

# Gate

magazine for visitors  
to the Ústí Region

Issue No. 9

## NATURE

The Rocks Under  
a Blanket of Snow

## HISTORY

The Mysteries of the Castles  
in the Ore Mountains

## INTERVIEW

The Gate to Bohemia and I  
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Criss-Crossing the Country by Bike  
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Comic Strip: How the Gorges Got Their Boats

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**Gate to Bohemia**

Discover the Beauty of the Ústí region



# Dear readers,





You have just opened the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the tourist magazine Gate to Bohemia. I hope that, over the years, this magazine has indeed become a gate that opens up the region to you; a region which – as we can now surely and proudly proclaim – pleasantly surprises a large majority of first-time visitors. The number of people who discover the charm and uniqueness of the Ústí Region is bound to grow now that the cross-border Ore Mountain Mining Region has been added to UNESCOs World Heritage List, after many years and much effort from many people. We are so proud as it is only the 13<sup>th</sup> Czech site to make it on to this prestigious list. This success is quite significant – UNESCO carries a lot of weight and we suddenly find ourselves on the radar for a much larger number of tourists from all over the world. Yet our happiness does not blind us to the fact that if you don't look after your precious site well enough, it can quickly be wiped off the list. So we are still finalising infrastructure, finishing up some last bits and pieces and preparing to represent the Czech Republic successfully. And of course we still dare hope for more additions to the list. The hops town of Žatec, the Franciscan monastery in Kadaň and the fortress town Terezín – they all deserve the same distinction. We believe that being added to UNESCO will draw interest to other noteworthy places in the region. For example, cyclists from all over Europe head our way as the Elbe Cycle Route is almost completed and more and more new detours and alternative routes are added. We want those that cycle all the way from Vrchlabí to the North Sea to look back and say that the Ústí Region was the most beautiful part of the trip with the best routes, detours and facilities. What can I say – we have bold ambitions. So come visit us and see the beauty and uniqueness of the Gate to Bohemia with your own eyes. We look forward to seeing you!





Zdeněk Matouš  
Councillor of the Ústí Region  
for Regional Development, International Relations and Tourism

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# The Author's Invitation

For the 9<sup>th</sup> time I wandered through the Gate to Bohemia as your vanguard, for the 9<sup>th</sup> time I tried to discover something we've yet to visit, and yet again I came to the conclusion that this region is simply inexhaustible. There are so many charming surprises, so many picturesque places and so many breathtaking experiences... This time I tried to uncover some of the Ústí Region's more hidden sides. From the dark valleys of Bohemian Switzerland, the volcanic peaks of the Czech Central Highlands, the wide plains of Lower Poohří and the forested ridges of the Ore Mountains, mysterious and exceptional things started to appear. Such as the story behind the ruins in the Ore Mountains; the secret behind the White Lady at Střekov Castle and the first comic in Bohemia; the remarkable mystery and the inexpressible strength at the cathedral in Panenský Týnec as well as the famous discovery (or not) of the famous Wogastisburg. During my wanderings I came across the miraculous interior of the church and castle in Konojedy; I travelled on the unique chair lift at Komáři Vížka and I visited the Czech village of the year. I flew over the Ore Mountains like Ikaros on a rope; I discovered the unexpected winter charm of Bohemian Switzerland; I visited every lookout tower and viewing point along the Elbe; I cycled almost all the way through the Czech Central Highlands; I met the Maxidog Fík in Kadaň, soldiers from the army of Maria Theresa in Terezín, and Benedikt Rejt himself in Louny. I tasted beer from every brewery in Poohří; I found out why children find the Czech Central Highlands so attractive; I appreciated the restored castle Stekník; I wandered among hop gardens; treated myself at restaurants; tried scootering, rafting and a via ferrata in Děčín and was breath taken by the waterfalls in the Ore Mountains... Simply put – I prepared a menu that no tourist visiting this highly praised region need be ashamed of. The rest is up to you!



Rostislav Křivánek





# The Elbe From Above

Not long ago, I told an acquaintance about my love for viewing points and lookout towers. He gave me a tortured look and shook his head. 'I can't believe anyone would want to trudge their way up there. In this day and age! I've bought a drone. I can film anything I want from above and then watch it in peace on a big screen at home.' Maybe that's simply the time, but it's not the world I want to live in. If you feel the same way, I encourage you to take a trip along some of the viewing points above the Elbe. We'll wander downstream along the River with a capital R in the Czech Central Highlands.

## Říp

We start at the outpost among the Czech Central Highlands. Back in 1879, the hill Říp was still bare and you could easily view the surroundings from the top. Over time, trees sprung up all around and today we must suffice with three viewing points. The viewing points Mělnická Vyhlička and Roudnická Vyhlička give a nice view of the surroundings and you can also just about catch a glimmer of the Elbe.



## Roudnická Hláška

The walk from Říp to the town Roudnice is beautiful. This historical town has not yet been discovered by tourists and the last surviving piece of the town's former fortress can be found in the form of the medieval lookout tower, Hláška. From here we can view the Lobkowitz Castle, the town and the river, which we have drawn close to.

## Hořidla Lookout Tower

This 14 metre high metal Helix above the village Jištěrpy provides a wonderful panorama of the Czech Central Highlands on the right-hand bank of the Elbe. The Elbe is more felt than seen from here, but it gives us a good view of the landscape it runs through.

## Radobýl

Once you reach the bare summit of this hill, below the mighty cross, you'll soon understand why the Czech poet Máchá loved this view so much. From here, the Czech Central Highlands lie spread before as though in the palm of a giant's hand. The region's soul lies before you.

## U Zámečku Lookout Tower

We head to the other side of the river. In the town Lovosice, there's an artificial hill where a nearby restaurant used to store its ice. It now hosts a hyperboloid viewing tower with an incredible view of the Elbe.

## Lovoš

There are many routes to the top of this impressive hill; one starts in the beautiful valley Oparenské Údolí. And up top you'll find two viewing points. The first viewing point is by the Schwarzenberg hut and if you've seen the Czech Central Highlands from Radobýl, then you'll now get to see this glittering jewel from the other side. The second viewing point is from the rocks Panenské Kameny. It lies a couple of hundred metres closer to the river and has an intoxicating view.

## Kalvárie

The three crosses atop Kalvárie can either be reached via a steep climb starting in the village Velké Žernoseky, or along the flat from the village Kamýk. Either way, you'll find yourself at one of the most remarkable spots above the Elbe. Seeing the three crosses at Kalvárie from below is as wonderful as the view you get from beside them. From here, the praline-shaped hill Říp can be seen on the horizon above the Elbe.

## Varhošť Lookout Tower

This might be the most famous lookout tower in the Czech Central Highlands. The viewing tower consists of three platforms atop the hill Varhošť, that was given its name by the Celts. We've distanced ourselves a bit from the river again, but even from here we can see its slithering body portioned up into eight charming pieces, as well as the entire eastern part of the Czech Central Highlands.



## Krkavčí Skála

Just slightly closer to the Elbe, you'll find Krkavčí Skála. From the top of this rock, you'll not only see the river and its hilly surroundings, but you'll also get a good view of the valley Tlučeňské Údolí and the hill Plešivec.

## Radejčín Lookout Tower

This is our first view of many from the left riverbank and is found at the top of the metal lookout tower named Radejčín. And now it's just one incredible view after another...

## Doerellova Viewing Point

The yellow trail markings take us all the way to the bench on the rocky spur Výsluní. From here we can see the glimmering Elbe wind itself through the landscape from the exact same angle as the painter Ernst Gustav Doerell once saw it.

## Viewing Point by the Dubice Church

We have reached the most famous viewing point in the region; a comfortable terrace by a restaurant, right by the Church of Saint Barbara. This is a view you'll never forget. There aren't many views more beautiful than this in the world.

## Mlynářův Kámen Viewing Point

Yet if you want to see the river from a place few people know of, head to Mlynářův Kámen. The curve of the Elbe is perhaps even more picturesque from here.



## Skalky Viewing Point

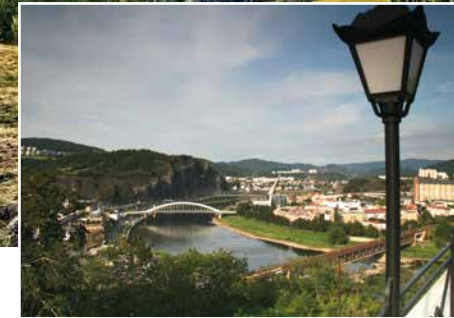
Follow the yellow trail markings from the river-side village Dolní Zálezly all the way to a fabulous viewing point, which perhaps provides the best view of the Elbe in its mountainous surroundings.

## Josefínka Viewing Point

A fossilized dinosaur lost in thought looking out over the valley is your companion at this viewing point above the village Vaňov. This is a view you have to earn, it's no easy walk but it's definitely worth it.

## Vrkoč

One of the most notable rocky peaks above the Elbe is without a doubt the basaltic Vrkoč. This is one of nature's truly unique pieces – a hexagonal stone pillar that looks as though it's been warped and stuck into the side of the hill. And the view! Another impressive crook in the Elbe, Střekov Castle, Masarykovo lock...



## Střekov Castle

A castle that has been here for 700 years must be a master at viewing the river. There are several viewing points up here, but I recommend you climb the tower – the view from the window on the top floor is sumptuous.

## Větruše Castle

The terrace in front of Kašpárkový Castle, as it used to be called, shows the river running through the centre of the town Ústí nad Labem.

## Kozí Vrch

The hill Kozí Vrch rises above the river between Mojžíř and Neštědce. This is where the Elbe leaves the town Ústí nad Labem and flows towards the next town, Děčín.

## Březový Vrch

This is a secret viewing point above the village Povrly. There's no marked path leading up here, but the solitude and unusual height make it worthwhile.

## Skrytín Castle

You can't see much of the river from here, but this 19<sup>th</sup> century castle, which is now almost fully renovated, makes a great companion when viewing the Verneřice Central Highlands.

## Vrabinec

We take our leave of the Elbe viewing points in the Czech Central Highlands at this very romantic example placed high up on a basalt rock leaning against the remains of the ancient castle, not far from Těchlovice on the right side of the Elbe.





# From Giant Labyrinths into the Arms of the River

The western most outpost of Bohemian Switzerland (Českosaské Švýcarsko) actually follows the left bank of the Elbe. On the Czech side of the river, there's a steep climb right up to the peak Děčínský Sněžník and on the German side, the undulating forests are penetrated by the tablelands shooting up towards the sky. And since us 21<sup>st</sup> century people are rather comfortable, let's explore this fairly uncharted area from top to bottom starting at the stone lookout tower and heading down to the cooling waters of the Elbe.

## The Lighthouse Above a Sea of Fog

From a distance, the lookout tower at **Děčínský Sněžník** really does look like the chimney on a steam ocean liner, and whoever steps out onto the viewing platform is rewarded with a fascinating view of one of the most beautiful landscapes in Europe. The **German tablelands** and **Bohemian Switzerland** are laid out before you as though in the palm of a giant, in perfect harmony with the **Czech Central Highlands**. When the area is taken over by inversion, the lookout tower stands like a lighthouse above a sea of fog and clouds and an island of sunlight appears lighting up the forested and rocky peaks.

## The Bottom of the Rocky Cauldron

Not far from here you'll find a remarkable area made up of curious eroded rock formations. There's a beautiful walk down from Děčínský Sněžník along a stony footpath guarded by an army of white birches. It leads all the way

to the bottom of this rocky cauldron and to the village **Ostrov**, where a cascade of glimmering ponds and the stream Bílá rush towards the German border without a trouble in the world – because nothing is quite as free as a river. The rock formations **Ostrovské Skály** and **Volské Kameny** are just the beginning of this rocky labyrinth. The border path turns



into an educational trail called **Zapomenuté Pohraničí** (Forgotten Border) that leads tourists to the almost unknown rocks **Rajecké Skály**, followed by the **Tisa Rocks** (Tiské stěny) which, on the contrary, have been a Mecca among hikers for over 150 years.

## A Labyrinth of Giants

The impressive rock wall, the sandstone palisade rising to the clouds, the natural battlement rising vertically above the calm little village of **Tisá** hides a town made of rocks – most likely created by giants, but inhabited by gnomes. Keep an eye on them! They strike up conversation while pouring disorientating herbs into your pockets, and you'll end up lost among such picturesque rocks as the Beheaded Major, the Mayor, the Mummy, the Turtle, the Seal, the Pulpit and Napoleon's Shoes until the end of your days. The labyrinth among the rocks and the panoramic walk along the upper blades of the wall, the mystical openings, the twisting tunnels, the breathtaking views from the top of the rock formations, the lengthy stairs and ladders – the Tisa Rocks are bound to enchant any sensitive being.

## Try Out a Scooter

So we've enjoyed the peaks and it's time to start moving downwards to the glistening and dignified body of the Elbe. There are several

ways of doing so. For example, we could catch the tourist bus that kindly takes us down to the foot of the hill we just wandered upon, then further through deep forests, past plenty of natural sights and all the way to the foot of the **tableland Königstein**, which is solemnly crowned by a breathtaking fortress. But we could also borrow some scooters and take a more intimate route – perhaps past the **tableland Pfaffenstein** with its slender rock needle **Barbarina**. Or on the Czech side, down along the idyllic lake **Vlčí Jezero** tempting you to jump in, past the hunting cabin Kristin Hrádek, once lost in the arms of the forest and then restored becoming original B&B with a popular restaurant that specializes in game meat. Then onwards through the village **Maxičky** with its legendary recreational lake, and perhaps to the rock formation **Česká Brána** or to the magical village **Kamenec**, and then along the forest path that the Thuns paved with huge sandstone slabs around the late baroque period.



The Elbe Canyon

## Where the Sky Is Supported by Rocks

But the best excursions are those on foot. Return to Ostrov and conquer the forest path leading up to the stunning viewing point at the rock plateau **Grenzplatte**. Then follow the silver stream as it changes name from the Czech Bílá to the German Biela and all the way down to the valley lined by rocky viewing points such as **Johanniswachte**, **Sachsenstein** and **Bielablick**, as well as the lesser known wonders **Herkulesssäulen**, an assembly of incredibly thin rock needles that seemingly prop up the sky.

## The Lazy Cyclist's Dream

If you are up for a top-class relaxing bike ride with a visual feast for your eyes, then let the bike bus pick you and your bike up in Děčín and take you up to the village **Sněžník**. Just a side note – the truly remarkable Art Nouveau stone **chapel of the Virgin Mary** (kaple Panny Marie), commissioned by earl František and Anna Thun in 1910 can be seen not far from the drop-off point. Once you've gotten back on your bike, you'll be riding 'for free' along wonderful forest paths all the way down to the Elbe, where the completely flat **Elbe Cycle Route** will lead you back to the town Děčín. You might want to ride all the way to Děčín Castle – all though that's technically on the other side of the river.



## Past Waterfalls to Tablelands

We'll sum up this charming tour with a hidden jewel. There is a very new trail marking that starts in the riverside village **Dolní Žleb**, which is easily reached either by bike, ferry or train. This yellow trail marking leads you uphill, through the deserted village Klopoty and all the way to the stream **Klopotský Potok**. Just a few steps upstream you'll discover an almost completely unknown, but astonishing sight: a three metre high **waterfall** crashing down into a small pond. Continue upstream following the national border all the way to the signpost that points us along the yellow trail markings into Germany. This route is rich in experiences as well as wonderful views. It takes us to both the highest and the lowest tablelands – **Großer Zschirnstein** and **Zirkelstein** – and then down the rocky hillside above the Elbe valley to the village **Schöna**. From here we can easily take a ferry over to the Czech village **Hřensko** or a train back to our starting point. It's a good 16 kilometres with a substantial incline – definitely a full day's worth!



# UNESCO Presents: The Ore Mountain Mining Region



A pair of falcons sail above the vast forests covering mountain ridges and hillsides. Voices and peculiar noises from the stream float up to them. The falcons land on the branch of large tree and watch the strange, swarming activity below. On the riverbank, a fair bit from the water, a group of men are digging. Other men are dragging some stony clay to a stream, and yet other men are busy moving bowls full of sludge around in wooden troughs. A pile of something dimly glimmers on a buckram sail. The falcons already know it's useless. Why do the humans slave away for days for something that won't even fill their stomachs? Because the humans know that these shiny reddish-brownish-blackish glassy stones hold an incredible power. The power to change their lives. They still don't know that it is cassiterite, nor do they know that it contains up to 78% tin, because the term percentage won't be invented for several hundred years yet. But even in these early years of the second millennium they know that these stones are highly valuable. As the light fades and the surrounding forests are enclosed in darkness, the men head to their huts in a clearing to eat, drink and sleep. Completely unaware of the fact that here, at one of Europe's earliest discovered tin ore deposits, a town will one day stand. The mining town of Krupka.

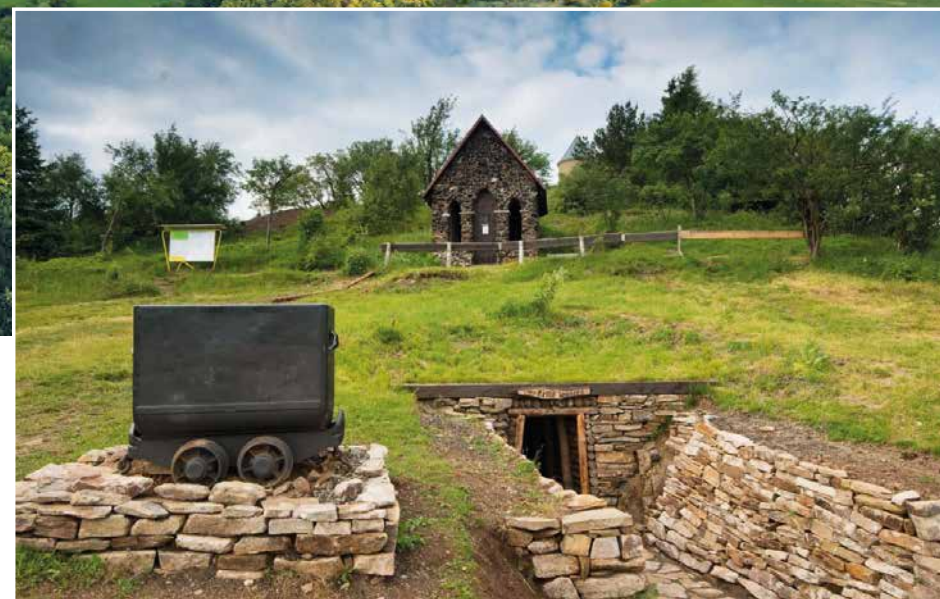


## Prestige Is No Easy Feat

Of course, the first miners could not have guessed that over a thousand years later, 6 July 2019, a dream would come true for many people on both sides of the national border that runs through the Ore Mountains, as this unique landscape full of remnants from almost 1,000 years of activities is added to the world's most prestigious list. A list that brings tourists from all over the world and that can provide work opportunities, prosperity and success. But that is a later effect. UNESCO's intent is different: a site is chosen and added to their list. Then they make sure you look after it and keep it in top condition for later generations to admire. So – let's rejoice and celebrate, and then get to work. We've got a lot to do.

## Reconciliation Across the Mountains

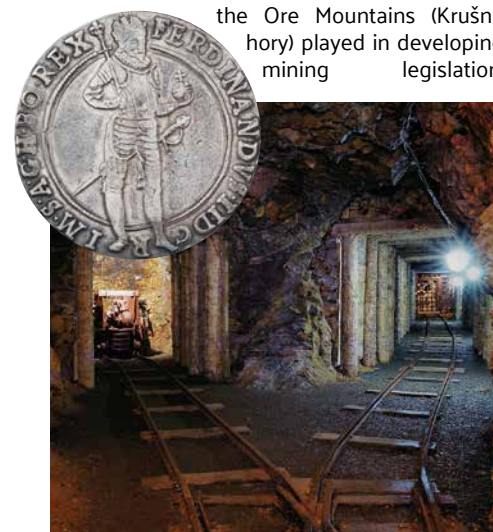
The Ore Mountain Mining Region is a remarkable place for many reasons. One of them is the fantastic cross-border cooperation that takes place here. Let's be clear about the region we're talking about: Sudetenland. Eighty years ago it was one of the most volatile places in Europe with two nations split by bitter hatred. And now? The degree of combined effort



it took to be added to the UNESCO list is not to be overlooked. It shows hope and is proof that people can learn to live together and to forgive.

## What Exactly Is the Ore Mountain Mining Region?

A total of 22 sites have been added to UNESCO's list; 17 in Germany and 5 in the Czech Republic. The Gate to Bohemia is the proud home to two of these places: the mining landscapes Krupka and Mědník. And what makes the Ore Mountains worthy of being on this list? One of the main reasons is the world famous inventions and innovations in mining and metallurgy, which spread from the Ore Mountains to Europe and beyond, especially during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Another reason is the global significance the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) played in developing mining legislation,



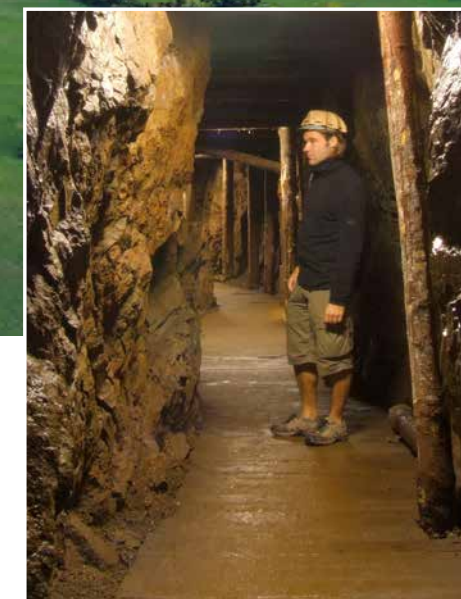
administration and education as well as monetary systems. The latter is mainly due to the Jáchymov tolar, which was the European tender for over 300 years, and which later lent its name to the American dollar. To this day, various remnants from the 800 years of mining remain in the mountains that were full of ore. The remnants can be found both above and below ground and are surrounded by a uniquely dense network of mining towns. And what was mined here? Mainly tin, silver, cobalt, copper, iron and uranium ore.

## The Mysterious Mountain Mědník

And what is there for international tourists to see? The peak of Mědník u Měděnce is home to an unprecedented concentration of authentic mining works showing the various mining techniques used over 400 years. There are 80 remnants from small and large mining galleries, shafts and chutes from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The gallery the Virgin Mary (Marie Pomocná) is open to the public. It has some well-preserved debossed documents and underground areas that have been expanded using fire-setting.

## The Mining Town and Landscape Krupka

We have already covered the mining landscape around Krupka in great detail in previous issues, so this time we'll just take a brief look. Krupka is the oldest tin mining region in the Ore Mountains and contributed to developing and



spreading tin ore mining techniques throughout the Ore Mountains and Central Europe. There's plenty of mining equipment, from medieval pieces to more modern day items, to be seen in the mining area Steinknochen north of Krupka, or in the areas Knötel, Preisselberg and Komáři Hürka. The much younger gallery Old Martin (Starý Martin) is also open to the public and displays mining techniques used for mining tin and tungsten ore in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The town Krupka itself is home to some of the best preserved historical buildings on the Czech side of the Ore Mountains. The town is dominated by the 14<sup>th</sup> century Krupka Castle. The town's Gothic Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie) with its large mining belfry is also worth a visit, as are the Gothic Church of the Holy Spirit, the renaissance Church of St Anna and the historical town houses.

## What does the future hold?

Work, work and more work. I.e. trying to keep a sustainable level of peace, handling the influx of tourists, and most importantly, creating useful infrastructure for the tourists. An old car park has been acquired and the plan is to transport tourists from here; perhaps on a tourist train, perhaps in minibuses or perhaps something completely different. An electronic guide to the sights of Krupka is being created in several different languages and more educational trails through the town are also being planned. But the first-class information centre and educational trails are already up and running. Krupka was ready for success.



# Kadaň and the Maxidog Fík

The bank along the river Ohře has always been important to the royal town of Kadaň. It has been home to mills, ferries, fishing houses, fishing docks, tanneries and bleachers. This is also where Kadaň's mythical creatures lived – the witch Violanta, the sorrowful Walpurga soaking bloody shirts in river through the ages and a whole gang of water-sprites.

And now the riverside promenade that has been developed over the last decade has been named after a beloved Czech cartoon character. The Maxidog Fík.

## Why Fík?

Quite simply because he belongs to the area. The writer Rudolf Čechura, the mastermind that created this character, lived in a nearby village, Ahňkov, and worked as a headmaster in another, Zásada. Kadaň was also where Fík lived with his owners, the young girl Ája and her family, before growing into a Maxidog. Neither of villages Čechura worked or lived in exist anymore; they fell victim to the expansion of the coal mining industry. Kadaň is the closest town and the voice of Fík, the actor Josef Dvořák, also lived here for three years. So that's why.

