

A visit to Bratislava

If you fancy visiting Central or Eastern Europe, would like a refreshing change and an interesting place to visit, then could I suggest Bratislava in Slovakia? It's smaller than nearby Prague, Budapest or Vienna but is most certainly worth a visit, as many visitors have recently discovered. The Slovak capital city, which is situated on both sides of the river Danube, has had its name since 1919. Previously it was known as Pressburg by the Austrians and Pozsony by the Hungarians. In fact, many Austrians and Hungarians still refer to the city using these names. It was also known as Possonium in Latin. Today Bratislava has a population of 430,000. It is the youngest capital city in Europe. Bratislava is situated on the edge of the small Carpathian Mountains; to its west is the Austrian border; to the south is the Hungarian border.

So how do you get there? You can fly into Bratislava airport or alternatively arrive at nearby Vienna airport, which is only 45 minutes away by bus. There are good motorway and rail connections. A novel way to arrive in the city is by boat. Daily services run five times a day between Vienna and Bratislava. Services also run to Budapest. These days the Slovak capital offers good hotel accommodation. Top-end hotels include the Radisson SAS Carlton Hotel, the Sheraton Hotel and the Park Inn. Bottom-end accommodation includes hostels – but not that hostel which is in the fictional movie 'Hostel!' Mind you, it certainly helped put Bratislava on the map! So what is worth seeing in Bratislava? Well, there are many choices. The city is famous for its historic Old Town, its castle and New Bridge. Other gems include the TV tower and nearby Devín Castle. Bratislava (and more so Slovakia) is also famous for its beautiful women! The city in the last few years has unfortunately seen many English stag parties. The novelty has thankfully worn off a little - with the exchange rate, the economic crisis and a waning of interest, reducing numbers.

Shopaholic? Bratislava offers a multitude of different shopping experiences. There are five large shopping malls; Eurovea, Aupark, The Polus Centre, the Avion Shopping Park and the Palace Shopping Centre. If you love markets do visit Trhovisko. Locals call it the 'Vietnamese' market. It's actually 50/50, having a real Eastern feel to it.

Category: Central Europe / Slovakia / Bratislava

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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New Year's Eve (known in Slovak as *Silvester*) in Bratislava is known as 'Partyslava'. Just before midnight virtually the entire city converges onto the Old Town riverfront to watch at midnight a grand firework display from boats on the river.

Slovakia offers some great beers including Zlatý Bažant, Šariš, Topvar and Smädný Mních. Slovak wines to enjoy include wines grown in the Slovak Tokaj region, Southern and Eastern Slovakia. They are also grown around the capital Bratislava in the region that is known as the Little Carpathian region.

Feeling hungry? Then try some Slovak food. The national dish is bryndzové halušky that is potato-pasta small dumplings topped with sheep's cheese and bacon. Slovaks like their soup. A favourite is kapustnica that is made with sauerkraut and smoked ham or sausage. Slovaks also like bryndza, which is sheep's cheese, which is sometimes spread on bread. Dumplings are popular especially with goulash. There are also the more unusual black poppy pancakes or goose fat and raw onion, which is spread on sliced bread. This is quite popular at the Bratislava Christmas market.

One of Bratislava's best kept secrets is its TV Tower. Situated on the hill high above the city this gem of a place has, to date, not been reconstructed. It is one of the few places where you can still get that communist feel! The views from the revolving tower with restaurant inside are truly panoramic. Nearby to Bratislava is a national monument – Devín Castle. The ruins of this famous castle lay on the Slovak border with Austria where the Moravia river joins the river Danube. Dating from the 9th century the castle, which for centuries sat on the top of the rock cliff, was destroyed by Napoleon's army in 1809. It lay in ruins till 1965 when the communists did some partial reconstruction. A leisurely afternoon visit here is well worth it.

Note: Check out an alternative lesson on the Slovak capital city: 'Bratislava old and new'.

EXERCISES

1. **Bratislava:** Think of three things you know about Bratislava? Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Geography: Bratislava:** What part of the world is Bratislava in? What country is Bratislava in? Draw a map on the board then look on Google maps.

3. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self correct your work from page two - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. **Reading:** Get students to read the passage aloud. Swap readers every paragraph.

5. **Vocabulary:** Students look through the article. Underline/highlight any vocabulary you do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through & explain any words or phrases you do not understand.

6. **The article:** Students look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about Bratislava?
- c) Will you be visiting Bratislava this year?

