

Gate

magazine for visitors
to the Ústí Region

Issue No. 2

Interview

The Gate to Bohemia and to my inner self
Roudnice patriot Michal Horáček

Nature

Technical singleton amid
quiet beauty of the mountains

History

Castles meant to overcome the ages

Winemaking

Wandering around in the name of wine

Active rest

Wise paths to the heart
of the national park



The Gate to Bohemia cultural calendar
can be found at www.gatetobohemia.com

Gate to Bohemia
www.gatetobohemia.com

Contents

page 16–17



Memorial Air Show

page 30–31



Religious monuments of the Litoměřice diocese

page 42



Paths around historic beauty

page 44–45



Kráska s náručí plnou historie

- 4–5 Architecture**
Four architectural treasures in Lower Poohří
- 6–7 Mikulášovice**
Following views and scents in the surroundings of Mikulášovice
- 8–9 The Elbe**
The most beautiful journey along the Great river
- 10–11 Fláje**
Technical uniqueness amidst the quiet beauty of the mountains
- 12–13 Interview with Jan Brodský**
About family ties and landscapes full of context
- 14–15 Children at the Gate**
Above ground and in the water or Children at the Gate to Bohemia
- 16–17 Roudnice nad Labem**
Memorial Air Show
- 18–19 Castles of Lower Poohří**
Castles meant to overcome the ages
- 20–21 Castle ruins in České středohoří**
Stone crowns on the peaks of České Středohoří
- 22–23 Traditional products**
Centuries-old and modern traditions
- 24–25 Grünwald moorland**
Magical moorland full of poet
- 26–27 Cultural events in Lower Poohří**
A somewhat festive summer
- 28 Dolní Žleb**
Ferry to Kamenka
- 29 Dolní Poustevna**
Hermits do not live here anymore
- 30–31 Litoměřice**
Religious monuments of the Litoměřice diocese
- 32–33 Osek**
Wandering around the monastery under the mountains
- 34–35 Educational Trails**
Wise paths to the heart of the national park
- 36 Rail transport**
Hidden charm of the Doupov shuttle train
- 37 Natural attractions**
From raven rocks to magical stones
- 38 Větruše hotel and restaurant**
Taste and esprit of the old monarchy

- 39 Na Stodolci homestead**
With local ingredients to the top
- 40–41 Rozhovor**
I have the Krušné Mountains in my genetic code
- 42 Česká Kamenice**
Paths around historic beauty
- 43 Varnsdorf**
Surprisingly attractive Varnsdorf
- 44–45 Kadaň**
Kráska s náručí plnou historie
- 46–47 Mšené spa**
Japanese charm in a Czech spa
- 48–49 Mining tunnels**
About mining in the mountain
- 50–51 Děčín Castle**
Miraculous awakening from a dark curse
- 52–53 Teplice spa**
The ancient power of the mighty Pravidl
- 54 Boat transport on the Elbe**
Undulated landscape seen from the deck
- 55 Comics**
200 years since the Battle of Chlumec
- 56–57 Winegrowing**
Wandering in the name of wine
- 58 U Orloje Brewery**
A stud in a beer-drinkers' paradise
- 59 Kahan Brewery**
The Mostecký Kahan, an oasis from another world
- 60–61 Interview**
Roudnice patriot Michal Horáček
- 62–63 Royal trips**
- 64 Beer Fair**
Where beer is brewed life is good
- 65 Cultural events in Děčín**
The Děčín anchor – full of colours and scents
- 66–67 Libochovice**
Baroque gem on a ribbon of the silvery Ohře
- 68 Terezín**
One person can make a difference
- 69 Loreta Rumburk**
The Holy stairs with humility and awe
- 70 Rail transport**
Chaga chaga choo choo



Rostislav Křivánek

Dear Readers!

Whether you are one of the impatient people looking forward to this second publication of the Gate periodical or whether this is your first time reading it, you have just entered the Gate to Bohemia.

The Gate to Bohemia? Where to find it? Go from the West and look for a gate in the area of Lower Poohří, where the summer tranquillity flows through the royal cities like the Ohře and washes the banks on which not only romantic chateaus loom, but also lighthouses of the traditions of the original agriculture and the chimneys of hop kilns. Go from the North and look for it in the deep forests of the Krušné Mountains, where the difficult mining of mineral resources in deep mines gave name and meaning to the importance of an area with a beautifully rugged landscape interwoven with bicycle paths and ski slopes. Isn't the gate indeed slightly more in the Northeast? Somewhere in the mountains, gorges and deep forests of the Czech Switzerland? And what about from the South? Why not? It may be hidden there among the extinct volcanoes of the Czech středohoří where the Elbe River emanates like honey bound by the ravishing slopes of the Elbe Valley.

When you are looking for signs to the Gate to Bohemia, try the proven one first – the www.branadocech.cz tourist web portal. It will open a world full of suggestions on how to spend your free time, holidays, weekends. Quite simply everyone will find what his heart desires here.

You have entered the gate to a region where we don't dilly-dally, where the offer is always improving. The destination management of the Ústí Region has for over a year now been successfully supported by its four destination agencies. The visitor rate of the region continues to increase as the fifth ranked region in the Czech Republic in 2012 is no longer in a grey haze of the stereotypical unattractiveness of the North. On the contrary. The Ústí Region has soared above the clouds and can be seen from a distance.

I hope that the enthusiasm for travelling which breathes from this magazine will guide your footsteps to our region and, most importantly, that the words on this paper transform into wonderful experiences beyond the Gate to Bohemia.

Jan Szántó
Councillor of the Ústí Region
for Regional Development, International Relations and Tourism



Published by the Regional Authority of the Ústí Region
Velká Hradební 3118/48, 400 02 Ústí nad Labem
Telephone: +420 475 657 111
Fax: +420 475 200 245
E-mail: urad@kr-ustecky.cz

www.kr-ustecky.cz
www.gatetobohemia.com

Creative and graphic design: NOESIS s.r.o.
DTP processing, production and printing: NOESIS s.r.o.
Author of texts: Rostislav Křivánek
Photos: Archive of the Ústí Region, archive of the Czech Switzerland, o. p. s.,
archive of DA Krušné Mountains, o. p. s.,
archive of DA Lower poohří, o. p. s., archive of the city of Úštěk,
Tomáš John, Petr Mikšíček, Dan Fiker
© NOESIS s.r.o. www.noesis.cz

Author's invitation

Believe me, it is beautiful and exalting to wander the corners of the Gate to Bohemia and discover its wonders. Albeit I am of German origin, I was born in Děčín and in my youth I travelled around the Usti Region every now and then, but only now, at my ripe old age, I again and again marvel at the breath-taking scenery of the Ore Mountains, at the inimitability of the České středohoří, at the picturesque beauty of the Ohře and the cities, castles and chateaus lining its lower flux and at the fascinating land of rocks and gorges, streams and fragile cottages in the profligately romantic Czech Switzerland. If you allow me, I would like to be your vanguard explorer. I will smell, taste, experience, daydream – and then I will report about it. I hope my words will manage to at least evoke to some extent all that is awaiting you, should you follow in the footsteps of the stories contained in the following pages. I enjoyed it very much and I wish, with all of my soul, that you enjoy it too, and that you, just like me, fall in love with the charm of a territory which is still somewhat undiscovered. And that is a heck of a challenge!

Rostislav Křivánek

Four architectural treasures in Lower Poohří

“Ohře is a glittering ribbon on which the beads of cities, castles and chateaus are strung. From time immemorial, people were attracted to build their homes on its banks – and this subconscious desire to be near the life-giving river lives in us as well. Let’s visit four gems, four noteworthy castles.”

KLÁŠTEREC NAD OHŘÍ – CASTLE OF PORCELAIN

On the very bank of Ohře a dark red castle stares at the scenery. It used to be an austere fortress, before its owners rebuilt it into a Renaissance residence. Today, however, we admire its current Neo-gothic design and the remains of the very penetrative but innovative Baroque reconstruction, initiated by Michal Oswald Thun. Honestly, he had no other choice as the castle burned down in 1639. His plan was however fortuitous – he commissioned the Italian architect Carlo Lurago and a four-wing castle with an appealing courtyard, side arcade corridor, splendid sala terrena and a spacious English park gradually grew on the banks of the Ohře. Opposite the castle, Michal Oswald built a church of the Holy Trinity with a Thun tomb in which he was later to be the first buried. In the middle of the 20th century, valuable Baroque sculptures by Jan Brokoff were moved to the castle garden from one of the water fountains in the square they used to adorn. It is still possible to see and admire all of it today. There are a total of three scenic circuits here. The first will take you to the castle chambers which have for sixty years housed the Museum of porcelain, a rare exhibition from the collections of the Museum of Decorative Art in Prague. Chinese, Japanese, European more than 220 years of Czech porcelain history can be seen in 25 halls – a lavish display of fragile beauty indeed. In the next circuit you be led to the basement where you can find a paradise for children – a fairy-tale world of ghosts and historic puppets. The third circuit offers an exhibition of precious stones, a tour of the Thun tomb and a climb to the top of castle tower, under which this fragile castle and its surroundings spread out like a napkin draped over the glade by the river.

STEKNÍK – CASTLE SURROUNDED BY TERRACES

If we continue down the Ohře River and pass the historic Žatec, our rambling will lead us to Stekník Castle. The village alone, despite its neurotic name, is quiet and extraordinary – the picturesque Baroque gabled estates are the pride of the local village historical area. However, the town’s landmark is the castle. This ornate and thoroughly charming Rococo building is surrounded by artfully structured gardens grouped into five terraces connected by steps and gates. The interiors are unfortunately not accessible as a thorough reconstruction is underway (perhaps it will not be too long before we can walk through the castle corridors with our heads backswep admiring Rococo frescos that have shaken hands with expert restorers), however, the castle chapel, which is open to visitors, is nonetheless a beautiful and worthy substitute. It is decorated with fresco paintings reflecting the initiation of the Virgin Mary at St. Elizabeth, which will also undergo restoration in the near future. Stekník is particularly attractive for its gardens. Wander around, sit on the stairs between the terraces and let the intoxicating smell of flowers and herbs overtake you and maybe even philosophise a little about where the still undiscovered entrance to the underground passage which leads from the castle to Ohře could be, admire the statues and torsos of the decorative Rococo ceramics on the terrace galleries – it is an abundant dose of tranquillity and beauty. And who amongst us does not need it, right?

LÍČKOV – A CASTLE FULL OF PICTURES

If we want to include Líčkov in our castle tour, and it would be a mistake not to, we need to go about seven kilometres south. The place is truly magical indeed – after all it used to be a stronghold in the 14th century, and perhaps even earlier it was a Baroque castle with Rococo elements. The story of this residence will take your breath away, and the story of its current owner even more so. From the mid-19th century the castle has successively served as a brewery, distillery, chicory plant, warehouse, and was slowly wasting away. In 1925, it was bought by Oskar Brázda, a distinguished Czech painter. In 1938 he was forced out by the Nazis, and ten years later the communists set aside a few rooms for him and turned the castle into a state farm. At that time Brázda was already dating Mařenka, a girl from Líčkov, whom he had met in the meadows and asked to become his model. Let us move to happier times – in 1992 the castle was returned to the widow Marie Brázdová (yes, the very same Mařenka from Líčkov) who little by little, basically with her own hands, restored the castle to its former charm. She built a worthy exhibition of big canvases and smaller artwork of her beloved husband, and despite her advanced age, she lives here alone and does not shy away from any kind of work. If you are lucky she will give you a tour of the castle herself with incredible gusto and vigour. The paintings are as impressive as the castle itself – you will see the interiors and the castle chapel, but lady Mařenka, that is a once-in-a-lifetime encounter. And when you see the portraits from her youth, you will indeed stop breathing.

NEW CASTLE – A CASTLE RETURNED TO LIFE

Now the road will lead us back to Ohře, most likely through Drahomyšl, where beyond the village patiently awaits one of the biggest Czech menhirs – the Petrified monk, in the direction of Louny, all the way to the village of Jimlín. Above it rises the New Castle, a large castle complex. In times long past, a proud and important seat which was founded as a stone stronghold some time in the 14th century, and whose current appearance dates from the Baroque period, and then especially after 1994. In the meantime the castle often served the army, and during communism the farmers. A sensitive and accurate reconstruction is nearing its end. The New Castle is owned by the Ústecký Region – so we can once again after more than one hundred years come here without falling into a military latrine or a pile of manure.

On the contrary, New Castle is in great shape. Should you choose the non-guided tour, you will walk through all three of the courtyards, look into the dungeons and even climb the tower to see far into the distance. A guided tour will walk you through the castle interiors, which are much more colourful than usual. In addition to the chambers (with their unbelievable wooden painted ceilings) you will also find an open kitchen, a collection of historic sewing machines, paper models of castles and chateaus, a chapel, Baroque kiln, bee exposition, traditional carpentry workshop, a laundry room with mangle and an exhibition of ancient washers. You can even stay in the castle’s accommodation or get married in the chapel, and it is the scene for many cultural events including interesting exhibits.

Following views and scents in the surroundings of Mikulášovice

Mikulášovice is a town located amongst the beautiful countryside. From here one can easily reach the entire Czech-Saxon Switzerland (while it is paradoxically closer from here to the Saxon part), but it is also the starting point for the region of arborous hills and hillocks, a land of captivating primitiveness and unpretentious beauty to the northernmost part of the country, where Bohemia gently touches Lužice. The only prerequisites are good shoes and the determination to ramble. It stands to reason that this place was once swarming with bandits, thieves and smugglers. It is extremely appealing to walk in their footsteps as the paths they left are logical, hidden and every once in a while will lead you to places where you can see far into the distance.

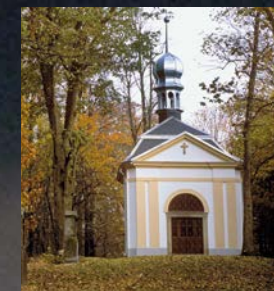
WHICHEVER DIRECTION YOU WANT

Let's go... to the south. Past the picturesque Mikulášovice swimming pool, over Hraniční hill, formerly called Hanč or Hantschberg. Enormous granite boulders in the forest suggest that this is the boundary of the sandstone kingdom – and that is where we are headed. Weifberg is awaiting us. One of the newest watchtowers in the area, a well-built, wooden, thirty-seven metre tall beauty, which generously offers us a view of nearly the entire Czech and Saxon Switzerland. Right below it is the little town of Hinterhermsdorf – where there is also a swimming pool which looks like it has been painted, and right in the centre of the town, beautiful Upper Lusatian houses, an educational and playful forest area, but above all, not far from here, in a craggy gorge of the Křivnice River, one of the biggest tourists attractions of Saxon Switzerland awaits us, Obere Schleuse or the Upper dam. Here you can board a boat and let it take you to a romantic backwater between perpendicular rocks. And skilled hikers can go against the current of Křinice to Bohemia and from Kyjovské Valley over Brtníky back to Mikulášovice. Or would you like to go west, on the Bandit path, which finally got new signs this year? This historic path will lead us to Mikulášovice Dancer watchtower, a more than one hundred year old lady in a red dress which literally offers us a royal view, said to be the most integrated in all of Czech-Saxon Switzerland. Descending to Sebnitz, a town of silky flowers, is a piece of cake – and it is worth it. Or would you rather head north? To the region of stuck out tongues, of meadows among truculently muffled forests, to Lipová and a gradual castle restoration, to the Stations of the Cross and the peaks of Annaberg and Jáchym, to Lobendava, Liščí and Severní – to the northernmost corners of Bohemia... All that remains is the East.



THE EASTER RIDERS ON WOLF MOUNTAIN

Before we head there, let's stay a while in Mikulášovice because missing a tour of the largest church in the area, the white painted Church of St. Mikuláš with remarkable paintings, reliquaries and organ would be a shame indeed. Especially if it happens to be Easter Sunday and the Easter Riders on horses in black suits, top hats and with gold-red sashes leave the church after mass. This almost forgotten and recently resurrected tradition is a spectacle that is hardly found anywhere else in Bohemia. Directly opposite the church is the interesting former Kraus observatory, a few steps away is the pleasant and hospitable information centre housed in the same building as Skloluxus, an art studio where you can try painting on glass... But now, let us follow the morning star to the East. We are back on the Bandit path from which it is wise to turn toward a breath-taking triangular chapel of the Holy Trinity and then follow it all the way to Brtník. The local information centre is very unique. Housed here is the Ametyst Gallery with a permanent exhibition of stones from all over the world including a sales exhibit of photographs by Zdeněk Patzelt, one of the most distinguished landscape artists of Czech-Saxon Switzerland. Just a little further on Cross hill above the village, a subtle but beautiful Station of the Cross is hidden away. Over one more hill and the third watchtower in Mikulášovice Valley, a brick tower on Wolf mountain, will appear in front of us.



No need to take a compass with you as the local lodestone will literally start it spinning. The Lusatian Mountains, the entire Šluknov area and the Elbe sandstones, are further sights to behold. At the bottom of the hill lies the village of Wolf Mountain. If nowhere else, make a stop here for sure, in the local "factory for fragrance and beauty". The company Nobilis Tilia (Latin for beautiful linden) resides here in a house which is surrounded by a garden and arboretum, three ponds and a walking path. In the local garden, they will let you smell the herbs and teach you how to recognise them – they literally live on herbs here. The widest range of certified natural cosmetics that you could imagine is also made

here – a must for children, athletes, people with allergies, and of course even for women. Here they understand herbs like no one else. They even have a tea room where you can relax with a book from their library and a cup of tea, a little shop where they show you an entire pallet of products, initiate you in their secrets and give you advice how to cure what ailment. And when you are completely embalmed, you can go back to the garden and try one of the sensoriums – for example, barefoot therapy.



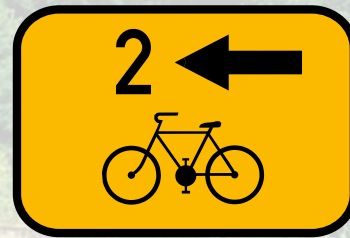
The most beautiful journey along the Great river

Rambling along rivers has been given to man since the beginning of time. Alongside every river are traceable, even if unused, trails that were certainly used in times when people would pass by an area for their work, faith, trade, love, adventure, or entertainment... And when the river is so important that she has always been called the Great River, and is one of Europe's water arteries, the trails, paths and roads of its banks never disappear. To go along the Elbe means to trace the footsteps of our ancestors. And so we shall – we know which way to go. But now the question is how... Slowly, as we are coming to the conclusion that moving under our own power is healthy, meaningful, considerate and last but not least enormously entertaining. We certainly won't give up our cars and airplanes, however, as much as possible, in increasingly larger numbers we seek self-powered activities. The bicycle is becoming our more frequent friend – yet it is also an invention which will soon be 200 years old! After all, it was invented by Karl Drais in Karlsruhe, which is, of course, on the banks of a river (Rhine). All in all bike riding along a river is logical and above all beautiful... Especially along the Elbe.

On a steep rock, the romantic Střekov thoughtfully looks down at the wonder of wonders, the Masaryk lock, under which the hungry cormorants hunt. We comfortably pass through traffic heavy Ústí. We have barely tasted the wine, and here we are in Velké Břeno, where another blood of the Czech countryside announces itself, our beer. České středohoří will accompany us to Buková Mountain and lets us look for the Elbe sandstones. They will soon announce themselves as slender silhouettes as Děčín Castle and its tiny opponent on the Pastýřská wall appear. What is happening right now is hard to take with the senses. On both banks rise grandiose rock cliffs, which formed by filigree erosion and decorated with rock towers and sandstone formations of all conceivable shapes. Beavers sit around curiously a few metres from the cycle path. Behind each meander, the scenery changes as we head deeper and deeper into the mountains of Czech-Saxon Switzerland. There is no wall or latch in Hřensko and the cycle path kindly invites us to continue our wonderful journey – to Píra, Königstein, the Saxon table mountains and more, all the way to Saxon Florence, Dresden and... No, let's stop for now and play the film which our eyes have recorded in the nearly one hundred kilometres of practically straight path. It is an epic, emotionally charged, moreover because man can hardly refrain from gushing on about the unbearable beauty of this country.

MEET THE ELBE BICYCLE PATH

Now imagine that there exists only one, tailor-made, constantly improved and extended cycle trail from Hamburg all the way to Prague, or perhaps to the Krkonoše, for us to stay on alongside the Elbe. In Germany, they call it the Elberadweg and in the Czech Republic it is called the Elbe Cycle Path. It leads, of course, through the entire Gateway to Bohemia. In the Ústí Region it is 96 kilometres long, of which only three kilometres need to be completed to achieve the set standard. Ninety-six kilometres from Hněvice to Hřensko is there for us to enjoy a more benign profile and to go “down the river” so to speak. Every once in a while side trails appear which will lead us inland – in case of the Krušnohorská magistrála somewhere to Karlovy Vary. Cycling enthusiasts with a sense for beauty with healthy lungs, can swallow up kilometres without limitations, and will be sure to see things unheard of.



