

Slovakia and Poland: Exploring the High Tatras to Krakow

This is one heck of a tour and not for the faint of heart! You will need to be in pretty good shape in order to fully enjoy this spectacular tour and one of the most scenic areas of central Europe – the High Tatras; mountain lakes, waterfalls and deep green valleys abound - Combine these vistas with exceptional sightseeing and walks in one of Poland's most sought-after cities, Krakow – from Schindler's Factory Museum to Wieliczka salt mine – this tour will be especially interesting to those who want the challenge of mountain walking / hiking and the new and old history of Krakow!

Toronto	September 09	KLM 692	depart:	17:15
Amsterdam	September 10		arrive:	06:25
Amsterdam	September 10	KLM 1993	depart:	09:20
Krakow			arrive:	11:15

Sept 10, 2019 **Krakow** (- / - / D)

After arriving at Krakow Airport, we meet our tour guide and transfer to downtown Krakow for an independent lunch. Following lunch we will check-in to the Hotel Wyspianski (after 15:00). The balance of the afternoon is open for relaxing or a stroll around. This evening we enjoy dinner in the hotel's restaurant. Overnight Krakow - Hotel Wyspianski

Sept 11, 2019 **Krakow – High Tatras / Slovakia** (B, L, D)

Breakfast and checkout, meet our guide and depart for the Slovakia / High Tatras area. On the way, we stop in Zdiar, a beautiful local settlement with regional architecture where we may wish to visit the local museum (entry fee additional) or simply enjoy the village before lunch. We then continue to our hotel: the Grand Stary Smokovec in Stary Smokovec village. This afternoon we will have time to refresh and use the hotel wellness center which offers a swimming pool, whirlpool, Finnish sauna, steam sauna, infra sauna, tepidarium, Kneipp bath, massage shower and a cooling pool. This evening we enjoy dinner at our hotel. Hotel Grand Stary Smokovec

Background: High Tatras National Park is the oldest in Slovakia. Founded in 1949 it covers a 741-square-kilometer area of the Slovak part of the Zapadne Tatra and Vysoke Tatra (West and High Tatras), including the entire Belianske (White) Tatras. The tallest and best-known part of this range is the High Tatras, the tallest peak being Gerlach with a summit of 2,655 meters above sea level. These mountains, the only of alpine character in Slovakia, stretch their 32 valleys over a mere 26 kilometers, making the range one of the smallest of its kind. The sharp, stony peaks owe their shape to glaciers, which shaped the High Tatras many thousands of years ago.

Sept 12, 2019 **High Tatras – hiking** (B, packed L, D)

This morning we take our packed lunches to meet our mountain guide and walk to Stary Smokovec cable car which will take us to Hrebienok - the starting point of this tour. The tour starts in the Stary Smokovec center. Taking the ground cable car, we transfer to Hrebienok (1,285m) where our hike begins. From Hrebienok we take the red path for 20 minutes in order to get to the Cold Creek waterfalls. From this point we follow the blue path. Once we leave the forest area great views into the Great Cold Valley, one of the most picturesque in the whole Tatra mountain area, will open to us. To the right we admire Prostedny Hrot and on the left the

dales of Slavkovsky peak. We end the tour near the valley on the final ascent to Zbojnicka Chalet. Altitude difference: approx. 600 m up, 600 m down

Extension: It is possible to extend the trek by 45 minutes to an hour and continue on to get to Zbojnicka chalet (1960 m). Total distance incl. chalet: 12.6 km

This afternoon return back to the hotel for free time followed by dinner at our hotel.



