

Welcome to Slovakia

Intercultura Slovakia, o. z., Vinohradnícka 40, 949 01 Nitra, Slovensko
tel: 00421 948 767 766 e-mail: slovakia@afs.org



www.slovakia.afs.org



[afs.intercultura.slovakia](https://www.facebook.com/afs.intercultura.slovakia)



[afsinterculturasklovakia](https://www.instagram.com/afsinterculturasklovakia)

Other resources:

<https://slovakia.travel/en>

<http://www.slovak-republic.org>

<http://slovake.eu/en/>

<http://www.slovakiasite.com/>

<https://spectator.sme.sk/>

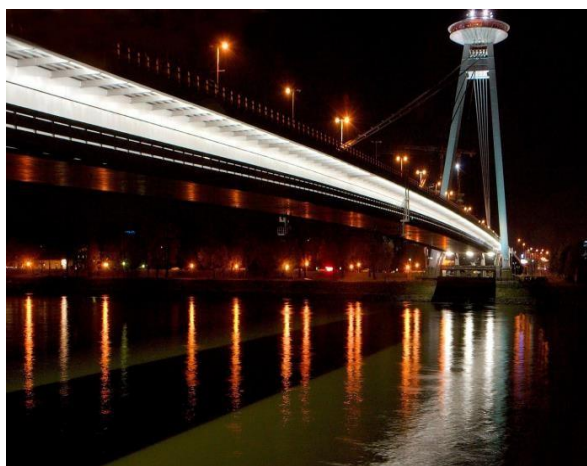
The Slovak Republic	5
Basic Facts	5
Population	6
Slovaks abroad	6
Language	6
Religion	6
Currency	7
International Time	7
System of Government.....	7
Economy	7
Shopping.....	8
Transport	8
Weather and Climate.....	9
History.....	9
Geography	9
Slovak cities	11
Do you know that	11
People and Manners	12
Greetings	12
The footwear question	12
Sniffing	13
Punctuality	13
Food.....	13
Slovak character	15
Visitors at home	15
Your experience	15
Traditions and national public holidays	15

Slovak families.....	21
Where will you live?	21
What are the Slovak families like.....	21
Daily schedule.....	22
Traditional family.....	22
Houseworks.....	22
Communication	22
Free time	23
Important to remember.....	23
Your school and free time	23
System of education	23
Schedule.....	24
Classification.....	24
Schools the AFS students attend	24
Before leaving... ..	26
Program schedule.....	26
Orientations.....	26
Activities organised by volunteers	27
How to prepare for your stay	28
Conclusion.....	30
Basic survival vocabulary	31

Our country will become your home during your exchange experience. We would like to provide you with some facts and give you suggestions and advice to make your stay over here rewarding and successful. We welcome you into the worldwide AFS community and sincerely hope you will have an interesting and challenging experience.

The Slovak Republic

Basic Facts



The Slovak Republic (short form Slovakia) is a state in Central Europe. It has a population of over five million and an area of about 49,000 square kilometres. Slovakia is a landlocked country bordered by the Czech Republic and Austria to the west, Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east and Hungary to the south. The largest city is the capital, Bratislava, and the second largest is Košice. Slovakia is a member state of the European Union, NATO, United Nations, OECD and WTO among others. The official language is Slovak, a

member of the Slavic language family.

Location: Central Europe

Capital City: Bratislava

Government: Parliamentary republic

Language: Slovak

Currency: Euro

Population: 5,4 million inhabitants

Area: 49,035 sq. km

Population density: 110 inhabitants/km²

Time Zone: CET

Country Code: +421

National flag and emblem of the Slovak Republic



Population

Slovakia has approximately 5.4 million inhabitants. The majority of the population is ethnically Slovak 85.8%, Hungarians are the largest ethnic minority 8.5%, other ethnic groups, include Roma, Czechs, Rusyns or Ukrainians and others. The capital of the Slovak Republic is Bratislava, with 500 000 inhabitants.

Slovaks abroad

According to the estimates of Slovak embassies and expatriate associations, there were approximately more than 2 million Slovaks living abroad in 2015. These people identify themselves as having Slovak nationality, speak Slovak but usually have citizenship of the country in which they live. The largest Slovak



community is in the USA where there are estimated to be between 821 000 and 1.2 million. Most of these are descendants of Slovak emigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries. A number of famous personalities of Slovak origin spent a certain part of their life in the USA or were born to Slovak parents there. These include an inventor and wireless telecommunications pioneer Jozef Murgaš (1864-1929), who was the first person to transmit the spoken word, and a parachute inventor Štefan Banic (1870-1941). Eugene Cernan (1934), the last person to walk on the moon, came from a family of Czech and Slovak emigrants, famous Hollywood actor Steve McQueen (1930-1980) had Slovak roots and the parents of Pop Art king Andy Warhol (1928-1987) were of Rusyn nationality and came from the village of Miková in eastern Slovakia. Other significant Slovak communities are in Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Poland and other countries.

Language

The official language is Slovak, a member of the Slavic language family. Hungarian is widely spoken in the southern regions and Rusyn is used in some parts of the Northeast. A large proportion of the population speaks English, but you will meet a lot of people who speak only Slovak. It will therefore be one of your first tasks to learn it. Although the language can be a bit difficult at the beginning, we know from our experience that within three months you will be able to speak it! Once you know it, you can understand easily other Slavonic languages such as Czech, Polish and some Russian.

Religion

Slovaks identify themselves as Roman Catholics 62%, as nonreligious or atheist 13%, as Protestant 6%, as Eastern Orthodox 3,8%. Generally, about one third of church members regularly attend church services. The pre-World War II population of the country included an estimated 90,000 Jews (1.6% of the

population). After the genocidal policies of the Nazi era, only about 2,300 Jews remain today (0.04% of the population).

Currency

Slovakia adopted the Euro currency on 1st January 2009 as the 16th member of the Eurozone. There are following coins and banknotes: Coins: 1 euro, 2 euros, 1 cent, 2 cent, 5 cent, 10 cent, 20 cent 50 cent Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 euros.



International Time

The Slovak Republic is located in the same time zone as continental Western Europe and much of Eastern Europe (Central European Time, i. e. GMT + 1 hour). Summer time starts the last Saturday in March ends in late September (GMT + 2 hours).

System of Government

Slovakia is a parliamentary democratic republic with a multi-party system. The Slovak head of state is the president, currently Zuzana Čaputová, elected by direct popular vote for a five - year term. Most executive power lies with the head of government; the prime minister being Igor Matovič. Prime minister is appointed by the president. The remainder of the Cabinet is appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister. Slovakia's highest legislative body is the 150 - seat National Council of the Slovak Republic. Delegates are elected for a four - year term on the basis of proportional representation. Slovakia's highest judicial body is the Constitutional Court of Slovakia, which rules on constitutional issues. The 13 members of this court are appointed by the president from a slate of candidates nominated by parliament. Slovakia has been a member state of the European Union and NATO since 2004.

