

## **Preview of Planned Visit to Slovakia, 31<sup>st</sup> July – 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2010**

We have an excellent leader, Stanislav Jelen, for our field trip. He is a mineralogist and researches and teaches at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Banska Bystrica (and Bratislava). He is busy preparing another field excursion at the moment but should prepare our itinerary in a month or so time. I'm not quite sure where he will take us but here is a summary of Slovak geology and some of the things available to see:

Slovakia is virtually synonymous with the West Carpathian mountains. The beautiful High Tatras are on the border with Poland. There have been two major orogenies, two closed oceans with continent/terraces approaching from the south. There are three major nappe systems, from south to north: Gemericum, Veporicum and Tatricum. There are very many other nappe systems. Each nappe system spans the geological column a bit and rocks of the same age are found in different nappe systems.

There are two beautiful karst areas in Slovakia, each made from Triassic limestones and dolomites. The Slovak Paradise park is in central Slovakia and Slovak Beauty in the south. Slovakia has many beautiful caves and we may visit the unusual Ochtinska aragonite cave.

Owing to back-arc extension, there are patches of Neogene volcanics in the country. There is a large stratovolcano and caldera at Banska Stiavnica, near Banska Bystrica. We shall go there and also see the mining and mineralogical museums. Mineralisations are abundant in Slovakia and we should visit one or two gold mines. There are many historic mine workings and minerals can be collected - I have found galena and azurite, for example.

We can expect to make a tour to eastern Slovakia and maybe see a precious opal mine there too. We may also visit the alkali igneous province in southern Slovakia, where there is a 'stone waterfall' (basalt columns).

Fossil collecting will be included but the emphasis will be on minerals - there are some good ammonite sites in Slovakia. (Microfossils are also found all over Slovakia).

We shall be based in Banska Bystrica, a city of about 80,000 people, in the centre of Slovakia. The Penzion Kuria is small, cheap and comfortable and near the historic centre of the city. The Tajov caravan site is about 7 km west of the centre of the city.

We welcome any more people, who want to come. Bookings will have to be made by early May.

The dates of the excursion are: Saturday 31st July to Tuesday 10th August; six days in the field and two for holiday. Travel can be by plane (Ryanair to Bratislava) or car/caravan. Depending on numbers we shall probably car share in Slovakia to get about. The expected cost per person is about £600 (£100 plane, £300 accommodation, £100 food, £100 getting about).

Collected samples are transportable out of the country by car/caravan.

*Gordon Alchin*