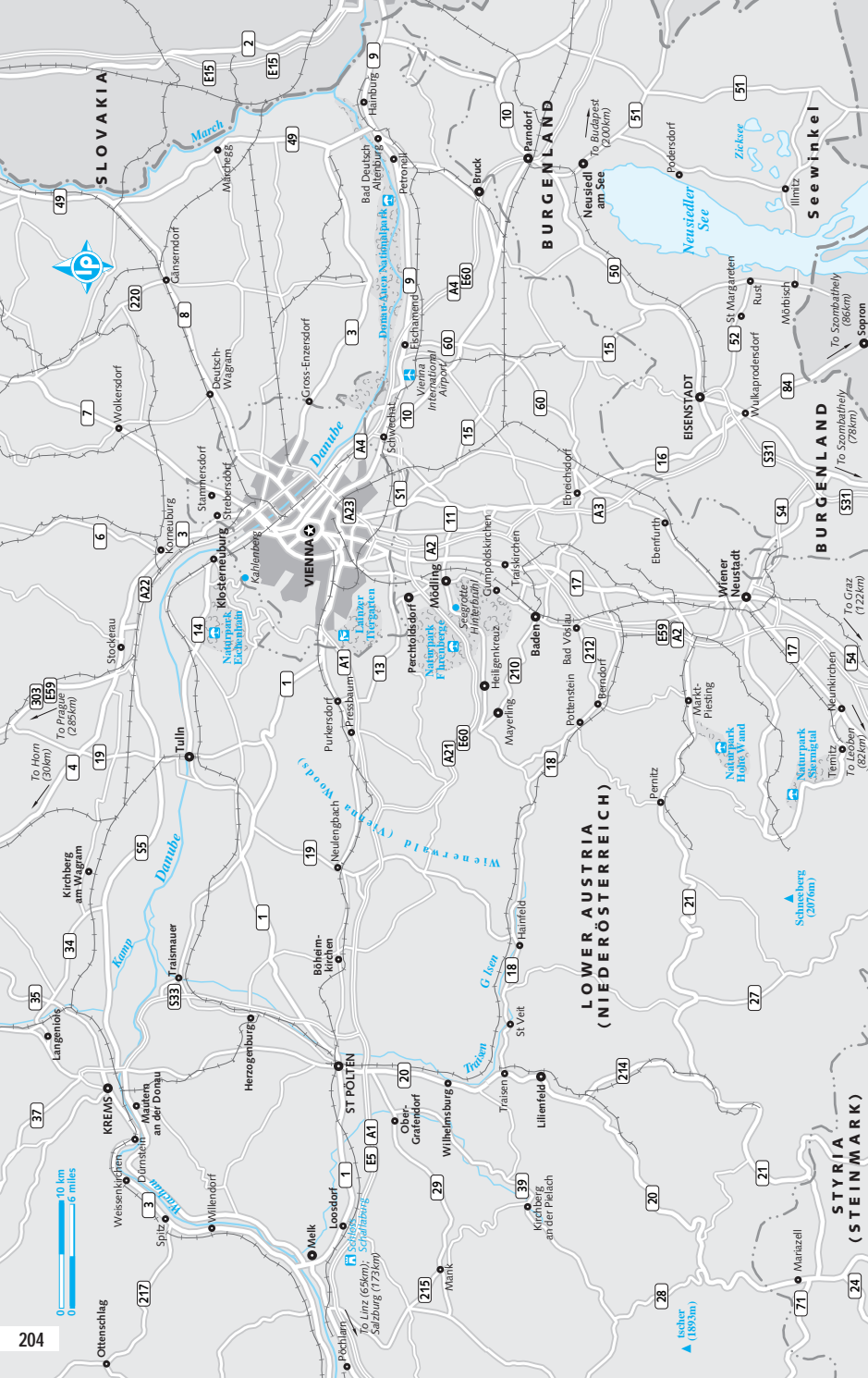


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Excursions ■



Excursions

Vienna is blessed with a bountiful array of day-trip destinations and activities. Nature lovers will enjoy the Wienerwald (Vienna Woods; p210) to the west of the city, which offers a wealth of hiking and cycling opportunities, and to the east the Neusiedler See (p211), a shallow steppe lake with boating and bird watching.

The Danube Valley, (below), to the northwest of Vienna, is dotted with historical towns, such as Krems, Dürnstein and Melk, and lorded over by crumbling castles; a river cruise down the Danube provides a snapshot of it all. It's also a major centre for wine; its hills are covered in vineyards, from which some of the country's best wines are produced. Wine again features heavily in Burgenland, particularly at the lakeside town of Rust (p211).

The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary are all within a two-hours' drive from Vienna. Bratislava (p214), Slovakia's capital, is a bustling Eastern European city with a long history, while Sopron (p214), across the border in Hungary, still retains its medieval heart.

THE DANUBE VALLEY

The Danube Valley, or the *Wachau* as its known locally, is arguably the prettiest stretch along the entire course of the Danube and a Unesco World Heritage Site. Here the dustless highway is bent and twisted between high hills whose slopes are layered with vineyards, and whose peaks are topped with castles.

Highlights are numerous, but rivalling the architecture of Krems, Dürnstein and Melk is the region's wining and dining. Some of the country's finest wines originate along the banks of the Danube, and the seasonal fare, using the freshest ingredients from the valley, attracts gourmands from across Austria.

TRANSPORT – THE DANUBE VALLEY

Distance from Vienna to Krems 64km; to Dürnstein 73km; to Melk 83km

Direction West

Bicycle A bicycle path runs along both sides of the Danube from Vienna to Melk, passing through Krems, Dürnstein, Weissenkirchen and Spitz (these are all on the northern bank). Many hotels and *Pensionen* (guesthouses) are geared towards cyclists, and most towns will have at least one bike-rental shop. For more information, pick up a copy of *Donaudröselweg – Von Passau bis Bratislava*, which provides details of distances, hotels and information offices along the route. Copies are available in tourist offices in the Wachau (and also Tulln); the text is in German only. Bicycles can also be taken on trains to and from Vienna.