Economy

The Slovak economy is considered an advanced economy that was transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven economy. Major privatizations are nearly complete, the banking sector is almost completely in private hands, and foreign investment has risen. Although Slovakia's GDP comes mainly from the tertiary (services) sector, the industrial sector also plays an important role within its economy. The main industry sectors are car manufacturing and electrical engineering. Since 2007, Slovakia has been the world's largest producer of car per capital. There are currently four automobile assemblies: Volkswagen's in Bratislava, PSA Peugeot Citroen's in Trnava, Kia Motors' in Žilina and Jaguar, Land Rover in Nitra.



Shopping

Most shops are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (there may be a lunch break from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in smaller ones) from Monday to Friday. On Saturday, the usual opening hours are from 8 a.m. to 12 a.m. Department stores are open until 7 p.m. or 8 p.m. every day. Some private shops open on Sunday. Shops and markets have fixed prices, it is not possible to bargain anywhere.

Transport

The Slovak Republic has an excellent and safe system of public transport inside and also outside the cities. In all the bigger cities there is a working system of trams, buses or trolleys. Public transport follows fixed time tables, which are very punctual. All the transport timetables are to be found on the internet. If you live nearby a bigger city and you are supposed to commute every morning by bus or train to school, please be always sure you come to the bus station on time! There is a student discount for transport (also on the intercity trains and buses) and you can ask your family, or schoolmates to help you to understand this system.

Within a month after your arrival, you have to arrange a student pass that allows you to travel free or with discount in the following manner: The school gives you a confirmation that you are a student, and you will go to the local BUS/TRAIN station office to hand in this form, together with a passport size picture. The logistic company (private or state) will issue a card, you need to charge and you will get a (1-3 months) coupon. From this card, the daily fee will be withdrawn. Or, you will get a card, that allows you to buy discounted ticket every day, without a possibility to buy a monthly coupon. In any case, you need to save these receipts, because during the orientation you will get reimbursed. Reimbursement is valid only for school commuting and arrival to orientations. No individual trips are reimbursed. Volunteers, school responsible and host families can help you to arrange this discounted pass/card/coupon and it needs to be done the first month, until the end of September the latest! AFS SVK office CAN NOT reimburse full travel fee, only the discounted tickets.

Weather and Climate

Slovakia climate is moderate because Slovakia lies in northern moderate climatic zone. Geographical position in continental Europe, wind circulation from west and altitude are the key factors that influence its climate.

There are four seasons in Slovakia. Spring, summer, autumn and winter are four seasons of the year peculiar to Slovakia climate, each lasting for three months. Spring in Slovakia starts around 21st March and is at early stages characterized by chilly mornings, with average temperatures 9° C in April, 14° C in May and 17° C in June. Surely you need to count with changeable weather in spring. Shifting into summer around 22nd June, this season of the year tends to be very hot, with tropical days, temperatures well above 30° C during the day, and warm nights. The hottest month is July and Slovakia summers can really earn heat wave, mainly in lowlands around Komárno, Hurbanovo or Štúrovo with 37° C. Summers proceed to autumns on 23rd September and might be rainy, windy or shiny. Temperatures in autumn drop from 14° C in September to 3° C in November. Final season of the year in Slovakia, winter, comes on 21st December. You can find snow especially in the mountains. In the lowlands, winters are often without or very little snow. Temperatures in winter go down to -5° C, extremely to -10° C or even more. In the mountains, winter is usually cold and snowy. Slovakia climate is featuring climatic inversions in the mountains when cold air drops down as fog to the valleys while the tops of the surrounding mountain ranges bathe in sunshine. However, some regularities in weather and climate are well tracked and many are known as proverbs, such as Medard's drop. For it drops forty days, it marks the rainy period in the end of June and the beginning of July. Next regularity is Indian summer that everyone enjoys by the end of September and beginning of October.

History

Slovak Republic was officially recognized as an independent state on January 1st 1993. One of the most important events in history of an independent Slovakia was the Pope John Paul's II visit to our country in 1995. Slovakia is a member of many international organizations - the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, UNESCO, and European Council. On May 1st 2004 Slovak Republic joined the European Union. It has been the NATO member since March 29th 2004. On December 21st 2007 the Slovak Republic became a party to the Schengen Agreement.

Geography

Slovak Republic is a central European country with vast forest areas extending on two fifths of its territory. Its total area of 18 932 sq. mi (49 035 sq. km) does not rank Slovakia among large countries. Slovakian westernmost and easternmost points are separated only by 266,5 mi (429 km).

The country features a diverse mixture of lowlands and mountain ranges interrupted by picturesque valleys. The majority of the territory of Slovakia is

covered by the Western Carpathian Mountains, which stretch from the south west along the western and northern border all the way to the east.

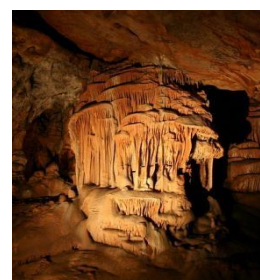
The High Tatras form the smallest European high mountain range (260 km² in Slovakia and 81 km² in Poland). They are characterised by broken relief and an extremely high concentration of natural beauty. In comparison with the Alps, they lack glaciers. Admirers fondly refer to them as the 'miniature Alps'. The highest peak of the High Tatras and in the entire country is Gerlachovský štít (2 655 metres above sea level). The highest situated municipality in Slovakia - Štrbské Pleso (1 350 metres above sea level) is also located in the High Tatras.



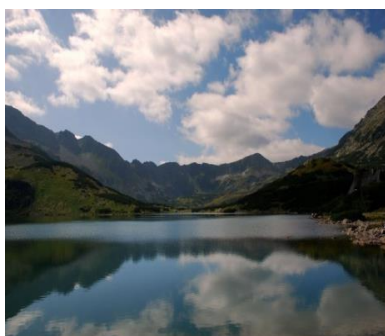
The lowest point of the country is Klin nad Bodrogom in eastern Slovakia (94 metres above sea level), on the border with Hungary.

Some mountain ranges (Štiavnické vrchy, Vtáčnik, Poľana in central Slovakia, Vihorlat and Slanské vrchy in the east of the country) are of volcanic origin. Slovakia's more than 1 200 caves are hidden in the mountains and foothills. Many of them have gorgeous karst formations, and 14 caves are open to the public.