A GOOD IDEA DESERVES SUPPORT

The Elbe bicycle path is always improving. It will never actually be completed because even if every metre of the trail is finished, it will always be busy around it. There will be more bed-and-breakfasts and options for accommodation, opportunities for refreshments and the replenishment of energy, and the selection will change and improve, and we lovers of bicycles of all kinds, will let ourselves be spoilt and shall keep returning here and... Well, it is not so easy. But as long as there are enlightened people who understand what such a bicycle path can bring to the whole region, and as long as there are those who let themselves be tempted by its beauty and comfort, there is no reason to stop being optimistic. Even today there is an abundance of opportunities to find a place to get good food, spend a night, to rest, and even take a boat ride aboard the Porta Bohemica or her sister Poseidon, or to entrust oneself to a railroad which has been a faithful servant to the Elbe for a long time.



COUNTRYSIDE OF ALLURING BEAUTY

Let us randomly begin on the wide and straight banks within sight of Říp Mountain with hop gardens and fields laden with vegetables, and let's race row boats along the Račice rowing canal. Soon, something very peculiar will start happening in the landscape around us. Suddenly, there are hills, hummocks and peaks everywhere, shapes so quaint and picturesque, they cannot be seen anywhere else. České středohoří welcomes us with its clusters and cones, its face rolled by volcanoes and slowly gaining grandeur. From beyond the snow-white and lofty Litoměřice, the water comes running down the hills through vineyards toward Velké Žernoseky, where the land will release its red and white blood. The hills suddenly pour almost into the river and for a moment they surround it in an incredibly solemn and spectacular scenery as we begin to tread through Porta Bohemika, the very Gateway to Bohemia.



Technical uniqueness amidst the quiet beauty of the mountains

The landscape of the Ore Mountains is beautifully rugged and stunningly distinctive. Some people say it's like Canada here, or it's like the Bohemian Forest... No, it's like the Ore mountains here. They in fact resemble nothing but themselves. These rugged and unyielding mountains are always stubborn. You have to deserve their beauty, walk amongst it, and tune in to it. You will meet, in these endless forests, meadows, peaks and valleys, unprecedented things. Perhaps they will be wonders of human craftsmanship, which have perfectly blended with the nature and the mountains have appropriated them for years. One such wonder is the Fláje water project.

FLÁJE – A DAMN IN THE WOODS

Barely two kilometres from the German border, in the valley between Klíny, Český Jiřetín and Moldava, shines the dimly red-brown surface of a lake fed by streams, which make their way here through the surrounding moorlands and bring in water the colour of black beer. A beautiful place where water gently caresses the banks, where evening after evening the shadows of trees die in the lake, where the restless backs of fish romp about under the surface, where low and stout forests dip their roots into the cold water. Yet even in the late 1950s a village stood where now only the memory of its 400 inhabitants remain. Fláje. The remains of the houses rest at the bottom of the lake, and only the wooden church of St. John the Baptist was moved to Český Jiřetín. The Fláje stream was dammed with a daring and unique structure, which is by its construction so rare (there are only two in Europe) that it was named a part of the cultural heritage. Why? It is a concrete pillar dam formed by 35 pillars, 19 of which are hollow. The dam is 459 metres long, 6 metres wide and rises up above the terrain to almost 50 metres. Dams are generally a gigantic mass of material through which runs a tunnel. The Fláje dam is different. Pillars leaning against one another create a “water-face” against which the water rests and by way of the magic of physics ensure that the dam will not break. And what a pressure it is – 22 million cubic metres of water in some places up to 57 metres deep, spread over an area of 170 hectares. It is a lighter elegant beauty with remarkable endurance, with its legs housed in the very granite rock it stands upon. Moreover, it is built of local material from a stone quarry built here to facilitate its construction, exporting the cement with specially built cable cars. And what is all this for? Fláje supplies drinking water to a vast region including Teplice and Ústí nad Labem. And that is not all it can do – during the floods in 2002 the fifty year-old dam managed to contain the millennial water, thus giving people enough time to safely evacuate the area, despite the fact that there was as much precipitation in twenty-four hours as there is in a six-month period.

TO PUKLÁ MOUNTAIN, ALONG THE CANAL OR ACROSS THE MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY

You have probably realised that bathing is not allowed here. But that's just it, the Ore Mountains aren't a set table, they are a hidden treasure. One must search, but he gets a great deal when he finds what he is looking for. Whether you come here by bike through the Fláje preserve from Klíny, or come here on foot from Jiřetín or Moldava, or again from Dlouhé Louky, you will always be excited. Trips around the dam are exceptional. And best of all – the beauty doesn't end anywhere. For example, by climbing Puklá Mountain about half a kilometre away, you will see Fláje from a different angle. Just be careful a storm isn't coming. The scenery of the dam is exceptionally beautiful then, ominous and romantic, but you could get struck by lightning. This reddish mountain literally attracts lightning. Just take a look around – the tiny chips of rock are the result of the fiery messengers' blows. Otherwise, the view from Puklá Mountain is unprecedented. Not only over all of Fláje or its adjacent preserve, but also of the highest mountain far and wide, 956 metres above sea level, the towering Loučná. And when you drop your eyes a beautiful rock sea awaits you. A wonderful place. But you can keep going. When you have filled up on the sumptuous view from the dam, and a breath-taking view it is, you can be sure that the dam is only about fifty metres away from the terrain below it at its highest point. This allows you to follow in the footsteps of another remarkable creation – the Fláje canal, built at the beginning of the 17th century by the Saxon electors and the Lobkowitz family, which for a long 243 years enabled timber to be floated as far as 18 kilometres to its mouth in the German Clausnitz. They are currently feverishly working to restore this monument and the installation of cross-border nature trail information signs. You may also travel along the country borderline on the spectacular Flájská mountainous country educational trail. It is twenty-three kilometres long, starting at the Mountain of St. Catherine and ending in Český Jiřetín – you can however take it from the other direction (because it is mostly downhill). You will encounter thirteen information signs along the way. And when you walk or bike through here, close your eyes and imagine that it is white everywhere, the landscape having lost its colour, the trees decorated with ornaments of ice, the wind playing with the snow like a child in a sandpit – and you are carving through the white mass with cross-country skis. You just happen to be on the famous Krušnohorská magistrála. And when you turn toward Fláje dam, you can journey through a network of other cross-country trails – and you will always be fascinated.



About family ties and landscapes full of context

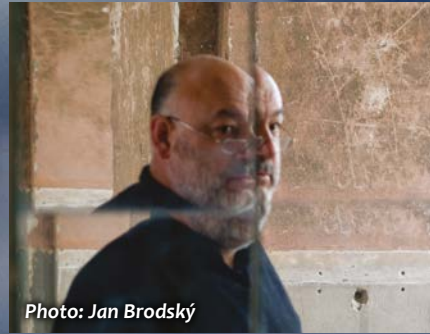


Photo: Jan Brodský

Jan Brodský is a photographer, typographer and an educator. Graduating from FAMU in art photography under Professor Ján Šmok in 1976, he has cooperated with the Egyptology Institute of Charles University in Prague since 1985 – five years professionally, today externally. He also worked as a professor in the Department of Photography at FAMU in Prague (1984–1989) and the UJEP Department of Art Education in Ústí nad Labem (1998–2004). He has had many solo and group exhibitions. In his free form, he often turns to inspiration in nature, enchanted by “magical” details. Lately, he has experimented with colour manipulated photography.

YOUR FAMILY HAS BEEN SETTLED IN ROUDNICE FOR QUITE SOME TIME, AM I RIGHT?

A very long time. It has been traced back to the Battle of the White Mountain, however it is very likely that our family from my father's side lived here long before that. There even are some suggestions that the Brodský clan had lived in Roudnice, not far from the ford over the Elbe, and made a living in the sale of fur. It is possible that our surname is connected with the ford. After the Battle of the White Mountain, members of the Brodský family were regularly councillors and until the 19th century they were responsible for the city chronicle, hence there is a lot of information about them in the archives. And when at the beginning of the 20th century a new bridge was built not far from the ford, its architect was for a change the grandfather of my wife, at the time an engineering principal.

BUT YOU WERE BORN IN LITOMĚŘICE!

Yes, but only because the Roudnice hospital was overcrowded, thus I had to be delivered in Litoměřice. When I look from my desk I see the house. Today, there is a hospice in it. So maybe I will return there and the circle will close. I have lived in Litoměřice for five years now and work as a curator at the North-bohemian Art Gallery. We moved here with my family for work and schools for the children. But we still have a big house in Roudnice that has been passed down for many generations.

YOU CAME BACK TO ČESKÉ STŘEDOHOŘÍ FROM PRAGUE, BRITTANY AND FROM EGYPT. HOW COME?

V Praze jsem studoval, v Egyptě fotografoval pro archeology v Abú Síru a v Bretani jsem hledal stopy Jana Zrzavého, kumštýře, kterého jsem objevil už jako kluk a dodnes mě fascinuje a inspiruje. Jenomže doma jsem tady. V Roudnici, v Litoměřicích. Mám to tu rád a patřím sem.

ARE THERE ANY PLACES THAT YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE, THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I tend to look at the world, history and art in context. So for example in Brittany I discovered what I only sensed at home. The fact that my ancestors had to also be Celts, because the Celtic traces in nature have always subconsciously attracted me. So I may go anywhere from Litoměřice, but I always, one way or another, end up in Varhošť. “Ar horst” means a high set nest of a bird of prey in Celtic. As often as I can, I climb up to the nest and enjoy the view. Similarly, I am attracted to Radobýl with its basalt columns, and we all know how important stones were for the Celts. Or Říp Mountain. Perhaps, even Říp Mountain above all. It is a stigma.

I HAVE HEARD THAT FROM MANY PEOPLE FROM ROUDNICE – WHY IS THAT? WHERE IS THE MAGIC OF THIS MOUNTAIN?

The place exudes a powerful energy. I am not too fond of the Slavic pseudo-mythologies about Forefather Čech. At FAMU, professor Václav Mencl interpreted the history of material culture and described Říp Mountain as a Celtic oppidum. One of the proofs is for example the name of the village Rovná, located at the foot of the mountain – it is named after the “flat” burial method of the Celts who used to bury their dead stretched, whereas the Slavs huddled up. When the archaeologists dug there, they found human remains buried mainly flat. For me, Říp Mountain is simply more Celtic than Slavic. I understand that the Slavs came through here, but long before the place was occupied basically by Celts. And that is what I tend to go back to and will continue to.

YOU ARE NOT A TYPICAL SCENERY PHOTOGRAPHER, BUT YOU TAKE PICTURES OF THE LANDSCAPE AROUND ROUDNICE AND LITOMĚŘICE...

I used to mainly photograph architecture as it runs in our family – my father and grandfather were architects. For example, in Litoměřice I created a book called “350 years of episcopate” which was an amazing job and quite a turning point for me. As for the landscape, I am more minimalist than romantic. I am trying to attain some kind of a logo and I have been most successful with Radobýl so far. Then, of course, Říp Mountain with its pendant, Sovice. Surprisingly, I have never photographed the Elbe, although I consider it an essential element of this landscape.

RECENTLY, YOU HAD A JOINT FAMILY EXHIBITION IN THE ROUDNICE GALLERY. HOW DID IT FEEL TO SHOW YOUR WORK TOGETHER WITH YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER?

Very well. Indeed. It wouldn't have even occurred to us. It was an idea of the director of the gallery Dr. Potůčková. My brother George, besides being a restorer, also paints and creates objects, my sister Eve makes tapestries. You know, we are back to the union of the family with the birthplace influencing even the context of our work. Some theorists claim that we have a lot in common with my sister, that we surely cooperate, but it is not the case. It is something inside of us, something that springs from a common source. It is in our family, in the tradition and in the place where we grew up.

YOU HAVE BEEN THE CURATOR OF THE GALLERY IN LITOMĚŘICE FOR SEVEN YEARS. TELL ME, WHY SHOULD PEOPLE COME HERE?

To draw energy. It is a different world, where you can rest from everyday life. It's like going to a concert or reading poetry. It gives you a different perspective. And the contexts will surface. This year, we are going to have several very interesting exhibitions, such as Glass-ing, an exhibition of associate professor Ilja Bílek and his student Luba Bakičová, extraordinary objects made of glass, then Music and the visual arts, works inspired by music, and in the fall an exhibit inspired by the creative protests of Jiří Sozanský against the devastation of landscape, towns and the human soul in connection with the destruction of the old Most and the onset of standardisation. And in a year or two, already mentioned Brittany and Jan Zrzavý, an exhibition which I have been preparing for a long time and am looking forward to very much. It is my lifelong photographic project.



Photo: Jan Brodský



Photo: Jan Brodský



Photo: Jan Brodský

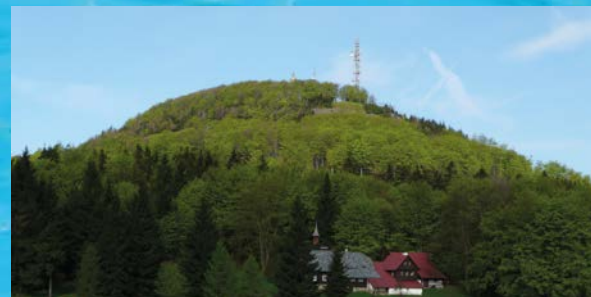
Above ground and in the water or Children at the Gate to Bohemia

If there is anyone who can be really mercilessly demanding when preparing a trip or vacation, it is children. They expect creativity, a large selection of activities, and they want everyone to have fun together, while at the same time they want to be the centre of attention. Their constant cries of “dad, mum –watch me!” proves this time and again. In the last Gate, we mapped out a pallet of zoological gardens – in Ústí nad Labem, Chomutov and Děčín. This time, let's do some climbing and romping around in the water.

ROPES HIGH AND A BIT ABOVE THE GROUND

When the weather is like it's painted, it is good to take the kids to the climbing centre. Such facilities look beautifully dangerous, but they are absolutely safe. An ideal combination for children's enthusiasm and parents' peace. Although, it is not written anywhere that you can't also go into the liana forest, even though you are only children at heart. You can start, say, in the Chomutov ZOO which is home to the Lanáček climbing centre. Its advantage is primarily the fact there are no limitations and even smaller children can romp in it. There are mainly nets – net tunnels, jungle gyms, jumping hoops, but also rope bridges, spider webs and climbers, all of which are only a little bit above the ground, so you don't have to worry. Additionally, it is possible to see the biggest ZOO in the Czech Republic which is all around, visit its outdoor museum or take the train to the Safari – and again back to the nets! A slightly more difficult level of adrenaline entertainment awaits you in the Jedlová Climbing centre at the very top of the mountain with the same name above Jiřetín under Jedlová. Only children 130 centimetres and taller can experience the suspended paths a few metres above the ground. There are twelve obstacles, and everyone is equipped with special gear and training. Nobody will be bored here as a few metres away there is a stone watchtower with a view of the entire Czech-Saxon Switzerland and Lusatian Mountains, and there are several ways to get down the hill. For example, you can borrow a scooter and go down the terrain you feel comfortable with – gradual paths, or steep slopes, or special tricycle carts where your child sits in front of you. Scooters and carts can be returned at the bottom of the hill or you can take the lift back up and go down the hill again.

If your children are taller than 150 centimetres, they can experience the heights in the Dymník nad Rumburkem Climbing park. It is once again a trip for the whole family because there is a special climbing park for children, swing sets, an airplane and a crawl-through hippo which are all free of charge. Bigger people with a paid ticket can of course be equipped and trained to conquer obstacles positioned seven to nine metres above the ground. Dymník also offers a watchtower, made of bricks, called August's, and above it the Tree of life. It is an impressive place, a star built from twenty-two erected five to six metres high granite rocks, which were wrought by wedges more than one hundred years ago. A place of special and captivating power, peace and universal harmony.



WILD RIDE IN PIPES OF ALL SHAPES

When the weather does not cooperate and the sky decides to sprinkle us with rain, there is no better place for family entertainment than the indoor water park. I wrote about the one in Most in the last issue, so just to recap: The Most Aquadrom is filled to the rafters with water attractions – two toboggans, a wild river, climbing net above the water, bubble beds, whirlpools, massages, tanning beds, aquaspinning, aquazumba, and when it stops raining, also minigolf – all of which is available from early morning until late evening. At the Gate to Bohemia, three more water parks await you. The Aquacentre in Teplice has a twenty-five metre indoor swimming pool with a giant toboggan, shallow pool with a slide, sauna, steam room, wet bar, and you can also play squash here. On top of which, you can warm up in the thermal water of the famous hot springs. Chomutov is home to a very modern, spacious and colourful Aquaworld. Children will be enthused about two plentifully twisted toboggans, one of which is on a raft, and the other more traditionally on your back. There also is a wild river, bubble geyser, massage bench, water wall, climbing net, water bell, waterfalls, waves, spouts, a kiddie pool with a slide in the shape of a pirate boat, and even a water cannon. Additionally, of course, there is also a twenty-five metre long swimming pool – quite simply enough water fun for the whole day. To complete the list of the water parks we have to go to Děčín. In the local water park, you can slide in the water on three toboggans. Two of them have a nine-metre crossfall – the red one is 82 metres long and the yellow one 56. The majority of the slide is experienced outside before heading back inside. The third toboggan is inside and is 65 metres long. Basically a toboggan paradise. On top of that there are swimming pools, various bubble and jet attractions from a wild river, bottom grid and spouts or whirlpools, and even tanning beds, saunas, massages... It is however good to know, that provided the weather gets better and the sun dries up the lawns, it is possible to go outside in all four of the water parks, where there is more entertainment – from outdoor swimming pools, minigolf, and even petanque, beach volleyball, streetball and beach football. It is important to add, that there is also a water park in Klášterec nad Ohří, a beautiful spacious park with open toboggans, however, it is only outdoors.



Memorial Air Show

the biggest social air event in the Czech Republic

HOW DID IT ALL START, WHERE WAS THE IDEA BORN TO ORGANISE THE MEMORIAL AIR SHOW?

The first year of the Memorial Air Show took place on the 17th and 18th June 1991. The event began very spontaneously, basically out of a promise I made right after the Velvet Revolution to general František Fajtl, the aviation legend. It was at the occasion of the grand opening of the swimming pool at Roudnice airport, and I invited the aviation aces of WWII who flew in the RAF uniforms. When we heard about their war but, and especially post-war fates, it was obvious that we had to do something for their moral rehabilitation. Something very panegyric, honourable and for the veterans unforgettable. We managed to accomplish it the very same year. At the time we thought it was only a one-time event, and none of us expected it to become a long-time project connected with veterans from both war fronts.

SO WHAT HAPPENED THAT THE MEMORIAL AIR SHOW STILL TAKES PLACE TODAY?

We couldn't get the reconciliation of both sides of the war conflict out of our heads. So under this idea we organised the subsequent years, but our intention did not come to fruition right away. Why? Today, it might seem incredible to some people, but when we tried to promote this idea in 1993 to the former warring parties, president Václav Havel invited the ambassadors and their military attaches to the Castle, introduced us to them and said, he supports our idea. Following the toast and a little refreshment, the German military attaché Colonel Müller stood up and said: "We are not going to celebrate anything. We did not lose the war. It was lost by politicians". And that was it for the next ten years. In 2005, the defence secretary Kühnl uttered similar nonsense, saying that they cannot celebrate with Russia, since they're the invaders. Finally, with my argument, that we are not celebrating countries and their governments, but that we are celebrating soldiers who couldn't choose their government, I convinced the politicians to look at the project from a different angle. Thus, we gained the support of president Václav Klaus who took over the patronage of the project, and the original thought was finally realised. Veterans from the USA, Russia, Germany, Slovakia, France, England and the Czech Republic, full of emotion, could meet at the ceremonial hall of the City Hall in Roudnice nad Labem. The tears in the eyes of these flying legends were quite eloquent proof that it was a very necessary gesture. There is no doubt that Roudnice made history.

HOW DID THE EVENT CONTINUE TO EVOLVE?

The next important act of the Memorial Air Show was the air transfer of the chairmanship of the European Union to Sweden in 2009. At the same time the mission of free Schengen sky was passed, which we opened as the first country of the EU. One event from the history of the Memorial Air Show has an interesting overlap with the present. In 2003, a memorial to fallen airmen of all warring parties of WWII was ceremoniously unveiled at Roudnice Airport. The memorial was to be revealed by the then Prime Minister Miloš Zeman, but eventually, he excused himself from the event. And I believe that as he is this year's patron, he will participate and on Saturday June 22, he will be able to present the award to the best aerial athletes of the Czech Republic for 2012.



“Memorial Air Show, an air show famous throughout Europe, can be proud of the fact that it is the only air show in the world visited personally by the head of State. The Roudnice airport has welcomed the president four times. Also Roudnice was the first place in the former Eastern Bloc that NATO aeroplanes landed, and for the first time in this part of Europe the biggest pride of the NATO air force was introduced... the Apache helicopter and the Harrier Jet, an aeroplane that takes off perpendicularly. Possibly the biggest accomplishment was the first post-war landing of the famous flying fortress B-17, Spitfire, Mitchell and Hurricane aeroplanes, which members of the Czech RAF flew. And last but not least, for the first time the Roudnice airport introduced aeroplanes of the current US army, navigated from the aeroplane AWACS. Namely these were F-16 jets and A-10 battle crafts from the Italian Aviano. I think it is now obvious, that the Memorial Air Show is in many ways a unique event and attending it is a worthwhile experience. Vlasta Dvořák, the founder of the event, main administrator and president of the Aeroclub of the Czech Republic knows a lot about this venture. And so we asked...”



