

Gate

magazine for visitors
to the Ústí Region

Issue No. 6

History

A unique experience
in Osek Monastery

Nature

Trips in search of mystery
of Jetřichovice

Interview

The Gate to Bohemia and I – David Vrřecký

Active rest

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Gate to Bohemia

Discover the Beauty of the Ústí region

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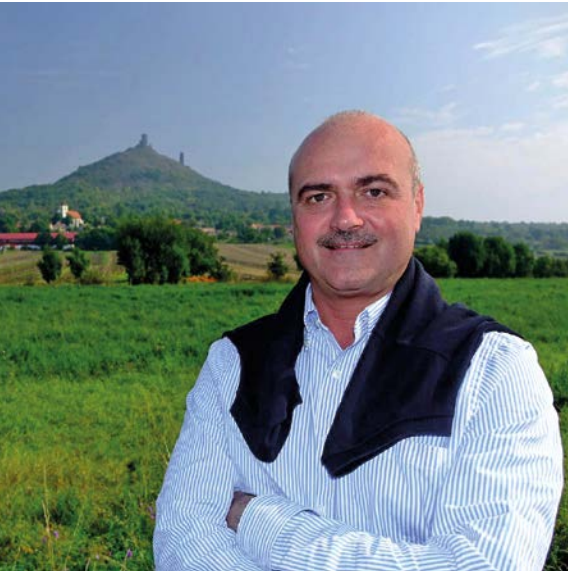
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performed just a short time ago. Together with us, you will participate in discovering the Baroque gems of the region, you will get advice on where to eat out, where the beer is good, we will go along the Elbe path and discover unexpected jewels in three large cities on the banks of the Elbe – Ústí nad Labem, Litoměřice and Roudnice nad Labem, we will take a stroll through the Garden of Bohemia, we will look at a carefully maintained mill, into town cellars in Jirkov chiselled into the rock, at brilliantly renovated sites of interest as well as those rescued from certain destruction at the last moment– and I can promise that this time I have some scary bits for you too. We are pleased that you have taken the time to visit and are interested in our region. We are happy to respond to the many requests asking for information about camp sites that could be your base camp for trips to the countryside in search of yet more aspects of the Gate to Bohemia that will lead to other adventures in close contact with nature. And I wish you GOOD LUCK on all your journeys!

Dear readers!

The Gate to Bohemia, the name traditionally given to the region of Ústí, has been undergoing an unprecedented increase in interest from tourists from around the whole country and the entire world. The region, underrated by those who know nothing of it, is suddenly the most dynamically developing tourist destination in the Czech Republic. And rightly so. You are opening another issue of Brána (Gate) magazine, which for years has been mapping the sights and gems of the region for you and which indisputably helps to raise awareness of the wonders of Northern Bohemia, the lovely local nature, historic towns, sacred monuments, chateaus, castles, clear rivers surrounded by comfortable and beautiful cycling routes, the motherland of wonderful wine and the best hops in the world... Within those six years, 444 pages of the magazine have provided hundreds of tips and ideas for where to go where you can be sure that something special awaits you. This time we summed up the most attractive locations offered by the four cornerstones of the Gate to Bohemia at the very beginning: four destinations – Bohemian Switzerland, the Czech Central Highlands, the Ore Mountains and the Lower Poohří. As you turn the pages I hope you will find surprising new routes and locations. We will invite you on an expedition in a jeep to places where many would expect to see the legendary moon-like landscape of the coal mines and their jaws drop when they see how nature, in cooperation with environmentalists, regenerates and prospers in locations where surface mining was



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Creative and graphic design: NOESIS s.r.o.
DTP processing, production and printing: NOESIS s.r.o.
Author of texts: Rostislav Křivánek
Photos: Archives of the Ústí Region, archives of Czech Switzerland, archives of DA Krušné hory, o. p. s., archive of DA Dolní Poohří, o. p. s., Archive of DA České středohoří, o. p. s., Tomáš John, Pavel Bergr, Rostislav Křivánek, Dan Fiker, Václav Sojka and others
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The Author’s Invitation

This time my roaming through the Gate to Bohemia was dedicated to the search for traces of a period which brought dynamics, expression and passion to the Czech landscape and freed faith from the cages of temples. Simply put, in the year of Baroque I have decided to show that the region of Ústí is unjustly left out whenever the jewels of the Baroque era are talked about. One of the most important of all, which easily equals the most frequented and celebrated sites, is located in the town of Osek in Podkrušnohoří (the Ore Mountain region). The local Cistercian monastery with the Baroque church of the Assumption of Mary is a unique experience which you should not miss. However, beautiful Baroque sights also appeared in Bohemian Switzerland (Bohemian Switzerland), Litoměřice, Roudnice, Pětipsy, Mariánské Radčice, Libochovice, Krupka, and especially in Citoliby, an almost forgotten Baroque gem. And this is by no means the end of the list of Baroque sites in the region. On my journey I was enchanted by local legends, discovered beauty in places where few would look for it – for instance in Ústí nad Labem or in the surface mining landscape near the town of Most, this time I had even the chance to make my observations through the window of an off-road car, whose drivers know about places that will take your breath away, I tried newly marked tourist paths in the Jetřichovice area and peeked over the border into Saské Švýcarsko (Saxon Switzerland)... I also listened to a large number of stories, for example the one about a family mill near Louny, and took care to write them down for you. This is, on one hand, due to the fact that I cannot help myself but go and discover yet more new secrets and charms in the region that I love, but on the other hand, you are the main reason. That is to say, I know very well that the best recommendations and tips come from somebody with direct experience. So, people, read and discover for yourselves! It will be worth it.



Rostislav Křivánek

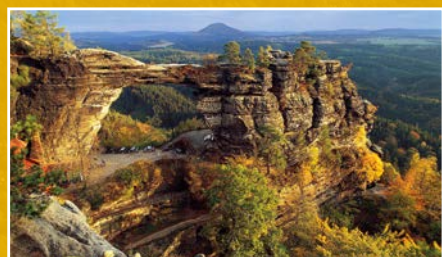


The Four Cornerstones of the Beautiful Gate



BOHEMIAN SWITZERLAND

A mesmerising landscape of rocks, ravines, canyons, mountain meadows, unbelievable views, stations of the cross, brooks and streams. We should start with the most precious gem, one of the wonders of the world, the narrow rock formation of **Pravčická brána**. This natural gate will let us into a realm decorated by Elbe sandstone and cut through with one of the most beautiful river canyons in Europe, i.e. the **Elbe valley**, on one side and the first undulating mountain tops of the **Lusatian Mountains** on the other side. Deep below



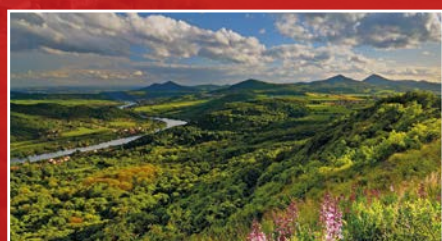
the majestic rock formation the wild waters of the Kamenice river thunder by **Dolský mlýn** (Dolský mill) and rush between rocks before they calm down and let wonder-struck wanderers flow through **Wild** and **Edmund's gorge**. Not far from there, three vistas (**Jetřichovické vyhlídky**) crown the back of a rocky dragon and provide a wonderful view of the rocky landscape. The charms of folk architecture, the unique Upper Lusatian houses, scattered abundantly all over the land, concentrate in **Kamenická Stráň** or in **Kamenná Horka** in Krásná Lípa. On the other hand, connoisseurs of sacred and profane architecture are advised to head for the historic town of **Česká Kamenice** or for Rumburk, with the chapel **Loreta**, a jewel shining brighter than others. The fourteen **Stations of the Cross** are scattered amongst omnipresent sacred monuments – not seeing, for example, **Bratský oltář** (Brethren altar) near Česká Kamenice or **Bauerova kaple** (Bauer's chapel) near Lipnice, means missing a lot. You will be astounded



by local chateaus – the one in **Děčín**, in **Benešov nad Ploučnicí** (there are more of them there), in **Šluknov** or in **Lipová**. The left bank of the Elbe river is ruled over by the fanciful rocky formation of **Tiské stěny** and the stone lookout tower on the mountain of **Děčínský Sněžník**. If you add **rocky castles**, **Garbiela's path**, **lookout towers**, the idyllic valley of **Křínické údolí** near Kyjov, you should also note that this is still just the beginning of the list of local sights.



CZECH CENTRAL HIGHLANDS



A landscape carved into two parts by the **Elbe river**, which is surrounded on all sides by hills of such unlikely and hardly believable shapes that a poet's imagination cannot match them. A land surged by brutal volcanic power and calmed by the lives of people, the region of the first Slavs, the region of legends and the most famous of Czech myths at the mountain of **Říp**, which grows directly from Czech souls. A labyrinth of cones, moulds, pyramids, loaves, solitary giants. The realm of queen **Milešovka** and king **Hazmburk** (both mountains). Some of their subjects are hills so strange and eerie that one cannot believe

one's eyes – the icy mountain of **Plešivec**, a location with ice in June, and its brother the mountain of **Boreč**, a fiery mountain that pampers green grass and moss in icy weather by breathing out hot air from inside, and the boisterous stone suns in meadows near **Třebívlice**. The land is rich in garnets with hues of dark carmine. Here, man has built proud mansions – the Baroque chateau of **Libochovice**, the renaissance **Budyně** with an alchemist's room, the **Ploskovice** chateau in a Rococo style; as well as proud towns – medieval **Ústě** with sky-scraping Bird houses, chapels and the Calvary near **Ostrý** and



a stone ship in the woods, the majestic ruins of the castle of **Helfenburk**, the noble town of **Roudnice** enclosing the Lobkowicz chateau monument, the world-renowned gloomy **Terezín**, a silent witness of the extremes of human intolerance, the picturesque town of **Litoměřice** crowned with the lofty **Dómský pahorek** (hill) and the tower of St. Stephen's cathedral, the city of **Ústí nad Labem**, still not discovered by tourists, and only few know that it is a town of waterfalls and beautiful surroundings. The region of grapevines, which, despite the northern latitude, yield delicious juice, and the wines made of it are renowned and appreciated, the region of **Porta Bohe-mica** itself, the grandiose wide meander of the Elbe river, or the mysterious plateaus in the vicinity of **Verneřice** in the shade of **Buková hora** (mountain). And all these spots of beauty are linked by **Labská stezka** (the **Elbe path**), the central cycling route that continues further into Bohemian Switzerland and yet further, all the way to the sea.

The **Gate to Bohemia**, a name traditionally given to the region of **Ústí**, is made up of four massive and attractive cornerstones, four regions that deserve careful inspection in search of unexpected beauty. This is the sixth expedition carried on the pages of this magazine that aims to uncover the secrets and charms of individual locations. Let's do it differently this time. Let's soar high above the landscape and look at this varied and jagged piece of the Czech lands from above. In other words – let me tell you which aspects of the four “cornerstones” make their beauty visible from a distance.



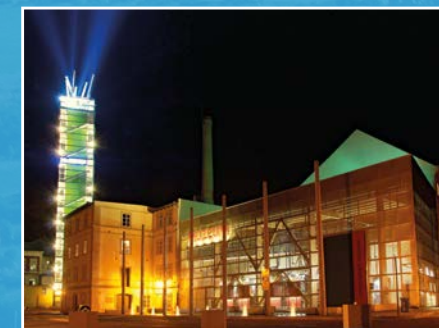
LOWER POOHŘÍ

The idyllic landscape around the life-giving **Ohře river**, which crawls down the wide basin from one royal town to another like a legendary snake, the forested mountaintops crowned with castle ruins, vast stretches of cultivated soil and tiny fields bathing in sun and combed by the wind, the rippled surface of the endless **Nechranická vodní nádrž** (Nechranická water reservoir). A region furrowed with the footsteps of ancient traders and the battles of legendary Lusatians. The land of mysterious menhirs. Put your trust in the Ohře river, it will show you the best path through its kingdom. You will be welcomed by the town of **Kláštepec nad Ohří** with a neo-Gothic Romantic chateau filled to the roof with precious porcelain, then



you will be hosted by the medieval town of **Kadaň**, with the narrowest lane in the country, fortifications and Zvingers, and the playful embankment promenade of **Maxipes Fik**, the hero of one animated series. The Ohře will carry you into the historic town of **Žatec** with the largest hop museum in the world, with the unique Temple of hops and beer, the place where you will hear the striking of the beer astronomical clock and can take a ride in a magic lift that will morph into the basket of a balloon flying high above the town. But now we are approaching the town of **Louny**, the pearl on the Ohře river with the fascinating roofs of St. Nicholas Temple and the mighty **Žatec gate** that holds together the horseshoe of the town fortifica-

tions. And if you set out in any direction from the riverbed you are bound to come across some wonderful things – the largest chateau park in the country, that is, the park surrounding the **Krásný Dvůr chateau**, the dreadful dragon sleeping in a mining shaft in **Březno**, the sparkling chateaus of **Stekník**, **Líčkov** and **Nový Hrad** and, finally, the mysterious and magic energy of the never completed structure of the Gothic temple in **Panenský Týnec**.

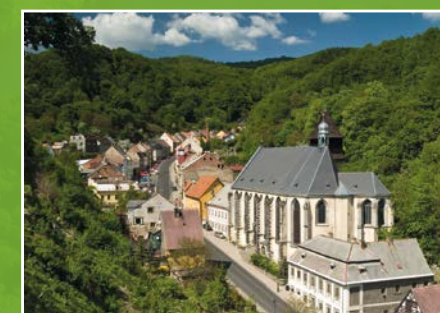


THE ORE MOUNTAINS

The silent mountains turn onto themselves, a hard life from time immemorial, with icily sharp views as well as foggy ones, always noble and majestic. A wonderful series of mountains of intoxicating raw beauty. A long, forested ridge that descends into woody and stony



slopes, enchanting mountain meadows, plains and marshes. They are full of unexpected surprises, hidden jewels, they have secrets that are amazing to uncover. All this is underlain with the energy of the Earth, the ores of pre-



cious metals mined from time immemorial, the mining shafts – roads to the Earth's core and the springs of healing waters. However, when the hills take off their colourful coats in winter and put on a majestic white robe, the Ore Mountains are very true to themselves. The ridges are home to the endless **Krušnohorská magistrála** (the Ore Mountain central route) – in summer for bikes, in winter for cross-country skiing, fascinating walks and peat bogs, the lake in **Fláje** guarded by forests,

the stone sphinxes near **Měděnec**, the mining shafts of ancient metal diggers, **Komáří vížka** (mountain) with the longest Czech chairlift with seats, a golf course at the highest altitude in the Czech Republic located in **Cínovec**, but also lookout towers, castle ruins and in winter bustling skiing centres in **Klínovec**, in **Klíný** and in **Telnice**. Below the mountains lovely towns await you – the spa resort of **Teplíce**, **Dubí** with the most northern Venetian church in the world, medieval **Krupka**, **Osek** with its noble monastery, the chateau in **Duchcov** that remembers the days of Casanova, **Most**, the town of drones, while the town of **Chomutov** boasts the unique lake of **Kamencové jezero** in the vicinity of the largest zoo in the country. You will come across lovely chateaus, for instance **Červený Hrádek**, the newly opened chateau in **Litvínov** or the spooky **Jezeří** towering above the moon-like landscape of the surface mines. You can even climb the devil's hill if you set out from **Bílina** in the direction of the mystical **Bořeň**...

Trips in search of mystery of Jetřichovice

České Švýcarsko (Bohemian Switzerland) is lavishly scattered with wonderful places that have been mesmerising tourists from all over the world for decades. The area has in fact two epicentres for waves of curious and keen walkers and cyclists. The first one of them is Hřensko with the formation of Pravčická brána and the gorges of the Kamenice river, and the second one is Jetřichovice with... But let's take one thing at a time. The search for the secrets of the charm and almost magical attractiveness of this middle-sized village in the middle of rocks and hills is the topic for the following lines.

Let us start with a short historical excursion – Jetřichovice was established in the 14th century as a settlement for the guard castle of Falkenštejn. The castle protected the so-called Czech road which linked the country with Lusatia and Saxony. It must have been a majestic castle with fields and agricultural buildings in the vicinity. Nowadays only a handful of rooms remain in its memory and the ascent to them is difficult, though possible. Now, that was the most important target from a historical viewpoint. And now we can stop in the centre of the village and think about which way to take. Honestly – whichever road you take you cannot go wrong. The best way to go about it is to visit the Information Centre. They are sure to give you tips galore. However, due to the information presented in these lines you will certainly have a healthy start already. Basically, you have two options – either you can follow the charming

painted markers and information boards and go along the walking routes, which means staying in the vicinity of the village, or you can go for a longer trip. Choose the walking routes if you feel like relaxing, or if you have small children with you, or if you just don't feel like going for a trek. The longer tracks await fit tourists who yearn to see some renowned or even lesser-known cites. If you are tempted, we can get to the more detailed part. So...

FOUR TRIPS IN SEARCH OF PICTURES IN THE VICINITY OF JETŘICHOVICE

A man standing in the centre of Jetřichovice and looking in awe at the ridge of the formation of Jetřichovické stěny, which winds into the distance like the back of a fabulous snake, beyond the back of the Baroque church of St. John of Nepomuk. The first walking route “Pfeiferův lesík” (Pfeifer's woods) leads under the rocky walls and starts right at the church. First, we go towards Kočičí kostel (Cat's church). Do not expect to find a temple full of adorable beasts, this is a beautiful rocky formation resembling a mirror of a fashion-oriented goddess turned to stone. On the way to an oak tree, hundreds of years old, and to the cross we are observed from above by three the famous vistas; Jetřichovické vyhlídky. But now we have entered woods surrounded with grazing land. Then we take an idyllic road with wonderful vistas and, making a loop, we get back to Jetřichovice – some three and a half kilometres altogether. The second route, known as “Kostelní” (church loop), leads from Fraňoch's cross by the side of Rynartice road, through woods and rocks – along the ancient church path that was trodden by religious villagers every Sunday on their way to St. John's. Having passed the picturesque chapel of St. Procopius,

we climb to the very edge of the village of Rynartice and then return along the road which will reward us with the famous Trpasličí skála (Dwarves' rock) with its colourful reliefs of elves chiselled at the beginning of the 19th century by a folk sculptor Ernst Vater directly into the rock. This trip is less than 2 kilometres. The other two routes start in the same way. We go south, uphill along the path winding through the rocks and along the road all the way to Griesel's cross. To the left the path descends towards the river valley of the Chřibská Kamenice and all this constitutes the “Pavlinka” loop. It will take us to the region of the famous Pavlino údolí (Pavlina's valley) to a picturesque pond, to Rusalčina jeskyně (water nymph's cave) and to a mysterious cork tunnel, which transported water first to a mill and then to a spinning factory. Today, we can flow through without soaking our clothes. Three and a half kilometres. From the point of Griesel's cross, we will follow



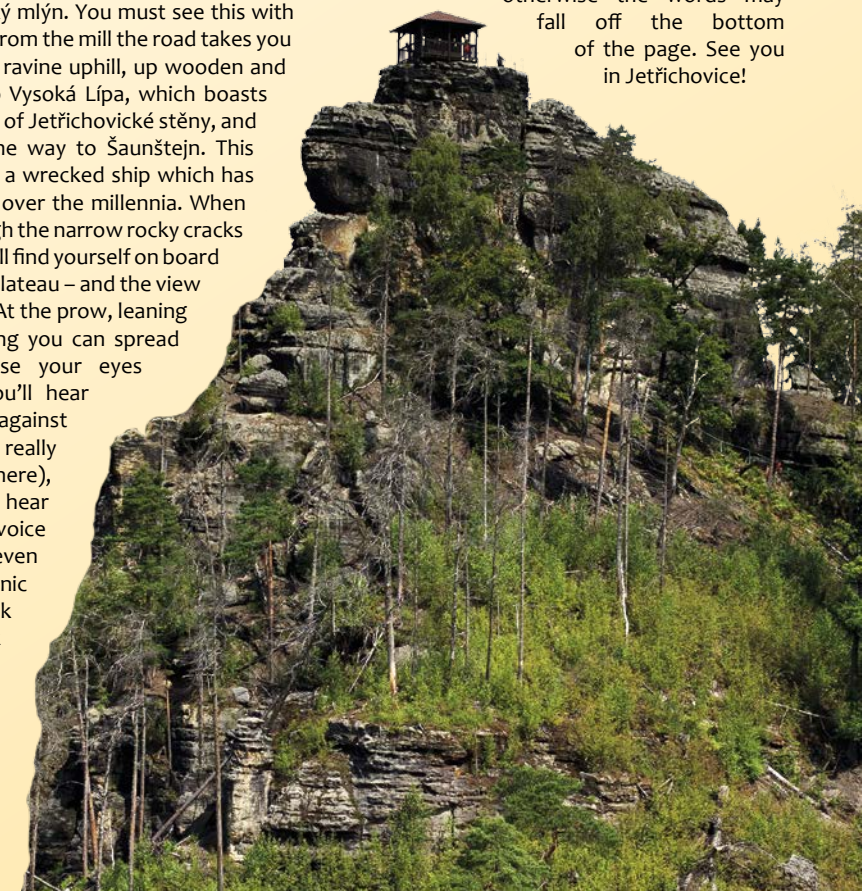
the blue markers for a while (keep it in mind, we'll get back to it!) until we reach a signpost that will send us along a forested hill that gave the name to this circle – “Čedičák”. We come to a forest, the benches provide wonderful views of plateau hills and peace and quiet. Two and a half kilometres. Along all the routes you will be accompanied by lovely pictures by Ivo Švejnoha, a painter from Kytlice. Thank you mister painter!

A TRIP TO FOLGA, TO DOLÁK AND TO VISTAS, AS WELL AS ON BOARD A SHIP TURNED TO STONE

I have known for a long time that the readers of this magazine love new routes and secret tips. Let us therefore start out on new journeys from Jetřichovice along a brand-new tourist route. We will follow the blue markers all the way to the aforementioned Griesel's cross, standing at the road leading to Všemily. After a while, the road will take us to a wonderful plateau where the settlement of Folga used to stand. This quiet path that winds through Folga is an idyllic route. You can let your eyes roam over meadows rich in blooming flowers, you will come across a modest chapel and a beautiful painted cross. Your partners on your journey will be the mountain of Studenec on one side and the mountain of Růžák on the other, and in high spirits you can descend along rocks all the way to Všemily. The place boasts a school built in the Upper Lusatian style with a belfry, a famous rock chapel and, a short way behind the village, an old cemetery preserved by local enthusiasts. The markers can take you further, along a cluster of bunkers along a wonderful farm track to Filipov and even further to Česká Kamenice. The other two routes are really well trodden; you will probably meet tourists there. But it's worth it. The first leads northeast, around the mysterious Havraní vrch (Raven hill), which has been recovering naturally from a devastating fire in 2006. Then the road turns and begins to ascend mercilessly. At the very top the ridge of the famous Mariina vyhlídka (Maria's vista) awaits you, and not far from there Vilemínina vyhlídka (Vilemína's vista) and then Rudolfův kámen (Rudolf's stone) – the three

peaks of the ridge trek along Jetřichovické stěny. Unbelievably wonderful vistas. The advantage of this route is that it turns back and after ten kilometres altogether you reach Jetřichovice again. The last route goes westwards, through the valley of one of the most splendid brooks in Bohemian Switzerland – the brook of Jetřichovická Bělá. After some time, it flows into the Kamenice and when you reach this point you will be only a few hundred metres away from arguably the most romantic ruins of a mill in the Czech Republic – Dolský mlýn. You must see this with your own eyes. From the mill the road takes you through a steep ravine uphill, up wooden and stone stairs into Vysoká Lípa, which boasts wonderful views of Jetřichovické stěny, and further on all the way to Šaunštejn. This formation is like a wrecked ship which has turned to stone over the millennia. When you climb through the narrow rocky cracks to the top you will find yourself on board a ship – a rocky plateau – and the view is unbelievable. At the prow, leaning against the railing you can spread your arms, close your eyes and perhaps you'll hear waves crashing against the keel (the sea really used to be here), others might hear the enchanting voice of Céline Dion, even though this Titanic did not sink but got stuck in the rocks. Just a little bit higher, waiting modestly, is the sister of the famous

heroine – Malá Pravčická brána (the Small Pravčická gate – a rock formation). Walking from here to Jetřichovice does not take that long – and the journey is lovely all the way. Now, do you have any idea why everybody talks about Jetřichovice? And I forgot to mention the journey along the Czech road towards the former Zadní Jetřichovice in the valley of Křínice, the entire valley of Pavlino údolí with the follow-up educational trail to Lipnice and Studený, the carved-out route to Rynartice, the trip to the hill of Tokáň... Enough is enough, otherwise the words may fall off the bottom of the page. See you in Jetřichovice!



The White Heart of the Garden of Bohemia



On the banks of the Velká řeka (Big river), in the background of greenish hills, a beautiful white ship lies at anchor with its St. Stephen mast piercing the skies. A dream that recurs each time you approach Litoměřice, a proud town encumbered with a precious treasure trove of historic gems, the brightest of them being the Baroque style of the town, designed mostly by the most famous citizen of Litoměřice, the architect Octavio Broggio, the genius of whom is imprinted on a half of northern Bohemia. Ambling through the streets, lanes and squares of Litoměřice is pleasing and intoxicating.

MORNING FULL OF ANCIENT TIMES

I admit that I love Litoměřice the most in the morning when the sun strokes the sleeping facades and then late in the evening when the Zwingers are lit up and the poetry of the poet Mácha is in the air. And what about the time in between? It's a good idea to get to know this town which resembles widely spread arms or a cornucopia from the skies. Do you think I'm exaggerating? No way! Unbelievers can

come with me. It is morning, so early that flocks of pigeons still slumber on cornices and the only partners of ours are the new-born Sun and curious wind that sweeps the nooks of Dómský pahorek (hill). We are at the beginning. This is the location of a former settlement from prehistoric times that gradually grew into a town. If we close eyes our imagination can recreate the Romanesque St. Stephens basilica from the beginning of the second millennium. Today, this place is the site of a noble cathedral dedicated to the same saint. Litoměřice was from the beginning of the summer of 1655 the seat

town of bishops and the town's religious significance was imprinted into its appearance. Dómský pahorek (a hill) is a place of remarkable noble peace, as though time here was different from time elsewhere. The very first bishop had the area built up with religious premises with three gates. The buildings of the bishop's residence, diocese charity and capitular consistory are crowned with a slender tower standing virtuously within the cathedral's reach. Before we climb it let's have a look inside the church – mass is not happening today so we can only look through the lattice. Our eyes rest on early Baroque times and our ears cannot help but hearing the soft steps of bishop Schleinitz, who checks the work of the builders in the morning. And then at last, having climbed a decent number of stairs, we stand at the top of the tower, and the view of the town and its surroundings is sure to take your breath away. On one side the Central Bohemian Mountains hug the town and protect the maze of lanes, on the other side the broad Elbe plain opens up. This is the town that will host us for the rest of the day. And, having started with the heritage of bishops, let us dwell for a while in the world of prayers and humbleness. The churches in Litoměřice are Baroque and beautiful. Kostel Věch svatých (All



Saints' Church), also known as the Bílý kostel (White church), at Mírové square, then kostel svatého Jakuba Staršího (The church of James the Greater) at Dominikánské square and finally kostel Zvěstování Panny Marie (the Annunciation Church), which tops the massive structure of the Jesuit college. The first two temples are accessible only when mass takes place, and the church mentioned last is always opened when it houses a concert or an exhibition of the Severočeská galerie výtvarných umění (Art Gallery of Northern Bohemia), which owns



the church. We will come across its collections twice more – first, in the spirit of our morning “bishopric walk”, in the Gallery and museum of the Litoměřice diocese (on the square) and then a few hundred metres along the way, in the main building of the gallery.

FROM THE COURTYARD OF LAUGHTER INTO THE REALM OF PAPER

You have had a taste of the town so let's finish the glass to the bottom. Our steps take us to the majestic library of the gothic castle whose walls remember two visits by the emperor and king Charles IV. This is only true about the walls really, since the interiors built within them are quite new and very remarkable. This inserted structure rescued the dilapidated monument and today is a place of quite exceptional experiences. For instance, the courtyard of laughter. This is not its real name but it could be – the place boasts a lovely exhibition about the legendary Czech comedian Felix Holzmann, who used to live in Litoměřice. On the castle's highest floor, we come across another sacred structure, this time it is dedicated to wine. A creative and interactive exhibition about the long history of the wine industry in Litoměřice, but also a pilgrimage through both sub-regions of Bohemian wine – the sub-region of Mělník and the sub-region of Litoměřice, which naturally ends in wine tasting. In the event of confusion, the staff in the information centre on



the castle's ground floor are there to help. Most likely they will send us just a few metres away to one of the castle's bastions, a former Jesuit observatory, which is nowadays filled from top to bottom with puppets. The local Galerie loutek (Puppet gallery) is naturally mostly appreciated by children, however the beauty of the exhibits is enticing whatever your age. And having reached the town fortifications we can follow the traces of them interrupted. At the end of Velká Dominikánská street, which we have entered directly from the square, we come across a lovely timbered house added to the castle's bastion, and inside it the kingdom of craftsmanship. The hand-made paper workshop will acquaint us with the history of paper manufacturing with a presentation on the process of the production of this ancient material, and so we leave with a wet sheet of paper made by our own hands.

FROM HEAVENLY HEIGHTS TO AN UNDERGROUND LABYRINTH

The day is getting older and there is still so much to see... For example, we can climb to the tower in the shape of a goblet in a house called Kalich (goblet). Just go to the Information centre on the square – and climbing along the edgy spiral of stairs can start immediately. The town looks different from this spot than from the cathedral tower, but again it is charming. However, the centre can also arrange a descent into the underground, and the underground in Litoměřice is vast, complicated and attractive. First, we set out through the corridors of the town hall underground into an exhibition called Důl Richard (The mine shaft Richard in the transition of time) and then, passing through the premises of the restaurant Radniční sklípek, we come into a three-storey cellar with a historical exhibition. And there are other must-see spots – the museum in the Renaissance building of the former town hall, the room of the poet Mácha, a theatre, cafés, restaurants, mini-breweries, wine cellars..., some of them were mentioned in previous issues of the magazine, so some things will be left aside for next time. It is getting dark

and it is time to take a stroll through the Zwingers, in other words terraces skirting the town fortifications. The houses below us squat tightly next one to another, the darkening sky is the backdrop for the silhouette of the cathedral, the first lamps light up and the poet Karel Hynek Mácha begins to draw pictures with words above a staircase named after him...