The Demänovský jaskynný systém (system of caves) in the Low Tatras, that stretches more than 30 kilometres, is the longest cave. Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa and Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa have ice formations. Ochtinská aragonitová jaskyňa (aragonite cave) is truly unique. It is one of only three aragonite caves in the world open to the general public. The Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa (cave) is also on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.



More than 40 per cent of the territory of Slovakia is situated between the heights of 300 metres up to 750 metres above sea level and another approximately 40 per cent is situated in a height up to 300 metres above sea level. Almost half of the territory of Slovakia (24 300 km²) is made up of agricultural soil, 14,300 km² are arable soil. Forests rich in game cover crops, approximately 20 000 km², cover 40 % of the territory. Nine national parks are situated especially in the mountain and foothill areas. In addition to national parks, there are 35 protected areas in Slovakia.



Northern Slovakia forms the border of the European watershed between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The vast majority of water is drained by the Slovak rivers into the Danube River, the largest Central European River, which flows through 153 kilometres of southwest Slovakia and for the most part forms the borderline with Hungary.

Most of Slovakia's lakes are of glacial origin. The majority (up to 105) are situated in the High Tatras. Great Hincovo Pleso with an area of 20,08 hectares and a depth of 53 metres is the largest one. Lakes can also be found in the volcanic mountain ranges, Morské oko (Sea Eye) in the Vihorlat mountain range is the largest one. Its area is 13 hectares and is 26 metres at its deepest.

Several artificial bodies used for energy production and water-management were created in the second half of the 20th century in Slovakia. The Liptovská Mara (360 million cubic metres of water), Oravská priehrada (346 million cubic metres of water) and Zemplínska Šírava (334 million cubic metres of water) reservoirs are the largest ones. The tank systems of various areas (so called tajchy), built from the 16th to the 18th centuries in the surroundings of Banská Štiavnica for the operation of mining equipment, are a rarity among the artificial lakes.

There are more than one thousand springs of mineral and thermal mineral waters with various compositions throughout the country. Several of them are therapeutic and have been used for these purposes for several centuries. Seventeen locations with therapeutic waters, high quality medical care and international clientele are officially acknowledged by the state as spa facilities. Some of the most significant are found in the towns of Piešťany, Trenčianske Teplice, Rajecské Teplice and Bardejov. Another four locations are official climatic spas.

Slovak cities

Slovakia is administratively divided into eight self-governing regions. Bratislava is the capital. Almost 60 per cent of the population live in 138 towns and cities. The rest live in 2 883 municipalities.

Do you know that ...

- Slovakia the second country in the middle Europe with the largest amount of forests is after Austria! Almost 40% of its territory is covered with forest, while in Austria it is only 6% more.
- Bratislava and Vienna are two closest located capitals in Europe! There is only fewer than 60 km between them.
- The European geographical central point is considered to be near the Roman - Catholic church of St. John the Baptist above the village of Kremnické Bane! You can read it out from an information table/panel situated on a boulder near the church.
- "Bryndza" stands for a traditional Slovak speciality made of sheep cheese! Within the European Union it can only be produced in Slovakia and is



distributed under the name „Slovenská bryndza“. It is made of non-pasteurized sheep milk from the sheep kept in the middle, northern and eastern Slovakia.

- One of the most popular sports in Slovakia is ice-hockey! The golden medal from the World Championship in Goeteborg, Sweden, in 2002, as well as many Slovaks playing in the world best teams prove that Slovakia is a country of real professionals. You can find out more about the history and the present of this sport in Slovakia by visiting the „Hockey Hall of Fame“ in the Bratislava castle.
- The inventor of the parachute is the Slovak Štefan Banič! He lived in the years 1870 - 1941 and worked also in the USA. Exactly there in 1914 he tested his invention in front of the patent committee by jumping from a high building. The parachute later belonged to the standard equipment of the US Army during World War I.

People and Manners

Should you take your shoes off or not when visiting friends? Should you say hello to people in lifts? These might not seem the most obvious things to ask. Things which you don't even think about at home can be a big issue elsewhere. Here is a list of the most common pitfalls to be aware of.

Greetings

One of the things you'll immediately notice in the Slovak Republic is that people say hello and goodbye to complete strangers in various situations. For example, if you enter or leave a shop you should say Dobrý deň (Good day) or Dovidenia (Goodbye) respectively. Obviously in larger shops such as hypermarkets you don't need to greet people as you enter, but you should certainly acknowledge the person at the counter. The same goes for lifts and also compartments in trains. In the mornings when you come to school, don't forget to greet the teachers you meet on the corridors. When it comes to physical contacts you'll notice that Slovakia tend to shake hands a lot. Shaking hands is a standard form of greeting. It's also usual when saying goodbye. There are two types of greeting – formal and informal.

The informal one Ahoj/Čau (Hello) you say to your friends and family members. The formal one Dobré ráno/Dobrý deň/Dobrý večer (Good morning/ afternoon/ evening) you say to unknown people, teachers and other authorities.

The footwear question

You should take off your outdoor shoes when entering a Slovak flat or house. The same goes for when entering a school. Usually at school there is a special place called „šatňa“ where you change your outdoor shoes for slippers and hang your coat. This



special habit is important especially during winter, when the boots can be dirty from snow and mud.

Your Slovak host family will have rows of indoor footwear arranged near the front door. The first space at the entrance door is called predsieň and it is used to change shoes and hang coats.

Sniffling



Sniffling is considered extremely bad manners, and so people blow their noses and carry tissues at all times. It is normal to blow one's nose in public places. **People consider it much more polite than sniffling.**

Punctuality

When you are meeting a friend, it is quite common to come 5 or 10 minutes late, not more. **You have to be very punctual when meeting an older person or when going to school.** Punctuality should also be observed when arriving at official events.

Food

Slovak cuisine is unique. Slovak cuisine was greatly influenced by the food of two neighbouring countries - Hungary and Austria and to add to the spice of life, the dishes vary from one region to the next. Typical Slovak dishes are rather heavy and do not include enough vegetables and fruit. Nowadays the situation is slowly changing for the better.

Raňajky (breakfast) is generally eaten around 7 a.m. depending on family habits. We regularly eat bread with jam, bread with cheese or ham and tea. During the school day there is usually a longer break around 10 a.m. when most students have a snack. The host mother will prepare it for you or you will do so yourself.

Obed (lunch) is served at school during week days, you eat with your schoolmates. Don't expect a lot of vegetables or fruits - the meals are mainly composed of meat with sauce and potatoes, rice, pasta or dumplings. Together with the main meal you will have soup and dessert. During weekends it is usually the mother who prepares lunch for all family members (the children often help her) and they all eat together. **If you take the initiative from time to time and offer to cook something from your local cuisine, your host family will be more than glad!** The Slovaks are usually quite open to trying new recipes.

