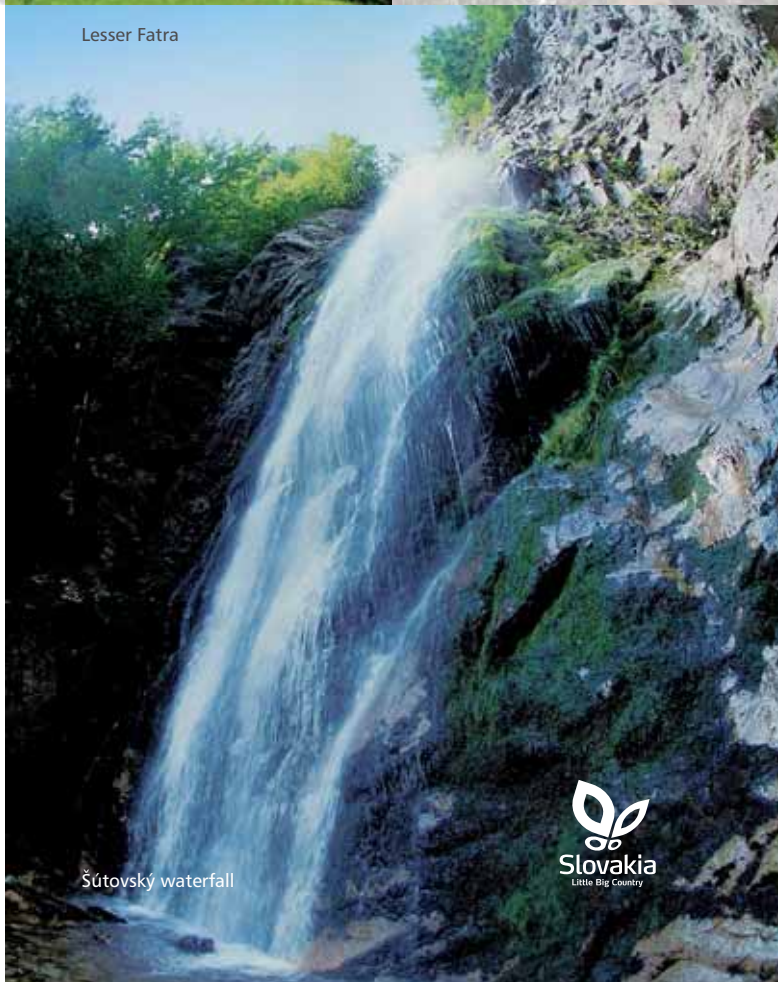


Lesser Fatra

The Lesser Fatra National Park is one of the top venues for relaxation and sports sought after by visitors from all over Slovakia and abroad all year round. Rather modest in size, the area concentrates a number of rare and protected natural features such as the mountain of Rozsutec or the waterfall of Šútovo. Vrátna Dolina, Valčianska Dolina and Martinské Hole are the best examples of top holiday resorts. In the summer, they offer numerous hiking paths whereas in winter they are the ideal venues for advanced skiers as well as complete beginners.