Boat From mid-May to mid-September DDSG Blue Danube (p219) runs a Sunday service (8.35am from Vienna, 4.40pm from Dürnstein; one-way/return €19.50/26, 5¾ hours) between Vienna and Dürnstein, stopping at Krems (1.55pm, returning 5pm).

A number of boat companies, including DDSG Blue Danube, operate boats from Krems to Melk, stopping in at Dürnstein and Spitz, from April to October. Boats leave Krems at 10.15am all season, and from late April to September two extra sailings cater to the added demand, departing at 1pm and 3.45pm. Return sailings are at 1.50pm the whole season, and 11am and 4.25pm from late April to September (one-way/return €16.50/22, three hours).

Bikes can be taken on board all sailings free of charge.

Car For Krems and Dürnstein take the A22 north out of Vienna towards Stockerau, then the S5 west to Krems. From Krems, the Bundesbahn 3 continues west and passes through Dürnstein, Weissenkirchen and Spitz. Melk is best reached by the A1 autobahn which connects Vienna with Salzburg; access the A1 from Penzing.

Train Over 20 direct trains every day travel between Franz-Josefs-Bahnhof and Krems (one hour). Only one train daily (7.35am) connects Dürnstein (the station is called Dürnstein-Oberloiben) with Franz-Josefs-Bahnhof; normally a change at Krems is required (13 daily, 1¼ hours).

At least 14 direct trains from Vienna's Westbahnhof (1¼ hours) travel to Melk daily. It's also possible to take a train to St Pölten, and change there.

A leisurely way to see the Danube Valley is by boat (p205). Cruising down the Danube with a glass of Riesling in one hand and a camera in the other can be the highlight of a trip to Vienna. From the capital it is easily organised; DDSG Blue Danube (p219) and the Österreichische Bundesbahn (ÖBB; Austrian Federal Railway; p222) offer a combined train–boat–train ticket (adult/child €39.80/20.70) for one-way train connections to Krems and Melk, and the boat trip in between the two. Tickets can be purchased at any train station or from the DDSG Blue Danube office. Sporty types may opt to tour the valley by bike (see p205).

Tourismusregion Wachau-Nibelungengau (% 02713-300 60 60; www.wachau.at; Schlossgasse 3, Spitz an der Donau; h 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–noon & 1–7pm Sat) is the central tourist office and stocks brochures covering the entire region.

KREMS

Krems is one of the larger towns in the Wachau region and has a historical core dating back over 1000 years. It's on the northern bank of the Danube, surrounded by terraced vineyards, and has been a centre of the wine trade for most of its history.

The town is comprised of three parts: Krems to the east, the smaller settlement of Stein 2km to the west, and the connecting suburb of Und – an unusual name that inspires the joke: 'Krems and (und in German) Stein are three towns'. Together, they create an attractive setting with a peaceful air; add to this a huge selection of wines from the region and the result is a town well worth spending some hours exploring. The Krems Tourismus in Kloster Und supplies visitors with a map pinpointing all the architectural and cultural attractions around town, but it's just as rewarding to simply wander the cobbled streets, quiet courtyards and ancient city.

Krems has several churches and museums worth diving into. The Pfarrkirche St Veit on the hill at Pfarrplatz is baroque in style, with frescoes by Martin Johann Schmidt, an 18th-century local artist who used the pseudonym Kremser Schmidt. Piaristenkirche, up behind St Veit's on Frauenbergplatz, has Gothic vaulting, huge windows and baroque altars. The

Weinstadt Museum, housed in a former Dominican monastery, contains collections of religious and modern art, (including works by Schmidt) and wine-making artefacts. East of the main centre is the Karikaturmuseum (Caricature Museum); it holds the largest collection of cartoons by Manfred Deix, a legendary Austrian cartoonist with an eye for the absurd and a knack for sharp social commentary. The town's arts centre, the Kunsthalle, is also located here.

Much of Krems' economic strength comes from its wine culture, and many shops offer wine tastings; both Kloster Und and Weingut der Stadt Krems have wines to sample and buy.



Statue and fresco at Piaristenkirche, Krems (opposite page)

Sights & Information

Krems Tourismus (% 02732-826 76; www.tiscover.com/krems; Undstrasse 6; h 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 11am–5pm Sat, 11am–4pm Sun May–Oct, 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri Nov–Apr)

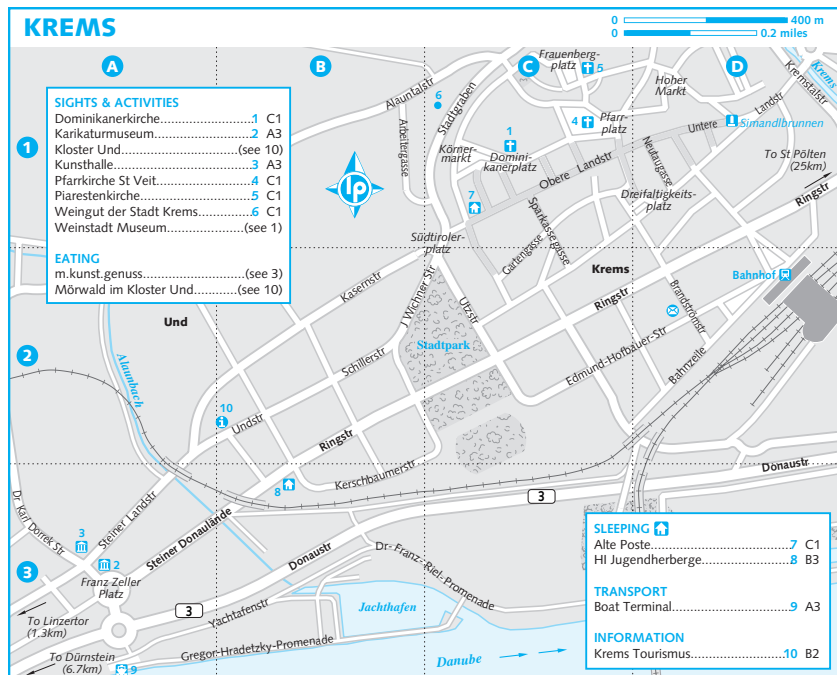
Weinstadt Museum (% 02732-801 567; Körnermarkt 14; adult/child €4/3; h 9am–6pm Tue, 1–6pm Wed–Sun Mar–Nov)