Večera (dinner) can also be a main meal similar to lunch. Sometimes the family doesn't have a "big meal", but only bread with cheese or ham. Dinner is typically eaten between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m., and is often a unique opportunity to meet all the family members and talk. Take advantage of this and try to be there even if you are not hungry.

The Slovak dishes use items such as pork, poultry, cabbage, wheat and potato flour, cheese from cows and sheep, potatoes, onions and garlic. Although rice does not grow in Slovakia, it is widely-used and incorporated in Slovak homes and restaurants. Beans, corn on the cob, lentils, parsley, carrots and other vegetables are often used to create soup dishes and other dishes in all Slovakia. Fruit like apples, plums, apricots, peaches and cherries are offered as a side dish alongside the main meal in Slovakia.

The Slovak national meal is bryndzové halušky, which means for the Slovaks the same as sushi for the Japanese or pizza for the Italians. This Slovak national meal consists of dumplings made of potato dough mixed with a special kind of soft and salty sheep curd. Fried bacon chopped in tiny pieces is added to the ready meal, which makes it especially tasty. The traditional beverage to accompany the meal is sour milk.



There are many sweet dishes served as a main course, too. Traditional desserts are pastries of risen dough filled with marmalade, curd, nuts or poppy seeds. Štedrák is the typical Christmas pastry and in Shrovetide the sweet aroma of šišky with marmalade hovers around. From the Slovak region of Záhorie comes an interesting pastry called Skalický trdelník in shape of a roll with a hole inside. Wine or beer is usually accompanied by salted cookies (kapustník, pagáč).

Typical Slovak soft beverage is Vinea, made from grape juice and Kofola, traditional cola drink. Slovakia is rich in mineral water springs. There are a lot of mineral water springs in Slovakia. Bottled mineral water is sold in different bottle sizes, available sparkling or non-sparkling mineral water. Mineral water is a popular soft drink in Slovakia.



Coffee is also a very popular drink in Slovakia. Slovak people go out for coffee just as they go out for beer.

Slovak character

Slovak people can be often perceived as “cold” at first. However, when you get to know them closer, you discover they are very open in sharing their feelings and thoughts with their friends and have very warm relationship with their closest friends and relatives. As we are also very open about our negative emotions and you might think from this that Slovaks as negativistic. The simple reason is perhaps that in your country you are not used to share negative emotions with people. Sometimes, to speak only about the positive is perceived as hypocrisy, because life is not always only positive. It can be difficult, but try to be open in your emotions! For the family it is very important to receive feedback from you. If you don't share it with them, they may think that you are keeping your distance.

The Slovaks are not very self-confident. It is difficult for us to talk about our qualities and success. We are too modest to do that. Always mindful that there may be somebody who is better than us. On the other hand, we like very much to celebrate the success of others (closest friends and relatives).

Visitors at home

Most families like to receive visitors. However, it is usually an activity which is well planned in advance by the family. It is not very common to bring your friends home when the parents don't know about that. Slovak families are used to keep their privacy, so normally “a visit” means hours of cleaning, shopping and preparing food – don't let your host parents become nervous about unexpected visitors. Don't forget to consult the visits of your guests with the family, same goes for the sleep overs.

Your experience

As you will spend more time in the Slovak Republic, you will observe many differences in custom and practice. Be sure to pay attention to these differences, and don't be afraid to ask questions. The more attention you pay to the way the things are done, the more you will learn about the Slovak culture, and the more successfully you will be able to adapt to Slovak way of living.

Traditions and national public holidays

- 1st of January - New Year (public holiday)
Day of the Establishment of the Slovak Republic. In 1993 after the decision of political leaders, Czechoslovakia split into Czech Republic and Slovakia, but there was no conflict between the two regions. Since then, Slovakia as

an independent and democratic state has a new flag with all its national symbols.

- 6th of January - Epiphany (public holiday)

Epiphany used to be the ending of Christmas time. Among the best-known customs are the tradition of the boys, dressed in long white shirts with crowns on their heads, going around the houses. They perform the Epiphany play - a paraphrase of the New Testament story telling how the Magi came to visit the baby Jesus Christ. Another typical element is koleda (the carol), when the priest visits houses with a procession and writes the last two figures of the date and the initials of the Magi - G.M.B. standing for Gaspar, Melcher, Balthazar above the door.



- Fašiangy, Carnival Season

Fašiangy is the period of balls, dances, and parades that lasts from the end of Christmas season to the beginning of Lent, 40 days before Easter. At this time cities, towns, villages, schools, and other institutions hold masquerade balls. On Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, it is a tradition to burry a contrabass. This ceremony symbolizes the end of festivities. Dances, weddings, and other festivities will resume after Easter.

- Burning of Morena (two weeks before Easter)

Morena symbolised the winter and so when people wanted the spring to come, they had to kill her, drown her in a stream or burn her. She was presented as an effigy made of straw clothed in women dress. Young girls carried her singing towards a stream. When they arrived at the bank, Morena was undressed, set on fire and thrown into the waters of the defrosting stream.

- Easter - Good Friday and Easter Monday (public holiday)

Easter is the most significant Christian holiday. Because it is a moveable holiday, its date changes every year. Christians begin Easter celebration on Holy Thursday. Good Friday is a public holiday in Slovakia. On Good Friday, the day of abstinence, Christians commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. Then on Easter Sunday then celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, not only Christians celebrate Easter. Easter preparations begin days before Easter. To be ready for the feast, people bake pastries, cookies, and do extensive grocery shopping. Easter dinner menu is always festive: potato salad with mayonnaise, cooked ham, cold cuts, and sandwiches are served on Easter Sunday as well as on Easter Monday. Cookies and pastries cannot be excluded from the Easter menu.



“Oblievačka” (water pouring) is a typical Easter Monday custom in Slovakia. The character of oblievačka slightly varies from region to region. On this day men visit their female relatives and friends and pour water on them or spray them with perfume, and whip them gently with special whips made of braided willow rods. According to tradition, pouring water on women will guarantee their beauty and good health throughout the year. Recently oblievačka and šibačka (whipping) have not been as intense as they used to be in the past decades. In many regions, water buckets have been replaced with perfumes, a small syringe filled with water, a water cup, or a water pistol. However, in some villages you may still see young men, sometimes riding on the horses or dressed in traditional folk costumes, who come with rattles and braided whips decorated with colourful ribbons. They may take females out of the houses and douse them with a bucket or buckets filled with cold water. During this tradition men may sing songs and play the accordion. After oblievačka and šibačka, women reward men with sweets, fruit, money, or painted Easter eggs. Easter eggs or kraslice are quite popular in Slovak tradition. Kraslice are painted, dyed, or otherwise decorated blown eggs. Many decorate kraslice at home or buy them at market or at the craft store. While it is not required to give Easter eggs to visiting males on Easter Monday, only a few men will leave the house without a drink or small refreshment.

