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**Bratislava Tourist Board**  
Primaciálne nám. 1  
P. O. BOX 349  
810 00 Bratislava  
btb@visitbratislava.com  
www.visitbratislava.com

**Tourist Information Centre**  
Klobučnícka 2  
SK-811 01 Bratislava  
Tel.: +421 2 16 186  
Tel.: +421 2 59356651  
touristinfo@visitbratislava.com

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## Roman Traces

**Remains of a Roman "Bath"**  
At **Veľká lúka archaeological site** in Bratislava – Dúbravka, you can see a 3rd century discovery: foundations of a Roman bathhouse with three rooms, connected with three semi-circular apses that served as pools for cold, warm and hot water. Initially planned as a bathhouse, the building was later changed into a residential dwelling – a countryside villa known as **villa rustica**. It contained a unique finding of a bronze statue of a minor fertility god, Priapus.



### Roman Milestone

If you go for a walk in the park at Hraničné námestie Square in **Bratislava – Podunajské Biskupice**, you will stumble upon a **copy of a Roman milestone from 230 A.D.** The inscription on the milestone confirms it was repaired by the then ruling Emperor Alexander Severus. **Sv. Mikuláš Church** contains walled-in Roman texts (spolias).

**More info on Celtic and Roman Bratislava:**  
[www.visitbratislava.com/history](http://www.visitbratislava.com/history)



## Gerulata Roman Military Camp

The border of the Roman Empire in Central Europe ran along the Danube, forming a natural barrier, and it was here that **Limes Romanus border defence system** – a chain of military camps and watchtowers was built. Founded by the Romans in the 1st century on the **territory of current Rusovce**, the military camp was to protect the eastern wing of the legion in Carnuntum, the capital of the Pannonia Superior province (nowadays in Austria). The camp was a home to a cavalry unit **ala prima Cannanefatum**, surrounded by a civilian settlement. Ancient Gerulata Museum contains foundations of build-

ings from the 1st to 4th centuries. The best-preserved monument is the late antique fortress. Its original mortar floor was left intact. Stone reliefs were later walled into the enclosure wall of the fortress, now are on display in Gerulata lapidarium. You can also see here a skeleton grave reconstruction, the camp model, and findings from archaeological surveys such as pendants, amulets, coins and ceramics. Ancient Gerulata is a candidate for **UNESCO World Heritage List**, listed as The **Danube Limes** together with other Roman monuments along the Danube in Germany, Austria and Hungary.



**Ancient Rome comes to life in Bratislava – Rusovce annually during Roman Games and Limes Day.** The visitors can get an insight into lives of noble Romans and witness gladiator fights.



  
**BRATISLAVA**



# Celtic & Roman Bratislava

- Acropolis at Bratislava Castle
- Secret of Celtic coins
- Gerulata Roman Military Camp

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## CELTIC BRATISLAVA

Foundation of a **Celtic oppidum** (i.e. fortified settlement) on the territory of current Bratislava at the end of the 2nd century BC took place due to favourable location at crossroads of long-distance roads. The Celtic town in Bratislava covered approx. 240 acres. A **fortified acropolis** dominated at the top of the castle hill. The settlement **beyond murals** extended to the current Old Town, with a **pre-castle settlement** at what is today Námestie Slobody Square. The Celtic settlement reached far beyond the town centre – the **Devín oppidum** was a strategic trade centre.



Visualisation of Celto-Roman Dwelling at Acropolis

## Acropolis at Bratislava Castle

Positioned strategically right above the Danube, the castle hill was predestined to become the seat of Celtic rulers. In the 1st century BC, opulent mansions of Celtic aristocracy were constructed here – stone houses with murals and high-quality floor tiles. Right under the palace courtyard, a unique **mosaic of opus signinum** type was discovered, which was decorated with rosette and meander motifs and formed a part of the decorative admission hall. You can still see its remnants *in situ*.



Premises of the current castle revealed a total of **seven Celto-Roman structures** with numerous precious findings such as golden and silver coins, ceramics, Roman amphorae, Baltic amber, etc. Currently already conserved, these structures will be opened to public as a part of Celtic Road.

## Where Did the Celts of Bratislava Live?

The usual Celtic dwelling beyond the murals had its roof supported by posts and its floor was pasted with earth, with a ritual fireplace in the centre. The walls were either pleated with twigs and smeared with clay, or they were wooden boards built in a log-house style. Shafts were found next to such dwellings, serving either as wells or storage areas. A pit-house at Nám. A. Dubčeka Square revealed a **bronze key**.