Karikaturmuseum (% 02732-908 020; www.karikaturmuseum.at in German; Steiner Landstrasse 3a; adult/concession/child €8/7/3.50; h 10am–6pm)

Kloster Und (% 02732-701 90-0; www.klosterund.at; Undstrasse 6; h 1–7pm Wed–Sun)

Kunsthalle (% 02732-908 010; www.kunsthalle.at; Steiner Landstrasse 3; adult/concession/child €8/7/3.50; h 10am–6pm)

Weingut der Stadt Krems (% 02732-801 441; www.weingutstadtkrems.at; Stadtgraben 11; h 9am–noon & 1–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat)



DETOUR: GOURMET DANUBE

The Danube Valley is well known for its culinary delights and viticulture, both of which heavily follow the seasons. A day spent sampling both can be a very rewarding experience, but for the best quality it pays to be a little picky.

Mörwald im Kloster Und % 02732-704 93; Undstrasse 6; mains €20–30; h noon–2pm, 6–10pm Tue–Sun) in Krems combines a stylish interior with an impressive selection of wine. Its European cuisine is outstanding, and its head chef, Leonard Cernko, was voted 2006 Cook of the Year by Gault Millau. Across the Danube in Mautern, **Landhaus Bacher** (% 02732-829 37; Südtiroler Platz 2; mains €20–30; h 11.30am–2pm & 6.30–9.30pm Wed–Sun) has won numerous awards (including two Michelin stars) for its creative take on staple Austrian dishes, and its summer garden, complete with walnut trees, is a joy in summer.

Weissenkirchen features two top eateries. Family-run **Weingut Jamek** (% 02715-2235; Joching 45, Weissenkirchen; mains €12–23; h 11.30am–4pm Mon–Thu, 11.30am–11pm Fri) is an old-fashioned establishment with a relaxed air, shady garden, and vineyard; its Riesling is one of the more highly rated in the region. Not far from Jamek, **Holzapfels Prandtauerhof** (% 02715-2310; Joching 36, Weissenkirchen; mains €15–25; h 11.30am–10.30pm Wed–Sat, 3–10.30pm Sun) occupies a baroque villa and serves classic Austrian food with a modern twist; its sheltered inner courtyard is often full in summer.

East of Dürnstein, **Brustbauer** and **Loibnerhof** (p209) are further examples of quality dining in the Danube Valley.

Eating

Mörwald im Kloster Und (see box below)

m.kunst.genuss (% 02732-908 010-21; Steiner Landstrasse 3; lunch buffet €7, mains €5–10; h 10am–6pm) Another from the Mörwald family (below), with simple lunch buffet produced with the freshest ingredients and accompanied by selective regional wines. Housed in the Kunsthalle.

Sleeping

Hl Jugendherberge (% 02732-834 52; oejhv.noe.krems@aon.at; Ringstrasse 77; dm €15; h Apr–Oct) Excellent hostel with facilities for cyclists and clean, basic dorm rooms.

Alte Poste (% 02732-822 76; www.altepost-krems.at in German; Obere Landstrasse 32; s/d €42/70) Guesthouse located in a historic 500-year-old house with an enchanting courtyard and cosy rooms.

DÜRNSTEIN

Dürnstein achieved 12th-century notoriety for its imprisonment of King Richard the Lionheart of England. Today, this compact, picturesque village is one of the prime destinations in the Wachau region.

High on the hill, commanding a marvellous view of the curve of the Danube, stand the ruins of Kuenringerburg, where Richard was incarcerated from 1192 to 1193. His crime was insulting Leopold V; his misfortune was being recognised despite his disguise when journeying through Austria on his way home from the crusades. His liberty was achieved only upon the payment of a huge ransom which funded the building of Wiener Neustadt. The hike up from the village takes 15 to 20 minutes.

In the village, Hauptstrasse is a cobbled street with some picturesque 16th-century houses, wrought-iron signs and floral displays. The dominating feature of Dürnstein however is the blue spire of the Chorherrenstift (Abbey church). Inside, its baroque interior effectively combines white stucco and dark wood, and its balcony enjoys a grand view of the Danube.

Travelling west from Dürnstein along the banks of the Danube, the steep hills are densely covered with vineyards. Riesling and Veltliner, two of Austria's top wines, are grown in these parts, and served in traditional *Heurigen* (wine taverns). Six kilometres on from Dürnstein is Weissenkirchen, a peaceful town that hasn't changed much in the last 100 years. Its centrepiece is a fortified parish church rising from a hill, with a labyrinth of covered pathways leading to its front doors. This Gothic church was built in the 15th century and has an impressive baroque altar. Directly below the church is the tiny Wachau Museum, which showcases artists of the Danube School. A further 5km west is Spitz, a village surrounded by vineyards and lined with quiet, cobblestoned streets. Its parish church is noteworthy for its unusual chancel, which is out of line with the main body of the church. Also note the 15th-century statues of the 12 apostles lining the organ loft. Continuing on another 5km towards Melk and Willendorf soon appears, where the 25,000-year-old sandstone statue of Venus was discovered.



Ruins of Kuenringerburg overlooking Dürnstein and the Danube River (this page)

Sights & Information

Chorherrenstift (☎ 02711-375; Stiftshof; adult/child €2.40/1.50; 𠂇 9am-6pm Apr-Oct)

Dürnstein Information Office (☎ 02711-200; Dürnstein Bahnhof; 𠂇 11am-6pm Mon-Sat mid-May-Sep, 1-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Apr-mid-May & 1st half Oct) Located east of town near the train station.

