



 **KOŠICE REGION**
full of inspiration

 **VIA REGIA plus**

 **CENTRAL EUROPE**
EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS

 **EUROPEAN UNION**
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

THE SIXTH SENSE OF THE KOŠICE REGION



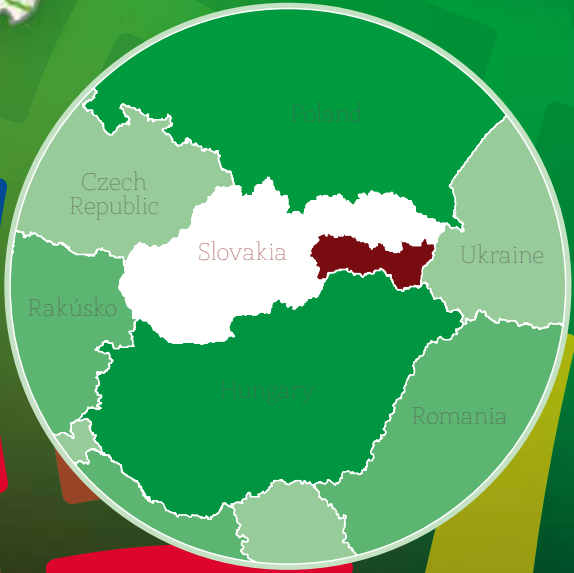
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Košice Region

Area

6 755 km²

Population

780 000 (2010)

Cities and Communities

17 / 440

Capital city of Region

Košice, European Capital of Culture 2013





PICTURE

We take in the most information with our eyes.

And the eye is said to be a window to the soul. How do we see our region? Nature has created a wonderful colour picture for us. The massive Ore Mountains ridge with the Volovské Hills and the Slovakian Karst drop into the green lowlands around Košice. Our view rests for a while on the protective wall of the Slanské Hills, and beyond them stretch the East Slovakian Lowlands. All the way to the strip of Vihorlat Hills near the border with Ukraine. To the west, the forests of Spiš and Gemer ripple like a sea of green waves. Down in the valleys squat ancient mining villages, hammerworks. To the east, spring green changes rapidly into the summer gold of spreading cornfields. The blue disc of Šírava is like a crown above Zemplín, lording it over the fertile countryside. Shining out in the middle of the region are the church spires of Košice, with the ring of Abov villages all around.

The picture which people have created is equally interesting. Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance, art nouveau and functionalism alternate as our view passes over castles, stately homes, manor houses, churches and chapels, merchants' town-houses, and theatres. Europeans were familiar with this region long ago. Important trade routes led through it all over the Old Continent, and the people here kept pace with the times.





SOUND

When music plays, people's hearts are merrier.

The harmonica, that little pocket orchestra, used to be played by every young lad, and women were not ashamed to try it either. When young people got together of an evening, songs could be heard all over the region.

But sound is not only songs. You can hear the sound of an axe and chisel, carving out the image of a saint, or a girl, from a lime-tree stump. There's the gentle tapping of bobbins, leaving behind then a cobweb of lace, or the knock and thump of the loom, as the weaver slides the shuttle and pulls the crossbar to herself. The ear also catches the rasp of the spoke-shave used by the shingle-maker to shape a piece of wood. The potter's wheel bears the slap of a lump of moist clay, and hands begin to draw it up into the neck of a newly-forming jug.

We must also mention another sound, one which is able to caress as well as hurt. Words. In the standard language, in dialect or a minority tongue. In folk tales through to research papers. We understand each other in this region even when others do not and wave a hand as if to say: oh, those Easterners...





FRAGRANCE

IO

A spring meadow - now there's a fragrance!

Wild thyme with St. John's wort, sweet balm, rosemary and mint. An avenue of limes by a village church, and lilac at every gate. Summer has the fragrance of mown hay, autumn the aroma of over-ripe straw. Winter constricts the nose, but when we get the scent of cinnamon, vanilla and cloves in Christmas mead, we know we're home again.