- 1st of May - Labour Day (public holiday)
It was declared as a public holiday after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1919. In general, the month of May is considered to be the time of love and new life. The May verdure used to be the symbol of energy and good growth. The most important place among plants belonged to the tree which in these circumstances was called the maypole. The maypole was usually put up by a young man for the girl he loved. The custom has been preserved till nowadays, though it is modified a little. Usually only one decorated tree is put up in the middle of the village or the main square.
- 8th of May - Freedom from Fascism (public holiday)
Celebration of the end of World War II. in Europe.
- Mother's Day
Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of May. Towns and villages host cultural events with the shows performed by children or different artists.
- 1st of June - Children's Day

Regular classes are typically not held for students, instead, the schools entertain children with contests, theatre shows, or sports activities, and reward them with treats. Cities, villages, shopping centre and parks also organize various activities for children on this day.

- Midsummer Night's Bonfires (23rd – 24th June night)

The Midsummer Day is the longest day of the year. Fire, especially bonfire, belonged among the basic elements of the solstice customs and the adults as well as the young went singing and dancing around it.

On this day, people picked medicinal herbs and they looked for treasures with the help of the so-called fern flower which was to blossom during the Midsummer Night. Most attention was paid to fire. One of the traditions was making huge bonfires on a place clearly seen from the village, launching fire wheels, tossing burning torches, singing, dancing and jumping over the bonfire.



- 5th of July - Memory of St. Cyril and St. Methodius (public holiday)

Brothers Cyril and Methodius compiled the Slavic alphabet and translated it into liturgical and biblical texts. They established several schools and training centers. One of the universities in Slovakia, in Trnava, is called Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda (University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius).

- 29th of August - Slovak National Uprising (public holiday)

In 1944, it was the day when the Slovak National Uprising began. The uprising was organized by the Slovak resistance movement during World War 2. Its main goal was to defend the country against German occupation, but it was also an offense for the Jozef Tiso government.

- 1st of September - (1992) Day of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (public holiday)

The constitution of (future) independent Slovakia has been adopted in Bratislava.

- 15th of September - Day of Blessed Virgin Mary, patron saint of Slovakia (public holiday)

It is celebrated by Slovaks and the Catholic Church. In 1727, Pope Benedict XIII declared Our Lady of Sorrows to be respected by the Church and its members as a Patron of Slovakia and later in 1966 was declared by Pope Paul VI as the main Patron.

- 1st of November - All Saints' Day (public holiday)

Pope Gregory III, and later Pope Gregory IV, declared 1st of November



as a holiday for the consecration of the Roman Pantheon into the Christian church, as a dedication to all the saints. Cemeteries are visited on or around this day.

- 17th of November - Day of democracy and freedom (public holiday)
On November 17th 1939, a student demonstration against the Nazi occupation was organized, during which one student, Jan Opletal, was dead. Right after that, universities were closed and Nazis persecuted and executed more students. In 1989, a student's memorial gathering of this incident was permitted by the communist authorities and this event turned into an open anti-communist demonstration on the National Avenue in Prague, which was the beginning of the Velvet Revolution. It is one of the most important days in modern Slovak history. It symbolizes the beginning of the radical transformation in each of the spheres of Slovak society.



- 6th of December - Saint Nicholas Day On St. Nicholas Day volunteers dress up in a red or white bishop's robe similar to the one of Santa Claus and give the goody bags to children in schools, cultural centre, or in churches. At night parents stuff their children's shoes and boots with goody bags filled with sweets or just give it to them and tell them the treats came from St. Nicholas. On this day, children in Pre-schools, Kindergartens, and elementary schools participate in song singing and poetry recitals.
- 13th of December - Lucia Day
Lucy - in Slovak "Lucia" (13th of December), in contradiction with the Christian tradition, was presented in the folk tales as the greatest of witches. People believed that they could see witches on this day. Foretelling of the future and various love wishes were also popular. According to the best-known of them, girls prepared 13 pieces of paper. They wrote different male names on twelve of them while the thirteenth one was left blank. The pieces of paper were then folded and every day one of them was burnt. The one before the last one was burnt on Christmas Eve in the morning and the last one was opened on the same day in the evening. The name on the last piece of paper was to be the name of the future husband. The girl, whose last piece of paper was blank, was not to be married the following year.
- 24th of December - Christmas Day and Evening (public holiday)



Christmas is a significant holiday in Slovakia and its celebration is accompanied by many regional traditions. Cities, towns, villages, and stores boast in beautiful Christmas decorations, Christmas trees, and Christmas lights weeks before Christmas. Decorated store windows draw customers and invite them to do Christmas shopping. A few days before Christmas, cities and towns hold Christmas markets where you can buy traditional Christmas wafers, drinks such as mead, Christmas ornaments, knickknacks, and various homemade products. Houses and apartments are decorated with real or artificial Christmas trees and Christmas decorations. People start decorating Christmas trees with sweets, ornaments, and Christmas lights several days before Christmas Eve. Hardly you will find a home without a Christmas tree at this time of the year. Slovaks always celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve, on December 24th. Throughout the day kitchens are filled with aroma of baked goodies and Christmas dishes, and the last ornaments are being hung on the Christmas tree. In the evening, families gather around the Christmas table for dinner, the hallmark of the day. At dinnertime, Christian families might say grace or sing carols. Christmas dinner varies according to the region of Slovakia. Typically, a thin wafer (oplátka) with honey and sometimes garlic is served as a Christmas appetizer to secure good health of all family members throughout the upcoming year. It is also a custom to cut a piece of fruit, usually an apple, into as many pieces as there are family members. This custom is a symbol of family unity. The next course is soup - split pea soup, sauerkraut soup, mushroom soup, bean soup, lentil soup, or bean and lentil combo, according to the region. The main course consists of fried or baked fish - usually carp or trout - or fish fillet served with potato salad with mayonnaise. It is a tradition to buy a live carp, which can be purchased at stores only at Christmas time. After the main course opekance or pupáčky are served with poppy seed or farmer's cheese. After dinner, the family members exchange their gifts under the Christmas tree. For children, this is the most favourite part of Christmas. Younger children believe it is Baby Jesus who brings them Christmas gifts. When they get older, they learn it is their parents and grandparents who buy them gifts. Nevertheless, you can still see a twinkle in their eyes when they unwrap their gifts. After dinner when all the gifts are open, families enjoy their time together and eat traditional desserts such as fruit, Christmas cookies, and various types of Christmas pastries.