Wachau Museum (☎ 02715-2268; Weissenkirchen 32; adult/child €4/1.10; 𠂇 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct)

Weissenkirchen Parish Church (☎ 02715-2203; Weissenkirchen 3; admission free; 𠂇 8am-7pm Easter-Oct, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Easter)

Eating

Brustbauer (☎ 02732-873 00; Oberloiben 2; mains €8-15; 𠂇 11am-10pm Apr-Oct) Gorgeous garden laden

MELK

Lying in the lee of its imposing monastery-fortress, Melk is arguably the most essential excursion destination from Vienna.

The Stift Melk, perched on a hill, dominates the town and provides an excellent view of the surrounding area. It was once the residence of the Babenberg family, but the Benedictine monks transformed it into a monastery in 1089 and it has stayed that way ever since. Receiving a major overhaul in the 18th century, it's an example of baroque gone mad, with endless prancing angels and gold twirls, but is very impressive nonetheless. The absolute highlights are the library and the mirror room, both of which have an extra tier painted on the ceiling (by Paul Troger) to give the illusion of greater height. The ceilings are also slightly curved to aid the effect. Imperial rooms, where various dignitaries (including Napoleon) stayed, contain museum exhibits. Guided tours (often in English, but phone ahead to be sure) of this Benedictine abbey explain its historical importance and are well worth the extra money.

The countryside surrounding Melk is home to some fine palaces. Schloss Schallaburg, 5km south of Melk, is a 16th-century Renaissance palace with magnificent terracotta arches and prestigious temporary exhibitions. There's also a permanent exhibition of toys through history and a reduced combination ticket with Stift Melk monastery is available. Just under 5km northeast is Schloss Schönbühel, on the southern bank of the Danube, along with a 17th-century Servite monastery (the Servites were a mendicant order of friars), and the ruins of the 12th-century Burg Aggstein.

Sights & Information

Burg Aggstein (admission €2; 𠂇 dawn-dusk)

Melk Tourist Office (☎ 02752-523 07-410; www.tiscover.com/melk in German; Babenbergerstrasse 1; 𠂇 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 5-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 4-6pm Sat & Sun May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Apr & Oct)

Schloss Schallaburg (☎ 02754-6317; www.schallaburg.at; Anzendorf; adult/concession/child €8/7/3.50, combined ticket with Stift Melk €13.60; 𠂇 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, until 6pm Sat)

Schloss Schönbühel (admission free; 𠂇 dawn-dusk)

Stift Melk (☎ 02752-555 232; www.stiftmelk.at; adult/child €7/4.10, with guided tour €8.80/5; 𠂇 9am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Apr & Oct, guided tours only Nov-Mar)

with tables and fruit trees, and with views of the Danube; simple homemade Austrian fare and fine wines.

Loibnerhof (☎ 02732-828 90; Unterloiben 7; mains €11-23; 𠂇 11.30am-9pm Wed-Sun) Large restaurant in a 400-year-old house, and an attractive garden, 1km east of Dürnstein in Unterloiben. The *Butterschnitzel* (a schnitzel of veal or pork, lightly buttered and then fried) is a speciality.

Sleeping

Pension Böhmer (☎ 02711-239; pension.boehmer@onemail.at; Hauptstrasse 22; s/d €30/40) Family-run *Pension* with good rooms and a well-stocked wine shop.

Gasthof Sängler Blondel (☎ 02711-253; www.saengerblondel.at; Klosterplatz; s/d €63/92) Right in the heart of Dürnstein; old fashioned rooms and decent restaurant with garden.

Reservations for tours in English are advisable (call ahead). The last admission is one hour before closing.

Eating

Tom's Restaurant (☎ 02752-524 75; Hauptplatz 1; menus from €25; 𠂇 noon-3pm & 6.30-10pm Thu-Tue) Three- to nine-course set menus showcasing food from the region; overlooks the town's main square.

Sleeping

Stadt Melk (☎ 02752-525 47; www.hotelstadtmelk.com, in German; Hauptplatz 1; s/d from €55/85) Friendly, small and pink *Pension*/hotel above Tom's Restaurant.

Zur Post (☎ 02752-523 45; info@hotelpost-melk.at; Linzer Strasse 1; s/d from €55/88) Family-run four-star hotel with very comfy rooms and bicycles for hire for €10 per day.

DETOUR: WEINVIERTEL & WALDVIERTEL

The Weinviertel (wine quarter), a flat expanse bordering the Czech and Slovak republics to the north and northeast of Vienna, is an agricultural area known for its wines. The Waldviertel (woods quarter), running north from the Danube Valley to the Czech border, is a region of rolling hills and rural villages. Sights are few, but combined they make an excellent escape the madding crowds in Vienna.

Benedictine Stift Altenburg (☎ 02982-3451; www.stift-altenburg.at in German; Stift 1; adult/senior/student/family €7/6/3/14, guided tours extra €1.50; 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm mid-June-Aug; tours 11am, 2pm & 3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) was founded in 1144 but much of the extensive baroque architecture seen today dates from 1650. Close to Altenburg, the Renaissance **Schloss Rosenberg** (☎ 02982-2911; www.rosenburg.at, in German; Rosenberg am Kamp; tours adult/senior/child/family €10/8.50/5/24, extra €2 for falconry & pageantry; 9am-5pm May-Sep (till 6pm weekends), 9.30am-4.30pm Apr & Oct) has splendid falconry shows at 11am and 3pm. About 18km east of Rosenberg, the **Österreichische Motorradmuseum** (Motorbike museum; ☎ 02984-2151; www.motorradmuseum.at in German; Museumgasse 6, Eggenburg; adult/concession/child €5/4/2; 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm weekends mid-Jan-mid-Dec) showcases over 300 immaculately restored bikes, including the Böhmerland 600, the longest bike in the world.

Waldviertel Tourismus (☎ 02822-541 09; www.waldviertel.or.at in German; Sparkassenplatz 4), 50km northwest of Krems in the town of Zwettl, has plenty of information on the region, while it's Weinviertel counterpart, **Weinviertel Tourismus** (☎ 02552-3515; www.weinviertel.at in German & Czech; Kolpingstrasse 7), resides in Poysdorf, 60km due north of Vienna. The best way to explore the regions is under your own steam as many places can only be reached by irregular bus services. Towns served by train include Horn (six trains daily; 1¼ hours) and Rosenberg (six trains daily; 1 hour) from Krems and Eggenburg (15 daily trains; 1¼ hours) from Vienna. Very irregular buses run to Altenburg (7 minutes) from Horn.