## Connecting the Town

Kadaň's riverbank also naturally connects the town's historical



gems. On one side the historical district Špitálské předměstí and Kadaň Castle, on the other side the Franciscan monastery. The riverbank is a mere two minute walk away from Kadaň's incredible main square, where you'll find Katova Ulička, the narrowest street in the Czech Republic, and the pearly white town hall tower decorated with stone crabs, and the spacious zwingers around the Kadaň's city walls. And there are plenty of other sights nearby; Kadaň has an inexhaustible number of them; it is one of the most beautiful historical towns in the country. And recently, a focused effort has been put into looking after, renovating, restoring and opening these sights. And the same energy is put into the everyday lives of the town's inhabitants. Kadaň is simply a wonderful place to live.



## What Else Is There to See?

How about the gate Svatá Brána, also known as Mikulovická Brána. You can even climb up and get a view of the city, which is also an option at the town hall tower. As you walk through the gate, take note of the duplicate of the baroque statue Black Madonna. This is the symbolic start of the noteworthy stations of the cross, which is now an integrated part of the town. Seven stations, seven fallings of Christ. It will take you all the way to the Franciscan monastery, and then you can follow the river to return to your starting point. And then? The barbican Žatecké Brány, Středověká Bašta and the military museum, the impressive baroque plague column on the main square that is like an axis that the entire town revolves around. Or perhaps the Gothic town house Šlikovský Dům or the huge baroque fountain, nicknamed Šlikovský Rybník, decorated with a balustrade and stone vases. Not enough? Then how about a visit to the unusual Witch Museum?

## From the Castle to the Monastery

Kadaň Castle is the town's cornerstone. It was founded at the same time as the town and thus remembers everything. During Maria Theresa's rule it was turned into barracks, but the Gothic cellars house an exhibition about the castle's rich history back when it would welcome

kings, Roman prince-electors and aristocrats. The wise river running around the castle also has a rich flow of memories and we can join the river and follow the riverside promenade that passes the below the castle walls. We already know that the promenade is named after the cartoon dog Fík, and we're not likely to forget it. The first reminder is the modern steel and tin sculpture of Fík that you can peer through for a great view of the castle. The castle surroundings are actually riddled with interesting statues and works of art. Right on the riverbed you'll find Kadaň's astronomical clock, dedicated to the clockmaker Mikuláš of Kadaň, which in fact contributed to perfecting Prague's astronomical clock back in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.



## The AmFík Amphitheatre

We run into Fík once more along this charming walk, this time with his owner Ája. The local sculptor František Vlček unveiled the work as part of a play, proving just how creative the entire riverbank project is. It's a full of fun, there are games, playgrounds and plenty of other things that keep you on your toes. Such as the architecturally notable amphitheatre named AmFík, reminiscent a Slavic fort surrounded by a palisade. It is made of over a thousand intertwined oak sleepers fastened with steel rods that outline this location of much fun and excitement.

## For Cyclists and Pedestrians Alike

Cyclists and pedestrians don't get under each other's feet along the river as the Maxipes Fík promenade is accompanied by the Ohře Cycle Route. There are also plenty of interesting benches along the promenade so that you can sit down and let your eyes flow downstream almost anywhere. This promenade is anything but ordinary. It has a distinct architectural character and zest. The 38 meter long bridge for cyclists attached to the rocks above the river is proof of this. This exceptional piece of infrastructure was created by Vít Branda, and even just looking at it is an experience. And this brings us down to the dam Údolní Nádrž Kadaň right at the end of the Maxidog Fík Promenade.

## Following the Fourteen Holy Helpers

Now let's head up the hill, where the yellow trail markings await us. We'll soon find ourselves in front of the gate to the Franciscan monastery. It's a magical place and has trying to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site for some time now. Today we might consider the Fourteen Holy Helpers a coalition of saints that set out to help Europe fight the plague and other common diseases of their time. In Kadaň, as well as in many other places, a chapel was built in their honour. In the spring of 1473, Franciscans were invited to the chapel, and along with the citizens of Kadaň and the family Hasištejnský of Lobkovic, they built an impressive Gothic church. The monastery gradually spread to other buildings until it became the fascinating complex it is today with its walled garden. Today, the monastery is home to the Museum of Kadaň and offers three different tours: Life at the Monastery, The History of Kadaň, and Mineralogy, Geology and Archaeology.





# The Unique Fortress of Terezín



One advantage of history is that – unless someone approaches it tendentiously – it doesn't change. What happened, happened. Its main charm, however, is that it is one of the few things on this planet that has not yet been fully uncovered. The archives are full of unread sources and treasures yet to be studied. Terezín's military historians have recently come across great treasures in Vienna's and Prague's archives, where they have uncovered facts that nobody had any idea about until just recently.

## A Sophisticated Defence System

These efforts have shown that the se Josefinian fortress town Terezín is, in fact, quite the rarity, one of a kind, not only in Europe but in the world. The genius of those who this fortified town and their strategical thinking and incredible foresight is coming to light. A fortified town is first and foremost a fortress. Defensibility and defence systems are vital. In Terezín, these are comprised of a unique combination of ramparts and underground mined tunnels that run below the ramparts like nimble spiders for more than 30 kilometres, enabling the town to literally blow up the ground beneath a besieging army's feet.

## Water as a Weapon

And most importantly – water. The creative builders exploited the plentiful amounts of water. The river Ohře is almost part of the town, the Elbe is within easy reach, and swamps and wetlands surround the town... A few examples of their creativity include being able to flood the large basins and ditches in and around the town, and being able to create an artificial torrential wave. You're not likely to find anything of the kind elsewhere in Europe.

## Treasures from the Archives

But let's get back to the intensive archive work. A treasure has literally been found:

a kind of user manual for the fortress town. This completely changes the previous view of Terezín as a redundant fortress that was never actually invaded. Because that was never the reason why Terezín was built. There were three clearly defined tasks, and the fortress fulfilled most of them during its existence, which proves that the fortress was anything but redundant. So what were these tasks?

## An Impenetrable Barrier

Terezín was meant to be a kind of barrier that would firmly block any access routes from Saxony to Prague. The fortress town was positioned so that it could control and open fire on the Elbe and the imperial road (later railway) without anybody being able to attack it from above (which is why Terezín is not situated directly by the Elbe below the Czech Central Highlands). This function was utilized for example during the war in 1866.

## A Base for the Armed Forces

Its second task was to be a logistical base and a reserve for the entire Austrian army! This is why the barracks are so large and why the hospital is so incredibly over-dimensioned. It was not built only to serve those injured while defending the town, but to serve injured soldiers from all kinds of battles – for example, during the Napoleonic Wars in 1813, many of the injured were brought to Terezín. And the fortresses bakery baked 60 tonnes of

bread a day, far more than the fortress itself could consume. But in 1813, for example, the entire Austrian army fighting in Saxony ate exclusively bread from Terezín. So this task was also fulfilled.

## A Remote Defence of Prague

The third intention was to create a strong fortified point north of Prague. The idea was that with a strong enough force, no enemy would want to pass this point as they would be at danger of being attacked from behind. This was the only task that was not fulfilled. It was in no way the fault of the fortress, the problem was the lack of staff. The Austrian army was simply never able to fully staff the fortress. In fact, during the war in 1866, there were so few soldiers here that they wouldn't have been able to defend even the fortress itself had it been attacked. The commander of the fortress lamented, that had the fortress been fully staffed, the battles at Jičín and Hradec Králové may have ended differently.

## Underground with Lanterns

All this has been dug up from the archives. Those of us who love living history and want

to touch and experience it for ourselves are in luck! The experts at Terezín are quick to put what is found in the archives into action. And so in the suggestive atmosphere provided by Rentranchement 5, we can currently view a very interesting exhibition about the history of the fortress from its very beginning until soon after the First Czechoslovak Republic. From here we can also set out on a thrilling tour of the underground passages with just lanterns to light up the way. At Bastion 5 the underground passages can also be accessed by people in wheelchairs.



## Ah, Life in the Barracks

The wide variety on offer in Cavalier 2 is a chapter in its own right. You can take a look at what life was really life for a soldier in the barracks, see how the hierarchy affected their living conditions and rations, get to know what life here was like behind the scenes. And in addition to this, there are several other exhibitions to see, such as what it was like below deck on La Grace, a Czech navy brig. In the renovated riding hall you can enjoy an exhibition of horse breeds.

## Unique Festivals

Tourists flock here for the truly unique historical reconstructions. Such as the Pirate Battle, where you can see sailing boats drifting past on the flooded moats, or the Josephine Festivities. The latter is an ambitious and unique military reconstruction that focuses on the baroque era and there is nothing else like it. Tourists with a love for military history travel all across the continent to partake in the festivities.



Czech Central Highlands

Terezín

[www.stredohori.cz](http://www.stredohori.cz)





# The Rocks Under a Blanket of Snow

Bohemian Switzerland (Českosaské Švýcarsko) won't disappoint even the fussiest of tourists. With so many incredible and astounding experiences to be had in such a small area, there's something for everyone. Whatever you may enjoy. In the spring, the rocks are dressed up in every shade of green, in the summer the rock faces are drenched in sunlight and in the autumn an awesome colourful palette can be seen from every viewing point. But not many people realise how beautiful the landscape is in winter. Let's take a look around this land of rocks, valleys, canyons and meadows in the winter, when the forests lose all colour and the black and white landscape is filled with a peculiar serenity and subtle charm. Perhaps we'll determine who will love the Bohemian Switzerland winterland the most.

## Love Idyllic Walks Through the Countryside?

In winter, **Edmundova Soutěska** becomes a thoughtful and quite different ravine than in summer. Wander through from the village Hřensko to the first weir and back and enjoy the crystal clear calm, pillows of snow atop the boulders in the riverbed, a frost-covered canyon, and a solemn silence as the snow softly falls to the ground.

**Gabrielina Stezka** (Gabriela's path) passes five rock faces covered in white beauty with views over the sleeping landscape around the ancient hill Růžák. The elevated forests bloom in silver, and beyond them we can see the natural stone bridge **Pravčická Brána** setting out to sea on an ocean of greyish-blue forests. Viewing points all around provide views far into the distance as the chilly air sharpens silhouettes on the horizon.

The labyrinth that is the **Tisa Rocks** (Tiské stěny) is covered in a light snowy blanket in winter and it feels like uncharted territory. Out here you feel like Amundsen on a polar expedition.

Water turns into crystals creating both small and tremendous **ice falls** all over the region. Hunting them down in the valley around

the stream **Vičí Potok** near **Brtníky**, where they are most numerous (**Opona**, **Konírna**, **Velký Ledový Sloup**, **Vičí Stěnka**, **Malá Kaskáda** and **Velká Kaskáda**), is intoxicating. They can also be found around the town **Chřibská** or the valley **Kyjovské Údolí**, where enchanted hikers will be amazed by the icy beauty that is the **Jeskyně víl** (Fairy Cave). It is filled with thousands of fragile stalactites and stalagmites, which disappear without a trace every spring, as if they were merely a winter mirage.

The surroundings of the region **Jetřichovice** also transform in winter – the mill ruins **Dolský Mlýn** look completely different when covered in snow; the valley **Pavlıno Údolí** surrounds the stream Chřibská Kamenice, whose banks become covered in filigree ice plates. At the rock **Trpasličí Skála** the gnomes cover themselves in ermine coats and the proud and rocky **Falkenštejn Castle** is wrapped in a frosty valley. Or head to the peak **Jedlová** with a stone lookout tower dressed in ermine boots. Other lookout towers in the region,

such as **Tanečnice**, **Weifberg**, **Janov**, **Sokolí Vrch**, **Studenec**, **Sněžník** and **Růženka** also offer greedy eyes views of the black and white silhouettes and contours. Observing this winter wonderland from above is the falcons' great pleasure, and anyone who experiences it will understand why.

The **Elbe Valley** is one of the most beautiful in Europe and the winter outlines every detail of it. To admire it from **Belvédér**, an impressive baroque viewing point on a rock plateau, is simply an unforgettable experience.



The craft soapworks **Rubens** in **Růžová** is sure to tickle your fancy, and in **Vičí Hora** the natural cosmetics manufacturers **Nobilis Tilia** have a great visitor's centre. In winter, almost every town in Saxony comes to life with a romantic and idyllic Christmas market (the market at the fortress **Königstein**, atop the tableland with the same name, is historical and completely unique, whereas the markets in **Dresden** are the most famous and absolutely huge). Another popular Czech winter activity is going to see nativity scenes. **Šluknov** and around is famous for its nativity scenes and the museum in **Rumburk** is a natural nave.

## Can't Imagine the Winter Without Sports?

There's some fantastic cross-country skiing with prepared tracks around the village **Polevsko** and the ridge of **Děčinský Sněžník**. For alpine skiing, head to the hill **Jedlová** or the village **Horní Podluží**. If you're a fan of skijoring, **JV ranch** in **Rybniště** won't disappoint.

The town **Děčín** has an aqua park, and swimming pools can be found in **Rumburk** and **Varnsdorf**. And **Děčín**, **Růžová** and **Rumburk** also offer bowling.

## Is Warming Wellness Your Thing?

The number of relaxing wellness centres in Bohemian Switzerland is increasing year by year. If you want to treat yourself, visit the hotel **Ostrov** in the village with the same name, near **Děčinský Sněžník**. Other options include **Usedlost Na Stodolci** and the B&B **Relax** in **Chřibská**, as well as the B&B **Balnika** in **Mikulášovice**.

On the German side of the border, you can indulge at the wellness centre **Toskana Terme** in **Bad Schandau**, **Trixi Park** in **Großschönau**, or the wellness centres in **Kirschau** and **Sebnitz**.

## Prefer to Avoid the Crowds?

Do you enjoy strolling in solitude? Then you'll love Bohemian Switzerland in winter.



## Craving Unusual Experiences Even in Winter?

At the glassworks **Ajeto** in **Lindava**, near **Nový Bor**, you can walk through the workshop filled with a wreath of hellish fires, stop for a bite in the glassworkers' pub and even try blowing glass yourself. In **Rumburk** the renovated cloisters **Svatá Chýše** and **Svaté Schody**, the local loretos, will amaze you.

In **Krásná Lípa** and **Bad Schandau** you'll find the incredible interactive exhibitions at the **House of Bohemian Switzerland** or the **Natural Park Centre** in **Bad Schandau**. And the exhibitions in the castles in **Děčín** and **Šluknov** are open all through the winter.







## Hasištejn – The Rock of Hate

Oh, how many times have I heard groups of tourists wandering around the compact and beautiful ruins of this castle, located not far from the town Kadaň, and heard them happily snickering and garbling its name – hashishtejn, hahaha. But you see, it used to be Hassenstein, i.e., the Rock of Hate. Serious historians tend to throw plenty of facts at you, but leave the name unexplained... The Gothic castle was erected by a monarch or several feudalists, most like in the first decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the intention of protecting the important trade route to Saxony. It was deserted around the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, blah, blah, blah... All maybes – but documented maybes! So what might we find lying on the second bottom...? The story is frightful. As if it weren't enough that the hidden treasure in the cellars is guarded by a giant old man with a gigantic dog, the hate that gave

the castle its name has left traces, too. One of the owners once went off to war leaving his daughter in the care of the chaplain. His daughter, however, instantly fell in love with a knight-errant. Having convinced the chaplain to marry them, her new husband then set off wandering again – and her father returned. So that's how you behave, dear daughter? The father had his daughter walled in alive, the chaplain was mercifully executed, and the father rode his loyal horse into the abyss below the castle.

## Rýzmburk – A Huge Castle with a Frightful Tower

Above the town Osek, a peak rises with forests growing around the ruins of an enormous castle, the most enormous one in the Czech Republic. Even just the ruins are gigantic and will take your breath away. The documented history tells us that the castle was erected by the Hrabšic family in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and we



owe the Osek monastery to the same family. The Rýzmburk Castle also protected the trade route to Saxony, but was deserted already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The castle's large oval tower seems to be suspiciously well preserved. And it hides...something evil. One owner after the other pulled down the footbridge leading to the tower and had the doors bricked up. Why could that be? If you dare spend the night here, you may well hear wailing and terrible groans coming from the tower. During the Hussite wars, 130 Hussites, including women and children, were apparently imprisoned in the tower. They died of thirst and hunger. Every single one. Their souls still suffer and are unable to leave the castle.

# The Mysteries of the Castles in the Ore Mountains

History is like a barrel full of stories. But few people speak about the fact that the barrel has a double bottom. On the first bottom, you'll find plenty of dates, names, architectural styles, and a few anecdotes. The second bottom is hidden. Here, hidden below spider webs, lie the stories full of mysteries and secrets. The stories that haven't been dated and carefully copied into land registers or encyclopaedias. Stories passed from one mouth to another. Let's take a look at five castle ruins in the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) and try to find their second, hidden bottom.



## Růžový castle, Kyšperk, Doubravka – a Magical Trio

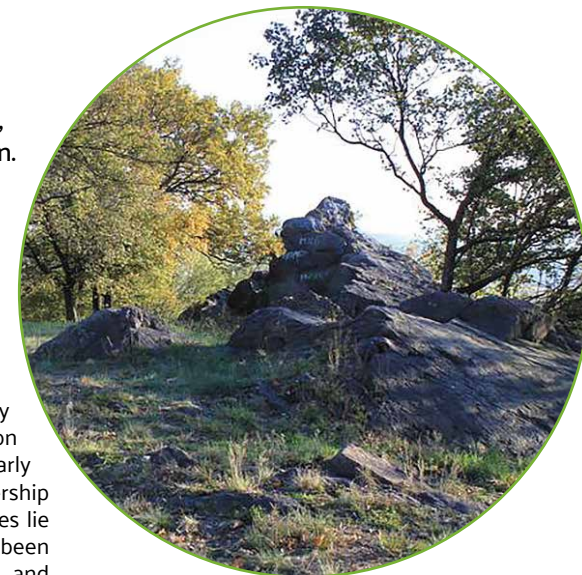
I've left the most wondrous story for last. Three castles and secret underground passages that connect not only the castles, but also human fates and dark magic. Rosenberg or Růžový Castle, also known as Krupka Castle, is the centrepiece of the mining town of Krupka. It was founded by King Wenceslas II sometime around the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. Kyšperk Castle is also called Supí Hora, which means Vulture Hill in English. It was built by John of Bohemia not long after. Doubravka Castle, above the town

Teplice, is the youngest and was built by Jan Illburg of Vřesovice. The first connection between the three castles arises in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century as they all fall under the ownership of Volf of Vřesovice. Today all three castles lie in various stages of ruin. They had all been erected by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and unprecedented and frightening things started occurring.

## The Stone of Death

The Lord of Rosenberg Castle in Krupka had an incredibly beautiful daughter named Donna. Who knows how, but somehow, she fell in love. Inappropriately, of course. And against her father's will. Her chosen one was a young knight who lived at Kyšperk. They met in secret on the cliff opposite the castle; Donna disguised as a nun to avoid being recognized. But her father found out what was happening. He put his daughter in prison and sent his men to kill the knight. One of the men wore a habit with a sword hidden beneath it. As the knight arrived to see his Donna, he rushed towards her, but the girl turned out to be a man with a sword. The knight was suddenly surrounded by hooded men with drawn weapons. But they didn't get him! The young man jumped on his horse and together they disappeared off the cliff into the dark depths below.

Totenstein, the Stone of Death, incorrectly named the Dead Stone (Mrtvý kámen) on maps. When you visit this viewing point, keep in mind that the lovers return once every hundred years, so be careful not to disturb them.



## The Curse of the Elders

Once in a hundred years, strange things happen at Kyšperk, Supí hora (Vulture Hill). The castle returns to its former beauty. Six silent elders appear in six halls, and two more in the dining hall – one in a scarlet, the other in a white cloak with a blood stain on the breast. Whoever enters will enjoy a royal feast, but the elders will merely wait, not speaking a word. If you don't know what you're supposed to do, the elders will turn into vultures and turn the castle back into ruins with a flap of their wings. According to the mining gnomes in Krupka, the elders are waiting to be thanked – but with just the right words. If you find yourself there at the right time, remember: it's either 'Zaplat' Pán Bůh', or maybe 'Gott sei dank' or perhaps even 'Gottlob!'. They are all different ways of saying 'thank God' and one of the three is the correct one, which gives you pretty good odds, doesn't it?

## The Frightening Witch Vela

There is, however, another way of freeing the elders. You have to head to the slopes below Doubravka Castle and pick the enchanted flowers. The catch is that they only bloom every fifty years and must be picked by an innocent young girl. Then you need to find the mighty witch along the castle walls, and hope that she's in a good mood, which doesn't happen too often. She'll then take you to the secret passages we mentioned earlier. Follow the passage to Kyšperk and place a flower on each elder's lap. And you'll be their rescuer!





# A Hop Tour Among Rococo Gems

A vast ocean of hop fields surrounds the town Žatec. If you follow them along the river Ohře, you'll soon find yourself in place so beautiful it takes your breath away. Stekník Castle rises nobly above the luscious greenery that is the antique hop gardens. From a distance, this incredible rococo villa seems to have a thick, pleated skirt, which at a closer look turns out to be the castle's terraced gardens. This part of the hop landscape is absolutely littered with historical attractions. Which is why it is cooperating with the hop town Žatec in the hopes of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## The Most Beautiful Rococo Castle in the Country

Already around the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, there was a village here named Vzteklník. Over the years, the name was mumbled and jumbled and ending up as Stekník. The castle was built during the height of baroque and was rebuilt during the rococo era, gaining its current shape and becoming what many people believe is the Czech Republic's most beautiful rococo castle. During the past decade, the castle has come back to life after standing forgotten

and dilapidated. Now it has regained its beauty. One room after the other has returned from hopelessness to its former beauty, as if by the wave of a magic wand. If you last saw the castle five years ago, you wouldn't recognise it today.

## All Thanks to the Kulháneks

There was once a medieval fortress here, which burned down. The burgher Jan Jiří Kulhánek bought the ruins and rebuilt them into a castle in high baroque style. He was an adept

character, who soon gained a title of nobility becoming a baron, a Freiherr. His grandson, also named Kulhánek but already a count, expanded the castle less than a hundred years later and turned it into a rococo building. He also built the beautiful chapel and ordered an altarpiece from Kryštof Seckel and wall paintings from the Jesuit Ignác Raab. He didn't cut any costs. And the chapel named Visitation of the Virgin Mary (Navštívení Panny Marie) is also one of the highlights on the tour of the castle. But it's far from the only one.

## A Castle that Was Lived in

A completely new tour is now available around the private salons of the Swiss consulate Gerold Déteindre and his family, who owned the family during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You'll see the castle kitchen, the incredible sala terrena, the reception hall right above it, and of course, you won't miss the chapel we mentioned above. The second tour takes you through the southern salons on the ground floor, where there is also an exhibition of historical toys and prams.

## A Garden as a Gift of Love

And now for the garden that caught our eye from afar. The strictly symmetrical baroque staircase leads us from the main sala terrena past all the garden's terraces and parterres. Incredible. And to add to the delight, this is a garden of love. The count Jan František Kulhánek chose his bride so carefully that, despite the common procedure of the time, he fell in love with her.

So much, that instead of a wedding ring, he gave her this garden. So ladies, as you wander through this garden, just imagine your husband doing something similar...

## A Baroque Square and Hops Everywhere

The village Stekník is an interesting place in general. When part of the main square burned down during the baroque era, the baron Kulhánek had it rebuilt and the hop architecture was born – decorative façades and gates all adorned with hop motifs. Stekník has always been one of the most important hop villages in the region. Hops were not only grown and harvested here, but also dried and turned into a noble frothy gold in the small brewery.

## The Hop Tour

Where else other than right here would there be an educational trail named the Hop Tour? This completely new trail is just under five kilometres long and has eight stops – but no messy information boards that would disturb the natural view, just wooden pillars with QR codes. All you need is a smartphone. The trail takes you through the fragrant hop fields and it is similar to wandering among the vineyards in Moravia – the only difference being that the surrounding greenery will be made into a different, but equally blessed, beverage. And you'll learn all about growing hops, both the historical and the contemporary practice, and you'll be amazed by hops' lesser known qualities. Did you know that it works as an antiseptic? That is has proven anticancer properties and that some of its substances have a rather strong calming effect? No? Or that it's closely related to cannabis? And just like humans, its children – the hop cones – are born by women, i.e., found only on female plants?