- 25th - 26th of December (public holiday)
Catholics start religious celebration of Christmas by attending Midnight Mass or they can attend mass the following day. In Slovakia 25th of December is

also called the First Day of Christmas. The Second Day of Christmas is St. Stephen's Day, 26th of December. On the First and the Second Day of Christmas, families relax and enjoy their time together and visit relatives and friends. Students are on Christmas break at this time. Young and old also like watching Christmas shows and movies, especially fairy tales. Many Slovaks spend Christmas and the period between Christmas and New Year's Day at mountain resorts.

- 31st of December - Silvester, New Year's Eve
The last day of December is called Silvester in Slovak calendar. It is because this day is the name day of those men named Silvester. Slovaks like to celebrate the New Year's Eve usually in a hotel, in the mountains, or at home with their relatives or friends and by watching TV shows. They also attend Silvester dances or go and welcome a New Year by watching fireworks and making a toast to the New Year in the city or town squares. Slovakia follows the Gregorian calendar with January 1st as the first official day of the new calendar year.
- Name days
Every day of the year is someone's name day (meniny). It is a reason to celebrate, wish the person a Happy Name Day, and buy a little present, like flowers and a box of chocolates. Remember: Never give anyone an even number of flowers (2, 4, 6...). Such bouquets are used at funerals. The number should be odd (1, 3, 5...). Find out if your name has an equivalent in Slovak and what its diminutive version would be. Learn on which days your friends' or family members' names fall and how to wish them a Happy Name Day in Slovak!

Slovak families

Where will you live?

AFS students are placed in small towns or villages close to towns. Most students are placed in traditional families, a one-parent host family is rather an exception. Predominantly, the AFS students have counterparts in their host families whom they go to school with. The way to school takes from 10 minutes to 40 minutes. It depends on suitable school near your place. Also, the Slovak students are used to travel to school by bus, or tram.

What are the Slovak families like

Slovak families are usually very hospitable, friendly and eager to help the student in all ways. Sometimes they have a tendency to treat the AFS student as a guest, and thus it is up to the student to try to take part in the host family life and thus become a real member of the family. This will enable the student to fully absorb our culture and lifestyle. Slovak families are mostly rather strict with

their children, and will try to act the same towards the AFS student. They are this way because they feel a great responsibility for AFS student's welfare.

Daily schedule



Slovak family is a rather self-contained unit, with a regular daily schedule. In most cases both father and mother are fully employed, so they get up early in the morning (6 a.m.), return home between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., and have dinner at 6 or 7 p.m. They go to sleep around 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. The social life of a Slovak family is not very extensive because of a great amount of work and other duties. However, they are rather keen on visiting and having visits from their relatives and friends, mainly over the weekends.

Traditional family

A traditional Slovak family has two children and lives in a rather small flat in a city, however, it is more and more common to live in a small house with a garden outside the city and go to the city just for work, study or special afternoon activities. They use the car often as the main means of transport, but also the urban transport works very well and it is easy to get around on your own. When the family lives in a city flat, it is quite common that the siblings share one room and it can also happen that you will share a room with your host brother or sister. The model of a Slovak traditional family (where the father was the sole person responsible for the family's income and the mother took care of the children and household) has changed a lot in recent years and it is not easy to specify the gender roles. Both parents take part in important decisions, if possible, they also ask the opinion of their children (they especially discuss questions related to free time activities with the children).

Houseworks

Very little percent of families employ servants, so household chores, minor repairs and a gardening (if there is one), are carried out by the family. Each family member is expected to do his/her share by helping whenever necessary, and so will you. The usual types of housework are: setting the table, washing the dishes, cleaning your own room, sweeping the floor, vacuuming, light shopping, taking out rubbish, etc. Most families have pets at home (dog, cat, etc.)

Communication

Not all Slovak families speak foreign languages and, in that case, the initial communication with host parents is via the host brother or sister who studies foreign languages - especially English. Though seemingly difficult at the beginning, it helps you a great deal in acquiring the Slovak language quickly.

Free time

Slovak families often spend their free time doing various sports. The most popular winter sport is skiing, in summer hiking, biking and swimming as well as visiting various cultural events, such as theatre, art galleries, and making excursions to historical castles and sites. Most families have an Internet connection at home and a computer free to use, however, it is important to reach an agreement with your family regarding the amount of time you can spend on the Internet. It can be a problem when they feel you are more in contact with your friends abroad than with your new Slovak family. Often the computer is shared also with the other children.

Important to remember

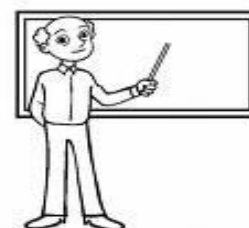
- **Your host family decided to host AFS student. They are not paid for hosting.**
- Your host family wants you to live with you. They want to learn from you about your country and show you their way of life.
- Your host family expects you to accept their daily schedule.
- Your host family wants to help you while you are in the Slovak Republic. They want you to be a true family member.
- You have to change your shoes when entering the house, and some families are also accustomed to changing into more comfortable indoor clothes.
- Your host family expects you to accept their hygienic norms (like washing hands before meal). Ask them about the frequency and duration of showering they are used to, about the housework you are supposed to help with!)
- Your host family takes responsibility for you, that's why they will always ask you where you are going and with whom, to be sure that you are safe during your entire stay in our country.

Your school and free time

System of education

Primary school starts at the age of 6 and lasts 8 or 9 years. Secondary school lasts 4 or 5 years and it usually includes:

- General secondary schools (gymnázium) - highly competitive secondary schools specialized in teaching modern languages, natural sciences or specialized in physical training disciplines. This type of school usually leads to a higher level of education.
- Vocational schools (business, nursing, industrial, music and art academies)
- Apprentice schools, attached to industries and services, related to practical life, teaching various trades.



Most Slovak schools are public schools, though since 1990 new private schools have been established, especially on secondary level, and their numbers have been steadily growing. There are 400-500 students in a school and 20 - 30 per class. Students do not wear uniforms at schools. It is usual to change shoes to slippers when entering school.

Schedule

School schedules start at 8 a.m. and finish at around 2 p.m. The average weekly school curriculum (gymnázium) is as follows: Slovak language and literature - 3 lessons, German or other languages - 3 lessons, English - 3 lessons, History - 2 lessons, Geography - 2 lessons, Physics - 3 lessons, Math - 4 lessons, Chemistry - 3 lessons, Biology - 3 lessons, Physical Education - 2 lessons

Classification

Students' knowledge is tested by oral and written exams, which are classified on a scale of 1 to 5. The students can receive also a written evaluation, which replaces or supplements the marks.

