

Hiking in the Slovak Paradise



Along and above the Hornad

Paradises

The Czechs have their Český raj, the Slovaks their Slovenský raj. Raj means in Czech and Slovak *paradise*. And they are indeed paradises. And National Parks. Is the Czech (or Bohemian) Paradise [a geological natural wonder](#), the Slovak Paradise is best known for its caves, gorges and waterfalls.

This article is mainly about the spectacular hiking trails in and through the gorges and along the waterfalls in the Slovak Paradise.

photo's: Peter Piroch,
[mapaslovenskyraj,Sk](http://mapaslovenskyraj.sk)

The National Park

Slovak Paradise National Park has some of the most romantic and beautiful ravines in Europe. It is perhaps the most visited hiking region in the country. A National Park with more than 300 kilometers of signposted hiking trails. The highest mountain is the *Predná hoľa* at 1545 meters. The paradise is home to 40 mammals, including the European brown bear, red fox, gray wolf, Eurasian lynx, European wildcat, red deer, roe deer, European fallow deer, Alpengems, European wild boar, marmot and marten.

The ravines, the gorges

Where once there was a flat limestone plateau landscape, fast-flowing mountain rivers have created special creations over the centuries.

Elsewhere in this mountain range, the wind has been steadily working [on beautifully shape-blown rocks](#). Here the river water has shaped the deep gorges and ravines. And caves. And waterfalls. The most spectacular ravines are the Suchá Belá, Piecky, Sokol, Kysel and Hornad with their numerous rapids. Sometimes it is a kind of dripping along the rocks, other times masses of water pour tens of meters but below.

Ever walked right past a waterfall? The gaps are not wide. Rather close. But deep. Tens of meters. In some places more than 300m high.

Gorges that are often also full of trap wood, tree trunks and everything that can come down with a fast-flowing river.

Ladders

The vegetation in the area is fantastic: sun roses, rosary, gentian, parnassia, primrose and wildemanswort. And all kinds of moss species. Just to name a few.

But the most special thing about these gorges is that the hiker can walk through them through all kinds of interventions and works of art. Small ladders, very long ladders, even longer ladders, made of iron, of wood, steps carved in stone, iron grids nailed into the rock walls, about half a meter apart so that you can just take a step crampons..... or just a rope..... or chain..... and sometimes no ladders or grids at all so you just have to get by!

Fascinating. Especially walking over the grids along the rock walls, a few meters above the fast-flowing river, impresses. Do you suffer from a fear of heights? Don't, this trip. Suffer from claustrophobia: don't do it either. But for the rest: an adrenaline rush.



Fear?



Peter Piroch Foto

Walking along the waterfalls

Ice gave

The same goes for a visit to the most famous cave from this Paradise and possibly the most famous ice cave in the world: the Dobšinská ice cave. Also an impressive consequence of what mountain rivers can do to the environment over the centuries. And still do. The cave is located on the outskirts of the village of Bystrá, between Podbrezová and Myto pod Dumbierom. Paradise has about 200 caves. And furthermore, the entire Park is a paradise for hikers. Perhaps more on this in a future article.

General route information

- The Hornad gorge is 16km long. Start is at the bridge of Podlesok (Hrabušice) and ends at Maša in the village of Smižany. Take 4 to 5 hours.
- There are opportunities to leave a gorge at intersections and take a circular walk. The area lends itself perfectly to it! For example, a walk to the viewpoint of Tomasovsky. Where you can see large parts of the impressive Tatras.
- Or to the viewpoint Matka Bozia;
- The longest ladder bridges a height difference of 75 meters. Along the waterfall Závojevý in the Sokolia dolina (Falcon Valley).
- Some gorges have a one-way walk;
- You need to buy an entrance ticket;
- Prepare well. Do not carry too large or heavy backpacks. You have too much trouble with that when manoeuvring on the ladders and the grids. Conditions in the canyon may change depending on the season or weather. We therefore recommend a suitable selection of hiking clothing and equipment (sturdy shoes, extra socks, etc.). In the winter months, the ladders can be covered with ice, so we recommend bringing crampons.



Matka Bozia



View of the Tatras



Piecky Gorge

