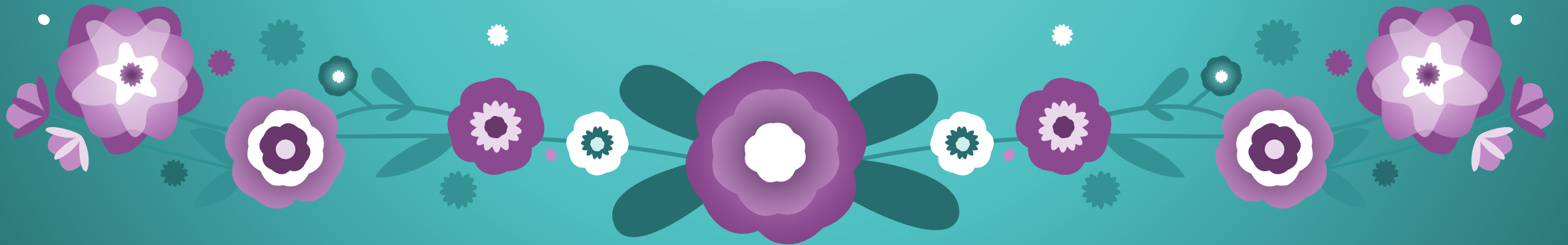


# Slovakia

Our beautiful country



# History

- Slovakia was always affiliated to some country since 28.10.1918 when Slovakia became part of Czecho-Slovakia. Credit of creation had Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik.
- 23.7.1939 Slovak State became Slovak Republic. This country later accenpted 27 states.
- 11.7.1960 was accepted new costitution which caused that socialism prevailed.
- 1.1.1993 began new Slovak Republic and the first president of this country was Michal Kováč.

# Slovak nature

- Slovak nature is not only picturesque but it is also rich in unusual finds and rarities. With their dimensions, the Tatras is the smallest mountain range in the world with an exceptional concentration of wonders set in deep valleys and sky scraping rocky peaks. It is also interesting to observe the regeneration of kilometres of forest after the strong wind storm of 2004. The Slovak Karst National Park is the largest karst area in Central Europe. Ochtinská aragonite cave is the only cave of its kind in Europe. Together with other caves in the Slovak Karst, it is entered in the UNESCO World Heritage List.



- More than 40% of the area is covered with forest, which makes Slovakia one of the most forested countries in Europe. And they hide secrets. In Kysuce, we can find the world famous, unique stone spheres and an oil spring, in Dobročský primeval forest we can find ancient trees in a 400-year development cycle, and in Poloniny National Park you can meet bears and wolves as well as one of the last European populations of European bison. Volcanic mountains hide former craters and stone waterfalls, next to Bratislava there is a paleontological dig of prehistoric fossils in the Sandberg sandstone formations.





In Kysuce village **Korňa**, you will not find any oil tycoons who would become rich thanks to „**black gold**“. However, you can find there the unique oil spring, which is the **only preserved spring among similar smaller oil surface outflows in the central Europe**.



Castle park in Bojnice prouids with Lime Tree of King Matej, one the **oldest trees** in all Slovakia. It had a girth of 11 metres and a height of 9 metres with a tree-top of 5 metres when the last measurement was taken.

# Culture

## *Slovak folk:*

- Slovakia is proud of its rich folklore and folk traditions. Each region, city, and municipality has a unique character and folklore – costumes, music, songs, architecture, customs, traditions, dances and dialects. Folklore festivals organised all around Slovakia serve to present the folk customs of individual regions.
- The largest folk festivals in Slovakia are held in the towns of Východná, Myjava, and Detva. Other festivals are more regional in nature, but their quality is usually comparable to that of these three festivals. Generally speaking, there are significant differences among festivals, and each has its own distinctive atmosphere and charm. During the best festivals the whole village, city, or even the whole region follows the festival, and you can feel folklore at every turn.