WIENERWALD

The Wienerwald, a 1250 sq km forest to the west and southwest of Vienna, attracts Viennese eager to enjoy its peaceful woodlands. Hiking and biking possibilities abound, and in keeping with the Austrian need for order, paths are well marked and start at the city border. Attractive settlements, such as the wine-growing centres of Perchtoldsdorf, Mödling and Gumpoldskirchen, speckle the area. Mayerling would be left off tours to the Wienerwald if it were not for its bloody history. In 1889, Archduke Rudolf, 30-year-old son of Emperor Franz Josef and heir to the throne, died in a mysterious double suicide with his mistress, 17-year-old Baroness Marie Vetsera. The hunting lodge in which the suicide took place was turned into a convent; it still operates today but there's not much to see.

About 6km northeast of Mayerling is Heiligenkreuz, the site of a 12th-century Cistercian Abbey. The abbey is the final resting place of most of the Babenberg dynasty who ruled Austria until 1246. The church and cloister are a combination of Romanesque and Gothic styles and the abbey museum contains models by Giovanni Giuliani, who also created the trinity column in the courtyard.

Between Mödling and Heiligenkreuz is the **Seegrotte Hinterbrühl**, Europe's largest underground lake. The site was used by the Nazis in WWII to build aircraft.

For more on mountain biking in the Wienerwald, and a suggested walk, see p112.

Sights & Information

Cistercian Abbey (☎ 02258-870 3-0; www.stift-heiligenkreuz.at in German; Heiligenkreuz 1; tours adult/child €6.20/3; tours 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Mon-Sat, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Sun)

Seegrotte Hinterbrühl (☎ 02236-263 64; www.seegrotte.at; Grutschgasse 2; tours adult/child €7/4.50; 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9am-noon & 1-3pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3.30pm Sun Nov-Mar)

Wienerwald Tourismus (☎ 02231-621 76; www.wienerwald.info; Hauptplatz 11, Purkersdorf; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

TRANSPORT – WIENERWALD

Distance from Vienna to Heiligenkreuz 27km

Direction Southwest

Bus The Baden-Alland Bundesbus, which runs from Mödling (reached from Südbahnhof) to Alland eight times daily, stops at Heiligenkreuz (27 minutes) and Hinterbrühl (17 minutes).

Car It's best to explore this region by car. Take the A2 south out of Vienna and exit onto the A21 at the Vösendorf junction; the A21 leads directly to Hinterbrühl and Heiligenkreuz (Mayerling is a short drive southwest of Heiligenkreuz).

BURGENLAND NEUSIEDLER SEE

This, the only steppe lake in Central Europe, is not only a popular summer holiday getaway for many Viennese and a top wine-growing region, but it's also a favourite breeding ground for nearly 300 species of birds.

Neusiedler See is a shallow lake (1.8m at its deepest) that has no natural outlet, giving the water a slightly saline quality. It's ringed by a wetland area of reed beds, particularly thick on the western bank, which provides an ideal breeding ground for birds. Bird-watchers flock to the area to catch a glimpse of the multitude of species; the national park Seewinkel, on the east shore, is a grassland interspersed with a myriad of smaller lakes and a popular spot for birds and bird-voyeurs.

Water sports are very popular activities here, with boats and windsurfers for hire at various resorts around the lake. The area's main town is Neusiedl am See, at the lake's northern end, but Podersdorf, 12km southeast of Neusiedl, is the largest centre for water sports on the lake. Cycling is another popular outdoor activity in these parts; a cycle track winds all the way around the reed beds, making it possible to complete a circuit of the lake, but remember to take your passport as the southern section is in Hungary. Pick up a copy of *Radtouren*, a handy map of the lake with cycle paths and distances marked, from any tourist office on the lake.

Much of the western side of Neusiedler is given over to vineyards. Rust, 30km southwest of Neusiedl, has some 60 wine growers nearby. The town's prosperity has been based on wine for centuries; in 1524 the emperor granted local vintners the exclusive right to display the letter 'R' on their wine barrels, and corks today bear the same insignia. From the end of March to late August storks descend on Rust to rear their young. If you stroll around town during this time, you'll see twig-nests perched precariously on chimney tops and, if you're quiet, hear the clicking of expectant beaks. A good vantage point is attained from the tower of the Katholische Kirche on Rathausplatz. The Fischerkirche at the opposite end of Rathausplatz is the oldest church in Rust (12th to 16th centuries) and contains some faded, yet beautiful, frescoes.



Entrance to a wine tavern in Rust (this page)

Sights & Information

Fischerkirche (Rathausplatz, Rust; adult/child €1/0.50; 1 10am-noon, 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-noon, 2-5pm Sun May-Sep, 11am-noon, 2-3pm Mon-Sat, 11am-noon, 2-4pm Sun Apr & Oct)

Katholische Kirche (Haydngasse, Rust; admission €1; 1 summer only)

Nationalpark Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (% 02175-344 20; www.nationalpark-neusiedlersee.org in German; Illmitz; 1 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, Apr-Oct, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar)

Neusiedler See Tourismus (% 02167-86 00; www.neusiedlersee.com; Obere Hauptstrasse 24; 1 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun Jul-Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct)

Rust Tourismus (% 02685-502; www.rust.at in German; Conradplatz 1, Rathaus; 1 9am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Sat May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri Mar, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Sat Apr & Oct, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Thu, 9am-noon Fri Nov-Feb)

Eating

Zur Dankbarkeit (% 02177-22 23; Hauptstrasse 39, Podersdorf; mains €8-21; 1 11.30am-2pm & 5.30-9pm Fri, 11.30am-9pm Sat & Sun) Lovely old guesthouse with regional cooking.

Inamera (% 02685-64 73; Oggauer Strasse 29, Rust; mains €12-25; 1 6-10pm Wed & Thu, 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10pm Fri & Sat, 11.30am-10pm Sun) Upmarket restaurant with fantastic tree-shaded garden and contemporary cuisine.