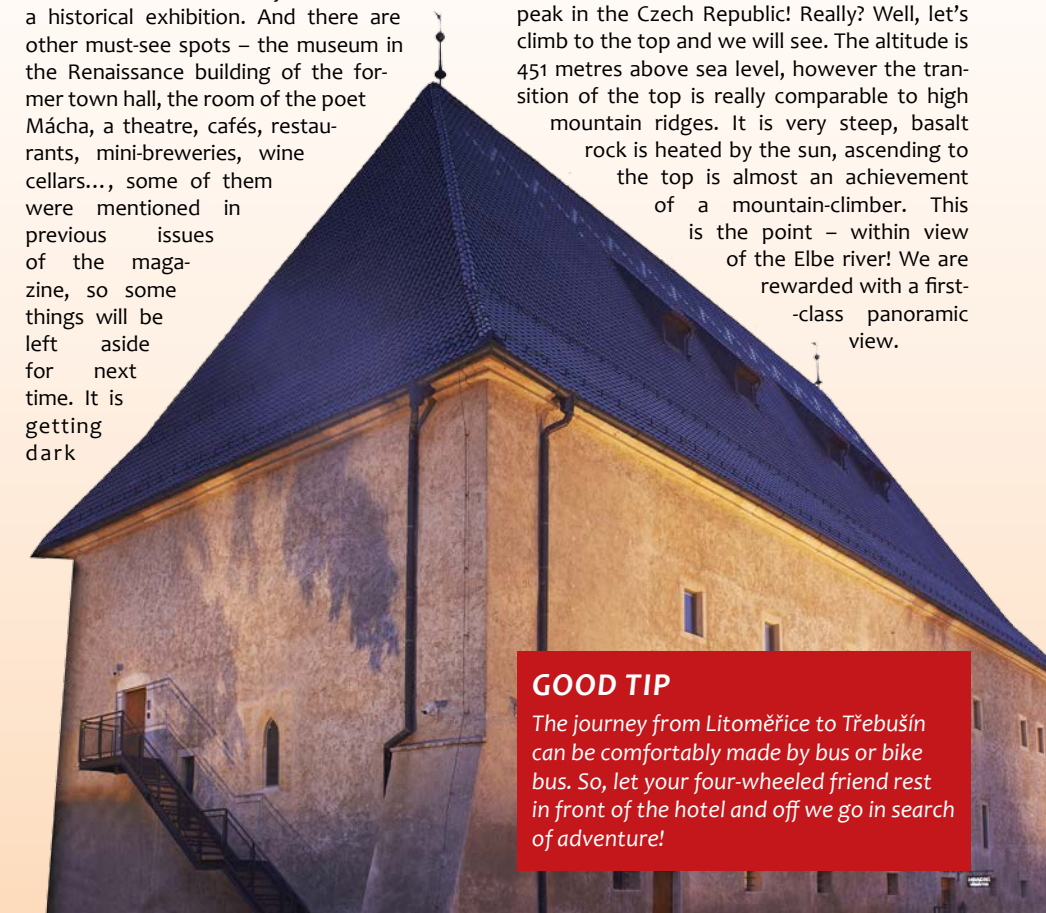


THREE ATTRACTIONS IN THE SURROUNDINGS

Litoměřice can be the starting point for wonderful trips for fourteen days in a row – and you will never be bored. Space is limited so let me suggest at least one more trip. We go to the remarkable village of Třebušín with some lovely Upper Lusatian houses. These jewels of folk architecture are present only in a limited area – and Třebušín is the southern border of this area. A rock that towers over the village is the place where the warrior Jan Žižka had the proud castle Kalich built – he liked it so much that he had his title changed to Jan Žižka “of Trocnov and of Kalich”. Nowadays, we can still see the remains of a gate, guard tower, walls of rooms and a cellar with a barrel vault. However, as far as the view is concerned nothing is missing, you can even see the mountain called Trojhora. You would never guess that this is the place with the only mountain peak in the Czech Republic! Really? Well, let's climb to the top and we will see. The altitude is 451 metres above sea level, however the transition of the top is really comparable to high mountain ridges. It is very steep, basalt rock is heated by the sun, ascending to the top is almost an achievement of a mountain-climber. This is the point – within view of the Elbe river! We are rewarded with a first-class panoramic view.

GOOD TIP

The journey from Litoměřice to Třebušín can be comfortably made by bus or bike bus. So, let your four-wheeled friend rest in front of the hotel and off we go in search of adventure!



The Ore Mountains full of adrenaline

Some might say that we live too well, we have no worries and so, out of vanity, we pursue various adrenaline filled entertainment and experiences – we just have to take risks. Despite such moralistic words, more and more people want to have adrenaline flowing through their veins. If you are one of them, please continue reading. I warn the others – the experiences collected in the following lines might not be for city folk!

A NEW TRAIL PARK ON KLÍNOVEC

The largest skiing centre in the Ore Mountains offers well known experiences on eleven skiing slopes, free-ride terrains, a snowboard park with a U-ramp and a children's ski park. The summer Trail Park is a novelty. It will be especially appreciated by cyclists and scooter riders – the narrow trails in wild terrain and moderate slopes are certainly a lot of fun. The easy Azur trail with a length of 10.3km is waiting, then there is the 4km long Rubin, of intermediate difficulty, and there is also a downhill trail for experts. And work on other trails is in progress so the choice of trails will be even richer by the summer of 2017. The surroundings of Klínovec contain about 74km of routes for mountain bikes, scooter riders and walkers. The chairlift is fully operational and on request bikes and scooters can be transported too. And then just take a step back and off you go... A downhill rush.

KLÍNÝ, FULL OF ADRENALINE

A true paradise for lovers of varied levels of adrenaline is the area around Klíný. The local premises offer, besides downhill skiing (on five slopes) and cross-country skiing circles where you can adjust the level of adrenaline to your needs, a refined snow park for free-skiing and snowboarding with two lines of obstacles



– intermediate and beginner difficulty. You should expect jumps, rails, boxes, barrels, a plastic pipe... Or you can book a ride on a Pisten Bully 400W snow groomer with a winch and take a ride at the highest speed along the slope! You will also find out how first-class corduroy is ironed. Enjoy an hour of light adrenaline and you can rest assured that there will be material to put on Instagram! The snow wheel Fatboy is a treat in its own right – you don't know what you're missing unless you try it. You can rent such a wheel at Klíný and they will also advise you about the best location to try it. The fun is not over when the snow thaws, one could even say quite the contrary! The chairlift is functional in summer too and so you can make use of the local Bike park. They offer trails for children, beginners and "experts", that is, bikers who aren't stopped easily. For a while you are on a ski slope, then

a passage through some woods, single tracks, downhill, obstacles, jumps, blue, red, and if you insist even the black trail, which is all topped off with a pump track for children... Bikes can be hired. And not only bikes – mountain scooters too! Wonderful machines that you can use to overcome steep slopes, stony terrain, woodland tracks, downhill with boulders and jumps, banked turns, free terrain... And when the premises are too limited for you, being transported by the chairlift whenever need be, you can take a ride in the foothills all the way to the town of Litvínov, where you can load your scooter onto a van and go back to Klíný. Ten kilometres of single tracks and a small road with almost no traffic in the picturesque Šumenské údolí (Šumenské valley). Not enough yet? No problem – enjoy the artificial climbing wall, in fact there are three of them of various difficulty levels, one with an overhang and a height of eight metres. Alternatively, you can go swinging along the ropes at the rope park. Eighteen obstacles await you at heights of up to five metres above the ground. Naturally all the equipment can be hired on the spot. To put it simply: enjoy Klíný, it is a true paradise!



THE SMELL OF PETROL AT MOST CAR RACE COURSE

Adrenaline filled experiences are also available in the plains below the mountains. One such perfect location is Most car race course. Watching the wizards behind the wheels of racing cars need not be the last step – even though for many of you this is already the peak of excitement. You can try the taxi ride of your life (Taxijízda života). This means that you take the passenger seat next to one of those wizards in racing cars, snap on the six-point safety belt,



put on a helmet... and then your facial muscles begin to deform. In places where you would push the brake down to the floor your personal driver steps on the gas with a smile on their face. The ride is more than four kilometres long – and a small piece of advice: trying to leave the car during the course of the ride is not recommended. On the other hand, it is quite obvious that this experience is quite safe, and not only because of the fact that the teaching centre for safe driving is located on the premises. If being a passenger is not enough for you can take a course in sports driving with professional racing driver Petr Fuřín – he will teach you how to drive! And once you think that you are the best of all you can test

your skills in the Most Challenge competition for amateur drivers and leave the rest behind you on the big racing circuit. And what about go-carts? They are small but swift. A ride on a modern course with a quality asphalt surface in a Birel N35 go-cart with a Subaru 200 cm³ motor might make your head spin. Would you rather try it in the wild? Why not – how about four-wheelers? A Buyang Delta Force 300 4x4 below you rears like a horse and off you go swishing along a special off-road track. And utter bliss, if you're that type of guy, is to take a ride along the same track in an off-road vehicle or on a motorbike. And what about children? Is there anywhere for them to play? Naturally. They can enjoy the local road traffic playground with working traffic lights, roundabouts, traffic signs as well as bikes, scooters, baby bikes...

HOW TO TAME A DRAGON AND DIG UP A MINE SHAFT

Now I wonder what wilder experiences I could offer you? Perhaps taming wild dragons comes to mind, what do you think? Honestly, I do not mean the legendary winged monsters, but these ones will shake you up properly as well. Snow kiting is a sport that is becoming very popular and a growing number of resorts in the Ore Mountains offer you a snow ride while being dragged along by a kite. They will teach you how to sit on the sled, they will provide you with all the equipment and they will also pray for you when the kite jerks into flight and takes you for the ride of your life. The last experience does not seem to be adrenaline-based on first sight. A medieval mine shaft – "so what?" you may think. Ok – borrow a coat, a helmet and wellingtons and set off on a trip



underground. We are in Měděnec, in the mine shaft called Země zaslíbená (the Promised land). If you were expecting swept paved paths for weekend tourists – hard luck. You will be plodding through mud, water, between narrow walls and along ladders; this will give you a very limited idea of what it was like for a metal miner in the 16th century, who with a torch, a hammer and a pick, having knelt in water for fourteen hours, has just estimated that he has dug out 4 centimetres of the shaft... Obviously, this is not meant for claustrophobic people.



An Unjustly Forgotten Baroque Pearl

The Czech Republic is a Baroque country. It was the surge of Baroque emotions, faith and dynamics that marked the beginning of a gigantic construction boom. Churches and monasteries were rebuilt, new ones were built, faith burst forth from the open doors of temples and flooded the countryside with chapels, crosses, pillars, wayside shrines and statues, aristocratic mansions and burgher houses changed their appearance towards rounded lavishness, gardens assumed a symmetric order and perfect shapes. Much of this has been preserved. When a person stands in a town filled with Baroque monuments, they fascinate them as witnesses of the past against a contemporary background. The small town of Cítoliby provides just the opposite.

A BAROQUE ISLAND IN THE WAVES OF THE PRESENT

When I arrived in Cítoliby for the first time I had a very strange feeling that repeated itself with each subsequent visit. I was suddenly standing in the middle of the Baroque era and the present appeared to be an unwelcome intruder. I found it quite absurd that cars were passing by the jewels that were surrounding me, that there were streetlights, that a lamp post speaker was broadcasting a message to the public who were dressed in strange clothes... The present seemed to be a ghost of the future while the past was the present. This was doubtlessly caused by the fact that Cítoliby is filled to the brim with Baroque architecture. As early as the 13th century the settlement was built around the village square with a gate to let travellers in from the main road, that is, the thoroughfare never led through the square. Nowadays a road crosses the square and one subconsciously feels that this is not the way things should be. As soon as you face the lovely and in many ways unique column of the Holy Trinity and Holy Mary,

you will find yourselves in a completely logical axis. There is a Baroque chateau behind you, you and the column are the central point of the composition, the façade of St. Jacobs church is in front of you but... something is somehow wrong. Oh, I see – it's the trees! Gorgeous ancient lindens, the one nearest to the church is more than 150 years old. The trees were not here at the time when the buildings were built. Since we are, just for the moment, people from the Baroque era we can easily forget the trees and the entire intention becomes quite clear and logical. In order to fully enjoy the Baroque composition, we move over to the other side of the square, which is lower than the one we have just left. It is this segmentation that shows the intention its meaning – from below the axis chateau – column – church shines. Who was actually behind this idea? And who carried it out?

BRAUN, KAŇKA, REINER AND THE OTHERS

In 1651 the Cítoliby estate was purchased by Ernst Schütz of Leopoldsdorf and his wife Markéta



Blandina. Ten years later Ernst was killed in the war with the Turks and thus the author of the idea to rebuild and complete Cítoliby in the spirit of Baroque ideas and trends came from a woman – Markéta Blandina. This would be unusual a short time ago, let alone in the Baroque period. First the rebuilding of the chateau started, then the garden began to grow – and here the first big name comes into play – Jan Tulipán (tulip in English).

You will acknowledge that it would be hard to find a more fitting name for a gardener. And this name is once and for all linked to the famous garden and greenhouses of Libochovice chateau. Lady Markéta died in 1687 and the family work was passed over to her son Ernst Gottfried. In the 18th century the church was built and soon afterwards so was

the Trinity column. The entire axis had been finished by 1715. Designers? The chateau was most likely designed by Giovanni Domenico Orsi, the church probably by Domenico Rignano. As for the other artistic works, the Schütz family managed to commission some true giants of Czech Baroque. The statues of the church, the gardens and the Column of the Holy Trinity and Holy Mary were created by the workshop of the sculptor Matthias Bernard Braun, the pictures in the church were painted by Václav Vavřinec Reiner, the construction of the garden column and the Trinity column saw the participation of František Maxmilián Kaňka. Each of these names belongs amongst the highest level of Czech Baroque art and structural engineering. Suddenly a car whizzes behind you, the trees are back and you have to ask yourself the question what has been preserved to this day? Certainly not everything, but there is still a lot to see.

AN ENCHANTING GALLERY UNDER A ROOF AND IN THE OPEN

Kaňka and Braun's Trinity column has been brilliantly repaired and shines almost as though it were new. It is true that Braun's statues of God the Father, Christ the Saviour and the Archangel lost their heads during one over-excited communist First of May procession but that fact takes almost no grandiosity and lustre away from the column. However, the chateau and the garden are in a much worse condition. The chateau is not accessible to the public and there are no signs indicating a better future. The garden has been used for more than hundred years to grow vegetables and not much of the past glory has remained. On the other hand, St. Jacobs church has withstood the past almost unchanged. Braun's statues, originally displayed in the church facade, are unfortunately gone, however his two

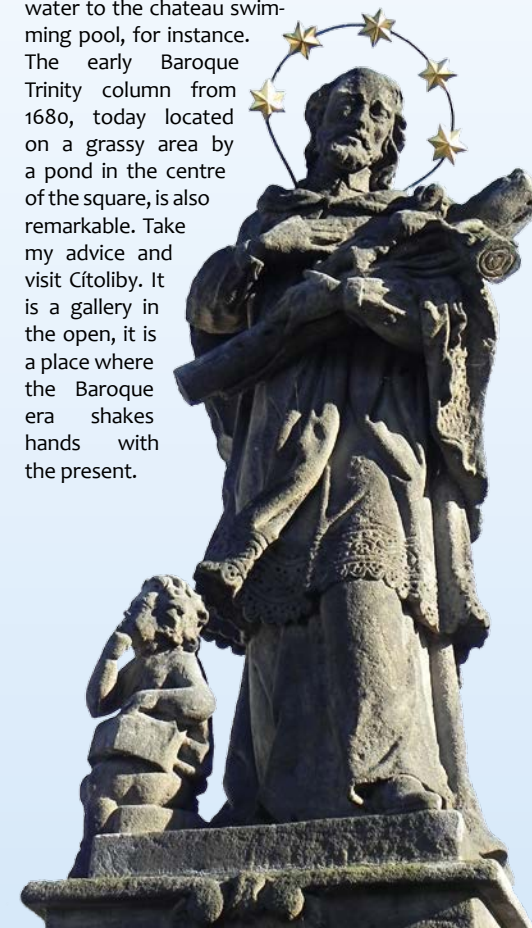


crucial sculptures placed on the wall that used to define the borders of the cemetery around the church have been preserved. The originals are now in St. Peters church in Louny but well-made copies are sufficient witness to Braun's genius. The one on the left is one of Braun's most merry statues, the one on the right is certainly one of his most tragic ones. The first one is an allegory of Faith (or also Youth), the other one is an allegory of Time (or Old Age). Entering the church in fact means entering an exclusive Baroque gallery. Right ahead of you there is one of the most precious Baroque groupings in the country – the statues of angels carrying light in the presbytery and the statues of St. Wenceslaus and St. Ludmila on the left and right confessional, respectively, are Braun's work. The third largest altar picture in Europe depicts St. Jacob and was painted by Václav Vavřinec Reiner, who belongs, together with Škréta and Brandl, amongst the giants of Czech Baroque painting. The majority of the remaining pictures are also his work – four evangelists in the presbytery, St. John of Nepomuk on the left side altar and St. Barbara on the right side altar. Staying here in silent meditation is an experience that you will rarely get elsewhere. However, Cítoliby is full of Baroque features, especially as far as statues are concerned. During a stroll along the square

you will meet St. Procopius with a devil on a chain (most likely also a work of Braun's), St. Leonard with a sheep and St. Barbara with a chalice, one hundred metres downhill from the square you'll come across a spectacular St. John of Nepomuk statue dating back to late the Baroque period. In Cítoliby you will find statues in other places too – in front of the classicistic vicarage at the Trinity cross St. Wenceslaus, St. Bernard, St. Peter and St. Paul line the southern side of the church. You will certainly notice a Baroque water tower built around 1717. The tower used to distribute water to the chateau swimming pool, for instance. The early Baroque Trinity column from 1680, today located on a grassy area by a pond in the centre of the square, is also remarkable. Take my advice and visit Cítoliby. It is a gallery in the open, it is a place where the Baroque era shakes hands with the present.

TIP

Before we leave the Baroque world of Cítoliby let us visit the St. Apollonia chapel on the road heading for Brloh. It is a brilliant example of High Baroque construction skills. And by the way, St. Apollonia is the patron saint of everybody who suffers from toothache. So whatever you believe in, just look carefully and you will see the face of the saint coming out of the background... A short plea won't do any harm since toothache... who would not want to get rid of it?



The Landscape of the Czech Central Highlands seen from a bike seat

The Elbe, which used to be called the Big river in ancient times, attracted man from time immemorial. People would build houses by the river, they would use it to transport goods, catch fish, build bridges and ferries, but especially to travel along its banks. At first on the basis of pure pragmatism in order to survive, later thanks to growing touristic curiosity and nowadays for example in order to raise the level of adrenaline in the blood or to have a chance to enjoy oneself. For reasons quite incomprehensible to the first Slavs a continuous bicycle path, i.e. the Elbe path, was created on the Elbe banks to provide fun, sport, activity and an opportunity to acquire new knowledge. The path is really long. Almost 1,400 kilometres from the river spring in the Krkonoše (the Giant Mountains) to the North Sea by (Dolnosaské Cuxhaven) Lower Saxony Cuxhaven.

A LANDSCAPE AS A GALLERY OF MARVELS

I have written about the Elbe path several times in this magazine and so by now you know that its length in the region of Ústí is 95 kilometres and it is not as level as one may think – you will climb and descend roughly 500 vertical metres altogether. But still this is an idyllic ride, nothing for mountain bikers, on the other hand everything for cyclists who prefer to look around and not ahead all the time. This time we will focus on the part of the route that crosses the Central Bohemian Mountains and thus naturally also through the gate (rock formation) that gave its name to our magazine. So how can one describe it without exaggeration...? It is colossal and unbelievably beautiful. Now, really, get on a bike and try to undergo the almost 80 kilometres from Štětí all the way to Děčín, where České švýcarsko (Bohemian Switzerland) takes over the path. You will not stop wondering.

Just the ride along the river is intoxicating. The banks gradually alter their appearance, the character of the scenery changes and so does the atmosphere of the ride. At the beginning, in the plains



near Štětí and Roudnice, you will come across the bubbles of the first knolls and hills, naturally the ancient mountain of Říp dominating the area. Then the white shining silhouette of Litoměřice emerges, with the rocket of the Saint Stephen tower pointing towards the skies, all this against the background of the exuberantly rising hills of the Central Bohemian Mountains on the right bank of the Elbe. And suddenly, like an eagle, the hill of Radobýl, a favourite of the poet Mácha, spreads its wings before you. Now, over the glittering river, you can see a vast stretch of the region below Říp, the plain that is abruptly interrupted by the majestic silhouette of castle Hazmburk and then breaks into a picturesque undulating horizon of mountains grouped together with Milešovka

mountain. By then you have arrived at the bank of lake Píšťanské jezero and out of the blue you are surrounded by mild slopes near Žernoseky abundant in vines and vineyards that remember the times of emperor Charles IV. Then, high above you, three well-built crosses of the Calvary emerge and you are entering one of the most beautiful meanders in the world, the rock formation called the gate to Bohemia or Porta Bohemica. The hilltops with forests on top stretch their feet to the very river. You will pass by Libochovice chateau and suddenly it seems as though St. Barbara descended from the skies and put the white church in Dubičky on the top of the mountain ridge on the left bank. By now you are already being watched by stony Střekov and playful Větruše and you pass through Ústí nad Labem and continue towards other hills, ridges, jagged scenery, past the chateau in Krásné Březno, you are heading for the sharp needle of Bukovka, the romantic silhouette of Vrabinec and the dignified wall of Děčínský Sněžník with the beacon of the stone lookout tower.



PRAISE FOR DETOURS

We have not got off the bicycle yet! Now imagine that you take a turn from time to time, a lovely detour, you stop and start to study the opulent beauty and curiosities on both sides of the path. For example, from Štětí you can follow the footsteps of highwayman Štětká all the way to the feared cave of Mordloch. In Roudnice pay a visit to the candy store Dortletka to taste the sweet delicacy of the same name, which will melt on your tongue, then get on the Podřipský motor train and you can go all the way to



Libochovice chateau, a true Baroque gem, or a cycle bus can take you to the medieval town of Ústětk. Anyway, cycle buses with stops along the entire route offer a lift from the river to the mountains and then back again to the river's banks – they will take you to Velemín, Třebenice, Verneřice... In Nučnice you can take a ferry to the other bank and take a peek into the gallery of decorated Easter eggs (Galerie kraslic) in Libotenice or the Levandulová farm (Lavender farm) in Židovice and maybe you will get as far as the fortified town of Terezín. In Litoměřice you will be assaulted by wonderful cafés, restaur-



rants, breweries, but also galleries, sacred monuments, lookout towers, underground rooms... The lake of Píšťanské jezero provides all you need for a proper bath in pure water and relaxation and you may allow your eyes to wander over the ships and yachts. When in Velké Žernoseky, have a look at Gothic wine cellars chiselled into the rock, taste the local wine in one of the local wine shops and you can use the ferry again to set out for the valley of Oparenské údolí guided by the hill of Lovoš or you can go back to Lovosice and have a good meal in Cukrovar. In Brná get off your bike for a while and take a trip to a lovely but little known ravine called Průčelská rokle. It was admired by Karl May and you can follow his footsteps to the waterfall of Průčelský vodopád, then you can get back and cycle a few hundred metres to a thermal swimming pool where you can wash away the dust from the journey. The ferry stop in Vaňov will allow you to climb the basalt mountain of Vrkoč and it would be simply unwise not to cross the Elbe, be it only to the other bank and back, across one exceptional technical monument, the Masaryk river lock. Taking a turn here also seems to be a must. And what about the cable car from the centre of Ústí to the top of Větruše? Do it! This is a place where you can have a wonderful meal and where you can get lost in the natural and mirror mazes. And when you find yourself on the left bank go in the direction of Krásné Březno, walk through the zoo and make sure not to miss St. Florians church with one of the most beautiful altars that I have ever seen. The Elbe path on the other bank will take you to the brewery and Tivoli restaurant in Velké Březno, where the orchard smells so nice and the beer tastes so good... And we have not mentioned the chateau of the Chotek family with its splendid park!

In Malé Březno you can try the historic railway that will take you to the open air folk architecture museum in Zubrnice... And this is only a fraction of the options limited by the length of this article. But I am not worried on your behalf – from the seat of your bike you are sure to find places that I am completely unaware of.



The Treasures on the Left Bank



Most people perceive Bohemian Switzerland as a territory on the right bank of the Elbe and best know the village of Hřensko, the gorgse of the Kamenice river and the rock formation of Pravčická brána or Jetřichovice with Dolský mill and great views. And so, the secrets and charms of the left bank of the Elbe are unknown to them. However, the thing is that speaking about Bohemian Switzerland and Saxon Switzerland is geographical nonsense. Rocks do not give a damn about borders. Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland is simply one whole across the territory of two states with two national parks. And so, we are not going to pay attention to the borders either as we survey the mysterious left bank.

FROM THE REALM OF GIANTS TO A STONE LOOKOUT TOWER

It is not true by any means that the left bank of the Elbe on Czech territory is without attractions – this would be a total misunderstanding. Many will make do with a simple count – the rocky walls of Tiské stěny, the rocks of Ostrovské and Rájecké skály, the mountain of Děčínský Sněžník. Well, and those of you who want more just keep on reading. If you want to get to know the territory it is best to find a comfortable base nearby and take trips from there. You may choose Děčín, a town located below these areas, or for instance Ostrov, a settlement at the bottom of a large rocky caudron where a vast meadow with several ponds is lined with fortifications of sandstone rock. I have written about hotel Ostrov before, it is an ideal starting point. We should start in Tisá, an elongated village resembling a settlement under a gigantic castle whose fortifications and fanciful battlements stretch as far as the eye can see. Ok, they are not only fortifications, they are also the rocky walls of Tiské stěny, but if you use your imagination... This rocky town is one of the best known in the country. There



are a number of reasons for that – this limited area contains a rocky wall and behind it a perfectly intertwined maze of rock towers, cracks and gorges, quaint squares and holes, where each rock has a name, where stone elephants, tortoises, bears and even mayors and beheaded majors look down upon you and where you will always find something new even if you have visited the place for the hundredth time. A paradise for children among the rocks of Malé Tiské stěny, where children can keep running for hours to and fro in the soft sand of the shallow maze, there is no such other place like this one. When you have had enough of hiding in the rocks it is time to have a look around the countryside. The cliffs of Tiské stěny provide a perfect view, however the grandiose view from the romantic stone lookout tower on the top of the plateau mountain of Děčínský Sněžník cannot be matched. It's a few kilometres from Tisá to get here, the last two being rather steep, however the experience from the gallery of the lookout tower in every season and in every weather condition cannot be, I am afraid, captured in words. In foggy weather, it is a ship on the sea, at dusk it is a castle of elves, in autumn it is the central point of a very colourful palette... Just next to Tiské stěny tens of rocks

known rocky town of Rájec. This place is hard to find, in fact it copies, in a way, the road from Tisá to Rájec on the right side, but the effort invested in such a search is certainly worth it. One always has the feeling as if they were the first person to set foot in this area. However, if we set out from Tisá following the red markers in the direction of Ostrov, we will come across two other rock towns. The first of them with the name of Volské kameny is more like a village in size, however it is certainly worth looking at, the second one, Ostrovské skály, is different, less spectacular but mysterious and mystical. And it is a paradise for all types of rock climbers.

WONDERFUL HERCULES COLUMNS

We slowly descend the old road leading through meadows near Ostrov until we reach the intoxicating valley of the Bělá stream, which will change its name to Biela after a few kilometres, but at this spot it is called the Bielatal. Actually, before we take this trip we can take one of the most beautiful detours you will have ever taken. We go left and climb the slope until we find at first the yellow and then the red markers that will take us to a lovely viewpoint on the border – Grenzplatte. The views from here are directly imprinted into your soul and the season and even the weather won't matter. Well – and now back to the valley of the Bělá. We realise that we are in Saxony only when, going along a romantic path, we reach Otto's mill, since all the information tables are in German. So, to be precise, the mill's name is Ottomühle. We can have something to eat and drink and then we set out in the direction of a forested slope to a spot that easily matches all the other well-known tourist magnets of Bohemian-Saxony, but hardly anybody knows about this one. Following the rocky road – Felsengasse – we soon reach the amazing Hercules columns. The two slim rock towers seem amazing from every point, however the view from the slope where you can see the sun between the columns descending towards the west and gilding everything it can reach among the shadows is an unforgettable view, I can guarantee that. And further along the way there is a tower, as if from a fairy tale, rising from a rock wall and pointing towards the sky. We will get to it following the path marked with a yellow circle all the way to the top and the view will take your breath away. The stone viewpoint of Bielablick was created in 1880 by a certain J. G. Kaiser from nearby Rosenthal to please ladies and gentlemen keen on tourism. Through a stone window, you will see the rock town on the other side. Then back to the valley and along stairs and ladders first to John's vista – Johannishof – which offers a full view of Königstein fort and then to the impressive



Saxon stone – Sachsenstein – which can be climbed thanks to metal ladders, and climbers will be rewarded with a spectacular view of Hercules columns and the entire ridge of Děčínský Sněžník.

BY BUS OVER THE BORDER OR WHEREVER YOU WISH TO GO

You can visit all the aforementioned places within two or three trips. Some of you may sigh and say that you are too old for such a slog – or young but lazy. Hard luck, excuses referring to age or laziness will not be accepted since the sensational cross-border tourist bus line number 217 is newly available. It starts in Saxon Pirna and heads for Czech Petrovice and Tisá (if you get off there, the rocks of Tiské stěny will be within reach and even a small child will manage the walk to Ostrov), to the village of Sněžník (an ascent of one and a half kilometres towards the lookout tower following the educational path Zapomenuté pohraničí – Forgotten borderland), to Saxon Rosenthal (the forest stop offers a pleasant and comfortable walk to Bielatal and to Hercules columns), to Leupoldishain and to the town of Königstein on the Elbe banks. From there you can take a circular trip to a fasci-

TIP

We have not talked much about the Leupoldishain stop of bus no. 217 in, which is a great mistake. The truth is that just 2.5 kilometres from there, hidden among the rocks, there is a stone maze carved out by Mother Nature in the gigantic sandstone blocks. Cracks and narrow holes, clefts and dales, a perfect maze of paths – but not too vast fortunately.

SOME ADVICE

Unless you have bought the Labe—Elbe ticket (a natural choice for a tourist in Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland), be ready to pay for bus tickets in Euros.

nating fort at the peak of a plateau mountain of the same name. It is a monumental complex with an area of almost ten hectares. Walking among sky-scraping walls, letting oneself be squeezed between tight gates, viewing the countryside, this is a unique experience. The fort gates are open for everybody and there is not a single week without a fair, feast or a show in costumes, but even on a day when no such activity is buzzing through the courtyards there are still several walking routes for strolls and you can be accompanied on them by an audio guide in Czech. It takes at least two hours and the willingness to prepare yourself for a look into the depths of time – as well as the depths of the local rocks. You will certainly enjoy a look into the deepest drilled well in Saxony or the descent into four century old cellars and casemates, the former location of an infamous jail.