SPEAKING OF THIS YEAR'S EVENT – WHEN IS IT TAKING PLACE AND WHAT CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO?

This year's Memorial Air Show will be 22nd and 23rd June at the airport in Roudnice nad Labem. This year will be a celebration of the 90th Anniversary of Czechoslovak Airlines and at the same time the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad. Held under the auspices of the Mayor of Roudnice Vladimír Urban, the hetman of the Ústí Region Oldřich Bubeníček, the Minister of Transport Zbyněk Stanjura and the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman. The biggest problem for us is to combine the fame of the event with our financial capabilities, as the fans have come to expect an ample participation of WWII aircrafts. Frankly speaking, without sponsors we could not do it. Our thanks for their significant support also go to the mayor of Roudnice nad Labem and the hetman of the Ústí Region. Thanks to all of them we can promise that there will be performances by JAS 39 Gripen, L-159 ALCA military aircrafts and Mi-24 and Mi-171 helicopters. Among the historical aircrafts to be seen in the Roudnice skyline will be the Spitfire, Vampir, T-6 Texan, JAK-3, Mustang and Corsaire. The highlight will be a breathtaking acrobatic performance by Peggy Kreinz, who exercises on the wing of a biplane during the flight, and even climbs between the upper and lower wings. Of course, there will also be acrobatic specials and paratroopers. So I would like to invite not only aeronautics fans, but also all lovers of unusual experiences – the Roudnice Memorial Air Show has seen several records and is indeed unique.



Castles meant to overcome the ages

Wandering along the Ohře River can mean many things. There are many destinations. This time, we will focus on how those who sought their fortune centuries ago used the local undulating landscape, hills rising above the river valley and even the swampy floodplains in their surroundings. They built proud and pompous castles, castles eternal, unconquerable and indestructible... Oh, human folly... The tracks are ruined and somewhat snowbound. But exploring them is engrossing and thoroughly meaningful.

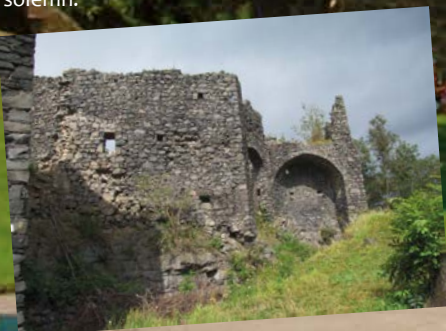
PERŠTEJN

There are three castles towering in the vicinity of Kadaň and Klášterec nad Ohří. We would categorise all of them as ruins, but ruins without question dignified and beautiful. Let's start with Pernštejn, a watch castle, probably from the second half of the 13th century, which guarded the trade route along the Ohře River and the nearby metal mines. The political mentality of one of its owners was fatal. Lord Bedřich from Šumburk could not stand King George of Poděbrady and instigated mutinies against him. His reward was to see well-armed troops with artillery. The siege was successful, the crew was allowed to leave the castle but the punitive expedition set the castle on fire and tore it down, so that it could not shelter the king's opponents in the future. And the glory was gone. Pernštejn is referred to as a ruin as early as 1537. Today, on a wooded hill among the trees, we find the remnants of massive towers, a palace, moats and ramparts, however with our fantasy running wild the castle comes to life again.



ŠUMBURK

Šumburk can be seen from the distance. Here it is easier to understand why Lord Vilém from Šumburk decided in the 1430s to build his seat here and not somewhere else. Even today there are amazing views of the countryside. About a hundred years later, the new owners made an extensive reconstruction of the castle because they believed it to be eternal and unconquerable and... But as is often the case, fate does not have any sense of human desire. Several decades had passed and the castle burnt down, quite thoroughly. At the beginning of the 17th century there are records of it as a bleak ruin. Today in picturesque compositions we see walls with towers, a gate, dungeons and that which remained of the proud castle tower steeply rise into the sky. Leaning against the sun-warmed Gothic masonry and watching the panorama of the Ore Mountains is still majestic and solemn.



EGERBERK

On the other bank of the Ohře, another castle, Egerberk, recalls the glorious past. Breathtaking views that have stood the test of time are preserved amongst the extraordinary remains of a noble residence. The perimeter walls of the palace are in some spots up to two-stories high, and in one of the window openings a beautiful and fragile Gothic double vault and walls clearly show where they once loomed in their entirety, the torso of the gateway acting with dignity and pride. Out of the three castles, Egerberk was the last one to be abandoned, as late as in the mid 17th century. It had seen more than three hundred years of history by then. A thorough modern reconstruction in the 1380s was crucial, when it was converted into a towerless double-palace complex. But what's the use, as it went out of fashion again. The Nobility began to build palaces and were growing tired of castles. For hundreds of years it was passed from hand to hand, but it did not mean as much to anyone as it should have.

BUDYNĚ

If we boarded a boat and let the current of the Ohře take us to places where the banks turn into wide floodplains, in the Middle Ages swampy and hardly permeable, all the way to Hazmburk, to places where the main riverbed leaves the Malá Ohře for a while, we would reach the proud Budyně water castle, surrounded by a moat and ramparts, which was built by Jan Zajíc from Hazmburk in the second half of the 15th century on the site of a previous stone and even earlier wooden castle. We would however have to sail against time. History doesn't let us see this originally four-winged castle with an enclosed courtyard in its wholeness. In 1551, a gun powder warehouse exploded and the stone building was heavily damaged. The castle was then ravaged by the Saxons, burned down by the Prussians and in 1823, there was no other option than to tear down the east and south palace wing, including the tower. However, Budyně is not a ruin! A laic could conclude that the third of the palace, which has been preserved is the entire castle. So quaintly and respectfully the castle appears. Due to the reconstructions from the 1970s and 1990s, when the castle had already been the property of the city of Budyně nad Ohří. Even the revival of the Janda museum which was founded in the 1920s was successful. Let's take a look inside the castle. There are two permanent expositions – The History of Budyně from prehistory to 1848, and Alchemy at Budyně Castle. Displays of firearms, trophies from expeditions of former owners of the castle including a unique specimen of a stuffed crocodile which was brought by Jan IV from Egypt at the beginning of the 16th century can be seen there, as well as a rabbit, and late Gothic and Renaissance interiors topped with the Golden hall. One of the biggest attractions is however an accurate reconstruction of the alchemy workshop and laboratory in the authentic premises where alchemy was practised in the 16th century. The late owner Jan Zajíc quipped for so long about investing in alchemy more than the Emperor Rudolf II that his hobby ruined him. Many furnaces, ovens, melting pots, burners, kneading bowls and secret recipes make an impression that the masters of the royal art are only gone for a little while.



Stone crowns on the peaks of České Středohoří

“České středohoří is a beautiful and rare landscape where picturesque volcanic hills, hummocks and peaks protrude and jump out as far as a man can see. Wandering around here is beautiful in any season. It is possible to incessantly, day after day, satisfy the atavistic human need to vanquish hills, conquer dimensions, stand as close as possible to the sky and look around the countryside. The pursuit to conquer all eight of the thousand metre high mountains is well known. By now, no one has however publically announced a plan to ascend all the peaks of České středohoří. It would be an interesting challenge and it would definitely not be boring. Among other things also due to the fact that many of the hills have their own ancient crowns in castles and ruins. Let's conquer at least six of them.”

KOŠŤÁLOV

We shall start on the left bank of the Elbe, in the area among the rulers of these parts – Milešovka and Hazmburk. Above Třebeň rises a 448 metre high hummock with the well visible ruins of the early Gothic Košťálov Castle. This scenery is one of the armorial for České středohoří – this is how we know this upland, how we picture it. The Medieval castle is of unknown origin from the beginning of the 17th century, although it is apparent until this day that it must have been a huge place. Preserved is mainly the part of a palace tower. Košťálov is interesting, and quite a popular place to visit at anytime, however on Palm Sunday it is especially advantageous. According to legend, a rock with treasure will open up. The silly thing is that it is supposedly guarded by a big black dog with fiery eyes.



KALICH

Northeast from Litoměřice, we can climb to Kalich. The journey to the castle ruins, a preserved torso of the gate and watch tower, building walls and a ceiling with a barrel vault, situated 535 metres high on a rock promontory, will be particularly ceremonial. In place of a wooden fortress, this castle was built for the Hussite leader who gave it his name was known from then-on as Jan Žižka from Trocnov and Kalich. Žižka's siblings and widowed daughter lived here with her children. The castle garrison was commanded by Žižka's brother Jaroslav. It is strange that they did not wait for the Devil's rock, a huge boulder on the top, to roll away on a Palm Sunday and reveal a glittering treasure. At least, there will be some left for us as well.

KOSTOMLATY

In the vicinity of the queen of České středohoří, above the village of Kostomlaty pod Milešovkou, 566 metres above sea level, perhaps the most beautiful and scenic ruins in Bohemia overlooks the countryside – Kostomlaty Castle. When you come here through the entrance gate and see two cylindrical towers and the massive perimeter walls of the palace, when you walk on the bailey along the ramparts and look down at the moat, you will realise why it earned this supremacy. And by the way, when someone tells you this castle's name is Sukoslav with a clear conscience you can laugh – he has succumbed to and misconstrued the make-believe tale of Václav Hájek from Libočany. Kostomlaty is simply Kostomlaty. Even Jakoubek from Vřesovice, a Hussite commander with a black spot in the shape of a chalice on his forehead who sought salvation here, will surely corroborate.

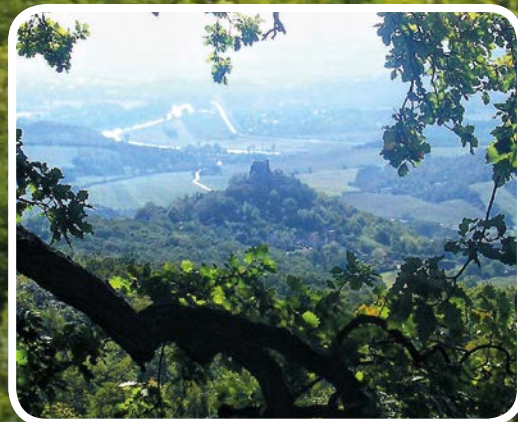


LITÝŠ

At the site of Žižka's Kalich, about five kilometres east above the village of Kotelice, a bit later, Zikmund from Vartenberk had Lityš Castle built (435.3 m above sea level), which was to serve as a fortress against the Hussite castle. At the time, Žižka and Vartenberk fought very fierce battles around Litoměřice. Although an implacable enemy, Vartenberk copied Žižka somewhat. The builders of the castle adopted a unique fortification system from the Hussites, which was used perhaps for the very first time during the construction of Kalich Castle. The walls are clearly noticeable, otherwise there are mainly remains of the walls of the local palace. It is curious there are no legends linked to Lityš, which of course doesn't mean there couldn't be any well hidden treasure here as well.

KAMÝK

On the right bank of the Elbe, we shall first wind around Litoměřice. Four kilometres west from here above Kamýk, one of the most charming villages of České středohoří, stands the ruins of a castle bearing the same name 382 metres above sea level. Kamýk meant a protruding rock in old Czech and right on such a basalt “kamýk” promontory, the preserved parts of a pentagonal star, the traces of a circumferential wall and a south wall with three window openings can be found. A basement, where a treasure was supposedly found at the end of the 19th century, is also preserved. Perhaps the graceful Rose of Kamýk, the daughter of the owner of the castle who was kidnapped and brought to death by a rejected suitor, who now wanders around the castle at midnight, could tell you about it.



HELFENBURK

The last rock crown was put on a 680 metre high sandstone peak not far from Ústě. Its Czech name is Hrádek, however, more often used is its original name Helfenburk. It was probably built in the mid-14th century and belonged to the Prague archbishopric during the reign of Václav IV. One is hesitant to say it is a ruin, more-so a well preserved castle complex, moreover currently taken care of by a group of volunteers. The castle wall with entrance gates and especially the 17 metre high three-story tower, which you can climb and take a good look around the countryside, are uniquely well-preserved. Naturally, there also is a treasure hidden here, however, it is for a change, guarded by the Devil himself disguised as a raven. During the tour, you also have to watch out for the devils, which there was an abundance of in the 17th century. Eventually it became clear that they were monkeys escaped from captivity, which sprightly proliferated here and undertook expeditions for food to the surrounding villages.

Centuries-old and modern traditions

“Each region has its own traditional products. Recently, they are deservedly talked and written about more often. However, there are not only old traditions, but also modern traditions – and both have their value. Today, when one of the small manufacturers manages to keep his brand in the market for about twenty years, it is practically a miracle and it is important to appreciate it. The Ústí Region has dozens of famous brands, traditional and modern. This time, we are going to follow in the footsteps of four of them.”

WHAT ABOUT NYLONS...

In 1907, a certain Maria Worm registered for the knitting trade in Varnsdorf. She soon married Julius Kunert who invested money in her business – and a titan was born. In 1924, the first buildings of the Julius Kunert and sons hosiery factory were built. They started with eighteen employees, but in the late thirties there were about eight hundred employees needed. The premises had their own power plant and their products were sold in Bat'a's business network. They made fifteen thousand pairs of hosiery a day. Soon, the Kunert's factory became the largest hosiery producing plant in Europe. The most important line of the range was called Elite. Following the socialisation of the industry, the name Elite was placed on a signboard and the first nylons appeared. They are in the mind of many people associated with the brand Elite until now – and the Varnsdorf factory bearing the same name still makes them today. And while it certainly not the largest in its industry on the continent, it produces a wide scale of hosiery from panty hose and tights, knee-highs to socks and flatties, and follows modern trends and collaborates with top Czech fashion designers on the development of new products.



LIQUEUR WITH A BITTER TASTE OF THE ŘÍP PLAINS

This year will mark exactly one hundred years since Václav Vinš established a distillery and sparkling water plant Okar in Mšené, a spa town near Budyně na Ohři. Among other things, he made a bittersweet herb liqueur of dark green colour and delicious taste. World War II suppressed the activity of the company, but right after it ended, Václav's son-in-law began to restore the family business. As you may suspect, three years later, the business was closed by the Bolsheviks. At that time, the founder's grandson, Mr. Oldřich Karpíšek, left to study at a business school. He couldn't however continue the family tradition so he worked at Jednota for most of his life. Soon after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, he began the renewal of the family business. Thus in 1992, with a bit of emotion, he held the first bottle of Podřipská bylinná liqueur, made according to the old family recipe, in his hand. The small family business gradually grew and today, after the sceptre has been passed from Mr. Karpíšek to his son-in-law Josef Mejstřík, it produces about thirty kinds of spirits in two rooms the size of a regular flat, in the yard of a family house, in the same premises where the liqueur was made by the grandfather Vinš. In the meantime, Podřipská bylinná has been awarded as "The best regional product of the Ústí Region – the land of Přemysl the Ploughman".



Centuries-old and modern traditions

YUM, YUM, BOBÍK, THREE TWO ONE – NOW!

Another traditional product turns twenty-six this year, and that's a quite respectable age for cream cheese. However, its birthplace has an even longer tradition. Dairy in Bohušovice nad Ohří was founded in the first year of the last century. After WWI, it was the only Czech dairy in the former North-Bohemian Region. Shortly before WWII, 4,700 distributors supplied milk for processing. During socialism, the dairy was kept at a high standard, and was even listed as exemplary under state supervision. When the old orders started to warp, Bobík was two years old. After the privatisation of the Bohušovice dairy, its popularity soared and it belongs among the most popular dairy products for children today. The commercial jingle in the title became domesticated even at children's discotheques, and even has its own choreography, which is learned by thousands of children in Czech and Slovakia. Bobík is made in nine flavours and forms and has long been a tradition which children who enjoy it today will reminisce about when adults.



ROCKABYE BABY IN THE TREE TOP

The rhyme, remembered by many generations, used to often be associated with rocking toys. a wooden rocking horse is an immortal phenomenon, or so it seemed. But it started to be pushed to the side by modern electronic toys, toys that talk and make noise, toys which seem to play with themselves. But it re-appeared and today, it beautifully, woodenly and completely snickers in safety thanks to the Děčín company Trihorse. Its owner Jaroslav Voldřich has been devoted to making wooden toys and wooden furniture for children since 1998. In 2010, he founded Trihorse and soon achieved his plan – to give Czech children back their traditional rocking friend. He had worked on it for five years and patiently searched for an ideal solution. His then two-year-old daughter performed the output control of all the prototypes, so he had no choice but to maximally focus on the safety, quality and usefulness of the wooden rocker. There are several versions of the horse on the market today, and so it seems that yet another tradition is alive. It is starting to show that playing is not so simple. It is important to let your fantasy go wild and not let the toy control you. And it is easy to release the reins of the rocking horse and the children's fantasy races on it at full gallop.



Magical moorland full of poetry

There are still places where time doesn't seem to exist. Intoxicating places of raw and untouched beauty, natural beauty. A plateau, covered by the Grünwald moorland, happens to be such a place. Its magic comes to light anytime during the year, no matter the weather –there is always something that takes your breath away. Meadows of tough and dishevelled grass which run into peculiar buns, levitating egret, fog that crawls around stout trunks of fallen trees, low scrub with warped branches where the sun tries in vain to breakthrough, meadows surrounded by grim forests where it seems as if man never ruled this planet.

PEAT KINGDOM IN THE SHADOW OF SCRUB

But like many things around us, even this is just an illusion. No so long ago the local peat was intensively extracted from here. It was sent to Teplice spa where it was used to cure ailments and helped relieve pain. Once a man is aware of this, he will soon discover the traces of this activity. They are not too noticeable because nature takes back its property fast. Moorland, quietly streaking through heath of all shades, is a convenient biotope for a variety of rare birds.

Ask yourself when was the last time you saw a Common Snipe or a Hen Harrier? Even a Boreal Owl lives here – it's not such a rare occurrence to see its feathered young curiously looking at the intruders of the preserves of its genus. Basking here are vipers and lizards, soaring above the grasses is a Eurasian Crane and a Sparrowhawk, and even the endangered Black Grouse is hiding here from lurking danger... And when you kneel down in the unyielding grass, you are suddenly surrounded by an open book of botanical poetry and caressed by names like Drosera, Crowberry, Ledum, Cranberry, Koprník, Marsh orchid, Cotton-grass, even Andromeda. Neither is a brown-black lake missing. It is not so easy to get here but such are the Krušné Mountains –you have to explore what is not so obvious at first sight. The more beautiful it then tends to be. If you go on a road connecting Nové Město with Fláje and turn onto a forest road at the old transformer, you will get to the edge of the moorland. There in front of you lies thirty-nine hectares of a nature preserve belonging to one of the best preserved moorlands in the Krušné Mountains. It is wonderful albeit challenging to wander through it. And to wait here for the sunset is a gourmet's delight.



TRAIN RIDE TO THE MIDDLE AGE GLASSMAKERS

You know from previous pages, the Fláje dam is nearby. But there is more than that around here. If you leave the magical forestless circle of the moorland, your steps will most likely lead you to nearby Moldava. A maybe you'll go over a field with neat ponds and will think about how beautiful it is here, a picturesque village could be here. As a matter of fact, it once was. Half a century ago. It gave its name to the moorland which we admired a while ago – Grünwald also called Pastviny. So when you walk through the rowanberry alley, remember it. Moldava is a quiet mountain town where you will certainly enjoy a well organised information centre connected with a library. They will treat you kindly and help you decide where to go next. They will surely send you on a fourteen-kilometre educational trail in the footsteps of medieval glassmaking in the Krušné Mountains (that is the name of the trail). You will gradually reach five places where smelters used to be in the Middle Age, and in one of them you will even see a replica of a contemporary wood burning glass furnace, experimentally tested by glassmaking experts. But besides the information on the signs, this journey promises a beautiful walk in a mountainous landscape with soul pleasing views.



It is possible that you will be taken to Moldava even in the winter by your desire for healthy activity and pungent frosty air. Congratulations, it's a great idea. There is Bouřňák around the corner for down-hill skiers and not far are Klíny, a plethora of trails for cross-country skiers. And on top of that, the snow-covered Krušné Mountains – one of the most beautiful winter areas in our country. Perhaps, we should have begun with that. One has to get to Moldava somehow. If you want good advice, take the train. Well, a train... A choo choo train! It will be a pleasant experience on a track which was declared a cultural monument of the Czech Republic in the Louka u Litvínova – Dubí – Moldava section. This track, the construction of which began in the mid-19th century, is both old and unusually picturesque. On top of that, enthusiasts have been associated in the well-organised Friends of the Krušné Mountains Railway Club for years, and you might easily find yourselves in the middle of an event organised by them, for example at Christmas when the train is pulled by a historic locomotive, or on St. Nicholas Day when the St. Nicholas steam express sets off on its journey, and there is theatre and music awaiting you in the Grave – in the train station called Grave, to be exact.



A somewhat festive summer

Klášteřec nad Ohří, Kadaň, Žatec, Louny – four cities, four shiny historic pearls strung on a chain of the Ohře River. There are many ways to perceive their beauty and atmosphere. But when the summer sails to the region on the Ohře, there is a way, above others, that is cheerful, friendly and fun. The summer festivities begin. Each town holds them on a different date, so if you please, you can spend the whole summer in a festive spirit on the banks of the Ohře.

