

Bratislava old and new

Today we are looking at the Slovak capital Bratislava. Let's start with its Old Town. Dating from the 15th century, its centre has largely been preserved and is a positive delight to see. It has charm! Since the collapse of communism and gradually since independence the Old Town has seen much reconstruction. Today it has many highly popular coffee shops and bars to visit. During the summer months the streets are packed with bar terraces, which bring the Old Town alive. One can sit, relax and enjoy a cup of coffee or have a beer and watch the world go by. There is also the Bratislava Summer Festival where one can see street entertainers, exhibitions, open air opera, orchestras and music festivals. In wintertime when it snows the Old Town becomes a winter wonderland. The narrow streets give one a glimpse into the past right here in the present. December sees the Christmas market in the Old Town. It offers visitors a multitude of unusual gifts to buy, hot wine and excellent foods.

St Michael's Gate is the only preserved gate into the Old Town and is one of the entrances into it. Its lower part is gothic. Its present appearance is baroque, due to rebuilding in 1758. From the top of the tower there is a great view of the city. Other notable buildings in the Old Town include the original Slovak National Theatre. Situated Downtown the building originates back to 1885. It is used for operas and ballet performances. To see one of these live is a truly wonderful experience. Practically adjacent to this is the Reduta building that is today used primarily for the Slovak Philharmonic orchestra. This is the place to see domestic and foreign orchestras play. Both of these venues are the place to be in January when the Ball season starts. It kicks off with the Orange Ball at the Slovak National Theatre while at Reduta the famous Bratislava Ball takes place.

'New Bratislava' is emerging from the ashes of Communism. On the northern riverbank of the river Danube is the new Eurovea complex. Nearby is the new Slovak National Theatre. This is an experience to see. Designed in the 80s, during communism, you can feel this and see it the moment you walk in the door. A good theatre but many still prefer the original.

Category: Central Europe / Slovakia / Bratislava
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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On the far side of the river is the city park. During the summer a part of it becomes an urban beach. The facility offers leisure and sports facilities, a beach and a wonderful bar with a terrace to relax on and enjoy a cool beer. One can take in the stunning views of the Old Town, the castle and the sun setting over New Bridge. Wintertime has seen the site transformed into an ice skating ring. Bratislava actually has several other beaches including Zlaté Piesky and Petržalka. Popular summer sports include in-line skating and cycling along the dykes of the Danube. Winter sports include ice skating and ice hockey. The city also has a race course.

Bratislava offers you more! It has a castle to visit. Bratislava Castle looks out over the whole city. It's been a part of the panorama for many centuries. The castle has also been associated with the first written remark about the city back in 907. The original Palace in the castle was built in the 15th century during the rule of King Zigmund of Luxembourg. A destructive fire in 1811 destroyed much of the castle, so it was abandoned and lay in ruins for 150 years. It was finally rebuilt in 1961 by the Communists. Since the early 60s Bratislava Castle has once again been a joy for all to see on the city's skyline. Indeed the views from the castle are stunning. One can see the Old Town, and on the far side of the river Petržalka, and the Austrian wind turbines in the distance. Today the castle houses part of the Slovak National Museum. It is also used as offices by the government.

Practically opposite the castle is the New Bridge. A giant UFO shaped restaurant sits at the top of one side of the bridge. Its odd shape makes it stand out for miles. The aerial views from the top of the 'UFO' are well worth the lift ride up there! The communist interior has been reconstructed into a modern café and restaurant where you can relax and take in the breathtaking views of the city.

Note: Check out an alternative lesson on the Slovak capital on the webpage - 'A visit to Bratislava'.

EXERCISES

1. Bratislava: Think of three interesting places tourists like to go in Bratislava. Now add three places people who live there might like to go. What is the difference? Go round the room swapping stories.

2. Geography: Bratislava, Slovakia: Where is Slovakia? What countries surround it? Where is its capital? 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 one - 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: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

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

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. Let's think! Think of five things you know about Bratislava. Then add five things you might like to see there. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these?