Quite Different Trips with Offroadsafari.cz



HAPHAZARD TRIPS THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE

I am sitting in the passenger seat listening to the words of my guide Martin Bareš. It was he who came up with the idea of travelling across the landscape haphazardly and showing people places that are beautiful, but which only a few know about. Tourism is growing bigger and bigger and people feel like they have seen it all. No way. Martin offered to show me the route through the coal region of Most combined with the route following the traces of the Second World War found in the region. We are going along a road through Růžodolská coal mine and I feel as though I am in some hills untouched by human activity. The tip has morphed into forests and meadows. I learn that this might look natural but in fact it is the result of the complicated intention of re-cultivators who created a project for the reforestation of the tip, planted maples, larches, alders, poplars and rowans, adjusted the terrain and handed over the work to the hands of Mother Nature. Suddenly the view ahead of me darkens as Martin goes off road and we go, or rather fall, down a steep slope, which is luckily quite short. Only now I am beginning to understand what these vehicles can do. One metre deep pools, slopes that hardly anybody would climb – nothing is a problem. I am telling



myself – this is why the trip takes six hours, we will be plodding through impassable terrain. But this is not true – the off-road parts are more to entertain the travellers. What matters is to see interesting places and have some fun. It means that the ride itself makes up only a fraction of the trip's time. We often stop, take photos, talk and survey the terrain – we may be searching for fossils uncovered by mining activity. However, Offroadsafari.cz also has other programmes during which you will be seeking Czech garnet or will be given a metal detector to investigate the traces of the past hidden underground. I am a little bit ahead of myself but perhaps I can disclose that my finds from the trip were a lovely piece of porcelain – baked clay, a piece of fossilized wood and a beautiful fossil – a leaf imprint in stone. The usual equipment in the car includes binoculars or prospecting pans for searching for Czech garnet.

HISTORY CARVED INTO THE LANDSCAPE

Martin stops the jeep and we get out. In front of us is a panorama of the chemical factory in Záluží. Here I have the first chance to learn that Martin – and his two colleagues who also drive guests through the landscape – is certainly not just a driver. They are guides who know what they're talking about. At the end of the day

I came to the conclusion that Martin is a former miner, geologist, hydrologist, botanist, zoologist, historian... However, he is none of these. He is just keen to acquire new knowledge and learn about new connections, stores this information in his head and is able to use it when the time comes. For example, now I am listening, open mouthed, to the story of the chemical factory in Záluží, the construction of which was started by the Nazis right at the beginning of the war because of the coal mines in the vicinity in order to produce fuel from coal using the technology of hydrocracking – they would produce a million tons a year. They brought in prisoners of war from all over the world to carry out the hard work and made use of a vast network of labour camps, which surrounded the factory, as well as gyms, pubs and other confiscated buildings. Throughout the war about 100,000 prisoners passed through this location. At one time, there were 33,000 people working here – which means more than



the population of the nearby town of Most at the time. During an air raid by the Allies on 12th May 1944 two thousand people of miscellaneous nationalities died – and nowadays nobody remembers them whilst we riotously and flamboyantly celebrate every... We are moving again and every now and then we pass by a "fopík" or "einmannbunker" (i.e. one-man bunker) or "splittergraben" (slit trench) – little forts functioning as light fortifications – stories come out one after

"When will we see the moon-like landscape?" is the question most frequently asked by those who have been lured by the offer of the Offroadsafari.cz project and set out on a six-hour ride by jeep through "the coal region of Most". However, they are soon to find out that the landscape is around them but nowadays looks more like a nature reserve – and in fact many parts officially belong to a nature reserve. To put it simply, it is fascinating to watch how nature, with a little bit of assistance from re-cultivators, regenerates, how the locations of former tips are being covered by a forest consisting of varied tree species with shallow lakes and marshes that provide habitat for more and more amphibians, how birds take hold of landfills that have, due to erosion, taken on fanciful shapes reminding us of the Mediterranean, how the location of the former brown coal quarry is covered with water and changed into a lake with pure water, how hares and deer scurry through grassy meadows. Nature watches us with amusement and mumbles under its breath: "They are here for some trifling eighty or ninety years and think they are entitled to pass judgement." Yes, from nature's viewpoint we are mayflies who spend a very short time in this world. And nature, not interested in our lamentations, again takes hold of everything that was taken away from it for a short time.



A LAKE IN PLACE OF A QUARRY

We are going down a dusty dirt road leading towards a splendid lake with transparent, pure water. I learn that this is a pit left behind after the Most – Ležáky quarry and that the pit is being converted to a recreation area. This area is out of bounds for

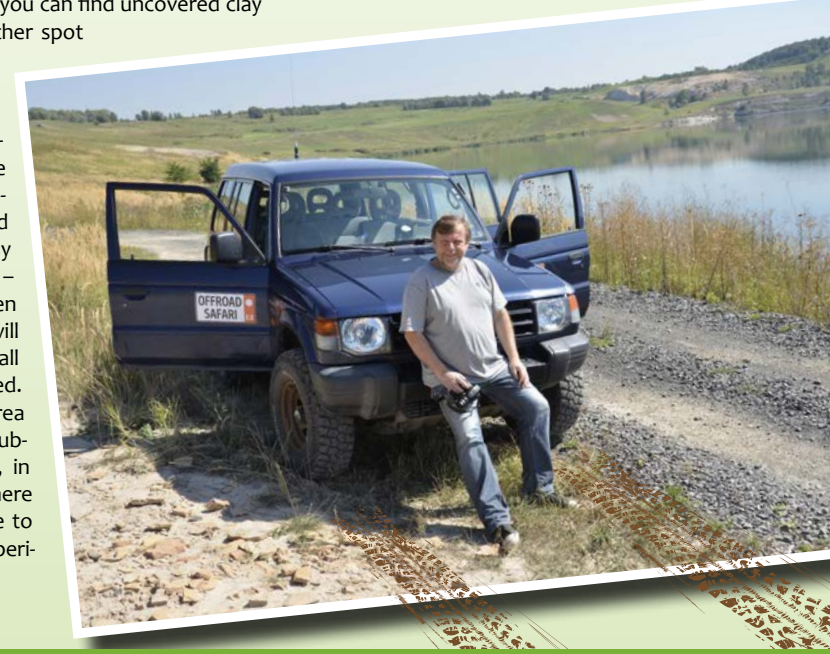


normal people but the representatives of Offroadsafari.cz have managed to negotiate an exception for themselves and thus they are the only entity that can take people here and show them the marvel, naturally after all strict safety conditions have been met – each entry has to be reported in advance to the dispatching station. The lake is 75 metres deep, larger than the lake Máchovo jezero, it is without any outflow, perfectly clean, without Cyanobacteria and with high quality water. And the surroundings? The job of the re-cultivators is almost finished and nature is beginning to take over. On the banks, you can find uncovered clay with fossils, at another spot fantastic eroded quarry walls, a paradise for kestrels and buzzards, sometimes you might come across a white-tailed eagle, gulls, wild geese, the grassy banks are endless – well, this job has been finished, bathing will be wonderful! A small jetty is also planned. When will the area be open for the public? If all goes well, in summer of 2018. There is not enough space to describe other experi-

ences from the surface mining pit called Vršany, which clearly shows that the pit, as it moves ahead, does the clearing itself and thus prepares the ground for re-cultivation, starting from the side of the Kopistská výsypka nature reserve ... It would not work anyway, it would be like just smelling a good meal. You have to take a bite and try Offroadsafari.cz for yourself!

HOW TO BOOK?

You can be single, a pair or an entire group or a teambuilding session, you can opt for prepared route or suggest your own ideas – nothing is a problem. Would you like to go and take photos at night? Would you like to go to the hillsides in winter? Just say it. A trip can be arranged for a weekend or for a working day. The shortest trip takes 3 hours, a normal trip is about 6 hours, the longest trip can take as much as two weeks. Age? Fitness? Not important. The guides speak Czech and English. I loved it – try it out too. Details are available at www.offroadsafari.cz, the latest information at www.facebook.com/offroadsafaricz.



Verner's mill, full of memories

Near the town of Louny, in the neighbourhood of Cítoliby, at the edge of a village with the poetic name of Brloh (lair) stands a mill built in 1630. It was managed by several milling families consecutively – for example the Kopřiva family. They had a son, born here in 1708, his name was Václav Jan Kopřiva and he was a composer and organist, the founder of the composing school in Cítoliby. But we are particularly interested in the year of 1913. In that year, the mill was bought by Bohumil Verner. And his family still owns it today.

A GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S HERITAGE

This is a beautiful story of solidarity in one family that has lasted over a hundred years. Mister Verner did not buy the mill to enjoy himself, that was not common in those days – he bought it to run a miller's business. However, he was not a miller. First, he had to obtain a milling trade licence and only then could he start to put his plans into action. In 1915 he bought a stable diesel operated motor, BRONS type, from the company Laurin & Klement. He did not want to be dependent only on water, which was driven into the mill by a mill-race starting at the brook of Smolnický potok. Thus, the motor was reserve power to drive nineteen milling machines and devices. Just to make things clear, this purchase was not fun – while Mr Verner was charged 70,000 Austro-Hungarian crowns for the mill, the motor itself cost 30,000. The miller also had to act as mayor and promote the electrification of the village. However, the mill was supplied with electricity before that – Mr Verner bought a dynamo and a Křížík distribution panel, which meant that he obtained a voltage of 120 V and an output of 5.9 kW – just to give you an idea: nowadays this would not be enough to run a single hob. In 1933 he repaired and extended the water structure and replaced the original two mill wheels with a single one. Mr Verner did not live to see the end of the Second World War and died in 1942. But that was not the end of the story of Verner's mill. The miller's son wished for two things all his life – the first was the end of the communist regime and second was to put the mill back into operation. Even though the latter wish was not fulfilled, his son and two granddaughters – sisters Stanislava and Zdenka – have brought the legacy back to life in their own way. When you come to see Verner's mill, your guide will be one of the great-granddaughters of the first miller of the Verner family.



to preserve the family's heritage and share the wonderful milling technology with other people. Today it is not possible to mill grain in the mill – and so the place can at least boast a unique and splendid exhibition. You will see the five-storey process (not visible from the outside), the so-called “American” composition of the milling process, including many perfectly



reconstructed and fully functional milling machines and machines related to milling. And some of them will be put into operation! Take a walk through the museum of the mill and of the Verner family, you will take a look into the workshop of a water mill craftsman and you will learn that this profession was indispensable in the mill. He was usually a jack of all trades who could process any material. He could build a perfectly functioning mill wheel, machine a pinion, but he could also repair the cracked skis of the miller's children or the housewife's brick furnace. You will also get to see the ice cellar. But do not expect to find meat and yogurts there, this room maintains a stable temperature throughout the year and contains parts made from hornbeam wood (would you believe it?) that are used to mount the mill wheel. A functional bakery with a furnace is a new exhibition, which is regularly used by contemporary “millers” to bake crusty loaves of bread. They are stacked on a shelf hanging from the ceiling to keep mice away. What does this shelf look like? Two beams connected by rods bent into the shape of an arch on which loaves of bread are put. The mill is full of equipment that bears strange names which mean nothing to a contemporary person. Hardly any Czech today knows the meaning of words such as pemřice, oškrt, šejdř, smetprach or koreček. The locals will teach you the meaning of these words. You will also have a look at the original Křížík distribution board – even in operation; the board has been meticulously restored and is functional. To round this experience off they will lead you into a machine room with the diesel motor manufactured in Mladá Boleslav in the factory of Laurin and Klement based on a Dutch patent. Yes, the motor is original. It is simply beautiful! Once a year, always at the end of the tourist season, you can be present when it is ceremonially put into operation – the truth is that this hundred years old machine can still run!



You will certainly also be interested in machines that have nothing in common with milling and were used for the ordinary operation of the miller's household – such as a manual drill, a slicer for beetroot, a milk separator or a grinder, with which you can try to sharpen knives in the old-fashioned way.

A VISION IN THE MILL ROOM

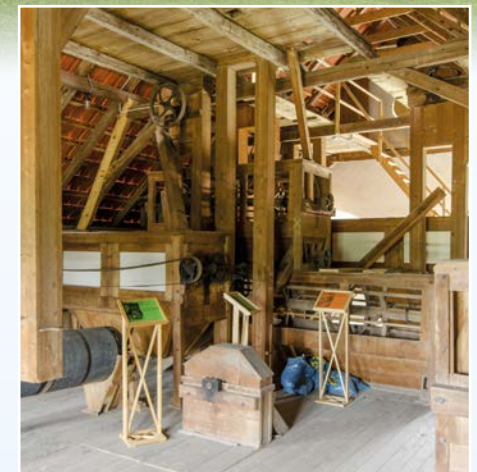
The tour of the mill is not limited to the interior; you will also see the water structure built by Mr Verner, a retention pond and the entire mill-race, which has been carefully repaired and completed. Water is no longer present – land reclaiming in the seventies levelled the bed of the Smolnický potok (Smolnický brook) and the mill-race ran dry. However, a suggestive explanation will help your imagination – anyway water was only present in the mill-race when milling took place, otherwise it was led away by a secondary mill-race. Water had to be managed in an economical way. There used to be several mills on the brook, at least three before and one after Verner's mill so the millers just had to find a way to share the water. To finish, let me talk about the mill room with all those lovely



machines, for example a unique a draft tube with ribs which separated semolina when wheat was milled. It is really intoxicating to stroll through this complicated system of splendidly repaired machines and listen to informed explanations of how grain used to change into flour. And I can tell that the process was a science of a kind. You are passing by machines with strange names and if you lean against the wall and close your eyes the mill room will come back to life in your imagination. When the master miller walks through the room everybody becomes silent and works as hard as they can. The chief miller wields the same authority, since he is the deputy of the master miller and nobody is on first names terms with him. The first journeyman is running here and there with white powder in his palm and smells it – it is he who is answerable to the chief miller for the quality of flour. There are other journeymen, each with their own jobs:

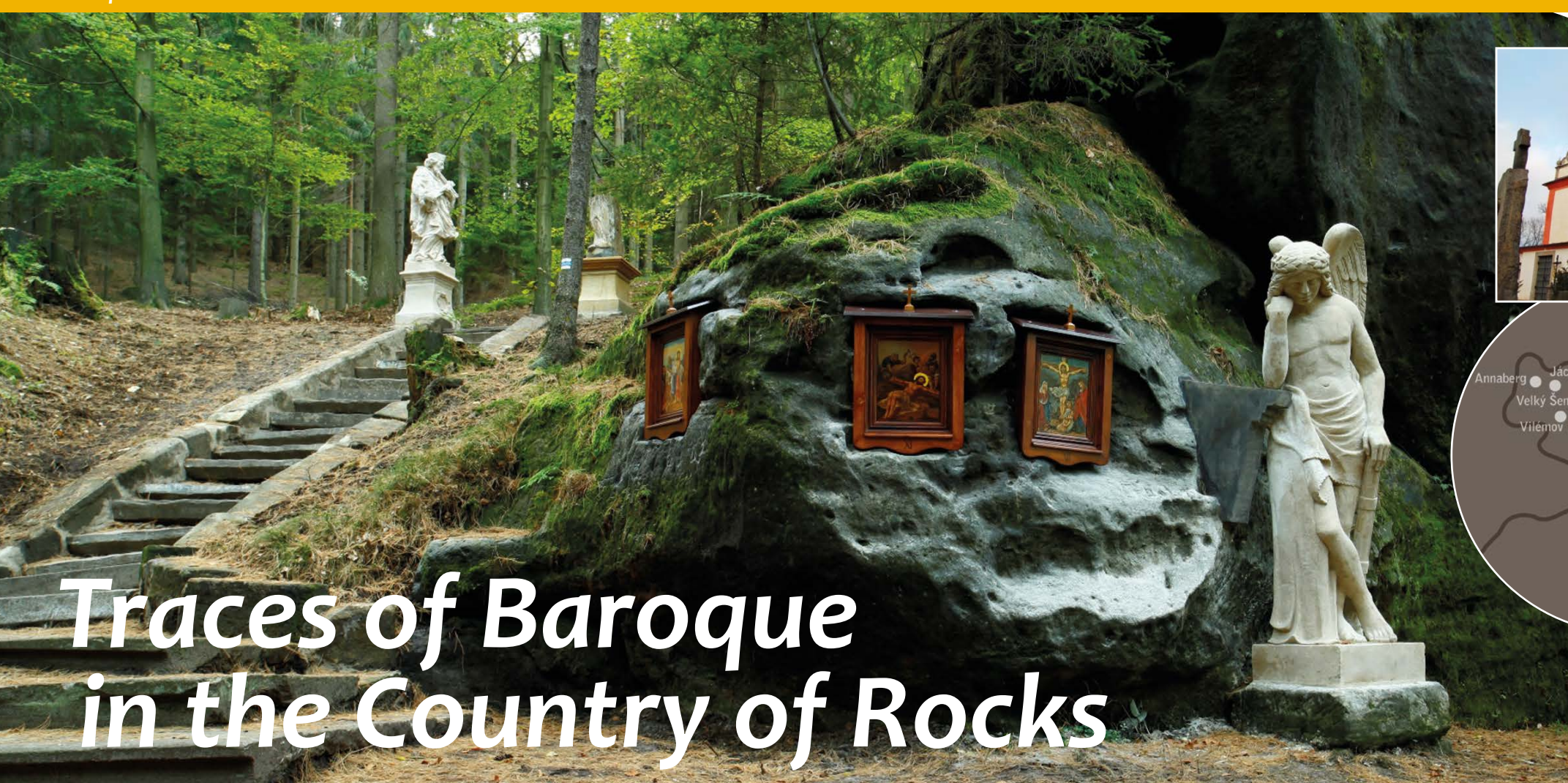
one is sweeping the floor, another one is carrying bags with grain along a ramp into the mill room. And there is the noise created by grain being poured into a hopper. There is also a travelling journeyman whose job is to do anything anybody asks him to do. The noise, the clanking, the rattling and sometimes the creaking mix with songs sung by the workers, since drudgery is easier with a song on your lips. When you open your eyes the mill room is empty. A pity? I do not think so. Our technology has improved very much and we can buy flour in shops nowadays. The thing is to be able to appreciate the skills and cleverness of our ancestors and not to forget them because of new inventions. And the sisters Stanislava and Zdenka do it with gentility, elegance and admirable engagement. It is a pity that there are not more people like them.

www.vernermlyn.cz



TIP

The family preceding great-grandfather Verner was the Sochor family. One of the members of this family was the professional painter Václav Sochor, who used to paint large sacral canvases, especially in France. However, he also painted the altar picture for a remarkable neo-Romanesque chapel in the village of Vlčí. You can get to this village along the educational path “Smolnický potok” (Smolnický brook), which passes by the mill.



Traces of Baroque in the Country of Rocks

Bohemian Switzerland is romantic countryside in every aspect. This is a landscape of rocky towers, walls and towns, a territory of deep jagged icy gorges that blow out thick fog at dusk, a region which was discovered by romantic painters and by pioneers of tourism, who were, by nature, very romantic souls too. They did not erase the traces of Baroque, which are still present in the landscape, clearly and visibly, and a curious person who will take the time to seek them out and find them will certainly not regret their efforts.



A LANDSCAPE LIKE A PICTURE

Baroque, this explosion of emotions, both uneasy and loving of God, but also a period of a new boom in agriculture, completely changed the Czech countryside. Baroque people had begun to view the landscape like a picture, which would have the right proportions, its highlights, golden parts, effects and, most of all, a spiritual dimension that strikes you on first sight. Naturally, such tendencies were felt much more in the undulating landscape of the Bohemian basin than in the northern part of the country, where the Catholic faith engaged in an

everyday struggle with Protestantism besieging Bohemian Switzerland and the adjacent Bohemian lands from three sides. And still, Baroque broke in like a tempest. Not that the country would be sprinkled with picturesque churches on grassy knolls with winding alleys of lindens (the few exceptions are represented best by St Wenceslaus church in Velká Bukovina in the very south of the region, near the town of Česká Kamenice). This landscape's Baroque traces are quite different – sometimes showy and spectacular, sometimes quite inconspicuous and invisible at first glance.

MONUMENTS OF HUMAN FAITH

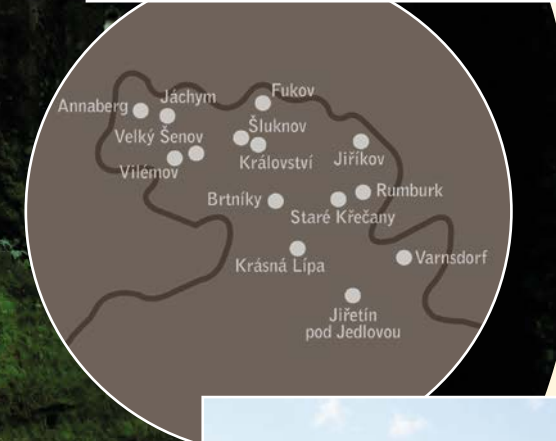
Baroque opened the temple door and faith flooded the landscape. Bohemian Switzerland and its surroundings are rich in tiny sacred monuments. Forged or cast crosses, small and large, some simple and some with rich ornamentation, wayside shrines, chapel-like niches in rocks, small isolated chapels, votive pictures... Many of these structures have been beautifully reconstructed, others are dilapidated shells. Nowadays, we tend to appreciate them as aesthetic features in the landscape, however every one of them has

its history, its often lost story. Walk the educational path in Dolní Poustevna, which will show you around the local sacred monuments, drop in to the fascinating trilateral building of Trinity Chapel in Mikulášovice, calm your nerves in the forests above the town of Česká Kamenice at the wonderfully reconstructed Brethren Altar, wonder at the unexpected power of Bauer's forest chapel near Lipnice, discover the pictures hidden in alcove chapels in Dolní Chřibská, on Česká silnici (Bohemian road) or in Jetřichovice, seek metal angels flying around Jesus' head... Enough sites for one Baroque pilgrimage. Add to that tours of local churches, where you can stroll along funeral or tramp roads, hidden and silently waiting in woods, or you can amble through town centres with columns dedicated to Mother Mary, which were supposed to protect the communities from plague – there is one in Rumburk and another one in Benešov nad Ploučnicí, for example. The most pompous and most demonstrative expressions of faith are, however, stations of the cross (14 such routes in total in the region). Their beginnings date back to the Baroque period. The oldest one of them, the one on Křížový vrch (a hill) in Šluknov, was constructed in the middle of the 18th century, the routes with stations of the cross in Vilémov and in Jiřetín pod Jedlovou were also created in

the Baroque period and the latter one especially deserves your attention. It is composed of late Baroque stations of the cross with Gethsemane and the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre and belongs among the most beautiful routes composed of stations of the cross in Europe. All in all,



Jiřetín is a Baroque town. The Baroque tone is set by the splendid premises of St Trinity church with a High Baroque vicarage (which nowadays houses a museum of precious metal mining) and the route with stations of the cross going uphill. However, Baroque crosses the boundaries of towns. Jiřetín is a very nice site to ponder the significance of Baroque statues in the landscape, statues that capture emotions and deep spiritual involvement. And then there are the local jewels of folk architecture – Upper Lusatian houses. Although the invention of their specific structure may be some two hundred years older, it was the Baroque period when they became a popular fashion for builders and



TIP

If you are restless, truly Baroque souls we have one tip for you. Near Krásná Lípa there is the village of Sněžná. The quietness, which should be packed and exported all over the world, begs for a stop at the local small Trinity chapel standing under a mighty linden on a background formed by the forested hill of Vlčí hora. This place is simply a panacea for any headache (not to mention the church of St Mary Major in the village itself).

art – you will not experience this in a similar concentration anywhere else. On the other hand, Srbská Kamenice offers perhaps the most beautiful Baroque scenery. The local rock vista provides a splendid view of St Wenceslaus Baroque church with its wooden tower on a background formed by the massive mill of Růžovský vrch and the village spread all over the river plain. And if we go to the lowest point of the rock we will find a Baroque relief of the crowning of Mother Mary. Naturally there are more Baroque churches in the area – for example in Děčín, Arnoltice, Jetřichovice, Česká Kame-



rebuilders. And so many, often piously preserved Upper Lusatian houses in the territory state the Baroque era as the period of their creation in numbers carved on their walls (in Kamenická Stráň, on Kamenná Horka, in Dolní Chřibská...). And talking of Jiřetín and its sights, the traces of ancient metal diggers are also Baroque, I mean the mining shaft bearing the name of St John the Evangelist that is open to the public – and you can believe me, it is worth visiting.

SACRED AND SECULAR MONUMENTS

The most visible representatives of Baroque are naturally temples and chateaus – they are sacred and profane manifestations of the Baroque way of thinking. The first Baroque stop must be in Rumburk. The unique Baroque complex of the local St Lawrence's church and chapel is a must-see for every lover of the Baroque style. The sacred Madonna, the sacred staircase with woodcuts with mocking Jews, the ambit with ceiling paintings of the stations of the cross, the underground areas, the exhibition of sacred

nice, Kerhartice, Růžová, Krásná Lípa, Kytlice, Šluknov, Varnsdorf; the largest one of them is probably St Nicholas Temple in Mikulášovice. St Simon and Jude's church in Lipová is also beautiful. The site boasts two other distinctive features – a High Baroque chateau and a linden alley, which was founded in the Baroque period and used to connect Vilémov with Lipová. The ravages of time brought the chateau to its knees, but it has been resuscitated in recent years and it has been marvellous to watch it to rise again. One the other hand, the renovation of the chateau in Děčín has almost been completed. The complex, completely devastated by the army, has been turned into one of the most frequented chateaus in the country – and there is a reason for that. Even though the chateau itself is not built in the Baroque style, this style still forms an important component. You know something? Take a tour around "the Baroque pearl of the chateau", which includes splendid Baroque stables, the Rose garden, with a "sala terrena" and a gloriette, as well as the church of the Feast of the Cross – and then you can judge for yourselves. The search for the traces of Baroque is simply wonderful. And let me know if you find something special!

In Search of the Natural Treasures of Lower Poohří

The Ohře river and its attractive surroundings have been the focus of walks and trips in every issue of our magazine from the very start. This time we will go downstream in search of natural rarities which cannot be found elsewhere. Besides the magnificent historical sites, it is nature that is the main treasure of the Lower Ohře region.



THE ENERGY OF PRECIOUS STONES

The first stop will be very quiet and slightly mysterious. The forests above the settlement of Klášterec nad Ohří hide two very remarkable sites. Both have been declared national wildlife sanctuaries. The Doupňák sanctuary is located on the slopes of Holubí vrch and Ciboušov lies near a village of the same name. When you are walking through mixed sunny woods and see a heap of boulders, touch them. Just put your palms on them. They are full of energy and remember very special times. You have found yourselves in the middle of a mining locality which used to be rich in amethyst and jasper deposits before they were exploited by medieval miners. The locality used to contain metre-long veins of violet amethysts, with sharp borders stacked on upon another in several layers, as well as deposits of brick orange and meat red jaspers. Dumps and other remnants of mining activity are still visible today. And would you like to see those precious stones in their highest form, ground to perfection? Then pay a visit to Prague Castle, the castle of Karlštejn or the castle of Tangermünde near Magdeburg.

SUN TURNED TO STONE

Southeast from the village of Rokle, which is within sight of the royal town of Kadaň, there is a place where walking among trees and along grassy land you will come across a strange boulder. And there is another one – and yet another. Suddenly, these strange stones everywhere you look. These entrancing quartzite stones with their typically eroded and seemingly polished surfaces are witnesses to very ancient times. They give us an idea what the Earth's surface was like in the Mesozoic and Tertiary era. The characteristic look is attributable to silicon dioxide, released during erosion and changing into a liquid gel of a sort that added more and more quartz to the rock and created clusters. Ancient people would use splinters of these boulders as tools, our ancestors from the 19th century used them for the production of cobblestones. The stones, polished for millions of years by sand carried in the air, are today protected and create a scenery unlike anything else in the Czech Republic.

THE CHARMING REALM OF THE OHŘE RIVER

Hardly a kilometre, as the crow flies, from the grove with the quartzite stones, in the vicinity of the village of Želina, the Ohře river is the magician. Its middle part used to consist of meanders, that is, loops and kinks in normal language, before the reservoir of Nechanická přehrada straightened it up. And so Želinský meandr (Želina meander) is the last example



of the character of the “old” Ohře. It may be the last, still it is a splendid one – the Ohře in this place a lot returns to itself and creates the silhouette of a vessel in the shape of letter U with the upper ends almost meeting. Wonderful. A long

time ago the river gnawed its way through hard rocks until it struck an eighty metre high slope that was too much even for the powers of flowing water and the river wisely stepped back. Besides being a beautiful natural scene, the locality also boasts a remarkable and rare biotope that provides an excellent habitat for pasque flowers, alyssums, astragali, feather grass, helichrysums, aconites, pheasant's eyes and festuca grass, while in the skies you can see wagtails, golden orioles, nightingales, eagle owls, wrynecks and even kingfishers. And down there, by the river, you might catch sight of an otter, if you are really lucky.

AN ANCIENT TOWN OF BEETLES

To the north from another royal town on the Ohře river, Žatec, there is the village of Staňkovic and near it a natural sanctuary of the same name. If you need to ask, you have to ask about Bílá skála (white rock), no local would ever call the location anything else. When I went there

for the first time my jaw just dropped. I had to rub my eyes since it felt like, due to a mysterious trick, I suddenly found myself somewhere in the Mediterranean, on Crete or in Algeria or near the French Riviera. A mild slope is a foundation for small white rocks pointing towards the skies, which look like a medieval town damaged by erosion and the ravages of time. There are gorges and ravines here, the walls of which are partly without any vegetation. The species of insect found here can only be found in a few locations in Bohemia and Southern Moravia and so you can come across some pretty rare beetles, such as the snout beetle, the ground beetle or the scara

TAKE-OFF FROM THE DRAGON'S BACK

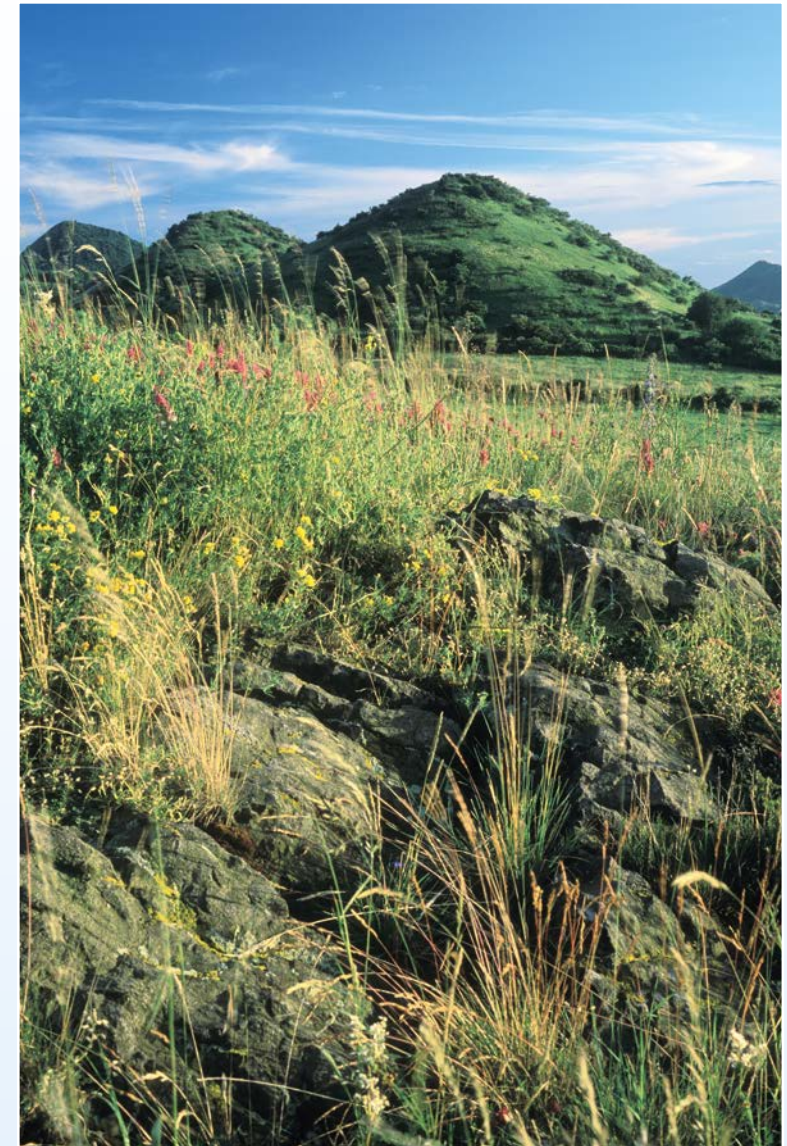
I have always wanted to be present at the moment when the prehistoric lizard, that sleeps in the meadows to the north of the third royal town of Louny, comes back to life and flies away. It has a long back with three humps and it has been continuously covered with prosperous vegetation of xeric and thermophile grasses for millions of years. Those without an imagination say that this is the basalt hill of Raná, but I know what I know. It is hard to say what is more beautiful, whether it is the view of Raná or the view from Raná. The hill itself is the left part of the gate to the mountains of the Central Bohemian Mountains (the right one will be mentioned later) and so it provides a view of the gradually rising relief of the mountains. The conditions here are almost the same as in the steppe and so you will come across the feathers of stipa grass, the cups of pasque flowers and the tiny suns of pheasant's eyes, among them a unique endemism of feather grass *Stipa pulcherrima* f. *nudicostata*, which grows nowhere else in the world. At the end of May and at the beginning of June when the feather grass comes to bloom, the slopes of the hill of Raná look like a rippled silvery sea. And besides butterflies you will also see flying people. The thing is that Raná is exposed to very strange airstreams



which make it one of the most popular spots for paragliding in the Czech Republic.