7. **I went to Bratislava and I saw...** Think of five places to visit in Bratislava. Add five foods and drinks from Slovakia. Use them to compile a short story about a holiday to Bratislava you made recently. (Imagine!) Tell your story to your partner.

| Five places to visit in Bratislava | Five Slovak food and drinks |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Let's chat! Phone call:** In pairs: One of you is on holiday in Bratislava for the weekend. You are excitedly ringing your friend back home to tell them all about your adventures so far. Your friend asks you some questions about it. Arrange a meeting time and date for the following weekend. Remember you are *on the phone!* 5-minutes.

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9. **Bratislava:** With your partner, discuss the following about Bratislava. (You may need to look on the internet for this)

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | As a capital | 6 | <i>Working/Jobs</i> in Bratislava |
| 2 | Major events in Bratislava | 7 | The river Danube |
| 3 | The Old City | 8 | The tourists! |
| 4 | The airport | 9 | Shopping in Bratislava |
| 5 | Bratislava pubs! | 10 | The Euro in <i>Bratislava/Slovakia</i> |

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

10. **Let's do 'the Article quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score one point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Which cities are mentioned?
- 2) How can you get to Bratislava?
- 3) What is a shopaholic?
- 4) What was the name of the movie?
- 5) Name three things Bratislava is famous for.

Student B

- 1) What happens on New Year's Eve?
- 2) Name two Slovak wine regions.
- 3) Name Bratislava's shopping malls.
- 4) Who destroyed Devín Castle?
- 5) Who partially reconstructed Devín Castle? When?

11. **Let's explain! Likes and dislikes of Bratislava!** Think of three things you like about Bratislava. Also three things you don't like. Write them below. Using these words/phrases tell your partner why. (Imagine!)

| Likes | | Dislikes | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| 1 | | 1 | |
| 2 | | 2 | |
| 3 | | 3 | |

The teacher will choose some pairs to hear their results.

12. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a 2-minute presentation on **Bratislava**. Maybe focus on a particular aspect of the city. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the strong and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

13. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about **Bratislava**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

DISCUSSION

Note: A previous trip to Bratislava will benefit students here.

For students who have NOT been to Bratislava – IMAGINE a little!

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Is Bratislava overrated?
- 3) How would you get to Bratislava?
- 4) What do you think of Slovakia?
- 5) Name three things tourists can see in Bratislava?
- 6) Where is the best place to go shopping in Bratislava?
- 7) What do you think of Bratislava's tram and trolleybus system?
- 8) What do you think of Bratislava airport?
- 9) Give three examples of how Bratislava has changed over 25 years.
- 10) Would you like to study English or Slovak in Bratislava?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) What do you think about Bratislava?
- 3) Are you a shopaholic?
- 4) Give three examples of Slovak food.
- 5) Have you ever been ripped off (in Bratislava)? How?
- 6) What do you think of Bratislava taxis?
- 7) Are there too many tourists in Bratislava?
- 8) Where's a good place to stay in Bratislava?
- 9) Where's a good place to eat in Bratislava?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Game! If I went to Bratislava I might see...

Allow 10 minutes - Small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Form a circle or go round the room in a clockwise direction.

"If I went to Bratislava I might see..."

The idea of the game is that each person has to remember what was previously said. Then add another of your own. The list will therefore get longer and longer.

When a student cannot remember the order or cannot think of any more ideas they are 'eliminated'!

The winner is the one at the end not eliminated!

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

If you _____ visiting Central or Eastern Europe, would like a refreshing change and an interesting place to visit, then could I suggest Bratislava in Slovakia? It's smaller than _____ Prague, Budapest or Vienna but is most certainly worth a visit, as many visitors have recently discovered. The Slovak capital city, which is situated on both sides of the river Danube, has had its name since 1919. Previously it was known as Pressburg by the Austrians and Pozsony by the Hungarians. In fact, many Austrians and Hungarians still _____ to the city using these names. It was also known as Possonium in _____. Today Bratislava has a population of 430,000. It is the youngest _____ city in Europe. Bratislava is situated on the _____ of the small Carpathian Mountains; to its west is the Austrian _____; to the south is the Hungarian border.