Sleeping

Alexander (% 02685-301; www.pension-alexander.at, in German; Dorfmeistergasse 21; s/d from €41/60; P) Four-star establishment with garden and sauna.

Seewirt (% 02177-2415; www.seewirtkarner.at; Strandplatz 1, Podersdorf; s/d from €41/82; P) Luxury establishment for the price; next to the ferry terminal on the lake, with well-appointed rooms.

TRANSPORT – NEUSIEDLER SEE

Distance from Vienna to Neusiedl am See 50km

Direction Southeast

Bus Buses run approximately hourly to and from Eisenstadt (30min) for Rust, and then on to Mörbisch (an extra 10min).

Car For Neusiedl and Podersdorf, take the A4 southeast out of Vienna till the Neusiedl am See exit; signposts direct you from there. For Rust and Mörbisch, head south out of Vienna on the A2 and exit onto the A3 at the Guntramtsdorf junction. When the A3 ends, follow the signs to Eisenstadt (east), exit the road at Eisenstadt Süd and continue east, passing through Trausdorf and St Margareten before arriving in Rust.

Ferries During the summer months ferries link Rust with Podersdorf, Podersdorf with Breitenbrunn, and Mörbisch with Illmitz.

Train Neusiedl is the only town on the lake reachable by train. Nine direct trains (40min) leave from Südbahnhof daily.

EISENSTADT

Tourism in Eisenstadt is primarily centred on one factor – the town's association with Josef Haydn.

Haydn revealed that Eisenstadt was 'where I wish to live and to die'. He achieved the former, being a resident for 31 years, but it was in Vienna that he finally tinkled his last tune. He also rather carelessly omitted any directive about his preferred residency after death. His skull was stolen from a temporary grave shortly after he died in 1809, and later became a museum exhibit in Vienna. The headless cadaver was subsequently returned to Eisenstadt (in 1932), but it wasn't until 1954 that the skull joined it.

Haydn's white marble tomb can now be seen in the **Bergkirche**. The church itself is remarkable for the Kalvarienberg, a unique Calvary display; access is via a separate entrance to the rear of the church. Life-sized figures depict the Stations of the Cross in a series of suitably austere, dungeon-like rooms.

You can't miss the baroque, 14th-century **Schloss Esterházy**, which dominates the town. Today, the palace is still owned by the powerful – and rich – Hungarian family Esterházy.

Without a doubt the highlight here is the frescoed **Haydn Hall**, which has the second-best acoustics of any concert hall in Austria (after Vienna's Musikverein). The **International Haydn Festival** (% 02682-618 66; www.haydnfestival.at) is an annual event staged here around the middle of September.

Not far from the palace, Haydn's former residence has been turned into a museum, the **Haydn-Haus**. It contains a few of his personal belongings but really only caters to Haydn fans. Behind the palace is a large, relaxing park, the **Schlosspark**, the setting for the **Fest der 1000 Weine** (Festival of 1000 Wines; % 0664-540 40 68; www.burgenlaendische-weinwoche.at in German) in late August.

Sights & Information

Bergkirche (% 02682-626 38; www.haydnkirche.at in German; Joseph Haydn Platz 1; adult/child €2.50/2; 1 9am-noon & 1-5pm mid-Apr-Oct)

Burgenland Tourismus (% 02682-633 84-29; www.burgenland.info; Schloss Esterházy; 1 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9am-2pm Mon-Fri Nov-Feb, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Mar) Covers the Burgenland province, and has information on the Neusiedler See.

Eisenstadt Tourismus (% 02682-673 90; www.eisenstadt-tourism.at; Schloss Esterházy; 1 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9am-2pm Mon-Fri Nov-Feb, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Mar) Offers maps and tours of the town.

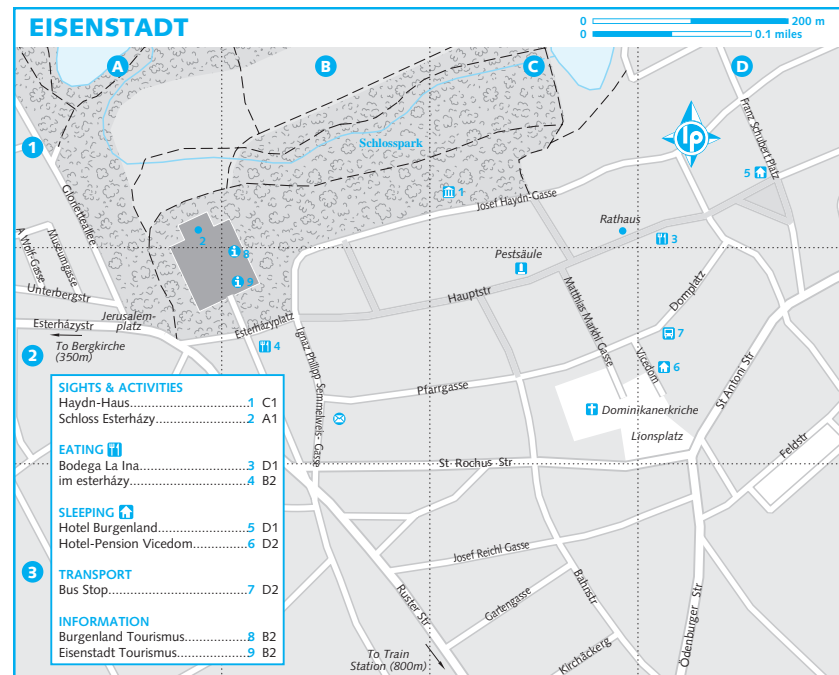
Haydn-Haus (% 02682-719 3900; www.haydnhaus.at; Joseph Haydn-Gasse 19-21; adult/child €4/3; 1 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar)

Schloss Esterházy (% 02682-719 3000; www.schloss-esterhazy.at; Schloss Esterházy; adult/child €7.50/7; tours by appointment) The tour visits 25 rooms, including the Haydn Hall and palace chapel.