KLÁŠTEŘEC MUSICAL SPRINGS

Let's begin in July, in its first half. We are going to go to Klášteřec nad Ohří, to its china castle to be more specific. This year, you can taste the Klášteřecké musical springs here for the ninth time. Open-air concerts in the courtyard and in the castle Renaissance hall await you. You will sail mainly under the sails of music which is for some reason is called classical although year by year there appears to be some kind of new fusion with modern genres. The festival is annually linked with violin lessons for music students under the supervision of the co-founder and the festival's current art director, violin virtuoso Jaroslav Svěcený. The most successful participants then play at the traditional graduation concert of the festival. The beautiful scenery of the chateau gives the music a somewhat different dimension than when one is listening plunged into a comfortable chair in their living room. And it is not a perversely "suit and tie" event. There is no need to pretend to be a music critic and choke in a cutaway coat – the local musical springs want to satisfy everyone who longs for heart warming music.



IMPERIAL DAY IN KADAŇ



If you really are history lovers go to Kadaň in the last weekend in August. In 1367, the Roman Emperor and Czech King Charles IV with his entourage came to this royal town. And the residents of Kadaň annually commemorate this event, this year for the twenty-first time. As the years have gone by, the script of the celebration has grown. There have been more performers and costumes. The number of additional attractions and games has increased. The entire programme is now accompanied by sound and lights. We can even watch everything important on the big screen. Otherwise, we find ourselves right in the Middle Age. A medieval fair with a display of traditional crafts is going to erupt in the Kadaň square. A blacksmith, carpenter, weaver, coiner, craftsman, potter and tinker work in this all-embracing masquerade. Even the Emperor Charles IV with his entourage is going to come. A pastime typical for Charles' era is thriving everywhere you look – jugglers, trouvers, clowns and jesters, musicians, dancers and actors, also a fiery show and especially an unusually authentic knights tournament where the horses run at full gallop and lances crack like skewers. The whole town simply falls into a different period and it is immensely enjoyable to be a part of it. Especially when a medieval tavern, oriental tea house and vendors offer the noble gentry a variety of tasty food as well as drinks to please their body and soul.

SUMMER LOUNY TEMPTATION

Louny will open their city festivities from August 16 to 18, this year for the tenth time. A weekend literally packed with sports and cultural activities is called Summer Louny temptation and it is its sports activities which sets it aside from other similar events in the vicinity. You will experience handball, volleyball, football and basketball tournaments, karate and baseball. Dragon boat races and a fishing competition.

You can go on a group hike or a bicycle ride, try rowing, target shooting or just take a walk around the festive Louny, perhaps even with a lit Chinese lantern in your hand. It will come in handy especially at the Celebration of the Ohře River which is quite different each year. Additionally, there are concerts of extraordinary bands on three stages – main, rock and country & folk. There is an abundance of food and drink. But you can also satisfy your hunger for Louny's history – during the event the historic streets around the unique St. Nicholas Church are open, including the local Katovská Street.



THE HOP HARVEST FESTIVAL IN ŽATEC

Hurry to Žatec, the capital of hops and beer, in the first weekend in September. Otherwise you could miss the festive, traditional and spectacular hop harvest festival. This year, it is going to take place on September 6-7 for the fifty-sixth time! The hop harvest festival has long been an opportunity for top bands and performers to meet a packed Žatec square. So on its three stages we are going to hear nearly all music genres from brass bands and country to rock and pop. Various hop and beer contests such as picking hops or dancing with a pitcher full of beer on your head will jump out at you from nowhere. A chosen hops producer is usually being fit into knighthood here. Beer barrels are cracked with beiseeming prestige and pomp. And while the adults enjoy the golden drink the children will not know what to look at first at the kids' stage.

You will also bump into a historic market with period stalls and you will dodge skilled fencers, seductive dancers and sprightly jugglers. Due to the fact Žatec owns the only hops lighthouse in the world, its lighting during the hop harvest festival is very ceremonial. Small breweries from across the country and from abroad also participate, especially those which are linked by the same basic ingredient – hops from Žatec. The entertainment doesn't seem to have an end – you may bump into a traditional exchange of beer labels, an annual attempt to break the record length of a snake made from beer cups, the defiling of runner-ups of the Miss Beer competition and a practical jokes exposition at the Homolupul Museum with the oldest brewer in the world, Lojza Lupulín, whose skeleton holding a beer mug in his hand was recently dug out from the middle of the square where the unnoticed crowd is going wild now.



Ferry to Kamenka

The Elbe canyon, seen from the Belvédér look-out by Labská Stráž, is overwhelming. One's heart melts when looking at the big river crawling with dignity between arborous banks under the supervision of one hundred metre high rock walls and towers. And there is an unreal village in the middle of that beauty. Right across on the left bank gathered around the little church surrounded by slender sandstone mountains. Dolní Žleb, until recently the only village in the country with no road, has just a railway and the famous Žleb ferry. This part of Děčín is now intersected by the Elbe cycle path but it didn't take away any of its appeal and certain mystery.

PAVED ROAD UNDER JEPTIŠKA

It used to be quite a large town with two schools, a button, ointments and tinctures factory, a post office, police station, customs office and eight pubs. It used to be a popular holiday spot in the 1930s. For centuries there was a ferry berth, and wood used to be logged from the surrounding forests mainly via Koňák, more correctly Hluboký důl, along Dolnožlebský brook. Perhaps the initiative of Earl Thun had the road along the creek paved with huge sandstone tiles. The two and half kilometre paved road is called Kamenka and it is one of the most beautiful roads in Czech Switzerland. A paved trail winds through the wild nature and gorge along a rock bound boisterous gill. The brook creeps in every now and then. Some rocks are loose but it is an utterly sublime feeling to walk through here up into the woods. From Kamenka, you can take a trip to nearby Maxička where you can enjoy a swim or head toward the borders. Here, right after crossing the bordering Klopotský brook, an unmarked trail leads to the right from the green path. It follows the flow of the brook down to the Elbe. The lonesome valley seems to be untouched by the hands of time. It is idyllically beautiful and quiet here. The brook is in a rush and you are soon to find out why: it forms a several metre high waterfall that drops into an artificial reservoir from which it rushes further into the arms of the Big river. An undiscovered, breathtaking trail also leads to the mountains from Kamenka. There used to be trails and paths which are overgrown today but for those of you who long to climb two metres above the level of the Elbe and look down, here is your opportunity. Local terrains are sought by climbers because the rocks above Dolní Žleb have very surreal and marvellous shapes. The most famous of them is Jeptiška, a thin and elegant needle which is eternally looking up over the river to the Monk.

BENCH FOR PAINTERS

Dolní Žleb is very nice even if you do not want to climb anywhere. Recently, a very delectable spot was created here – a massive bench by the cemetery wall directly in the centre of the town. The view from here is worthy of photographers and painters – the Elbe, a ferry carrying several people and a few cars, rock walls on the other bank, a passing train and the older part of the village with half-timbered houses. There is also a library with a bar room (!) and three pubs. One for rock climbers, one pizzeria and a brand new tourist pub right by the bike trail. Before you get back to the ferry or get on your bike, go and look at the Baroque church of the Holy Trinity from 1830. And if you go on the bike trail or by raft, do not forget to stop by the statue of St. Vojtěch, the patron of swimmers. Sailors have thrown coins in the river from time immemorial for St. Vojtěch to protect them. And they still do.



Hermits do not live here anymore

In the westernmost corner of the Šluknov Hook, from three sides surrounded by Saxony, the town of Dolní Poustevna is located. Set in a valley of Luční brook among several hills that have slowly been ascended by houses and buildings since the Middle Ages. The town is most likely named after a hermit who had lived here sometime in the first half of the 13th century. One would think that on such a country cape one has to live like a hermit till this day. Except it is just the opposite – Dolní Poustevna is alive like no other place.



PUPPETEERS, FIRE-FIGHTERS AND TOURISTS WITH EXCLAMATION

You don't believe it? Just imagine more than fifty cultural and sporting events a year. Exhibits, theatre, concerts, contests... Additionally there are very active associations, especially the fire-fighters, whose meeting of "matýskáři" (the owners of the legendary fire engine) has already been held ten times. There is a permanent puppet theatre in the town where the International puppet festival, attended by groups from all over the world, has been held for fifteen years now – and they are always sold out. The festival performances are seen by over two thousand people! Still not enough? Well, very active tourists participate in a local march on the Northern track, which will be held for the thirty-seventh time this year. Tourists from throughout the country and from Saxony will get together, usually more than two thousand of them, and explore the surroundings taking a different trail every year. If you would like to participate, mark down the second Saturday in May in your calendar, and do not worry about the weather forecast because we go rain or shine – it poured down on eleven hundred participants last year. Do you understand yet? Let's go back to the Puppet house, a multifunctional club for children and youth. Do not miss it. The luminous facade shines with cheerful colours, designed by the children themselves! I have just realised this article is full of exclamation points. Deservedly so! It is not common for such things to take place in a small frontier town. And I have not even mentioned the Gathering centre yet.

A CHURCH OR NOT, THE GATHERING CENTRE

What an interesting building it is. It looks like a church on a hill – and it actually was supposed to be a church. In 1937, local Evangelists started building it. Two years later, people had different things to worry about and after the war the Evangelists were gone. What remained was a torso of a building which was only completed in 2009 when the construction of the cultural centre, which the intended church turned into, had begun. Go check it out. Personally, my jaw dropped. This is where the majority of the events take place. It is such a pleasant environment, no wonder it is full all the time. And this is not yet the end! There is a Square on the outskirts of the town, a former hunting range from 1955, that is still used today – the 51st annual clay pigeon shooting contest is soon going to take place here. Otherwise, it has been a popular tourist spot for many decades, and what doesn't take place in the church or Puppet Theatre, is certainly organised right here. When you're here with children of course you will discover more than just the puppet theatre, as there are several playgrounds intended for different age groups! And where to go on a trip? The Dancer watchtower, the Station of Cross to Annaberg u Lobendava, restored small sacral monuments which will be connected by an educational trail from the beginning of October, or maybe just to wander around town where you will find the pseudo-Gothic Church of Archangel Michael, the picturesque Church of the Virgin Mary, and an especially remarkable baroque Pietà sculpture from 1748 by an unknown author. So crawl out of your hermitages and go to Poustevna.

Religious monuments of the Litoměřice diocese

The Litoměřice diocese includes an abundance of remarkable sacerdotal buildings and objects whose memory is very, very long. Let's explore at least three of them in quiet contemplation. Each of the places has a different ambience, purpose and energy. Let's succumb to it and maybe we will sense a breath of history.

MOUND OF HUMILITY AND PEACE

The highest point in the vicinity of the Elbe in Litoměřice is a rounded mound rising above the neighbouring houses. The city seems to end here and a new one seems to start beyond the ramparts. You can enter the Dómský square by way of three gates, the heart of Dómský mound, but whichever we choose, we enter a special place which seems to be lost in its own time, a time completely free of stress and foolhardy running from futility to futility. One instinctively slows down and holds his breath with sacerdotal administration for nearly a thousand years. when the Chapter at the Church of St. Štěpán the first Martyr mound premises has gradually become an ecclesiastical the city. In 1655, when Pope Alexander VII established of the local chapter Maximilian Rudolf Schleinitz became a baroque cathedral on the site of the original demolished

here. The Dómský mound has been tied The first records date back to 1057 was founded. The entire Dómský district with a fairly large autonomy to the Litoměřice bishopric, the provost its first bishop. The construction of church began during his episcopate.



The bishop's residence (it has never served any purpose other than the residence of the bishop), the Cathedral of St. Štěpán with its tower (completed only in the 19th century), Episcopal curia building (the office of the Litoměřice bishopric), provost and canon's houses are all located on the premises of the Dómský mound. The diocese accommodated the great tourist interest for visiting the Dómský mound and today you can climb the two hundred stone stairs to the steeple, which is the highest view point in Litoměřice, for a view that is an extraordinary experience. And on your way up you can see a gallery of Litoměřice bishop medallions and photographs where you will be introduced to the history of Dómský mound and learn about bells towers. It is also possible to visit a cathedral with a precious collection of paintings by a Baroque artist Charles Škréta. Reservations are required ahead of time (at +420 731 402 400 or svaty.stepan@gmail.com). The actual bishop's residence, which currently houses the 20th residential Litoměřice bishop Mons. Mgr. Jan Baxant, is not open to the public. You can however get acquainted with it thanks to a book by Charles Kuča called "The Guide to the Dómský mound in Litoměřice", which can be purchased at the reception of the Episcopal curia.

TWO TOWERS HIGH ABOVE THE REGION

Do not miss this place. It can be seen from a distance and it draws one's eyes like a magnet. Not far from Ústěk, on Kalvárie hill by the village of Ostrý, there is a station of crosses winding to the top with thirteen chapels crowned with two symmetrical "little churches" as they're referred to in the region. In reality they are only chapels, and there are three of them. The lower building in the middle is the culmination of the Station of the Cross. It is the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. Its dominant side chapels are the Chapel of Finding and the Chapel of the Holy Cross. The Station of the Cross is cut across the middle by an impressive stone stairwell with two patio rest areas and a lower observation deck. Those who climbs the stairs to most likely stare at the early work of the famous Czech Baroque architect Oktavián Broggio with delight will probably have no idea that not long ago it seemed that this decaying monument had no future. One of the chapels burned down, inventory was looted, the building was dilapidated and overgrown by weed. In 2005, a few Ústěk associations led by the Society for restoration of Ústěk monuments began to pursue the preservation of the Kalvárie.



When in August 2011 the Litoměřice bishop Mons. Jan Baxant blessed the restored Station of the Cross the works progressed significantly. Today's condition is even closer to the final preservation of this spectacular monument, which is gradually not only being brought back to life, but also to its original purpose. Another piece of the puzzle is going to be added to the restoration and reconstruction efforts this year. A more than three metre high stone tower will be placed on the roof of the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre in accordance with preserved documents. If you happen to be passing by, don't be satisfied with the delectable view from the distance. It is only a few dozen metres away from the parking lot in Ostrý, and the feeling which this place evokes in you, and the breathtaking view of the scenery with the majestic Saddle in the middle of the horizon, would be worthy even a greater effort.

THE ANIMATE MONASTERY OF THE PREMNOSTRATENSIA SISTERS

If you are passing through Doksany, you will surely be dumbfounded by the vast monastery complex right in the centre of the town. Maybe you'll be surprised that it's not some sleeping sacred monument, but a living place where the Premonstratensian Sisters devoted their life to prayer. This contemplative order which professes lifelong stability, loyalty to sole place designated to prayer and quiet work restored the nunnery in Doksany in 1998. The Sisters are kind and hospitable, but the part of the monastery which they occupy and administer is of course not open to the public. If for a while you want to become a part of the monastery, which was founded in 1143-44 by Vladislav II and his wife Gertrude, as only the second women's monastery in the Czech lands, you can look at the truly gorgeous baroque monastery Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary whose interior shows the unceasing care of devoted hands. Your steps can even lead to a magnificent Romanesque crypt from the 12th century under whose arch one tends to be quiet rather than waste words. You however have to book your visit well in advance with Father Adrián Zemek, the probost of the monastery (+420 731 557 601 or farnostdoksany@centrum.cz). He will gladly, insightfully and engagingly give you a tour.



Wandering around the monastery under the mountains

The city of Osek is situated right at the foot of the Krušné Mountains. So closely that from three sides it is surrounded by the Krušné Mountain forests and from the fourth side it spreads out to the planes in the direction of Teplice. The city owes its existence to the Cistercian order that founded a monastery here in 1196. Another significant building for the development of the latter city was also the unusually spacious and mighty Rýzmburk Castle built in the first half of the 13th century. Both of these Osek angular rocks are situated on an educational trail which in many respects hardly bears comparison. Why? To begin with, you will see two cultural monuments, two memorial trees and three protected areas along the seven-kilometre loop leading from the city through beautiful approximately one hundred and fifty year old beech forests. And that is without question a rarity. Let's set out on a journey, at least on paper for the time being.



CISTERCIAN MONASTERY – EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS OF HISTORY

We are going to begin, of course, at the most famous and oldest place in Osek, the Cistercian monastery, the first national cultural monument. There is a well-equipped tourist information centre which at the same time provides guided tours of the monastery. Let's have a tour then. The monastery itself is slowly restored to its former beauty but the areas which are accessible are breathtaking. When you enter the monastery Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, you will concur. The church is a remainder of an especially happy period of the monastery, a time of Baroque spiritual renewal. Octavio Broggio, a famous Czech architect of Italian origin, left behind a truly beautiful example of Baroque architecture. Richly carved wooden lining with benches, impressive ceiling paintings and a rare altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Such beauty brings a man to his knees no matter his beliefs. The tour takes us to the buildings of the old convent, specifically to the cloister with a well chapel surrounding the Garden of Eden, and then also to the Gothic capitular chamber where you can see an extraordinary unique rotating stone pulpit. The vastness of the monastery complex is stunning. Imagine that in the heyday of the monastery there was also a brewery and a mill. At the same time it is important not to forget that in the era which had nothing in common with glory, the monastery was turned into a detention camp. In the 1950s there were 230 monks, clerics and novices imprisoned who were continuously transported to perform forced labour in the uranium mines in Příbram and Jáchymov. At present, the monastery is alive again, which is simply a joy for every good man.



EDUCATION TRAIL OR WHATEVER YOU WANT

From the monastery, we are going to take the mentioned educational trail to the second national cultural monument, the Memorial to the victims of the disaster at the Nelson III mine. It's a suggestive place. As if heartbroken parents of one of the 144 dead miners were literally petrified here. At the very beginning of 1934 a fire erupted in the mining pit. The mining tower collapsed to the ground and the whole neighbourhood caught fire. The statuary is the masterpiece of sculptor Charles Pokorný, whose work is based on a design by architect Josef Grus. The trail takes us further, along the first manufacturer in the Czech lands up through the forest to the amazing Rýzmburk Castle ruins. To this day the noble and graceful refuge castle tower and extensive remains of buildings and walls leave one amazed by how great this place must have been during its time. Like many early medieval castles Rýzmburk became a ruin many hundred years ago, sometime in the 16th century. Only romanticism brought it back to centre stage. Karel Hynek Mácha even drew it in his sketchbook. That however did not change its status as a ruin. But the Osek residents do not want to come to terms with the gradual dilapidation of their castle and progressively gather strength for its preservation. Let's wish them good luck – there is a lot to be saved.



TALL BEECHWOOD TO A BEAUTIFUL VIEW

The educational trail offers three already mentioned protected areas. Wolf mine is a narrow stony valley in the vicinity of the Osek stream, which is right here unusually picturesque – it has never been regulated here so it has retained its completely natural look of a mountain gill with a steep fall, cascades and pools. Vrása is a roughly eight metre high rock with a beautifully obvious corrugated structure of crystalline slates. Perhaps the most famous is the third area – the Salesius' highland. This geologically magnificent rock formation with thousands of fossil imprints commemorates one of the abbots of the Osek monastery, a lover of the Krušné Mountains nature, Salesius Krügener. When you add old silver tunnels with a protected sanctuary for bats and stop at a place rightly called "At a beautiful vista", you're on an educational trail hard to find anywhere else. On top of that, you will not meet crowds of tourists – it is still rather a secret tip of the denizens. Simply an ideal trip. And to make your decision to come to Osek irreversible, let me add there's a swimming pool near the Oseký pond and wonderful bike trails along Dlouhá Louka.

Moudrými stezkami i do srdce národního parku

The Czech Switzerland National Park is an absolutely unique piece of land. It protects a distinct sandstone rock city, rare plants and animals which live here, taking care of the natural development of the forest. We can criss-cross our way through it provided with information of what to look for, why to look at it, what is worth noticing and what the value of what we are passing is. All of which without carrying printed guides and maps the size of tablecloths. The national park is interlaced with four natural trails that are strewn with information signs.

VICINITY OF PRAVČICKÁ GATE EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

To be in the national park and not see the Pravčická gate is almost an oxymoron. It is simply a duty because you will not find such a gate anywhere else. After all, it has just recently aspired to be one of the modern wonders of the world. When you start in Hřensko and come to the Three springs crossroad, you arrive at the first information board and find out that you are going to have two virtual companions along the way – our contemporary, a guardian of the national park, and a good fairy of this region, the gracious Elisalex Clary-Aldringen, who inspired her husband Edmund to undertake frenzied construction of facilities for tourism in the mid 19th century (thus was born the cruise through the gorges of Kamenice, the stone path to the Pravčická gate, the Hawk's nest tavern, the hotel on Mezní Meadow and also the watchtower at Růžák, which no longer exists). However disparate the couple seems to be, you are soon to realise that the interjection of their experiences and knowledge is conversely entertaining and meaningful. On the way to Pravčická gate and further down Gabriela's trail (Edmund and Elisalex were also at its birth) pertaining to the rock walls, watching their piedmont sliced into a steep slope and offering graceful views of the countryside. You will learn a lot of useful and playful information. Your guides will say good-bye on Mezní Meadow where the educational trail ends and you will be able to move, for example on the tourist bus, to the starting point of another one of the trails. The Vicinity of the Pravčická gate educational trail is six kilometres long.