THE HEAD OF A SLEEPING GIANT

Opposite the hill of Raná stands Oblík, a hill much less segmented in shape, as if somebody had buried a giant here and only the upper part of his head can be seen. Oblík means rounded in Czech and you could hardly think of a more fitting name for this hill. It is not surprising that it has attracted



A JUG FULL OF MYSTERY AND BEAUTY

South of the town of Louny there is the beginning of an enormous park that reaches over the borders of Central Bohemia. Its name is both poetic and ancient – Džbán, which is Jug in English. “The mission of the natural sanctuary of Džbán is to preserve the unique landscape of this cretaceous plateau with significant aesthetic values, especially in view of the geomorphology of the area, its forests, the typical and rare flora and fauna, scattered vegetation outside of woods and old fruit orchards,” reads the entry in one encyclopaedia. I see... Looking around one has to admit that this place cannot be captured in words. Visit this natural sanctuary and see for yourselves how charming, picturesque and remarkable this territory is. And if you need one piece of advice, then you must definitely go to the very southern tip of the Ústí region and let yourselves be enchanted by the mysterious power of the stones near the village of Kounov. Imagine two and a half thousand stones aligned into fourteen rows nowadays hidden under forest vegetation. There are many theories about what these stones were

used for, however none can be proven. And can anything be more attractive?



Three Historic Gems of the Garden of Bohemia

FROM THE ATHANOR TO THE MALÁ OHŘE RIVER

In the settlement of Budyně nad Ohří there used to be a water castle where the Zajíč family of Hazmburk would generously host alchemists from all over the world. This was also the place of work of the famous astrologist and alchemist Bavor Rodovský of Hustiřany, who spent most of his time here engaged in the production of gold from miscellaneous materials, but he also found time to write one of the first Czech cook books as a by-product – “Cooking is a book about various meals, how to make them tasteful to your palate”. It is quite possible that alchemistic experiments were the cause of one fatal accident that blew half the castle apart. Three hundred years later it was quite clear that nobody was going to repair the damaged parts of the castle and so the eastern and southern wings were torn down. Thus, the letter U was changed to the letter L as far as the ground plan of the castle complex is concerned. The idea that originally the castle looked different hardly ever enters the head of a tourist today – anyway the castle has preserved its charm and mysteri-



ousness. The alchemistic past naturally attracts the attention of many visitors and their curiosity can be satisfied in Jandovo museum (Janda's museum), which includes an authentic workshop of aspirants to the royal art filled with crucibles, burners, bellows, flasks, various mysterious tools and even an alchemist's furnace, an athanor. Having seen the castle, we exit through its gate but remain in the town. We may then set our eyes upon St Wenceslaus church, originally built in the Gothic style but converted to Baroque and then – of course - a trip along the educational path Malá Ohře is a must. However, first you should know what Malá Ohře is. It is a six kilometre long mill-race, which starts a short way behind Libochovice, and in the forest of Pístecký les near Budyně flows back into the mother river. It was constructed to bring water to Budyně mill and to make its wheel go round.

Nowadays, it is lined with a path with six information boards, which give interesting information about local history, flora and fauna, about the duke's road, about a pheasantry – in short, there is no chance you'll get bored. The path in fact runs parallel to the stream of Malá Ohře and ends in a spot called Špička, where the millrace merges with the main river bed.

THROUGH RIPARIAN FORESTS ON THE WAY TO LIBOCHOVICE CHATEAU

To reach another site we will take the same road – however this time we do not turn onto the educational path but go upstream of the Malá Ohře through Budyně forest, led by cycle route no. 6, all the way to Kostelec nad Ohří, where we visit a Baroque church erected by Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer, have an excellent Perlova voda beer or two in the local brewery restaurant (more about this beer on page 60) and continue passing through the natural sanctuary of Myslivna, with a complex of protected marshes, riparian forests and water spring areas along the stream of Malá Ohře, all the way to the bridge over the river, which we cross. And we are in Libochovice. Since we are keen to see some historical sites we start with a visit to the Church of All Saints with its main altar displaying a remarkable fresco “Czech Heaven” from the beginning of the 20th century, which shows pictures of all the Czech saints. However, the main destination of our journey is different – it is a Baroque gem, the splendid chateau in Libochovice. Originally a Gothic fort converted to a renaissance chateau, burnt down and rebuilt in the Baroque style in the 17th century by the Italian Antonio Porta.

The local exhibition is a very interesting cross-section of the lifestyles of nobility since the Renaissance to the end of the 19th century. The greatest attractions are the gigantic Saturn's



The central part of the Central Bohemian Mountains, with its very centre in the town of Litoměřice, is a splendid sunbathed fertile countryside. As early as the 17th century the region assumed the nicknames of Bohemian Arcadia or the Garden of Bohemia, the latter nickname is still used today. Moreover, this splendid landscape contains remarkable traces of the past. Let us go together to the southern part of the garden of Bohemia, to a fertile area fed by the Ohře river. The trip we are going to take will be an easy one – some fifteen kilometres – and it does not matter whether you take it on foot or on a bike, in both cases three historic gems of the garden of Bohemia will be waiting for you.



hall, unique collections of tapestry, inlaid furniture and oriental china, eight precious blue-white ceramic stoves and a collection of landscapes and portraits. The park is beautiful as well, at first in the manner of a French formal garden, gradually changing over to an English landscape garden. The famous local greenhouses are open to the public from time to time, so you may get lucky.

AN INTERMEZZO: THE STORY OF LITTLE JOHN

If we let little John, the son of an economic clerk of Duke Dietrichstein who was born and spent his childhood in the chateau, show us around the chateau our experience will be quite different. For John, the chateau was quite an ordinary thing. He passed through the chateau gate every day on his way to school, carrying Czech books and newspapers, which he would study for

hours, in hidden parts of the chateau park he would play the fife, which he could put in a pocket, at home the violin, the local walls saw him following the local chaplain many times, who taught him Latin and Greek from a very early age. Ambling through the luxurious halls, salons and bedrooms I have a strange feeling realising that, in those days, the duke might've looked up from the table and seen the figure of a small boy jumping around in the garden. He had no idea that Jan Evangelista Purkyně would grow up to become one of the most important Czech scientists of all time,

he was a physiologist, biologist and philosopher, a professor of Prague's Charles University, a cofounder of cytology. On the other hand... perhaps it was Duke Dietrichstein who was at the beginning of it all because it was he who sent little John to study at the Piarist monastery at his Mikulov mansion. However, for the time being, little John and his brother were running to and fro in the park engaged in innocent children's games. They were not allowed to enter the chateau, naturally. Luckily, we can.

ON BOARD A STONE SHIP

In Libochovice we seek the red markers and before leaving the town we pay a visit to St Lawrence's cemetery church, whose Baroque appearance dates back to the 1820s. And then – the last gem, the last destination. There is no need to search for it – it will be in front of us all the time. The dominating feature of the landscape, the pride of local patriots, the king

of the Central Bohemian Mountains, the ancient castle of Hazmburk, which the locals call Hanzburek. We walk through vineyards and a plum orchard until we reach the castle gate and then look around in amazement. Describing Hazmburk and the view from it is a task for poets such as Mácha, Goethe or Seifert. One feels as though they are on board a gigantic transatlantic ship that got stuck on a dry land. The Black tower on the stern that is located lower; on the prow, some metres higher, the White tower. Wherever you look, the Central Bohemian Mountains are as picturesque as they can get. Only in one direction is there a plain, flat like a table, spreading into the distance, from which the noble hill of Říp rises, a separate magical mountain. Can we get higher? Yes, we can – go up the White tower. The natural relief of the landscape, ponds, the glistening ribbon of the Ohře, hills, hills, hills, vineyards – precise geometry as though somebody had designed the countryside. The Zajíč family of Valdek, who gave the name to the castle (Hasenburg = the Hare castle and “Zajíč” means “hare” in Czech), moved their seat towards the Ohře, to Libochovice and to Budyně and left the castle fall apart ever since and so it was a ruin as early as the end of the 16th century. Much later, Romanticism, which invented tourism, discovered the immense charm of Hazmburk and since then people have been enjoying it.



Romantic Moments on the Banks of One Limpid Lake

If you told an ordinary person, say somebody in a pub, that you were going for a week long romantic holiday by a lake they might envy you. If you added that the lake was unique in the whole world and that its water is uncommon and healing they would certainly nod their head in respect, guessing that you must be going somewhere near the Mediterranean. However, if you said that the lake is in the town of Chomutov, they would laugh at you and wouldn't believe you. But they would be wrong, because the lake of Kamencové jezero, which is sometimes called "the Bohemian Dead Sea", is not just beautiful but also romantic to the very core.

A DREAM OF A CHARMING DUSK

Close your eyes and imagine that... You are lying on a bank in the shadows of high trees, the sun tilts westwards and puts gold on the forests of the opposite bank, on the horizon the majestic mountains of Krušné hory (the Ore Mountains), the water glitters with thousand gleams, warmth heavily sits on the grass and you feel wonderfully languid, everything is quiet but for an occasional donkey's bray from a nearby zoo or a parrot's screech and suddenly the soft tinkling of a railway crossing enriches the late afternoon mood. As though the sound had brought you to different times, when people didn't hurry so much and did everything properly, which applied to relaxation too. Then you slowly rise to your feet and walk down to a sandy beach, wet your feet in cool but still mild water, the transparency of which is enchanting. Not a trace of water grass or algae. You lazily move your limbs just to keep yourself above the water's surface and literally feel your body expressing its thanks aloud for the good brought about by this remarkable water. Suddenly you are in the middle of the lake with an intrusive feeling that you need to free yourself even more, that you need to remove all stress and the plodding along of time. You swim to the opposite beach, swimwear in hand, naked like a baby, nodding your head in the direction of a few naturalists who cannot gather the will to leave this bay dedicated to nudity. You stand on the jetty watching the lake, going to sleep, and feel good, oh, so good...

The Secret of Healing Dead Water

As early as the 15th century, people knew that this lake was different. Already back then they would say that this slightly larger puddle is full of miraculous "dead" water. How does it happen that this puddle is today one of the largest lakes in the Czech Republic with an area of almost six hectares? This is the result of alum mining; alum is in fact a sulphate of aluminium and potassium. Nobody today can find out what happened but water, the everyday enemy in the alum quarry, won one day and got hold of not only the quarry but also the meadows in the vicinity – it flooded everything it could reach. And so, land registers mention a big lake as early as 1841. Some fifty years later a spa was established, and soon afterwards a medical institute, which used the local water to treat maladies of the upper airway, gout, anaemia, rheumatism, female illnesses, kidney illnesses and acne. Alum, alum... the shining stone which our grandfathers used to have in the bathroom just next to the razor and the shaving brush! Yes, the stone which could reduce any cut and stop the bleeding in no time. This just one of the properties of this remarkable rock which nowadays enriches the waters of lake Kamencové jezero – the alum content is 1 per cent! Alum also prevents almost any life from taking root in the lake, with the exception of protozoa – and this not only applies to fish; there are no plants in the lake, including the menace to most water reservoirs, Cyanobacteria and algae. That is why the water in the lake is clear from spring to autumn. Adding the fact that a bath in the lake is good for your health and the slightly constricting



power of the water in any weather, no matter how hot (alum is added to antiperspirants), it is clear that a romantic experience is not the only reason to set out for this area on the edge of Chomutov, put up a tent, park your caravan or arrange accommodation in one of the comfortable wooden huts with verandas.

SO MANY PLACES TO VISIT

In this place boredom sets in only for those without imagination. Even simple walks by the lake are lovely. The historical spirit of some spots is really charming – for example the main entrance to the premises, a house which exudes the atmosphere of the 1930s. As do the rows of wooden changing huts. These witnesses of olden times are not only beautiful, they are also rare – the keys to them have been passed down from one Chomutov generation to another for decades as Kamenčák, as the locals call the lake, has been a synonym of relaxation since the time of our great-grandfathers. You can hire a boat or a pedalo, the local amenities include playgrounds for children, a mini golf course, beach volleyball courts, an open air cinema, right behind the fence



there is the Aqua world with toboggans... However, the greatest attraction is located on the opposite pond, known as Otvický, locally also known as Banda, which is separated from the lake by a dam. Welcome to the Wakepark. They have some treats in store for you, to raise the level of adrenaline in your blood – a tow for water skis, wakeboards or wakeskates. A circuit with a length of 780 metres is full of fun obstacles, such as the fun box, kicker and straight. All equipment is available and easy to hire. We have already mentioned the zoo park. It starts at the edge of the lake and it is certainly not just a bunch of cages – this is a zoo with a large area with generous runs and pens. The name of the zoo park is

not just an attraction, it really combines a park with a zoo, which specialises in animals from the territories of Eurasia. Moreover, there are other attractions: the Eurosafari and the open air museum of folk architecture Stará ves – everything within one complex, everything on the banks of a lake. Alright, you may think, but I have go there for a week, what else is there? You can relax, one week will certainly not be long enough if you wish to go and see all the beauty of this locality. The ridges of the mountains of the Ore Mountains are within your reach. A network of cycle paths, one of them going directly towards the lake. What about castles and chateaus? A splendid chateau, Červený Hrádek (10 km), one vast romantic ruin

of a castle, Hasištejn (15 km). Anything special? Town cellars chiselled into sandstone rock in neighbouring Jirkov – which is within walking distance. But let us stick to romantic sites – one of the most splendid valleys in Krušné hory begins right at the outskirts of Chomutov. The valley of Bezručovo údolí, carved by the Chomutovka and Kamenička streams, has everything, one might say – an educational path, mills, water reservoirs, a natural sanctuary at Buky nad Kameničkou, two waterfalls, ponds and at the very end of it, embraced by hills, the marvellous peat bog Novodomske rašeliniště, a world of low trees and enchanting undulating surfaces that change colour from green to reddish brown to exploding violet, a landscape sprinkled with the greedy mouths of carnivorous sundews and plumes of cotton grass feathers. If I were you I would ride to the village of Načetín and walk or ride down the 18 kilometre long valley of Bezručovo údolí – here you will come across another cycle route. And you can be sure that the reason other sites are not mentioned is solely a lack of space. I wish you a romantic holiday!

TIP

If anybody tries to convince you that Chomutov is an industrial town without any charm, tell them to be quiet! It is obvious that they have never been to the beautiful historic centre in the urban preservation area. A preserved medieval ground plan contains burgher houses with arcades and late Gothic honeycomb vaults, a town tower, several churches, the most precious among them being the early Gothic St Catherine's church, a former Jesuit college, a granary with a splendid gallery...



Cycling through Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland

Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland is a very attractive area visited every year by many tourists. On the other hand, walking in a big group of tourists is not to everybody's liking. Moreover, lines of tourists are in the places which everybody knows. We will be wiser, since we don't want to visit splendid places following the usual system: get in a line, fight for a parking space, queue up for a glass of beer... The key to our method is very simple – cars will stay at home. This time we will travel mainly by bike and sometimes also by train.



WHY TOIL AWAY WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO?

You do not have to be an Olympic contender with a history of ten thousand kilometres in training to enjoy a ride on a bike. Take me, I am not an athlete by nature and ride a bike at most a few times a month, but my bike took me to every little spot of Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland. The thing is that a ride here will always be fascinating and overwhelmingly splendid. If you are interested I have four marvellous routes for you and a piece of advice on top of that. And I'll start with the piece of advice: do not think that you have to do all the pedalling on your own. You can reach the starting points – naturally with your bike too – by other means of transport. The cycle bus is the most usual one of them. Train is a lesser known option – not everybody knows that you can force your way onto a train with a bicycle. In Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland this is certainly possible. There are two marvellous routes that will take you comfortably, even by bike, wherever you wish to go. The first one is the track in the National Park. You and your bike get on at Děčín and go past Schön (a stop where you can get off and embark on a ferry to Hřensko), Bad Schandau (a lovely town, a starting point for trips around the rocks), Sebnitz (Museum of artificial flowers), Dolní Poustevna, Mikulášovice and Šluknov all the way to Rumburk. The map clearly shows that you will have covered quite a distance in

vertical kilometres and you can get off at any stop and choose a cycle path. The second route is dear to my heart. A track as picturesque as they get – from Děčín over Česká Kamenice and then through the valley of the Kamenice river over Mlýny to Kytlice, Jedlová, Chřibská, Krásná Lípa and Rumburk. This way you will also zigzag through the southern part of the region. Well – and now you have instructions of how to get almost anywhere while saving your strength for the beautiful cycle routes.

THE FIRST ROUTE – FROM A PLATEAU MOUNTAIN TO THE ELBE

Load your bike onto the cycle bus trailer in Děčín and take a ride to the village of Sněžník at the foot of a beautiful plateau mountain, Děčínský Sněžník. When you get off, you can be satisfied that you have travelled 453 vertical metres quite effortlessly. And now the trip downhill is ahead of you – but wait a minute... A bike ride uphill to the largest chess piece in the world – the stone tower (rook) of Sněžník lookout tower – is certainly worth it. Hardly anything can match this view. But then you have an easy ride downhill to Maxičky, where you turn left and follow another cycle path to the crossroads of U Buku, where you can either take the road to Saxony and go downhill to the village of Schöna on the Elbe bank, or you can turn right and take the yellow track that will slightly raise the level of adrenaline in your blood and follow Kamenka – a paved road in the middle of nowhere – all the way to Dolní Žleb. Both variants meet up with the Elbe central route.



THE SECOND ROUTE – THROUGH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CANYON IN THE UNIVERSE

Yes, I am exaggerating, accept my apologies – everybody has a side they root for and I simply love this place. But my statement cannot be far from the truth – visiting the Elbe canyon is really an intoxicating revelation. We will go through it following the Elbe central path, albeit only a small part. The path starts from the springs of the Elbe and goes all the way to the North Sea. We are setting out from Děčín, having succumbed to the temptation to take a ride along the new Ploučnická cycle path (ten kilometres along a beautiful river into the historic settlement of Benešov nad Ploučnicí). After a while the canyon has captivated our attention, we lean our heads backwards in wonder, making the ride a rather dangerous one! Splendid giants, rocky massifs, needles and towers, walls and rock lookout platforms – something quite unique. Getting on the ferry in Schöna to get to Hřensko or beyond – because Saxon Switzerland opens its arms to cyclists.



THE THIRD ROUTE – ALONG THE ROUTE OF BLACK STORKS

The valley of the Křinice river is an uncut diamond in both national parks – in the Czech Republic and in Saxony. Every now and

then a black stork, one of the rulers of this area, flies by you like a Concorde. We leave Krásná Lípa, the eastern gate to Bohemian Switzerland, a lovely little town full of remarkable sights. Right behind the square we catch up with the Křinice river and, with one short exception, we will stay with it for the rest of our journey. We go down to Kyjov and follow the wild waters over the bridge of Turistický Most all the way to Zadní Doubice, a defunct border settlement. We cross the bridge to the Saxony side and test our fitness climbing to Hinterhermsdorf, a picturesque village full of Upper Lusatian houses, then we go down again to the Obere Schleuse gorge, where we replace the bike with a boat for a short while, and then further on following the stream around mills and over waterfalls, through a rocky gorge and friendly forests, alongside the rails of the forest tram all the way to Bad Schandau – where crossing the bridge gets you to the Elbe route, or you can get on a train.

THE FOURTH ROUTE – TO LUŽICE IN PURSUIT OF HIGHWAYMAN KARÁSEK

Honestly – this is not a route but a series of routes. The thing is that only a few Czech tourists know about them. This time we start in the town of Varnsdorf, which is wedged between Saxon, or to be precise, Lusatian villages and a few steps will carry you over the border. You may, for example, opt for the journey past Upper Lusatian houses in Neukirch and Kottmar, villages ornamented with folk architecture, to Herrnhut, or Ochránov in Czech, a village established a long time ago by Moravian

evangelic exiles, which is also the birth place of the famous Herrnhuter Sterne, i.e. the star of Ochránov, which is used as a decoration in the Advent period in the whole of Saxony, a tradition that has taken root in the Czech Republic too. Then Großschönau, with houses in the Upper Lusatian style lining the Mandava river, a scene taken from a romantic landscape (also the location of the unique museum of damask and terry). Moreover, Waltersdorf with its open-air museum of mills and the historical settlement of Žitava, or Zittau. The second route bears the name of highwayman Karásek and starts in Seifhennersdorf with a museum dedicated to the highwayman, over Hainewalde with a splendid chateau and chateau park... The routes intertwine, and in the end it does not matter that much where you go – easy terrain and the lovely landscape will certainly fill you with enthusiasm.

TIP

I have to mention the Elbe canyon once again. There is one nicer way to get through it other than on a bike – you can cross it in a boat. If you like adventure, hire a raft in Děčín and let it be carried downstream past beaver structures, steel ships and nests of cormorants. If you like more comfortable boat travel, get on one of the boats of the Labské plavební company and, seated comfortably, let your eyes wander over the rocks around you. And if you do not feel like getting off in Hřensko, you can go all the way to Dresden or Meissen.



The Ohře, a river emblazoned with legends

It is a blessing for every town and every region if one of its citizens is a dedicated keen and talented writer. And there used to be many of them in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia! But not anymore. If a writer has the skills of a historian and a philosopher combined, they are really lucky. The royal town of Kadaň and the entire Lower Ohře region have one such writer. His name is Petr Hlaváček and he really knows how to write well. Local legends are one of his splendid obsessions. And one work in this thematic vein is a book of fables and legends about the Ohře river.

ABOUT THE LIFE-GIVING WATER OF THE OHŘE

You should get hold of the book *Řeka Ohře v bájích a pověstech* (The Ohře river in fables and legends). In it, Petr Hlaváček presents, in an accommodating and cultivating manner, collected legends one way or another related to the Ohře river, which has been the life-giving artery of the region from time immemorial. The Ohře is a magical and mysterious river. When you come to the territory of the Lower Ohře Region to see one of those tourist magnets or just to amble through the lovely landscape, you will soon find out that the local people have a warm and firm relationship with their river. They love it, they are proud of it and they relate to it – which is not a common thing. It is as if the stream with its spring in Bavarian Upper Franconia, winding through the regions of Karlovy Vary and Ústí to flow into the Elbe

at Litoměřice, really has some supernatural power that brings back strength, confidence, self-esteem and optimism in life. The best place to understand this phenomenon is the home town of Petr Hlaváček, the lovely town of Kadaň. Within the last two decades the town has woken up, sprinkled with life-giving water from the Ohře and every day miraculous things take place. I am not lying, visit the place and you will see that even today some towns flourish and respect their past while reflecting the needs of contemporaries. Kadaň is simply a nice town to live in – just for the weekend, during a holiday or all your life. And the Ohře doubtlessly contributes to that.

FROM TEMPLARS TO WATER SPRITES

The book tells, for example, the stories of Knight Romuald from the mysterious castle of Funkenstein, a magical castle frog, dwarf

mirrors, a lost Templar castle nearby Kadaň, in the crystal palace of water you will meet Egeria, the queen of Poohří, you will hope to avoid Violanta the nymph from Kadaň, the messenger of misfortune, you will catch a glimpse of water sprites, dwarves, you will have a look into the stone face of one blood-thirsty magistrate from Žatec, you will be surrounded by a ghost army, you will be shocked by the betrayal of Lusatian Durynk, you will dive into the palace of the king of water sprites on the Ohře, which is within the sight of Louny, and fairy godmothers from Poohří will fly to you from the local hills to give somebody good luck and somebody bad luck. Let us have a look into this book of legends related to the Ohře. You might, for example, read the one... the one about Violanta.

VIOLANTA, A NYMPH FROM KADAŇ

When a walker ambles through the ancient quarter of Špitálské předměstí in the royal town of Kadaň, he or she cannot miss the former hospital church of the beheading of John the Baptist, which stands near the Ohře. From there just a few steps will take you to a bridge that provides access to the legendary island of Písečná hlava (Sand head), now you can stroll along the path under the bridge and watch the wild river stream. The bushes on the island have been home to nymph Violanta from time immemorial, she can be seen dancing in the full moon singing her mysterious and somewhat spooky songs without words.

Sometimes you can meet her right in the town, a bad omen for the people of Kadaň announcing an impending catastrophe, particularly destructive fires and conflagrations. Rumour has it that she was seen for the first time in 1632, when the entire royal town and its suburbs burnt to ashes. Three days before the natural element began its rage, on a Sunday evening with a full moon when people, sitting on wooden benches in the lanes of the quarter of Špitálské předměstí, drinking wine and beer and having fun with their neighbours, saw a large and strangely long female figure covered in a white shroud. This was the nymph Violanta in the form of an old woman; in her right hand, she was holding a beggar's staff, and a white scarf in her left hand. She was running from the island of Písečná hlava

through the quarter of Špitálské předměstí and through the Žatecká gate towards the main square in the old town of Kadaň. Her figure was growing bigger and bigger, while she continued moaning and wailing. In this horrible condition, she crossed the square, wringing her arms and shaking her body with fear until she reached the Prunéřovská gate. There, the scared crowds of local people caught up with her, but with a shout she vanished without trace. Since then nymph Violanta has been seen many times, especially during the period of the Thirty Years' War or before the last conflagration in the town at the beginning of century before last.

The local water sprite, who used to live on the island of Písečná hlava, at the lower Kadaň weir on the Ohře, was her loyal partner. Usually he could be seen at high noon, each time in a grey suit with a hat on his head engaged in repairing his shoes. He would take a seat just for a while, hardly ever more than fifteen minutes, since the weir was too dry for the sprite as a significant portion of water was flowing through the nearby millrace. Nobody had any idea where

exactly in the river the sprite lived. One afternoon, sixteen year old Hans, a son of a temporary worker from Špitálské předměstí, went with a can to fetch some water from the river. He took the water from the weir, stayed there for a while playing and wading in the shallow river bed. But then he suddenly disappeared under the water's surface.

There were other children on the island at that time and so the rumour spread quickly over the entire quarter of Špitálské předměstí. A crowd of people gathered quickly. In vain a few brave people tried to find Hans in the river, the only thing left behind was his spilled can – it took two hours before a fisherman found the body of the poor boy below the weir. He had bruises on his arms and feet, the silent witnesses of the sprite's grasp that held the boy below the water. Some people would rather never go to the island of Písečná hlava, as they are afraid of Violanta and the local water sprite.

TIP

The book *Řeka Ohře v bájích a pověstech* (The Elbe river in fables and legends), with charming illustrations by Antonín Grafnetter, is available in all information centres in the Lower Ohře region, from Klášterec to Louny.

Camps and Let's be Romantic

Honestly, would you not say that we are getting lazy? I mean we as humanity. We are getting lazy, mollycoddled and too much used to comfort. And we are somewhat cynical. It is hard for us to be enthusiastic about anything. If this characterization fits you, the following two pages will be a challenge. However if your soul has any romantic tendencies, if you can cope with discomfort and endure – forget hotels and boarding houses for once and go to a camp. A tent, cabin, bungalow or a trailer will provide accommodation. The Gate to Bohemia is ready for you. Just browse through the Internet and find a location to your liking – and there you go in search of romanticism!

THE REGION OF ÚSTĚCKO – A WATER WORLD ON LAKE CHMELAŘ

Lake Chmelař nearby the town of Ústě (you can read about it on pages 64–65) is one of the most popular recreational areas in the Gate to Bohemia – and the fact that Chmelař is in fact a pond does not change a thing. Sixty seven hectares of water area with two adjusted beaches and a lovely surrounding landscape will allow you to stay quite passive, if you wish to, or you can go for relaxation full of physical activity and fun. The offer of camps is vast – it is up to you what preferences are.

Camp Ústě – www.kempustek.cz
Cabin camp Oáza
<http://mujweb.cz/ustekdovolenakemp.html>
Camp Na Konci – www.kempnakonci.cz
Camp Pod Smrkem – <http://kemp-ustek.wz.cz>
Camp Klárka – www.kempklarka.com
Camp Obzor – www.kemp-obzor.cz
Horní Vysoké – Tourist and cabin settlement Zdravotník – www.zdravotnik.net



THE ELBE ROUTE – A PARADISE FOR TOURISTS

We travelled along the Elbe route on pages 14–15 so you know the essential things about the route. The list of camps covers its entire length in the region of Ústí – from the village of Vědomice near Roudnice nad Labem all the way to Děčín. Some camps are in close vicinity of the cycling path, some are placed literally on it, others not quite so but still very close to it – this for instance applies to the camp in Terezín, in which case you have to take a turn to the left off the route in Litoměřice. The fascinating fortification town of Terezín and the enthralling monuments of holocaust are certainly worth it.