Eating

im esterházy (% 02682-628 19; Esterházyplatz; mains €7-16; 1 11.30am-11pm) Opposite the Schloss Esterházy; arched ceilings, natural light, fine service and the likes of pasta with *gambas* (shrimps) and organic beef steak with summer vegetables.

Bodega La Ina (% 02682-623 05; Hauptstrasse 48; mains €8-20; 1 10am-midnight Tue-Sat) Mediterranean and Austrian cuisine accompanied by Burgenland wines and a courtyard setting.



Sleeping

Hotel-Pension Vicedom (‰ 02682-642 22; www.vicedom.at; Vicedom 5; s/d from €30/52) Comfortable Pension/hotel with breakfast buffet and simple, adequate rooms.

Hotel Burgenland (‰ 02682-696 0; www.hotelburgenland.at; Franz Schubert-Platz 11; s/d from €87/97; S i) Modern hotel with a slant towards business clients in the very centre of town.

BRATISLAVA

Slovakia's capital is a vibrant, pulsing city just over an hour from Vienna by train. Its historical centre is small, easy to explore on foot and crammed with historical buildings, many of which have received a well-earned makeover in recent years with the help of EU money.

From Hlavná stanica, Bratislava's main train station, it's around a 20-minute walk to Hurbanovo námestie, the northern edge of the old town. Dominating the city from above is Bratislava Castle, the city's most prominent sight. Its shape, reminiscent of a four-poster bed, was well established by the 15th century but most of what you see today is a reconstruction from the 1950s. The castle's best feature is the views from its hefty ramparts; the vastness of the communist Petrzalka housing estate lies to the south, while the old town spreads east. On the ground floor is the *Treasury of Slovakia*, containing a small but important collection of archaeological finds dating from 5000 BC and earlier – the *Venus of Moravany*, a 25,000-year-old fertility statue of a naked woman, is a highlight. The top floors are occupied by the Historical Museum, which covers folk crafts, furniture, modern art and history and also includes the all-important ice-hockey hall of fame.

Zidovská, the most direct path from castle hill to the old town, passes through what remains of the former Jewish quarter. What is reputedly the skinniest house in Central Europe contains a little Museum of Clocks and nearby, the Museum of Jewish Culture houses moving exhibits about Slovakia's Jewish community lost during WWII, the buildings demolished in the 1960s, and Judaism in general.

Down in the old town St Martin Cathedral, the city's finest Gothic structure, dominates. Of the museums here, the best is the Municipal Museum, located in the 14th-century town hall. It comes complete with Renaissance courtyard and green-roofed neogothic annexe. Next door is the Primatial Palace, where Napoleon signed a peace treaty with Austria's Franz I in 1805. The town's only surviving tower gate, Michael Tower, has a 14th-century base, a 16th-century

TRANSPORT – EISENSTADT

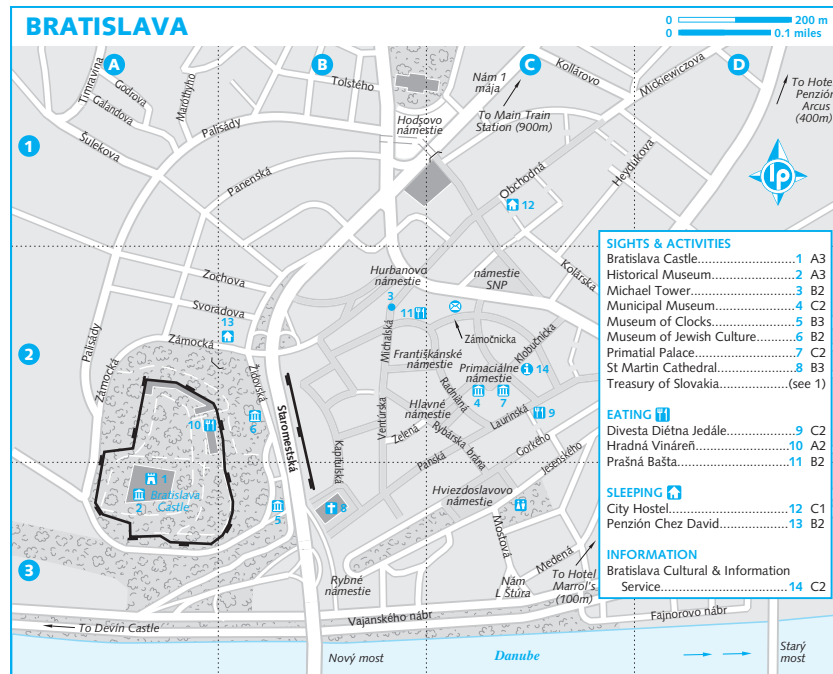
Distance from Vienna to Eisenstadt 60km

Direction Southeast

Bus Frequent direct buses depart from Südtiroler Platz in Vienna (70min).

Car Head south out of Vienna on the A2 and exit onto the A3 at the Guntramsdorf junction. When the A3 ends, follow the signs to Eisenstadt (east).

Train There are no direct trains from Vienna to Eisenstadt; change at Neusiedl am See (1hr 35min; trains connect with those heading to and from Südbahnhof).



top and an 18th-century steeple. Climb to the top for views across the rooftops and a small display of antique swords, armour and guns.

Dating from Roman times is Devin Castle, 9km west of town. Most of the castle you see today dates from the 15th and 16th centuries, although within its grounds is a restored 13th-century citadel. Its cliff-top views back across the Danube towards Vienna are quite enchanting; the best transport to the castle is by ferry (adult/student return 150/95Sk; 10am & 2.30pm Tue-Sun May-Aug).

Bratislava also has its quirky side. *Nový most* (Nový Bridge; 1972), which spans the Danube between the old town and Petrzalka, is an unbalanced modernist structure with what looks

DETOUR: SOPRON

Many Austrians associate Sopron, a town 27km southeast of Eisenstadt in Hungarian territory, with hairdressers and dentists – both are cheaper, and often better, than their German-speaking counterparts. Unfortunately most Austrian day-trippers return home without a glance at the city, which has a charming medieval heart.