RŮŽOVÁ EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

Ten stops in ten kilometres – such is the Růžová educational trail. As the name suggests, it begins in the lovely village of Růžová and creates a loop. You will walk through the village in the direction of the “Děčínská Fujiyama” the landmark of the region, a granite lighthouse in the middle of a sandstone sea, Růžovský hill, aka Růžák. If you are able you can even vanquish it on a detour from the trail, however the views from its peak are very limited. You will pass light fortifications, and through the dense forests above the bed of the Kamenice River you will come to one of the most romantic spots in the national park, the beautiful ruins of the Dolský mill. Further climbing will take you to Kamenická Stráž, a unique rural conservation zone with a very reputable collection of folk architecture jewels typical for this region – picturesque Upper Lusatian houses. Across the lost Nová Ves you will end this wonderful journey on Pastevní hill, famous for one of the most beautiful panoramic views in the entire Czech Switzerland. Paradoxically, from the not so high pitch you will see the table mountains of Saxon Switzerland, Děčínský Sněžník, massifs of the Silver and Křidelní walls, Lužické Mountains and the distant Česká středohoří. And of course the Jetřichovické rocks.

JETŘICHOVICKÉ ROCKS EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

The impressive Jetřichovické rocks educational trail is eight kilometres long. Climbing up a steep slope with stairs around the seat of fire of Raven hill to Marie's lookout to view the continuous mountain to Vilemína's lookout and Rudolf's rock means walking on one of the most beautiful roads in the national park, with practically uninterrupted views of the countryside. Equally interesting is also the descent around Koliště hill all the way to Smolný rock not far from Vysoká Lípa (from here you can take the bus and comfortably go back to Jetřichovice). Some of the sixteen stops along the way will bring your attention, for example, to an extinct skid for wood – a place on a steep slope conditioned in order for the lumber to go down to the valley in the desired direction driven by its own weight. You are even going to walk on a famous Czech road, a historical parkway and trade route used since prehistory. At the end of the educational trail, you will be offered a truly irresistible detour. You are going to climb under the Šaunštejn rock castle, and if you are slender enough you will climb a network of ladders all the way to a rocky plateau where the castle used to be. The view from here is indescribable and has to be experienced. A few metres further you will discover Malá Pravčická gate on the top of the slope, the smaller but just as attractive sister of the famous Pravčická gate, and you will be able to enjoy a lavish view from a brand new lookout which was opened this April.



KÖGLER'S EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

It would be a mistake not to mention Kögler's educational trail. Only a part of it runs through the national park but it is the oldest educational trail in Bohemia. It was marked in the early 1940s by an amateur naturalist from Krásná Lípa, Rudolf Kögler. It is fully renewed today with 40 stops along twenty-three kilometres. It starts in Krásná Lípa, runs by Kögler's geological map at Zahrady over Wolf Mountain to Kyjovské Valley where it enters the area of the national park and takes a wide loop back to Krásná Lípa.



Hidden charm of the Doupov shuttle train

“It doesn't very often happen that man can help something just by going on a trip. In the case of jeopardised Czech trains, it is just so. The more people are tempted to take a ride in the idyllic steam train, the greater the chance for keeping the railway alive. The Doupov shuttle train was this lucky. You can ride it from Kadaň heading south by Nechranická dam all the way to the Doupovské Mountains, and even beyond to charming still quite hidden softly undulating fields, subalpine meadows, memorable architectural and technical monuments and quite startling tranquillity.”



Photo: Ing. Michal Skala

MUSIC IN THE RHYTHM OF RAILROAD TIES

The mentioned good fortune of the Doupov shuttle train is very fragile. At the beginning of this century it was left to destruction. But after the local residents rebelled and the micro-region put up resistance, the train started to come back to life. The track between Kadaň and Podbořany with a detour to Kadaňský Rohozec at the foot of the Doupovské Mountains has seen a lot. The first, very short just four-kilometre long track began operating in the summer of 1881 and lead from Kašnice to Krásný Dvůr. It was a sugar beet railway, which had no ambition to transport people. At the turn of the century it saw further expansion culminating in a long and eagerly anticipated connection to the royal town of Kadaň. The year was 1903, One hundred years later the Doupov shuttle train, operated by JHMD, has a chance to become a tourist sensation. Year after year there are more connoisseurs who love undiscovered sites. And the railway caters to them. Aside from the regular summer weekend tourist schedule and Saturdays in June, regularly organised train experiences where the most beautiful film subject, the passing scenery behind the window, is accompanied by live music and other shows. And if there are more of you, you can even book a ride on a date which suits you.

TO THE MOUNTAINS, FISHING AND SIGHTSEEING

And where exactly will the Doupov shuttle train take you? To mysterious, beautiful and unexpected places. From Kadaň you will pass by a Roman church in Želina, along the banks of Nechranická dam to Pětipes, one of ideal places where you can get on a bike, which the train will of course transport all the way here – the local terrains are the ultimate paradise for bikers. Provided you stay in the train, you will go through the cities of Vilemrov and Radonice all the way to Kadaňský Rohozec where one of the branches of the track ends. The Doupovské Mountains, whose panorama can be admired the entire way from the windows of the train, are now rising directly above you. And whether on foot or by bike, you can either go on a trip to the hills or through the foothills to Sedlec, a fishermen's paradise, or to the picturesque historic town of Mašov. Should you choose the trail to Krásný Dvůr the train will take you all the way to the local swimming pool, and especially to the gates of the amazing Baroque Krásný Dvůr Castle, with a specious English park full of romantic buildings. The Doupov shuttle train is simply a secret tip for a future hit!



From raven rocks to magical stones

“The vicinity of Kadaň, the city on the Ohře River, is not only riddled with the castles and ruins which you read about on previous pages. It is also an area of many natural wonders and sights. Rocks, solitary stones and mighty river bends – these are three things we're going to explore in more detail, so that you have a reason to see them.”



PATH OF STONE AND WATER

About seven kilometres southwest from Kadaň is an entry wall of the Doupovské Mountains, Rašovické rocks shine in the distance. It is not at all easy to reach them. There is no tourist sign pointing the way, but you will get here from the Lestkov and Suchý mine on unmarked trails. The reward is an incredible view. You will see the Krušné Mountains in all its length. When you have sumptuously taken in the view, you are going to begin to notice what lives and grows around you. Maybe the much endangered raven will fly above your head. Rašovické rocks are a proclaimed natural conservation area because of the thermophilic plant communities on basalt rock. Most of the flowers around you belong among the specially protected – Small Pasque Flower, Pink Grey, Alyssum, Polygala or Dictamnus. In shady areas you can also find Platanthera, Cephalanthera, Lily and the extremely endangered and truly splendid Orchis mascula. It is most beautiful here in the spring when the woods are covered by carpets of Anemones. If you go in the other direction from Kadaň, downstream of the Ohře River, you cannot miss another natural monument, the Želinský meander. The river in granitic gneisses created a deep canyon-like valley with rocky slopes up to 80 metres high. The slopes are covered with scree and talus fields, rocks here and there change into rock walls and towering rocks. The actual meander, i.e. in layman's terms the cove of the river, here in the shape of a closed U, is the last surviving example of the original character of the central Ohře in a deep cut valley.

You can see heath and fescue lawns on the slopes. The vegetation almost has a steppe character here. Because the slope above the river is essentially inaccessible, you will be impressed by numerous birds – with a bit of luck you can see a kingfisher and an eagle owl. You can hear the warble of the nightingales during warm nights. However, the most mysterious and charming attraction is the natural Sluňáky monument, maybe because of the fact that the area of solitary stones is easy to access. Southeast of the village Rokle you will be walking among trees, and in a grassy area you will go from one Sluňák to another. They are breathtaking stones scattered across the landscape. One feels a bit like in another world – and to some extent that's how it is. Sluňáks are in fact an example of how the surface looked back in the Mesozoic and Tertiary periods. And what actually are the Sluňáks? Quartzite boulders with a typically weathered almost “painted” surface. This is a process caused by silicon dioxide, which is released during weathering and turn into some sort of liquid gel. It fills the rock with quartz and creates clusters. The cavemen used Sluňák chips as tools. Our more contemporary ancestors in the 19th century used it for making “cat heads” or cobblestones. Today, the rocks smoothed by sand are protected and create scenery which you cannot see anywhere else in the Czech Republic.

Taste and esprit of the old monarchy

The first tourist restaurant grew on the Ferdinand highland above the city of Ústí nad Labem in 1847. Exactly fifty years later, a new restaurant grew on the very same spot, in a well-built building with an observatory tower. The grand opening of Větruše, which was then widely called Jester's Castle, was a great event for the Ústí residents. Větruše became a place for rest and entertainment for many generations. Parties, balls, theatre plays, promenade concerts were all held here... The cuisine was especially great. The local restaurant was famous for their specialties from all corners of the empire of Emperor Franz Joseph.

CABLE CAR TO A GASTRONOMIC SURPRISE

When in 2000 the dilapidated building burned down, it seemed the fame of Větruše was over. And yet I sit here today and look around the light and very comfortable interior of the restaurant, which is open for its first season, but in its first few months it has gained considerable attention. And justly so. The menu will surprise you. As if nothing has changed in the hundred years. The current director and chef have remained loyal to Austro-Hungarian cuisine, and you don't find this in the Czech Republic very often. The beautifully remodelled Větruše is today a hotel with extensive wellness facilities and a representative hall. A cable car goes here from the city centre so it is no problem to just come here for lunch. And what an incredible view! But first things first. On the rock in front of Větruše you will arrive at a lower patio where you can try local homemade ice-cream, Větrušské cakes or just have a drink and continue your journey to surrounding attractions. The upper patio is a part of the restaurant and when the weather is nice you can enjoy the same goodies here as inside, moreover with the view of the Elbe valley. When you walk inside, you will enjoy a comfortable lobby bar with very original souvenirs, such as homemade pates or Větrušské wine. You can go to the observatory tower and with a cool cocktail in hand wait by one of

the small tables for a free spot in the restaurant – it is usually very busy. And then, just as I am now, open the menu and start reading. The time of whisks and walking hold fast as if they are breathing at you, and yet all of the meals are prepared with modern technologies, slow preparation, as I am told by the chef Lukáš Uher. Either way, the result is brilliant. If I may, I recommend that you have the warm ham or carp fries with homemade mayonnaise – it is a grand entree! One of the local favourites is veal. Say a genuine Viennese veal steak prepared on butter in soft roughly ground breadcrumbs, covering the whole plate... Or veal steak in Tyrolean bacon with mushroom sauce – it truly is a delicacy. Other specialties of the Austro-Hungarian cuisine are also the Tyrolean Gröstlem, rabbit thigh with dumplings, Spaetzle cheese, crispy honey duck with plum sauce, meaty beef ribs in dark beer, or a unique Přestice of roasted pig with potato pancake and cabbage of beetroot. In any case, do not miss the dessert! Hot plums with gingerbread ice cream, imperial Pancake, sourdough pancakes with blueberry Žahour, or the simply classic Sacher cake! In addition, if you come in the evening, you may try special seasonal dinner specials by Lukáš Uher. What about a traditional old French style cockerel or mouflon steak – where else would you get it today? And in such high quality... The waiting staff are kind and knowledgeable. If you have children, the chef might even prepare something that is not on the menu to satisfy their picky tastes. Větruše simply continues the venerable Austro-Hungarian and first-republic tradition with dignity.



With local ingredients to the top



On the bank of the wild Chřibská Kamenice River, at the reach of the most beautiful meadow of Czech Switzerland, in the middle of amazing nature in a mystical region under Studenec, in the town of Chřibská, is the picturesque Na Stodolci bed and breakfast. It's a little paradise. You can get here by car, but the best way is to start at the square and take the charming path winding between the Upper Lusatian houses. This year, this beautiful trail should be marked for tourists and if not, know that you just turn from the main road by the Community building – and there you are.

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BOLD

What is so special about this bed and breakfast? Especially its restaurant. Just imagine you are running a restaurant in a small town in the north of Bohemia. In a small town, surrounded by plain pubs where the simple catechism includes prayers such as the hangman's whip, fried cheese, chicken breast with peach and cheese. And you decide to go against the wind and cook with exclusively fresh and local ingredients. Czech cuisine, but modern and inventive. And instead of going bankrupt in a year, one morning you open the prestigious Mauer's Grand restaurant (such a small Czech Michelin) and you see your restaurant ranked 25th among all the restaurants in the Czech Republic. And you will find many famous Prague or Brno gastronomic sanctuaries behind you. Additionally, your restaurant ranked the fourth cheapest amongst the Top 100. This happened to Matěj Kudla, a man who gave it a shot, and succeeded. And his place is packed!



CZECH CUISINE WITH A MODERN TWIST

And what's cooking? First of all the ingredients: the majority of the ingredients literally come from the neighbourhood and the menu is proud of it. Delicate organic beef is from Lipová farm, dumplings are from Mr. Tolar, potatoes and seasonal vegetables from Mr. Růžička, goat cheese from the village next door, honey from the neighbour... You can't go wrong with ordering a domestically bred roasted duck with potato dumplings and red sauerkraut, tender beef cheeks with mashed potatoes, or an incredible lamb shank with spinach and homemade potato wedges... Local tartar steak made of organic meat is also popular. Enjoy a delicious local beer from the Varnsdorf Kocour brewery or a homemade lemonade, ginger ale or Stodolecký ice-tea. To support your digestion have a shot of Grešík's Děčín Jeřábinka and definitely do not skip the dessert! A high standard is set by local sourdough pancakes in three flavours – delicious and addictive. In addition, consider the kind and civil service, and also everything else that is awaiting you when you step outside. Two May kittens will rub against your legs. At a distance you will see grazing sheep and goats. A dog and a cat are snoozing by a sun warmed wall and horses in the yard will restlessly stomp their heels and look forward to giving you or your children a ride. Surprised, you will discover a café in a nearby barn and perhaps you will even happen to be present at a theatre play or concert. Let me add that the restaurant has a neat play area for children and that even the accommodation in this bed and breakfast is "family friendly". It's obvious that Stodolec is without a doubt worth your visit.



I have the Krušné Mountains in my genetic code

Petr Mikšíček is sometimes called Pěťa Krušnošlápek. He knows a lot about the Krušné Mountains and he is not afraid to ask. He is the instigator and the soul of many projects in the Krušné Mountains. He could

be considered their private photographer. He is the author of exhibitions, events, and successful web pages. He has published books including *Sudetská pilgrimage or Waldgang*, *Newly found Krušné Mountains*, *Faces of the Krušné Mountains* and a representative portrait *Krušný paradise*. He organises lectures, teaches at the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University. Petr Mikšíček is an interesting person and debating with him is always thrilling. To write it on paper doesn't give it justice, but you will see for yourselves...

WHAT HAPPENED THAT THE KRUŠNÉ MOUNTAINS HAVE HAD SUCH AN EFFECT ON YOU? ARE YOU A NATIVE?

Not a native. More. I was conceived here – and that is energetically a significantly stronger deposit than a mere birthplace. I only realised this in 2000. That's when I decided I was going to walk around Bohemia. By myself. To find out what it's going to do to me. I started at Mnichovo Hradiště and went across the Czech paradise, Jizerské and Lužické Mountains, the Elbe sandstones, Krušné Mountains, Czech forest, Šumava all the way to the Novohradské Mountains and ended my wandering at the Czech Siberia. The strange thing was, the first week I sometimes felt like a fool and didn't understand why I was actually doing this. Later, the journey was somehow personified and became my companion. And I subconsciously cut myself off from everything that I had left at home, and let the countryside absorb me. My attention sharpened, I perceived details and contexts, and gradually fell under the spell of the places I'd gone through. Right in the Krušné Mountains it suddenly occurred to me that the Sudetenland is a region of extinct civilisation. An unfinished product. A depleted entity. The consequences of displacement are still clearly evident. The landscape lost its humanity. It lost the traces of people which should not have been lost. Based on these experiences were born the travelling exhibitions *Newly found Krušné Mountains* and *Extinct Sudetenland*, even my latter book bearing the same name. At that time, I was studying culture at the Philosophical Faculty and was looking for a theme which would help me define this landless field. I later wrote my bachelor thesis about the Sudetenlands until 1945 and my thesis about Sudetenland from 1945 until today. And I had a theme for life. But also to return to my roots, my grandfather was a blaster in the Jáchymov mines. When the mines were closed in the fifties, he moved with my grandmother to Vysoká pec u Nejedku. And that's where I was conceived and spend a part of my childhood.



AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO PHOTOGRAPHY?

My dad. I used to stand behind him in the dark room and watch how the photos were being born out of nothing from such a mysterious place. When my dad bought a Zenit camera, I got his Exakta. I have been learning it ever since then and the Krušné Mountains have been giving me tough lessons. In "Krušný paradise" you can see my photographic skills today. It was quite a turning point for my work – I was slowly cutting myself away from other activities and started mapping out the areas of the Krušné Mountains, even those which I didn't know at the time including the German side of the mountains. I was exploring new places, waiting for the weather, searching for angles. I was driven by the awareness that the Krušné Mountains do not have any representative large photographic publications, and that they should.

YEARS AGO, YOU FOUNDED THE NOW ICONIC REDISCOVERY OF THE KRUŠNÉ MOUNTAINS WEBPAGES AT WWW.ZNKR.CZ. HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA?

The web was actually created as a kind of dumping place. As I was wandering the mountains, I gathered contact information for collectors, convinced them to lend me old photographs, scanned them, and when I realised how much data I already have in my computer and that it would be a shame not to share them, I put everything on the web. I then added hours and hours of interviews with personal observers which I acquired during the Mosaic of the Krušné Mountains Culture project. It was quite intense at one time. I was recording as many as three interviews a day, and my head was about to explode. Well, the web slowly began living its own life. Many subpages were created and until today I am being asked, for example by students, if they could use some of the material from it. I think it has a substantial and permanent purpose.

YOU'RE A WRITER AND A PHOTOGRAPHER – WHAT DO YOU FEEL MORE AFFINITY WITH?

It's hard to say. It comes in waves. Sometimes I write more – and during that time I take hardly any take pictures, or I start taking pictures and nearly lose the ability to form a sentence. Either or. But eventually, I have found a solution – a film. It's a completely comprehensive and holistic category. It combines a number of things such as people, looking for locations, organising, training, filming, editing, presentation. That's where I have found myself and it is now my journey. It began when I was writing scripts for the patriotic Aeronaut Kráčmera programme for Czech television, and at the same time I was looking for interesting locations for filming, and on top of that I was also the assistant director. Today, I am preparing a few documentaries, collaborating on Julius Schmitke, a feature film which I unawaringly inspired through my interviews with the Krušné Mountains contemporaries. I am learning and collecting energy for my own project. I'm thirty-five and suddenly realise that there is no time for waiting for anything and pounding out work for some employer. That if I want to create something, I have to submerge myself in it.

BUT YOU'RE NOT ABANDONING PROJECTS ABOUT THE KRUŠNÉ MOUNTAINS ARE YOU?

No. In part, most of my themes revolve around them, and then, there are times when you just cannot help it and simply have to. For example, when I accidentally discovered the most preserved extinct village of the Krušné Mountains – Königsmühle, not far from Klínovec, in a hidden valley. An incredibly powerful place. There were no bulldozers that would level the village, so there are still the ruins of six houses with walls taller than an adult. A little miracle. So I decided along with my colleagues from the Antikomplex organisation, which I co-founded sometime around the turn of the millennium, that every once in a while we are going to revive this village and we organised a land art festival there, opened a "pub" in one of the houses and served beer... An amazing experience. Especially, when one lady who was born there shared her stories. Now we're doing all we can to save this place, so that it would not cease to exist on its own.



Paths around historic beauty

“Do you happen to know the results of the Historic town questionnaire of 2005? This prestigious title was then awarded to Česká Kamenice. Are you surprised? You're not alone. This medieval town founded sometime in the 13th century has for years been a hidden treasure. Consider the fact that this historic town is literally locked in by tall hills. That it's called the Gate to Czech Switzerland. That it's situated right at the intersection point of three protected areas – the Elbe sandstones, České středohoří and Lužické Mountains. That it's a pilgrimage town, that... Let's go check it out.”



URBAN CONSERVATION ZONE

A square with a nine-sided Renaissance fountain and carefully renovated townhouses is the logical and picturesque centre of the town. From here, we can set out on trips to the remarkable late Gothic vaulted Church of St. Jakub the Greater with a forty-six metre high observatory tower. To Saulhausenský chateau, brewery, hospital, cemetery chapel of the Preidl family or to the most precious jewel, the pilgrimage chapel of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. This mystical place is a wonder made of harmonious Baroque architectural curves, the work of the Litoměřice architect Octavio Broggio. It is a square arcade with a central chapel which is richly decorated in the Rococo style and serves as an abode for the statue of the Virgin Mary of Kamenice, a miracle worker who was visited by thousands of people from far and wide. Today, it is ethereally tranquil here.