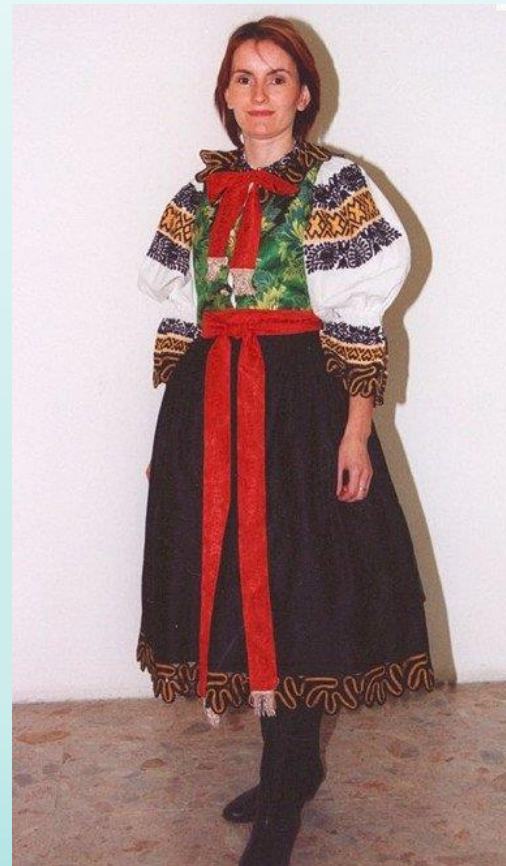
# Folk costumes from west of Slovakia



Čataj



Hlboké



Orešany



Piešťany



# Folk costumes from east of Slovakia



Kojošov



Šariš



Zemplín



Ždiar

# Folk costumes from middle of Slovakia



Východná



Terchová



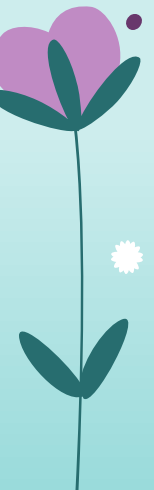
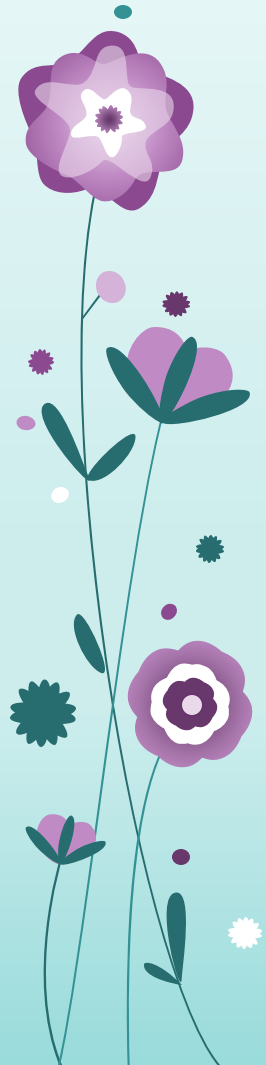
Tekov



Šumiac

# Customs and traditions

- Folk customs and traditions long affected the life of our predecessors. The birth of these customs is usually rooted in fear of the unknown, an inability to explain natural events, as well as an attempt to achieve happiness, health or beauty. These uncertainties were the origin of many superstitions, myths and legends. Most customs were related to birth and death.
- Many of the customs have survived to the present day. For example, the carrying of Morena (in the form of a straw effigy dressed in woman's clothing) symbolises the end of winter and the arrival of spring. Young girls carried Morena to a local stream, undressed it on the bank, set it on fire and threw it in a stream.





- The most important Christian holiday of the year is **Easter**. The Easter holiday is celebrated differently in individual regions.
- Special customs are linked to each day of Easter week.
- On Holy Thursday it was recommended to awake early and bathe in the dew. It was said to be the best way to keep good health during the whole year.
- On Good Friday, people were during forbidden from eating meat or meat products
- .On Easter Sunday food is consecrated in churches and can be consumed again after the long period of fasting. Young girls decorate Easter eggs for young boys on Monday. Easter Monday is traditionally connected with "šibačka" (whipping) and "polievačka" (water pouring) – young boys go from door to door, pour girls with water, and gently whip them with a birch rod. In return, they receive painted Easter eggs and coloured ribbons on their rods from the young girls.

May was traditionally called the month of love.

In this period, a maypole tree was the most important of all plants.

The maypole was usually a spruce without bark, whose top the boys had decorated with coloured ribbon.

On Mayday, people still erect maypoles, usually

on the square or in the middle of the village.