FRI, Sept 13th

High Tatras – hiking

(B, packed L, D)

After breakfast, packed lunches will be provided as we meet with our guide and head to the train station which will take us to Strbske Pleso center. We start in Strbske Pleso center - a settlement with the highest elevation in the High Tatras (1,355m) and situated on the southern bank of a mountain-lake with the same name. We take the main red path “Tatranska magistrála” (90 minutes) leading to Popradske Mountain Lake. Here we find a chalet offering board and lodging and a symbolic cemetery devoted to those (mostly professionals) who died in the High Tatras mountains. We continue and enter the Mengusovská Valley. This branched valley is 8 km long and very attractive. After a 35 minute hike we continue up to the Hincova kotlina (Hincova Basin) surrounded by the Kôprovský Štít (Kôprovský Peak), Čubrína and the breathtaking ridge of the Mengusovské peaks. The Veľké Hincovo Pleso (Great Hincovo Mountain-lake, 1944m) dominates at the end of the Mengusovská Valley - the largest (200 800 m²) and the deepest (53,7m) in the Slovak part of the High Tatras. Here we enjoy our lunch and get refreshed before our return walk. Total distance: 16.8 km, up 872 m, down 872 m. After our hike we return back to the hotel by train where for dinner and overnight at our hotel.

Sept 14, 2019

High Tatras – Levoca – Spišske Podhradie

(B, L, D)

Breakfast, packed lunches and meet our guide for a tour of the medieval town of Levoča. The town has a historic center with a well preserved wall, numerous Renaissance buildings and the Church of St. James with the highest wood carved altar in the world. After lunch in Levoča we travel to Spiš Castle followed by a tour. Spišská Kapitula is a unique urbanistic-architectonic complex encircled by fortified walls. It is a small clerical town founded in the Middle Ages, and is sometimes called the Slovak Vatican. On a dolomite rock 200 m above the surrounding land, we find one of the most precious cultural monuments in the Spiš - the Spiš Castle. Built between the 12th and 18th centuries, it is one of the largest castles in Central Europe. Following our tour we return to our hotel for free time and dinner.



Sept 15, 2019 Dobsinska Ice cave – Slovak Paradise National Park (B, packed L, D)

Breakfast, packed lunches and an hour long bus ride to the Dobsinska Ice Cave Settlement. Upon arrival we embark upon an easy 1 kilometer walk through the forest to the cave entrance, located on the south-western edge of the Slovak Paradise National Park in the Spiš-Gemer karst. The Dobšinská ice cave is recognized as one of the most important ice caves in the world. In 2000 it was listed as a World Heritage site. Compared to known high-mountain ice caves, including Eisriesenwelt (Austrian Alps) or the Romanian Scărișoara Cave (Bihor Mountains), which have the glaciated part at elevations of 1,100 to 1,120 m, the monumental glaciation of the Dobšinská Ice Cave has survived for thousands of years at elevations from 920 to 950 m. After our cave tour we transfer to Cingov/Slovak Paradise National Park for an easy trek through the park including beautiful views of Tomasovsky. Total distance: 6,4 km, up 200 m, down 200 m
This afternoon we return back to our hotel for dinner and overnight.



Sept 16, 2019 High Tatras – hiking (B, packed L, D)

Enjoy our breakfast at the hotel this morning before taking our packed lunch and meeting our guide as we head off to the train station for our journey to Tatranska Lomnica Center. Stating off our hike at the Tatranska Lomnica Center, we take the green path for two hours and 45 minutes to Rocky Mountain Lake which lies on the main and most frequented tourist path known as “Tatranska magistrala”. This path is 70 km long and traverses the southern slopes of Western High Tatras and Belianske Tatras. Here we take the cable car ending at Rocky Mountain Lake (the ride takes 20-30 min). After a quick break for pictures we walk the Red Path - Tatranska Magistrala to Hrebienok. On our hike we’ll pass the Rocky chalet situated at the threshold of the Skalnata dolina (Rocky Valley). The trek will continue for approximately 50 minutes until we arrive at the second chalet “Zamkovskeho” for a rest. We then continue down to Hrebienok. On the way we admire the Cold Creek Waterfalls and from Hrebienok, we take a ground cable car which ends just behind our hotel. Total distance: 6.7 km, up 130 m, down 610 m. Dinner and overnight at our hotel.