TRIPS TO THE SURROUNDINGS

Česká Kamenice is a great starting point of very interesting tourist routes. A joint project with the partner town of Bad Schandau is currently underway. Its goal is to mark ten trails from each town in the direction of the other town, as if the historic Česká Kamenice and the Bad Schandau spa were holding out ten pairs of arms. Česká Kamenice is a tourist's dream. Let's take the newly marked loop which we can manage in two hours. It will take you around a lovely swimming pool all the way to Bratský altar with a newly planted Station of the Cross, over Needle rock with a wonderful lookout back to town. Or on a hike to Zámecký hill with Kamenice Castle, where you can enjoy a view of the scenery from the newly build lookout tower. And now the most secret tip: From here, take the newly marked Lísky and beyond trail, for example to Golden hill with its stunning basalt “organ” or the observatory on top of Studenec. When you go down to Studené, you will find two educational trails leading through the countryside of this delectable hamlet – it's worth seeing, count on it! Equally interesting is the blue trail, say all the way to the Dolský mill, or the unmarked arrow guided turn leading to the lookout above Srbová Kamenice, and to the public educational trail with charming hand-painted boards. Another secret tip: the green trail to Jetřichovice. Altogether some eight kilometres, but an extraordinary experience. When you pass the spring behind Kunratice, watch for a left turn. A few dozen metres on a narrow path will take you to a place on the slope of Windy hill, where you can enjoy a breathtaking view. From the Děčínský Sněžník over the Saxon Table Mountains all the way to the Dancer and Wolf Mountain. You cannot enjoy the spectacular view of Jetřichovická rock from anywhere else but here. So, enjoy Česká Kamenice and its surroundings!

Surprisingly attractive Varnsdorf

“When you feel like surprising yourselves, go to Varnsdorf. Why? It's a city situated amongst beautiful nature surrounded by the Lužické Mountains on one side, and Czech Switzerland on the other. And the city itself? Those who aren't lazy and wish to criss-cross Varnsdorf to take in the sights and are not too lazy to climb a few metres will discover the unexpected. Food for the eyes, mind and belly.”

FAMOUS VILLAS AND A CHURCH WITHOUT A TOWER

Let's begin with the famous Varnsdorf villas. You will find real gems of several styles scattered among the urban development. An Art Nouveau villa from the beginning of the 20th century, historic and neoclassical villas and perfect examples of functionalism. However, two buildings are particularly famous. First, Eltis' massive three-story villa, an unmistakable functionalist landmark of the district built by leading Dresden architect, a native of Šluknov, Hans Richter (another of his gems, the huge Palme' villa, can be seen in the nearby Krasna Lipa.) The second is Held's villa, which is right next door. That was built by architect Otto Fleischer as an intersection of traditional forms and functionalism. Functionalism is known for flat roofs, but a church with a flat roof?

There is one in Varnsdorf and it is called the church “without a tower”. It is the remarkable neo-Gothic Church of St. Charles Borromeo finished in 1912. In this case, however, it wasn't the architects intention – the roof of the tower simply wasn't finished and after WWI there were no means to resume and complete it. And what about the belly? Well, I recommend two icons, certified as regional products of Czech Switzerland. The local Kocour Brewery on the outskirts of town in the building of a former porcelain factory makes beer according to recipes from all over the world. In the centre is the Dask confectionary with the largest větrníky in the world and with a motto “the best of Czech tradition and the most popular in the world”.



A CASTLE BORN FROM RUINS

I've left the best for last. The landmark of the town is the legendary Hrádek hill, over the top of which runs the border – the neighbouring town of Seiffhennersdorf lies beneath it. Is the view nice from there? Luxurious! So luxurious that in 1904 the local Mountain Club organisation for the northernmost Bohemia had an observation tower with a restaurant built here. The entire city celebrated its opening. The restaurant enjoyed a rich social life for years. Both wars, the building of socialism, but also the time just after the Velvet revolution brought Hrádek nothing but destruction, which seemed inevitable. However, instead of being demolished it was reconstructed in 2000, and today we can once again look down at the scenery from the tower of the historic building with Art Nouveau elements, the author of which is the local architect Anton Möller, who also designed the above mentioned “church without a tower”. The bright yellow and red facade of Hrádek shines into the distance. Varnsdorf is here at your fingertips. As are the Lužické Mountains with Luže, Jedlová, Hvozď, Jonsberg and Töpfer, Špičák, behind which the Žitavská basin opens up with the Breitberg cone. And when the weather is nice you can even see the Jizerské mountains and the Krkonoše Mountains. Clearly, the boundaries are only an imaginary line here. Just a few steps and you are in Seiffhennersdorf, for example in the museum of the bandit Karásek who also “operated” irrespective of being in Saxony or Bohemia. Or in Großschönau among more than 600 picturesque Upper Lusatian houses, in the museum of damascus and terry cloth...



Beauty with arms full of history

Kadaň is beautiful. Maybe even this succinct statement was enough to

make the crowds come here. But you probably still want to know what it so appealing about this town on the banks of the Ohře River. So be it. We have to start at the square because there are not many neater, more picturesque or more spacious squares in Bohemia. When you are in the information centre, where you should definitely visit, you will be offered a folding book showing the square stretched out in a line... be sure to take it. It will reveal one of the many Kadaň secrets to you.

THE SQUARE AS A CALMLY BEATING HEART OF THE CITY

The secret lies in the fact that each individual house in the square is in itself beautiful, remarkable and valuable, and at the same time that as a whole it is incredibly harmonious considering the attacks on the architecture and urban development this country went through in the second half of the 20th century. You're simply not going to find one recruitment centre, glass supermarket or other monstrosities. The Kadaň square is clean, extremely comforting, repaired and taken care of with love. It boasts the oriental looking white Gothic town hall tower (with a very nice view of the city), the symmetrically sympathetic baroque Church of the Holy Cross with its remarkable altar and pulpit, arcade arches, the protective Plague Column of the Holy Trinity, historically valuable buildings at the Stone Lion, The Knight, The Rose, Golden Crown, Šlikův or Ottlilienfeldský house... One doesn't even want to leave. But there's more to see in Kadaň. So where to next? Definitely, Katova Street, the narrowest urban street in the country where in one spot the opposing walls are only 66.1 centimetres apart. The Kadaň executioners used to walk through here to the execution place which used to be a part of the city ramparts. The peculiar shape of the street and the Gothic masonry with an expanding diaphragm however, despite romanticising ideas, are more indicative of it originally serving as a sewer. This is an example of how even utilitarian things can in time gain the value and appearance of jewels. Even the ramparts and moats are carefully repaired and wandering through here is a joy.

BARBICAN TO THE DEPTH OF TIME

Whether you want it or not, all roads will eventually take you to the river. When looking from the other bank, it is clear that Kadaň has two landmarks – the majestic castle built in the 13th century alongside the building the new royal city, and a national cultural monument, the monastery of the Franciscan order with the Gothic Church of Fourteen Holy Helpers. The castle was with the permission from Maria Theresa rebuilt and has since served the military. Today, it houses, for example, the Gallery of Josef Liesler. The monastery, located outside of the urban conservation area, has been for years returned to its former splendour. There are rocks in the monastery cellars. Well, not just rocks – the city museum has a permanent exhibition of mineralogical and archaeological attractions. Moreover, there are also the “About life in the monastery” and “Glances into the history of Kadaň” exhibitions. If you happen to be at the castle go to a late Gothic Barbican and walk through it to the oldest part of the city, the Špitálského periphery. The oldest church in town is situated here, rebuilt in the Baroque style but originally a Romanesque sanctuary, the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. With a bit of luck you might happen to run into one of the frequently organised cultural events.

ALONG THE OHŘE RIVER WITH FÍK

If you want to go to the Franciscan monastery from the here, be sure to stay by the river. You will soon arrive at a place which clearly shows that Kadaň doesn't only live on memories and dusting off its numerous monuments. A sensitively build modern coastal promenade with an acoustic park, sonorous trumpets, horns, spraying machine, flying wheel, or grinder for Nadkřeček is playful – after all the waterfront bears the name of Maxipes Fík. How did Kadaň get Fík? Well, Fík's literary father, Rudolf Čechura, used to live in nearby Ahníkov, and Josef Dvořák, Fík's vocal alter ego, was studying to become a car mechanic and fooling around with the theatre muse in Kadaň. So there you have it. But we're going to end up in the past anyway. The Kadaň residents are rather proud about it, thus when you look around you can see it everywhere. There aren't many cities that take care of their ancestor's heritage long-term and with such purpose. And so it's actually logical that we are going to go back to the urban conservation area and after we walk by the park along all the stops on the Baroque Station of the Cross, we're going to enter through the only preserved city gate, Mikulovická, all known as the Saint.

Walking under it you might sense a breath of history. The gate, as you see it, has been standing there since the 14th century. Back then however, there used to be a fore-gate and the passage itself was protected by a wooden gate and portcullis. And when intruders did get in, they were met by a cruel surprise – hot rosin or another boiling favour was poured down onto their heads. You can still see the openings which they were poured through today. And we're back to the square. Where shall we finish the tour of Kadaň? Without a doubt by Šlikovský pond. In fact, it is a Baroque fountain, the only one of three Kadaň fountains which has survived till now. It's said that he who looks into it will return to Kadaň within a year. And that's definitely a good idea.



Japanese charm in a Czech spa

“Spas are for old and ill people and one has to spend a lot of time in it...” Such is the very stubborn conviction of many people. It was never the case and is definitely not the case today. Mšené Spa is a perfect example. It's not that they're not going to be of help in the above cases – they definitely will help, specifically with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, diseases of the nerves and post-surgery, all mainly thanks to peat wraps and mineral baths. But the important thing is that younger, healthy people now come here, if only for a day. They can take advantage of beauty, wellness and preventive packages including treatments and massage, wellness treatments, a solarium, sauna, and fitness centre, bicycle rental and trekking poles rental. At their disposal, there are relaxing tourist routes from eight hundred metres to five kilometres long. A beautiful Pétanque field – exactly the way it's supposed to be, with a gravel surface. A park lining Mšenský brook. The romantic ruins of the Church of St. John of Nepomuk... Simply an ideal place for active relaxation and health care. Mšené Spa however has more to offer. Something you're not going to find anywhere else in Europe. An architectural gem which is alone worth your visit. In 1905...

FROM MŠENÉ SPA TO THE END OF THE WORLD

No. Nothing we can do about, we have to begin from the start. The healing effects of the water have been known since ancient times. In 1790, when the Director of the feudal property of the Kinsky Clan, Mr. František Pavikovsky, came and drank the water his lingering stomach problems subsided. The business idea was born. Duke Kinský didn't have the courage to build a spa, but he was willing to support his employee and so František Pavikovsky opened a spa in the valley of the Mšenský brook in 1796. Only a year later, the first two pavilions were built – Praděd and Říp. The biggest prosperity of the spa however doesn't come until nearly one hundred years later. That's when the spa became the property of Mr. František Toman who energetically started a big reconstruction and completion of the spa complex. In the scope of it, he invites a young twenty-five year old architect with still a wet diploma to Mšené, a favourite student of the famous professor Jan Kotěra, a certain Jan Letzel, and commissions him for the construction of the central spa pavilion, Dvorana. It's truly wondrous that he decided

to give a chance to a young man who had not built a single house, but the fact is that this risk was fully justified. Jan Letzel designed a very daring and unusual building which is strongly planted in Art Nouveau but it's so very different... Wooden dragons with bulging eyes, oriental decorative elements, colourful birds, broken wavy lines, fine wood-carved decorative beams, roofs like the Palace of the Emperor of Japan... Breath-taking. And mysterious – Letzel couldn't have any idea at the time that from Mšené that he is going to embark on a journey to southern Europe. That he is going to go to Egypt, where Jan Kotěra recommends him to the Viceroy of Egypt for his team of architects. Or that just two years after his departure from Mšené he's going to be established in Japan where he will experience many wonderful years and become known throughout the world. That he's going to build schools, palaces, museums, monasteries, office buildings, hotels, luxury villas...

HOUSE WHICH SURVIVED THE BOMBING

He couldn't have had any idea that the concrete buildings influenced by his European studies constructed to withstand even the strongest earthquakes are going to become a legend. Not even that one of his buildings is going to survive an unprecedented event. In 1915, when he completed the Exhibition palace of the prefecture in Hiroshima, he couldn't know that in ten years he was not going to be alive, and that in another twenty years the palace was going to be the only building in the epicentre to withstand the explosion of the atomic bomb, and that its cupola will become the world-wide symbol of the efforts to prevent a nuclear war. He had no idea about any of what was to come, and yet the Dvorana in Mšené is full of charming Japanese influences. Before he left on an adventure which he had dreamt about since childhood, he managed to design another pavilion – Kyselka, for František Toman, which was completed without his supervision in 1907 (Letzel was at the time working for the German construction company E. de Lalande, in Tokyo). So, now we can safely go back to the claim

that we're not going to find anything similar anywhere in Europe. Jan Letzel didn't build any other buildings in the Czech Republic or anywhere else in Europe – all of his other projects were designed and realised in Japan. He did however participate in the reconstruction of the hotel U arcivévodý Štěpána, later Šroubek, today the Hotel Europe at Wenceslas Square. Another of his creations was only discovered in 2009 at the town cemetery in Brno. It's a gravestone in the shape of a Japanese gate at the grave of Klára Květoňová. And that is all folks. So, if you're not planning a trip to Tokyo, Matushima or Hiroshima, go to Mšené. It's a very rare experience.



About mining in the mountains

“The Krušné Mountains are mountains “mined out”. That might be a way to describe the connection of the beautiful, fierce mountains and the no less beautiful old Czech word “krušiti”. This word originally meant to crush and figuratively also to mine. Krušec then was a chipped off piece of a mineral rock. And there was an abundance of the minerals in the bowels of the mountain massive (and still is)! Mining has been active here since the 12th century – copper, tin, silver, coal... Traces of ancient and recent mining activities are still visible almost everywhere, be it on long overgrown uneven terrain, placers, prospector’s signs damaged by erosion or abandoned shafts.”

FOR A WHILE IN THE MINER’S SHOES

A slightly different but just as authentic experience is awaiting you in the Podkrušnohorské technical museum in Most, in the mining museum. The authenticity is in some ways absolute. You will happen to be in the premises of the former Julius III underground mine surrounded by seven large technical monuments – buildings downcast and water pits with hoisting towers, engine hoist tower, the original boiler, chimney torso, residential houses of workers’ colony and a steam hoisting machine from 1890. In this mood you can even dare to continue downwards. But don’t be afraid. Nobody is going to drop you dozens of metres underground. There is an artificial sample gallery which perfectly simulates underground mining, and you can bask in the knowledge that above you is not that horrible mass of rock. In order to leave here with a deep respect for the men who had been working in the underground mines for year with sweat dripping down their faces like few of us can even imagine today, this gallery serves the purpose. You can simply try how these men must have felt deep under the ground, in the small enclosed space, with the noise of the running machines. You’re going to learn how it was actually done, breaking coal from the depths of the earth. You’re going to see a rare wooden cart, selection machine, modular conveyor, a cart which transported the miners, even the toilet! Additionally, you can try everything with your own hands, which is exciting especially for children. Just tell me, where can they ignite a carbide lamp, heft mining tools or try to directly control the pan by themselves today? Just to make it clear, we mean the road header PK 3, which miners so fondly nicknamed it. You can find out how the coal was really mined with the pan in a five-minute 3D film. But the gallery is not the end of the exhibition. In the next hall, a huge steam engine from 1890 will take your breath away. The only preserved one in central Europe. The gateway to the underground is abundant with levers. The cart and people were dispatched to the galleries from here. The mining equipment including the tools, mining lamps, ventilation, measuring equipment, a device for saving lives, but also mining uniforms, can all be seen. And what is not displayed or directly built in actual size can be explored on detailed models. The area of the museum where you will learn about the work of rescuers and their equipment is also remarkable. What’s more at the end of the exhibition you are sure to get goose bumps. That’s when you arrive in the memorial room. Mining disasters are remembered here. One can learn about the devil’s trap and its awful collapse.

TIN VEIN INTO THE HEART OF THE EARTH

Today, some of the galleries have turned into popular tourist attractions. One of the most popular, and also the most accessible to visitors, is the Old Martin gallery in Krupka. This remarkable gallery opens the north-western part of the unusually massive Lukáš tin vein, the longest and richest tin ore vein in our country and central Europe. It really is a special and elated feeling entering the mine corridor knowing that in the 14th century miners were carrying chisels, hammers, irons and crowbars this way. The Martin gallery is younger but was eliminated in the 1860s. The expedition here is an unusual adventure which you need to be prepared for – it is important to have good shoes and especially something warm to wear. The mountain doesn’t care what the weather is like outside. Inside, it is cold all year long (in the winter and summer around 7°C). Equipped with a helmet, one walks under the ground a few kilometres and doesn’t know where to look first. You will learn something about the historical nature of long mining excavation works. You will see how the reinforcement of passages was developing from the earliest beginnings to the present day. You will observe different ways of mining and extraction

technologies. See photos hung like laundry right in the tunnel. Go around the historic mining carts, tools and equipment. Furthermore, thrust into the bowels of the earth which will boast with a wonderful mineral filling of the Lukáš vein or the secondary pseudo-karst decoration – plainly speaking filigree stalactites that have been created here as time went by, one centimetre every ten years. But the water is ubiquitous. It’s running underneath your feet, streaming through the side corridors, dripping from all possible openings and running down the walls of the gallery. In one spot, you will learn from the kind guides that the spirit of the mountain is going to grant a wish to anyone who puts their hand into the Spring of happiness and wishes for anything except money. I’ll tell you one wish that is going to come true for sure – a wish to see the historical mining equipment altogether. When you come out of the gallery, you’ll be amazed because right in front of you there is the whole exhibition of mining loaders, forklifts, conveyors, winches, mining machinery, pneumatic percussion hammers, and even a mining diesel locomotive. Simply, Old Martin makes wishes come true.



Miraculous awakening from a dark curse

The city of Děčín would lose its soul without its castle. Something like this will occur to those leaning on the rail of the lookout at Pastýřská wall and looking over the river toward the rock block where a slender white castle is sitting majestically. Just some twenty years ago however it was a severely tortured soul. This proud building had been for the majority of its history linked with the Thun-Hohenstein clan. It used to flourish and shine then. Then came the blows of fate. Harder and harder.

IN SILENT ASTONISHMENT, LED BY A COUNTESS AND A KNIGHT

This castle complex is truly worth a thorough examination. Each year, a new area is added which wasn't open to the public the year before. The first area to be granted access was the passageway from the Rose Garden to the Church of the Holy Cross Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows which was closed for many years. The South wing was opened to the public last year and a brand new guided tour is being added this year. So you can choose – do you prefer the castle chambers, or the Baroque circuit? Are you attracted by the mentioned new development – the loop situated mainly in the recently repaired South wing of the castle dedicated to the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the era of Jaroslav and Franz Thun? Do you have your children with you and want to indulge them in a slightly different tour? As you wish – the countess Klára will eagerly take care of the smaller ones and let them walk in the footsteps of the royal children for a playful, at times even mischievous tour. And the older children? Entrust them into the hands of the Black Knight, Zikmund from Vartenberk, who will take them to otherwise closed places. But mainly, he will take them to the Middle Ages and let them see for themselves how difficult a period it was. Do you happen to be here at Christmas? What about having a tour from the former owners of the castle, Jaroslav Thun and his wife, who are preparing the Christmas atmosphere for their two grandsons who are rollicking somewhere in the chambers? What about a night tour? Or attending a medieval fair? You see – it's hard to choose. A relatively short time ago, blight and destruction were ruling here without restraint. Could it be a miracle? Frankly speaking – if not this then nothing else.



INTER ARMA SILENT MUSAE

Four armies gradually turned the castle into barracks. The last one was especially creative – basketball hoops were screwed into frescos. Walls were “decorated” with flashy oil portraits of ideological leaders. Statues were coloured with technical colours. Instead of elegant bedrooms there were iron bunk beds – the complete list of horrors is only for the most hardened. The Hospital of the Soviet troops was the last blow to the former soulful splendour and brilliance. Not even the first reconstructions after the departure of the troops in the early 90s were the most sensitive. Basically no one believed that the castle could be renewed as a historic object. There were ideas to turn it into a hotel... In 1996, came the final blow which many considered the end..., and paradoxically, it was only the beginning. The South-eastern courtyard of the castle collapsed. Only then did the sensitive, meaningful and long-term repair of the castle and the gradual recovery of a significant Czech monument begin. When you take the guided tour of the castle today, you will be reluctant to believe all

the horrors of the past.

But the Děčín Castle was not only ravaged but also nearly empty. And so every piece of furniture, even every small picture, everything had to be either loaned or located. And it was often a very adventuresome and difficult search. Something appeared in the Děčín museum where a few gems were hidden in its safe. The search was however soon expanded covering nearly the entire Bohemia. So when people today are climbing the Long ride past the Rose garden, when they're walking through the entry facade to the monumental main courtyard, when led by a tour guide to admire the panoramic Thun lookout, when descending a beautiful archway to a truly impressive Baroque stable with a colonnade bearing a cross vault, they can simply be delighted by the castle experience or they can feel proud that even in this age of marketing plans and maximum profit there still are people who manage to dig out a pearl from a rubbish dump and just have a good feeling about it.