In the past young boys erected maypoles for young girls whom they wished to court, or all young boys erected a maypole in honour of all young girls in the village.



December 13th is **St. Lucy's Day**, who was a witch according to folk superstitions.

People believed that they could see witches on this day. St. Lucy's Day is particularly associated with prophecies about love.

Girls would write a different male name on each of twelve slips of paper, with the thirteenth slip being left blank and folded.

They burned one each day. On the Christmas Eve morning they burned the second to last slip, and in the evening opened the last one.

The name on this slip of paper was believed to be the name of the man whom the girl would marry.

If the piece of paper was blank, it was assumed that the girl would not marry in the next year.



# Christmas

- Although it is a Christian holiday, Christmas is celebrated not only by Christians, but by nearly all families. Christmas is most beloved by children, who look forward to it all year.
- People clean their households, bake honey cakes, and decorate their homes long before the holiday. Children especially look forward to the Christmas tree decorated with sweets



- Christmas dinner is composed of Christmas wafers with honey and nuts or garlic, so that those eating it would be healthy all year. An apple is then picked and cut open – when the seeds form a regular five-pointed star it means good health

The menu differs depending on the region.

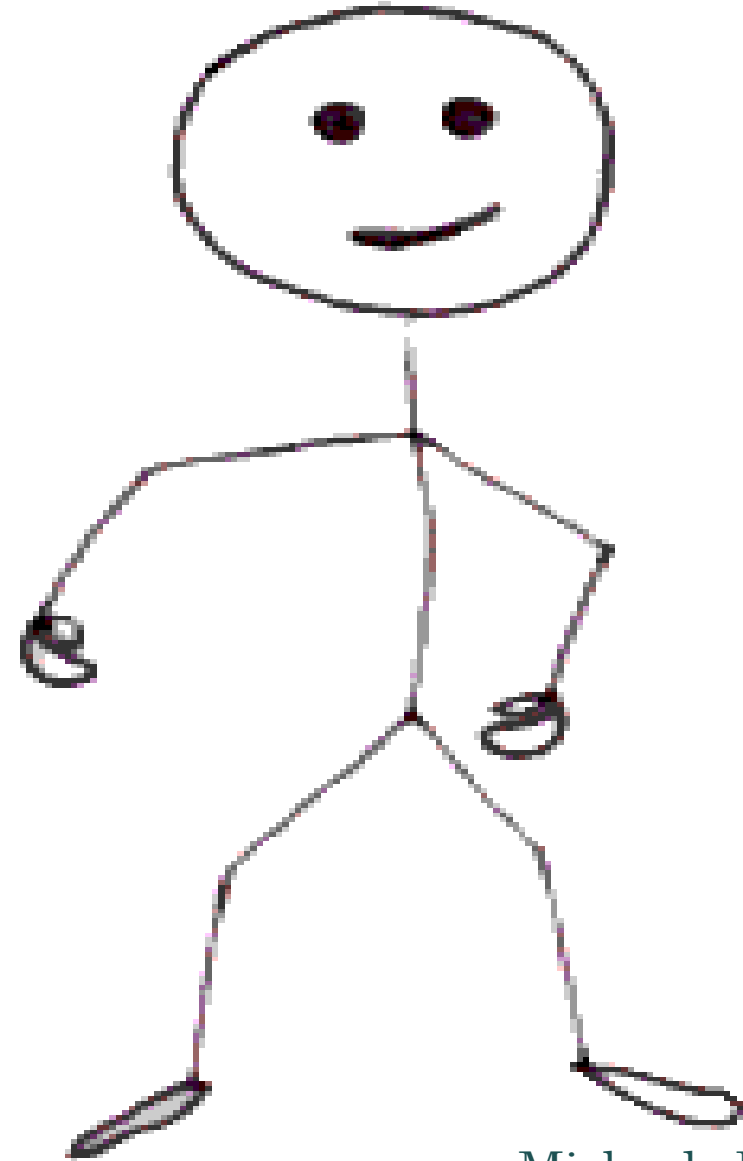
Cabbage or pea soup is usually served, followed by fish and potato salad.

- After dinner the family unwraps the gifts under the tree, carols are sung, or Christmas tales are watched on television.





This is  
my  
thank you  
dance!



Michaela Bartošová