Sept 17, 2019 Pieniny National Park / Dunajec river floating – Zakopane / Poland (B, L)



Breakfast and check out. Meet our guide for our tour to Pieniny National Park. When we arrive, a boat will be waiting to take us up the Dunajec River from Červený Kláštor to Lesnica. Enroute we will enjoy a beer or soft drink, sheep cheese, bacon and sausage, vegetables and bread while historically dressed rafters regale the group with stories (weather permitting). Should the weather not be in our favor we will tour the

beautiful town of Kežmarok and its wooden heritage church built without metal. Our traditional lunch will be served in the Slovak styled restaurant Koliba where we will also listen to local folk music. From here we transfer to Zakopane in Poland and check into the Belvedere Hotel. After this we take an orientation tour of Zakopane, enjoy some free time and an open evening for an independent dinner. Hotel Belvedere

Sept 18, 2019 High Tatras (Polish side) – hiking (B, packed L, D)

Breakfast, grab our packed lunch and meet our guide to take a bus to the Morskie Oko (Sea Eye) mountain lake. Today's hike takes approx. 2 hours along easy terrain and mostly paved walkways unless we take the short cut through the stairways. Morskie Oko is the largest and fourth-deepest lake in the Tatra Mountains and is located within the Tatras National Park in the Rybi Potok (the Fish Brook) Valley. The peaks that surround the lake rise approx. 1,000 meters above its surface. In the past, Morskie Oko was called "Rybie Jezioro" ("Fish Lake") due to its natural stock of fish, which are uncommon in Tatra lakes and ponds. The name "Morskie Oko" ("Sea Eye", "Eye of the Sea") is derived from an old legend, according to which the lake was connected to the sea via an underground passage. Morskie Oko is one of the most popular destinations in the Tatras, often receiving over 50,000 visitors during the vacation season. Total distance: 16.2 km, up 411 m, down 411 m. We head back to our hotel after the hike where we will venture out for dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight in Zakopane.

Sept 19, 2019 Zakopane – Krakow (B, L)

Check-out after breakfast and meet our guide before departing for Krakow. On arrival we take a 90-minute walking tour of the city. Here we visit Krakow's must-see attraction and the symbol of the nation: Wawel Hill. Follow our guide to the top, where we'll see stately Wawel Royal Castle, a magnificent Renaissance palace built by Italian architects. It was the kings' seat for more than 500 years through the end of the 16th century when the power moved to Warsaw. From Wawel we continue walking down to the city center via Royal road passing interesting sights including the church of Saints Peter and Paul which is largest of the historic Churches of Kraków in terms of seating capacity. After our tour we sit down for lunch in the city center followed by a tour of the Rynek Główny area. Rynek Główny is the city's main square and the largest medieval town square in Europe at 10 acres. We will stop by Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady (St Mary's Basilica), better known in these parts as the Mariacki located in the northern corner of the square. During the tour we also pass the church of St. Adalbert, one of the oldest stone churches in Poland and the Sukiennice, a Cloth Hall, originally designed for the medieval rag trade. At the end of our day we check into the INX hotel for some relaxation and an independent dinner. Hotel INX



Sept 20, 2019 Krakow – Wielicka Salt Mine – Krakow (B, D)

Today we head to Schindlers Factory Museum - the best museum in Krakow, where we get a guided tour of the museum. <http://www.mhk.pl/branches/oskar-schindlers-factory>. Following the tour we transfer back to the city center and enjoy an independent lunch before we are off to the Wieliczka Salt Mine – our tour this afternoon. The Wieliczka Salt Mine is the oldest salt enterprise in Poland and dates back to the Middle Ages. For centuries it was the source of the country's wealth, the material foundation of its culture and today the most popular Polish tourist attraction. Hundreds of years of rock salt exploitation have shaped the spatial arrangement of its excavated structure. Built on nine levels, concealed under the town, the mine reaches down to a depth of 327 meters. Subterranean Wieliczka consists of nearly 300 kilometers of corridors and almost 3,000 chambers. The tourist route includes a 3.5-kilometres section located between 64 and 135 meters below ground level. To end our day we head back to Krakow where we celebrate the end of this very special tour in a Jewish area restaurant with Klezmer music and dinner. Overnight in Krakow.