GARDENS AWOKEN FROM A DREAM

If you are eager for a walk which no one in Děčín has been able to experience for many, many decades, you will be delighted by the news that Děčín Castle is going to open the entire area of its formerly famous terrace south gardens this season. One hundred and fifty-one years ago, the royal greenhouse grew a Royal Victoria for the first time in Europe. There are no greenhouses today, but you can enjoy one of the largest garden castle areas in Bohemia and through the smell of the flowers you are going to look at the castle from angles which were last seen only by the Thun's and their guests, such as one of the most famous guests, Fryderyk Chopin who was staying at the castle in 1835. He was teaching the young counts to play the piano, and it is possible that he even had a fragile love affair with a charming Juža Thun, which is based on the fact that he wrote his famous waltz As-Dur, since then called Děčínský, in her diary.

The ancient power of the mighty Pravřídlo

“It's evening, nightfall is swallowing a clump of trees disappearing in a cloud of steam which is fluttering as it rises up to the glitter of the first stars. In the circle of trees an old druid is standing with palms facing the sky, staring at the seepage of the boiling water and silently saying thanks to the Gods for the gift of the healing water. Eventually, he will kneel down and ceremoniously throws a coin into the spring. More than two thousand years later, the very same coin is held in the hand of a young archaeologist. A coin one hundred years older than our era. That, and even older, is the power and strength of Pravřídlo.”

FROM JUDITH TO BEETHOVEN

If you come to the Teplice Spa today to get some relief from suffering connected with musculoskeletal disorders, diseases of the nerves or blood vessels, lying in a bathtub full of warm healing water during a treatment, within the procedure try to close your eyes for a moment and imagine how old the water is. Some eighteen thousand years. Since the time the Celts and Romans were among the first to take advantage of its healing power, Teplice has seen a lot. And it was a rich and exciting history. After all, when you're now walking around the city, you can see it everywhere. Perhaps the most beautiful encounter with Teplice starts at one of the nicest plague columns in the country. In the castle square, at the foot of the sky high creation of Matyáš Bernard Braun. Surrounded by stately town houses, let's go to the castle with a Gothic birth certificate, Renaissance heart and Baroque and Classical apparel. To the park that surrounds it and where each fountain could tell a great story about the meetings of the famous and powerful people of this world. Or let's first go to the white Church of St. John the Baptist. The local spring used to be devoted to him. The Janské spa had clearly been here back in the 12th century when the queen Judith had a female Benedictine monastery built by the Pravřídlo. In the mid-16th century the Saxon electors used to come here – back then the sublime and spectacular spa houses had not yet been built by the springs. They started popping up like mushrooms after a thermal rain a few decades later thanks to the Vchynický clan. And what about the era of the Clary-Aldringens? In the second half of the 18th century Teplice became the most visited spa in Bohemia and could even compare to famous German, Austrian, French and Italian spas. The real boom however came only in the 19th century. Teplice was then referred to as the Salon of Europe or little Paris. He who meant anything in Europe had to be seen here. Politicians, generals, rulers, traders, artists – anyone you can recall was then strolling in the park. And for a long time it seemed that not even the 20th century was going to change that. But the development of coal mining and idiosyncratic priorities of the post-war socialist elite began to force the town along with the spa into an industrial garb. They didn't succeed. Just twenty years after the return to democracy, we can notice the return to spa and even nobleness with a naked eye. The preserved spa houses have a large share in this – there are not many places in the world where you could stay in a room where someone as famous as Beethoven or Goethe once lived.

HOUSES FILLED WITH HEALTH AND BEAUTY

Such an example is the impressive Imperial baths building in the centre of the town. The Imperial baths belong among the historically oldest houses in Teplice. Behind the bright white decorative facade is now a clinic equipped with state of the art medical and diagnostic equipment and a newly built thermal rehabilitation pool. Or the Beethoven spa house, which is actually a complex formed by connecting the original bath houses. You can find in the historic town centre, settled in the greenery of the parks. What about the Stone spa? A splendid neo Baroque cake hidden in the park behind whose noble facade you're going to find all of the modern spa amenities. And the list of bathhouses is far from over. Teplice is returning to a place which justly belongs to them. This is undoubtedly also given by the fact that the success rate of the treatment exceeds ninety-six per cent.

WATER KEEPING US AFLOAT

What kind of miraculous water is it? Above all, all of the spa services today regardless the modern technologies are managed from only two sources – our old friend the famous Pravřídlo, and his great-grandson Hynie (named after its discoverer). Both give us medium-mineralised thermal mineral water, and now pay attention as an expert term is coming up, hydrogen-carbonate-sulphate-sodium. But there's no need to be a geologist or balneologist. For each spa guest, the most important thing is that no matter what the source of the healing power of the Teplice water is, it is beneficial and there is a lot to be thankful for. The Teplice Spa is simply a charming place – and one doesn't even have to be ill! Coming here for relaxation or beauty or even the desire to rid yourself of annoying snoring isn't anything unusual today, on the contrary, these services draw more and more clients from all around Europe to Teplice. So maybe the time when Teplice is going to be the Salon of Europe again is not too far away. It definitely has the power and strength to make it happen.

Undulating landscape seen from the deck

Just as it's said the world is most beautiful from horseback, the České středohoří is without a doubt the most picturesque from a deck of a boat. The Elbe River has from time immemorial been a frequented route and many generations have been able to admire its banks leaning on the rail of a boat drifting with dignity along the breathtaking scenery. Already in 1851 the Porta Bohemica, a side-paddle-wheel steamboat, was ploughing the vicinity of Litoměřice, and on a boat bearing almost the same name, you can even cruise today.

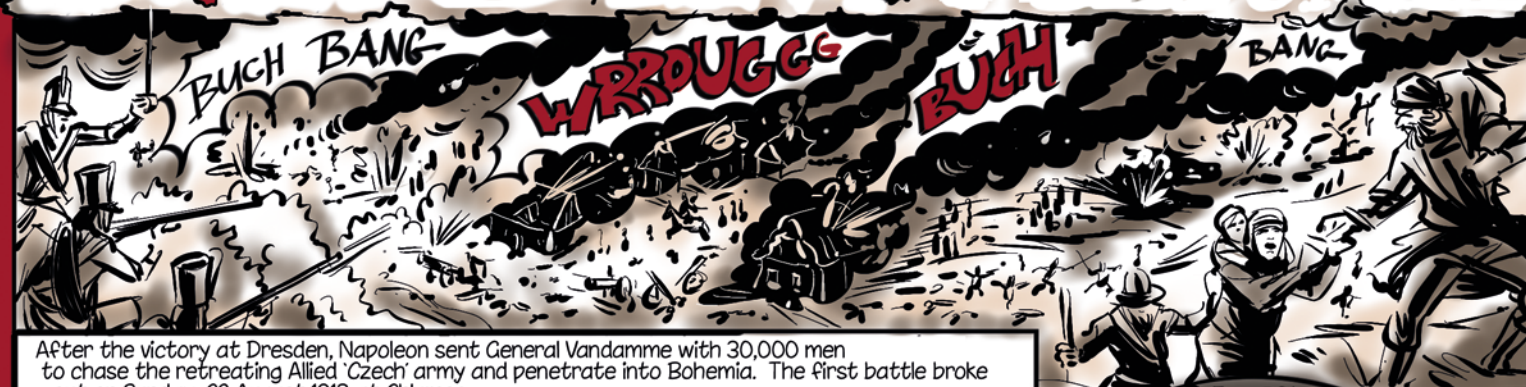


AN ADVENTUROUS CRUISE THERE AND BACK AGAIN

Believe me, it is an amazing experience. Boarding is in Litoměřice, not far from the Tyršův bridge. Tickets for the three and a half hour cruise full of exceptional experiences, can be purchased directly on board. You will hear the powerful voice of a siren, anchors aweigh! A kind voice will welcome you on board and will tell you about everything interesting that you are going to see on both banks of the Great river. You'll be cruising by Radobýl hill which looks as if a giant took a big bit off it. You will learn that there used to be a basalt quarry and that this rock was used to build Kurfürstendamm Street, the most famous street in Berlin, tenderly referred to as Ku'damm. In Lovosice, you will be surprised by how the one hundred and fifty ton boat is going to sink three metres during a few minutes in the local lock. The local famous vine growing towns are going to appear on both sides of the river, Velké Žernoseky on the right, and Malé Žernoseky on the left, and you will learn that they got their name because the people who lived here quarried stone to žernovy, mill stones called "žernovsekové". The Porta Bohemica will turn and continue toward Píšťanské lake. You're going to look for a vodyanoy Labina who's said to live in the canal between the river and the lake, but you will probably not see him. What you can see for sure though is the huge wreck of a broken concrete ship, half of which is helplessly resting on the sandy shore. Believe or not, Píšťanské lake is one of the largest cemeteries in the country, about forty metres deep, and is the last resting place of not only a few dozen ships, but also the entire original Barikádníků bridge!

When you say good-bye to the Ptačí and Potápěčský isle, Porta Bohemica is going to take a course upstream where you will breathlessly watch the sun set over the hummock of Lovoše. If you choose one of the Sundays during the summer break for your cruise, you are probably going to be very surprised because you will be attacked by the pirates of the Labeian. By the way, so you know when to go on your cruise, in May and September it operates on Saturdays and Sundays. In June also on Fridays, and during the summer, it's available on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. You can also have a pleasant meal onboard as there is a fast-food restaurant. However, if you have a more refined tongue and want to experience a real culinary orgy, the ship can be booked for a wedding (you will be married by the officers of the ship in full regalia right onboard), for birthday parties, training or a corporate party. The boat will then turn into a gastronomical watercraft, the floating Flying Fish restaurant, and your taste buds are soon going to fall into ecstasy over the fish specialties, lamb or Angus tartar steak... Don't think that you cannot get further by boat – in Děčín you can board the Poseidon and go either upstream to Ústí nad Labem or vice versa, downstream to Hřensko through the beautiful Elbe canyon, right to the heart of the Czech-Saxon Switzerland. Quite simply – boat swimming is extremely appropriate!

200 YEARS SINCE THE BATTLE OF CHLUMEC



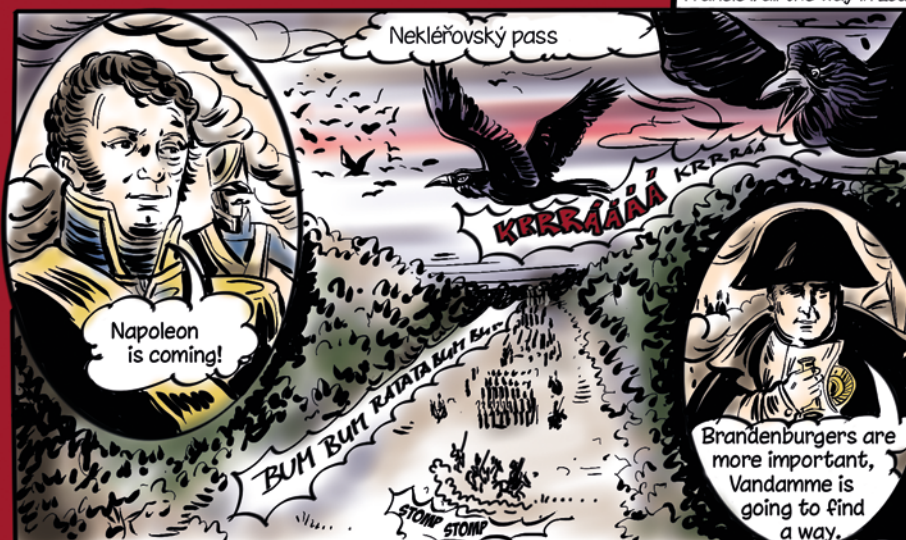
After the victory at Dresden, Napoleon sent General Vandamme with 30,000 men to chase the retreating Allied 'Czech' army and penetrate into Bohemia. The first battle broke out on Sunday, 29 August 1813 at Chlumec



The first day brought 6,000 casualties on each side. During the night, reinforcements arrived, the preponderance of the allies is now about double.



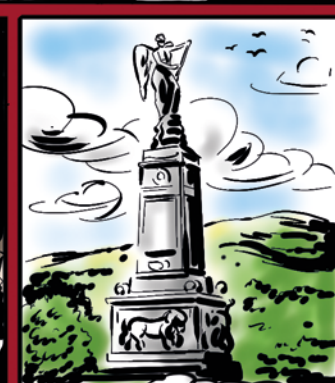
The Russian tsar Alexander I. and the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III. were watching the battle from the safety of Doubravská mountain near Teplice. The Austrian Emperor Francis I. all the way in Louny, through reports from the battlefield.



The French artillery was left in place to cover the retreat. Infantry and cavalry turned against the Prussians.



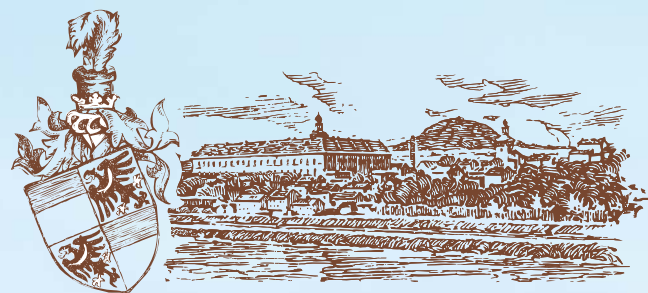
The retreat is unsuccessful. General Vandamme is captured. The Frenchmen are fleeing in panic in all directions.



Two hundred years ago, Chlumec turned into a brulee. Five other towns were also destroyed. About twenty thousand soldiers had fallen.

Wandering in the name of wine

TRADITION RENEWED AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS



ON THE SUNNY SLOPES OF THE CHARMING SOVICE

The undulating landscape around Roudnice nad Labem is ideal for growing vines. Clay-loam soil with marl subsoil has attracted vintners since the 14th century with a glass of Roudnice wine, wine with a rich body, intense aroma, fresh spark and hidden fire, it's clearly obvious why this is still the case today. Roudnice wines have a distinctive character and definitely aren't simple – on the contrary, they have their secret. The Lobkowicz acquired the Roudnice estate in 1603 and have maintained a strong wine-making tradition since then. Forty years later, they worked on eight vineyards, two of which still produce wine today – Kochovská vineyard, and especially the most famous, Sovická. The wine route spread on the slopes of Sovice, one of the most charming mountains of České středohoří. Altogether the Lobkowitz royal winegrowing is managing seventy-five hectares of vineyards. Primarily on the viniferous slopes at the site of the riverbed of the Elbe. Müller Thurgau, Riesling, Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Muscat Ottonel and the red varieties of Blue Portugal, St. Laurent, Pinot Noir and the new Czech Fratava are all grown here. Of special renown is primarily the local Sylvaner, delicious, harmonious, with a subtle spicy flavour and the fiery St. Laurent, a rich wine with a fruity aroma and great depth.

All of the wines are however noteworthy, even the youngest, only recently bred variety Fratava, with a dark colour turning into purple and a plum aroma, which is reflected in the taste with a decent emphasis of acids. A nice wine, which represents a very good local produce – particularly dry wines with less residual sugar. This also is due to the fact that in the cellars, which are situated directly in Roudnice Castle, they especially utilise traditional winemaking practices. Of course, they're also equipped with modern technologies, but they use them "sensibly and in moderation" so to speak. So for example, the red wines are blended by hand in open vats without the use of wine tanks. Their overall philosophy remains firmly loyal to the varietal characteristics. If you come to Roudnice, I have a tip for you – go directly from the square to the castle, or more precisely the original Romanesque castle from the 12th century which is hidden in the bowels of the contemporary chateau. You will enjoy a short tour of the preserved area topped with a tasting of five samples of Roudnice wines, of course, with the option to purchase what you wish. You'll be partaking in the inspirational taste and scent of the Roudnického Polabí.

It's been more than one hundred years since the phylloxera pest destroyed the historic vineyards in the beautiful countryside of Czech garnets and volcanic cones of the Českého středohoří, near Třebívlice. Desperate winemakers had pulled up all the vines and winemaking disappeared. It was only in 2004 when the recovery process began. For a long eight years, the vines have been planted in areas of historic vineyards with great reverence to the traditional varieties. The white varieties that grow here are Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling or Gewurztraminer and the red varieties are Pinot Noir and St. Laurent. At the same time, winemaking buildings are being built again with great respect for tradition and the surrounding development – there is actually a large farmhouse, architecturally unpretentious but extremely ambitious. The intention of the local modern winemakers is to create the most beautiful winery in the Czech Republic. The grapes ripen with exceptional minerality on the south-western slopes

with the volcanic basalt bedrock or limestone marl, on four vineyard tracts – Koskov, under Hazmburkem, under Skršínský hill and under Šepetelský hill – a total area of thirty-four hectares. Processing is based on modern and friendly technologies. Wines are being made under continuous monitoring by the system of controlled fermentation. The winery is going to open its doors in the fall of 2013 – and there will be a lot to see. Visitors will be able to experience wine tours, explore the vineyards, taste and buy local remarkable wine, but also to enjoy a good meal, as on the winery premises there's also going to be a culinary centre with tasting rooms as well as a restaurant. The meals are going to be made entirely of local ingredients from the local farmers according to traditional recipes. It is interesting that one of the members of Třebívlice, Ulrika von Lewetzov, able to taste several dishes of the 19th

of the team of chefs is also a great-granddaughter of the most famous resident the last gentle girlfriend of the poet Goethe. Thanks to her, the guests will be based on the original recipes from the kitchen of Mrs. Ulrike from the end century. The basic principle of the gastronomic philosophy is a perfect harmony of dishes and local wines, carefully selected for each individual meal. There's nothing left for us to do but look forward to the completion of the patient work of the Třebívlice winemakers planned for the end of summer. Then we'll be able to eagerly smell and taste...



LOBKOWICZ



ZÁMECKÉ VINAŘSTVÍ
TŘEBÍVLICE s. r. o.



A stud in a beer drinker's paradise

Every true beer connoisseur should at least once in a lifetime go to Žatec. It is, after all, the Mecca of the world's beer making. And when you eventually get here, it would be foolish indeed not to go to the main "mosque", namely

the Temple of Hops and Beer. You're not going to find anything like it anywhere in the world. An interactive, about one-hour long exhibit, in which you are going to take the lift to the hop beacon while watching a 3D simulation of a flight over the city or the planet. Then you're going to wander through a labyrinth of hop bales and the alchemist's study all the way to the treasure and the hops clock. It's hard to describe, you have to experience it. Let me just add that at the end you're going to climb through a chimney, take your children to a grand-scale playroom, and you yourselves led by a tour guide will arrive at the main point of the entire exhibit, the restaurant with the brewery U Orloje.

RELAXATION IN THE CLASSICAL SPIRIT

It is understood that you can come here directly from the street but those of you who haven't seen the Temple shouldn't miss it. In the restaurant, you will stand face to face with shining copper vat. You're going to find out the process of beer making and then you do some tasting which will probably not be your final stop. The restaurant built in the spirit of the dryer and hop picker, with a typical metal floor, will certainly tempt you for a longer visit, for good food (for example, grilled pork chop stuffed with prunes, ground beef steak, pike with butter, roasted rabbit with marjoram, brewery goulash or hop strudel) and especially the great beer which you can't taste anywhere else. What's cooked here is drunk here, unless you bought one of the local "kegs" (from one to thirty litres) and took a little bit of heaven home with you. And what's on tap here? Especially the legendary Žatecký Stud. This beer has been brewed in Žatec since the 13th century and even back then had significant effects on the male population (it provided strength and virility). And the women enjoyed it too. This tasty eleven degree beer (which in the summer, when mixed with draught raspberry juice, turns into Red Riding Hood, or with Kofola turns into Diesel, and three

times a year it acts as Green beer when the brewer colours it with chlorophyll) is complemented by the Temple dark beer, also an eleven degree beer made of four types of malt. The hop lager, a light twelve degree beer with an extra scoop of hops, is bitter on the tongue and harmonious on the roof of the mouth, along with seasonal specials. The beer here is brewed in the old honest Czech way and the result are well seasoned pilsner type lagers. No chemicals, just malt, hops, water, yeast, no pasteurisation, no filtration. You simply know what you're drinking, and on top of that it's devilishly good. You can expect a brand new light ten degree beer in the summer and most importantly – there's going to be a real hop field in the garden of the restaurant. Just imagine, you're tasting and indulging and all around the hops are growing and maturing – isn't it heaven? Once you are regulars you can put your special beer mug into a beer safe and, based on the example of one of the locals, you can even put some money there in case of a sudden emergency... Before I forget – bikers are welcome. They know how to take good care of them here. So, let's go!

The Mostecký Kahan, an oasis from another world

Old Most is long gone from this world. It's been replaced by a new town which, rid off the option to attract tourists to historical architecture, is building an innovative sports

area, unique areas and facilities for visitors of the town and its surroundings. The traditions have however not disappeared altogether. One of the strongest traditions was the brewing right which was granted to Most by Přemysl Otakar II. in 1237. And the microbrewery Mostecký Kahan has been relying on this pious tradition for four years now.