**Celts of Bratislava Exhibition, located in the underground part of the castle, presents the Celtic theme divided into crafts such as pottery, iron founding and minting. The exhibits contain original findings including precious coin treasures.**

## Celtic Coins from Bratislava

Celts were the first nation in Central Europe to start with **minting**. As early as in the 2nd century BC, they minted golden coins, so-called shell-type staters. Golden staters from Bratislava contain Latin inscriptions BIATEC and NONNOS. It is the oldest script ever used on Slovak territory. The most frequently circulated medium were silver coins known as tetradrachmae. A usual motif was a small horse or a rider with mistletoe and sword. In total, there were 16 types of inscriptions on the coins from Bratislava (e.g. with various suffixes such as -rix = king, duke; or -marus = great, important).

### How Were the Coins Minted?

The precious metal was dosed into a flat clay plate, which was put into the furnace to melt the metal, thus creating a coin-shaped object. The coin roundel was then put between two dies and, using a hammer, an image on both sides was achieved. Golden staters were minted at the acropolis, where

melting pots and small furnace were discovered. Silver coins were made beyond the murals. One such mint was located at the current Panská Street, where a large number of iron-smelting cups and fragments of dosing plates for silver melting were discovered. The small **exposition of Celtic minting** is placed right on its discovery place, in the **underground premises of the Pálffy Palace** (GMB).

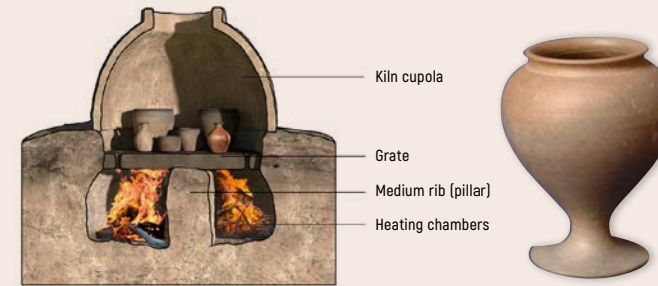


**The most frequent inscription on Celtic coins is Biatec, hence these coins were given the name of a biatec. There is a large-sized Biatec statue made by L. Cvengrošová in front of the Slovak National Bank building.**



## Pottery

The Celts were skilled craftsmen and their pottery sites were centred in craft settlements around what are currently Hlavné námestie and Námestie slobody Squares. A total of 17 Celtic kilns used for firing of both grey and painted ceramics have been discovered so far. The Celts were the first nation to use a fast-rotating potter's wheel on our territory.



**The best-preserved Celtic kiln was found in the Apponyi Palace. A double-chamber kiln with a circular grate is now exhibited at Bratislava City Museum.**

### What did the Celts from Bratislava eat and drink?

With grain as their staple diet, the Celts were far from vegetarians. This is confirmed by a large number of bones of both domestic and wild animals found in the waste pits of Bratislava oppidum. The court of Celtic rulers saw feasts as those of any other kings. **Discovered amphorae** are an ample proof that the Celtic elite loved **wine**. Rich Celts had their wine, olive oil, luxurious dining glassware and wrought metalware imported from other countries. Common people drank various fermented beverages akin to beer.

## Discoveries at Devín Castle

The castle and village of Devín revealed numerous **dwellings and manufacturing objects**, including **jeweller's and blacksmith's shops** with more than 150 objects that were uncovered there. Numerous findings from Devín, such as glass and metal jewels, large **grains storage vessels, painted ceramics, and a small dog sculpture**, are shown at Celts of Bratislava exhibition at Bratislava Castle.



## ROMAN BRATISLAVA

The strategic location of Bratislava at the crossroads of Amber and Danube Roads played an important role in extension of the Roman Empire in Mid-Danube section. Discoveries such as Celto-Roman structures at Bratislava Castle and Roman amphorae full of coins are a proof of the earliest Roman presence on the territory of Bratislava. The Roman influence is demonstrated by the applied building method, Latin inscriptions on coins and dietary habits such as the use of olive oil.

## Ancient Findings

**SNM – Museum of History** at Bratislava Castle shows a permanent exhibition called History of Slovakia – From Prehistoric to Middle Ages. A part of it is focused on the Roman period in Slovakia and includes findings from Bratislava and other sites. Antiquity buffs are recommended to visit also the **SNM – Archaeological Museum** below the castle. Roman traces in Bratislava can be found in the form of stamped bricks, altar stones and tombstones with bass reliefs, and minor objects such as pins, coins and pieces of ceramics.

## Guardian of Bratislava

The Devín Castle hill at the confluence of the Danube and Morava Rivers was occupied by the Romans replacing the Celts and Germanic tribes. The **Devín Castle** revealed foundations of several Roman structures. Next to the castle entrance, you can see foundations of a sacral building with plaster fragments, where also a 4th century iron cross was discovered. At the mid-castle courtyard, next to the well, you can

spot the ground plan of a 3rd century dwelling house.