Lesser Fatra



Šútovský waterfall



Greater Fatra



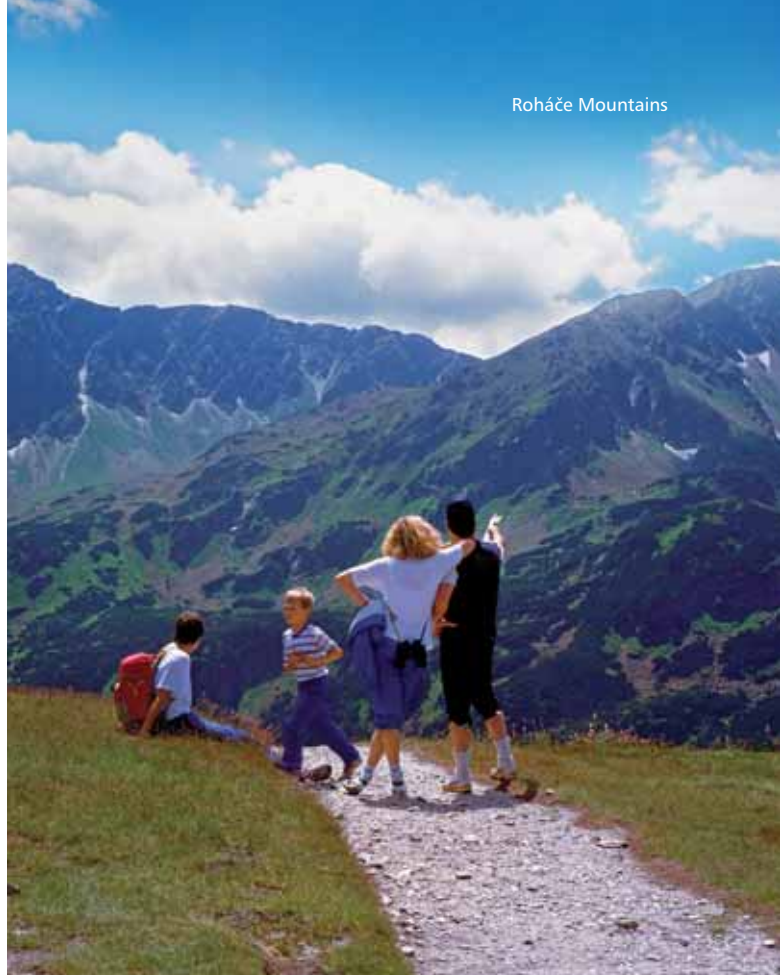
Greater Fatra



Gader Valley

The Greater Fatra Mountains has a number of rare plant species occurring especially on the high rocky peaks. The area comprises several protected nature reserves and includes rare ecosystems. Especially popular among tourists are the beautiful valleys (along the rivers Ľubochňanka or Gader) which enjoy the reputation for being the most charming in Slovakia. The highlight of the eastern part of the mountains is the Harmanec Cave. The popular winter resorts include the village of Malinô Brdo near the town of Ružomberok and Jasenská Valley near Martin.

Slovakia's second tallest mountain range after the High Tatras, the Roháče Mountains boast wild rocky cliffs and peaks (Ostrý Roháč, Plačlivé, Baníkov, Bystrá) which provide the most challenging hiking trails in the country. The magnet for winter tourists is the centre of Zuberec – Zverovka, not far from the thermal water park called Meander Park Oravice.



The West Tatras (Roháče)





Low Tatras



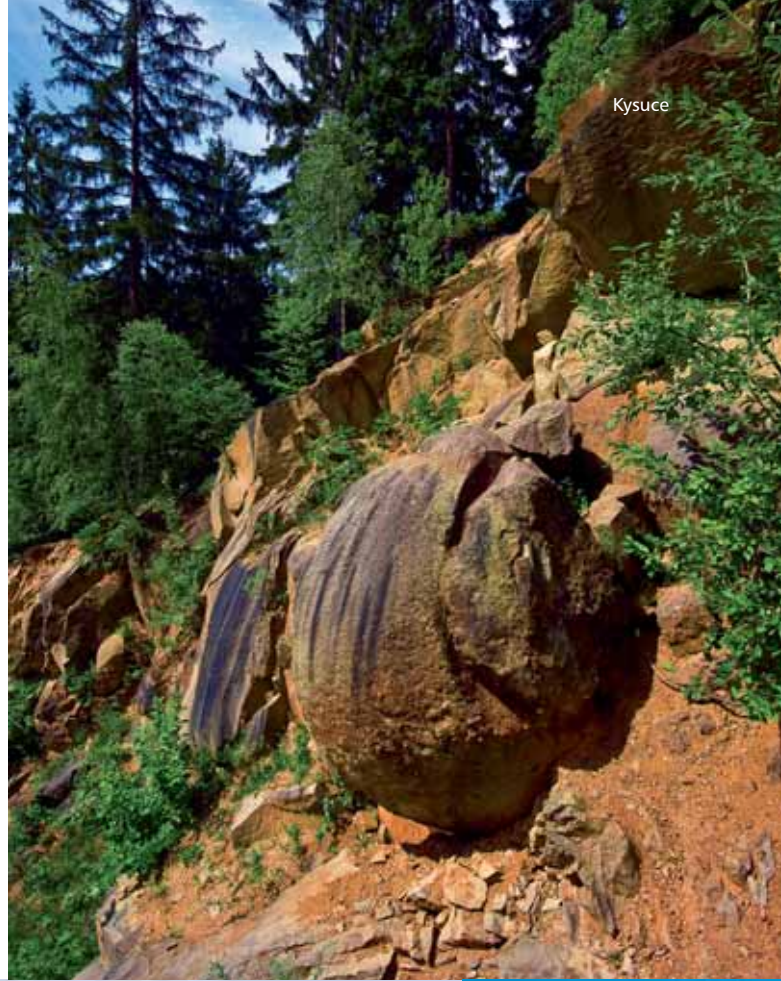
The ridge of the Low Tatras is the borderline between the regions of Žilina and Banská Bystrica. In addition to some challenging hiking paths, the mountains offer fascinating views of the High and West Tatras. The Demänovská Valley is a popular tourist venue all year round with its famous caves such as the Cave of Freedom and the Ice Cave. In the winter, the mountain of Chopok offers first-rate conditions for skiing.