## A Miraculous Spring and a Protected Pill

The educational trail named the Hop Tour is far from the only trail you can follow around Stekník. There is also a historical trail. This takes you past the stunning and very picturesque baroque granary to a replica of the historical trellised hop garden and a mineral spring that is said to have miraculous effects. Count Jan František Kulhánek erected a chapel by the spring, and the picturesque ruins remain to this day. The trail also leads past one of many pillboxes, light fortified objects, often incorrectly called bunkers. You'll learn a lot about building a defensive line of fortifications and the specifics of the local area on this trail. And one of the pillboxes is actually part

## Go Now to Avoid the Crowds!

A final recommendation for you: don't hesitate and visit Stekník sooner rather than later. The journey to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site is no sprint, but it is successful – and it is firmly believed that it will be – the crowds will come flocking. And as loyal readers of the Gate know, being able to enjoy some space and privacy on a trip makes the experience deeper and all the more intense.

[www.zamek-steknik.cz](http://www.zamek-steknik.cz)  
[cestouchmele.chizatec.cz](http://cestouchmele.chizatec.cz)



of the castle gardens and thus protected as a Czech cultural monument.





# Criss-Crossing the Country by Bike the Czech Central Highlands

It's hard to imagine a more perfect landscape for cycling that the variegated and rugged Czech Central Highlands (České středohoří). You can cycle along the beautiful Elbe practically without any incline at all, but you can also climb the hills, though you won't find any of those kilometre-long 'walls' such as those in the Alps. The highest peak, Milešovka, is just 837 metres above sea level and the bank of the Elbe lies a devilish, but manageable, 666 metres below it. It's a great place to go cycling with kids, but also a great place to enjoy the adrenaline as you rush down the off-road slopes. But whoever you go cycling with and whatever your goal is, you can be sure that not much will measure up to this.



## The Elbe Cycle Route, Fun and Charming

People have travelled along rivers since time immemorial. It's in our genes. And cycling along the Elbe surrounded by the beautiful riverbanks, slopes, hills, vineyards, historical towns and finally even steep rock walls is a delight for any bike gourmet. The Elbe Cycle Route takes its start 20 kilometres from the river's source and ends at its mouth. On the German side of the border it listens to the name Elberadweg. The section within

the Ústí Region measures 96 kilometres, and it's worth every single one.

## More than Just the Route Itself

New, clear markings have recently been placed along the Elbe Cycle Route, and there are thirty detour boards and 18 information boards, so you'll not only know where you are and what's worth seeing nearby, but also where to stay, eat and drink... Children and fun-loving parents will also find three stops with fun and games. The cycle route takes you from

the flat landscape around the town Roudnice to the heart of the Czech Central Highlands, through the **Gate of Bohemia** and, just before it reaches the national border, to the **Elbe Canyon** guarded by the rocky wonders of Bohemian Switzerland (České Švýcarsko).

## Finalizing the Cycle Route

Families with children will most likely prefer the route along the Elbe, which is exclusively a cycle path most of the way. And this year, more sections are being added increasing the number of trips available for families with children. In the autumn of 2019, a new four

kilometre section of the Elbe Cycle Route opened between the villages Dobříň and Račice. This year, the terrain between the villages Račice and Hněvice will be renovated and improved, and next up is the terrain from Třeboutice to Křešice and Nučnice. And if all goes to plan, 2021 will be the year the entire section in the Ústí Region will be completed.

## Alternative Routes

In the Ústí Region, the Elbe Cycle Route also has two alternative routes. They are both marked as cycle route **2A** and take you to several interesting places. The first alternative route pops up on the left-hand bank and connects the towns Roudnice nad Labem and Litoměřice. It partly runs along roads and takes you to e.g. the **fortress town Terezín** or the secluded **church of St Catherine of Alexandria** (kostel sv. Kateřiny Alexandrijské), right on the riverbank not far from the village Libotenice. The second route makes use of the Elbe ferries: the first ferry takes you over to the town Lovosice, where you'll surely want to stop

at the new **viewing point U Zámečku** before heading to the village **Malé Žernoseky**, where you can catch the ferry back to the Gate to Bohemia and the main cycle route.

## Amazing Detours

You could say, that the detours are the spice of the Elbe Cycle Route. You can follow route 25 through the valley **Oparenské údolí** all

the way to the foot of the hill **Lovoš** and the village **Oparno**, which will impress you with its **romantic ruins** of the castle by the same name. More serious cyclists can continue even further past the famed 'smoking' hill **Boreč**, below the ruins of the castles **Košťálov**, **Skalka** or **Oltářík** all the way to the peak **Hradišťany**, the second highest peak in the Czech Central Highlands at a height of 600 metres above sea level. About as demanding, but more suited for mountain bikes, are the detours around the town Litoměřice. The most popular route here is number 3057. It starts in the village **Libochovany** and soon takes a steep climb. It passes the **viewing point Tři Kříže** (three crosses), then continues to the **castle ruins Kamýk**. Next up is **Plešivec**, a hill shrouded in mystery and definitely worth a visit, and then it's through the village Hlinná and on to the signpost below the hill **Varhošť**. Up next is the highest point along this route below the peak **Babinský Vrch**, and finally back down, past the hill **Dlouhý Vrch** and the incredible **castle in Ploskovice**.







## Serious Competition

For those with a mountain bike, it's possible to partake in various competitions near the town Litoměřice. The best opportunity is the annual **Czech Central Highlands MTB Tour**, a bike marathon open to the wide public. What does 'wide public' mean? Well – anyone. Everybody can find the right route for them, and what makes this competition unique is that you can switch from a longer to a shorter route during the competition and still be in the running for a medal! The routes tend to be between 45 and 85 kilometres long, but there are also competitive routes for children or handbikes.

## Cycle Routes Through the Home of Bohemian Garnet

Cycling through the region where Bohemian garnet, fossilized beads of pigeon blood, has been found for centuries is a pleasant experience for almost any cyclist. Choose cycle route 3118 from the town **Lovosice**, along the famous **Plum Track**

(Švestková dráha), through Třebenice with a **Bohemian Garnet Museum**, an exhibition named the **Castles of the Czech Central Highlands** and a picturesque **chocolate shop (Čokolatérie)**. On then to Třebívlice, where you can stop at the fabulous **castle vineyard Johann W** or the **exhibition about Ulrike von Levetzow**, the poet Goethe's romantic girlfriend, who is buried at the local cemetery. And by the way – if you want to spice the trip up a bit, hop on the train on the Plum Track for



a couple of stations.. Another cycle route in this area is number 3119. This route diverts from the previous route in the village Lkáň and leads you below the iconic **castle Hazmburk**, through the village Slatina to the village Libochovice and right up to the beautiful baroque **castle** with an English park.

## Along the River Ohře back to the Elbe

In the village Libochovice, we come across another river that keeps the fields and meadows of the Czech Central Highlands saturated. We've reached the river Ohře.



Simply ride across the bridge and cycle route 3119 flows into the Ohře Cycle Route, marked by the number 6. This route takes us along the Small Ohře (Malá Ohře), an 8.5 kilometre long artificially created canal that used to feed water to the local water mill. Along the way, I highly recommend you stop at the village **Kostelec nad Ohří** and the estate **Perlová Voda**, which is exceedingly open to cyclists and the makes wonderful food and equally wonderful beer! And don't miss the **water castle with an alchemist's workshop** as you pass **Budyně nad Ohří**. The cycle route then leads us on through the venerable village **Doksany** with a **Premonstratensian monastery** complex, and then through Bohušovice and the fortress town **Terezín** before taking us to Litoměřice and the arms of the Elbe Cycle Route.

## A Little Help Never Hurts

It's far from just lazy cyclists who utilize the Czech Central Highland **bike buses** in the summer. This helping hand comes in handy even for more dedicated cyclists; the Czech Central Highlands are vast and being transported a bit closer to your starting point means more time to see what you came for. Plus – the bike buses can be used even if you haven't got a bike with you. The main boarding stations are the bus stations in Litoměřice and Roudnice nad Labem and they stop at Velemin – pod Milešovkou, Bílý Újezd – pod Kletečnou, Lovečkovice and Mukařov (on the Veneřice plateau). The bike buses take you directly to the best attractions on both sides of the Elbe throughout the Czech Central Highlands. By the way – you'll find the current time table on [www.stredohori.cz](http://www.stredohori.cz).

## Openings and Closings

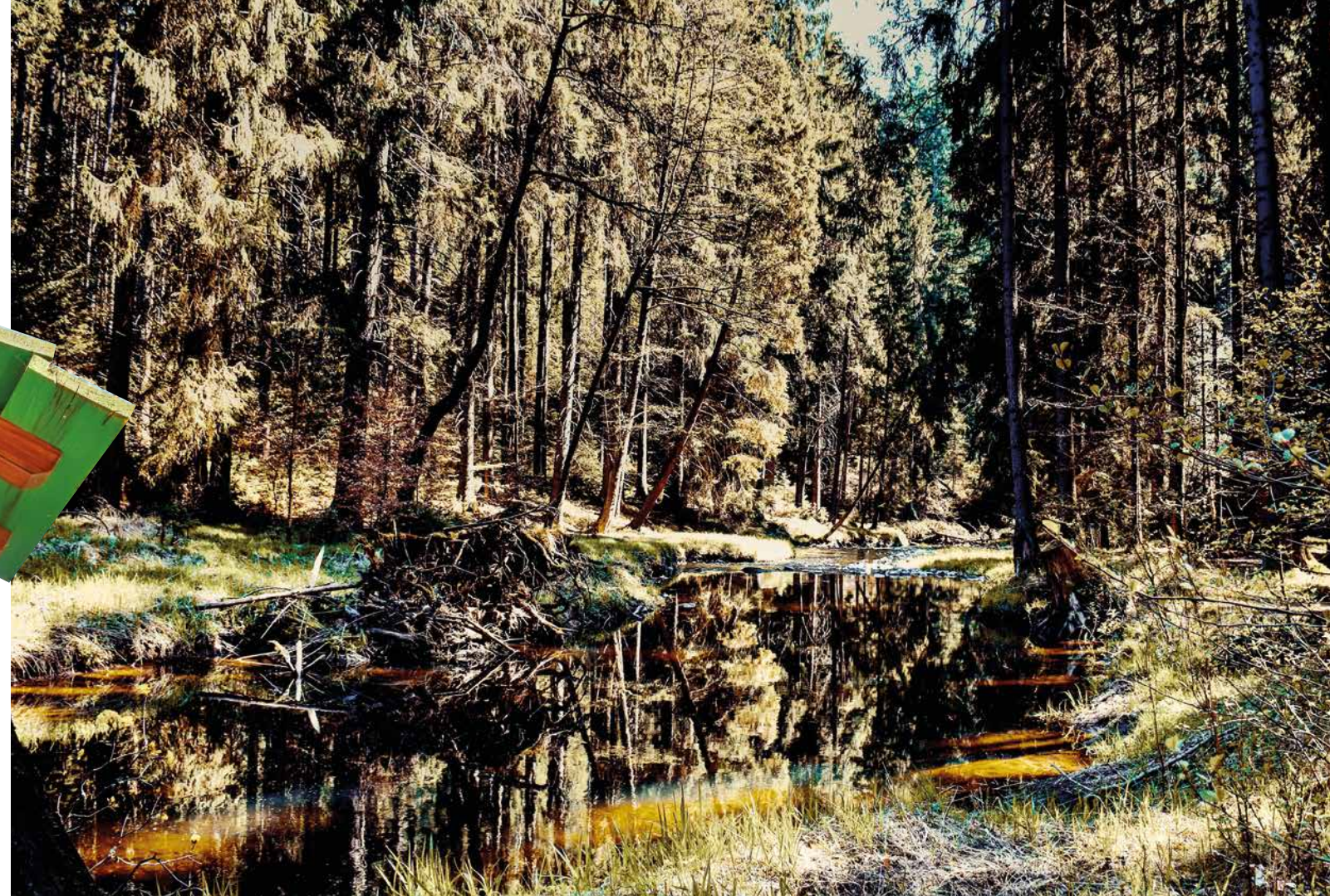
The destination management company České středohoří organises two regular events each year. They both take place on the Elbe Cycle Route and are organised in cooperation with the larger towns along the Elbe. It's like this you see, every serious cycle route should open and close on time and with proper pomp and circumstance. Symbolically, anyway, the route is open all year round. Once the riverbanks start drying up, the **Elbe Cycle Route Spring Opening** occurs. Last year it took place in the towns Litoměřice, Ústí nad Labem and Děčín. The opening of course includes a short ride that symbolically starts the tourist season. It is a very popular event with a rich programme. Then once the winds start beating the surface of the Elbe and the rain becomes more frequent and more obtrusive, it's time for the **Elbe Cycle Route Autumn Closing**. And although the cycle route doesn't close, every cyclist is given the opportunity to actually close a beautiful lock with the Elbe key!





# A Quiet and Beautiful Valley Leading to a Carved Path

Almost anyone who loves Bohemian Switzerland (České Švýcarsko) is familiar with the area Jetřichovice. The viewing points, the former mill Dolský mlýn, Falkenštejn Castle... Sure, but there's another route that not everybody knows, and if you come here in spring or autumn, it is quite likely that you'll be the only one here. And that's a very rare luxury in this region so full of experiences. Where am I taking you? To the valley Pavlino Údolí



## Following Pavlínka Around the Pond

Right away, a charming little sign tempts us to take a short detour. I advise you to do so as this little loop, known as Pavlínka, leads you to a tall massive rock that you will float through like a magic witch. Lokes aside, you'll be led through a carved tunnel, which once was a mill race that led water to the mill wheel that belonged to another Mr Griesel. The tunnel once used to have half-metre deep stream running through it, but you'll pass through without wetting your feet. Next up, the painted fish markings will guide you pass an idyllic pond. At the cave Rusalčina Jeskyně, you'll cross the water on a simple bridge and then through the gate back to the Valley Pavlino Údolí. Where did the valley get its name? Well, at one point a Mr Josef Müller bought the mill and turned it into a thread mill, and his wife Pauline enjoyed wandering upstream through the valley. Let's follow in her footsteps.

## The Curly Fairy's Rapids

Several little bridges cross the stream, and when it floods, they are given quite a beating, despite constantly being made sturdier. The valley starts off wide with forested slopes all around and a path that runs back and forth across the bridges from one bank to the other. As you walk with a bowed head letting your entire

body absorb the calm and the quiet trickle of the water, keep in mind that even this fragile fairy can turn into a violent beast. A few years ago, I saw huge beams rolled into balls and metal girders ripped out of metre thick layers of concrete. Who would've thought...

## Kingfishers and Chamois

Then the valley starts closing in and rock walls are exposed on the slopes. But the stream guards its bed and glimmers against the roof of green leaves. The rocky guards protecting us up on the slopes become more monumental every fifty metres. It is so beautiful here. And full of life! In the spring, oceans of corydalis flowers can be seen, and throughout the season plenty of flowers, including rare ones can be spotted here. You may also catch sight of kingfishers, trout, dippers, and even otters apparently live here. Every now and then, a black stork flies through the valley, and a flock of chamois come down off the slope Studenec to drink here.



## Up to the Village Rynartice

At one point, the path hops up the slope and a rocky terrace leads you along the steep bank and then back down to the riverbank, where you are watched over by large, sullen giants of rock. The calm water soothes your soul. Man was made to wander along rivers. And then suddenly it ends as the valley forks. In one direction it passes the chapel Johnova Kaple and ends in the village Studený, in the other direction it follows the wild ravine to the village Chřibská. But we'll climb the slope straight up to a wonderful meadow, behind which the houses of the village Rynartice stand.

## From Dwarfs to the Rock Road

Now it's time to concentrate as we leave the kind assistance of the trail markings behind us. We reach the road... Oh and if you don't know the famous Trpasličí Skála, which means Dwarf Rock, with the seven dwarfs and a portrait of the woman who was saved from being stuck in a crevice (no, it wasn't Snow White but the homeless widow Ritschelová), it's worth leaving the road and taking a few steps down into the ravine. Once you've had a good look, come back up and follow the winding road that slopes slightly upwards between the cottages and chalets. Just behind them, what starts off as an idyllic forest path soon changes into something else completely. The low rocks look as though they have been worked by human hands. This notion increases, until suddenly you

stand before one of the wonders of Bohemian Switzerland (České Švýcarsko), a wonder that is completely unknown to most tourists: The Rock Road, also known as the Carved Road (Kamenná Cesta/Tesaná Cesta). Its origin can still not be fully explained until this day.

## The Mysterious Huhln

Saint John of Nepomuk (painted by Mr Miroslav Hejný from Varnsdorf) guards this remarkable corridor reminiscent of a bobsleigh track. There are numerous theories. One is that the track was carved by the wheels of the wheelbarrows that weavers used to transport their goods. But that doesn't seem likely. Perhaps if wagons had come this way – but it's too narrow for that. Could it have been a groove for wood with the middle furrow created by horse hooves? I'd like to see any horse that is able to create a furrow like that when it walks. The Steinweg, colloquially known as Huhln (from the word Hohlweg, ravine) is simply a mystery. As you duck-walk along it, try to think up your own fabulous and unique theory as to how and why this path arose.

## Along the Dragon's Back

And the path doesn't get any less beautiful. It has been evened out in order to breach the saddle between the rocky ridges as easily as possible. It looks like a dragon's back surrounded by tree trunks and the walk along it is equally beautiful at any time of year. Then the path folds over leading us down across a meadow and through some cottages back to the large cross, Grieselův Kříž. It's quite possible that this is what heaven looks like.



## From Cross to Cross

Every journey should have a clear starting and ending point. On this expedition, those points are made up of the large cross Grieselův Kříž nad Jetřichovicemi, which is situated by the road towards Všemily at a place that used to be called Lindicht. The local farmer Josef Griesel erected the cross back in 1799. The cross has been thoroughly renovated and now shines as brightly as though erected just yesterday. From here, we can follow the red trail marking that takes us to the Jetřichovice swimming pool on the bank of the river Chřibská Kamenice, which will be our faithful guide for a good half of this seven kilometre long loop.





# Above the Valley Like a Bird

Since time immemorial, man has longed to fly like a bird, if even just for a moment. Perhaps you've watched children zip along the lines at a children's adventure park, watched the kind force of gravity transport them above the ground, and let your mind wander and said to yourself: if only there was a huge zip line, say, across an entire valley, that would be...

Well, one is already in the making. Klíny is home to the Ore Mountain sport centre for summer and winter sports and will soon be home to the longest Czech zip line. And it's going to be extraordinary!

## Zippering Across the Valley

Try to picture it. You are fastened to a full-body harness, which is attached to a pulley hung on an incredibly long cable. You take off – and fly. At times you fly an incredible 140 metres above the ground at a speed of 80 km/h and you have two kilometres ahead of you. Below you, the river Bílá wriggles its way along the bottom of the valley Šumný důl as you head towards the opposite slope. Just a moment ago you were at the starting tower, the zip line's upper station, and now you are flying above the ground as skiers gracefully zigzag their way down the slopes below you, or perhaps the bobsleigh track or some cyclists pop into view, or some lightly dressed tourists rush downhill on scooters. This flight can be executed in winter and summer alike.

## A Two Kilometre Flight

The zip line is not fully tense, but it has a slack of just three percent, so the speed you go at will depend on your weight. Once you start slowing down, the pulley's electric motor kicks in and gracefully transports you all the way to the transfer station on the opposite hill. This first stage is about 1,300 metres long and the electric motor only helps you out for the last 100 metres or so. Then you transfer to the next zip line and

set off again; this time downwards to the lower station. All in all, the zip line is two kilometres long, which makes it by far the longest zip line in the Czech Republic (many others are only about 200 metres long), and the twentieth longest zip

line in the world! And if you take a closer look at some of the domestic competition, you could easily say that this will be the first 'real' zip line in the Czech Republic.

## Where Did It Come From?

It all started when Alena Dalecká, the manager at ZIMLET Klíny, which is in charge of various sports and entertainment, including day camps for children, went on holiday to Costa Rica. And there were zip lines – or tirolin in Spanish – everywhere. As if it were their national sport. The girls courageously gave it a go and came home wide-eyed – we need one of those at Klíny too! Quite frankly, there are plenty of people who get all excited about something and go on and on about it, but nothing ever comes of it... But that's not how it works at Klíny. When someone says something here, it happens. Their slogan is that obstacles are not made to put us off, but to be overcome. And so they started looking for a company able to build a zip line. A suitable company was found in Italy, and they even have a patented electric pulley. Next up, they needed funding. So the project was put on the Czech crowdfunding platform HITHIT – and not surprisingly, over 600,000 Czech crowns were raised by enthusiastic supporters.



## When Will It Open?

What's next? Although the towers that the cables will be attached to aren't very big (the transfer tower will only be about four by four metres), getting a building permit and arranging all the other bureaucracy won't be easy. If everything goes smoothly, we'll be able to have a go this season. And if not... Well, let's not be pessimists. When Klíny decided it wanted to have a sports hall with a climbing wall, it built one. A high-rope park? Kites? Fatboy bikes? A snow park? Snowcat rides? A sledging track? Perfectly tended cross-country tracks that connect to the ones in Germany? Wellness facilities? A bike park for bikes and scooters? A unique summer bobsleigh track? A multi-functional sports ground with lights? They've got it all, and the visitors are delighted.

They even built their own brewery! And I have to say that the local beer, with the same name as the pleasant hotel and top-class restaurant Emeran, is so good that it's worth coming here just to taste it.

## Pick a Date – and Fly!

It always starts with a daydream, like in the case of this zip line. But here you can count on projects being finished and dreams



coming true. Let's get back to the zip line and try to imagine the whirring noise... The interest has been huge ever since the project was first mentioned. It's clear that not everyone will be able to just show up for a spontaneous ride. So it will be possible to book a time in advance.

The capacity will be about twenty people an hour – and no one enjoys standing in endless queues. The solution is to book in advance – for you and your child even as tandem rides will be possible – then simply show up and go. Experience from other European countries shows that similar zip lines are booked for up to three months in advance. So not a spur of the moment kind of experience, but a thoroughly planned one.

## Keep Your Fingers Crossed!

If Klíny's zip line project caught your fancy, keep your fingers crossed that everything goes well so that you can fly above the valley in the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) this summer. It is hard to estimate if the Corona situation will complicate things and delay the project, but once

the tourist season starts, come see for yourself how far things have come. And although there is a Czech word for zip line, you can rest assured that even in Czech, the word zip line is the most commonly used, so no chance you won't be understood if asking for directions.





# Wogastisburg Has Been Found! Twice even...

Czechs love history, which is great. But sometimes historians give them a distrust of anything that isn't clearly documented and supported. But the further into history you delve, the harder it is to find evidence. And so historians' sentences are packed with innumerable 'maybes' and 'in all likelihoods', and they are willing to fight their colleagues at the next table to the very end to defend these sentences. And most Czechs do the same. The rest of the world is different. Just look at how many of King Arthur's Camelots there are in the United Kingdom. And nobody minds – the tourists flock to them all.

## A Change in Attitude

In other words – with the Czech attitude, Wogastisburg, i.e., the location of the famous battle where the Slavs first kicked the Franks' arses, will never be found. But let's take a broader view and enjoy the mystery. Let's forget about pursuing a spring that has long run dry because the only source regarding the Battle of Wogastisburg is from a chronicle. And the original chronicle hasn't been preserved, only copies, and you can just imagine what kind of things may happen while copying a document like that...

## A Thousand Kilometres of Puzzlement

It's delightful how many theories there are regarding the exact location of Wogastisburg. Tens of them! Historians are searching along a line that is almost a thousand kilometres long, from Bavaria to Slovakia, and it spreads fairly far north and south as well. Nevertheless, where the battle actually took place is still

unknown... Well, it was unknown. If you ask Jan Losenický, the deputy mayor of Kadaň, or Radek Reindl, the mayor of Podbořany, you'll be firmly reassured, that Wogastisburg has recently been discovered. The inhabitants of Kadaň are quite sure that it is Úhošť, a beautiful and dominant tableland that rises above the town on the right bank of the river Ohře.

In Podbořany, they'll but their right arm, that it is the hill Rubín near the village Dolánky, about ten kilometres away from the Ohře. Both hills are about 18 kilometres apart as the bird flies.



## Wogastisburg Is in the Poohří. And That's That.

Hooray! There was a fortress on Rubín and Úhošť was the forefield. Or was it the other way around? It doesn't matter – the main thing is that the battle was fought near the river Ohře, which is perfectly logical and I don't know why it hasn't been agreed upon much sooner. Logically, the Frankish army and horses must have advanced along rivers. They would hardly risk the adventure of searching for water in unknown terrain. So they followed the Main and then the Ohře. Settled. Whereas King Sámó and his army left their residence somewhere in Moravia and set off to meet their enemy. And now we know where.