refer

fancy

nearby

edge

capital

border

Latin

So how do you get there? You can fly into Bratislava airport or _____ arrive at nearby Vienna airport, which is only 45 minutes away by bus. There are good motorway and rail connections. A _____ way to arrive in the city is by boat. Daily services run five times a day between Vienna and Bratislava. Services also run to Budapest. These days the Slovak capital offers good hotel _____. Top-end hotels include the Radisson SAS Carlton Hotel, the Sheraton Hotel and the Park Inn. Bottom-end accommodation includes hostels – but not that _____ which is in the _____ movie 'Hostel!' Mind you, it certainly helped put Bratislava on the map! So what is worth seeing in Bratislava? Well, there are many choices. The city is famous for its historic Old Town, its castle and New Bridge. Other gems include the TV tower and nearby Devín Castle. Bratislava (and more so Slovakia) is also famous for its beautiful _____! The city in the last few years has unfortunately seen many English _____ parties. The novelty has _____ worn off a little - with the exchange rate, the economic crisis and a waning of interest, reducing numbers.

alternatively

stag

novel

accommodation

hostel

women

fictional

thankfully

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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If you fancy visiting Central or Eastern Europe, (1)___ like a refreshing change and an interesting place to visit, then could I suggest Bratislava in Slovakia? It's smaller (2)___ nearby Prague, Budapest or Vienna but is (3)___ certainly worth a visit, as (4)___ visitors have recently discovered. The Slovak capital city, (5)___ is situated on both sides of the river Danube, has had its name (6)___ 1919. Previously it was known as Pressburg by the Austrians and Pozsony by the Hungarians. In fact, many Austrians and Hungarians (7)___ refer to the city using these names. It was (8)___ known as Possonium in Latin. Today Bratislava has a population of 430,000. It is the youngest capital city in Europe. Bratislava is situated on the edge of the small Carpathian Mountains; to its west is the Austrian border; to the south is the Hungarian border.

(1)___ (2)___ do you get there? (3)___ can fly into Bratislava airport or alternatively arrive at nearby Vienna airport, which is only 45 minutes away by bus. There are good motorway and rail connections. (4)___ novel way to arrive in the city is by boat. Daily services run five times a day between Vienna and Bratislava. Services also run to Budapest. These days the Slovak capital offers good hotel accommodation. Top-end hotels include the Radisson SAS Carlton Hotel, the Sheraton Hotel and the Park Inn. Bottom-end accommodation includes hostels – (5)___ not that hostel, which is in the fictional movie 'Hostel!' Mind you, it certainly helped put Bratislava on the map! So what is worth seeing in Bratislava? Well, there are many choices. The city is famous for its historic Old Town, (6)___ castle and New Bridge. Other gems include the TV tower and nearby Devín Castle. Bratislava (and more so Slovakia) is also famous (7)___ its beautiful women! The city in the last few years has unfortunately seen many English stag parties. The novelty has thankfully worn off a little - with the exchange rate, (8)___ economic crisis and a waning of interest, reducing numbers.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words, which are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

| | | | |
|----|----------------|----|---------------|
| 1 | previously | 11 | multitude |
| 2 | communists | 12 | accommodation |
| 3 | beautiful | 13 | unfortunately |
| 4 | connections | 14 | economic |
| 5 | gems | 15 | fictional |
| 6 | alternatively | 16 | Mountains |
| 7 | literally | 17 | Vietnamese |
| 8 | population | 18 | virtually |
| 9 | reconstruction | 19 | entire |
| 10 | leisurely | 20 | favourite |

LINKS

http://maps.google.sk/maps?client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&channel=s&hl=sk&q=bratislava&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=Bratislava&gl=sk&ei=ooxeTIioMYmKOLzmiL0J&sa=X&oi=geocode_result&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CB8Q8gEwAA
<http://visit.bratislava.sk/en/>
<http://www.slovakia.org/bratislava.htm>
http://www.visitbratislava.info/fusion_pages/index.php?page_id=5
<http://www.bratislava-city.sk/>
<http://www.bratislavavisit.com/>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: A visit to Bratislava: If you **fancy** visiting Central or Eastern Europe, would like a refreshing change and an interesting place to visit, then could I suggest Bratislava in Slovakia? It's smaller than **nearby** Prague, Budapest or Vienna but is most certainly worth a visit, as many visitors have recently discovered. The Slovak capital city, which is situated on both sides of the river Danube, has had its name since 1919. Previously it was known as Pressburg by the Austrians and Pozsony by the Hungarians. In fact, many Austrians and Hungarians still **refer** to the city using these names. It was also known as Possonium in **Latin**. Today Bratislava has a **population** of 430,000. It is the youngest **capital** city in Europe. Bratislava is situated on the **edge** of the small Carpathian Mountains; to its west is the Austrian **border**; to the south is the Hungarian border.

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