Sept 21, 2019

Krakow – Krakow airport

(B package)

Hotel check-out and transfer to the airport after breakfast.

Krakow	September 21	KLM 1992	depart:	06:40
Amsterdam			arrive:	08:40
Amsterdam	September 21	KLM 691	depart:	09:45
Toronto			arrive:	11:40

Included in Price:

- Return air flights as noted including all taxes as of December 2018
- Tour leader Charles Whitlock
- 11 nights in excellent hotels with breakfast
- Meals as above: 4 x 3-course lunch, 5 x packed lunch, 9 x 3-course dinner
- Bus transportation according to the program
- Train tickets for the tour
- Local English speaking tour manager
- Local English speaking mountain guides (days 3, 4 and 7)
- Visits and cable cars: 1 return cable car ticket Stary Smokovec-Hrebienok,
- City tour of Levoca, entry to church of St. James, entry and guided tour of Spis castle, entry and guided tour of Dobsinska Ice Cave, 1 combi ticket (Tatranska-Lomnica–Rocky Mountain Lake–Hrebienok-Stary Smokovec), wooden floating tour including refreshment, Zakopane orientation city tour, Krakow city tour, guided tour of Schindler’s factory, guided tour of Wieliczka Salt Mine
- Porterage service

Excluded:

- Meals other than noted
- Drinks with the meals
- All strictly personal costs including options insurance
- Gratuities for driver and guides

AIR

We offer a group air arrangements from / to Toronto or the option of a land only. In the case where a land only is used, we will provide transfers on a group basis only for independent travelers who arrive and / or depart at the same approximate time(s) as our group. Independent transfers at a different arrival or departure can easily be pre-confirmed through our local tour operator.

Strictly Limited Availability:

Our Slovakia & Poland program is strictly limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. In order to ensure the quality of our tour, this program is limited to a maximum of 19-participants. Once the tour is filled we will accept wait-lists. As with the tour itself, wait lists will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

TOUR PRICE:

Complete tour with air:	Canadian \$4,695 per person share twin
Land ONLY Tour price:	Canadian \$3,525 per person share twin
Single room surcharge:	Canadian \$710
Deposit required to secure your booking:	Canadian \$750 per person
Final payment due:	June 28, 2019
Cancellation Penalties:	
From date of booking to June 28, 2019	loss of deposit paid
From final payment date to departure	100% non-refundable

SPECIAL NOTE:

In the event that we are able to find a replacement from wait-lists or other requests received for the tour between date of booking and 31-days prior to date of departure, a flat \$50.00 p.p. administration charge will be accessed. Within 31-days prior, we regret that all payments become non-refundable with or without a replacement. We cannot guarantee a replacement for any cancelled passenger regardless of the date the cancellation is received in our office.

PASSPORT

A valid Canadian passport is required to travel to Slovakia and Poland. Your passport must be valid for at least 3 months beyond the date you expect to leave the Schengen area. We recommend a minimum of 6 months validity to avoid any possible issues.

INSURANCE

We strongly recommend adequate travel insurance and will provide details of insurance suggestions at the time of booking.

Exclusive reservations through:



572 Weber Street North, Unit 1, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5C6

CONTACT: Scott Allen, CTC or Kendra Allen

Phone (519) 745 – 1860 ext 303

Fax (519) 745 - 5694

Toll Free: (800) 578 – 8958

Cell: (519) 897 - 9673

e-mail: scotta@ftwaterloo.com or kendra@ftwaterloo.com