## One Wogastisburg Is Not Enough

And since we decided to be generous and open-minded, let's agree that there are two Wogastisburgs. And then everyone can choose which one they prefer. Because homo turisticus is increasingly spoilt and greedy and expects to be taken to interesting and beautiful places, preferably exceptionally photogenic ones that have recently been shared by their friends on social media. And once they get here, they want to be entertained and amazed by incredible views and unique exhibitions. And whether or not it is all documented and proven is a minor matter.

## The Germans Cracked It Long Ago

Let's take a look at our dear neighbours in Lower Saxony. Their first victorious battle took place in the Teutoburg Forest. It was here that the Germanic people first defeated the Romans. And nobody knew, where this forest may be situated. And at some point, someone said that it must be that forest in the German Central Uplands. And so it was. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this forest was simply renamed Teutoburg Forest and two hundred

years later, a statue of General Hermann was erected. Including the plinth, it's the tallest statue in Europe and is greatly popular among tourists to this day. Another hundred years later, an archaeological excavation indicated that the aforementioned forest was more likely located a hundred kilometres further north, near Osnabrück. An archaeological museum was built there and now welcomes thousands of visitors from all over the country as well as abroad, including families and school trips. And so the Germans have two Teutoburg Forests. And the tourists happily visit them both.

## Will We Have Two Modern Exhibitions?

In the interest of a positive world view, meaningful entertainment and the Czech sense of humour, let's have the encyclopaedias note that there are two Wogastisburgs – Úhošť and Rubín. In about eleven years, the famous battle will celebrate its 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Teams of enthusiasts are already working on a reconstruction and you can be sure that it will be a Europe-wide sensation, because battles from this era are hardly ever reconstructed. The script is already under way and it has three acts – the assault on Frankish merchants, the receipt of Dagobert's messenger with a complaint and its refusal by Sámó, and finally the battle itself. So why not build two entertaining archaeological parks full of experiences while we're at it? Poor old Sámó

only has a mere two statues in Moravia and not a single one in Bohemia. And yet he is quite likely the most famous Czech hero – pupils have always learnt about him at school irrespective of the current regime. He deserves a modern, interactive exhibition that would attract tourists from all over Europe.

## Mysterious Úhošť

It's still worth visiting both hills even before anything like that has been created, because the views themselves are a great experience. From the magical tableland Úhošť, the view is just fabulous. It is the first major hill in the Doupov Mountains (593 m.a.s.l.) and nobody was allowed up here until 1990 as it was military land. The area was inhabited from the Neolithic Age and the last settlement was deserted as the German inhabitants were expelled following the end of the WWII. It really is a beautiful place and can be reached by following the red trail markings from Kadaň.

## Magical Rubín

The flat peak Rubín is lower (352 m.a.s.l.), but the view from here is also remarkable, and it is only made better by the new lookout tower built to resemble a Slavic fortress. There once was a Slavic fortress here, and archaeological excavations show that the area was inhabited already during the early Stone Age. You can reach Rubín by following the unmarked trail that turns off cycle route 3080, or by following the unmarked path from the village Dolánky.







# Lipová, Village of the Year!

In the 25 years that the competition Village of the Year has existed, only two villages in the Ústí Region have managed to reach the top rung. Jiřetín pod Jedlovou won in 1998, and twenty-one years later, Lipová. The village has 600 inhabitants and is situated in the northernmost corner of the country, in the heart of the raw beauty of the Czech lowlands. I'm here to convince you why it's worth a visit.

## A Good Place to Live

If you really want to understand the soul of the Czech lowlands (Českého Nizozemí) – the pensive, undulating region in the very north of the Czech Republic – Lipová is the place to go. This region is both typical and yet unique for the local landscape. The northernmost part of the Šluknov Hook (Šluknovský výběžek) has never been the centre of attention and life here is not easy. And yet, I can honestly say that life in Lipová is good.



## New Traditions in an Uprooted Region

Lipová is an attractive place for both tourists and those who live here. And, after all, that is the essence of the competition Village of the Year – not just to assess how attractive the village is to tourists, but to applaud villages with an active and committed community that knows how to have fun. Upholding traditions usually plays an important part, too. And that's a bit of a problem in Sudetenland. The inhabitants here are only third-generation settlers. The post-war development severed traditions that were several hundred years old without bringing any new ones. Yet Lipová does have some traditions of its own. Just take a walk around the area and you'll see that it is full of wooden statues. And this natural gallery hardly popped up overnight. For over ten years, Lipová has organised a competition for the best wooden statues, and it also annually hosts popular market and craft fair.

## A Timbered House at the Heart

Let's start off viewing the village as tourists. The heart of the village is a wonderfully renovated timbered house, which was built by the local settler Zacharias Hoffman, the most significant baroque builder far and wide. Today, the building houses a gallery, a museum, areas for social and cultural events, and the information centre, which is open seven days a week all year round. The village's sacred gem is the wonderful baroque church of St Simon and Jude (kostel sv. Šimona a Judy), which has been thoroughly and generously renovated. The church still serves its original purpose, but it is also used for community events. There's even an interesting exhibition down in the church's cellar. And I definitely recommend taking a good look at the statue of the praying angel above the main altar. It is a wonderful piece created by the court sculptor of the Kingdom of Saxony, the Czech German Franz Pettrich. At the info centre, you will happily be equipped with the key to the completely renovated chapel in the nearby village Liščí, as well as a map that guides you along a trail that



is popular among the local inhabitants. The trail leads you past twenty small sacred objects that have been repaired – crosses, images, statues, and also several legacy trees. The greenery is the pride and glory of Lipová, and the incredible linden alley and several other revitalised trees bring the village to life.

## A Castle and Beaver Trail Rise from the Ashes

The complex renovation of the village's centrepiece, the Salm Castle, has just begun. The charming baroque castle gardens have already been brought into a suitable condition for it to become a natural place for games and a meeting ground for locals and visitors alike. On the other side of the castle lies the glittering surface of the pond Zámecký Rybník. Beyond the dam, you can head up the hill Jáchym, where the stations of the cross have been renovated and there are plans to renovate the chapel of St Joachim as well. But let's stay down by the dam a bit longer and explore the surroundings and the newly erected educational trail. The seven boards along the trail provide information about the local fauna and flora. You'll also get to see bright white water lilies and fragile marsh calla, get to drink from the well Dědova Studánka

(Granddad's Well), and most importantly – you'll get to see a building site that belongs to the local beavers. And with a little luck, you might catch sight of one of its inhabitants. There is also a beautiful track around the pond Sohlandský Rybník, and you can roller skate or cycle your way along it all the way to the border crossing for cyclists and pedestrians.

## An Active Community!

So what is living in Lipová like? Natural, active and happy. The local community is constantly up to something – which can hardly be taken for granted in Czech villages. Lipová's main asset is that it manages to involve people of all ages, descent and interest. The pensioners take care of the greenery and flowers, clean up before events, bake, cook and organise the Old Wives' Ball and Senior Day. You'll see them everywhere, and they are clearly not about to give up their lives and fade away in front of the television. The children are just as active. They put on plays, dance, recite poetry, have a punk band, help out at events, make Christmas gifts... What's really great is the village's cooperation with the Šluknov regional charity, which is able to offer a helping hand beyond the village's reach, for example by

providing professional consultancy or helping people find work – even across the border in Germany. Sports are also a part of life, especially football. There's something going on in Lipová every fortnight. And there are plenty of towns even that can't live up to that.

## The Consequences of Winning

Winning Village of the Year isn't always just fun and games, though. It can sometimes be a double-edged sword. In the Czech Republic due to grudges, hate or jealousy. But in Lipová, the experience has been quite the opposite. As the village was preparing to ceremoniously receive the title, the mayors of two nearby villages got in touch to offer up their help. Over a hundred volunteers helped organise the event, and the atmosphere was elevated – the joy and emotion even caught up with those who previously hadn't been too involved... Just imagine what a simple award can lead to. Lipová was already an active community, but the award put even more wind in their sails. In a region where plenty of people whinge and throw up their hands, an area that looks like the middle of nowhere in comparison to Prague, the inhabitants of Lipová live with gusto and skill. So there you go... Come and see it for yourself. The village, the people, the sights and the wonderful nature will all welcome you with open arms.





# Top Tourist Tips in the Ore Mountains

Tourists are often spoilt. And rather picky. To simply write 'Come here, it's beautiful!' on a piece of paper is no longer enough. And so every true tourist destination tries to constantly offer something new, something original, something that homo turisticus can't experience elsewhere. The Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) is no exception. The mountains' long-standing advantage is that they are equally attractive every day of the year. The season never ends and it is now supported by several new attractions. And tourists can even vote which one is to be named the TOP attraction. Last year, eleven new attractions that came into being in 2018 were up for the title. Let's start by introducing the contestants to make things more exciting, and see if you can guess who the winner was. We'll let you know at the end.

## Viewing Point at the Ledvice Electrical Power Station

The highest lookout tower in the country (144 metres) appeared on top of the country's highest industrial construction, which is also the most modern electrical power station in Central Europe. Quite the start for the top list. And that's not all – from up here, you can see the Czech Republic's lowest situated area down at the bottom of the Bílina mine, and the largest phonolite structure in Central Europe – the 'devil's hill' Bořeň – is right in front of your eyes.

## The Deserted Mining Areas Lom and Loučná

This educational trail with fifteen stops is eleven kilometres long. What is there to see? Mainly the deserted mine workings, such as the mines Eugen, Johann, Anna, Theodor and

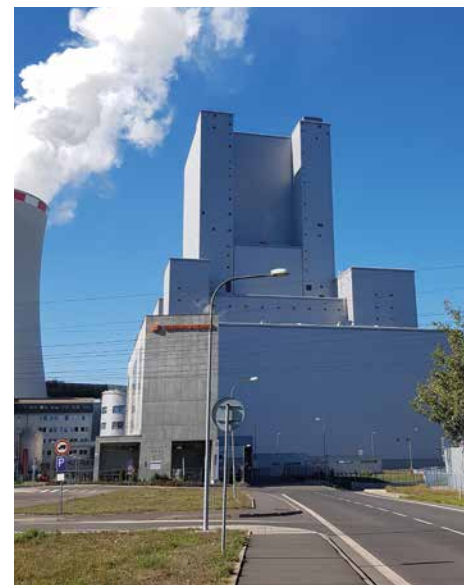
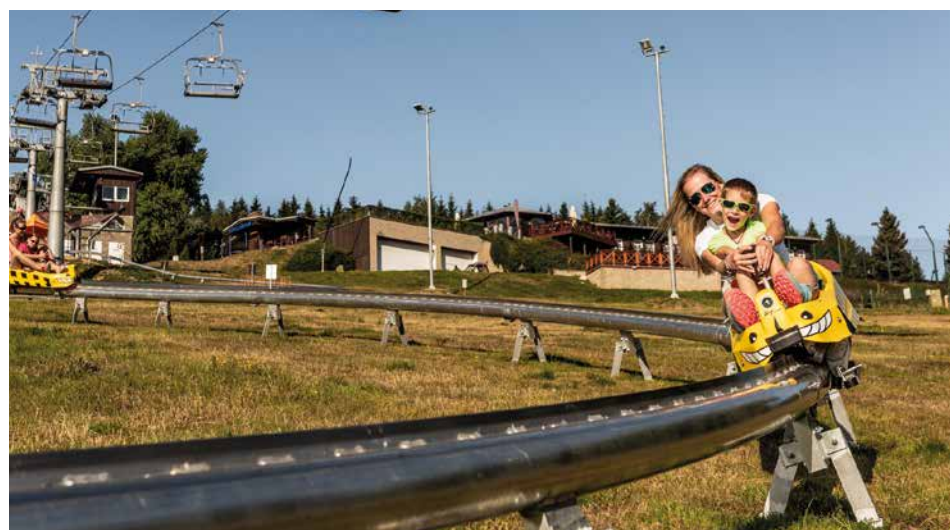
Guttmann, but also three mining villages and three ventilation brattices.

## The Coal Trail – Mining Up Close

Offroadsafari offers unusual trips in terrain vehicles. The tour guide provides insightful and fascinating explanations about everything you can see on the other side of the car window and you'll also stop off at various places in the terrain. Their newest tour takes you right up close to see enormous diggers at work, and you can get out and watch the ongoing mining and see with your own eyes how quickly the landscape is recultivated. This really is an experience you won't find elsewhere.

## The Bobsleigh Track in Klíny

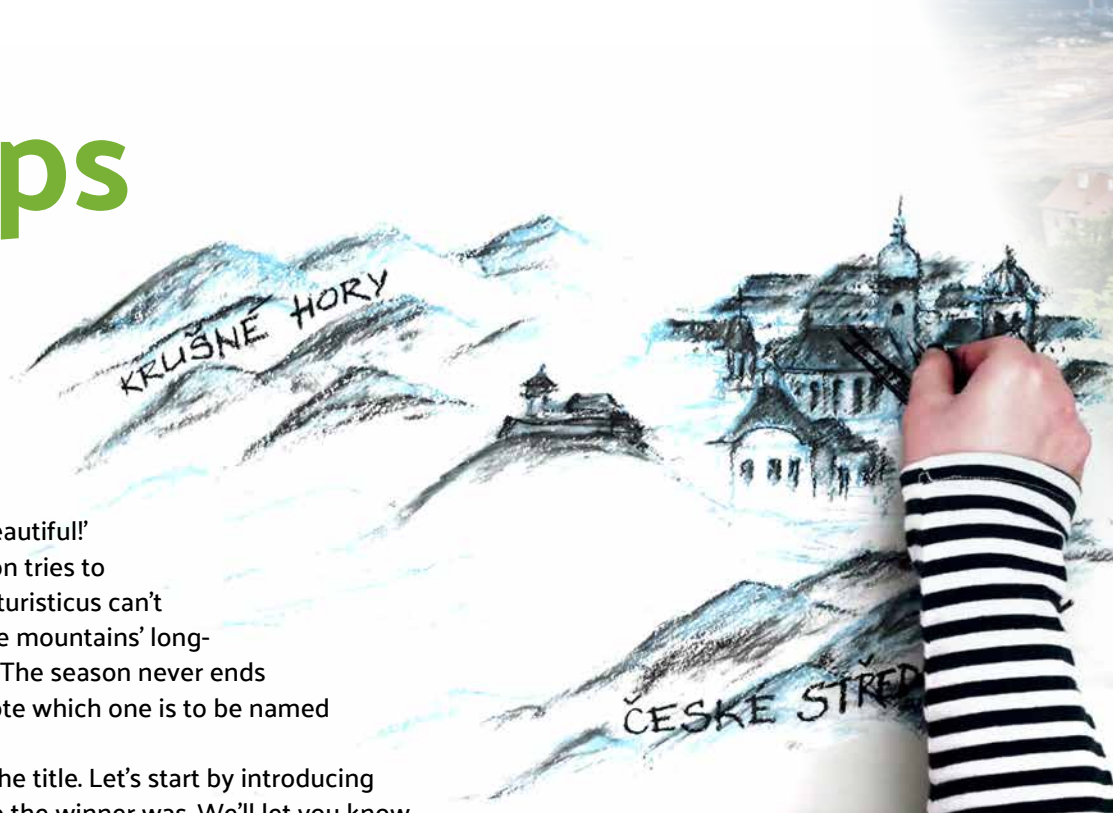
The winding bobsleigh track consists of a kilometre long pipe with bobsleighs attached on top. The bobsleigh only has one seat, but



two seatbelts; children up to eight can ride with their parents, and the smallest are provided with booster seats. It's fourteen bends, a maximum speed of 45 km/h, the opportunity to pull or release the break, three minutes of adrenaline and then the chairlift back up for another ride!

## Barbora Cottage in Český Jiřetín

In the village Horní Ves above Český Jiřetín, situated in the picturesque landscape of the national park Loučenská Vrchovina, the hospitable cottage Barbora will welcome you with open arms. You can relax or do sports here in summer and winter alike, and the luxurious crystal clear air is free. Ski slopes, cross country tracks and bike tracks are all within reach. You'll find a nice restaurant, a pool, a covered fireplace – and most importantly divine serenity.



## Craft and Creative Workshops at the Waldstein Castle in Litvínov

The incredible baroque Waldstein Castle in Litvínov offers very interesting and popular thematic exhibitions. Now they have also started offering family workshops, which are mostly run by interesting people from the creative and handicraft trades. All kinds of things are created here, but the most important part is to enjoy yourself and try something new.

## The Information and Tourist Centre in Krupka in the Ore Mountain Mining Region

Krupka's information centre is proof that the town was ready to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site even before the nomination was solemnly admitted. It is situated in a historical building, which was in a dilapidated state, right in the heart of the town. The renovation

made sure to preserve the old façades, and the building is now a multifunctional centre that includes an information centre, a gallery with an exhibition of the mining traditions in the region, and also areas that can be used for conferences and educational activities.

## Thermalium Teplice

Thermalium is a new healing and relaxing centre with thermal springs. The spring Pravčická has thus been made accessible in a completely new way. The pool's surface is 420 m<sup>2</sup>, which gives the impression of it being never-ending. The water temperature in the main spa is 35°C, whereas the smaller spa is 3°C 'cooler'. In addition to this, Thermalium houses hydrotherapy (Kneippův chodník, several kinds of saunas and a relaxing garden on the roof. The spring Pravčická is a pillar in physiotherapy, one of the best in the world, and at Thermalium, you can become a part of it.

And the winner? Tamtadada... Thermalium! The competition is open for new contestants this year, and you can vote for which new Ore Mountain attraction you believe will be the most successful either on the website or via Facebook!



## The Restored Moldava Railway

The Moldova railway (Moldavská Horská Dráha) connecting the town Most and the village Moldova officially opened in May 1885. Part of it has been a classed a cultural heritage since 1998. Once the ground under the tracks moved, things didn't look good for the railway, but the trains are up and running again! And not just the historical motor wagon Hurvínek, but also modern trains. And the tracks from Moldova to the German village Holzhau have also been restored at least symbolically. For now, buses run along this part of the track, but trains are planned for the future.

## The Animated Promotional Video Most

The inhabitants of Most took a different path. They decided to promote their town through an animated video based 'drawing hands'. It has amusing commentary and an upbeat tempo; it connects history with the town of today, provides a clear overview and invites viewers to visit the 'sport town'. A wonderful idea. (Find the video by searching for Město Most! Město, které žije! on YouTube.)

## Connecting the Ski Resorts Klínovec, Neklid and Boží Dar

By now, most people know that Klínovec is a great place for skiing. Maybe that's why they introduced a revolutionary change – to make it even better. Three ski resorts have been connected. Not by ski buses, but by connecting slopes. And the result? A total of 31.5 kilometres of slopes, of which two thirds are covered in snow, and the slopes have almost been doubled! You can visit all three resorts on a single ski pass. You won't find anything like that elsewhere in the Czech Republic!



# The Wonderful Mystery of Panenský Týnec

Plenty has been written about the mystery of the unfinished Gothic church in the village Panenský Týnec, but not much has actually been said. How many pages have been written about the roaming ghost of the knight Plichta from Žirotín who heals wherever he may roam? How much has been written about the powerful impact of the possible relics of Agnes of Bohemia? And how often have we read that there actually isn't any mystery at all, just an attempt to attract tourists? And yet it is simple: the church's torso is unusually rich in energy, and anyone who is the slightest bit sensitive will immediately feel it as soon as they pop their head round the door. But why is that?



## Where Did Gothicism Come from?

Us 21<sup>st</sup> century people want to know, touch and measure everything. And we want it to be supported by evidence. But neither the world nor life is measurable, so it's best we get used to it. Let's start with Gothicism. It literally appeared overnight sometime around year 1130. Suddenly it was here. And it only took a few years for it to reach the top. Suddenly, there were plenty of masters, craftsmen and builders all over Europe who could 'do' Gothicism. How is that possible?

## We'll Build Where the Spirit Flows

And yet, wherever Gothicism came from, it honoured contemporary traditions, especially when it came to deciding where to erect a church or even a cathedral. It was never left to chance or human whims. Churches were erected in logical places (a skill we have lost today). And in those dark Middle Ages, nobody cared who had



first erected a sacrifice site, a shrine or some other spiritual object here. If anything, that was a hint that this was a place filled with energy, telluric energy (i.e., earthly energy that reaches the surface in a certain place, like a spring of water) as well as cosmic energy (i.e., energy from the immeasurable absolute above use). As they said back then – wherever the spirit flows.

## What Has This Got to Do with Panenský Týnec?

Originally, the area was just known as Týn, which is related to the English word 'town'. Later it became Týnec, and even later, due to the impact of the convent, Panenský Týnec, or Virginal Týnec. The name fits perfectly! Traces of an ancient, prehistoric settlement have been found here, and it was once home to an enclosed Slavic fortress – in other words, this 'týn' also incorporates pagan shrines. The same place was later home to a Christian chapel, and even later it was meant to become home to a spectacular church, most likely to be named after the Virgin Mary. You can almost touch the telluric and cosmic energy here as it mingles and blends... This is where the spirit flows.

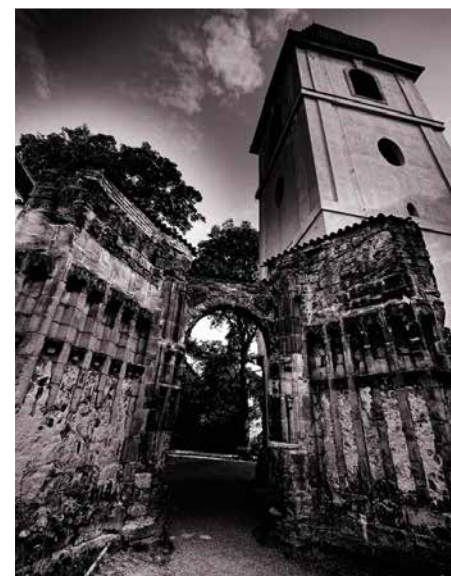
## All Thanks to the Žirotíns

It was the Žirotín family that built the castle, it was they who founded the convent and invited nuns from the Franciscan Order of St Clare. It was they who decided to donate the surrounding grounds and the village itself to the convent, and it was they who started building the Gothic church with three naves, which – had it been finished according to plan – would have been one of Central Europe's most significant 14<sup>th</sup> century sacred structures. What we don't know is why it was never finished. No sources on the matter have been found. Perhaps it was due to the fact that the convent suffered a severe fire in 1382 (by which work on the church had probably been running for a few decades) and the funding for the church had to be used to restore the convent... Who knows.



## It Would Have Been Huge

The last remaining part of the convent, what was once perhaps a stable, today holds an exhibition about the convent's history and activity. Whatever drew you to this place, the exhibition is worth seeing. You'll see what keeps Panenský Týnec alive today, and the exhibition also includes a model of what the church would've looked like had it been built. What remains to be seen in real life is the mere chancel or presbytery, which the gigantic church with three naves would've been connected to. All that has survived is the richly decorated portal and tower, and even that wasn't finished until the Renaissance, with the advantage that it was built on the only preserved pillar from the planned church.



## Panenský Týnec – More than Just a

While you're here, it's worth visiting the cemetery. The wonderful Empire tomb of the Tuscany family will lead you to where plenty of other locals rest – including some famous ones. For example, Benedikt Roetzl, better known as Don Benito, the famous botanist, traveller and orchid collector. And take a look at the remarkable stone milestone and try to imagine a time when this was a fundamental – and practically the only – landmark

when travelling. Have a bite to eat at the B&B Na Pile, you won't be disappointed – unless they are busy hosting a wedding, as numerous weddings are held at the church.

## Living in the Church's Shadow

Having a tourist magnet in the village is of course great, but... Neither the church torso nor the convent is fenced in. Anyone can access them for free whenever they like. And yet maintenance is essential. The money-box for voluntary contributions is huddled in front of the portal, where it quietly and proudly eyes the visitors. So what can you do but offer other services – which is great, because that means there is a cosy kiosk here as well as a small art and photo gallery and the aforementioned exhibition about the convent's history and life in the village. Nothing showy. Everything is created with love for one's village, with pride and enthusiasm. Below the church there is a serene lea, and the park has plenty of benches to sit on. A beautiful place.