Vědomice – BK Cycling camp Pod Lipou
www.sporthotelbk.cz/kemp
Vědomice – Recreational centre Pod Lipou
www.podlipou.cz
Litoměřice – Autocamp Slavoj
www.autokemplitomerice.com
Terezín – Autocamp Kréta
www.autokempterezin-kreta.cz
Píšťany – Camp Marina
www.marina-pistany.cz/kemp/
Brná – Cycling camp Loděnice
www.cyklokemplodenice.cz/cs
Nebočady – Camp Formule
www.hotelformule.cz/cs/kemp-sluzby.html
Děčín – Camp Cyklostop – www.kempdecin.cz



BOHEMIAN SWITZERLAND – A ROMANTIC REALM OF ROCKS

This is a land of rocks and rock towns, gorges, meadows, folk architecture, views stretching into distance and remarkable beauty. The rock formation of Pravčická brána, gorges of the Kamenice river, vistas in Jetřichovce, Dolný mill... a large number of such magnets are within the reach of camps. The majority of camps is situated on the right bank of the Elbe, the camp in Ostrov is on the left bank (read more about it on pages 16–17). In Stará Oleška there is a pond with wonderful swimming within the reach of all jewels of Bohemian Switzerland.

Mezní Louka – camp Mezní Louka
www.npcs.cz/kemp-mezni-louka
Vysoká Líba – camp Mosquito Intercamp
www.mosquito.cz
Srbská Kamenice – <http://u-ferdinanda.cz/>
Stará Oleška – camp Pod lesem
<http://ustipost.cz/autocamp/>
Stará Oleška – autocamp Aljaška,
Stará Oleška 134, Huntířov 405 02
www.autokempalaska.cz
Stará Oleška – autocamping Česká brána
www.ceskabrana.cz
Ostrov – Camp Pod Císařem
www.podcisarem.cz/cz

THE REGION AROUND THE TOWN OF KRÁSNÁ LÍPA – THE ENCHANTING SURROUNDINGS OF KŘINICE AND MANDAVA

Krásná Líba is the east gate to Bohemian Switzerland with beautiful surroundings. Be it the valley of Kyjovské údolí of the Křinice river or the first hills of Lužické hory (Lusatian mountains), it is always a pleasing sight for the eye. Three camps in the surroundings of the town are a great starting point for the entire Šluknovský výběžek (the Šluknov Hook), which used to be called the Bohemian Netherlands.

Jiřetín pod Jedlovou – Recreational Complex with camp Pod Jedlovou
<http://obecjiretin.cz/vitejte-u-nas-v-jiretine-2/ubytovani/>
Rumburk – Sportlife Centre
www.sportlifehotel.cz
Staré Křečany – Eko Camp Valdek
www.farmavaldek.cz

NECHRANICE – FUN ON A SILVER LAKE

The water reservoir of Nechanice on the Ohře river, with the longest gravity dam in Central Europe and 1300 hectares of water, is an ideal place for relaxation, bathing and water sports. The view of the fortification of Krušné Hory (the Ore Mountains) and remarkable sites of the lower Ohře region, which you can regularly read about in this magazine, are within reach.

Vikletice – camp Czech Sailing Centre
Nechranice – www.cscn.cz
Vikletice – autocamp Vikletice
www.nechanice.cz/index.php/ubytovani/31-autocamping-vikletice
Vikletice – camp Rybářská bašta
www.rybarskabasta.com
Nechranice – Sport centre camp Piraňa
Nechranice
<http://kemppirana.webmium.com>

THE REGION OF THE LOWER POOHŘÍ – A LAND OF ROYAL TOWNS

Kadaň, Žatec, Louny – a threesome of historical towns, a region of hop fields, castles, chalets and lovely mountains of Doupovské hory (Doupov Mountains), a rugged land feeding on the life-giving Ohře, an ideal region of trekkers, cyclists and tourists travelling by car that not many are quite familiar with.
Perštejn – swimming pool Perštejn
www.obec-perstejn.cz/koupaliste
Kláštevec nad Ohří – boarding house and camp U Jezu – www.pensionujezu.wz.cz
Kadaň – Na Koupališti, Kadaň – www.skkanadan.cz/zobraz.asp?t=restaurace-a-ubytovani
Prunéřov – autocamp Prunéřov
www.autokemp-prunerov.cz
Hradec – autocamp Hradec u Kadaně
www.atchradek.com
Krásný Dvůr – camp Krásný Dvůr
www.krasnydvur.cz/kemp-na-hristi-chatky
Peruc – camp Peruc U koupaliště
www.peruc.cz
Písty u Budyně – camp and refreshment shop U Jezu
www.ekempy.cz/ustecky-kraj/litomerice/1597-kemp-a-obcerstveni-u-jezu-pisty-budyne-nad-ohri



STŘEDOHOŘÍ – THE HILLS AND MOUNTAINS OF CENTRAL BOHEMIAN MOUNTAINS

A landscape, which cannot be found elsewhere, the unreal relief of hills and lone mountains – from the mountains of Verneřické středohoří, which you can easily reach from Benešov nad Ploučnicí, over the town of Ústí nad Labem (its surroundings are described on pages 54–55), the devil's mountains of Bořeň, the mountain of Milešovka and the monastery in Doksany... Just leave your tent or cabin and go for a trip.

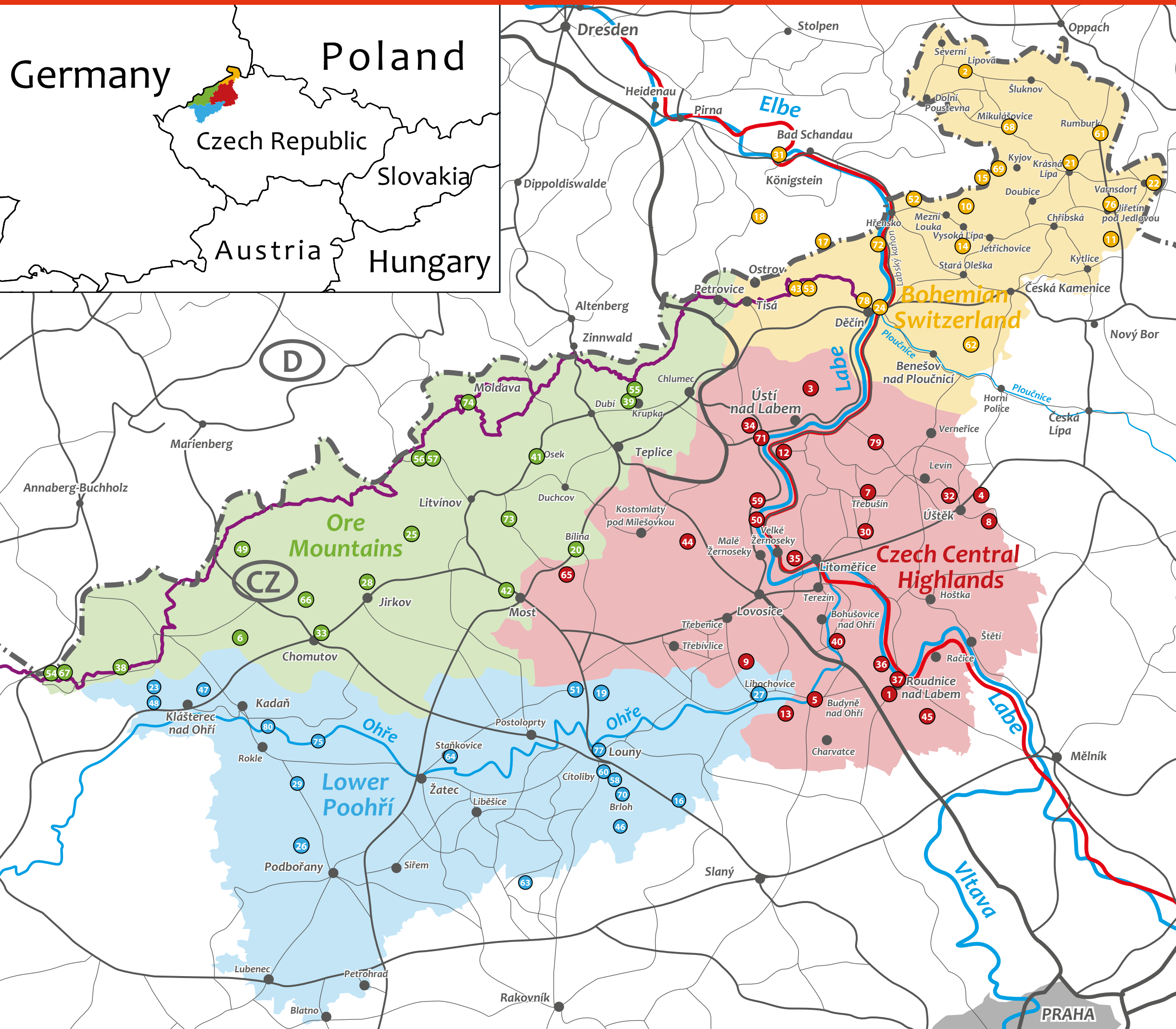
Benešov nad Ploučnicí – thermal swimming pool
www.sluzbybenesov.cz/index.php/cenik
Chabařovice – autocamp Chabařovice
www.autokemp-chabarovice.cz
Oparno – camp Jordán – www.campjordan.cz
Brožany nad Ohří – autocamping
www.kempbrozany.cz
Bílina – autocamping Kyselka
www.sportbilina.cz/autocamp



THE ORE MOUNTAINS – THE BEAUTY OF FOOTHILLS AND THE MILD LANDSCAPE BELOW

Even if there no camp on the ridges of these lovely, broody and sunny mountains intertwined with cycling paths and tourist marks, you will certainly find a camp to your liking in the landscape below and then you can set out for the mountain. It is worth it – believe me. But the foothills are interesting on their own – for example a lovely bath in the only dead lake in the Czech Republic is certainly something one might consider (more info on pages 28–29).

Osek – autocamp Osek
www.autocamposek.cz
Červený Hrádek – autocamp and recreational centre Červený Hrádek
www.autocamp-cervenyhradek.cz
Chomutov – autocamp Kamencové jezero
www.kamencovejezero.cz
Most – Benedikt
<http://benediktmost.cz/ubytovani>
Oldřichov u Duchcova – Eurocamp Barbora
www.eurocampbarbora.cz



Clues:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Airport Roudnice nad Labem | 43 Mountain of Děčínský Sněžník |
| 2 Annaberg | 44 Mountain of Milešovka |
| 3 Blansko castle | 45 Mountain of Říp |
| 4 Calvary with the stations of the cross | 46 Natural park Džbán |
| 5 Castle Budyně nad Ohří | 47 Natural sanctuary of Ciboušov |
| 6 Castle Hasištejn | 48 Natural sanctuary of Doupňák |
| 7 Castle Kalich | 49 Novodomské peat bog |
| 8 Castle of Helfenburk | 50 Porta Bohemica |
| 9 Castle ruin of Hazmburk | 51 Raná |
| 10 Castle ruin of Šaunštejn | 52 Rock formation of Pravčická brána |
| 11 Castle ruin of Tolštejn | 53 Rocks of Tiské stěny |
| 12 Castle Sřekov | 54 Skiing centre Klínovec |
| 13 Complex Dvůr Perlová voda | 55 Skiing centre Komárův vížka |
| 14 Dolský mill | 56 Klíny |
| 15 Gorges Obere Schleuse | 57 Sport complex Klíny |
| 16 Gothic temple in Panenský Týnec | 58 St Apollonia Chapel |
| 17 Grenzplatte vista | 59 St Barbara church |
| 18 Hercules' pillars | 60 St Jacob church |
| 19 Hill of Oblík | 61 St Lawrence church and Loreta |
| 20 Hotel U Iva | 62 St Wenceslaus church |
| 21 House of Bohemian Switzerland | 63 Stone rows in Kounov |
| 22 Hrádek lookout tower | 64 The hill of Bílá skála |
| 23 Chalupník brewery | 65 The mountain of Bořeň |
| 24 Chateau in Děčín | 66 The valley of Bezručovo údolí |
| 25 Chateau Jezeří | 67 Trial park Klínovec |
| 26 Chateau Krásný Dvůr | 68 Trinity chapel |
| 27 Chateau Libochovice | 69 Valley of Křínické údolí |
| 28 Chateau of Červený Hrádek | 70 Verner's mill |
| 29 Chateau Pětipys | 71 Větruše |
| 30 Chateau Ploskovice | 72 Village of Dolní Žleb |
| 31 Königstein fort | 73 Village of Mariánské Radčice |
| 32 Lake Chmelář | 74 Water reservoir Fláje |
| 33 Lake Kamencové jezero | 75 Water reservoir Nechranice |
| 34 Lake Milada | 76 Way of the Cross |
| 35 Lake Píšťanské jezero | 77 Zloun brewery |
| 36 Lavender farm | 78 Zoo in Děčín |
| 37 Lobkowicz chateau | 79 Zubrnický skanzen – open air museum of folk architecture |
| 38 Měděnec – mining shaft | 80 Želínský meander |
| 39 Mining shaft Starý Martin | |
| 40 Monastery in Doksany | |
| 41 Monastery in Osek | |
| 42 Most autodrome | |

- The Elbe path
— The Ore Mountains central cycling route

Irresistible roving through the Bohemian Netherland

This region used to be called the Bohemian Netherlands for centuries and it seems that this name is becoming popular again. Where is the region exactly? In the close vicinity of Bohemian Switzerland, it is literally hugging the landscape of rocks and gorges. This intoxicating land is called Šluknovský výběžek (the Šluknov hook). I admit that I have a soft spot for this picturesque landscape and I love to wander aimlessly through it. However for you I have prepared a plethora of aims, that is, destinations that will fully expose the attractiveness of the Šluknov hook.

THROUGH THE LAND OF JOURNEMEN AND WIZARD KRABATA

We can start, for instance, in the village of Sevní. It is surrounded with splendid meadows crossed by half-forgotten alleys and lone ancient trees, which bow their crowns to the ground with age. White cows with tender eyes watch you from the shadows of the local groves, looking as though they have grown directly from the ground. A mild road will take you to the state border and then around a meandering brook to a place, which would be magical even if it were not famous as a geological locality. A massive boulder embedded in ground marks the most northern point of the Czech Republic. When you get back to Sevní, go through the village of Lobendava to Lipová. And a stop in Annaberg in the middle of the journey is a must. Now it is the right time to make a little digression and put you in the picture – the Šluknov hook has been for centuries a Catholic wedge driven into the sea of Protestantism and so the locality was a place of unusual building activity: you will come across fourteen ways of the Cross and giant forged crosses, which will often catch you by surprise in the middle of a forest or on a dirt road. Annaberg is one of the locations with the stations of the cross, this time even with the tableaux of Jesus passion and so you can contemplate in front of Gethsemane garden with sleeping apostles and Christ on guard. From the highest point of the hill there is a lovely view of Lobendava. This is

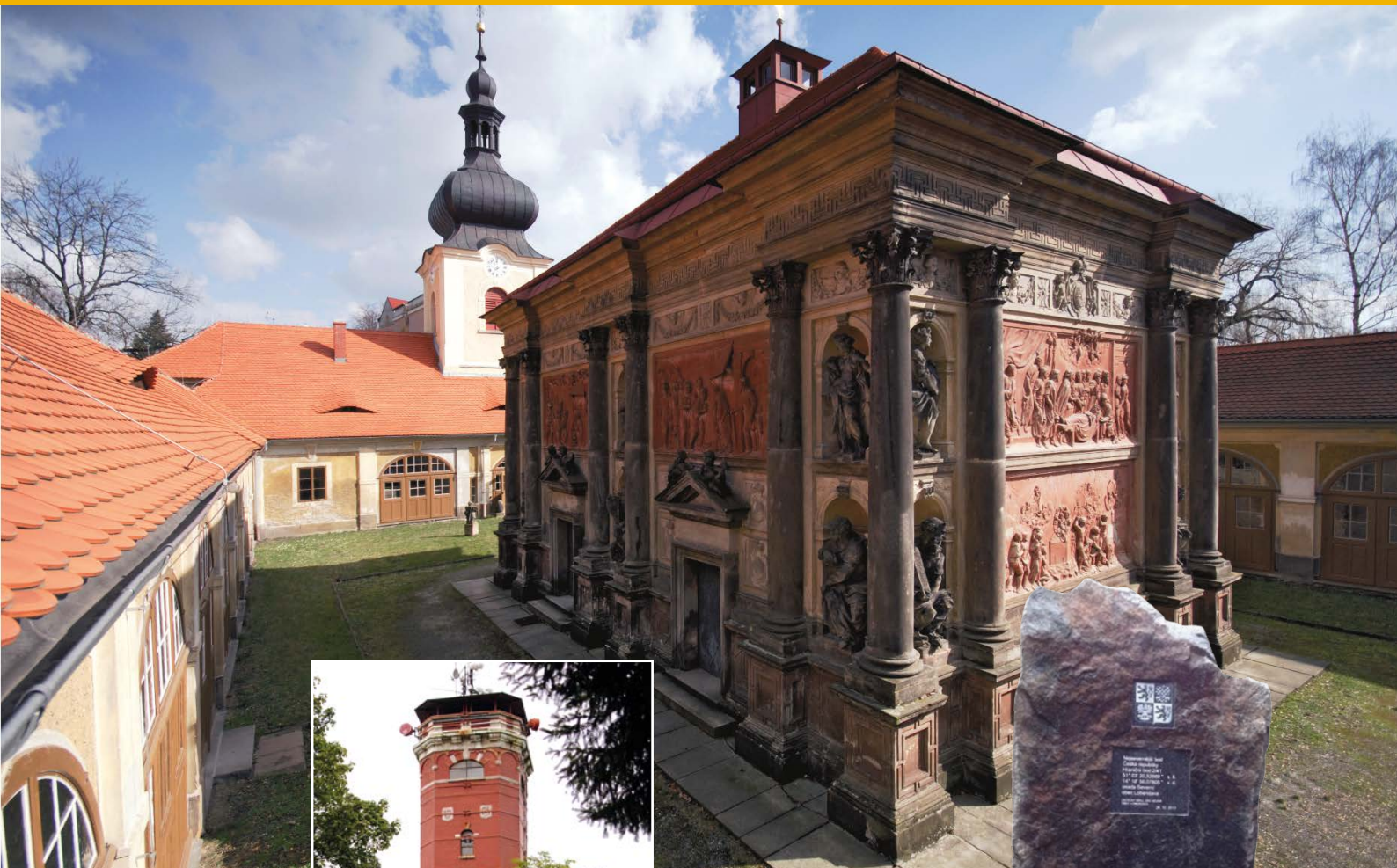


the place where you have the best chance to understand the soul of this landscape. And if you look long enough you may see a wandering journeyman, who comes from Saxony to Bohemia in search of work, or you can even catch a glimpse of a ghostly pilgrim wrapped in a long cloak – this is wizard Krabata, who got here from Upper Lusatia. In this place time drags slowly with the speed of thick forest honey. In Lipová, surrounded by tens of woodcuts, left behind for years by the participants of the traditional

sculpting workshop Lipovský dřevák, you can visit a beautifully reconstructed Upper Lusatian house with a wonderful expression, the Baroque church of St Simon and Juda and especially the Lipová chateau, which I personally always pay a visit to because this is a place of strange phenomena. The chateau is literally being brought back to life. A few years ago you would think that the chateau should be torn down. Nowadays it is again surrounded with chateau park and step by step it is being reconstructed.

BY WAYS OF THE CROSS ALL THE WAY TO THE LUSATIAN MOUNTAINS

You can rest assured that whichever direction you take, you shall like it. In the southwest villages of Horní and Dolní Poustevna with an educational path sprinkled with small sacral monuments, in the south Mikulášovice and right behind it the famous lookout tower of Tanečnice (female dancer), in the southeast Velký Šenov with the stations of the cross... But we set out westwards to a town that gave name to the Šluknov Hook. This place is the location of one of the oldest and vastest ways of the cross in the entire hook. Afterwards pay a visit to the local chateau, the pearl of so-called Saxon Renaissance. By the way, there is a pleasant garden surrounding it and the chateau itself



houses, besides its exposition, an information centre and a really wonderful cake shop. Another bead on the rope of this journey is the town of Rumburk with the most northern Czech loreta (an imitation of Jesus' birthplace), a breath-taking place with an ambit and a brilliantly reconstructed Svaté schody (Saint stairs), fascinating in the daytime as well as in candlelight, with another way of the cross. We say good-bye Rumburk in its square, standing by remarkable Trinity pillar surrounded with statues of saints, and then we can continue our journey – for instance through tidy German villages (this is the shortest way) to the town of Varnsdorf. Once there, definitely take a trip to Hrádek, a somewhat fanciful chateau with a lookout tower, which

provides a view of the entire town, however you will also see the hills of the Lusatian Mountain in the distance and the town is an ideal starting point for trips to these mountains. It would be a mistake not to make a tour of local spectacular villas and even (believe it or not) factories built in various styles. They are precious monuments remembering the times when industry was at its very beginning.



that you set up a base in Krásná Lípa, put your car aside and take walks, for example along the famous more than twenty kilometres long Kögler's educational path, a route which was officially opened thanks to the care of Rudolf Kögler, a technical clerk and keen naturalist, as early as 1941, and thus this may be the oldest educational path in the country. It will take you to places you will never forget – such is their

FROM THE OLDEST EDUCATIONAL PATH TO THE TOWN OF CHATEAUS

The journey to Krásná Lípa is just a few kilometres long. The town has a wonderful interactive exposition in the House of Bohemian Switzerland (Dům Českého Švýcarska), a grandiose sport complex, a rare Dittrich tomb (with a dedicated heating facility), a wonderful regional brewery directly at the square, a nice grouping of Upper Lusatian houses in the settlement of Kamenná Horka, all that has been described in detail in the previous issues of this magazine. This time I recommend

beauty. And then take a trip by train. Another unforgettable experience. The track between Kytlice and Mlýny is one of the most beautiful I know. Lean out of a window and let your eyes wander along this splendour. The train will unload you in Benešov nad Ploučnicí, famous Saalhausen with several chateaus in the style of Saxon Renaissance (I wrote about the church of Nativity of Mary in the previous issue) and the option to take a trip to one of the local lookout towers or vistas. The hills Kohout and Strážný vrch are nearby, the vista Ploučnická vyhlídka is right above the town and the view from the ruin of castle Ostrý will engrave itself into your memory. You can hire a bike and take a ride along Ploučnická educational path to Děčín... But that is quite another topic.

TIP

If you wish to look like an expert and see something special ask the guide in Šluknov chateau to take you to the loft – it is unique and you may come across a theatre production or a concert. While in Loreta in Rumburk, ask for the leaflet with the Rumburk walk through the centuries. The leaflet is an interesting and somewhat mysterious guide through the town – you will have to guess the right answers to deserve the trip and if you find the solution to the crossword puzzle there will be a reward waiting for you in Loreta.

Zoo, which Takes All Your Senses into Account

The zoo in Děčín has one great advantage – nobody can get bored in it. In my view this is the most entertaining zoo in the country. Naturally it is children who appreciate this the most, however you will learn that it takes just a few minutes and anybody can become a child. The thing is that the employees of this zoo are exceptionally creative and share the opinion that passing by cages and watching animals is not enough to satisfy the visitor. One can say that this zoo is full of ideas – and stories too.

CAN YOU BE FASTER THAN THE BEAR?

Let us start with the ideas. The presence of spacious and playful children's corner goes without saying. A wooden castle with rope footbridges and slides, a climbing wall, a climbing frame in the shape of dragon... it takes energy to persuade children to leave this place. And then one idea follows another. Enthusiastic children are running from one interactive component to another, lifting the covers of window-like holes with various tasks: you are asked to look into them or put your arm in to touch, for instance, a shed snake skin, sometimes you are even asked to smell the window to learn what the smell of a particular animal is like, there are rhymed riddles, some tables even speak. The high point is a telephone booth that will connect you to any of ten animals – and if you get connected you will hear the sound produced by the animal in question... If you

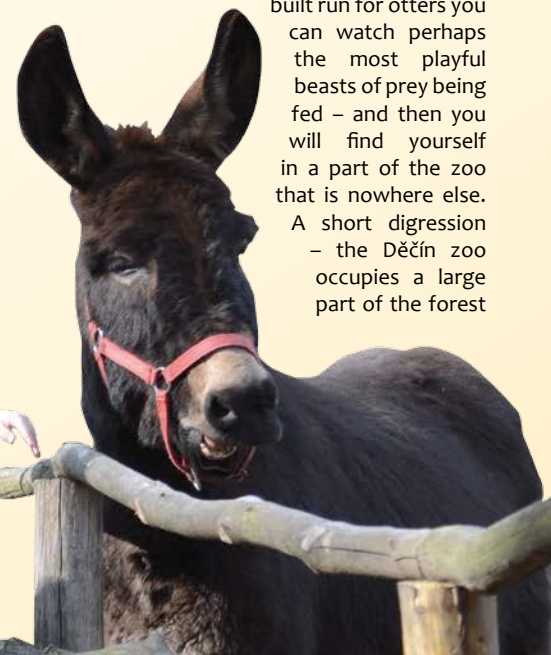


made of wood), and even taking part in the running competition with a bear on one of the available tracks, where the bear is represented by a sensitive radar. If you can run faster than 55 kilometres per hour and take eight metres long leaps, you can beat the grizzly. And then, at the end of the path, you can lean against a fence and watch these splendid beasts of prey, now that we know them much better.

FROM BOHEMIAN-SAXON SWITZERLAND TO THE CARIBBEAN

Besides grizzly bears the Děčín zoo offers another 150 species of animals. At random: the takin, the sun bear, the Visayan warty pig, the clouded leopard, the vicugna, the West Caucasian tur, the Canadian porcupine, the giant anteater, the red-necked wallaby, the fishing cat, the South American tapir, the maned wolf... In the Bird's house (Ptačí dům) you walk among flying good-lookers, at the newly built run for otters you can watch perhaps the most playful beasts of prey being fed – and then you will find yourself in a part of the zoo that is nowhere else. A short digression – the Děčín zoo occupies a large part of the forest

think that the sense of taste is missing in this list, try Bamburger bistro with really tasty hamburgers and some other specialties. At the zoo record station you may try whether you leap further than a flea or armadillo or run faster than a grizzly bear – but I do not think that you can. The thing is that the grizzly bear can be faster than Usain Bolt! By now you may be keen to see some animals – after all we are in a zoo. No worry – animals here are omnipresent and definitely play the main part. For example, the mentioned bears, the only grizzly bears on the territory of the entire former Czechoslovakia and thus a long-term pride of the zoo. When you enter the zoo you may follow the Bear's path and I can assure you that you will enjoy it. What awaits you is eight stations, eight good reasons to be like the grizzly bear. And each time you can try something different from the bear's life – keeping balance on a log bridge, drawing on a lack board such food that could be used to feed bears, trying the bear's "poker face" in a photo, climbing over a mountain ridge made of nets, taking photos in a grizzly's hug (do not worry – this one is



on the slopes of the hill of Pastýřský stěna, high above the town. This is one of the most natural environments you can imagine. And so it is logical that a part of the complex is dedicated to the fauna of Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland. Given the fact that these animals live in the surrounding wild nature you may ask why? Well, this is the very reason. Honestly, how many times have you caught a glimpse of a lynx, a black stork, a peregrine falcon or an eagle-owl while walking among rocks? And you can hardly imagine what enthusiasm a single "ordinary" squirrel can spark. The most beautiful and structurally rich pavilion of the Děčín zoo is Paradise islands (Rajské ostrovy), which is not located directly in the zoo. It is quite a few vertical metres lower, outside the zoo premises, in a house in Teplická street. If you have a ticket from the zoo, the entry on the same day is for free. What awaits you is four storeys of a very emotional exposition – a coral cliff in Reunion, a mangrove coast on Fiji, an Asian rain forest on Sulawesi and a semi-desert in Haiti. You can take a seat in front of the largest sea aquarium in the region, watch the sea life and listen to enthusiastic shouts of children who met their favourite heroes – Nemo aka the clownfish and Dory aka the palette surgeonfish. You will also come across the poisonous lionfish, which scares even the zoo keepers, monkeys of the slow loris species in the nocturnal exposition, iguanas, spiders, turtles and tortoises, chameleons, snakes...

BÁBINKA AND OTHER STORIES

And what about the promised stories? For example, the new attraction of Paradise islands, the pygmy cuttlefish. It went like this... One day the keepers let a shoal of baby pygmy fish into the aquarium. They were quick to orient themselves in the new environment and as soon as they saw a coral cliff, they set out towards it, changed their colour and became invisible. But then they found out that the people watching them through glass came to see them. One would not expect cuttlefish to be such comedians. They started to show off, change colours and fluoresce – one the bowing was missing. The most famous story is linked to Bábinka. Bábinka is the oldest female individual of the collared mongabay in the world! She has lived in the Děčín zoo since 1980 and the keepers think she is roughly about 37. When Hukan, her partner, died four years ago the zoo decided to let Bábinka be and did not look for another partner. However, the monkey grandma was sad. She was missing the everyday rituals. The keepers understood this quickly and found a solution. One of them comes to Bábinka's cage every morning and lets Bábinka search through her hair with her dexterous fingers. However, then the roles have to be exchanged and the keeper has to go through Bábinka's fur with her fingers. Another story? Be your-

selves a part of these stories – just consider the number of newly born animals recently! For example, kitties of the fishing cat or a small goat-antelope – a second baby in two consecutive years, or the first babies ever of the great grey owl, a small crested black macaque, a calf of the pygmy zebu – the smallest cow in the world, or the twins of the red-handed tamarin, which are looked after their father all day long, a common thing among tamarins, while mother secures only breastfeeding... A plethora of stories.

A GOOD IDEA

One region – three different zoos. This is a new campaign, and a great one, when you can buy a joint ticket for all these three zoos in the Gate to Bohemia: the Děčín zoo, the Chomutov zoo and the Ústí zoo. You will save tens of Czech crowns in comparison to buying three separate tickets. In each zoo you will also get a magnetic sticker and if you manage to visit all the zoos by the end of October and collect three stamps, you will be included in a draw for prizes and the main prize is a tour flight starting from the airport in Roudnice nad Labem. The joint ticket can be bought in the ticket office of any of the three zoos.