The smell of the oak woods around Košice is one thing, the spruce forests of Spiš another, and the smell of the wetlands between the Latorica and the Tisa is something else entirely. Maybe caves can be told apart by their odours. Of the twelve caves that are open to the public in Slovakia, five are in our region, each one with something unique about it.

Whoever bends their head and enters under the low lintel must breathe in the incense which is every pore of an ancient wooden church. The reek of fire and hot metal can still be sensed in the Sugov hammer-works. It's not every nose that can distinguish the historical libraries in Jasov Monastery and Betliar House. In winter the smoke from village chimneys sinks groundwards, stinging our eyes - rather different from the fragrant kind from the smoking huts that promises tasty sausages and bacon.





TASTE

Close your eyes and open your mouth.

What can you taste in the first mouthful? Stuffed cabbage leaves from Zemplín, sheep-curd stuffed pasties from Spiš, smoked-pork dumplings from Gemer, or pork scratchings from Abov with fresh-baked bread. Fish baked on the banks of the Latorica, or Christmas carp from the Perín, Hrhov or Senné fishpools. Guests are glad to come for some good food and good wine. Tasting Tokay in a cellar hand-carved out of volcanic tuff, followed by delicacies prepared by local housewives - pure pleasure! The fertile East Slovakian Lowlands give the people who farm them foodstuffs aplenty. Other tastes are on offer in the valleys of Spiš and Gemer. The sheep here still always provide the best of milk from the hillside pastures. Curds and whey and cheese from the sheep-fold are delicious. And a tot of local spirits will warm your innards too.

No matter how hard life is, our guests never sit down to an empty table. Easterners have hospitality in their blood.





TOUCH

Road junction.

Amber, iron, Gothic, salt, post, wine - all sorts of roads pass through this region. They have brought merchants here, craftsmen, teachers and students, priests, artists and tramps likewise, people who just stopped for a while, others who remained here for good. Each one has brought something with them from their homeland, and added it to the local qualities.

In the Middle Ages Košice was the second most important city in Greater Hungary after Budin. It was the first town in Europe to acquire its own coat of arms. St. Elizabeth's Cathedral is the easternmost built in Gothic style. This is where western culture shakes hands with the eastern. People of various faiths and ethnicities live side by side here in harmony and mutual respect. They are in everyday contact throughout their lives, and their lives are mutually enhanced. Tolerance is a principle which works, here in the east.

People have their roots here, and their trees of life put out new branches and bear new fruit. Past and future touch right here in the present.





INSPIRATION

This region is full of inspiration.

It has something in it which is hard to put a name to. Something beyond the picture, sound, fragrance, taste and touch. Something which remains in people's hearts and souls. Our region is both woman and man, veteran and child. It uses all the senses nature has given it. And it has that sixth one as well, that's hard to define. Something that cannot be grasped. Genius loci – the spirit of the place. Genius regionis – the spirit of the region. Genius populi – the spirit of the people, or society. Their unity represents the heritage of generations of our ancestors. This is what makes our region inimitable and precious, unique and rich. Tolerance, respect for freedom of thought, creed, culture, ethnicity, mutual respect, and ability to communicate. The joy of youth, the humility of old age.

For many people in the world, or in Europe, or even in Slovakia, this region remains unknown. We would like as many people as possible to get to know it, because it is interesting and inspirational. For this very reason we have set up the Terra Incognita – Undiscovered Country programme, which is part of the Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013 project. The gateway to our region is open, its secrets await discovery and its people look forward to welcoming you.

If you glance at the map, the Košice region looks like a butterfly. Its left wing is made up of Spiš and Gemer, the right wing is Zemplín, and in the middle is the heart of Abov. Accept our invitation, fly over the meadows and valleys, the towns and villages, and look into the hearts of our people.



Points of interest in the region.