## Finding the Positive Energy

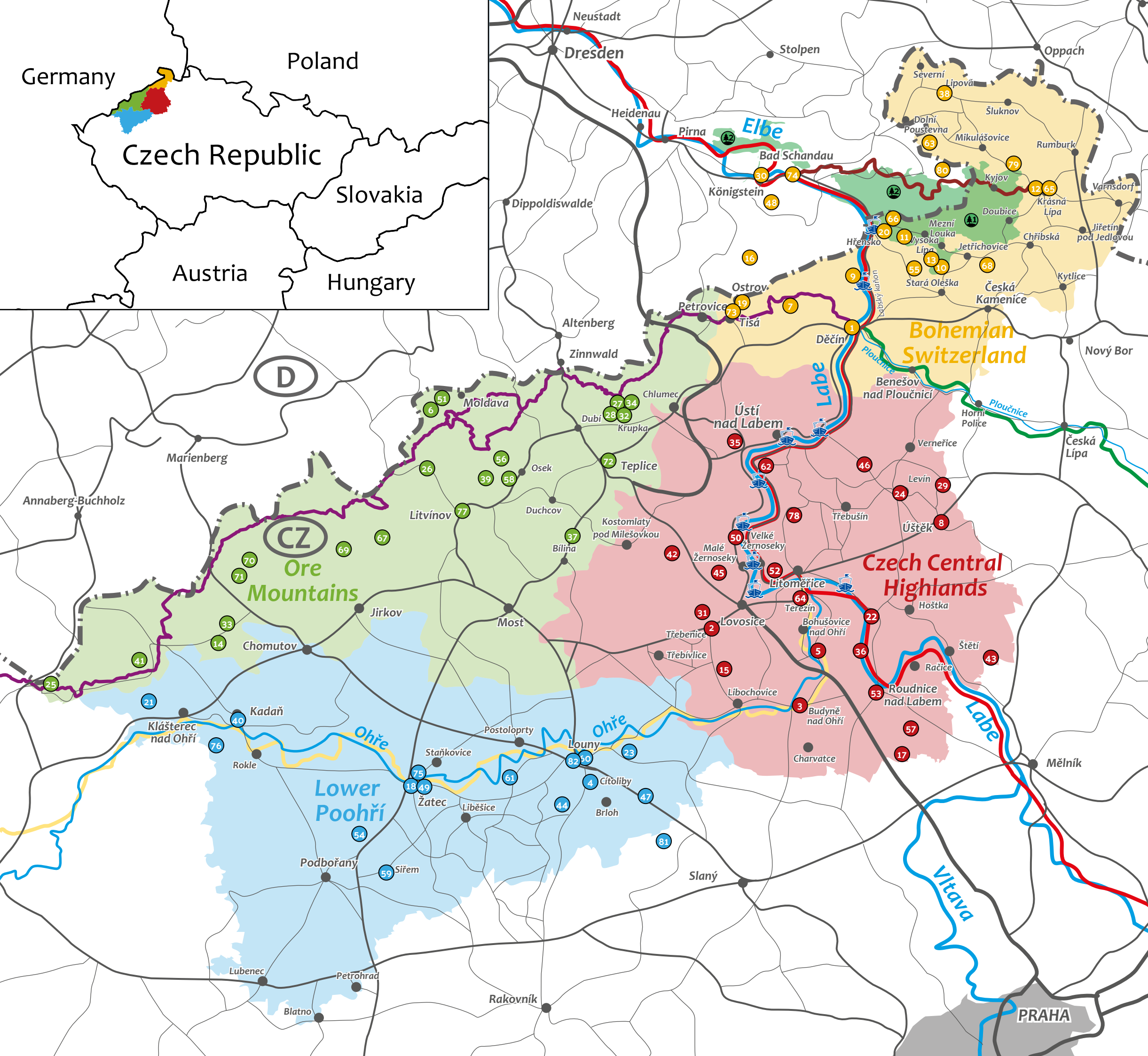
The torso of the presbytery looks like a palm surrounded by fingers that are reaching for the sky. As you enter it, you will realise it is



shaped like a classic Latin cross with a bud-shaped top. The bud fills the presbytery arch – this is a relaxing area where the energy lingers. The heart of the cross, where the two arms of the cross meet, is the energy centre. This is where the telluric energy rises and collides with the cosmic energy. Try to avoid this spot as it may have a negative impact. Between the centre and the bud, i.e., in the upper part of the longer arm, is where the positive energy is hidden. This place is a healing place. It improves your confidence and your mood, strengthens your immunity, suppresses headaches... But most importantly – this is where you become a part of the energy that flows out of the planet, which you call home and, and connects to the force of the universe. Which strengthens and enhances even the healthiest of people. Or is the truth actually something else indeed?







## Maps

### Clues:

- 1 Active Point Děčín
- 2 Bohemian Garnet Museum
- 3 Budyně nad Ohří Castle
- 4 Cítoliby
- 5 Convent of the Premonstratensian sisters in Doksany
- 6 Český Jiřetín Sport Centre
- 7 Děčínský Sněžník
- 8 Demon Museum in Úštěk
- 9 Dolní Žleb
- 10 Dolský Mlýn Mill
- 11 Edmundova Soutěska Gorge
- 12 Falkenštejn Brewery
- 13 Falkenštejn Castle
- 14 Hasištejn Castle
- 15 Hazmburk Castle
- 16 Herkulesssäulen Rock Needles
- 17 HistoryPark Ledčice
- 18 Hops and Beer Temple
- 19 Hotel Ostrov
- 20 Hřensko
- 21 Chalupník Brewery
- 22 Church of St Catherine of Alexandria
- 23 Church of St James the Great
- 24 Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 25 Klínovec Sport Centre
- 26 Klíny Zip Line
- 27 Komáří Vížka
- 28 Komáří Vížka Chairlift
- 29 Konojedy Castle
- 30 Königstein
- 31 Košťálov Castle
- 32 Krupka Mining Region
- 33 Kyšovický Vodopád Waterfall
- 34 Kyšperk Castle
- 35 Lake Milada
- 36 Lavender Farm
- 37 Ledvice Electrical Power Station
- 38 Lipová
- 39 Loučná (Quarry)
- 40 Maxidog Fík Promenade
- 41 Mědník Mining Region
- 42 Milešovka
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- 44 Nový Hrad Castle
- 45 Oparenské Údolí Valley
- 46 Open-air Museum Zubrnice
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- 50 Porta Bohemica
- 51 Puklá Skála Rock
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- 57 Říp
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- 67 The Rock Medvědí Skála
- 68 The Valley Pavlino Údolí
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- 80 Weifberg Lookout Tower
- 81 Zichovec Brewery
- 82 Zloun Brewery



Ferries

- The Elbe Cycle Route
- The Ohře Cycle Route
- Ploučnice Cycle Path
- Express Trail in the Ore Mountains
- Křinice Cycle Path

- National Park Bohemian Switzerland
- National Park Saxon Switzerland



# Fun for the Youngest in the Czech Central Highlands

The Czech Central Highlands (České středohoří) are a paradise for children, no doubt about it. And this isn't just a statement made by some adult who thinks that nothing excites children as much as a walk through the beautiful countryside. Children are merciless and have no problem letting anyone know if they are bored. Whatever their parents find moving often leaves them completely cold. They want some fun, extravaganza and action! And all this can be found in excess among the incredible hills that rise above the Elbe. So let's see...



## Demons and a Water-Sprite

The medieval town of Ústě. Parents are delighted by the markets, the Bird Houses, the synagogue... and the children just roll their eyes. But take them to the tower Pikartská věž and their doubt will soon turn into delight as they find the **Demon Museum** (Muzeum Čertů). And right opposite there's the **Cellars of Hell** (Pekelné Sklepy) with live demons! There's a demon nativity scene, various male and female demons, a chase, scales of sin, demon eggs – even an angel will be busily entertained! And from here it's just a few steps to **Waterworld** (Vodní Svět). Here the demons are replaced by Jan Kryštof Wassermann, the water-sprite of Ústě and his **exhibition of sweet-water fish**.

## Take the Draisine to the Market

It's up the hill all the way towards the town **Verneřice**. But taking the kids to see dilapidated churches and breathtaking plateaus...? No. But how about a **coal trail**? Now that's a different story! The mini museum Lovečkovice has an exhibition of the museum railway and a rather



unexpected and mysterious tour in the footsteps of miners. And then there's the **Vít'ova lookout tower**. Just a few kilometres further on,

the village **Zubrnice** awaits the children with an **open-air museum**, where they can see what schools used to look like and how butter was churned. They can also walk among the collection of vernacular houses and see what life was like before not only mobile phones and tablets, but even television. Not to forget the old-fashioned Czech market, or the **Railway Museum** (Muzeum železnice), where they can see what a conductor's job used to be like.

## A Zoo, a Cable Car and a Waterfall

The town Ústí nad Labem is equally prepared for children. You can start at the **zoo**, then take the **cable car from the centre of town** up to Kašpárkův Castle, nowadays Větruše Castle, where you'll find a **natural labyrinth** as well as a **mirror maze**. From here you can go on an adventurous trip past the medieval scaffold and all the way to the twelve metre high **waterfall Vaňovský vodopád**. Then head down to the village **Vaňov** and get lost in the mysterious **fairy-tale forest** with twenty different animals and characters from various fairy tales. To get to the other side of the river, you can walk across the railway bridge or the lock and then enjoy the **thermal swimming pool** in the village **Brná**, or perhaps venture a little further to the **lake Milada** and enjoy the day paddle-boarding.



## The World of Puppets and a Furry Kingdom

You can also go swimming at the popular **swimming pool** in the town **Litoměřice**, and while your hair is still wet, head to the **puppet gallery** (Galerie loutek Svát'ova Dividla), where the exhibition covers several floors in one of the bastions of the former town walls. If you manage to follow the town wall a little further, you'll reach the incredible **Paper-Making Workshop** (Dílna Ručního Papíru), where anyone can make their own sheet of paper by hand and make it look as odd as they want. In Litoměřice, you can even go down **below the town** and wander among the cellars – it's not every day an opportunity like that comes along. And how about venturing a little further, to village **Ploskovice** and an incredible princess **castle** that even has an **exhibition of teddy bears**!



## Underground Passages, Alchemists and a Hangman

In **Terezín**, however, the **underground** experience even more exciting as you can walk through the underground labyrinth with a lantern or a torch in hand, which really makes it feel like an RPG! In the same town, you'll find the **Nostalgia Museum** (Muzeum Nostalgie), where wide-eyed children can see what life was like when their grandparents grew up, what their toys were like, what they rode and what they watched. From here, it's not far to the town **Budyně nad Ohří**. And, oh no! A castle – it'll be all antlers and fancy bedrooms... No, it's not that kind of castle. It's a **water castle** with a real **alchemists' workshop**! And right next door there's an exhibition showing **medieval hangmen's tools**.



## Hunting for Bohemian Garnet and Chocolate

As we're already here, it's definitely worth travelling a bit further to **Třebenice** and the **Bohemian Garnet Museum** (Muzeum Českého Granátu) which has an **exhibition on castles in the Czech Central Highlands**. Parents can wonder at the beauty of the garnet while the children dive into the sand hunting for real garnet, which they can then triumphantly place in a special bottle and then take with them as they go celebrate at the chocolate shop (**Čokolaterie**). Perhaps with a chocolate lollipop, chocolate truffle, hot chocolate or chocolate ice cream – these tend to be equally popular among parents and children.

## Scoot into the Middle Ages

We're at the very edge of the Czech Central Highlands, at the foot of a hill which should be climbed by anyone who visits the Czech Republic. But children are rarely impressed by the wonderful views or the rotunda atop the majestic hill Říp – but rushing back **down-hill on a scooter** is a different matter! And you can ride all the way down to the Elbe or the centre of the historical town Roudnice nad Labem, where you can return the scooters. A little further on, you'll find the village Ledčice, which has a fabulous HistoryPark. What is there to do here? Glad you asked! The HistoryPark is comprised of two hectares of nature, where children can make their own medieval souvenirs, take part in an archaeological excavation, shoot a bow and arrow, light a fire, make a stone axe or flint tools, work with clay, try building a wooden house or a clay oven, make string out of wool, dig a 'hole for a mammoth'... Is that enough?

## Hunt Down Robbers and Hop on a Boat

What else is missing? Robbers! Head to the town Štětí and the surrounding woods and rocks looking for traces of the **robber Štětko** and his bandits. Discover the mythical robbers' **cave Mordloch** (jeskyně Mordloch) and play the interactive games. Quite likely you'll even meet a gang of robbers! So you see – the Czech Central Highlands really do have a lot to offer children. But we've forgotten something... Oh, of course – a **boat ride across the Elbe** aboard one of the **ferries** along the **Elbe Cycle Route**, which you can cycle along all the way to the Elbe Canyon up by the German border.



Czech Central Highlands



The Czech Central Highlands for Children



# A Railway with Beautiful Views

In the latest issue of the Gate I took you on a gorgeous train ride on the National Park Line (Dráha Národního Parku). Today we'll continue our train ride in the beautiful Bohemian Switzerland (Českosaské Švýcarsko) and the Czech lowlands (Českého Nizozemí). But before we hop on the tourist train (Turistický vlak), let's quickly summarize what we already know.

## How We Love the National Park Line...

...is what more and more tourists and locals keep exclaiming. The National Park Line (parks actually, as it runs through both the Czech and the German national parks) is a safe connection between the region's tourist attractions as well as between the Šluknov Hook (Šluknovský výběžek) and the town Děčín. The loop is comprised of three tracks. The U28 runs from Děčín along the Labe past **Bad Schandau**, **Sebnitz**, **Mikulášovice** and **Šluknov**, ending in **Rumburk**. From these stops and stations you can easily reach the **natural stone bridge Pravčická Brána** and the **Kamenice Gorge** (soutěsky Kamenice) – simply get off in Schöna, hop on the ferry and you're in the village Hřensko. This track also takes you within reach of the **Saxon tablelands Schrammstein**, **Affenstein**, **Kuhstall** and **Malerweg**; the stations of the cross in the Czech lowlands; the castle in Šluknov; and the **Rumburk loretto**. Simply hop off the train and go. The U28 is open all year round, as is the U8 that connects **Rumburk**, **Krásná Lípa**, **Rybniště**, **Chřibská**, **Jedlová**, **Kytlice**, **Česká Kamenice** and **Děčín**. Here you'll see a completely different landscape: the first hills of the Lusatian Mountains. The romantic little station pod Jedlovou, which you can go to, is incredible, especially if you prolong the trip all the way to the hill Tolštejn and then the delightful and charming valley that follows the stream **Kamenice**. Villages run up the sides of the hills while the stream rests in the riverbed. Then it's on to the idyllic village **Kytlice**,

the dreamy village **Mlýny**, and historical town **Česká Kamenice**, filled with remarkable sights... And the third track? That's our main focus today, as the machines that run on it are called...

## The Tourist Train

This track listens to the name U27 and is open at the weekends from spring to autumn, and during the main summer holidays it is open daily. The track starts in **Mikulášovice** and runs through **Brtníky** and **Panský** all the way to the eastern gate of Bohemian Switzerland, **Krásná Lípa**. This track didn't pop up out of nowhere – it first opened in 1902! But in the 1990s the track was used less and less, and so not long after the turn of the millennium, the track was almost closed. But the destination management company (Destinační agentura České Švýcarsko) couldn't agree with this decision and managed to save the track at least for the tourists.

## A Railway with a View

And why should we change from the National Park Line to the Tourist Train in Mikulášovice? There are countless reasons why. For one – you'll get to ride a historical train with two axles. But the main thing is that you'll have several great trips at your finger tips. Such as the lookout towers **Tanečnice** and **Weifberg** or the almost unknown gorge Obere Schleuse (which is actually the sister of the very popular Kamenice Gorge in Hřensko – you can enjoy a boat ride here as well and the experience is definitely comparable). Other options include the rocks in the rear section of **Saxon Switzerland**, the valley **Kyjovské Údolí**, the stream **Křinice** and the lookout tower on the hill **Vlčí Hora**. And the final stop? Krásná Lípa is not only a strategical starting point for visiting the eastern



for a great bike trip. A top tip is to get off in Krásná Lípa and follow the newly marked, and quite beautiful, **Křinice Cycle Path** (Křinická cyklostezka) that follows the river Křinice all the way to where it meets the Elbe in Bad Schandau – which is where the National Park Line will be waiting for you.

## Trips Starting in Mikulášovice

part of the national park Bohemian Switzerland, it is also a very pleasant – and in recent years pulsating – tourist town, which is home to the renowned **brewery Falkenštejn**, several great **cafés**, a wonderful **bakery** and a **chocolate shop full of experiences**, a sports centre and, of course, a very good information centre with and a popular **exhibition in the House of Bohemian Switzerland** (Dům České Švýcarska).

## Bring Your Bike Along for the Ride

An original way to enjoy the Tourist Train is to wait for the **Brtníky bike train** (Brtnický cyklovlak) in Děčín. This train runs through Kytlice, Jedlová and Krásná Lípa all the way to Mikulášovice, connecting the two previously mentioned routes. The advantage of this train is that it has a carriage that can carry a much larger number of bikes than the regular trains can. Wherever you decide to get off, you're in

Just like the National Park Line, every stop along the Tourist Train connects you to a wealth of interesting hikes and remarkable spots for a trip. Let's start at the central station in **Mikulášovice**. This is a great starting point for visiting Saxon Switzerland (Saské Švýcarsko). Follow the blue trail markings to the **lookout tower Tanečnice** and then the yellow trail markings to the viewing tower **Weifberg**, through the picturesque village **Hinterhermsdorf** and down to the gorge Obere Schleuse. And these are not the only trail markings that lead to attractive destinations. From the upper station in Mikulášovice there is a beautiful route along the trail **Kostelní Stezka**, with views into the distance. It then passes through the valleys Křinice and **Bílý potok**, while following the stream Křinice, and passes the romantic mill **Niedermühle** – the mill **Dolský mlýn** would probably look something like this if it was still standing. From there it carries on through the gorge Obere Schleuse, which you can visit even off season when the boats

aren't running, then through the village **Zadní Jetřichovice**, the valley **Mlýnský důl** and finally the village **Mezní Louka**. Basically, it walks you through Bohemian Switzerland from north to south and you can't help but love it.

## Trips Starting at Other Stations

In Brtníky, you can hop on the **Lužická Spojka**, a via ferrata that connects the Lusatian Mountains, such as the hills Tolštejn, Jedlová and Karlova Výšina with the town Šluknov and goes all the way up to the national border. You can also reach Šluknov via the hill Hrazený and enjoy the almost deserted path with wonderful views of the Czech lowlands. Or you could reach it via the valley **Kyjovské Údolí** along a path that shows off its famous ice falls in winter. From the station **Panský** you can visit the lookout tower on the hill **Vlčí Hora**, and if you hop off at **Zahrady** you can follow the educational trail **Köglerova**, enjoy a geological map, or in May and June you can easily walk from here past an ocean of blooming rhododendrons to the village Sněžná.





# Where the Water Flows and the Rocks Rise

The Ore Mountains (Krušné Hory) aren't exactly known for their rugged rocks and waterfalls, but this region still has plenty of surprises, hidden gems and unexpected beauty for tourists to discover. Though to be honest, it isn't always easy to reach these places. There are no car parks 100 metres away, and often there aren't any marked paths, if there's a path at all.

But that just makes the hunt for the rocks and waterfalls all the more adventurous. We'll start with the waterfalls and then set off looking for the remarkable rocks.

## The Waterfall Helenčiny Vodopády

We'll start with the most beautiful waterfall and end with the highest. We are up high above the town Jirkov in the village Lesná, where you can see the famous Krušnohorský Lidový Dům, a replica of a typical vernacular house with an open-air expedition. From Lesná, we follow the red European long distance path E3 (which starts in Bulgaria and goes all the way to Spain, but we'll just follow it for about two kilometres). Once we cross the river, we'll know we're almost there. A footpath has been

trodden along the stream and we'll follow it downstream. The stream has two Czech names, some call it Lužec, others Nivský. Either way, it's a translation of the German name Aubach, which originates from the German word for riverbed. We hear the waterfall before we see it. It is beautiful, and its advantage is that it tends to be full of water even in the middle of summer. Though it's of course grander in spring. From a height of four metres, a rather impressively wide mass of water rushes down the shiny rock creating elegant rapids. It is a wonderful spot, and the way the water moves makes it look like a plump fairy's reed skirt.

## The Waterfall Chomutovky

This time, we're a bit further west, in the hills above Chomutov on the path that leads from the hill of St Sebastian (Hora Sv. Šebestiána) to the valley Bezručovo Údolí. We'll again follow the red E3 for about 1.5 kilometres along the stream Chomutovka. Without leaving the path we get a great view of the three metre high waterfall that this stream creates. Well, great and great – if you're a passionate photographer you'll want to tumble your way down the six metre bank to get right up close to the water. That photo will be worth it though, trust me.

## The Waterfall Medvědí Vodopády

We continue along Chomutovka for the next waterfall, but leaving the red trail markings and instead following the cycle track 3079. After about two kilometres, we reach the solitary building known as Pašerácký dům, or the Smuggler's House. Behind this building, an unnamed stream flows into Chomutovka, and it's this unnamed stream we now follow upstream. But be prepared for a rather arduous walk and a path that distracts you with captivating crowds of boulders in the riverbed or beside it. But stick it out and keep going. The best is yet to come – from a height of nine metres, the water flows down in two levels. A wild and incredible spot. True waterfall fanatics can continue a little further up to see another smaller waterfall named Karlův Vodopád, but it is nowhere near as moving as this one. On our way back to Chomutov, as we wander through the wonderful valley Bezručovo Údolí we get to see the stream Chomutovka create a final small waterfall.

## The Waterfall Kýšovický Vodopád

We are further west again, in the hills above the town Kadaň. We follow the blue trail markings from the valley Pruněřovo Údolí, home to the stream Pruněřovský potok, past the Hasištejn Castle (which you can read about in another article) and the romantic stone bridge in the village Úbočí. After almost six kilometres, we reach the waterfall Kýšovický Vodopád. Its 25 metres make it the highest waterfall in the Ore Mountains. First, we have to make it across the stream, and then follow the unmarked path upstream along an unnamed brook. Now you really are in the wilderness, and you will be richly rewarded by nature. This waterfall with three cascades is truly astounding. In fact, all of the waterfalls are stunning. Just remember, they are

the most beautiful in spring, the easiest to reach in summer, all colours of the rainbow in autumn, and in winter the snow and ice make the waterfalls all the more magical, though also much harder (if at all possible) to reach.

## The Rock Medvědí Skála

We return to Lesná, the same village we started in when we set out to see the waterfall Helenčiny Vodopády. This time, we follow the E3 in the opposite direction for about 300 metres, then we turn right along a forest path, and straight after, we turn left uphill along an unmarked footpath that leads us all the way to the rugged rock up top. This is where the last bear in the Ore Mountains was shot, hence the name Medvědí Skála, which translates as Bear Rock. From the top we have an ineffable view of the landscape from this seven metre high, jagged and majestic rocky cone. It will take your breath away.

## Loučná and Puklá Skála

Loučná is the highest peak (955.9 m.a.s.l.) around the town Most. The summit is flat and crowned by a dominant rocky knag, which is ten metres high with an embedded metal cross. There used to be a wooden lookout tower here, but even without it the view is worthy of a king. You can reach the summit by following the blue trail markings from the village Meziboří or Dlouhá Louka and then turning off onto the marked detour to the rock. Below, we can see the surface of the reservoir Fláje glittering, but for a better view of it, head to the rock Puklá on the other side of the reservoir.



The rock Puklá has a reddish colour and can be reached by following our favourite E3. The view of the blue reservoir surrounded by forests is simply breathtaking.

## Salesiova Výšina

The town Osek lies below the reservoir Fláje, and it's worth exploring town thoroughly; the Osek monastery includes one of the most beautiful baroque castles in the country and there is a mysterious and beautiful spot hidden in the forest above the town. From the swimming pool by the pond, follow the yellow trail markings for about a kilometre and a half. A rock suddenly rises in front of you like an epiphany. It is as though a space ship landed in the shady beech forest or an upset giant threw his rock toy on the ground. There used to be a glorieta with a stunning view here, but we've already enjoyed plenty of views today. The atmosphere by this stone church surrounded by the silver oak columns is in fact an even more powerful experience. There's more than just one rock here, but this is the one that sticks in your mind. This grand place surely is a worthy end to our pilgrimage of waterfalls and rugged rocks.







# How the Gorges Got Their Boats

Written by Rostislav Krivánek

Drawn by Petr Herold

1875: Prince Edmund Clary Aldringen and his guests are at the Kamenice Gorge in Hřensko.



At the back you can see Eufemina's Halt, that's Matylda's Corner and here you see Felicia's Arbour.



May you not tread any further, if your life is your dear! They call that the end of the world!