Demänovská Ice Cave

Chopok



The Kysuce Mountains is a nice area of fresh forests and water streams, located in the northernmost part of Slovakia, close to the Czech and Polish borders. The region is famous for its wealth of wood, wild animals and fine forest fruits. The places worth seeing are the narrow-gauge railway in Vychylovka and the winter sports centre called Veľká Rača in the village of Oščadnica.



Kysuce, Beskydy Mountains





Rajecké Teplice



The healing effects of the thermal springs with a temperature of 38 degrees of Celsius are used in treating infections and disorders of the movement system, joints, and spine, disorders of the nervous system, or work-related diseases. The spa facilities in Rajecké Teplice have a tradition of more than three centuries.



The water springs used in healing baths in Turčianske Teplice have a temperature of 47 degrees of Celsius and are rich in minerals such as calcium, magnesium and fluorine. The local thermal water is especially suitable for treating disorders of the spine and the movement system, as well as disorders of the kidneys and the urinary system. Drinking the thermal water is a preventive measure against osteoporosis, gall bladder and intestinal disorders.

Turčianske Teplice



Tatralandia ranks among the highlights of Slovakia's tourism. The thermal spring in the Aquapark has a temperature of 60.7 degrees of Celsius and comes from 2,500 meters below the surface. The spring has great healing effects for movement and breathing disorders in particular. The water also contains substances coming from the sea that covered this area 40 million years ago. In addition to 9 swimming pools with thermal water, the Aquapark offers a water fun park, 18 toboggans and slides, a large sporting area and a complex of 16 facilities including steam and dry sauna, massages and baths.



Liptovský Mikuláš, Tatralandia





Bešeňová



The bathing facilities use hot healing water springs which rise from 1987 meters below the surface. The mineral water contains calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, iron, manganese, lithium, bicarbonates, free carbon dioxide, enormous amounts of sulphates, and other minerals. In the spring, winter and autumn, the water has a positive effect on breathing. The visitors are invited to use seven pools where the water is cooled down in order to meet the clients' expectations and provide pleasant and refreshing relaxation.

Bešeňová





Orava Dam





In the past, the place was a frequent victim of flooding; therefore, a dam was designed in order to reign in the Orava River. In the process, four villages were demolished and an area of 35 square kilometers was covered with water. In the entire dam, there is a single hill projecting from the water which came to be known as the Slanica Island, also called the Isle of Arts.

It is home to a museum of folk sculptures and paintings. The Orava Dam is an excellent venue for a number of water sports such as water cycling, boat rides, diving, yachting, windsurfing, but also offers ample opportunities for lovers of fishing or hiking.

Liptovská Mara



Liptovská Mara is a water reservoir in the Liptov region, and took over the name of the village that gave way to the construction in 1975. It is only the ruins of a Gothic church that have been left behind, located in a place called Havránok. The embankment is 45 meters tall, which makes it the second tallest dam

in Slovakia. The dam takes in up to 365 million cubic meters of water, which is unprecedented in the country. The place is an ideal venue for swimming, yachting, water cycling, minigolf, fishing, boat rides, and has a school of windsurfing.





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