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Slovak Trenčín awakens curiosity as European Capital of Culture 2026

Just like the Hungarian city of Veszprém in 2023 and the city of Pecs in 2010, Trenčín has been given the opportunity to shine on the map of European social and artistic life. In 2026, it will join the family of cities that can boast the title of European Capital of Culture and the associated development of the cultural environment and cultural infrastructure. However, a diverse artistic programme will already fill this year's agenda.

The project of the European Capital of Culture in Trenčín in 2026 with the main motto "Awakening Curiosity" is not only about a rich cultural programme, but also about the gradual development of the city - reviving unused places, creating experiences and new opportunities that connect Trenčín with Europe.

The beginning of long-term change

"The year 2026 is just the beginning", says project director Ján Sudzina "We are focusing on the long-term development of the city and we believe that by working together we will make not only the city but the whole region an attractive place to live and visit beyond 2026. With everything we do, we are awakening people's curiosity and interest in people and the world around them, in public spaces and communities", adds the project director.

Building communities and neighbourhoods

„The emphasis of Trenčín 2026 on building communities and community spaces is what makes the project different from other European Capitals of Culture projects to date. *"It is pleasant neighbourhoods, lively communities, people who know each other, tolerate each other and care about the city that make the city a better place to live,* " explains Stanislav Krajči, Manager responsible for Participation and Inclusion. *"This September we can already look forward to the Festival of Living Neighbourhoods: community events that take place in neighbourhoods outside the city centre,"* he adds.

Investing in cultural infrastructure

One of the first milestones of this transformation is the revitalisation of the disused old railway bridge over the river Váh into a modern multifunctional so-called Fiesta Bridge with studios and shops, which is the investment plan of the Trenčín 2026 project. This unique structure will not only connect both banks of the river, but will also become a new centre of social life and recreation. The investment planned for the revitalisation of the bridge amounts to almost EUR 10.5 million including VAT. The city will pay 8% of this amount from its own budget and the rest from a non-repayable financial contribution under the Slovensko programme.

In addition to the railway bridge, the former cinema Hviezda was transformed into a cultural and creative centre, and the local synagogue was also comprehensively reconstructed in cooperation with the Jewish religious community.

More than 10 million euros will be gradually invested in the new look of cultural institutions and public spaces in the city, which reflect their historical significance and at the same time give them a modern and innovative character—they will also be worth a visit in Trenčín.

Experience the unexpected

Both visitors and residents can look forward to a varied cultural programme as early as 2025, which will be intensified in 2026. *"The Light Art Festival, which focuses on light and digital art, will enliven the city already in April this year and then next year,"* says Vladimír Beskid, manager of the Trenčín 2026 programme, about one of the many events.

The programme will create a space for original connections between art and unconventional places. Art installations will draw attention to water surfaces, the city streets will come alive with theatre, and an exhibition of modern art will take place at Trenčín Castle. Trenčín 2026 will also be enlivened by the popular Splanekor event. On its 45th anniversary, artistic and recyclable coracles will sail down the river Váh as part of Splanekor 2.0.

One of the biggest events of the year 2026 will be the opening ceremony, which will take place in February 2026. *"We believe that the several-day event full of cultural and artistic experiences will attract not only local visitors to Trenčín, but also guests from Hungary,"* adds the manager of the Trenčín 2026 programme, Vladimír Beskid. However, people will be able to enjoy cultural experiences all year round.

As a tradition, not only Slovak artists, but also foreign ones will have the opportunity to perform. *"Trenčín 2026 gives us the opportunity to bring Europe to Trenčín and put Trenčín on the map of Europe. We will welcome artists from abroad to Trenčín and send our artists to the world,"* says Martin Mojžiš, manager for the European dimension and international relations. In 2026, for example, the Hungarian artist Tamás Kaszás will take part in the Green Line art project with his art installation. Within the *Global Equality and Hospitality* project, new intermedia works by Szabolcs Kiss-Pal and Ferenc Gróf will be created under the curatorship of Ilona Németh.

Places are coming to life

The good news is that the icons of Trenčín and its surroundings will also become the scene of culture. *"We will use the most visited castles in the Trenčín Region—Trenčín Castle, Beckov Castle and Čachtice Castle, as well as the Váh River as the stage for cultural events of the European Capital of Culture Trenčín 2026,"* explains Eva Dudová Frývaldská from the Regional Tourism Organisation in Trenčín.

The Trenčín region is unique for its large number of castles, which are accompanied by the river Váh throughout the whole region of the Považie region. They are also accessible thanks to the Vážska Cyklomagistrála (Váh River Cycling Route) and numerous cycling routes. Creative Wellbeing is an artistic programme that in 2026 will revive the spa towns in the Považie region, which are the most concentrated in Slovakia in a relatively small area - Trenčianske Teplice, Bojnice, Nimnica and Piešť'aný. This group also includes the cross-border spa in Luhačovice in the Czech Republic. Thanks to the New Town Jewish Festival, the life and tradition of the Jews in the Považie region has been talked about for 5 years and this year, from 12–15. June 2025, the festival will also move to Trenčín and Piešť'aný.

For up-to-date information on the programme, please visit www.trencin2026.eu and for the complete tourist offer, please visit www.trencinregion.sk

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