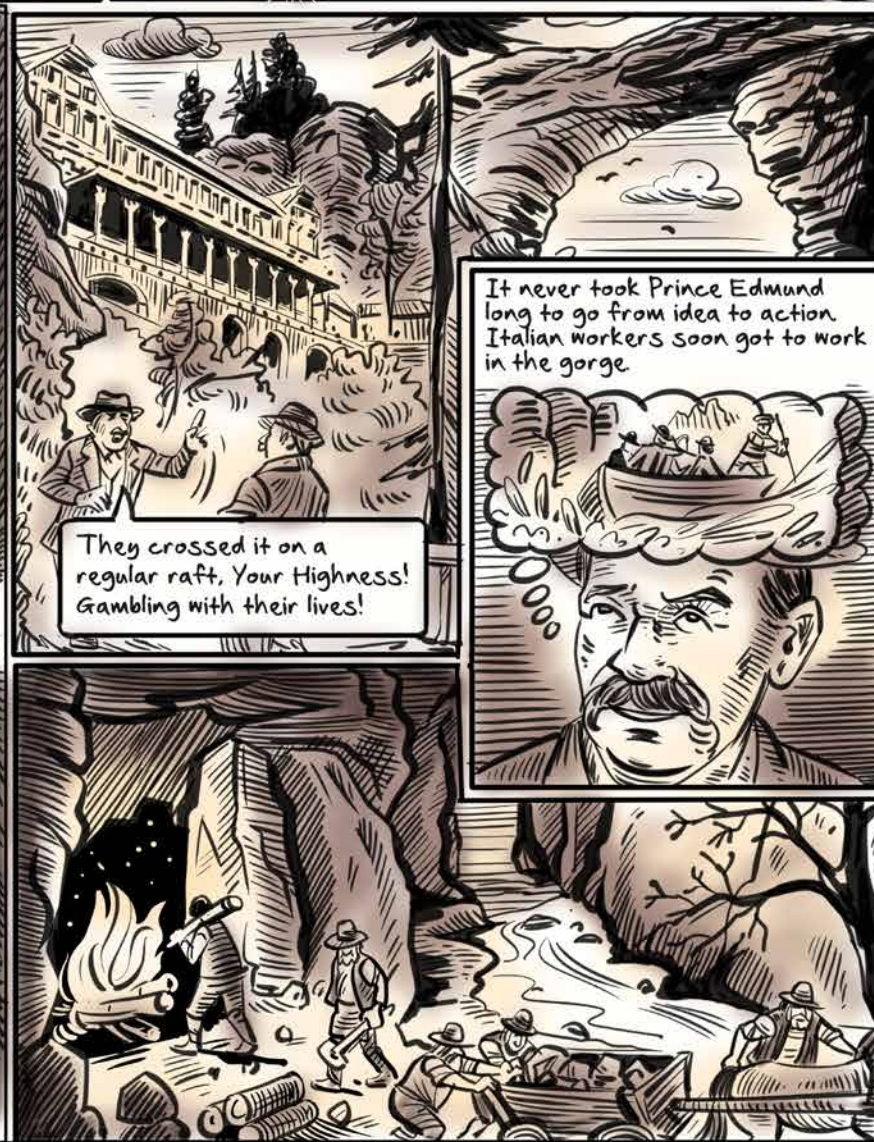


1877 A pub in Hřensko

Deal! Ten gold coins that we can cross the crevice from Dolský mlýn to the Elbe!

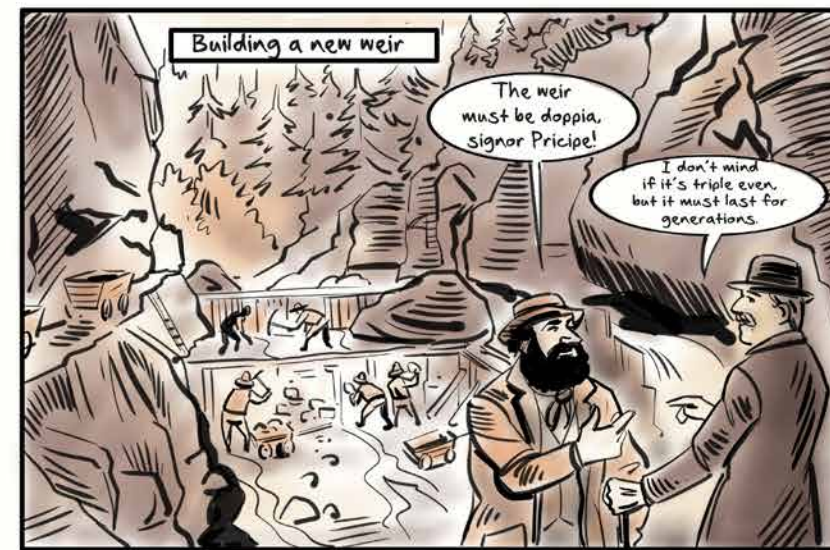


Dolský mlýn



It never took Prince Edmund long to go from idea to action. Italian workers soon got to work in the gorge.

They crossed it on a regular raft, Your Highness! Gambling with their lives!



Building a new weir

The weir must be doppia, signor Pricipe!

I don't mind if it's triple even, but it must last for generations.



4 May 1890 – the gorge is ceremoniously opened



Launching the ships from the precipice

Slowly does it!

Just make sure you catch them!



Up top you may see a family of rocks, ladies and gentlemen.

Wunderbar!



Africa has the Victoria Falls and we have the String Falls!

Aaaaah!

Ooooh!



The same day the boats were launched, a restaurant opened behind the rear quay.

Ladies and gentlemen, a good honest pint from Džbán all round!



This year, Edmund's Gorge turns 130. Her sister, the Wild Gorge, was opened eight years later. But Prince Edmund didn't live to see it.

Aaaaah!

Ooooh!



# Two Gems in the Royal Town of Louny

Louny has always been a town of architecture. Ever since the height of the Middle Ages and up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionary buildings were erected in this town. Tourists come here to enjoy the exhilarating atmosphere in the town's historical centre, where the city walls mingle with sacred and secular buildings in various architectural styles. Today we'll take a closer look at two buildings that were erected almost 400 years apart.

## A Slender Ship Among the City Walls

The first is reminiscent of a noble, beautiful and monumental sailing boat moored just a stone's throw from the main square. **St Nicholas' Church** (chrám svatého Mikuláše) is one of the country's foremost Gothic buildings. Yet the structure suffered a tragedy, the extent of which we can barely imagine today. On 25 March 1517, several fires broke out in the town. The fire spread quickly and mercilessly and it soon seized – and swallowed – almost the entire town. The town's pride and glory, St Nicholas' Church, was burned to the ground leaving just a single tower, and even that was in a terrible state.

## Nothing Less Than the Best!

Two years later, once the shock had passed and the will to live returned, Louny's councillors

decided to erect a new church. And they weren't going to settle for anything less than the best, which is why they sent a delegation to the royal architect werkemeister Benedikt Rejt himself. The maestro, also known as Beneš of Píšov, was already incredibly busy, but accepted the assignment and immediately got to work. He also recommended his colleague Pavel from Pardubice, who turned Rejt's visions into reality. In less than two years, the tower was restored and work on the new church could begin.

## The First Stone is Laid

Benedikt Rejt was wanted everywhere in those days – simultaneously with the church in Louny, he also worked on St Barbaras Church in Kutná Hora, prepared the reconstruction of the New Town Hall in Prague and did various work on castles in Blatná, Křivoklát, Rabí, Březnice, and most likely the construction of the church in Most. In other words, he kept himself busy. The first stone of Louny's St Nicholas' Church was therefore ceremoniously laid without his presence on 19 April 1520. Maestro Benedikt did not witness the construction process until four years later.



Lower Poohří



## Beneš of Louny

At that point, he had no idea that he would finally return here from his numerous trips viewing his various constructions. Nor did he know that he would become known as Beneš of Louny, that he would benefit from Louny's miraculous mineral water, or that his earthly pilgrimage would end here in 1534. 'On Friday, as witnessed by all saints, maestro Benedikt, the eminent mason, who did not have an equal in many countries, who built the Prague Castle and the church in Louny, passed away and was buried', the chronicler of Louny, Pavel Mikšovic, wrote soon after. Maestro Benedikt was buried in the yet unfinished church, which was finally completed on St Margaret's Day, 1538. Yet it seems that his remains did not rest here for even 100 years. It is said that they were removed in 1625 by the catholic fanatic general Hoeff-Huerta, who believed the rumour that Rejt had been a member of the protestant Czech Unity of the Brethren. According to other sources, however, his grave remained in the church.

## Reconstructing the First Stone

The church is truly beautiful with its unprecedented arches and impressive tented roof. Benedikt Rejt enhanced tented roofs by using several polygons rather than just one. As the sun sets over St Nicholas' Church, a total of three polygons glimmer in its light and reflect the solitary peaks of the nearby Czech Central Highlands. This year it will be 500 years since the first stone was laid and Louny is preparing to celebrate the anniversary in style. The local museum is planning a related exhibition, and this historical event will ceremoniously be re-enacted on the main square in September. A demonstration of medieval masonry can be expected: foundation stones will be produced in a traditional fashion, stone drills will be made using traditional carpentry, there'll be a demonstration of how the church's foundations were erected, as well as an educational programme with demonstrations by blacksmiths, coopers... Louny's main square will simply turn into a fully-fledged medieval masonry.

Louny

since the Middle Ages. Back then, a number of pavilions, mainly wooden, were erected around a central building – the Exhibition Pavilion. The Exhibition Pavilion was built in the spirit of functionalism by the local engineer Otakar Polák and Karel Skorkovský a building engineer from Prague, who focused on concrete constructions (and built among others the Trade Fair Palace, Adria Palace and the Libeň Bridge in Prague). Ever since, this building of almost antique proportions has stood on the bank of the river Ohře as an example of the modern architecture of a young and bold country.

## May Beauty Attract

The building is beautiful. And yet it has often stood empty, or been used as a mere warehouse. Even worse, several insensitive alterations have since been made to the building. But Louny asked the architect Ondřej Tuček to take on the building with a clear task at hand – to revive the building's original design as much as possible. And the task was carried out excellently! **Pavilon A** again shines day and night and is home to a café with furniture that corresponds to when the building was first erected, and it is ready to welcome culture lovers from Louny and elsewhere. Quite likely this will bring the entire exhibition area back to life.





# Beer from the Hop Region

The land of Lower Poohří (Dolní Poohří) has always been dedicated to a commercial plant that thrives better here than anywhere else in the world. If you say 'Žatec', most Czechs will respond with 'hops'. The wide and slightly undulating valley of the river Ohře was proven to be a great for growing hops already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and most of the production of these aromatic cones was moved here. So that gives us hops – they clearly know how to grow them here. But what about beer? Don't worry – they're masters at brewing, too. There are currently eight breweries in the area, each one has its own personal touch and is quite different to the others. Let's visit them in order and sample their products.

## The Brewery Chalupník in Perštejn

The westernmost brewery is the family brewery Chalupník in the village Perštejn, near Klášterec nad Ohří. This remarkable building was once a hammer mill, which later became a trimmings factory, and after the war sleeping bags were sewn here. Once entrepreneurship was no longer a crime, Miroslav Chalupník bought the building and dedicated it to brewing and consuming beer. They brew classic bottom-fermented lagers: Sládek 10°, the light lager Premiant 12° and the dark lager Harmonie 12°. All of them are unfiltered and unpasteurized. And they also make a great beer lemonade. All their beers can be bought in the brewery's restaurant, which also serves great food.

## The Brewery Sřem

The youngest of the seven breweries lies in the hop region Sřem, which is famous for once having hosted Franz Kafka. The brewer and owner, Jan Chmel, founded this craft brewery in a former game keeper's lodge. Jan Chmel is curious and inquisitive, and brews

whatever kind of beer he happens to fancy. He's a great admirer of lager, which he considers to be the gleaming gem of all beers. He also brews less common, even downright unusual beer. He plays around, experiments and finds inspiration among history and modern brewing practices. His beer can be bought via his e-shop and can be found on tap at many pubs in Prague.

## The Brewery Žatecký Pivovar

The traditional, historical – and today carefully restored and renovated – brewery Žatecký Pivovar entered business back in 1800. At this brewery, you can take a look at the brewing process and also head up the lookout tower Vodárenská Věž (the Water Tower).

They mainly brew bottom-fermented beers, but classic lagers and light and dark gluten-free lagers can also be found among their

assortment. Their flagship is called Sedmý Schod. It has a golden to amber colour and is a cold-hopped beer with a high level of bitterness and made from a specific species of hops from Žatec. Their whole assortment is on sale in the brewery's shop.

## The Brewery U Orloje in Žatec

The craft brewery U Orloje is a part, and for many people the main attraction, of the famed Hops and Beer Temple (Chrám chmele a piva) in Žatec. Beer has been brewed in this former hop warehouse for about a decade now. Traditional Czech brewing practices are respected, and a line of specialities are offered alongside their classics. Their pride and glory is Samec, a beer that has been brewed in Žatec since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This wonderful eleven degree beer is complemented by the dark Chrámové Tmavé 11°, which is made of four kinds of malt; and Chmelový Ležák 12°, a very hoppy light lager that tastes bitter on the tongue and harmonious on the roof of your mouth. The brewery's beers can be found in the adjacent restaurant alongside their wonderful food.

## The Brewery Pioneer in Žatec

Another young brewery on just its second season. The story? Wonderful. The brewer Michal from a large brewery fell in love with Miriam, the charming marketer from the same brewery. They started their own business and this couple literally fulfilled their dream within view of the Hops and Beer Temple. They want to be pioneers, as the name implies. Their corner stone is the wonderful light lager Rezident 11, which is complemented by interesting top-fermented specialities. Their ales are great – you could easily drink their light Double Trap 12° or semi-dark Caramel Shake 13° all evening, which is not common for ales. They are planning to open a beer garden in front of the brewery and, in the future, also a restaurant.

## ZLoun from Louny

Radek Taraba started brewing beer on his knees in the garage, and later also tried out brewing beer on the banks of the Volga. He decided to put all his experience into a craft brewery with an accompanying restaurant – and that's how ZLoun was born. Along with a friend, Taraba bought the pub Na Letňáku, where you can now order a Zloun 10°, a Jantar Zloun 11°, Tvrdák Zloun 12°, or the top-fermented pale ale ALEnt 15°. The remarkable Lyon 13° is quite different and is named after the Celtic name for the town Louny.

connects to Louny's beer tradition. Or you could try their dark speciality, Lounský Žejdlík Tmavý Special 13°, which is an unfiltered and unpasteurized beer flavoured with coffee and caramel, and which has been awarded as the best food product in the Ústí Region. And there are plenty of other top and bottom-fermented specialities to try, too.

## The Brewery Lounský Žejdlík

This mini brewery was founded in 2013, in a historical building which was formerly a B&B. It brews exclusively for the restaurant Domov, which houses a 200 litre copper brew kettle. The food here is great and can be complemented by their light lager, Lounský Žejdlík Světlý Ležák 11°, a beer that

## The Brewery Zichovec in Louny

The family brewery Zichovec has been up and running since 2012. It was founded due to a sense of dissatisfaction with the unified flavour of international breweries, but also in honour of the family's forefather, the advocatus Krahulík, who once ran a popular travellers' inn in the town Panenský Týnec. In 2016, the brewery's new premises were erected in place of the former barracks. Instead of a tank shooting range, there is now a beer bar where you can taste the local beer from the tap: Krahulík 10° and 12°, Černé 13°, Magor 15°, and Zichovec IPA 15°.

## The Royal Road of Hops and Beer

And there's one more thing worth mentioning. But it's not a brewery, it's a project. The Royal Road of Hops and Beer (Královská Cesta Chmele a Piva) guides you along several interesting sights: the Royal Brewery Krušovice (Královský Pivovar Krušovice), the Hops and Beer Temple in Žatec, the Hops Museum (Chmelařské Muzeum) in Žatec, the Museum of Homo Lupulus (Muzeum Chmelového Národa Homolupulů) in Žatec, the brewery Žatecký Pivovar and the Stekník Castle – and it will unveil plenty of secrets. You can also spice up your pilgrimage by taking part in the competition and collecting stamps along the way. Once you have collected all the stamps – the competition isn't time limited – you will be royally rewarded and can pick up your prize at the Žatec hops harvest festival Dočesná.





# The Best Flavours and Traditions from the Czech Central Highlands



The Gate regularly presents certified regional products. This time, our presentation takes us all across the Czech Central Highlands (České Středohoří). But let's start by reminding ourselves what the regional certification is actually good for. In an age when products are being thrown at you from all angles and are aggressively advertised on TV and in shops, serious recommendations are golden. A regional certification guarantees something – for example that a product is made by a local producer, that it doesn't harm the environment, or that it has a unique connection to the region, whether due to the ingredients used, the traditional manufacturing process or the craft skills employed in the production. By keeping an eye out for these products and services, you are contributing to long-term sustainable tourism.

## Twenty-Seven Brands in the Czech Central Highlands

During the few years that the regional certification has existed, a variety of 27 original and high-quality brands from the Czech Central Highlands have received it. By supporting these brands, you can be sure that you won't find the inscription 'Made in China' artfully hidden on a product, which you thought was handmade, traditional and original. The regional certification makes sure of that.

## Beer Five Times Over

Not surprisingly, the boom of craft breweries has also reached the Czech Central Highlands, especially as there is a significant hop area near the town Ústě. I recommend you taste all the beers at the pub and brewery **Pivovar Na Rychtě** in the town Ústí nad Labem, as they all



hold the regional certification. In other words – you can't go wrong, and their **Mazel** is a good place to start. Another local pub and brewery that carries the regional certification of quality is **Pivovar Millenium** and their beers: the lager **Milláček** brewed using a triple decoction technique, and the semi-dark lager **Dršňák** brewed using a double decoction. In the town Litoměřice, two frothy and golden experiences await you at the brewery **Biskupský Pivovar U sv. Štěpána**. You can also find these beers on sale atop the hills Milešovka and Říp. The nearby mini brewery **Minipivovar Labut'** also offers several local specialities, and we find our last certified beer at the mini brewery **Podřipský Rodinný Minipivovar** in the village Ctiněves, just below the hill Říp, where they offer a wheat beer named **Podřipské 12°** and a light lager, **Světlý Ležák 11°**. Quite a nice beer tour, don't you think?



## Praise the Wine

In the town Lovosice, there is a winery named **Naturální Nanovinařství Charlie-VinumCelebratum**, where they produce a craft **Grinor**, a cuvée **Pinot gris** and a **Pinot noir**, that are all completely natural and free from chemicals. At the castle winery **Lobkowicz Zámecké Vinařství** in the town Roudnice nad Labem, the wine **Fratava** has been granted the regional certification. It is made of **Blaufrankish** and **St Laurent** grapes via uncontrolled fermentation and matured in oak barrels. Every year, at the regionally certified event **Roudnický Košť** provides you with a unique opportunity to get to know the entire Bohemian wine production. It is a one-day event held in the chambers and courtyard of the Lobkowicz Castle in Roudnice nad Labem.

## Food Flavoured by the Czech Central Highlands

The winery **Zámecké vinařství Johann W** in the village Třebívlice traditionally connects local gastronomy with high-quality wine and a great experience. They sell Třebívlice farm products such as slowly roasted brisket, poultry pâté and a spread made of pork rind. All products are, of course, made using home-made recipes and local ingredients. **Pršuterie Chovaneček** in Litoměřice holds two regional certificates – one for their prosciutto and fermented meat products, and one for their lamb meat from their farm in Hlinná. Next up is a trip to the local **goat farm** in the village



**Držovice** near Ústě and we are sure you will appreciate their goat milk products as much as the regional commission does. Goat cheese tastes best with some good honey... We'll head back to Litoměřice and the bee farm **Včelařství Horákovi** for that. Their honey comes from the suburban allotment gardens and is completely unique.

## Thirsty?

If so, it's best to head to a place not far from the town Ústě; the local fresh bio apple juice from the orchard **Ovocná Farma Starý Týn** is made exclusively of hand-picked apples from their certified orchard, which is completely ecologically. And if you're in the mood for some coffee, then your best bet is definitely the carefully selected coffee beans, with a face and a story to their name, from the **roaster Pražírna kávy Zoban** in Litoměřice.

## Sweet Sins

Fancy something sweet? Then try the legendary cake shop **Dortletka** decorated in the style of the First Czechoslovak Republic and run by the confectioner **Jaroslava Michalčová** in Roudnice nad Labem. Or perhaps some gingerbread by **Markéta Nebeská** in Dušníky, where she runs the gingerbread bakery **Podřipské Perníčkování** using local ingredients and her own honey. Another option is the handmade truffles from the chocolate laboratory (**Čokoládová Laboratoř**) in Litoměřice.

## Beautiful As Well As Useful

Then we have the unique ceramics made by **Alena Šumová** from Levín and burned in a wood oven, or the **original handwoven clothing and household textiles** by **Petra Brázdová** from Litoměřice, **AnnKas beeswax candles** from bee farms in the Ústí Region, or even **handmade cowhide bags** from the leather shop **Valešová** in Chuderov, Ústí nad Labem – they are all full of joy and beauty. And the **chopped wooden fences** by **Jan Tytlý** from the town Štětí? This harmonious product with a wooden aroma to it is simply a wonderful idea.



## The Magic of Natural Materials

What does the nature of the Czech Central Highlands give us? Corn, for example. **Jiřina Šustrová** from Bechlín is able to conjure up all kinds of things from corn husks, such as a unique nativity scene. Šustrová also holds a regional certificate for the unique experience that she offers in Bechlín: courses in folk art. You can learn how to bake traditional Czech pastries, make figures out of corn husks or create various straw creations. You perhaps wouldn't expect to find a **lavender farm** near Říp, and yet there's one in the village **Židovice** – and it sells regionally certified products. And how about paper? In Litoměřice's **Paper-Making Workshop** (**Dílna ručního papíru**) you can either buy or make handmade truffles from the chocolate laboratory (**Čokoládová Laboratoř**) in Litoměřice.



# An Island of Consistent Quality

The village Ostrov lies between the Tisa Rocks (Tiské Stěny) and the hill Děčínský Sněžník. It's an incredible area that will take your breath away as it lies right at the bottom of a valley lined with rock walls in all kinds of shapes and adorned by a winding stream decorated with six ponds, like pearls on a string. Hotel Ostrov. An oasis of calm and modest comfort that doesn't make you feel awkward. And the hotel restaurant has maintained the same high quality for years.

## Dependable

Some restaurants constantly try out new ideas and change their menu practically every week, which means you end up never knowing what you can expect. There are plenty of those kinds of restaurants. And then there are restaurants you know you can depend on, where you'll always find what you wanted and where the quality retains its high level, or even improves. There are not as many of these. But Hotel Ostrov is the flagship of such restaurants. I have been coming here for years and relish in their commitment to their vision and concept. Because retaining a high standard is more difficult than experimenting.

## Dinner and Wellness

Don't come expecting a cheap lunch menu. You are among rocks and forests now, you won't find any office clerks rushing in for a quick lunch. This is a hotel restaurant that focuses on

evening meals, a restaurant as steady and dependable as the rocks. It is open all year round and you will find the same great quality at any time of year and plenty of people make quite the trip to dine here. You can also spend a longer period of time here – the hotel is incredibly hospitable and comfortable and they have a pool with a view of the pond and the rocks, a whirlpool, a Finnish sauna, a steam sauna, popular massages...

## The Tried and Trusted Path to Being Unique

Close cooperation between owner, Ondřej Kulič, his three previous head chefs and the current one, Antonín Marcin, has resulted in the hotel kitchen's philosophy: verified fresh first-class ingredients, highly professional chefs and the perfected craft of carefully and meticulously preparing slowly-cooked meat. Add to that incredible sauces, fantastic untraditional ice cream, which is even served as part of a meal, and then wine – exclusive wine running the full scale from world famous brands to fairly priced wines carefully selected

straight from the winery to go with your meal. Tens of wines are served here, so you can even have a small tasting session. And beer? Their own semi-dark Ostroff is brewed at the brewery Falkenštejn in Krásná Lípa. Another unique feature of this restaurant is their ability to pair great chocolate with liquor, wine and their own coffee from farmers in Cameroon.

## Whatever You Fancy

So what do I recommend? To be honest, you can't go wrong whatever you choose, so follow your instinct. Their beef confit, Belgian veal steak tatar, and spiked deer rump in Ostroff beer are all fantastic. The Czech classic svičková (roast sirloin in a cream sauce) is a local gem, as is the confit duck leg. Or try the classic dill soup kulajda, which tastes just the way it should. Or perhaps wild boar and red wine ragout? Hmm... Some of the sorbets make a great break between meals. And for dessert? I personally can't help but order the chocolate-filled quark dumplings served with a blackberry sauce.

[www.hotelostrov.com](http://www.hotelostrov.com)



Hotel Ostrov

# Lost on an Ocean of Flavours

I am in the town Roudnice nad Labem, on the upper part of the square Husovo Náměstí. Somewhere around here we should find the restaurant Ztracená. Apparently, it's on the street Orlova Ulice... But however hard I look... It takes me a while to find it – you have to turn off the square down an incredibly narrow medieval street that looks more like a passageway than a street. And appropriately enough, the restaurant's name Ztracená translates as Lost. And now to the point – don't be put off by the hunt, because the goal is really worth it!