TIP

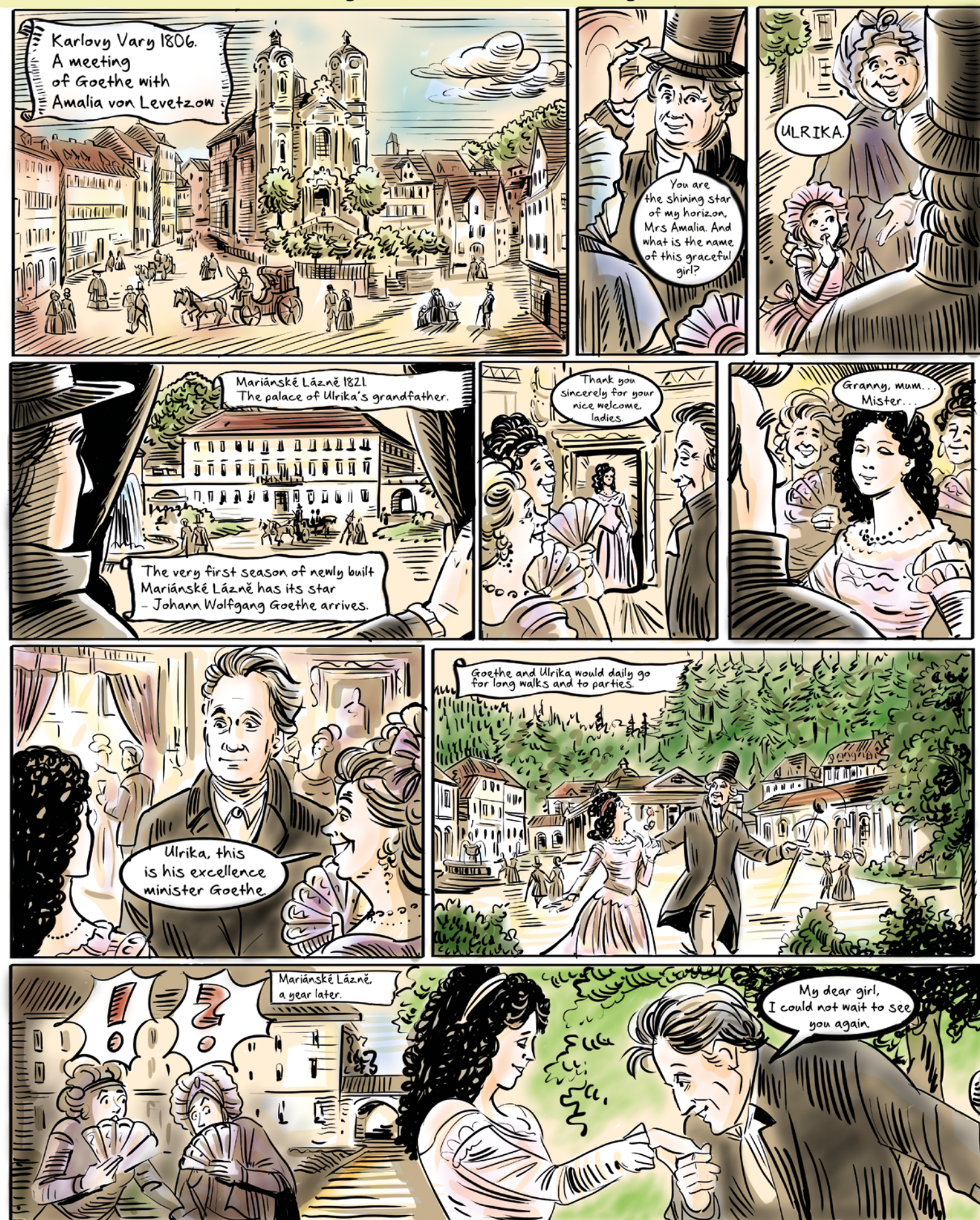
Nearby the zoo at the edge of the hill of Pastýřská stěna, right behind the famous via ferrata, the legendary weekend chateau Nebíčko is being brought back to life under the auspices of the zoo administration. After many years the gallery of the lookout tower has been opened again – it provides a full view of Děčín and there is also a restaurant there.



Ulrika and Johann

the Story of the Most Romantic Love of All time

Written by Rostislav Křivánek – Drawn by Petr Herold



From the Fabled Mountain of Říp to the Historical Town of Roudnice

Of the three largest towns of the Central Bohemian Mountains Roudnice nad Labem seems to be somewhat in the shadow of Litoměřice and Ústí nad Labem. Quite unjustly. Let me coax you into a healthy walk and you will see for yourselves that this town and its remarkable surroundings are literally full of tourist attractions. We set out for the top of Říp, on the way back we will partly walk and partly ride bikes, and then we will survey the entire town. It is quite possible that one whole day will not suffice.

UP THE MOUNTAIN OF ŘÍP

Říp. These three letters will probably not rouse an emotional response in foreign readers of the Gate to Bohemia, however I do not know a Czech who would remain indifferent when the name of this legendary mountain is mentioned. But still – how many of them have really climbed to the top of it... Certainly, when the legendary forefather Čech and his tribe stopped there and viewed the countryside from the top of this bare hill, the land looked quite different – even the river beds were in



different places. However, the unmistakable relief of the Central Bohemian Mountains was already there. And who would not be tempted to have a look at these eerie hills and knolls and say – I see, so that is what forefather Čech saw and that is why he decided to stay, and that is why I am here today. You can climb Říp from several starting points, but we shall follow the blue marked route that starts in Roudnice. In a while we'll get to the stylish Štípárna pub on the outskirts of the village of Vesce. We are not tired, but having a stop here is a wonderful idea, especially if we have any children with us. They will enjoy the children's corner, a climbing wall, a shooting range for bows and

catapults, a nail hammering station... And we can have something nice to eat, from the grill for example, because Říp is not going to run away and, for that matter, we will be watching it all the time. Another stop is in Rovný, in the workshop of folk traditions, where you will be offered lovely traditional products and perhaps you will arrange to take part in a course of some kind. From Rovný, along a beautiful path and then uphill. It is not obvious at first sight but Říp is definitely a decent hill. Before we reach the very top, we are enchanted by a lovely wooden cottage with the name of Boumova chata with the great inscription "What Mecca is for Mohamed, Říp is for Czechs". Just a few steps and we are at the Rotunda of St. George, we are shown around, and then another few steps and we can let our eyes rove through the landscape from one of three viewpoints. I personally love the vista of Roudnická vyhlídka the most because it serves České středohoří up on a golden platter. You will be surprised that the walk downhill is much faster but is still exhausting. We are lucky that at the foot of the hill there is place to hire scooters. The lovely half-walk half-ride will take

us back to Roudnice, where we can return the scooters. This is, by the way, is possible at other places too and so we can, for example, set out for the Lavender farm in Židovice, for the Gallery of decorated Easter eggs (Galerie kraslic) in Libotenice, in Nučnický we can cross the Elbe by ferry and hand over the scooters at the cycling bar U Trumpetky in Lounky. Those who have not tried it have no idea how sensational this mode of transport is!

CRISS-CROSSING AN ANCIENT TOWN

We are back again standing in Roudnice nad Labem at the huge Lobkowicz chateau. We let the guide walk us through a chapel, two historical halls and an original Romanesque castle with a courtyard, we taste the lovely wine from Roudnice and, with renewed energy, we set out for walks around the town. At the square of Husovo náměstí (Why is this square named after Hus? Jan Hus or John Hus was, most likely, ordained as a priest here), we cannot resist the cake shop Dortleka and have a sweet speciality bearing the same name, then we set out for Hláška, a dignified tower, the last remnant of the former town fortifications, which provides an enchanting view of Středohoří (Central Bohemian mountains) and a meander of the Elbe, and there we go down towards



the Podřipské museum. It is interesting because of its collection, focused mainly on the history of the town and the entire region, and, moreover, this is the place where you can arrange a tour of the Jewish cemetery, which is good because the cemetery is a beautiful place. Another destination on our journey appears in front of us in all its beauty – the Temple of the Nativity of Mother Mary with an Augustinian monastery, the dominating feature of the town. The tour of the church, of the monastery ambit



and of a mysterious little underground lake is quiet, calm and as if from another period. You can have a coffee or taste a liqueur, which Premonstratensian nuns produce in nearby Dokšany. Now, two Baroque chapels are awaiting us. This is one remarkable thing about Roudnice – as you walk around the town you come across, without warning, historical monuments sprinkled all over the place in spots where you would not expect them. For example, at the roundabout on the main road there suddenly appears a magnificent chapel, a creation of the reputable workshop of Octavio Broggio, the master of architecture from Litoměřice, richly decorated with paintings by Wenzel Lorenz Reiner, as if it had fallen from the skies. Well – in the old days a scaffold used to stand there and the town started quite a distance away, however the ensuing centuries somehow included the chapel in the somewhat haphazardly developing urbanism. By the way, the building behind the chapel is a former orphanage built in the Neo-Baroque style. We listen to an interesting presentation and instead of leaving we ask the guide to take us a few tens of metres on to the Late Baroque chapel of St. Joseph. It used to be part of the complex of the town hospital, nowadays it is a meeting point of busy streets, however its beauty, dignity and calmness have been preserved to this day. It is about time to look upon the town from a height. We are lucky – the ascent up a spiral staircase is encouraged by a purely functionalist Kratochvílova lookout tower from the year of 1934. A really magnificent building gives the impression of being light, on the other hand it provides a firm support for

viewing the town, which we have already almost walked around completely. Down there – it is the chateau where we started... And the building in front of it – what is it? Of course, this must be the indoor riding academy built by the builder of the Roudnice chateau Antonio della Porta! However, now this Baroque structure houses contemporary works of art. That is, this is the seat of Galerie moderního umění (Gallery of modern art). It boasts many

a precious work of art created by Czech artists from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, for example Antonín Slaviček, Emil Filla, Jan Zrzavý or Václav Špála. At the very end of this tour



we will go to see something that is no longer there. Strange? Not really. Roudnice is one of the oldest Czech towns, which acquired its royal rights as early as the 12th century. And as such it also had one jewel, a magnificent Gothic bridge over the Elbe. It was commissioned by Bishop Jan IV. of Dražice in 1333 (Prague Charles Bridge was finished almost 70 years later). Thus, the bridge was the third oldest bridge in the Czech lands. Right behind it upstream there used to be a Romanesque castle, the second oldest Czech stone building. The bridge was torn down during the Thirty Years' War and since 1910 an iron bridge has stood in its place. The castle, on the other hand, was expanded into a Baroque chateau. And so, we end our journey on the bridge, in the middle of the river, with a view of the chateau, and we can feel the history flowing under our feet in the river bed of the mother of Czech rivers, the grand and mighty Elbe.

TIP

Have you succumbed to the charm of Czech microbreweries? The region around Roudnice will not let you down. Directly under the mountain of Říp there is the village of Ctíněves and in it the brewery Podřipský pivovar, which produces beer by top-fermenting as well as bottom-fermenting, beer not filtered and not pasteurised, just with the use of water, malt, hops, yeast and a love for beer. And the brewery has a pub with food perfect for consuming with beer!

A Boy from the Banks of the Čepel brook



David Vršický is the most successful racing driver in the Czech Republic. His domain is truck racing. He holds several world speed records, he is a double European champion in the championship of truck racing and a four-time winner of the designer cup. His name is inseparably linked to the Buggyra team, which has its technology centre in Roudnice nad Labem. This is the place where I met David to ask him about his connections to Roudnice, where he was born, and to the entire region of the Gate to Bohemia. After we shook hands he took me to the workshop where he had made a name for himself over many years of work as an exceptionally gifted and inventive designer. Both staircases leading to the first floor were literally buried under trophies and prizes and this unbelievable collection of awards continued to the level of the bar above the workshop. “I have had these made myself to make us look better”, jokes David, but one can see that he is very proud of his own, and Buggyra’s success.

David, what is your connection to your hometown and its surroundings?

It is a paradox – and I am not the only one – a man knows his closest surroundings least of all parts of the world. We are used to finding a spot as far from home as possible, to conquer the world and think that the more complicated a journey to an experience is, the more powerful an experience it is. I have travelled throughout the world but as time passes by I feel more and more satisfaction when I come back to the Elbe,

to Roudnice, where I was born. And I learn to find the beauty which I have not seen until now, and if I saw it before I considered it to be natural and somehow ordinary. I love warm weather and water and I have found a calm paradise on one small Thai island where I run to as soon as winter creeps in and so we have a rather quiet month before the Dakar Rally. There are very few people, there is peace, the sea, almost no tourists, electricity is rare. In fact, I know this place better than the country around Roudnice. Which is terrible.

And what are the memories of your childhood – which places were your favourite ones when you were a boy?

Definitely Roudnice park around the church – I used to go down to a primary school located by the church. This used to be our schoolboy’s paradise and we would do..., I think I can speak about it today, quite crazy things not realising that we could get into quite some trouble. Luckily nothing ever happened to anybody – you know that it is the luck that children have. In fact, we were just normal boys. Another of our territories was the Čepel brook in Roudnice. And then naturally, when I was older, the beautiful forests around Slavín, where our family used to have a cottage. There we would have adventurous expeditions and survey the terrain, discovering where things were or could be. My parents, naturally, permanently made efforts to get me involved in looking after patches of tomatoes and other vegetables, but I would try all ways to escape, most often on a bike. I remember that at one time I was taken for the great hero of the bunch, it was when an acquaintance of mine showed me the Roudnice



sand pit and I took the rest of the bunch to this place. I really was a king of a sort. Today it seems like it is right around the corner but then the three kilometres to the pit were, for us boys, a monumental and understandably quite secret expedition. Naturally nobody was to learn about it because our parents would ban us from going there immediately. We would climb overhanging rocks, discover a remarkable landscape and do things that could cripple us but again, nothing ever happened to us. Moreover, we had a wonderful feeling of doing something forbidden because each of us had a clearly defined area around his house where he was supposed to move about – and in this case, we went over the borders of this territory in a big way. It was a very good time.

And what about today? Do you have any favourite places for relaxation?

I have started to use a bike more and discovered the Elbe route. I am enthusiastic about it, it is a place I really like to go to. Today the Elbe bank is more accessible to people but, on the other hand, I remember that in the old days, when no such comfort was available, people would meet more often, talk, have fun and even swim... Nowadays you can meet cyclists and people on inline skates there – and that’s about it. But this may be due to the current times, I think – in the old days people wanted to be together and now they want to be alone with their mobiles, which make it possible for them to stay in touch with other castaways. I would prefer it if

a restaurant with outdoor benches and more refreshment stands were erected by the Elbe bank and the people would come. I would like it that way.

And what about places further away from Roudnice?

The landscape in the surroundings of Roudnice is beautiful, I love the hills of the Central Bohemian Mountains. I had one period when I was very much into model making and went to Roudnice airport. When I remember those summer evenings when the horizon of the hills around Milešovka began to change into silhouettes lit by the setting sun and Hazmburk literally poked its horns out – I cannot imagine anybody who would not be touched. I have always been attracted to this location and I even managed to climb some of the hills, Milešovka for instance. But still there are many places in this region where I have never been, and I feel it is a mistake I should remedy in future. For example, I have never been to Bohemian Switzerland. And as far as the Ore Mountains are concerned I know only the town of Most, or the autodrome to be more precise – on the other hand I know it like the back of my hand. But there is one place in the region which I like a lot and I go there whenever I can. Nechranice. This reservoir has the ideal conditions for windsurfing, which is another passion of mine.

What do you feel like when coming home from around the world?

It is a strange feeling. On one hand this is my home, memories, on the other hand when you come back, even after a long time of being away, you have something to compare your town to and that changes your perspective. Especially when coming back from Germany, Austria or Switzerland, where everything is polished to perfection, cleaned, repaired and looked after... Such an experience takes off the rose-tinted glasses of everyday routine, when one does not see the weatherworn facades, the shortcomings... But I must say that there have been great improvements in recent years. There are things that cannot be changed and I do not want them to change – and anyway my friends would poke fun at me about them – I mean our square.

What is it they do not like about it?

Well, it goes uphill! And people from other places find it rather silly. I really do not understand why.

You have seen half the world – which place do you like the most?

I really like Asia. Our lives are too much hustle and bustle, theirs is not. They are relaxed, smiling, amicable, honest, often they have little to eat but still they would share it with you. I especially love Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam. China is a country of great contrasts – unbelievable smog, chaos and crowds of people in big cities and just a few hundred kilometres inland there is magnificent nature that you will not find elsewhere. But I like the south of Asia more. And my best recent discovery is Bolivia. A beautiful country and very nice people.

David Vršický Overview of Achievements

- 2015 – Buggyra, title in the designer cup RT
- 2013 – Buggyra, speed records (100 km, 100 miles in one hour)
- 2009 – Buggyra, 1st place in the European Cup of truck racing, the title in the designer cup RT, international master of Germany
- 2008 – Buggyra, 1st place in the European Cup of truck racing, the title in the designer cup RT, international master of Germany
- 2008 – Buggyra, world speed record for 1 km (starting from a stopped position)
- 2007 – Buggyra, 3rd place in the European Cup of truck racing, the title in the designer cup RT, international master of Germany
- 2004 – Buggyra, 3rd place in the European Cup of truck racing SRT
- 2004 – Buggyra, the world record speed with a truck
- 2003 – Buggyra, 3rd place in the European Cup of truck racing SRT
- 2002 – Buggyra, first participation in the European Cup of truck racing SRT
- 2001 – Buggyra, test driver
- 1998 – SISU, a debut in the European Cup of truck racing representing the team ProCa–PTE–Holoubek
- 1997 – David Vršický discovered by Martin Koloc



The story of the Chateau in Pětipsy, or Do Miracles Happen?

HOW I WAS BORN, GREW UP AND CHANGED

Dear people, after centuries of silence at last I have the chance to talk. If you have a while listen to me. This story is full of delight, sadness, resignation and hope, but you people probably know this from your own stories. I was born... now, you can't really expect me to remember after all those centuries. But wait a minute, you know something, I do remember. It was in the times of King John of Bohemia, that I know for certain. The year was 1332 and Friedrich of Egenberg brought a bunch of craftsmen with him to Pětipsy, who got down to work and I was born into this world stone by stone. As a new-born baby I was a three-storey Gothic fort with walls almost two metres high, protected by a massive rampart and a moat. For two centuries I was a good and safe abode for several families, which I can't tell one from another. But I remember well the Hrobčický family of Hrobčice because thanks to them I grew larger. They added two wings and so I became a handsome Renaissance dandy in the fashionable shape of the letter U – this was some time in the 16th-century, if I remember correctly. The moat was preserved, that goes



without saying. After about another hundred years I was purchased by the Thun family who held onto me until the twenties of the previous century. The Thun family were wonderful – they looked after me, they even changed me into the Baroque style by completing the eastern wing and I was suddenly a closed chateau with a courtyard. And I still had the moat. Well, I felt little sorry about the aristocratic family living elsewhere, while I was home to the clerks of the demesne and, from time to time, the place of assembly where things concerning the demesne were discussed. In the 18th century a few classicistic embellishments were added – I always just went with the flow of the times. When everybody started talking about industry and about the new times I was just a little apprehensive about my future, but fortunately the Thun family let me to a very talented man of the new period. His name was Gustav... wait a minute – Hodek! Yes, Hodek. He built a new sugar factory in Pětipsy and was generally efficient in everything. His son bought me in 1926 together with the nearby farm and I fell for the illusion that the 20th century would not be so bad! My old age did not make me any wiser. When the Second World War arrived I was turned into a jail. Some 130 French soldiers would be driven daily to work in fields and in

mines. I can still hear their desperate sighs and prayers. Then the Hodek family were back and I told myself – times are changing for the better.

HOW I BECAME A RUIN

But then the year of 1948 came and my courtyard was suddenly full of tractors and a fat man in rubber boots walked through my chambers and spat on the floor. The years after that – I wish I could forget them. I was really in great shape, given my age. But these agriculturalists were quite something different from all their predecessors of those long six hundred years. First I was to house some flats and a canteen. Well, why not I kept telling myself. But things went from bad to worse. How to express it politely – terrible chaos ruled the place, nobody looked after me, quite the contrary, I felt as if those people found me irritating. By the end of the sixties I had turned into a ruin where nobody could live anymore. Nights were the worst thing – and when rogues turned up the days were just as bad. First, they only took furniture, later they ripped out my entrails – windows, doors, timber supports, beams... When they got into my head and cut the roof rafters out it was clear that I was not going to survive this era that labelled itself as a happy one. They even considered tearing me down. At least it would be over for me. But since I was by some

mistake designated a monument protected by the state in 1958, my suffering continued. A sad old age I can tell you that. I would give up all hope but then in front of me and, very tentatively, also inside me a group of people started to appear regularly. I listened to them and told myself – they are nice people, but fools. They walked through the ruins of me, that had no roof and holes where windows used to be, with ceilings caved in and cracked remnants of walls and talked about how I was, out of the blue, the most endangered piece of real estate in the country and that – hold on to your hats, guys – they were going to save me and repair me. Would you believe it? What foolishness. If a man was in my condition probably nobody would try to rescue me. But they really meant it! They call themselves Via Levamente (I didn't expect to hear Latin again after all those years). They started clearing, lopping away bushes and trees, and shored up the caved-in ceilings with wooden supports... Bit by bit, naturally. I think that no man in this country has enough money to rescue me. But they have not given up and asked for money everywhere they could. They would like to provide me with a roof as soon as possible – well, honestly that is the one thing I need the most. One day they brought with them a likeable lady and started doing things that used to be quite common in the previous centuries

and which I thought people had already forgotten. They activated energy points. They cleared the area around me and then rejuvenated the areas that help to harmonise me with everything living in the vicinity.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME ONE DAY?

Naturally, I was not much interested in what the intentions of those lovely people concerning me were. I am telling you – if they manage what they intend to do I will have experienced something I have never experienced before, really. They want to restore me to full health and open me as an interesting and unique interactive centre for families and groups of people. They will play in me a game during which people will fulfil tasks, solve puzzles and each triviality and detail will be significant and will lead to a goal. The game is not based on logic only, it also includes suspense and mystery. They want to bring to life the atmosphere of the medieval times and even the spirits of those who used to live in me. The place should also boast a children's playground, agritourism, horse riding and fishing for the children among the visitors. Thus, people will have fun within my walls and around me – and I really did not expect that. That is to say, this will come true if this bunch of adventurers manages to raise the money. But as I have been watching them, they are not giving up.



WILL YOU HELP?

What do you think – can this be done by the enthusiasts from Via Levamente? If you are not indifferent to my destiny and would like to help, you can send some money to the public bank account at Fio Bank 2200688777/2010. Or you can at least vote for me as the most endangered historical monument in the region – this could bring in some money too – as they say today, a subsidy. I personally have one more plea – if any of you have any information about me from the past or if you even have any photos or postcards of me from the past and you are willing to share them, that would make those people really happy. You will find them in that strange web that cannot be seen but which we all got stuck in a long time ago, at www.vialevamente.cz. The greybeard, who will soon be 685 years old, thanks you.



**BANK ACCOUNT NUMBER
FOR DONATIONS**

Fio Bank 2200688777/2010



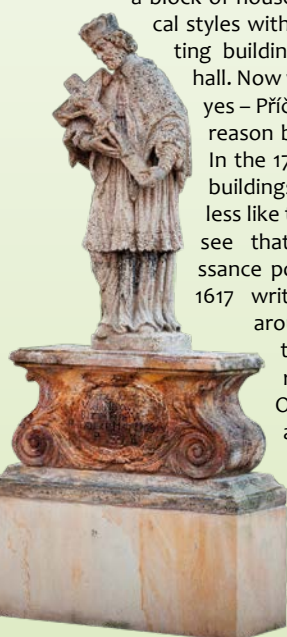
The Inconspicuous Charm of the Town of Jirkov

The first impression of the town of Jirkov is deceptive. When you are passing through Chomutov you will not really notice that you have crossed the boundary over to Jirkov since the two towns are joined to each other.

On the other hand, if you are going in the opposite direction towards Most, you'll particularly notice the concrete blocks of flats and it will not enter your mind to take a turn into the town centre and look around. And this is a big mistake. On second impression, Jirkov will catch your attention and the third impression will engross you. There is so much to see – and that does not just mean the famous cellars of Jirkov, which will naturally be included in this narration. Personally, I consider myself a fan of this inconspicuous town with a proud soul. And so, let me show you around, if you do not mind.

THE TRACES OF PAST LIVES

Just next to the square there is a car park where we leave the car and go for a “saunter”, as my grandma used to say. Surrounded by a modern practical canal, the Bílina river is surging by us and on the bridge over the river (where else?) stands a “thank you” Baroque statue of St. John of Nepomuk from the beginning of the 18th century. What is this gratitude for? When meat shops were burning in 1708 a certain horrified burgher knelt on his knees and prayed to the beloved Jonny of Nepomuk to ask God the Father to save his house and that if his plea would be heard he would have a statue erected in honour of John. Well and we can look at this statue with satisfaction today. On the square, you will notice a splendidly shaped sandstone Baroque fountain as well as the northern part of the square where the eye is pleased by



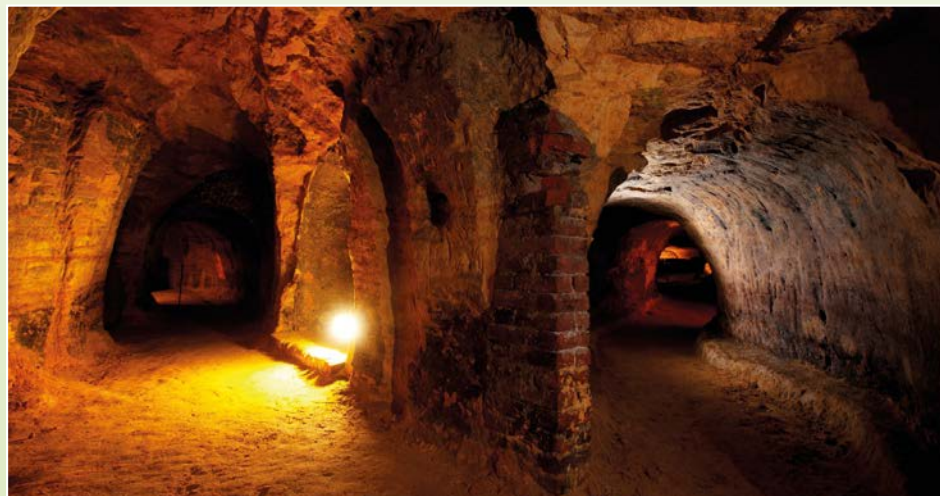
a block of houses imitating historical styles with the most dominating building being the town hall. Now we will go this way, yes – Příčná street, the main reason being house no. 19. In the 17th century all town buildings looked more or less like this house. Can you see that beautiful Renaissance portal with the year 1617 written on it? Right around the corner there is another remarkable house. Originally this was a travellers' inn built in a Classicistic style at the end of the 18th century with a half-timbered storey. Today this is one of the few witne-

sses of the atmosphere that Jirkov used to have two centuries ago, which was preserved until the twenties of the previous century. Another interesting fact is that this is the last house in Jirkov that is connected to the legendary sandstone town cellars. You see, it has not taken long and we are at the renowned Jirkov underground.

DOWN INTO MYSTERIOUS CELLARS

A few steps away, in front of the pragmatic building of the shopping centre (which mercilessly replaced the dilapidated and famous Jirkov burgher brewery in 2006), we find an entrance into the aforementioned Jirkov cellars, one of the most important historic sites of the town. While the town was turbulently changing on the surface the underground preserved many things in a state as they were many centuries ago. But even this place was exposed to the twists and turns of history. The cellars were dug in a sandstone knoll and

in a part of the substratum of the town throughout the entire second half of the 16th century. They were predominantly used for storage. Jirkov beer, which was renowned in the wider surroundings of the town, completed its fermentation process and was stored there, while the unique climate of the sandstone cellars contributed to its quality and uniqueness. Originally this was really a system of individual cellars linked by corridors. Nowadays the underground looks more like a maze of cave corridors. Since we have wisely asked for a guide to show us around the underground at the local Information centre, a friendly guide is now taking us to the cellars. Just to let you know – there are four other places in the Czech Republic with cellars chiselled into sandstone, but the underground in Jirkov is the oldest of them. The underground is mysterious, even mystical. We are slowly ambling in corridors lit by ghostly light cleverly distributed all over the place and feel the energy of all the people who have passed through this site before, whether they carried a kettle with beer or dragged a coffer with



money in fear that it may be confiscated by Banner, the wicked Swede, and his merciless bunch of rogues. We might be also surprised by the odd French or Russian word, spoken some decades ago and still resonating in stone corridors. The fact is that by the end of the 19th century the cellars were no longer being used by the town brewery and so the perforated underground was put back to use at the time of the Second World War. As the war approached its end, the headquarters of the Wehrmacht, fearing the consequences of allied air raids, decided to build an air-raid shelter in the cellars of Jirkov. The shelter was constructed by prisoners of war – especially Russian ones, but perhaps also French ones. Nowadays, the guiding red and white stripes on the ceilings of the corridors will take us back to those times, since these stripes used to lead to the underground headquarters. However, the air raids left Jirkov almost untouched and the headquarters were covered up by soil when the war ended. However, a much more profound covering of the cellars with soil was impending in 2003. At that time a man fell though into the underground and hurt himself badly. And so, a debate was started as to whether this long-standing playground for Jirkov boys, their secret place of initiation and later also a paradise for adventure and treasure seekers, who had changed the originally separated cellars into a maze, should not be buried under fly ash or whether it should be opened to the public. The fact that we are walking through the cellars today shows that the second option won. In 2005, during the celebrations of the 450th anniversary of the promotion of Jirkov to a town, a small tour was opened to the public, as a trial. Interest was so overwhelming that not everybody could get in. However, then the aforementioned con-

TIP

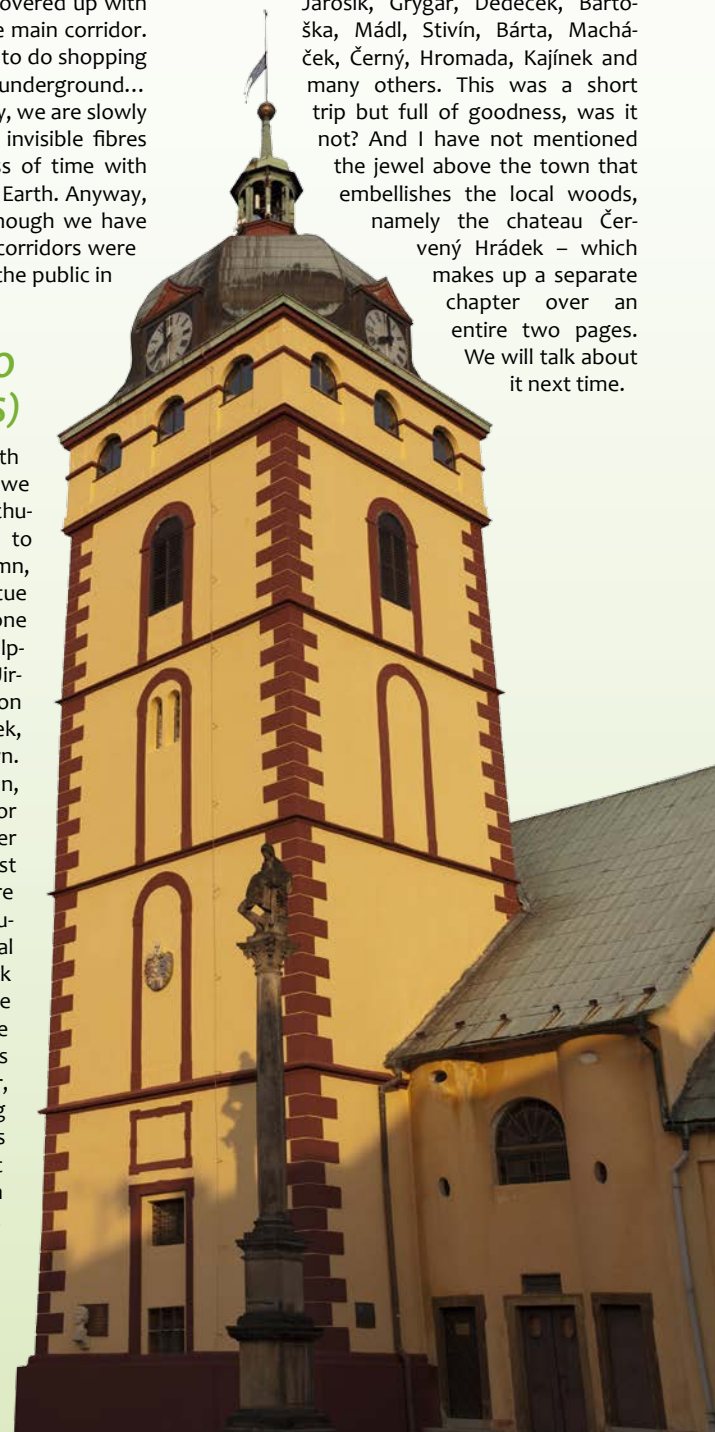
Do not miss a visit to a Neo-Renaissance villa in Vinařická street. It became a historic monument long after it was built, in 1920 when the famous circus owner Karel Kludský and his family moved into it. And what a family they were! Not only a skilful flock of circus performers but also some hundred and fifty animals. Today the villa is beautifully reconstructed and functions as a library, surrounded by an amusement park with many fun and educational attractions.

struction of the shopping centre happened, during the course of which roughly a quarter of the Jirkov underground, located on land that had not been in the possession of the town for some time, was unscrupulously covered up with soil, including some parts of the main corridor. You could say that people need to do shopping more than go walking in the underground... You may be right. But in this way, we are slowly cutting ourselves off from the invisible fibres that connect us over the abyss of time with those who preceded us on this Earth. Anyway, we all sometimes behave as though we have lost our minds. The rest of the corridors were saved, adjusted and opened to the public in the spring of 2007.