- 1 = Outstanding
- 2 = Very Good
- 3 = Good
- 4 = Poor
- 5 = Failing

Parents are informed constantly about their children's study results through the "Pupil's Record Book" and at regular meetings when they are also forewarned about possible failures or more serious disciplinary problems. At the end of the semester and at the end of the school year students receive report cards/certificates.

Schools the AFS students attend

- The AFS program
The AFS SVK Academic Program is designed to provide students with a wonderful opportunity to live with a Slovak host family, be part of a Slovak community and attend a Slovak secondary school. Along with this opportunity responsibility comes. **You should understand that this is an academic program and even if you have "already graduated" or are not depending on credits from this year to count towards your graduation in your home country, you have to attend the school lessons regularly and make an effort to perform well. Schools also expect that the students they agree to host are coming on this program to study and to become full members of their school community. Most schools are hoping that the Slovak students in the school will learn as much as you through their interaction on a daily basis in classes, in school clubs and activities. You are expected to attend school on a regular basis, to complete all work assigned both in and outside class and show continuous effort throughout the year,**

working to your fullest potential. Be aware that you are representative of your country and AFS and your behaviour will be judged by the school community as a representative of other AFS students and people from your country.

- Your school

The AFS students are mostly placed at secondary schools of very good academic standing (gymnázium). Where appropriate, students can be also placed in other types of secondary schools, for example business schools, that are similar to the previous academic institution of the student. The schools may be either state or private. Most of the students are placed at state schools, which is the most common way for Slovak students too.

- Attendance and schedule

School attendance is compulsory. If absent, the student must inform the teacher within a day (usually a written letter explaining the absence from the parents) and AFS Slovakia hosting coordinator. Some schools use a security card that allows you to enter and leave school. The arrival time then automatically appears in the school record, which your host family can attend and check. Some schools lock the main entrance, hence if you are late you have to wait until somebody lets you in and the missed class is marked as unattended. This will be monitored by class teacher, host family and coordinator.

- Classification

AFS students are usually not graded but verbally evaluated. They do not receive the same certificate as the Slovak students. However, they can receive a certificate of school attendance and some schools will give them assignments to work out either in Slovak or English. The first few months will be probably difficult whilst you are learning Slovak but you will no doubt find that school is a perfect environment for learning about our culture and our people. It is there where you make most of your friends.

- School expenses

Things that will be arranged at no extra cost to you are:

- Transportation to and from school - the train, tram or public bus

The AFS student must pay for:

- School fees if necessary (in private schools)
- School textbooks
- School supplies (as pencils, copy-books)
- School trips – schools usually organize a one-week mountain trip during winter and sometimes day trips during the summer. These trips are not compulsory. However, it provides a great opportunity to meet with the students and teachers informally.

- Extracurricular activities

Not all schools offer these activities. They may have some special interest clubs (computer, drama, sports). AFS students as well as the Slovak students mostly join sports clubs or



pursue other types of out-of-school activities (e.g. dance classes, pottery, choir) organized by various youth or other organizations. Most of the Slovak students have one or two extra-curricular activities they attend regularly one or twice a week. Some of these classes must be paid for. School and these courses are places where the teenagers develop friendships with each other.

- Teachers and students

The teachers are always treated with respect, there is quite a social distance between a teacher and student, the teacher is perceived as an authority. The school has a strict order which is necessary to follow. If not, you can be expelled. The lessons are mainly theoretical, not very interactive or practical and the teachers are very demanding. The Slovak students always use part of the afternoon for doing homework or studying for the exams. The exams are done throughout the whole school year, depending on teacher's decision. Slovak students are not very open at first: some of them are shy about speaking English, and some of them have just a small group of schoolmates they speak with. Try to approach them actively, invite them to go out with you, show them your interests and you will find friends that will be interested in joining you and you will discover how friendly, enthusiastic can the Slovaks be.

Before leaving...

Program schedule

AFS Slovakia will prepare some obligatory activities for you, the purpose of which is to help you with the new cultural background you will encounter. These activities, called Orientation, will give you the chance to meet all the other AFS students staying in the Slovak Republic. The Orientations will be held in English and Slovak.

Orientations

Upon arrival to the Slovak Republic you will take part in the Survival Orientation for two days. Please do remember to bring all necessities with you for these days (slippers, etc.). During this Orientation Camp you will receive much information about Slovakia, everyday life, school, shops, and transport and also some hints about how to behave properly. At the end of this camp your host family meets you and takes you to your new home. It may happen that during the orientation there might be no mobile phone coverage or access to phone line. Please, inform your natural parents about that and be prepared for that.

Cultural Orientation takes place 6 weeks after your arrival. It offers you time to speak about the first cultural differences and similarities you have met, problems you have and ways to deal with them.

A Mid-stay Orientation is usually planned around Christmas time or mid-January. The End-of-stay evaluation is usually organized at the beginning of February (for Semester Program) and June (for Year Program).



Activities organised by volunteers

AFS Slovakia offers lots of activities organized by volunteers, such as trip to Bratislava, trip to Vienna, Trip to Budapest, Trip to Prague, picnics, sightseeing, ski trips, typical Slovak barbecues, rafting etc.) This is optional and if you want to participate, you have to pay for the journey and cover the necessary expenses yourself.



How to prepare for your stay

- Language

Students will be provided with some materials before their arrival. Please, start studying Slovak language soon! Go through the materials you will receive and try to learn the basics. It is good to check the web sites listed at the beginning of this manual.

Learning Slovak very fast is the key to a rewarding experience. It will help you a lot once you arrive. To say few basic words in Slovak will make a very good impression on the family and also at school! Once you come to the Slovak Republic, you will receive another study book – geography and history, which you can use during the whole stay. Don't hesitate to ask your host family for help when you need it! They will be very glad that you are interested in our language and that you are making an effort to learn. It is the first and most important thing the people around will consider that you try to be really part of the Slovak community. For non-English speakers we also strongly recommend learning English before departure to be sure you can communicate with the people around. AFS Slovakia will most likely arrange an additional language course, that will be help online or in respective city. You need to contribute paying 1 Euro and the rest we will cover.

- Information about your home country

As you will be asked to provide information about your home country, your town, your home, parents, friends, and school. You should be prepared to speak about the standard of living in your country, history, geography, political system, etc. Your family, school, and friends will greatly appreciate it as it will broaden their knowledge and enhance intercultural learning. Also bringing along some little souvenirs from your country/state as gifts for your host family and people you meet during your stay is a good idea. It may happen that not only your host family and friends will ask you about your home country, but that you will have the opportunity to do school presentations also for other students.