## The Window

The story behind this restaurant is fascinating. In the 1990s, Jiří Polák and Marcela Chmelařová opened a classic 'window' which they sold food through. Back then, this was the Czech version of fast food. We are on the street Špindlerova Ulice, where the 'window' serves us some unusual burgers with, say, smoked meat, sauerkraut and a potato pancake. Cut. The window's popularity grows and becomes a buffet that also serves customers indoors. Cut again. The buffet is too cramped for Jiří and Marcela, and pure chance leads them to a narrow street off the square, where a woman is just putting up a 'For Sale' sign in the window. The couple withdraws the family's home-purchase savings and buys the building.

## The Street

Cut again. It's now 2012 and the restaurant Ztracená opens on this secret street. It couldn't have been given any other name. The concept

is clear – modern gastronomy that doesn't flirt with abstract art but aims to first and foremost please our taste buds. Fusion. Mainly based on the Czech Central Highlands (České Středohoří), but with influences from all around the world. People come here for the great steaks. The interior is historical, rough around the edges. The guests sit below stone arches on furniture that the owners have made themselves – they make almost everything here themselves.

## The Challenge

Cut once more. Three years later. The former 'window' turns into Caffè&Grill Ztracená II. The interior is trendy, kind of like a modern bistro in Prague. Burgers, hotdogs, sushi... Jiří cooks in 'the first one' and Marcela in 'the second'. Both places tend to be full. Large maisonette flats are being prepared above the first restaurant and they will soon offer full packages with accommodation, food, trips and wellness. These two are definitely going places.



## The Philosophy

The kitchen's philosophy? Fresh, high-quality, and seasonal. Meticulous preparation. And an interesting trend has caught on in the restaurant: the side dishes should be as interesting as and equal to the meat. They serve a great risotto, vegetable tarhonya (egg barely) wonderful potato croquettes, gnocchi with Parmesan... And the meat? If you only order one thing, the veal hanger steak is a must. And the ostrich bourguignon? You won't find it anywhere else – and it's sensational. Their cheek meat, ribs and fish are equally legendary. And 'the second one' also serves great Asian food, tortillas, pasta... And some Moravian wine from trusted family wineries to go with it.

[www.restauraceztracena.cz](http://www.restauraceztracena.cz)



Restaurant Ztracená, Roudnice nad Labem



# Experience Děčín Like Never Before!



Readers of the Gate know that we have already covered Děčín and gotten to know it as a town full of fun and experiences... But this time we'll look at it from a different angle. We'll enjoy the town in a sporty fashion, but without counting any points or entering competitions. Adventure and new perspectives are more important than your time or who finishes first. The agency Active Point, which focuses on active experiences, will help us out.

## Plenty to Discover

Děčín is the western gate to Bohemian Switzerland. From here, you can easily reach the Elbe Canyon, which is completely unique in Europe with its steeply rising rock walls, viewing towers and other sights. Cycle paths intertwine with each other, and the flow of the great Elbe offers up a number of activities. The town's Thun castle tempts you and

the town hides plenty of other sights waiting to be uncovered. How will you manage to do it all? By putting one of Active Point's experienced guides in charge.

## Conquer the Mighty River

First up is the Mighty River, as the Elbe was often called in the olden days. It certainly commands your respect, but as you aren't likely to come across any large ships on the surface anymore, it has become an ideal river for water sports. You can glide along on almost anything – a paddleboard, a canoe, a raft... Start by renting a paddleboard and try to become one with the current's incredible strength while enjoying the view of Děčín's castle from a new perspective. Once you've warmed up, climb aboard a more stable vessel and you can follow the stream all the way to the villages Dolní Žleb or Hřensko, or perhaps even Bad Schandau on the German side of the border. Beavers, herons, black storks and cormorants will keep you company.



## Paddle There, Pedal Back

How do you get back? Choose between a bike or a scooter. Wherever your planned stop is, Active Point will have their staff there waiting for you, ready to switch your means of transport. So switch up your form of exercise and follow the Elbe Cycle Route back to Děčín. Bikes and scooters can also be used as the main mode of transport for a full day of fun.

## The King of Scooters

A sturdy road scooter can be a surprisingly fun companion. Especially when going downhill, which is exactly what you'll be doing if you choose Active Point's downhill scooter tour. You are dropped off atop the tableland Děčínský Sněžník, where you are provided with a scooter and are given some instructions on the correct technique – and then off you go. You could start among the Tisá Rocks (Tiské Stěny) and then scoot around the romantic little lake Vlčí Jezero and then down through the beautiful countryside back to Děčín. You can choose between a number of routes varying from 12 to 45 kilometres! You are, of course, provided with a map, but you can also ask for a guide to lead the way.

## Nirvana for Cyclists

You can actually follow the same route on an electric bike. The latter has the added advantage that you can easily enjoy a ride all the way up to the lookout tower on Děčínský Sněžník – and the view is worth it. There are great opportunities for cyclists around Děčín – there is the lesser known, yet beautiful, cycle path Ploučnice, or you can follow the Elbe Cycle Route in whichever

direction your adventurous soul takes you, and the Express Trail in the Ore Mountains (Krušnohorská magistrála) guides you through the aforementioned Tisá Rocks all the way to the ridges of the Ore Mountains.

## Up the Rock

But there's no need to go too far. Right opposite the castle, on the left bank of the river, the mighty rock Pastýřská Stěna rises and

receive some training and be informed about the best route to the top. And again – you can choose to go with a guide.

## Seeing the Town Differently

The most popular attraction the last couple of seasons has been a guided tour through the town – on scooters. You will cover all of Děčín's interesting sights, take a look at the castle, and most importantly, you will always know exactly what you're looking at thanks to the guides well-informed and amusing commentary. To top it all off, this tour also includes a gastronomic component, meaning you'll stop off for a nice pint and something to eat – quality guaranteed.

## Equipment Available

Active Point's rental shop and the campsite Kemp Děčín provide the perfect foundation for an active holiday in Děčín. The rental shop will provide you with any necessary equipment. And since they are your advisors and guides, they know exactly what you will need. You can of course also rent equipment here even if you are not partaking in any of Active Point's tours. All the equipment is of high standard and certified, and it all comes from trusted Czech manufacturers.

## The Perfect Location for a Campsite

The campsite has a very strategic location right where the Elbe Cycle Route meets the cycle path Ploučnice, in view of the Děčín Castle, the via ferrata, and the rental shop. Everything is within reach. Whatever kind of tent or caravan you have, or whether you need to rent a bungalow, this campsite is ready for you. It even has a bar, where you can enjoy a cool local beer (Kapitán from Děčín, or Falkenštejn from Krásná Lípa) after your trip. They also serve breakfast, and sell coffee from the local roaster...





# One Region, Two Anniversaries

Bohemian Switzerland (Českosaské Švýcarsko) is one of the most significant sandstone regions in Europe, and definitely the most beautiful. The heart of the Elbe sandstone rocks is remarkable in all kinds of ways, from the geological chronicles of the rock cities and deep valleys, and the unique flora caused by the unusual climate, to its rare fauna, which includes several species that are fairly common here but not found anywhere else in Central Europe.

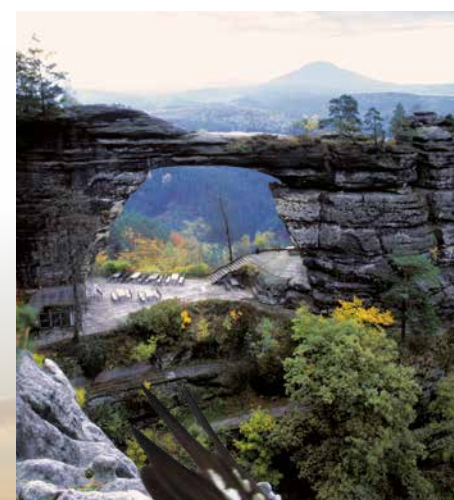
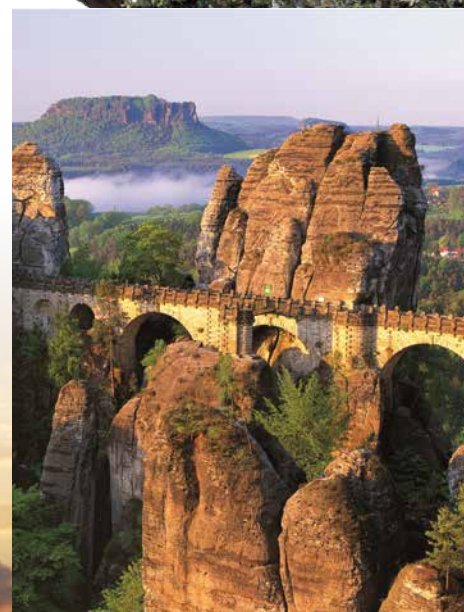


## One Region, Two Countries

Human deliberations and inventions have divided the planet into countries separated by imaginary lines on a map. These same lines have also separated this otherwise united and variegated region between the Czech Republic and Germany. But the rocks couldn't care less about that. Neither could the kingfishers, black storks, horned owls, falcons, salmon, lynxes, otters or silver fir trees.

## Thank you, Adrian and Anton!

During the baroque era, two Swiss painters working in Dresden wandered among this wild, almost uninhabited, region. Adrian Zingg and Anton Graff liked what they saw. The landscape reminded them of home. Another Switzerland, but in Germany, and later also the Czech Republic. The artists were soon followed by the first tourists. And Europe's first ever tourist



construction was even created here: the rock bridge at Bastei (1851). And the tourists haven't left Bohemian Switzerland since.

## Two National Parks

The German national park was founded 1 October 1990. And almost ten years later, on New Year's Day 2000, the Czech national park logically followed, ensuring that this beautiful and attractive landscape would be fully protected. National parks not only preserve and protect nature from being damaged, they also work hard to support their natural development, help reintroduce original species and encourage sustainable tourism in the region. Even if the region is a mere 173 km<sup>2</sup>. It may be small, but you are hard pushed to find as much beauty, even in a much bigger area.

## No More Words Needed

Much could be written in association with the two national parks' anniversaries, numbers could be presented, comparisons of the region before and after the parks were founded could be made, actions and services and could be noted. But let's leave that to the experts. For us regular folks, it's more important to wander through the rock cities Schrammsteine and Affensteine, to climb the peaks of the tablelands, to stand with our heads bowed before the natural stone bridge Pravčická Brána, one of the wonders of the world, or to navigate our way along the river valleys of the rivers Kamenice and Křinice – in fact, even just listing all the wonderful sights and spots in the two parks would amount to a book. So instead, let's celebrate the double anniversary by promising to be kind and considerate to the parks and ensuring that the only marks we leave on them are the prints of our soles and we wander along the marked paths. Happy Birthday!





# Lukáš Hejlík: From Cítoliby to the Entire Czech Republic

Lukáš Hejlík was born in 1980. He and I know each other well, so I'm not going to pretend that this was a neutral interview, we simply had a regular old chat. I have to admit that I've never met anyone who is quite so productive and so efficient as Lukáš. He dives head first into things with the speed of Usain Bolt, and he never leaves them unfinished. His live-reading project Listování is the most successful nomadic acting project in modern history and his Gastromapa has become a guide for hundreds of thousands of people hungry for good food and drink. Lukáš' face is known from the theatre stage, several television shows and the numerous events he has hosted.



*I always hear that you were born in Most, but I thought you were from Louny...*

Well, I'm actually from Cítoliby, a village not far from Louny. When I was about to be born, the maternity ward in Louny was full, and so my mother was taken to Most, where I was born in a hospital on the edge of the town. But I only spent a few days there before heading back to Cítoliby, which is where I call home.

*Cítoliby is a beautiful baroque gem...*

You bet it is! But as a child I never noticed that. Back then, my whole life rotated around the existence of the two crucial gangs. If you weren't part of one, you simply didn't exist. And if you were part of one, your enemies were clearly defined and there was the constant threat of a fight. The first gang was the footballers and the second the fire-fighter youths. I belonged to the footballers, but my sister still belongs to the fire-fighters to this day. I had a great childhood. I remember ice-skating on the lake, building gigantic bunkers in haystacks, poaching from the fishing ponds, conflicts with the fish warden...

*So why do some people think you're from Louny?*

Well, because that's where I attended the second part of primary school and then high school. At primary school I ended up in the hockey class; all my classmates played ice hockey and I couldn't even skate. Maybe that's when my ambition was born, because despite my classmates' taunting when I fell over or had to hold on to the railing, and the laughter my prehistoric skates caused... I managed, and the first time I scored a goal, I felt incredible. Then at high school I just floated along, making a point of how bored I was and watching endless amounts of TV...

*Your interest in theatre must've been born around this time though, wasn't it?*

My mum often took me to the theatre in Most, which I loved. The biggest bard there at that time was Standa Oubram, and back then I couldn't have imagined that I'd later get to know his son at acting school and that we'd start Listování together. I'd also go to various theatres in Prague with a youth club, but I was never in the theatre group. My first acting experience was actually at high school in Louny. As part of our Spanish class, we had to act out a scene from Blood Wedding by Federico García Lorca. This was the first time I was in front of a group of people and I loved it. We wrote the script in Spanish and I acted out this about eight minute long scene. After I graduated, I spent a year studying English in Prague while working odd jobs. I'd get up at five in the morning, go to work and then go to school. But Blood Wedding stuck in my head. I incredibly naively expanded the script – in Czech that is – into a kind of paraphrase. It was in verse and full of easy rhymes.

*But things finally led you to studying at acting school in Prague...*

Quite frankly, I was the last year to still be affected by obligatory conscription and so I wanted to study something in order to be able to postpone being drafted – acting school was a fun way of doing so. I got in thanks to Mrs Dostálová, who chose my monologues for me and who also ignited my love of the Czech language and literature.

*And was this where Listování was born?*

No, that came about when I first started working at the theatre in České Budějovice, where my previously mentioned classmate Pavel Oubram and I both ended up getting jobs. We both read a lot and felt like we wanted to do something more – I did especially. My three main characteristics are: passion, endurance and speed. I instantly put any idea I have into action – it's true about anything I do. So Pavel and I wrote a script based on the book Ocean Sea by Alessandro Baricco and one of our teachers from acting school, the director Helena Glancová, read it said we should turn it into a kind of 'read theatre', with a lot of movement so that there was more action than in a regular reading. This was our initial impulse. At that same time, a librarian from the library in České Budějovice asked us to do a reading from one of Emil Hák's books, so we used this new concept when doing so. It was a great success, people enjoyed it... And that's how Listování was born. It's now been running for over 17 years, and we've had thousands of performances from 126 books.

*You travel all over the country – have you got a favourite place in the Gate to Bohemia?*

Definitely Ústí nad Labem and the library on Winston Churchill street. It's like the promised land for Listování. Ústí nad Labem has been



a regular spot for us for years; it's always packed and people have a great time. We also go to Litoměřice, which is a beautiful town. I love it – I'd say it's among my top ten Czech towns.

*Plenty of foodies follow you nowadays – where does your love of good food come from?*

I've loved food since I was a kid. I was a bit of a pig. I weighed 95 kilos back in primary school. I only weigh ten less today, and I'm pretty tall. After lunch at school, I used to head to grandma and granddad's for a second lunch. My family loves telling the story about my uncle, who always used to go out into the garden pretending he was eating something – and I'd rush after him: 'What have you got, uncle? I want some too!' So yeah, a bit of a pig.

*But your Gastromapa is more for those who want something really good...*

Gastromapa is directly related to Listování. Every day, I'd find myself in a new town in the Czech Republic, and I had to eat and drink somewhere. And so I'd thought I'd share my experiences. It has become a great success, and today the app Gastromapa has 103,000 users, and 30,000 people have bought the paper version. I don't write reviews, I write about my experience. The success has pushed me to be more responsible.



*And what's your favourite place for some good gastronomy in the Gate to Bohemia?*

I have lots of favourites. Hotel Ostrov in Tisá, the legendary Na Stodolci in Chřibská, then there are two restaurants that cook well and have great service and interior in Chomutov – Republika and Ristorante La Terrena. And the restaurant Capra and the cafés Káva s Párou and Espresso Bar U Zobana in Litoměřice... And definitely the café Korek in Klášterec nad Ohří, that's one of the nicest small-town cafés in the Czech Republic.

*Do your projects also take you back to Louny?*

That's a difficult question. At the moment, I visit 200-300 towns and cities a year. And whenever Listování comes to Louny, which isn't that often, not many people show up, and just performing for your family – well, it's not great. I've made several attempts but it's unlikely to change. I guess it really is true that you're never a prophet in your own town. But that doesn't mean that I don't like Louny. I do, a lot. I'm proud of the brewery Zichovec, which is one of the top breweries for new beers, and the incredibly well renovated Pavilon A at the exhibition ground – it might make me move back there one day... As for gastronomy? Well, it seems that boom hasn't reached Louny yet.



# The Eerie and Mysterious Gate to Bohemia Bohemia



The Gate to Bohemia is a region full of wonderful mysteries, secrets and unearthly phenomena. And so it has been since time immemorial. Take dragons, for example – there used to be loads of them here. A whole flock used to fly above the hill Říp back when it was still as bare as an old man's head. One especially reprehensible dragon lived in the river Ohře and ate children on the riverbanks. Or... Well, there are plenty of examples. Let's look at them at least briefly.



## Giants, Gnomes and Creatures of Fire

A ghastly dog with eyes of fire can be heard at night howling in the ruins of the castle Košťálov, where he has been guarding a buried treasure for centuries. The wild hunter Berndtrich roams near the town of Krásná Lípa accompanied by his four wolves made of fire and a burning chicken. One of the Czech Republic's many 'white ladies' wanders around the twisted walls of the castle Tolštejn, headless monks ramble around the castle in the town Klášterec, belligerent gnomes guard a large silver treasure at the rock Mariánská skála in the town Ústí nad Labem, and the devil himself counts his money on the large flat rock atop the hill Kalich, where the military Hussite leader Žižka once had a castle. And man-eating giants have long lived on the hill Slepíčí Vrch near the town Teplice.

## A Devil and Sleeping Knights

To this day many historians are confused by the curious relief of a creature called the Levínský Cat in the round church in the village Levín. Many claim that it's the devil himself who crept into the church to mock Christ. But don't worry! There are thirty fully armed knights with horses sleeping on the hill Špičák near the town Most, and another large garrison of knights sleep in the hill below the castle Hazmburk. And if the worst comes to the worst, the sleeping knights from the hill Blaník will join them. You think these are just old legends? Well, I wouldn't take them quite so lightly. True, in certain cases a rational explanation has been found for some of these rather unearthly phenomena. Such as the ghostly white lady who walked on the castle walls at the famous Střekov Castle, which happens to be celebrating its 700<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. Here's what actually happened...

## Střekov, the King Among Romantic Ruins

It was 1827 and 14-year-old Richard and his friend Rudolf were wandering by foot from Dresden to Teplice, on to Ústí nad Labem and then along the Elbe and the Vltava all the way to Prague, where Richard's sister had already been working at the Estates Theatre for a year. As the boys reached the valley of the Elbe and the mysterious Střekov Castle rose above them, tearing the clouds to pieces, Richard said that he was certain he would return to this place. The young traveller, whose surname was Wagner, went on to become one of the most famous composers of all time.

## Richard Wagner and he Gate to Bohemia

Richard Wagner loved Bohemia and often spent his time here. In a letter to a relative he wrote: 'Oh, Teplice with its distant surroundings really is the most beautiful thing I have seen!' And in another letter: 'I feel good here on the volcanic ground of these wonderful Czech lands than constantly amaze me.' Well, once while during a stay at the healing spa in his beloved Teplice, Richard left his wife behind and set off to spend a week at Střekov Castle. It was the autumn of 1842 and he was enjoying a romantic stay among the impressive castle ruins. He was staying in a room on the first floor of the gate tower. He spent his days exploring the surroundings, and during the moonlit nights he stepped out onto the terrace and stared into the landscape.

## Neither a White Lady Nor a Ghost

His opera Flying Dutchman had been a great success and at Střekov he was wanting to outline a brand new romantic opera about the singer Tannhäuser. But inspiration wouldn't strike. The castle backdrop was missing something... Of course, Richard thought – a ghost! What is a castle without a ghost roaming around its walls! And so he took things into his own hands: he dressed in a white sheet and took to the castle walls to scare anyone who caught sight of him. I must add, that this probably did the trick for him, because the next day his notebook started filling up with ideas. And when he overheard a shepherd on the nearby hill Vysoký Ostrý playing a tune on his wooden flute, he had a musical motif as well.

## The Curious Overnight Guests

This next mystery is yet to be explained. Crowds of tourists hardly break down the gate



the castle Nový Hrad, not far from the village Jimlín, but the interesting exhibition here and the famous painted ceilings attract people from afar. And if you're halfway across the country to get here, you'll likely want a place to spend the night. The castle rents several rooms in this very romantic setting. One night, a family decided to stay here. The next morning castellan asked them how they had slept. Wonderfully, they said, they hadn't even been disturbed by the family upstairs – at first their children were running around and screaming, but they soon quietened down and all was well. The castellan turned pale: 'But... You were the only ones staying in the castle last night. There aren't any other guests.' And how can you explain this story without assuming that Nový Hrad is haunted?

## The First Czech Comic

The last secret is not so mysterious, but it is quite unique. Have you ever wondered when the comics first appeared? Around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in America? Pffft... Go to the church

of St James the Great (kostel sv. Jakuba Většího) in the village Slavětín u Loun and you'll be quite surprised. Because it is quite clear, that already the Goths were familiar with comics. Biblia pauperum – the paupers' bible – is what the books with more pictures than text were called, because even most illiterate folks wanted to know the biblical stories. The walls of the presbytery and the nave are covered in comics, too. You can see Christ's life and contemporary life at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century depicted on this large area.

## Mysterious Scissors

Do you know what the scissors that look like they are about to cut Christ's arm mean? They are to remind us not to work on Sundays – or perhaps the painter gave in to the pressure the tailors in Slavětín put on him to make their profession more visible by placing their fundamental tool in the arms of Christ, making it a tool of the Passion of Christ. The best thing about mysteries is that they are so mysterious...





# FKÚK's Film Harvest

Film-makers happily keep invading the Ústí Region. The Ústí Region Film Office, (Filmová kancelář Ústeckého kraje) FKÚK, is no longer a mere apprentice, and with each new enterprise they prove to even the greatest pessimists that their business is a fantastic idea and that it has benefited the region significantly. The benefits go beyond the mere money that the film-makers bring and spend while filming – tourists' interest in the Gate to Bohemia is priceless.

## Dycky Most! Most Forever!

One clear example of this is the popular Czech TV series Most!, which was filmed entirely in the town with the same name. The success is shocking – the show broke all kinds of viewing records and despite concerns about the show's controversy, a million viewers turned on the TV each Monday to watch it, with hundreds of thousands watching it later online.