Five things you know about Bratislava	Five things you might like to see in Bratislava
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 talk! In Bratislava: In pairs. You are in a pub in Bratislava. One of you is a barman/barmaid. The other is a tourist just in off the street who wants a drink. The tourist orders one at the bar. Between you – you get talking. Find out what you can about each other. Then ask questions about where to go in Bratislava. *5-minutes.*

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9. A day in Bratislava: In pairs/mini group. Each person chooses to be one of the following. Think of five things that person might do or see during a typical day in Bratislava. (Imagine!) Create a short story about it. Tell it your story. Try to make it interesting, funny, the problems, the experiences, the weather, etc. Interact your story with your colleagues.

1	Tour guide	3	Ice hockey fan
2	Taxi driver	4	In-line skater

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

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

1	Infrastructure	4	Old town
2	Transportation	5	Sports facilities
3	Real estate	6	Industry

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

11. Let's debate: In pairs. Students A think Bratislava is a great small European City for tourists to visit. Students B think otherwise – choose an alternative European city. Explain why.

12. Let's be economic! The economic issues of Bratislava: Think of two economic advantages of Bratislava today. Add two economic issues it faces today. Fill in the list below then discuss with your partner.

Economic advantages of Bratislava today	
1 _____	2 _____
Economic issues the city faces today	
1 _____	2 _____

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

13. 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) What can you do in the summer in the Old Town?
- 2) Name the Balls.
- 3) What was built around 1885?
- 4) Where can you enjoy a cool beer?
- 5) What does the castle house?

Student B

- 1) What is emerging from the ashes of Communism?
- 2) What happens in the city park?
- 3) What happened in 1961?
- 4) Name the summer sports.
- 5) What happens in December?

14. Let's think! Bratislava: Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with '**Bratislava**' as you can. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Bratislava _____
- b) Central Europe _____
- c) Bratislava Castle _____
- d) The UFO restaurant _____
- e) Tourists _____

16. Quickfire session: The teacher asks the class: "I love Bratislava because..."

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) Have you ever attended a Ball? If yes, which one?
- 3) Would you like to visit Bratislava?
- 4) What is the view from where you live?
- 5) What tall buildings have you visited recently?
- 6) What is the name of biggest river where you live?
- 7) What do you think of Christmas markets?
- 8) What do you think of Bratislava Old Town?
- 9) Which museums have you visited recently?
- 10) What is the nightlife like in Bratislava?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) How would you describe the old town in Bratislava?
- 3) What do you think of Bratislava Castle?
- 4) How often do you visit a park?
- 5) What winter sports do you like?
- 6) What summer sports do you like?
- 7) Do you like to visit a beach?
- 8) What castles have you visited recently?
- 9) What theatres or operas have you visited recently?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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narrow

gradually

glimpse

bars

collapse

gifts

multitude

exhibitions

St Michael's Gate is the only preserved gate into the Old Town and is one of the entrances into it. Its lower part is (1)_____. Its present appearance is (2)_____, due to rebuilding in 1758. From the top of the tower there is a great view of the city. Other (3)_____ buildings in the Old Town include the original Slovak National Theatre. Situated Downtown the building originates back to 1885. It is used for operas and (4)_____ performances. To see one of these live is a truly (5)_____ experience. Practically adjacent to this is the Reduta building that is today used (6)_____ for the Slovak Philharmonic orchestra. This is the place to see (7)_____ and foreign orchestras play. Both of these venues are the place to be in January when the Ball season starts. It kicks off with the Orange Ball at the Slovak National (8)_____ while at Reduta the famous Bratislava Ball takes place.

theatre

gothic

wonderful

baroque

primarily

notable

domestic

ballet

GRAMMAR

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that 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	wonderful	11	developments
2	domestic	12	performances
3	ballet	13	collapse
4	multitude	14	gradually
5	narrow	15	independence
6	unusual	16	excellent
7	reconstruction	17	philharmonic
8	positive	18	gothic
9	truly	19	notable
10	baroque	20	exhibitions

LINKS

<http://www.opodo.co.uk/opodo/StrutsServlet/TravelGuidesDetails?geoId=3100>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bratislava>
<http://www.visitbratislava.co.uk/>
<http://www.bratislava-info.net/en/>

ANSWERS

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