- Information about Slovak culture

Try to learn as much as you can also about the Slovak Republic. There are many Internet pages where you can find interesting information about Slovakia and local culture. Try to find some similarities or differences with your own culture, identify things that you are looking for or which may be difficult for you.

<https://slovakia.travel/en>

<http://www.slovak-republic.org>

<http://slovake.eu/en/>

<http://www.slovakiasite.com/>

<https://spectator.sme.sk/>

- Contact your host family

Write to your host family as soon as you can. Don't be shy. They will be very anxious to learn about you. Your parents could also write to your host

family. If you were about to receive a teenager from another country, you know how much it would mean to get a letter from the parents saying "Thank you" and "We trust you". If English is a problem a short note or translation would be fine.

- Find out about AFS

This will also help you. Get to know AFS in your own country as we share the same ideals everywhere, the only difference is that each country has its own unique customs.

- Health

So far, no specific vaccination certificates have been required - but if you suffer from a chronic disease or allergy, or **if you use a particular medicine, we suggest you to bring enough for the entire period of your stay if possible.** It is rather difficult to have them sent afterwards, and some medicines might be rather difficult to obtain in the Slovak Republic. AFS provides medical insurance which is valid for the whole world – the AFS office at your home country should give your parents details about the insurance. When you need to go to the doctor here, the usual procedure is that you pay smaller amounts with your own money directly and then you send the tax certificate and medical claim to the Slovak AFS office and we give you the money back. If the medical examination is more expensive, you (or your family) ask the doctor to write an invoice to the AFS office.



- Pocket money

Credit cards are the easiest to use. You can find cash machines almost everywhere (except small villages) and they accept all types of credit cards (Visa, Visa Electron, Master card, American Express, Dinner's club) There is also a possibility to open a new Slovak bank account with a support of your host family. You can also have your allowance in travel checks (e.g. American Express) which are easy to cash all over the world. **Do not take any personal checks - it takes a very long time to cash them.** You will need approximately 1200 USD for the Year Program and 600 USD for the Semester Program. We advise you to have some small cash with you in case you want to buy something during your journey. Upon arrival you can change it into Slovak currency - EUR. Here you have some price examples:

- Lunch in a restaurant	5 – 10 EUR
- Orange Juice (1 liter)	1 – 2 EUR
- Coca-Cola (0,5 liter)	1 – 2 EUR
- Cinema	3 - 7 EUR
- City bus/tram	0,3 - 1 EUR
- Brand Jeans	50 – 100 EUR

- Calling home

We advise you to use skype to call your home country. Be aware that even though modern means of communication allow you to call or write whenever you want for free, it is always good to know what the host family sees as normal behaviour. **It could be a problem when the host parents**

have a feeling you speak with your parents more than with them and could feel abused and not accepted – they offer you your home and they expect you to become part of their family during your stay.



- Clothes
Be well prepared for the winter time. The temperature can be often below zero. There are always heaters at home, school, and in public transport. However, when you are outside it is necessary to have warm boots, a warm waterproof jacket, warm sweater, mittens, socks and winter coat. Good clothes are expensive here and to have them sent from your home country costs a lot of money. During summer you will need some light clothes, the temperature can be around 30 degrees. You will need also slippers for home and school. Also, you should bring a nice dress or suit for special occasions (Christmas, theatre, balls etc.) and shoes to match.
- Electricity
If you take any electric appliances, be sure they can be used over here (220 V/ 50 Hz and plugs have different shape from Asian or American standard)



Conclusion

The value of your experience in the Slovak Republic will depend upon you. Here there is some important advice which will help you get the most out of your time here! It will be very important to come with an open mind and willingness to learn about our country and our culture.

You should always remember that you have come to the Slovak Republic to learn. While you are here, be sure to listen and observe carefully everything that is going on around you. Make an effort not to judge the people too quickly and don't be afraid to ask questions about what you see and hear!

Remember that the AFS experience is not an easy one. Much work will be demanded of you. As in all experiences, there will be good moments and bad moments, ups and downs, during your AFS stay in the Slovak Republic.

It will be very important for you to openly communicate about how you feel and what you think with your host family and to your new friends. We talk a lot and discuss negative and positive things equally. By communication you will reach deeper levels of understanding and affection with them, and you will avoid possible misunderstandings. Do not forget to maintain a sense of humour. You

will be in a new culture and you are going to make mistakes. If you are able to laugh at yourself, it is always better!

Remember, your attitude will be the key to your AFS experience. We sincerely hope that you come to us with the desire to learn, an enthusiasm to try new things, and an openness to communicate.

If you need more information about anything connected with the Program in the Slovak Republic, please, contact national AFS office in your country or write directly to:

Our address:
AFS Intercultura Slovakia, o. z.
Vinohradnícka 40
94901 Nitra
Slovak Republic
Phones:
National Director, Sending Coordinator (421) 948 676 766
Hosting and School Coordinator (421) 948 676 566
Organization Development Coordinator (421) 948 676 966



www.slovakia.afs.org



[afs.interculturaslovakia](https://www.facebook.com/afs.interculturaslovakia)



[afsinterculturaslovakia](https://www.instagram.com/afsinterculturaslovakia)

We believe your stay in our country, however challenging it may be, will bring you a lifelong, unforgettable and rewarding experience and we are looking forward to meeting you and having you with us in our country. The Slovak AFS community will be happy to share your experience and learn from you.

Basic survival vocabulary

Pomóc!	Help!
Nerozumiem.	I don't understand.
Hovoríte po anglicky?	Do you speak English?
Áno	Yes
Nie	No
Dobrý deň (formal expression)	Good afternoon
Čau, Ahoj	Hi, Hello
Dovidenia	Goodbye
Dobrá noc	Good night
Volám sa ...	My name is ...
Som z Ameriky.	I come from America.
Prosím si niečo na pitie.	I'd like to drink something.
Som smädný.	I am thirsty.
Som hladný.	I am hungry.
Ďakujem	Thank you
Prosím	Please
Prepáčte	Excuse me
Koľko to stojí?	How much is it?

Koľko je hodín?
Kde budem spať?
Tu
Tam
Je horúco.
Je zima.
Kde je toaleta?

What time is it?
Where shall I sleep?
Here
There
It is hot.
It is cold.
Where is the toilet?

Dear student, Slovak is not as difficult as it seems. Keep in mind that the first syllable always bears the stress. A line above a vowel lengthens it. Each syllable is pronounced clearly, it is not swallowed as in English. It's a challenge; however, we are sure you'll manage it.

Good luck!