FROM BROKOFF TO JIRKA'S (GEORGE'S)

Above the ground again with the sun shining in our faces we are approaching the dean's church of St. George. Right next to it a beautiful Pieta on a column, which the locals call the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. This is one of the best sculptures by the sculptor Jan Brokoff, who lived in Jirkov for some time and worked on the chateau of Červený Hrádek, which stands above the town. His son Ferdinand Maximilian, whose reputation as a sculptor surpassed that even of his father – is remembered by a plaque just a few steps away, over there on the church tower. The church itself is the oldest structural monument in Jirkov: we can peek in through a lattice and if we are lucky and Mass is under way we can even enter. However, access to the aforementioned tower, which in fact does not belong to the church but to the town, is without restrictions. It is the seat of the unique George's Museum (Muzeum Jirků), a permanent exhibition of Jirkas who became famous in one way or another and dedicated an object to the town of Jirkov. The most precious of them are defi-

nately the skis of the ski jumper Jiří Raška, but you will also have a chance to have a look into the cabinets, wardrobes and desks of many other famous Georges – Jiří Suchý, Jarošík, Grygar, Dědeček, Bartoška, Mádl, Stívín, Bárta, Macháček, Černý, Hromada, Kajínek and many others. This was a short trip but full of goodness, was it not? And I have not mentioned the jewel above the town that embellishes the local woods, namely the chateau Červený Hrádek – which makes up a separate chapter over an entire two pages. We will talk about it next time.



The Protector from Danger and Certain Death

Some people think that a trip to České Švýcarsko (Bohemian Switzerland) is risk free. And the horrible dangers posed by the powers of the hell do not enter their minds! From time immemorial this region was full of fables and legends. And those who think that there can be smoke without fire will be terribly surprised. So, this text is a warning letter describing what to watch out for and where you may encounter it!

BLOODTHIRSTY BERNDYTRYCH AND HEADLESS ROHÁL

First of all – highwaymen, rogues and thugs. It makes sense that there are many hiding places, caves and castles in the rocks, where this riff-raff could hide. The small castle of **Kyjovské hrádek** over the valley of Kyjovské údolí, the castle of Horní Karlštejn, as we call it – this was a home to one such den of thieves. However, they caught them all, hanged them and so their poor souls are wandering the valley to this day. As if this was not enough, a fiery bird flies in the skies at midnight, which is in fact a devil tricked by people still raging about it. Naturally another such place was **Tolštejn** – there were many of these rogues there, some of them were even aristocrats. If you are there you need to protect yourself from the ghost of the white lady Swanhilda, who poisoned her husband and has to haunt the place until the end of time, a story of one unhappy love.

Above the fortifi-

cations of Tolštejn, the wild cavalry appears, a horde of apparitions of the black night, who whine and wail and make a racket with such fury that a man's hair may turn white. And on the remnants of the battlements a giant bird of a kind that even scholars do not know its name sits and also moans and wails with such power that each time it does so a piece of a wall falls into the valley. This

is a former owner of the castle and this is his destiny. A place where you really put your life at risk is **Šaunštejn** near Vysoká Lípa. This used to be the territory of another highwayman, a foreign knight, and he still haunts the place. So, if you meet him take to your heels for the sake of your life! And it is not just about highwaymen! There are quite a few horrible ghosts here and the worst of them is **Berndytrich**. The black rider. He appears in the surroundings of **Krásná Lípa**, in **Dolní Poustevna** and in **Jetřichovice**. You will know it is him when you meet him – he has a green jacket with big shiny buttons, sometimes he has a head sometimes he is headless, he rides a pack of flaming wolves, which are preceded by flaming hens, or sits on

a horse with flaming horseshoes, alternatively he appears as a black dog with a chain round its neck. He kills with an axe and spares nobody. He may also offer you a rifle to shoot, but you should avoid this too. You aim at a deer, shoot and out of the blue it changes into a fair-haired slim virgin and you are the one who killed her! Another

such creature is **Rašauer**, a rogue who used to have a magical cloak which made him invisible. He was broken into pieces on a wheel in Lipová and he now roves around the hill of **Vlčí Hora**, so watch out for him! There is also a ghost in the form of a white lady who makes her appearances in Dolní Poustevna, but she is almost harmless. However, the chateau peasant who haunts the surroundings of **Česká Kamenice** is much worse – a beardless old chap as pale as death in short leather trousers and a blue cloak with a stiff collar. Those who meet him will have bad luck for certain. Or what about **Růžek**, also known as **Rohál**! On the way from **Doubice** to **Dolní Chřibská** there is a hill in a forest where he dwells. He who calls his name at this place or makes fun of him will see him rushing out from the hill, his head under his arm, and will be torn into pieces. The mill of **Dolský mlýn** is the territory of a horrible miller and his wife who murdered their son who returned home rich after years of being abroad, so different that they could not recognise him. In **Mikulášovice** in the cemetery the most horrible apparition of them all appears – a girl of about ten years old in a white dress, a wreath of white roses in her hair. She smiles nicely at you and offers her wreath. He who takes it will be dead in three days! I should not forget about the dragon from **Varnsdorf**, also a terrible creature, but the girl, ugh! I have not mentioned various sprites and dwarves, but they can sometimes be useful because...



ROCKS OPEN UP AND TREASURES ARE GIVEN OUT

The facts are like this: in our region, there are so many hidden treasures that nobody would even dream it would be possible! And the sprites and dwarves mentioned before can give you good advice if you are nice to them. I am on good terms with them and they have told me quite a few things so I can share them with you. Two basic rules apply – treasure should be searched for on Sunday when psalms are read in churches, the best time of all is Palm Sunday and even better Good Friday – this is the time when the rocks open up. During the search, not a word may be spoken, otherwise all your tools will fall into the ground and the rock will close. It happened to many a greedy woman that she took her child into the rock and then, being enchanted by all that gold, she left it in the rock and she could only come back to pick it up the next year – so look after your brats and see that the rocks do not swallow them up! And where are those treasures? On **Tolštejn**, on **Chřibský hrádek**, on **Holubí vrch u Brtníků**, on **Růžovský vrch** – in this place an entire chapel full of precious stones and pearls was swallowed by the rock, in **Vlčí hora**, and naturally on **Hrádek** in Varnsdorf because this place has the highest concentration of sprites, dwarves and fairies in the entire region! On a rock above **Česká Kamenice**, which the locals call **Jehla (needle)**, there used to be a bunch of cunning dwarves. They know best where precious stones are hidden in rocks but they are hard to fathom. When in a good mood, they would invite one for a chat and a beer, which they brew themselves, and if you are willing to pick out vermin from their hair they will give

you a handful of dry leaves. If this happens to you do not dare throw those leaves away! Before morning comes the leaves will turn into gold! The dwarves in **Tiské stěny**, they are vicious. Be careful and do not start any business with them. They keep guard over the treasures in that rock formation. In the old days, they would show people where to search but when they understood how greedy, mean and envious we people are they changed their mind completely. When you relax somewhere leaning against a rock they will creep up from behind and stuff spices into your pocket and you will never be able to get out of this maze!

DEMONS OF ROCK AND OTHER DREADFUL CREATURES

One cannot say that you can enjoy peace while you are in the rocks. These rocks are often people turned to stone and you never know when they may change again and begin to come after you. For example, the unhappy engaged couple who were to look after guarding fires, each of them on a different bank of the Elbe near the village of **Dolní Žleb**. They kept looking at each other and the fires went out and they turned to stone. She is called **Jeptiška (nun)**, he is called **Mnich (monk)**. And some fools even climb these rocks – they are completely brainless! And while talking about those tourists – apologies if you are one of them – they will believe anything. For example, about the conciliation crosses – some would say that they are reminders of a murder or another bad deed. No way, not reminders! If somebody is murdered in the woods he or she

keeps making appearances in the woods. For example, **Veronica**. She can be seen at dusk at the conciliation cross between the settlements of **Růžová** and **Kamenická Stráň**. One would feel sorry for her. She was a businesswoman trading in materials, ties and ribbons and had a friend who used to help her but secretly felt madly enviously towards her. One day they stopped at this place to have a rest and **Veronica** dozed off. Her friend hit her with a stick and stabbed her with a knife behind her ear. She did not have much fun with the stolen money – she was caught, sentenced and executed. And **Veronica**? She is dangerous only for women, she is furious with them and strangles them with a ribbon to get revenge. So look, you wanderers through **České Švýcarsko** – always be watchful, make the sign of the cross before every cross and do let the demons deceive you!



A week in a city with the most beautiful surroundings

Try telling somebody, let's say in Prague, České Budějovice or Znojmo, that Ústí nad Labem is a city with some of the most beautiful surroundings in Bohemia. They will tap their forehead and laugh at you. But they'd be wrong to do so because it's completely true and I can vouch for it. Don't believe me? Ask people from Ústí, they know – at least some of them. Or do you know what? Come over to Ústí for a week and go on some trips in the nearby countryside. Still not convinced? OK then, I'll plan an excellent week for you that you won't forget.

MONDAY – by cable car above Porta Bohemica (15 km)

The trip along a ridge above the Elbe valley starts in the centre of Ústí nad Labem in comfort – a cable car will take you to the former chateau Větruše. The views over the city, the Elbe bridges and the wavy hills of the Central Bohemian Mountains, whether from the lift or the sightseeing terrace or the lookout tower of Větruše, offer a first glimpse of the sights that await you. Take Julius' trail to Humboldt's lookout over the shiny snake-like Elbe. Before long, you'll arrive at Vaňovský waterfall. Well, don't be surprised, Ústí is called the city of waterfalls; there are more than 20 of them nearby! Vaňovský waterfall has two tiers, from below you can see a 12-metre wall and then there is an 8-metre cliff. Not far from here, there is the breath-taking basalt rock formation Vrkoč, where you'll take a quick detour and then continue along the ridge with an occasional lookout point over the valley, past Podlešínská plain, past Skalka lookout hill, round Moravanský waterfall to Dubičky to St. Barbara's Church with its spacious terrace where you can enjoy the best views of Porta Bohemica. Take a bus for your return journey.

TUESDAY – to a ravine with Karl May, to a castellated wall with Richard Wagner (11 km)

You start on the outskirts of Ústí nad Labem, in Brná, and walk upstream along Průčelský stream, through the surreal and rugged landscape of Průčelská ravine that water has eroded over millions of years of flowing through the rocks. Vertical rocks covered in moss and fern close over a path, fields, the colossal Výří rocks, the fascinating Průčelský waterfall in the rainy season, a rock prairie on Sluneční hillside... It was here where Karl May found inspiration for the first Vinnétoú book, where he wandered during his stay in Pension Srdíčko on the Elbe riverbank at the end of 1897 for 5 weeks and wrote his first novel 'Christmas', in which both his main western characters are included. Then there is a panoramic nature trail to the top of Vysoký Ostrý: České středohoří at



your fingertips. After that down again, and, as a reward, to the most romantic castle you can imagine – Střekov, the walls of which composer Wagner once walked around in a white sheet to add a ghost to the castle, which was something it was missing in his opinion. You can use public transport on the way back.

WEDNESDAY – to Blansko for the Wartenbergs (20 km)

Above Severní Terasa housing estate there is a stone lookout tower, Erbenova vyhlídka (Erben's lookout tower, named after the tourist, not the poet), from which you can see Milešovka, Buková hora, Teplice, Krušné mountains and of course part of Ústí nad Labem. Then past Dobětická heights, a popular spot with paragliders, to Žežice with a charming small Baroque church and continue along a winding woody path to the ruins of Blansko castle. All that remains of the former Wartenberg castle is a large ruin with the remains of large walls, from which there is a picturesque view of the rugged landscape, as there is from nearly everywhere here, after which you descend to the Elbe to the village of Povrly, where a nice swimming pool awaits you after all that walking. You can return by train.



THURSDAY – from a picturesque chateau to an open-air museum of folk architecture (14 km)

You can get to Velké Březno by bus, train or ferry across the Elbe. Apart from the famous brewery, where you can go on a tour on Saturdays, there is the lovely little chateau of the Chotek family with a nice tour and a shady garden waiting for you. Then there is a sharp bend in the path and you ascend along a beautiful trail, where woods give way to distant views over the Sokolí ridge and Kamenná mountain, to Pláň. There you can pop into the nearby Babiny II farm for a horse ride and then via Týniště back to Zubrnice. In this village, there is a famous and popular open-air museum with frequent fairs and seasonal events, but there is also a railway museum. The museum train also stops here and you can use it to get back to Ústí. And if there is no train service, there is always the bus.



FRIDAY – to waterfalls and lookouts (11 km)

Take public transport to the Olšinky stop on the right riverbank of the Elbe, cross the railway and follow the blue tourist markers up a woody hill. When the wood opens onto a spacious field, you are in the village of Budov. Here you turn left (along an unmarked path but led by a sign) to Vlčí gully and after about 300 metres to the beautiful Budovský waterfall. It looks a bit



like a theatre, a natural amphitheatre created by water on the basalt stone. It flows strongest in the spring; in the winter the falling water freezes into an impressive column. The next walk takes us to Malečův. Not far from a newly-built ski lift there is a little-known observation point that offers a great panorama of the Central Bohemian Mountains and also part of Bohemian Switzerland. Green and yellow routes take you past enchanting scenery back to Olšinky, where the 10-metre-high Olšínecký waterfall awaits you.

SATURDAY – from a museum of model trains to Milada lake (5 km)

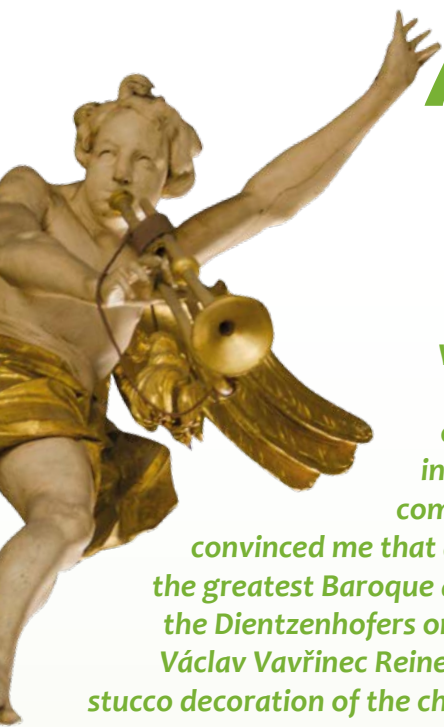
In the middle of the 19th century, the Nostic family had a small chateau built in a Gothic Revival style in the Ústí quarter of Trmice. There is an exhibition of mining and industry here today, but above all, it is a model train utopia. When you've had enough of looking and playing with the contemporary and historic train sets, set off along the comfortable path to the nearby Milada lake. The pit of the Chabařovice quarry was gradually turned into a lovely recreational lake where you can have a nice swim, do water sports, circle the lake along one of the nature trails or just sunbathe on the beach.



SUNDAY – through small České středohoří, at least on par (18 holes)

One should not be rushing about on a Sunday, one should take a nice relaxing walk. Less than 5 minutes from the centre of Ústí nad Labem and yet in the heart of nature, in a re-cultivated zone on the edge of the former Všebořický mine, around a lake created by the flooding of the mine and on the slopes of the Jedlová mountain, there is an 18-hole golf course called (very characteristically) the Terraces. It's definitely the most rugged golf course in the region. When you walk through it, you can't shake off the feeling that it is actually a scale model of the Central Bohemian Mountains made with all the details. The first nine holes circle the rectangular lake, over which the wooden claws of branches stick out. The other nine holes determine the character of the course, which takes over the hill step by step under the watchful eyes of the ever-present buzzards and ravens. It is a difficult course that doesn't give anything away for free but on the other hand it's simply beautiful. It may keep surprising you for years, especially if you are there to enjoy its rugged beauty.





A unique experience in Osek Monastery

When I entered the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady for the first time, I was speechless. With my head bent backwards, I could hardly breathe and couldn't collect myself because the beauty of the place. There are many impressive sacred interiors in the Czech Republic but few of them can equal the one in Osek. It can be compared with Santini's Kladruhy or Prague St. Nicholas in Malá Strana. It definitely convinced me that although Octavio Broggio, an Italian builder from Litoměřice, is not rated among the greatest Baroque architects of the Czech lands, he definitely belongs among such names as Lurago, the Dientzenhofers or Santini. Broggio's work was complemented by other Baroque masters – painter Václav Vavřinec Reiner and above all the genius plasterer and sculptor Giacomo Antonio Corbellini. His stucco decoration of the church dome is incomparable with anything else in this country. But that's only the start of the treasures to be found at the Cistercian monastery in Osek.

A STORY OF EIGHT CENTURIES

First of all, we should look at the story of the Cistercian monastery in Osek because it really is simply breath-taking. Construction of the monastery started in the late 12th century. Now take note: in 1278 the monastery was plundered by the Brandeburgs, in 1421 it was burnt down by the Hussites and it was ransacked and plundered for another 150 years until Rudolph II abolished it in 1580. The monks left for Zbraslav. The end? Not at all – the pope reopened it in 1614, but

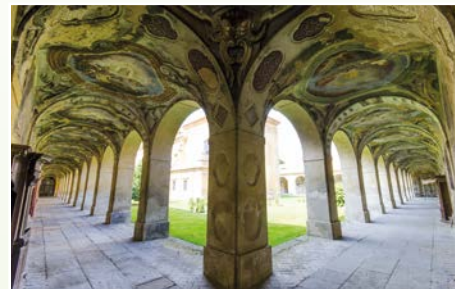


after several years the Thirty-Years War started and the protestants captured it. Just 3 years after the White Mountain Battle the monastery returned to the Cistercians and its former glory was renewed around the time of the Baroque era. The original Roman basilica was rebuilt in a Baroque style, a French garden was created, as was a pharmacy and the first factory in Bohemia. The monastery was one of just a few to survive Joseph's reforms, science even starts to develop there, the study of products of nature begins and an astronomic observatory is opened. The monastery endured bombing at the end of World War II without significant damage but the Cistercians had to leave. And then came the year of 1950 that brought 'Action K' and the massive hunt for religious people – across the whole country 219 cloisters were destroyed and 2,376 religious people were interned, 230

of whom in the newly built detention camp in Osek monastery. When they were transferred to camps in Příbram and Jáchymov 3 years later, they were replaced by 300 nuns from 6 different orders, who would only return to their home convents in 1993. The Cistercians returned and their monastery has been a national cultural monument since 1995.

EMPIRE OF HUMBLE SILENCE

There is an information centre in the courtyard of the monastery that provides tours of the church and the monastery – and I really recommend that you don't let this opportunity go! When you step into the Church of the Assumption of our Lady, you'll understand what I mean. Reiner's frescoes, Corbellini's fascinating stucco decoration, beautiful carved church pews, paintings, altars, sculptures, a wonderful pulpit and in front of you there is a decorative choir screen, which divides the space for believers from seclusion, i.e. areas which only the initiated could enter. Here, another newly-restored jewel shines – choir pews for 38 members of the monastic choir. The pews are inlaid with sculpture and relief decoration by Franz Anton Kuen and paintings by Václav Vavřinec Reiner. Brilliant. A presbytery with an altar and a painting of the Assumption of our Lady by Jan Kryštof Liška (we can also find his paintings in Plasy or in the cathedral in Sedlec, Kutná Hora) has also recently been restored. And then the Baroque part ends with a magnificent Roman portal and you step right into the Gothic era. This should be appreciated as you wouldn't have been able to enter this area without the tour guide. There is much to see and experience. When you walk along the cloisters under the early Gothic vault, it is as if you could hear the quiet sound of monks' sandals and the rustle of black and white frocks. You glance into the central paradise garden, to the Studniční chapel, which used to be the only source of drinking water in the monastery, and



arrive at a capitular hall from 1230, one of the first Gothic halls in the territory of the Czech Kingdom at the time. The chapter – the oldest monks – used to meet here and it was here where decisions about the life of the monastery were made. Your guide will sometimes ask for silence because there are places that shouldn't be disturbed by human speech. Yet you'll feel that someone is speaking here... Osek monastery is a unique experience for anyone who is even a little bit spiritual.

PILGRIMAGE TO MARIÁNSKÉ RADČICE

The Pilgrimage Church of our Lady of Sorrows in nearby Mariánské Radčice is closely connected to Osek monastery. When the Brandeburgs plundered Osek monastery in 1278, people started to go on pilgrimages there. And when the Cistercians returned after the Battle on the White Mountain, the then abbot had a new Baroque church with a cloister and a vicarage built in place of the original small church. And who was the co-creator of the project? Octavio Broggio again. He was also the creator of seven chapels lining the pilgrimage route from neighbouring Libkovic. When Libkovic had to give way to brown coal mining (it happened as late as 1992!), four of the chapels were transported to Vtelno u Mostu, where we can still admire them. Mariánské Radčice became a refuge for other religious monuments transported there from places that were destroyed by excavators. So, in front of the

renovated vicarage you can see St. Laurent, St. John of Nepomuk and St. Felix face to face, you can admire wayside crosses and two conciliation crosses, all that near a beautiful Holy Trinity Column. Pilgrimages to the painting of Our Lady of Sorrows have been restarted, so if you feel like it and have the need and humility, you can go to Mariánské Radčice in a group; a smaller group than in the Baroque era – there used to be crowds of around 50,000 pilgrims.

UNDER THE GUARD OF APOSTLES

Let's return to Osek one more time. The aforementioned pleasant and roomy Information Centre, which hosts seasonal exhibitions, has recently started to offer tours of another religious building in Osek. It is the Baroque Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. It has been here since the 13th century, but a new single-aisle church with a polygonal tower was built in its place with the aid of builder Jakub Schwarz (a former foreman bricklayer with Octavio Broggio, from whom he obviously learnt a lot). You will be able to visit the interior of the church with a guide, which is regrettably rather rare in the Czech Republic. Make sure you take note of the beautiful Baroque sculptures by Matyáš Kühnel in two niches on the front of the church – thanks to him, the holy apostles Peter and Paul now guard the entrance to the church.



TIP

In the monastery grounds, don't miss the great Ossegg beer straight from the tap of the monastery brewery. Of course, you already know everything about it from the last issue of Gate magazine, but honestly – how many of you have tried this heavenly drink?

Zloun from Louny

The story of the local Zloun brewery, or more precisely its founder and boss Radek Taraba, deserves a whole novel by Jonas Jonasson rather than just a single page in a magazine. Oh well, it'll be brief but even so, you'll be amazed just like I was. Radek Taraba used to work as a firefighter for many years and was the mayor of the village of Zbrašín u Loun for almost 12 years. His cousin Honza appeared at one party and brought two canisters of beer – saying he brewed it at home and they should taste it. The beer wasn't bad and Radek Taraba thought – is it really possible to brew beer at home? And because he doesn't believe anything he hasn't tried himself, he started brewing with Honza. They used a former pig butchers room as the brewery room, seized his wife's large freezer, turned it into a fermentation tank and started. It wasn't perfect at first but everything was always drunk and what wasn't was distilled into 'beer brandy' and then drunk.



water and finally the heating as well. Radek spent his time in a sauna and waiting for the thaw. And the whole time he was thinking about what would happen when somebody asks about his qualifications. Surrounded by steam, he was inventing a complicated story about how he climbed his way from the bottom in Louny brewery... When the question was really asked and Radek drew his breath, the guy added: 'And where were you born?' Radek replied truthfully that in Žatec. 'What?' The Russian roared, 'here?' And he pointed to a photo of Žatec town hall on the wall. 'Then you have the best qualifications I could ask for, if you are from Žatec!' And that

FROM VOLGA TO OHŘE

The beer gradually got better and better, which really surprised an experienced brewer who came round to Radek's brewery for a chat. 'My dear boy,' said the brewer, 'you could go Russia straight away!' When Radek asked why Russia, the brewer replied that there was a brewery boom in Russia and Czech brewers were highly fashionable there. So Radek Taraba flew to Russia. The region of Saratov, the city of Engels, the village of Shumeika on the bank of the Volga River. It was February, -40°C. First, the cold water froze, then the hot



was it. In the end, Radek brewed the beer and the Russians liked it so much that they invited him back again. Radek took his wife and his dog with him this time and because he is an adventurer at heart, they set off from Zbrašín to Shumeika in a car. This trip itself would make a good book. The second brewing mission was successful and Radek began to believe that he really could brew beer. After his return, he got together with a friend who bought the pub Na Letňáku in Louny. They started to do it up, bought brewing tanks and equipment and started brewing beer. That's how Pivo Zloun was born. Go and try it, one won't be enough. It's 'like horseradish', as we say. Zloun is a typical bottom-fermented lager and has different types: Desítka Zloun (10°), Jantar Zloun (11°), Tvrdák Zloun (12°), Lyon – a special dark lager and the top-fermented ALEnt – 15° Pale Ale. You can have a good meal in the brewery restaurant and take beer in plastic bottles (soon in glass bottles) home with you.



Chalupník from Perštein

In the case of the Chalupník family brewery in Perštein near Klášterec nad Ohří, two stories are of interest – of the house and of the people. An old iron mill used to stand on the spot where you can enjoy very good beer today. At the turn of the 20th century it had to make way for a new ribbon factory, which gradually expanded into making lace, net curtains, decorative trims and threads. After the war, the future of the building was uncertain until a cooperative society from Teplice gained possession of it and started making sleeping bags there. Times changed and the factory was put up for sale in 2008. Miroslav Chalupník, who had been in the metal industry all his life, bought it and started using it as a warehouse. But he thought it would be a pity not to put such a magnificent building to better use. Together with his family he thought about what would fit there, when, by coincidence, they visited a brewery in Chyš in Western Bohemia. And that was it. They created a brewery with a restaurant and a small guest house in Perštein ribbon factory.



WHAT IS BREWED AT HOME, THAT IS DRUNK AT HOME

Mr. Chalupník's wife went to hop-growing school in Žatec, so they started looking for a brewer among her friends. And they found a really excellent one – Jan Hervert, who brews beer in the Hop-Growing Institute in Žatec and so is a professional like none other. First, it was necessary to restore the factory and rebuild it for its new purpose – and that wasn't easy. Even so, it was completed in a record time – only three years passed between the initial idea and the first tapped pint. When you visit, you'll notice that the restoration was done by people using their brains. The beautiful bar uses the original cast-iron columns, from the taps you can see the cooks working in the kitchen through a large glass port-hole, the brewing tanks themselves crown the side bar and there is a spacious terrace in front of the bar. And the house? From the adjoining lake, it looks like a grain-mill, from the other side more like a refined burgess house. OK, you might think, but what about the beer? Well, it's great. A classic bottom-fermented lager and some



specials. 10° Sládek, light 12° Premiant and 12° dark Harmonie, all unfiltered and unpasteurised beers. Top-fermented 11° beer is also often brewed, especially St. Martin's, Christmas,

Spring and Budimíra – for Walpurgis night. Miroslav Chalupník's philosophy is – what is brewed at home, that is drunk at home, so even though the brewery prepares 50,000 litres a year, they all get drunk in this restaurant without problems. Regarding something to go with beer, you won't be disappointed, especially if you like tasty Czech cuisine made without the use of pre-prepared foods. The restaurant makes its own sauerkraut, headcheese, dumplings... and the best on the menu? Pork ribs, beef sirloin with cream sauce, brewery goulash and pork tenderloin prepared in various ways. And if you want a non-alcoholic drink, try the local beer lemonade – it's very refreshing. So, when you're on your way down to Ohře from Měděnec or Klínovec, drop in for a beer!



Pearl Water oasis

When you drive past Hazmburk, Libochovice and Budyně nad Ohří, allow yourself to be guided by one of the signs directing travellers to Dvůr Perlová voda (Pearl Water Yard). You can relax there, there is good food and you will feel like it was time well spent. Dvůr Perlová voda, in a small village called Kostelec nad Ohří, is an oasis among fields, hop-fields, unique wetlands and the floodplain forests of Malá Ohře.

FROM A SHEEP FARM TO A BREWERY

Why an oasis? And why Pearl Water? Is it a restaurant or a farm or...? OK, OK. That's too many question at once. First things first. In Kostelec nad Ohří, near a beautiful small Baroque church, which was designed by the famous Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer in the 18th century at the Budyně dean's request, there was a farm, one of the Herberstein's family estates from 1830. There used to be a sheep and horse farm and an administrative building. The Herbersteins lost their property after World War I as a result of land reforms and the new owner asked an eminent Prague architect, Josef Berek, to rebuild the administrative building as a 'manor' as the people from the village started to call it. It happened in the 1930s. 20 years later the estate was turned into a cow farm, a kingdom of concrete and chaos. And it wasn't too long ago when some enthusiasts, who were keen cyclists and fans of a healthy lifestyle, took a liking to the layout of the building and started reconstruction work. At first it looked more or less like a cottage for friends, but with a waste water treatment plant with sustainable development principles. However, the project grew and it started to look as if it could also be interesting for passing cyclists or in fact for people from large cities too, who could organise events, company conferences or even a wedding if someone wanted... I'll keep you

waiting no longer – when you arrive, you'll be speechless with wonder. A magnificent guest house for nearly 100 people, a multi-purpose hall, a wellness area, a swimming pool, a yard with several sports grounds, an amphitheatre



with a barbecue area and space for cultural events – and, above all, a great restaurant on the generous vaulted premises of a former horse stable, with its own brewery. They brew a classic bottom-fermented lager, Lanýž, 10° and 12°, and you can see the brewing room and the fermentation room while you are enjoying one of the meals from the local menu.