The best place to begin a tour of Sopron – and get your bearings – is to climb the 200 steps of the narrow circular staircase to the top of the 60m-high **firewatch tower** (tűztorony; ‰ 0036-99-311 327; F6 tér; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; 10am-8pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr, Sep & Oct) at the northern end of F6 tér, the central square. Back on ground level, an exploration of the inner town's cobblestone streets reveals some inviting sights. The **Storno Collection** (Storno Gyűjtemény; ‰ 311 327; adult/senior or student 800/400Ft; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), on the second floor of Storno House, contains a Gothic treasure-trove of religious items, and the **Old Synagogue** (Ó Zsinagóga; ‰ 311 327; Új utca 22; adult/senior or student 400/200Ft; 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct) and **New Synagogue** (Új Zsinagóga; Új utca 11), both built in the 14th century, are open to the public. A number of smaller museums also inhabit the central area.

Information on Sopron is available from **Tourinform** (‰ 0036-99-517 560; sopron@tourinform.hu; Ferenc Liszt Conference & Cultural Centre, Liszt Ferenc utca 1; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Jun–mid-Sep) near the centre of town. At least 11 direct trains daily (1½ hours) connect Sopron with Vienna's Südbahnhof.



View of Michael Tower looking along Michalska, Bratislava (this page)

like a 1970s B-grade-film flying saucer hovering above it. Hard to miss are the old town's strange bronze statues: the Watcher peeps out of an imaginary manhole at the intersection of Panská and Sedlárska; the Frenchman, a replica of one of Napoleon's soldiers, leans on a park bench; the Photographer stalks his subject paparazzi-style around a corner; *Schöner Náci* tips his top hat on a square; and a soldier stands guard in front of a water fountain.

The currency is Slovak koruna (crowns; the country is set to adopt the Euro in 2009), which are easily changed at banks and bus, boat and train stations. Nationals of EU countries don't require a visa to enter Slovakia; citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US don't need a visa for tourist visits of up to 90 days. South African citizens can stay in the country for up to 30 days without a visa. In theory EU citizens only require an identity card to visit Slovakia, but in practice it's still best to carry a passport.

Sights & Information

Bratislava Castle (Bratislavský hrad; grounds admission free; 1 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar)

Bratislava Culture & Information Centre (BKIS; % 00421-2-5249 5906; www.bkis.sk) Centre (Klobučnícka 2; 1 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat); Main Train Station (Hlavná stanica; 1 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat Jun-Sep, 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-May)

Devín Castle (% 00421-2-6573 0105; Muranská; adult/student 80/30Sk; 1 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, until 6pm Sat & Sun mid-Apr-Oct)

Michael Tower (Michalská veža; % 00421-2-5443 3044; Michalská 24; adult/student 40/20Sk; 1 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun)

Municipal Museum (% 00421-2-5920 5130; Hlavné nám; adult/student 50/20Sk; 1 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun)

Museum of Clocks (Múzeum hodín; % 00421-2-5441 1940; Židovská 1; adult/student 40/20Sk; 1 10am-5pm Tue-Sun)

Museum of Jewish Culture (Múzeum Židovskej kultúry; % 5441 8507; www.chatamsofer.com; Židovská 17; adult/student 200/20Sk; 1 11am-5pm Sun-Fri)

Primatial Palace (Primaciálny Palác; Primaciálne námestie 1; adult/student 40Sk/free; 1 10am-5pm Tue-Sun)

Historical Museum (% 00421-2-5441 1441; www.snm.sk; adult/student 100/40Sk; 1 9am-6pm Tue-Sun)

Slovakische Zentrale für Tourismus (% 0041-1-513 95 69; www.slovakiatourism.sk; 04, Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 70; 1 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Slovak Tourism Board's representative in Vienna.

TRANSPORT – BRATISLAVA

Distance from Vienna 65km

Direction East

Boat For information on boats to Bratislava see p219.

Bus For information of bus connections to Bratislava's airport see p218

Car Head east on the A4 from Vienna until the Fischamend junction, where you continue on Bundesbahn 9, which passes through Petronell and Hainburg and eventually ends at the Slovakia border, just south of Bratislava.

Train From Südbahnhof, over a dozen trains daily (1¼hrs) travel to both Bratislava's main train station, 1km north of the old town, and its Petržalka station, 3km south of the old town.

St Martin Cathedral (Dóm sv Martina; Rudnayovo námestie; admission 60Sk; 1 9-11am & 1-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun)

Treasury of Slovakia (currently closed for renovation; check with the Information Centre for up-to-date details)

Eating

Divesta diétna jedáleň (Laurinská 8; mains 60-80Sk; 1 11am-3pm Mon-Fri) Central buffet with constant queues for its healthy vegetarian food.

Prašná Bašta (% 00421-2-5443 4957; Zámocnícka 11; mains 105-215Sk) Good, reasonable Slovak food, a charming round vaulted interior and one of the most private inner courtyards in the city.

Sleeping

City Hostel (% 00421-2-5263 6041; www.cityhostel.sk; Obchodná 38; s/d 1000/1690Sk; i) Small, modern singles and doubles that are more basic hotel than hostel; each has its own bathroom, but TV costs extra and breakfast isn't available.

Penzión Chez David (% 00421-2-5441 3824; www.chezdavid.sk; Zámocná 13; s €64-74, d €78-88) Small but comfortable rooms at this cool blue (and Jewish) pension. Kosher food is available from its attached restaurant.

Hotel-Penzión Arcus (% 00421-2-5557 2522; www.hotelarcus.sk; Moskovská 5; s 1400-1800Sk, d 2600Sk) Friendly, popular hotel near the bus station and only 15 minutes' walk from the old town. Some of the dated rooms come with balcony.

Hotel Marrol's (% 00421-2-5778 4600; www.hotelmarrols.sk; Tobrucká 4; s 7000Sk, d 7300-9600Sk; i s) Retro refinement, black-and-white movie stills, sleek leather chairs, sumptuous fabrics: Hotel Marrol's is straight off the silver screen – circa 1940. The Jasmine spa downstairs is welcome relief after a day of sightseeing.

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