- The first coat of arms for a town in Europe was granted by King Ludovicus the Great in 1369, when he issued an armorial warrant for Košice.
- The oldest guild document in Slovakia and in the former Greater Hungary consists of the Articles of the Košice Furriers' Guild, dated 1307.
- The international Košice Peace Marathon, the oldest marathon race in Europe and the second oldest in the world, has been run since 1924.
- The Cathedral of St. Elizabeth is the easternmost original Gothic cathedral.
- The Košice Golden Treasure, found in 1935 and consisting of 2920 gold coins from the 15th to 17th centuries, is one of the largest treasure-troves in the world.
- The geyser in Herľany, a cold-water geyser, is unique in Europe, and is a protected natural feature.



- The Slovakian Karst is the most extensive karst area in Central Europe. Due to its wealth of karst features and unusual species of flora and fauna, UNESCO has included it in its network of international biosphere reservations.
- The Silica Plateau is the most extensive plateau in the Slovakian Karst. It has an area of around 150 km², and it extends over the territories of two states, Slovakia and Hungary.
- Of the twelve publicly-accessible caves in Slovakia, five are in the Košice region: Domica, Gombasek, Ochtiná Aragonite, Jasov and Dobšiná Ice Cave.
- There are only three publicly-accessible aragonite caves in the world, and one of them is Ochtiná Aragonite Cave.
- The first electrically-lit cave in the world was Dobšiná Ice Cave in 1887.
- Gombasek Cave was the first in Slovakia to be used for speleotherapy. Jasov Cave is also used in a similar way. This was the first cave to be made accessible in Slovakia, by the Premonstratensian monks from the nearby monastery. Nineteen species of bat hibernate here.
- Silica Ice Cave is the lowest in height above sea-level of all ice caves in the moderate climatic zone.





- Krásnohorská Cave contains one of the largest stalagmites in the world.
- Zádiel Gorge is a monumental karst canyon, nearly 400 metres deep and 3 km long. In it stands the tallest tower-like rock formation in Slovakia, the "Sugar Loaf" (105 m).
- The lowest geographical point in Slovakia is near Klin nad Bodrogom, at 94 metres above sea-level.
- Košice Zoological Gardens are among the largest in Europe, with an area of 288 hectares.
- Spiš Castle is one of the largest medieval castle complexes in Europe, with a total area of over four hectares. It is registered in UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List.
- One of the best-preserved castles in Gemer is Krásna Hôrka. Another gem nearby is the Renaissance-style Beľiar House with its original interior and rich collection of hunting trophies. It has been awarded the Europa Nostra prize for heritage renovation. The park around the House is included in the list of historical gardens of the world.
- One of the most beautiful Baroque complexes in Slovakia is the Premonstratensian monastery in Jasov. Another beautiful Baroque/neo-Classical country house with an English-style park can be found in Trebišov, and Michalovce boasts its own neo-Classical stately home.



- Among Zemplín's attractions are its traditional wooden churches, which are the westernmost examples of the architecture of Eastern Christianity.
- The 39-inch narrow-gauge Children's Railway in Čermel' Valley near Košice is the only one of its kind in Slovakia. The steam-engine called Katka which runs on it was made in Germany in 1884, and is our oldest operating steam-engine.
- Zemplínska Šírava is the second-largest stretch of water in Slovakia. It has an area of 33 km², maximum length of 11 km, maximum width of 3,5 km, average depth of 9,5 m, and maximum depth of 14 m. This reservoir was created between 1961 – 65.
- Slovakia's tallest church spire is in Spišská Nová Ves, on the Roman Catholic church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It is 87 metres high.
- The town square in the historical centre of Rožňava is literally square, and it is the largest of its kind in Slovakia.
- Onosma tornensis is a precious endemic flower which grows nowhere else in the world other than on Turňa Castle hill.





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Terra Incognita
Krajina nespoznaná

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