## Sightseeing in Most

The show's popularity has brought about a huge interest in the town Most. The resourceful company Offroadsafari from the neighbouring town Litvínov even provided thematic guided tours named Dycky Most!, which is the show's famous slogan. The tour shows you all sights made famous from the show, such as the restaurant Severka, the hill Hněvín, and even the housing area Chánov, which was

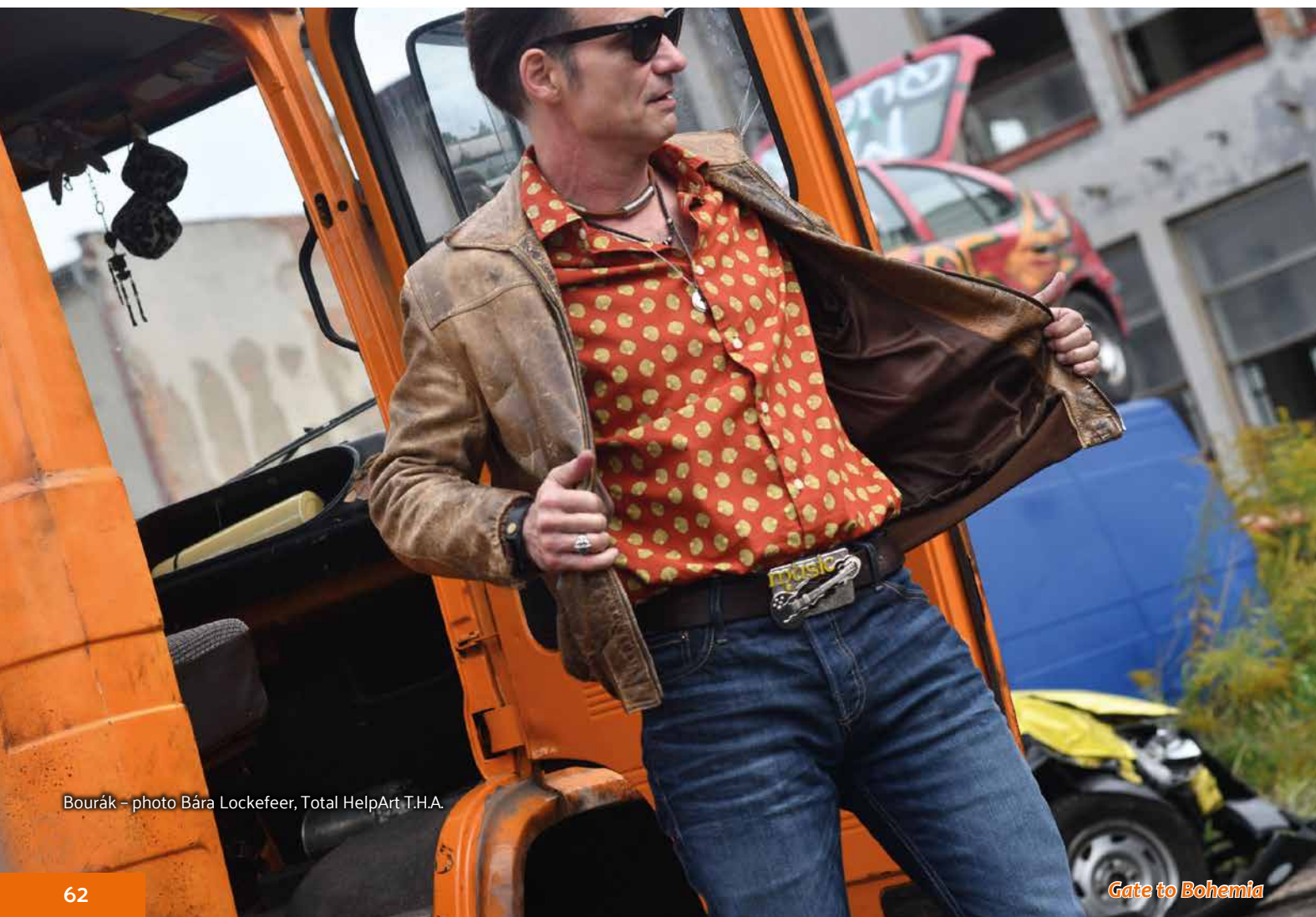
previously marked with the label Hic sunt leones on most maps for tourists. The town has even started using the slogan Dycky Most! as a part of their official advertising.

## Offering a Helping Hand

At the previewings for Most!, FKÚK managed to raise almost 94,000 Czech crowns for the hospice in Most. And that's not all! In September, FKÚK put together a 'star-filled relay race', a charity race that took place alongside the Mattoni ½ Marathon in support of the organisation Zdravotní klaun, a partner of Red Noses International. The actresses Petra Bučková and Petra Hřebíčková, the director Dan Svátek and the local author Josef Formánek combined this physical feat with an autograph signing. Last year, FKÚK managed to raise a total of almost 150,000 Czech crowns for charity!

## One Show After Another

The Czech psychological detective series Sever stars the actor Jiří Mádl as a man, who decides to become a police officer and goes on to discover all sides of life in northern Bohemia ("sever"). This show also passed through the hands of Bára and Helena at FKÚK long attracting viewers to their television sets. The women scouted locations, organised the official cooperation with the towns Bílina, Teplice and Ústí nad Labem, and provided reporters for a scene where a local post office (in Neštětice) is ambushed. They also received some rather curious requests, such as when the show's creators wanted to shoot the mayor. Luckily, it was only the show's mayor that had to be shot, so FKÚK just needed to organise permission to shoot at the local government's premises.



Bourák – photo Bára Lockefer, Total HelpArt.T.H.A.

ČT series – Sever, photo: ČT archives



ČT crime series – Zrádci

## Bílina Is a Lifestyle

Most of the series Sever was shot in Bílina, which has the potential of becoming the next Most. Jiří Mádl was completely taken in by the town. 'Bílina is not just a town, it's a lifestyle. It's an incredible town. The surroundings and the nearby hill Bořeň are fascinating.' Everyone loves visiting a place that is not yet overrun by tourists, and Bílina has more to offer than it would seem at a first glance. In addition to the town itself with its huge castle and white lookout tower at the town hall, I highly recommend that you visit the newly renovated spa Kyselka and its incredible surroundings. By the way, the hill Bořeň, often called the 'Devil's hill' once attracted such visitors as the author Goethe or the traveller Humboldt.

## Enter Bourák

The actor Ivan Trojan plays Bourák, a rockabilly who couldn't care less about his family or their home. He loves American cars, rock'n'roll and dancing with young girls, who are anything but

his wife. This dark, musical gangster comedy is directed by Ondřej Trojan (the two Trojans are indeed brothers, and this is the first time they have worked together on screen) and was shot in 'Šlukdorf', which avid Gate readers may be able to guess denotes the towns Varnsdorf, Šluknov and Rumburk. FKÚK played an important part in this project as well, mainly scouting locations and negotiating with the town officials.

## Varnsdorf Is Unique

Litoměřice-born actor Jiří Macháček stars in the film Bourák and was delighted over the choice of Varnsdorf as the film's genius loci: 'Varnsdorf has a special magic to it. During the second half of the 19th century, the town was an industrial centre, then there was the period following WWII and the expulsion of the majority of the local inhabitants, and these two periods clash with each other and the town of today, which creates something completely unique. It's this unique clash that attracted us and the film crew to the town.'

## Two Spa Series

And the carousel is spinning once more, and FKÚK are finding and offering locations, organising viewings, negotiating with the town... This time it's all about the town Chomutov, former spas and the Czech crime series Zrádci, in which meth trade is the backdrop. FKÚK has also helped a Norwegian team filming the series Atlantic Crossing. These shots also took place at a spa, but this time at the fully functional spa in Ústí nad Labem, where the pool got to represent the president's pool

in the White House. And some of the props that were added to the spa while shooting have remained even after the team left.

## Czech Films and German TV Series

FKÚK are now known to be good at hunting down locations, casting extras and negotiating with town and village officials, so it is no surprise that they assisted the creation of the Czech films Zátoka and Až do konce as well as the German TV series Shadowplay. They have also helped out young film-makers from the Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) as well as provided services for the Discovery Science Channel when shooting the underground WWII factory in Rabštejn... FKÚK has done a lot – and it still consists of just two people! And there's much more to come! A surprise is in the making. A surprise that will ensure that the Ústí Region is even more attractive to film-makers. What it is? Well, then it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?

## Worth-While Festivals

FKÚK also does its best to support local film festivals. It is a partner of the film festival FIFEL in Litoměřice, whose next annual event will take place at the end of August 2020. They also support ELBEDOCK, a festival that focuses on documentary films. Due to the pandemic, ELBEDOCK has been moved from June to the autumn and will take place in Ústí nad Labem. Perhaps I'll see you at one of the festivals.



# A Different Kind of Guide Book



For the sixth time, the fictive Svozil family went on holiday. And for the sixth time, you can go with them. Or at least let them advise you on what is or isn't worth seeing as they entertain you with the kind of amusing incidents most families will recognise. Years ago, when trying to create a modern kind of guide to the Gate to Bohemia, the choice fell on a format that is reminiscent of social networks. Back then, social networks were still up and coming. Today they're a part of our everyday life. And it turned out to be the right format to choose, as the travel diaries are constantly becoming more and more popular.



## Can Fictive Characters Come to Life?

To be honest, not even the creators of the diaries believe the Svozils to be fictive anymore. Partly because, with each diary, it is as though the characters gain their own will, their own mind and their own volition, which cannot be ignored, and which the author simply has to follow. And then – one of the travel diaries' unique and characteristic features are the illustrations of the family visiting all the places they write about. And in order for the artist Petr Herold to be able to create these images, live models are used to pose as the Svozils. And these models have settled into their roles so well, that they have almost become the Svozils.



## A Guide with a Story

What makes the travel diaries so special? The travel diaries are based on a story, which sets them apart from regular guide books. Reading them is like browsing your friends' posts on social networks. You get to share the random moments, bickering, family folklore and jokes that are a part of their trip – as well as finding out where they've been, what they've seen, what they liked, what they missed and their plans for next time. What you won't find is sentences such as: 'turn right at the yellow building 100 metres on'.

## To the Heart of Bohemian Switzerland

Yep, that's where the Svozils headed this time. To see the region's great beauty and alluring destinations. And they were smart – they came here in late autumn, when the landscape is flooded with colour and when the places that are overrun with tourists in summer are often left deserted, making the experience so much more intense. So have a read, see what they got up to, and let their holiday inspire yours.



This is the second weir, much higher than the first, and beyond it the gorge Divoká Soutěska and another boat ride. This time all to ourselves! The group we shared a boat with at Edmundova Soutěska waved goodbye to us about halfway along the way and crossed a bridge and headed off up a hill somewhere. Jan said that at the top of that steep hill, they'll reach Mezná, the only village to be found within the national park. Our luxury private boat trip had quite the start – the experienced boater Lukáš was showing off as he climbed aboard. The boat started moving, and he still had one foot on shore and ended up doing the splits... Hopefully, the incident won't have any lasting consequences. Anyway, he finally got on board, and off we went. He powered the boat with a pole, incredibly skillfully. He has been working here for quite some time and knows all there is to know about the place. He even let Jan take over the pole for a while (which I doubt most boaters would do), and surprisingly enough, we all survived it. 'Hey, uncle Jan, you're like Baron!', Mates shouted. None of us understood what he meant, so he had to clarify. 'Baron, from mythology – he takes people to the world of the dead...' 'Don't you mean Charon?' Natálka butted in. Did I know that at her age? I'd like to think so... Divoká Soutěska is shorter, more closed and, well, different. More intimate. I loved it. Now in autumn, the colours are beautiful with rust-coloured ferns, the gold and red leaves, and there's a peculiar, almost mysterious atmosphere to it. Almost before we knew it, it was time to get off the boat. The view of the gorge from the bridge as the boat set off again, this time with a different group aboard, and the log cabin where the ticket office is hidden below the smoking chimney – it's like a scene from an adventure book. From here we set off on foot again.

And what a hike! We spent much of the time walking along wooden bridges attached to the side of the rocks that stick out above the river with flowing water or steep riverbanks below. The rocks

weren't as close here, and didn't rise to the sky in the same way, but the countryside was much more wild. I stopped for a moment and let the others walk ahead out of sight. What a feeling! Alone, surrounded by this beauty..., and I'm not exactly a romantic soul, as you've probably noticed. But this really hit me. It seems like the path had recently been cleaned up, and it was quite comfortable to follow. But we soon reached a sign that directed us away from riverbank as this is where zone 1 of the national park begins. According to the map, the old mill Dolský Mlýn was just another 1.5 kilometres upstream and I can't wait to see it tomorrow. We followed the path leading us a higher up the ravine, where we met a park ranger who told us that this quiet part of the river is inhabited by plenty of animals, who have all understood that it is best to spend the tourist season in this area free from people. I completely understand them; sometimes animals are smarter than humans.



## Previous editions:

- Around Bohemian Switzerland
- Forefather in the Czech Central Highlands Time Travel in Lower Poohří
- The Magnificent Seven in the Ore Mountains (winter in the Ore Mountains)
- The Return of the Magnificent Seven (summer in the Ore Mountains)
- To the Heart of Bohemian Switzerland

## And where are the Svozils headed on their next holiday?

It's not 100 percent, but it looks like the Elbe Cycle Route is in for a visit!



# Komáří Vížka is Unique Worldwide

In 2009, a vote was taken to determine the seven modern wonders of the Czech Republic, and the chairlift up the hill Komáří Vížka won by a long way. It is the longest chairlift without any intermediate terminals in the Czech Republic. And what makes it unique worldwide? The technology. But for a regular tourist, the most important thing is the feeling of the wind against your face and the panorama of the hills and the Czech landscape that your eyes get to soak up as you are slowly and bumpily rocked up the hill for a full fifteen minutes. The feeling is hard to describe; it has to be experienced in person.

## A Mythical Hill

So where does this chairlift start and end? It starts in the mining town of Krupka, more specifically in the neighbourhood Bohosudov, and ends at the top of the hill Komáří Vížka. The hill is literally mythical. Even the legendary Czech ancestor Libuše spoke of it in one of her prophecies: 'I see a crisp hill, lead in its depths, the matte sheen of tin.' The area was, after all, heavily mined since about 1416. The mining sinkhole Velká Pinka is a reminder of this. At 5000 m<sup>2</sup>, it is the largest sinkhole in the country and a Czech cultural monument. Don't forget to take a look at it from the viewing terrace. It's stunning.

### A Priceless View

A stone belfry was built here as early as the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Its plaintive ring marked the start and the end

of the workday for the miners, who mined tin and later copper. In 1857, a tavern was built to accompany the belfry – and you can still find a restaurant here to this day. But the best part about being here is of course the view. Already back in 1890, travel guides pointed out that this is the most beautiful view in the Ore Mountains (Krušné Hory), and that statement still holds true today. This hill also has several

long-distance cycling and hiking tracks, and in winter well-kept cross country tracks, which makes it a great destination for anyone.

## Dreams and Plans Halted by Wars

One morning in 1838, following an exquisite breakfast, the count Klement August Westphalen-Fürstenberg pushed his chair back and decisively proclaimed: 'Let's erect a chairlift to Mückenberg!' He wanted to help the inhabitants in the mountain villages, who were effectively cut off from the world – only rocky, muddy and often impassable paths led up here. The idea was wonderful, but in the end a road was built instead of a chairlift. It wasn't until 1903, soon after the count's death, that preparations for the chairlift began. By

1914 the project had been financed by the company Siemens, but then... the first shots of the First World War were fired. There was still no chairlift, but the idea of it lived on. In 1932 a new project was planned. A combination of rails and two haul ropes. Preparations began, but then... the first shots of the Second World War were fired.

## Horse Power

In the end, work on the chairlift started in the early 1950s. First, a track needed to be cleared. Eight pairs of horses pulled felled trees down the hill and construction material up the hill. The horses also transported water and supplies for the young workers, and were a great help during the construction of the supporting towers. It was incredibly hard work, no doubt about that, especially as the track is a full 2,348 metres long! Which makes it one of the longest uninterrupted cableways in Central Europe.

## Fifteen Minutes of Breathtaking Scenery

The elevation between the terminals is 480 metres. The lower terminal controls the tension on the rope and the upper terminal is the drive terminal – which is why it has a machine room for the propulsion mechanism. There are 29 supporting towers along the way, of which four have sheaves where the endless rope is aggregated. This cable can hold the 50 seats, on which – and this is another curiosity – you don't face forwards, or even backwards, but sideways. On the way up and on the way down. The chairlift is not the speediest of its kind; the rope speed is 2.5 metres a second. So how long does this panoramic trip to the top take? A wonderful fifteen minutes. And you won't regret a second of it. The first tourists rode up the hill on 25 May 1952, so this year this unique old lady turns 68 – which is a respectable age indeed for the technical components!

## Avoiding Closure

'A personal suspended single-cable circulatory track with detachable double seats.' That's how complicated the official terminology can be when describing this lady with a 55 kW motor, born at the Czech transport manufacturer Transporta in Chrudim. In the 70s and 80s she happily transported up to 100,000 passengers to the ridges of the Ore Mountains annually! But then the communist union subsidies stopped and the number of visitors decreased dramatically. The opening of the borders also meant that people had more travel options than before. In 1995, the Czech Railways, who had been operating the chairlift up until then, decided enough was enough.

They were losing money on the chairlift and decided to sell it. It was bought by a private entrepreneur, who ran it for the next 13 years. Since 2009, the chairlift is property of the town Krupka, and there is no longer any need to speculate about its future as it is now prioritised as a technical treasure.

## A Rarity and a Monument in Great Shape

The chairlift is still alive and kicking and has no plans of retiring. Each year, it transports 50,000 people and 10,000 bikes up and down the hill. That's right, you can bring your two-wheeled partner up with you and then enjoy the incredible, and almost flat, terrain of the Express Trail in the Ore Mountains. For seven years now the chairlift's two terminals, cable and technical equipment has even been designated as a Czech technical cultural monument. Since her sister, the old chairlift at the hill Sněžka retired in 2012, this fresh old lady has become truly unique. It still uses the original technology (the upgrade in the 80s only modernised the machine room and changed the pulleys), which is in great shape and works perfectly. You won't see anything like this elsewhere.





# The Castle and Church in Konojedy Rise from the Dead

The village Konojedy, near Ústě, is known for its natural monument at Dubí Hora, where a breathtaking river of lava burst forth from a former quarry creating what looks like fossilized loaves of bread packed on top of each other into high columns. But this is not the only thing that will take your breath away in this village. I know, I've been. Fifteen years ago, the castle and church still lay in ruins on the verge of collapse, but now an optical illusion makes them shine like new again.



## Hope for Historical Heritage

But it's no illusion. It's real. A while back I wrote about the dying church in Pětipsy that was saved and resurrected by a group of enthusiasts. I could hardly believe I'd come across a similar miracle so soon again. The Gate to Bohemia is simply full of people and institutions that try to defy the ravages of time and the sins of the past. It's thanks to them, that monuments like these are able to be resurrected.

## The Enlightened Count von Sporck

Once upon a time, there was a man named Vilém Konojedský of Pojetice, who decided to

rebuild his family fortress in Konojedy and turn it into a Renaissance castle. The years passed, and following the Battle of White Mountain, the castle was confiscated from Konojedský's successors and ended up in the hands of count Jan von Sporck. Count Jan had a son named Franz Anton von Sporck. This name may be familiar as he is also responsible for the castle in Lysá nad Labem, the hospital in Kuks, and the pharmacy and hospital that were connected to the castle in Konojedy in 1699. He was a strong advocate of religious freedom and even owned his own printing press, which he paid dearly for during Father Koniáš' raids in 1729, when thousands of forbidden books were found at the castle, which caused quite some trouble for the count. At that time, his daughter Anna Katharina was already married to Franz Karl Swéerts, a freiherr from Reist. Count von Sporck was so fond of his son-in-law that he considered him to be his own son and granted him the title Count von Sweerts-Sporck.

## A Cloister of Servites and a Single Promise

The drama following the death of count von Sporck is like something taken from a film – unpaid bills of 300,000 Gulden appeared. The matter was taken to court. The countess Anna Katharina and her husband tried to prove that the bills were fake. To top things off, their son fell ill. The desperate couple sacredly vowed, that if their son recovered and the court ruled in their favour, they would erect a monastery and a church in Konojedy in honour of the Virgin Mary. The court did rule in their favour, and their son miraculously recovered after scapulars with relics from the founder of the Servite Order had been applied. And so it was decided that the cloister would be dedicated to the Servite Order.



## A Baroque Castle is Born

The monastery was consecrated in 1762. By then it was already accompanied by the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie), and the two were connected by a covered passageway. But religious life at the monastery did not last long; not even 25 years later, a decree by Emperor Joseph II closed the Servite monastery. And this is when the son of the monastery's founders – that's right, the miraculously recovered Jan Christian Sweerts – enters the scene. He buys the closed monastery and almost completely rebuilds it turning it into the baroque castle that can be seen today.



## Doom and Destruction

From here on the castle's fate was not so bright. It passed on from hand to hand, until a pharmacist from the town Ústě bought it for his daughter during a public auction in 1819. The last pre-war transaction was when the castle was sold off to the family Delhaes, whom the Czechoslovak state confiscated it from following the Second World War. Just a few months later, a fearful detonation was heard from the nearby quarry (yes, the one at Dubí Hora). The unfortunate detonation of stored explosives significantly damaged the castle's structure, part of the oratory ceiling, and the roof. But that was not the worst of it. The castle and the church both ended up in the hands of the Czechoslovak People's Army, which used them as a training centre and a warehouse. In the 1970s, the buildings' rich interior, which surprisingly hadn't already disappeared over night, was apparently exchanged for a load of alcohol intended to keep the troops' spirits up.

## Hope and New People

It's 2007. The entrepreneur Vladimír Přibyl, known for his passion for renovating historical objects, buys the castle. At this point, the building is on the verge of collapsing completely. The new owner starts the extensive and time-consuming renovation. During this time, a church representative appears and gifts also the church to Přibyl in the hopes that it will be included in his patronage. A very generous gift, but also somewhat of a white elephant. Until a precious group of volunteers and enthusiasts from a local Ústě organisation that works to restore monuments enters the game. These volunteers have already restored crosses and wayside shrines around Ústě, as well as caring for Kalvárie on the hill Ostrý. This time they ask the church's owner for a long-term rental contract, which suits him just fine.



## A Beautiful Miracle

Visions are beautiful, but money doesn't grow on trees. However, the church was able to be resurrected thanks to assistance from the Ústí Region and the fact that the Norway Grants provided 90 percent of the required 32 million



Czech crowns. Within a few years, the church was literally rebuilt from rubble. And next door, Vladimír Přibyl was busy repairing the castle. So when I made my way here in 2017 to take a look at the famous 'loaves of bread', I found myself awestruck as I entered the beautifully restored church and walked through the vast castle corridors. The restoration has been and continues to be carried out under constant expert consultation. These incredible buildings open to the public every summer. Concerts take place in the church, and in the future the castle will serve as a retirement home, a health facility, a boarding school, or perhaps a hotel. That's yet to be decided. Come and take a look, and you'll see for yourself that miracles do happen.







# Dresden International Airport – Your gateway to North Bohemia



Flughafen Dresden GmbH is a daughter company of Mitteldeutsche Flughafen AG, a joint-stock company with approximately 1.7 million passengers a year (2017). Apart from the German regions of Saxony and South Brandenburg, the catchment area of Dresden International Airport, the airport for short haul flights, also includes North Bohemia and Lower Silesia in Poland.

The flight schedule includes attractive connections to important air travel hubs both in Germany and the rest of Europe. These are: **Amsterdam** (KLM), **Barcelona** (Germania), **Basel** (Easyjet), **Düsseldorf** (Eurowings), **Frankfurt upon Mohan** (Lufthansa), **Köln/Bonn** (Eurowings), **Moscow-Sheremetyevo** (Aeroflot), **Munich** (Lufthansa), **Stuttgart** (Eurowings) and **Curych** (SWISS). Leipzig/Halle airport, which is also a part of Mitteldeutsche Flughafen AG, offers also flights to/from **Istanbul** (Turkish Airlines), **London-Stansted** (Ryanair), **Moscow-Domodyedovo** (Rusline) and **Vienna** (Austrian Airlines). Waiting times at the transfer airports are usually short and a large number of connecting flights to and from Dresden or Leipzig/Halle allows for flexible journey planning.

In addition, there are many direct flights from Dresden and Leipzig/Halle to popular tourist destinations in the Mediterranean, by the Atlantic, Red or Black Sea. These destinations include e.g. **Athens** (from Dresden only), **Bastia** (from Dresden only), **Dubai**, **Hurghada**, **Lamezia Terme**, **Malta**, **Monastir**, **Marsa Alam**, **Palma de Mallorca**, **Reykjavik** (from Dresden only), **Saint Petersburg** (from Dresden only), **Tivat** (from Leipzig/Halle only), **Tenerife**, **Varna** and many others.

The direct connection of Dresden Airport to the A4 Motorway, almost 3,000 parking spaces close to the terminal building and a compact terminal with a high-speed railway station and a conference centre provide an integrated concept that allows for comfortable arrivals and departures or holding meetings and conferences. It takes about 45 minutes on the A4 and A17/D8 motorways to get from Dresden to Northern Bohemia. Passengers can change from S2 high-speed railway to trains to the Czech Republic at Dresden Main Station. The journey from the airport to the main station only takes about 20 minutes. In addition, there are modern yellow Regiojet coaches travelling from Prague to Dresden Airport.

According to surveys, the airport is also popular because of its sophisticated design and friendly and capable employees. There is a shop, "Gate 14", where passengers and visitors can buy snacks, drinks, travel necessities, and many original gifts.

Dresden Airport also offers its popular tours in Czech (booking at [petra.vetrakova@dresden-airport.de](mailto:petra.vetrakova@dresden-airport.de)). The exciting tour includes a visit to the terminal building, a security check, a bus ride to the plane handling area and a visit to the airport fire brigade. Booking is definitely necessary.

#### Flight schedule, on-line travel agency, parking reservation:

[www.dresden-airport.de](http://www.dresden-airport.de)  
[www.letiste-drazdany.cz](http://www.letiste-drazdany.cz)  
[www.unser-flughafen.com](http://www.unser-flughafen.com)

#### Airport information:

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