ATMOSPHERE INTENSIFIES TASTE

I really like going there. Why? Their cooking is good and makes sense, beer is 'like horseradish' and I like the owners' lifestyle, their lovely down to earth attitude that demonstrates that if you don't want to damage the planet, you don't have to. And I love their motto: they cook their meals in the way they like it themselves, so they, their families and children also enjoy going there. Another pleasant thing is the atmosphere. Nobody wants you to wear a suit, nobody presents you with an abstract painting on a silver plate and they won't scowl at you if you are sweaty from cycling when you,



hungry and thirsty, sit down. This is not posh gastronomy, it is good cuisine, newly – since autumn 2016 – under the management of talented Czech chef Petr Heneš, who is a rising star of modern Czech gastronomy. He is a propagator of sous – vide cooking technology, uses only fresh ingredients, grown locally if possible and without using convenience foods and other 'help' - it's just normal healthy cooking. You can enjoy, for example, pork ribs roasted with honey, local Lanýž beer and pickled onions and cream horseradish, or tender pikeperch fillet with roast-pepper sauce... And that's just a glimpse of the very interesting menu. You'll feel good there and maybe you'll come back for a longer stay or with your colleagues. Oh yes – and what about Pearl Water? Well, you don't need to know everything. It's enough to know that it's related to a nearby alchemist's workshop in Budyně and... And you know what? Ask them yourself when you visit.



A lion that can speak Italian

Bílina is a beautiful historic spa city under Ďáblova hora (Devil Mountain), as the phonolite mountain Bořen has been called over the years. Even Johann Wolfgang Goethe once examined it excitedly with a prospecting hammer and added it to his sketch-book enthusiastically. There is a massive Baroque chateau, the work of the architect Giovanni Pietro Tencalla and the builder Antonio della Port, towering above a beautiful square with a Baroque fountain decorated with a statue of St. Florian and a Marian column from the same era. And in the kitchen of one of the historic houses on the square, their fellow-countryman, Salvatore Angelo Meloni, a manager and a chef at the restaurant at Hotel U Lva (Lion), is now in charge.



PASTA À LA SALVATORE

A modern and tastefully refurbished hotel with a capacity of 20 rooms offers a very good restaurant on the ground floor. You'll feel comfortable there because there won't be loads of stuff falling on you like in many Czech

restaurants. God knows why so many people think that a cake mould, a model witch on a broomstick or a million pictures can make up for boring cuisine. Don't expect anything like that here – austere décor dominated by historic photos of Bílina, light pastel colours and a couple of decorations. Gastronomy plays the main role. Salvatore's cuisine is centred around the Mediterranean, which is only logical. You can have bruschetta with tomatoes, pesto and parmesan, caprese, ratatouille, carpaccio and they also make good steaks here – chicken, pork and beef, tasty fish, such as bream, seafood – grilled tiger prawns. But I'd like to draw your attention to their pasta. Why? The whole menu is built on fresh food and ingredients made right there without convenience foods and substitutes. But pasta is Salvatore's family speciality. He makes it himself and the choice is always expanding, new kinds are added – just like in Salvatore's homeland. It's so good that it doesn't need much added. It's a mistake of many Czech chefs to feel that pasta needs lots of seasoning and extras - 'so it's not so plain'. But at U Lva you'll enjoy the best Italian 'simplicity'. Home-made ravioli filled with meat with Bolognese sauce and grated parmesan cheese or filled with Gorgonzola with sage

butter. The taste is in the simplicity. Tagliatelle, linguine, penne..., you can't go wrong here. Salvatore's pasta has become popular so the restaurant decided to open a small bistro next door, where you can enjoy pasta if you don't have the time to sit in a restaurant, and what's more, you can buy pasta à la Salvatore there and take it home with you. So, when you go to explore Bílina, stop at restaurant U Lva. Buon appetito!

TIP

You can only visit Bílina chateau at specific times each year when the chateau owner allows tours of the historical interiors. You can see the whole of Bílina from the gallery of the tower of the beautiful secession city hall (under construction now but will be open for the 2017 season) or from the top of Bořen. The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is also remarkable as are the monuments around it. These were collected from the places that had to give way to coal mining. There is now only a grandiose spa park which offers cultural, sports and gastronomical experiences remaining from the famous spa in Bílina.



The Tin Kingdom

The ancient mining town of Krupka lies close to Teplice, at the foot of the the Ore Mountains. The streaks of tin minerals, which were discovered at the end of the first millennium, attracted metal diggers and the town started to grow rapidly. Krupka has a special appeal and a very characteristic atmosphere. Let's go and see the places that the history of the town has left for us.

BY CHAIR-LIFT TO A MINING GALLERY



If tin is behind the foundation and growth of the mining town, we should follow in its footsteps. Ore mining was still happening here as late as the second half of the 18th century, after which the mineral seams thinned and

the people of Krupka started to earn their living in a different way. Let's make use of the fact that there is a chair-lift to the ridge of the Krušné hory (the Ore Mountains), which is also the longest lift without a middle station in the Czech Republic. The journey is 2,348 metres long. Its mechanism is the only original one in the country and it's a world rarity of its kind. And where does it take us? To Komářův vížka. A stone bell tower stood here from the 16th century. The sound of the bell signalled the start of mining work in the morning and ended it in the evening. Tin was mined here and later copper as well. The remains of mining pits are still visible today. In 1857, the bell tower was complemented by an inn. Today you can find a restaurant here, you can have a nice drink and food but the most precious thing at Komářův vížka can't be bought with money. It's the view from the terrace. Even a guide from 1890 points out that it is the most beautiful view in the whole of the Ore Mountains and nothing has needed to be changed about this statement since then. We'll make a stop at the cemetery chapel of St. Wolfgang, the patron saint of miners on our way back and then we'll continue along Příhraniční hornická naučná stezka (Border-zone mining nature trail) to Starý Martin excursion mining gallery. Starý Martin (Old Martin) is one of the younger galleries, built around the rich tin streak 'Lukáš' from 1864 as a part of an effort to renew tin mining there. Its importance lies in the fact that it was turned into a unique exhibition and a mining excursion area. You can walk along the tin seam for about 2 kilometres, which is not possible



anywhere else in the Czech Republic or Europe. The experience is very authentic; the exhibition of mining locations, miners' equipment, tunnelling and mining systems, natural beauty – you will remember all of this without a doubt as well as the outside exhibition, which includes a collection of very interesting mining machines used for working underground.

FROM A BASILICA TO A CALVARY

We are back at Krupka now and it's time to get to know the historic gems of the town, or more precisely two towns because Krupka and Bohosudov were two separate towns until 1959. And it's in the Bohosudov part where the biggest gem, Bazilika Panny Marie Sedmibolestné (Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows), is located. From the 15th century there was a humble chapel here, the importance of which sharply rose about half a century later when pilgrims started pouring in to bow to the miraculous Marian statuette. That's when the first church was built and as it wasn't large enough to accommodate all the pilgrims, construction of a new large



church designed as a place of pilgrimage started at the very beginning of the 18th century. Father Julius and son Octavio Broggio, excellent architects who participated in the changes of the Baroque period in the whole of Northern Bohemia, built a magnificent Baroque single-aisle basilica with two towers, encircled by cross-vaulted cloisters which connect seven chapels, each of which is a reminder of one of the seven sorrows of Our Lady. Whatever you believe in, when you enter, it'll take your breath away. The place has great spirituality, an impressive silent power. The main altar will amaze you repeatedly on each visit because you simply can't get used to something like this. The high wooden canopy by sculptor and woodcarver Franz Tollinger is a copy of the Roman altar in St. Peter's temple – and even though it's smaller, in the context of Bohosudov church it's really monumental. A magnificent organ that still produces a great sound, a magnificently carved pulpit, a number of sculptures and paintings among which the rare paintings by Ignac Raab stand out, and the original miraculous statuette kept in a glass case above the tabernacle, whose artistic importance is small but whose spiritual importance is unimaginable, and in fact the whole harmonic interior of the church – all this creates a great impression from the church,

which the pope promoted to a basilica minor, i.e. an important pilgrimage church under the pope's patronage, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the place of pilgrimage in 1924. We need a break now so we'll go along Calvary way to a Baroque chapel and a beautiful Calvary sculpture group. Then we'll slowly move to the centre of Krupka, past the lovely cemetery church of St. Anna and the Gothic spital church of the Holy Spirit, behind which is a charming conservation area of the town of Krupka.

AT A MEDIEVAL MARKET

We are at a rectangular square surrounded by burgher houses, mostly Renaissance, and several churches and a castle. It used to be called Tržní náměstí (Market Square) and all the important parts of medieval life went on there. Just close your eyes and you'll be surrounded by noises that are very different from the present – shouting stall keepers, rough and out-of-tune singing pouring from the open windows of a tavern, noise from craftsmen... Apart from a classicist city hall with a clock tower and remarkable burgher houses, some of which are classic examples of half-timbered houses, you'll also want to stop at the Baroque statues and a bust of the founder of modern



optical medicine, MUDr. Ferdinand Arlt. In one of the houses there is the Regional Museum with a remarkable exhibition called 'Krupka and Tin', and there is a Firefighting Museum in a gorgeous Baroque vicarage. The dominant feature of the square is the beautiful Gothic Church Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (Church of the Assumption of Our Lady) from the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries with a pretty detached wooden bell-tower under a shingle roof. The conservation zone is crowned by Krupka castle. It used to be a sentry and defence castle, part of the protection system of the Czech-Saxony border. When you stand there today and look at the remains of the tower in the east castle wall, it's really difficult to imagine a castle with three gates, impressive walls, a massive polygonal tower, a chapel and a three-storey palace. But our ancestors felt the same a hundred years ago, because the castle was abandoned after the Thirty-Year War and started to collapse and the main castle tower fell in 1807. At the very end of the 17th century the Sternbergs had an administrative building built, which remains to this day. It's called Panský dům (Mansion) and there is a restaurant in it now. It has been here since the romantic period when the first tourists and spa guests from Teplice started to discover Rosenberg, as the place was known because of about a hundred kinds of roses growing and blossoming in the mansion garden. Today you can go on a guided tour there in the summer and on your own for the rest of the year, look around the town and its surroundings from the newly rebuilt restaurant terrace where you can, of course, have a good meal and even spend a romantic night in comfortably furnished rooms.

TIP

If the views from the castle aren't enough, just climb the opposite rock Totenstein, or Mrtvý or Umrličí kámen (Dead Stone), where breath-taking and distant views from a different angle await you. Not only can you see the whole of Krupka but you can also let your eyes wander over the woody ridge of the Ore Mountains, the picturesque the Central Bohemian Mountains and the Teplická kotlina (Teplice basin).





An expedition into different times

When you arrive in the town of Ústě̀k and stroll along its narrow streets, after a while you'll get a pleasant feeling that this place is somehow frozen in time. Whether the concentrated silence or noisy glee, the atmosphere seems to spring out of the depths of time. Maybe it's because of the medieval houses, narrow lanes, maybe because of the archaic shop signs – some of them reverently preserved from the First Republic era, other contemporary but made in such a way that they don't remind you of the typical advertising slogans of the present, but have their own quiet poetry.

TWO-STOREY TOWN

Ústě̀k is of a dignified age; it is more than 650 years old. In quite a small area there are so many sights, so much fun and entertainment that you can spend several days here and you'll still not have seen everything. Take the centre of the town itself, the smallest conservation zone in the Czech Republic. A rectangle shaped square lined with burges houses, some of which are reminiscent of the Gothic era and whose beautiful gables and chunky arcades are still enchanting, others refer to later styles, for example the elegant deanship building, the work of Litoměřice builder Octavio Broggio. After you've had a look at the late-Baroque church of St. Peter and St. Paul you might feel that you already know the most interesting things in Ústě̀k. You couldn't be more wrong! We can say that Ústě̀k is a town on two storeys. When you go from the square to Ústě̀k castle, which was a brewery for some time, and to Pikartská tower, you'll realise that you are on the level of the former town walls and that the quietly flowing Ústě̀cký stream creates a picturesque valley deep underneath you, enclosed with sandstone walls on

all sides. The houses, whose calm facades we know from the square, climb the steep rock face here. In one place, the wooden porches and sheds are literally glued to the rock so you can't help comparing them to swallows' nests. Of course, these are the famous Ptačí domky (Bird houses) creating one of the loveliest vistas in Ústě̀k. But that's not the end of the sights. Your attention will certainly be drawn to the generously and creatively reconstructed synagogue, which is small and descends into the valley like everything in this town, but it literally rose from ruins thanks to the skill and know-how of our contemporaries. When you have seen the meeting-house with the beautiful 'women's' gallery and filigree painting, your breath will be taken away by floors of the building. You'll descend to a classroom of a school which is connected to the teacher's flat. The rabbi's house and the adjoining building, called 'Gothic Twins', have also been repaired with love and precision and apart from being a nice sight to behold they also offer cultural experiences.

DEVILS, A TORTURE CHAMBER AND A BATTLE OF BUCCANEERS

You take an idyllic walk to the Jewish cemetery and then you can't resist – you'll see – turning back to enjoy the aforementioned attractions. For example,

the unique Museum of Devils located in Pikartská tower, where you'll experience a rather unconventional tour of various devilish inventions and items from the only 'devil scene' in the world, or the moving 'Punishment of a sinful woman by rightful infernal punishment' and the town Gothic cellars where the museum turns into an adrenaline filled chase with the devils. The darkness behind a squeaky infernal gate is illuminated by cleverly placed lights. There are unidentifiable noises. And if it's the devils' day, a gang of devils spring out from all around, and because these are experienced actors, it sometimes gets really scary. They have scales for human souls, an infernal time machine that measures remaining human life but can also turn days and years backwards, a devil's egg about to hatch, an entrance to a terrible corridor from which devils emerge with dreadful screams if the egg unfortunately breaks, an iron correction cage for sinners – both men and women, an abrasive wheel for sharpening devils' claws... Or the aquarium next door which introduces freshwater fish from catfish to sturgeons, or the Museum of Old Postcards in a former wine cellar carved into the rock, where you descend in fascination, surrounded by yellowed witnesses of the past, the local Šatlava (Prison), where you'll discover a tiny market, a torture chamber and cells and where you'll be able to play executioner, moneyer or poor prisoner. Or would you rather visit Galerie u brány (Gate Gallery) with its permanent exhibition about Czech draftsmen and designers? What's more, there are various events taking place in the town almost every weekend from March to December, such as markets, concerts, theatre performances, fairs... Is that not enough for you? Right behind the town there

TIP

Less than 5 kilometres from Ústě̀k there is the village of Liběšice with a fascinating alley of Baroque and Rococo sculptures on the wall of a former Jesuit residence, lining the road and by the Empire-style Church Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (the Assumption of Our Lady) with a Renaissance tower and Baroque gate. An extraordinary place.



is the gleaming surface of the nearly 70-hectare Chmelař lake, which is suitable for relaxing in every imaginable way. There are beaches, children's playgrounds, sports grounds, mini golf, snooker, boat and paddle boat rentals.... And every year there is a spectacular event called the 'Conquest of Chmelař lake by pirates

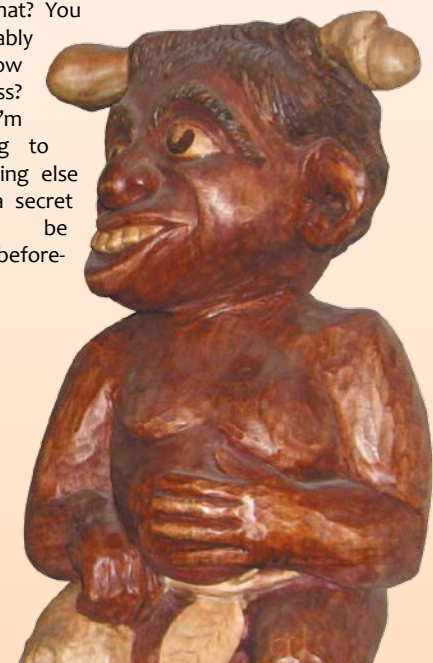


or an atrocious massacre on the shores of Ústě̀k'. Pirates will be all around you, as will corsairs, buccaneers, a historic market, gold-washing, theatre performances, competitions and most of all a battle on the land and in the water, in the water on a replica of a pirate schooner. Muskets shoot, swords clang, pistols bang... No, there is no place for boredom in Ústě̀k.

BY STONE SHIP TO THE HEART OF THE UPLANDS

The surroundings of Ústě̀k are no less interesting than the town itself. There are two remarkable destinations just a stone's throw away – one can be seen from afar, the other is hidden in woods. The region is dominated by a Calvary with stations of the cross in Ostrý, which the locals have always affectionately called 'Kostelíčky' (Little Churches). It's beautiful and relaxing to climb to Golgota past the stations of the cross. And the view from the top – a view overlooking a wide valley and the hilltops of the northern part of the Central Bohemian Mountains opens up in front of you. Just a few kilometres away, in the middle of the woods, you'll be astonished by the majestic ruins of Helfenburk, a castle of Prague archbishops. From the reconstructed and accessible castle tower, the well-preserved outer walls look like the sides and bows of a stone ship which was stranded on a cliff and the sea below it has dried up. You can wander round the castle, discover narrow manholes and unexpectedly wide courtyards, climb stairs and grass-covered remains of palaces, feeling romantic and adventurous. If you set off from Ústě̀k in the opposite direction, you'll arrive in Levín, a small town crouching under a proud campanile, from which you'll have the northern part of the Central Bohemian Mountains with the double-ridged Sedlo,

flat land around Verneřice and the hollow basin of Ústě̀k at your fingertips. But what's most appealing about the view is the late-Baroque Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in the middle of the town. It's unique. Similar round constructions are rare in this country. There are also several mysteries related to the church as well as mysterious letters and signs, the lioness of Levin on the church wall... What? You are probably asking now – a lioness? No, I'm not going to say anything else because a secret mustn't be revealed beforehand.



Memorial Air Show

– Let's be proud of them



I honestly don't know whether today's children and students know the names František Fajtl, František Chábera or František Peřina, even though there haven't been many greater heroes in this country. Czechoslovakian pilots from World War II are legends. But will they still be legends in 10, 20 or 50 years' time? Vlasta Dvořák, the President of Aeroklub Roudnice nad Labem and the man who had the idea of organising a unique air show at the airport in Roudnice, has tried to keep the legends alive all his life. Right after the Velvet Revolution he promised General Fajtl to organise a dignified event which would finally rehabilitate Czech pilots, veterans from World War II, and he has been keeping his promise every 2 years since 1991. The 14th year of this event will take place in Roudnice on 24th and 25th June 2017.



A SHOW FULL OF IDEAS

The Memorial Air Show is a well-known event around the whole world. It's the only air show on Earth that a head of a state has visited – and not only once but four times! But that's not the only reason why the show is unique. While at most

other air shows spectators stand well away from the planes and pilots, in Roudnice they have them within reach. But what's most important is that each year has a specific theme which everything within the event is related to. Good ideas are always needed – and Vlasta Dvořák's team hasn't run out of them. At first, the point was to rehabilitate Czech war pilots after many years of persecution, imprisonment and public humiliation. Then came the idea of reconciliation, which turned out to be quite difficult but finally succeeded in 2005. The Memorial Air Show became a platform where former pilots from opposite battling sides could meet and symbolically make peace for the first time since World War II ended. No-one who witnessed it could describe



the emotion of the participating veterans from the USA, Russia, Germany, Slovakia, France, the UK and the Czech Republic. The aviation legends had tears in their eyes, holding yellowed photos and souvenirs and it was clear at that very moment that Roudnice had made its mark on the history of tolerance and the memories of the human race. Last year's show commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in a very dignified way. And what about the next show? The theme will include 4 anniversaries. The first will remember Czechoslovakian legionaries fighting in World War I; it's the 100th anniversary of the victorious battle of the Czechoslovakian legions at Zborov. But there were more important events in 1917 – planes were used in war for the first time in history and the USA entered the world war. The 4th anniversary is related to 1942 – it's been 75 years since the USA entered the European battle fields of World War II. It's clear that we'll be able to see planes from both world wars and, as is tradition in Roudnice, modern and contemporary aircraft as well.



THINGS YOU CAN SEE IN ROUDNICE AND NOWHERE ELSE

The Memorial Air Show has acquired a lot of importance and a lot of exceptional things have happened at it. For example, a B-17, the famous flying fortress, landed in Roudnice for the first time after the war. NATO planes landed there for the very first time in the Eastern Bloc. You could even see the pride of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air force – An Apache helicopter and a Harrier, a jet which is capable of vertical take-off – again for the first time in Bohemia. There is no need to highlight the Spitfire, Mitchell and Hurricane, the planes which Czech RAF pilots flew and which were introduced in the first year of the show, on 18th June 1991, because they were followed by all the war planes available in Europe. It was the first time when jets of the contemporary US air force guided by an AWACS aeroplane arrived in the Czech Republic. These were F-16 fighters and A-10 warplanes from Aviano in Italy. It was at the Memorial Air Show in Roudnice that the EU presidency was handed over to Sweden in the air and was accompanied by the message of free Schengen skies, which the Czech Republic opened as the first country in Europe with the contribution of Vlasta Dvořák. 'It was my long-time dream and idea, which I managed to make come true as the only one in the EU. I have many personal experiences and findings related to the project. The strongest one is without doubt my letter to the Swedish Prime Minister.



At that time our government fell and there was no-one else who could make this communication. So, I wrote to the Prime Minister and asked him to take over my vision and that the next Czech Prime Minister, Jan Fischer, will discuss it with him during his official visit to the Swedish Kingdom that was to take place a week later. And it really happened. And since then I have known that nothing is impossible." It's only fair to add that while the Schengen area is in reality on land, it is not so in the skies. Thanks to Vlasta Dvořák's initiative the sky is only free above the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries – and not in other parts of Europe. And the reason? Maybe they need their own Dvořáks. But let's get back to the upcoming Memorial Air Show, which is expected to be one of the most important events of the year in the region of Ústí and will be under the patronage of the President of the Region and the President of the Czech Republic. It wasn't clear at the time when this article was written whether Miloš Zeman will come to Roudnice like Václav Havel and Václav Klaus did. But 5 would

make a nice round number of presidential visits, don't you agree? Apart from an impressive show of aeroplanes both on land and in the air, there will be a day dedicated to the stars of famous Czech pilot film roles. Actors who starred as war pilots – from Nebeští jezdci (Sky Crawlers) to Tmavomodrý svět (Dark Blue World) – will come to Roudnice. A visit from a very honourable guest is also planned – the Memorial Air Show will welcome the famous Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard, who developed a solar-powered plane and managed to fly it around the world. A talk with him, held right on the airfield, will be one of the highlights of the two-day programme. Feeling tempted? I don't blame you. Come along and you won't regret it.

SOME ADVICE

You may have had bad experiences with parking at different air shows and may be tempted to park somewhere illegally when you arrive in Roudnice, but that's an unnecessary risk. You can comfortably drive to the airport and park right on the airfield.



The 14th Memorial Air Show will take place on 24th and 25th June 2017

Ústí people's Forum and what you can experience in the city centre



TIP

There is a great children's corner in the Forum shopping centre. There is a huge play and climbing set with an ice-cream theme and a lot of toys and active games for small and older children. For girls, there is a roomy pink playhouse with an equipped kitchen, dolls house and a table with chairs. Boys can bounce around a big workshop with a workbench and tools, a firefighter's station with garages, a remote-control crane, cars, robots, soldiers, dinosaurs and balance bikes. Add train sets, game consoles, Lego, a TV corner... The only problem will be how to tear the kids away.



AROUND THE LEANING TOWER

When you sit down in one of the 11 restaurants and cafés (you can have something typically Czech, but also sushi, kebabs or a pizza and vegetarians won't go hungry either) and watch what's going on around you, you'll understand that Ústí gained not only a shopping centre but more importantly a community centre. There are a handy 640 parking spaces so whatever the reason for your journey to Ústí, you won't have trouble parking. Let's now have a look at the area that Forum is in. The Church Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (the Assumption of Our Lady) used to be surrounded by buildings on three sides so Kostelní square was created as well as a natural promenade around one of the greatest sights in Ústí, which is the church tower. Why? Because it's the fourth most leaning tower in the world. 65 metres high and tilted on its axis by 2 metres and 9 millimetres. The tower tilted after the heavy bombing of Ústí by the Allies in April 1945, when 3 bombs exploded very close to the church. For several days, it seemed that the tower was going to collapse but then it was supported by a massive wooden construction and injected with concrete to prevent the further movement of the tower. The tower has been considered stable since 1949, which has been confirmed by recent surveys, so it's being prepared for public access. The original staircase collapsed and now the tower can only be accessed by a complicated route across the attic of the building. This was solved by designing a 12-metre exterior double-spiral staircase in a transparent building with wooden blinds by architect Martin Rajniš (the designer

permission should be granted this year, so tourists will be able to climb to the tower in the 2018 season. Until then, passers-by will continue to be fascinated by the tilt, which can be seen from the square. However, the church is interesting even without the tower. The late-Gothic three-aisled church has a remarkable presbytery, which is the oldest preserved part of the church and replaced the original Romanic construction, and there is also a beautiful late-Gothic altar. You can go inside every day for mass.

FOR A BEER AND THEN TO THE GALLOWS BY CABLE CAR

The square has an atmosphere that overcomes you very quickly. Even more so if you come at the time of the Ústecký pivní jarmark (Ústí beer market) of small and family breweries. Then there is a huge crowd, beer flows, con-



certs and theatre performances are going on around you and you won't know where to look first. The event was the idea of Forum's neighbour, the popular mini-brewery Na Rychtě, which brews the much-liked Mazel. And after you drink in the atmosphere of the square (and maybe a beer or two as well), go inside the shopping centre and let the signs guide you to what is probably the best attraction. There is the bottom station of a cable car right inside the centre that takes you to Větruše chateau. It is a suspended cableway with two cars. When you get inside the car and it leaves the station, you'll enjoy a ride with a 50-metre elevation, during which nearly the whole city introduces itself. And you won't just go up and down a hill – Větruše might have been just a small chateau, which used to be called Punch's castle, but there is a modern spa hotel there today with a very good restaurant, an observation platform and a small observation point in the tower. What's more, in close proximity there are sports grounds, both natural and mirror mazes and



Julius' trail to Vaňovský waterfall starts here. A nice walk takes you to a round stone podium with a massive cross – that's the city's place of execution. It was built in 1543 and high-capacity gallows were erected there. Hanging was practised there until the end of the 18th century when Ústí lost the right to capital punishment as part of the reforms by Josef II. Today there is a beautiful view of the city. If you walk about 20 metres further, you'll arrive at the newly-built Museum of Civil Defence in a former anti-aircraft bunker from 1942. There are 500 metres of corridors waiting for you with a constant temperature of 12°C and air humidity of 85%. You will see a collection of gas masks (including the oldest one from 1920), a radio-telephone exchange, an ambulance station and a working air-conditioning machine room. The tour lasts nearly an hour. You can have a coffee back in the shopping centre when the cable car takes you down the hill. You needn't worry about your evening – Forum offers also cinema experiences, two and three-dimensional in the Cinema City multiplex, and if you desire an even greater experience, visit Maxim 5D Cinema. Of course, the city centre of Ústí nad Labem offers more attractions – e.g. the municipal museum in a beautiful Neo-Renaissance building of a former bourgeois school. Its remarkable collections are complemented by interesting interactive exhibition projects – you won't be bored there. But let's stay close to Kostelní square for a while – you'll find another church right behind the church with the leaning tower – St. Adalbert's. It's Octavio Broggio's work, a Baroque construction with a really magnificent facade. When you stand in front of it, let yourself be carried back to times gone by. More than a thousand years ago, there was a small hillfort and a short time later a Romanic church, already dedicated to St. Adalbert. In the Baroque era, Dominicans acquired it, rebuilt it and added a monastery. Today there is the Ústí office of the YMCA here – the Christian association for young people. As you can see, there are many things you can experience around one shopping centre in the city centre.



of the new Poštovna on Sněžka). The construction will be placed next to the tower and will have 180 steps, which people can 'buy' – one for 25,000 Czech crowns. This is how funds for the building of the staircase will be raised. If everything goes according to plan, planning



Dresden International Airport – Your gate to Northern Bohemia



Flughafen Dresden GmbH is a subsidiary of Mitteldeutsche Airport Holding with approximately 1.73 million passengers a year (2015). The catchment area of Dresden International Airport, an airport for short-distance journeys, includes, apart from the German regions of Saxony and Southern Brandenburg, Northern Bohemia in the Czech Republic and Southern Silesia in Poland.

The flight schedule includes attractive flights from or to cities in Germany and Europe: **Amsterdam** (KLM), **Barcelona** (Vueling), **Basilej** (EasyJet), **Düsseldorf** (Air Berlin, Eurowings), **Frankfurt upon Mohan** (Lufthansa), **Hamburg** (Eurowings), **Cologne/Bonn** (Eurowings), **Moscow-Sheremetyevo** (Aeroflot), **Malaga** (Germania), **Munich** (Lufthansa), **Palma de Mallorca** (Air Berlin, Germania), **Stuttgart** (Eurowings) and **Curych** (SWISS). The Leipzig/Halle Airport, which is also a part of Mitteldeutsche Airport Holding, also offers flights to/from **Istanbul** (Turkish Airlines), **London-Stansted** (Ryanair) and Vienna (Austrian Airlines). In addition, direct flights to holiday destinations on the Atlantic and Red and Black Seas leave every day from both Dresden and Leipzig.

You can get to almost any destination in Europe and the world leaving from Dresden or Leipzig/Halle with just one change, thanks to Aeroflot, Austrian Airlines, Air Berlin, Eurowings, KLM, Lufthansa, Turkish Airlines, Vueling and SWISS airlines. They offer passengers a large number of practical connecting flights to cities and tourist destinations. Waiting times at transfer airports are usually short and many connecting flights to/from Dresden or Leipzig/Halle allow for the flexible planning of your journey.

A concept for convenient arrivals and departures or holding conferences and meetings is represented by the direct connection

of Dresden Airport to the A4 Motorway, almost 3,000 parking places close to the terminal building with a high-speed train stop and a conference centre. You can reach Northern Bohemia from Dresden in approximately 45 minutes using the A4 and A17/D8 motorways. At Dresden main station, passengers can change from the S2 high-speed train to lines to the Czech Republic. The journey between the airport and the main station takes about 20 minutes. In addition, the modern yellow Student Agency buses run between Prague and Dresden Airport several times a day.

According to surveys, the airport is also popular for its green spaces and the helpful and competent approach of the staff. There is a new shop called 'Gate 14' where travellers can buy refreshments, drinks, souvenirs and travel accessories, as well as many gift ideas.

The famous Dresden Airport tours are now also offered in the Czech language. On the last Sunday every month visitors can take part in a 90-minute tour, which starts at 4.30 pm, with a Czech guide. This interesting tour includes a visit to the terminal building, safety checks, a bus ride to the plane dispatch area and a visit by the airport fire brigade. It is necessary to book your tour at least 5 days in advance.

Flight schedules, on-line travel agency, parking space booking:
www.dresden-airport.de
www.letiste-drazdany.cz
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