WHEN ONE CAN OBSERVE THE BREWERS' WORK

It's kind of magic. In the middle of a housing development, today actually in a historic building of the first modern Most Kosmos cinema (1971), you're going to find an oasis from a different era. When you enter the Mostecký Kahan brewery restaurant, you're going to leave the image of the town built in the sixties and seventies behind you at the door, and you're going to find yourselves in an old Czech tavern. A welcoming pub with such a distinctive atmosphere that in a few minutes you're not going to be willing to believe that the 21st century is right outside. Especially, when you're going to be welcomed by a live band with a repertoire of charming pub songs. You'll sit down, but you'll most likely not be able to sit for long. One of the parts of the tavern is rather unusual – there's not only a shiny vat which is quite common in microbreweries, but also a "spilka". So you can observe with amazement how the beer is brewed right in front of your eyes. In the cold cellar below the restaurant, there are tanks and barrels where the beer is maturing, and if there are more of you, the local brewer will gladly give you a tour and explain everything. We still have not got to the most important thing, what to drink here. Firstly, all of the beers brewed here are named Kahan, to honour one of the essential working tools of the Most miners. They are twelve degree beers or more powerful calibres

and you can be sure that when you're told by someone here that you're drinking a twelve, it will not be 11.7°, but a few tenths above 12. This is related to the philosophy of honesty and respect for guests. The essential ingredients are a high quality malt, Žatecký hops and Flájská water, which is considered some of the best in the country. By default, you're going to be served classic lagers – light, amber and dark. On top of which there are specials available every month. The biggest hit is smoked beer with chilli, an excellent local wheat beer, top fermented beer, but also remarkable fruity beers including cherry, blueberry, fig(!), bitter orange, tangerine, or even honey or vanilla beer. They'll be just what the doctor ordered especially in the summer when a nice patio with a play area for kids will be open. Of course, with good beer should come good food, and you are going to be spoiled with traditional Czech cuisine like lamb shanks, boar shoulder with rosehip sauce, roasted ribs, pork knees, but also for example lard with cracklings, roasts, sausage meat or homemade pate. One warning – on each table you will find discreetly trumped up dishes with roasted barley. You have one or two bites and you're lost. It's incredibly tasty and damned addictive. So don't forget – when you happen to be thirsty in Most, you're going to find an oasis with Kahan!

Roudnice patriot Michal Horáček

The Gate
to Bohemia
and to my
inner self...

MR. HORÁČEK, YOU WERE BORN IN PRAGUE. BUT TODAY, PEOPLE PERCEIVE YOU AS AN OBSTINATE ROUDNICE NATIVE. HOW COME?

I have lived in Roudnice for eighteen years. And I'm glad. So glad that I don't want to just live here, but die here which is, I think, an even stronger bond to a certain place. It's a small town but not so small that it doesn't have everything a man needs for life – a post-office, administration services, restaurants, hospital (I hope this one stays here!). One has the advantages of a town here, but at the same time is surrounded by beautiful scenery. On top of that, it's a place where you essentially feel that the human settlement has been for centuries, as a matter of fact since the dawn of time. That it's a natural body, and not a city without roots recently built somewhere in the field.

A BOND WITH A PLACE IS OFTEN BUILT BY FEELING IT WITH YOUR FEET. WHERE DO YOU GO FOR WALKS HERE?

There are many beautiful paths. Above all, there's a beautiful, wide river which eminently belongs to the town and is ubiquitous in its life. As long as I can remember, people have always gone down the river, fished, there were and still are paddlers, canoeists... I love the cardinality of the river. I think that many towns could envy Roudnice and the mature and dignified Elbe. At night, when it's quiet, a rich and powerful hum can be heard behind my windows. It's the water falling over the weir. It's one of my life satisfactions to be able to see the river from my house.

DO YOU STROLL ALONE?

Not at all. I have a two-year old daughter so I go to the river with her every other day to feed the ducks and swans. And when it's warmer we go even further – whether on the left or right bank of the river, no matter. It's beautiful on both sides. And there are still places that are untouched, and I am looking forward to the time when Julie's bigger and we're going to be able to go to those places by boat. A few kilometres down the stream, right on the bank of the Elbe, is the spectacular Baroque Church of St. Catherine of Alexandria, and not a living soul goes there.

IT'S SAID THAT A GOOD VIEW DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF HOUSING – WHAT'S YOUR VIEW LIKE?

Superb. There's an amazing view from Roudnice. Far and wide. I can see all the way to Litoměřice from my windows. I often stand here and stare with amazement at the changes in České středohoří. Perhaps, it is the most beautiful in the morning when it's foggy. It's worth to wait for Sovice to emerge from it and then another hill and another... like islands in the sea. That fascinates me.

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS ARE YOU'RE RECOGNISED BY THE LOCALS AS A ROUDNICE NATIVE?

I think the people of Roudnice have accepted me by now. The fact that I'm trying to do something for the city every now and then has helped. Not far from my house used to be terribly botched garages which were adjoining a Jewish cemetery from the mid-18th century. A charming place but in horrible condition. So I bought the garages, tore them down and turned the place into a little square with greenery, a bell tower, statue of a sage and a fountain. It's a public place. Children play there. And I even found out that newlyweds come here to have their pictures taken on their way from the town hall. It's a wonderful feeling... I'm not boasting. I'm just fostering that feeling inside of me that I gave something to the city. I think everyone should feel that way. Everyone should make an effort to improve the space in which he cohabits, based on his means.

BUT IT WASN'T JUST THE LITTLE SQUARE...

If you mean the reconstruction of the old Jewish cemetery, in that case I only contributed a bit in the beginning and then watched with delight how the Jewish community generously continued it. I built a wall between the cemetery and the little square which is however not obstructing the view of the tombs. It used to be a rubbish dump before. People used to ask - "what should we do with this? Let's dump it at the cemetery." And so the tombs were covered with tires, refrigerators, mattresses, rubble and all kinds of rubbish. We cleaned it out, and since then, slowly and in good faith, for the last fifteen years, dignity and beauty is being returned to the cemetery. Today, it's actually a gallery of cemetery architecture with precise stone-carved restored Renaissance and Baroque tombstones. In my opinion, it's a true pride of Roudnice. Modest, inconspicuous, but a great work and I would recommend to everyone to come to look at it. It's no lesser an experience than the world-famous Jewish cemetery in Prague.

PROBABLY THE MOST FAMOUS MOUNTAIN OF THE CZECH HISTORY IS JUST A SHORT DISTANCE FROM ROUDNICE. WHAT ARE THE LOCAL'S FEELINGS ABOUT IT?

We natives of Roudnice, consider Říp Mountain unquestionably our own and are very proud of it. Everyone I know takes part in the Řípská pilgrimage every year. It would be unthinkable not to go! Or there's also a long tradition of going by foot to Říp the morning of New Year's Eve. People climb to the top and play music, chat, but above all they're there together. There's no agenda behind it, no organisational support. It's simply a tradition that lives on. I've been there eleven times.

WE HAVEN'T TALKED ABOUT THE ROUDNICE CASTLE YET... HOW COME?

I perceive the castle from many perspectives. It is an old settlement from the early Přemysl's time. Below it was later erected a stone bridge over the river, in many ways similar to Charles Bridge. Too bad it only survived until the invasion of the Swedes. Roudnice would've had a first-class historic gem today. Today, there's a castle built by Caratti, the builder of the Prague Klementina, above the vanished bridge, on the site of the fort and later a Romanesque castle. It is the second largest castle complex after Prague Castle. It covers an immense area, gardens, cellars... It has always belonged to the Lobkowicz family and it still belongs to them today. William Lobkowicz takes good care of the castle but his plate is full. He renovated the Lobkowitz palace in Prague, castle Nelahozeves... And thus Roudnice Castle is kind of in limbo at the moment. It's a logical focal point of the city, but is not accessible. The heart of the city which isn't beating. I'm convinced that for the future development of Roudnice, the connection of the castle with the city is absolutely crucial. I would be excited for a university faculty to find its home here in order for the castle to become alive with young, educated and eager people who would wake the city up and give it new dynamics. Maybe it will happen one day.



A Trip Fit for a King

A FAIRYTALE CASTLE AND ITS TREASURES

Moritzburg Castle



Picturesque and majestic it thrones on an island: the former hunting and pleasure castle of Augustus the Strong. Discover its precious interior, monumental painted leather tapestries, one of the most significant collections of hunting trophies and the legendary »Moritzburg Feather Room«! This castle also became famous for the fairytale movie »Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella« During the winter months the castle's exhibition is dedicated to this special fairytale.

Directions: A4 – Exit Dresden-Wilder Mann (follow the signage to Moritzburg)
www.schloss-moritzburg.de

A PEARL FROM SAXONY'S CROWN

Weesenstein Castle



High over the Mueglitz Valley rises on a rocky promontory the unique architectural ensemble of Weesenstein Castle. The museum awaits you with valuable furnishings and precious wallpapers in the royal apartments from the 18th /19th century – a reminiscence of King Johann von Sachsen. The castle offers insight into contemporary and building history since Gothic and the turbulent history of the Buenau Family, who, from here, constituted many lines in Saxony as well as Bohemia.

Directions: A17 – Dresden-Prague | Exit Pirna (follow the signage to Glashütte)
www.schloss-weesenstein.de

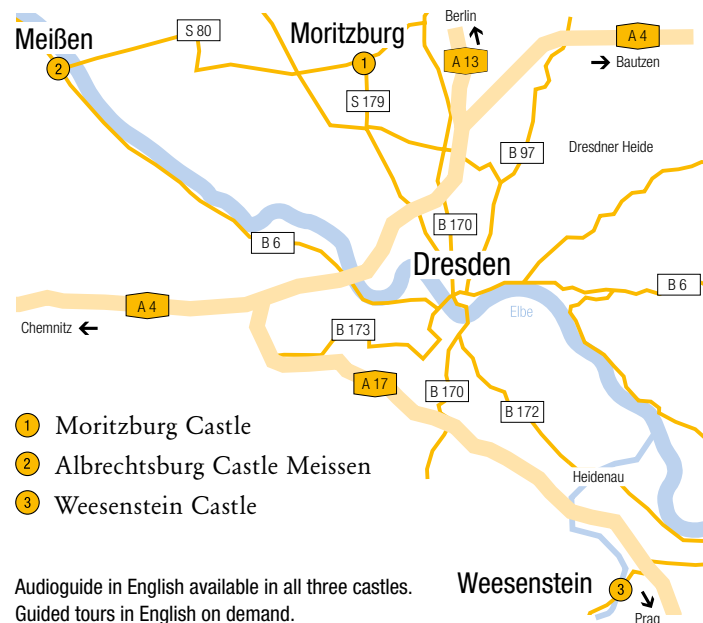
REACH FOR THE TOP!

Albrechtsburg Castle Meissen



Albrechtsburg Castle is considered the first palace in German building history and an architectural masterpiece. The castle was built from 1471 onwards by Duke Albrecht von Wettin. The murals from the 19th century impressively show a piece of Saxon history. Experience this unique site of culture.

Directions: A4 – Exit Wilsdruff | A13 – Exit Radeburg | A14 – Exit Nossen-Ost | from Dresden along B6 | direct train route from Dresden
www.albrechtsburg-meissen.de



SCHLOESSERLAND SACHSEN



EUROPÄISCHE UNION

Schloss Moritzburg
D-01468 Moritzburg

Albrechtsburg Meissen
Domplatz 1 | D-01662 Meißen

Schloss Weesenstein
Am Schlossberg 1 | D-01809 Müglitztal

»With
Schloesserland
on Tour!«



Discover your kingdom with the schloesserlandPASS.

Pay once and see as much as you can.

Free admission to more than 45 properties: one year at only € 40 or ten days at only € 20.
As a pass holder, you can benefit from many specials and discounts.

There is two of you?

Then make use of the family pass and save € 10 or € 5, respectively.

Further information
www.schloesserland-sachsen.de



Where beer is brewed life is good

Na Rychtě Brewery has become a legend in the Ústí Region. One cannot easily find a spot to sit down in the restaurant. It's usually busy all day long. Well, and these "reeves" not only brew a great beer, they also think about beer a lot. And they've figured that Ústí nad Labem is significantly lacking a real beer event which would attract people, offer them great entertainment and even better beer, and above all, introduce beer as an incredibly colourful category. And thus the idea to organise the Ústecký beer fest was born three years ago. Saturday 18 May will commemorate the third year of this festival of small and family-run breweries.

ENTHUSIASTS AND BEER EXPERTS FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND EUROPE

It is peculiar – the admission is free, breweries do not pay anything to participate and the whole day, from ten to ten, the area around the famous Ústí church with a leaning tower in the atrium of the Forum shopping centre is literally packed with a first-rate cultural programme. Is it worth the brewers from Rychta investing in an event which doesn't bring them any profit? It is. It's about prestige, about the distinction of the brewery, the possibility to meet others and mainly, it's about giving people the opportunity to taste beers which they would otherwise have to travel hundreds of kilometres to taste, which is highly unlikely. And also to teach them that beer tourism is a great idea, not travelling around the Czech Republic or even around the world drinking beer which they can buy practically anywhere thanks to the global market, but drinking local beers, occasional specialties – simply tasting the towns and villages which they pass along the way, now that's an experience. There were 20,000 people at the festival last year and they're expecting an even bigger crowd this year. There will be around twenty breweries from the Czech Republic but also from Bavaria, Saxony and Belgium. The recommended method of use is to have a third at each booth to compare, taste, try, explore – but most of all to have fun. There are concerts and theatre for adults and children. Children are competing, drinking tap lemonade – entertainment for the entire family. Seriously, it's a great day here. There are even two beer contests – a tasting one for the Maß of the Ústí beer fest and the other for the Maß of the Ústecký daily, so the breweries are even judged competitively. But believe me, that's not really what matters here. When you're going to taste the tenth special on the roof of your mouth, when your eyes widen in amazement over the inexhaustible diversity and variability of the golden drink from time immemorial called beer, you'll realise that it doesn't matter who won or lost.



It's about human stubbornness and foible, know-how and creativity – simply small and family-owned breweries usually serve what they make on tap. They don't expand to supermarkets or pubs. This shows that something like this can't be done without a little obsession. Well, and because we're at a fair, there are also craftsmen. This year there is going to be a fiery blacksmith, skilful potter and wonder-making jewellers. You know from experience that with a pint of beer in your hand it's always very enjoyable to stare at other people working... And so, when the good soldier Švejk on the morning of May 18th officially opens the first barrel of beer and declares the Ústecký beer fest has begun, do not hesitate and go tasting. And if you're going to look for breweries from the Gate to Bohemia, you will surely come across the Varnsdorf Kocour, Mostecký Kahan, Litoměřice Labut' and, of course, especially the homemade "reeve" beers – Mazl, Vojtěch and Brusinka, but also this year's novelty brewed during the battle noise and bombardment at the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Chlumec. Enjoy - and don't forget to wipe the foam from your lips!



The Děčín anchor – full of colours and scents

Since the late seventies, once a year, Děčín was alive with the Děčinská anchor festival. The most popular event was a song-writing contest in the genre of pop-music, which was then a brand new thing. But there were all kinds of contests – for example in judo or recitation. Děčinská anchor however was gradually disappearing from the spotlight. People who were not involved might have thought it had completely. Its flag is still erected though, thanks to the florists who have been holding it above their heads for forty-two long years.



FLORISTS HAVE MAINTAINED THE TRADITION

Nowadays, the Děčinská anchor is above all the floristic championship of the Czech Republic. The 42nd championship is going to take place on 15-19 May at Děčín Castle where the competition was moved a few years ago from the original Střelnice. To be exact it is in the newly opened south wing (its grand opening was announced by the florists a year ago). How is it possible that this tradition has survived both a century and political earthquakes? The way it usually is – thanks to foible, enthusiasm and dedication. This year's Děčinská anchor, held under the scope of the Floristics by four senses project, is organised jointly by the Association of Flower Growers and Florists of the Czech Republic and the Central School of Horticulture and Agricultural of Antonín Emanuel Komers in Děčín Libverdy. It is a very interesting and in many ways unique school which was founded on the impulse of Earl František Antonín Thun and until this day educates people in traditional fields such as horticulture and veterinary science. It also educates farmers and shop clerks in the fields which earl Thun would have undoubtedly called agribusiness in his era.

BEAUTY SENSED WITHOUT THE HELP OF EYES

This year is conceived as a tribute to a famous Czech scientist, Professor Otto Wichterle, the inventor of nylon and contact lenses, who would be one hundred years old. The united blind and visually impaired organisation of the Czech Republic was therefore invited to collaborate. And part of the challenges that await the participants of the championship will be aimed directly at people with visual impairments. In order for you to be able to have an idea what is going to be happening at Děčín Castle in mid May, and why it's a good idea to go there, I'm going to give you an insight into the programme of the 42nd Děčinská anchor. The first two days will host a non-public contest in which roughly 40 competitors in the junior and senior categories will compete in four disciplines. Wedding bouquet is a traditional year on year discipline which is rather essential in floristry. The remaining themes change every year. This year will feature a bouquet for the visually impaired, pink glasses, and a floristic variation and spatial floral arrangement. Florists' imagination and creativity are indeed limitless. Those who have never attended such a contest can hardly imagine what can be created from flowers and plant materials. More than 120 competitive exhibits will be created and displayed for the public, so you can come and see for yourselves how creative they are. On Friday, the Floristic by four senses exhibition will be focused on the blind and visually impaired, but that doesn't mean that those of you with perfect sight cannot come. On the contrary! You will see olfactory and tactile presentations which, blinded by a scarf, you will be able to try for yourselves and feel what it's like to perceive beauty without the help of your eyes. So accept our invitation and come join one of the three guided tours of the Děčín Castle with a unique, very fragrant and wonderfully colourful experience.



Baroque gem on a ribbon of the silvery Ohře

Czech countryside... A phrase which evokes a slightly different image in each of us, but always slight numbness, the strange mixture of emotion, pride and joy. Which corner of the Czech Republic is "the most Czech"? I'm offering this picture – you're going through Slánská plane gently sloping to the north and suddenly you will pop up at the Oherský break. A remarkable picture of the hills and mountains of the České středohoří will appear in front of you and almost within reach will be a mountain crowned which is simply known which inches towards on its shore, above Baroque palace. soul will unbend.

STŘEDOHOŘÍ FAIRYTALE, OR LONG LIVE KING GEORGE!

The tale of the castle is by far from over. For thirty-one years, it has been written by the castellan doctor Ladislav Pešek and his gradually changing team, who have also decided to dedicate it to the children. And thus, the Středohoří fairytale was pronounced and King George (incidentally with the surname Šlégr, originally a hockey player, an Olympic champion from Nagano) sat on the throne. And a fairytale exhibition with creative workshops was established in the former music school on premises of the castle where children are invited to tap into their creative side with natural materials. Year after year there are many events for children highlighted by a weekend event called Castle full of magic or From fairy-tale to fairy-tale, which each year brings a brand new script, tours of the scary basement and so forth. And if you're a bit older, you'll without doubt be taken by the tour of the castle interiors with an exhibition dedicated to the development of housing in castles from the Renaissance to the 19th century, with the rare collection of encaustic tiles to the Baroque stove tiles ordered during the construction of the castle from a Dresden factory which also supplied the Saxon electors. Or a trip to the cellars while the ghosts are on their break to explore the local kitchen or the unique ice room, where ice was brought in the winter and food was stored in the summer. Or perhaps you may prefer a walk in the park accompanied by the sorrowful singing of peacocks... To sum it up you can continue to help write the tale of Libochovice Castle during your visit. So we hope its nicely written.

CASTLE FULL OF TALES

Each building erected by man has its own tale. The tale of Libochovice Castle is very colourful, at times engrossing, interwoven with notable personalities. The most important part was written in the early Baroque period, when the recently burnt out Renaissance chateau built on the site of a once burned down Gothic fortress was bought by Duke Gundakar of Dietrichstein. It must have been his peculiar love for this magical place since he was willing to build a new castle literally on a black meadow. Gundakar commissioned Antonio della Porta, a very fashionable and famous architect, and a magnificent Baroque four-winged palace with a closed layout in the shape of an irregular trapezoid began to grow on the shores of this magical meander of the Ohře River. The only things that remained from the past were the Gothic chapel and a large basement. Gundakar wanted the castle to have beautiful gardens so he called in Jan Tulipán, a gardener at heart that was beginning to make a name for himself, who created a breathtaking French park and began the great gardening project of Libochovice. The Dietrichstein family tale continues with the Duke's daughter Miss Terezie, who as it sometimes happens, married rather beneath her status, and upon marrying a mere earl, the barony became the property of the Herberstein family. After a lavish life typical of the higher nobility comes a new and fresh wind indeed. It was the mid-19th century and the Herbersteins walked hand in hand with time, beginning to run a very successful business. Josef Bedřich especially achieved huge progress in agriculture, fruit growing, cultivation and the processing industry. A sugar refinery was built in Libochovice. Libochovice and its surroundings was flourishing and the estate was significantly reaping financial reward. Josef Bedřich could

start fulfilling his desire for travel, and while the earl was wandering around Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Persia, India, China and Japan, another famous gardener, Josef Rublič, was improving the gardens which expanded downstream the Ohře, covering about 25 hectares. An English park was, and still is, connected to the French garden. The pride of the garden used to be its greenhouses which the earl supplied with samples of plants brought back from his travels. Likewise, exotic and strange objects also filled the castle including rare china, decorative furniture and a remarkable collection of stuffed animals resplendent with a 100 year old Nile crocodile, slain by the earl himself. You can still admire it in the sala terrena now. The rest of the animals are waiting for the reconstruction of the second floor. However, the tale of the castle would not be complete without mentioning its most famous native. In 1787, on the ground floor of the east wing of the castle, Jan Evangelista Purkyně, the greatest Czech naturalist was born into the family of the prebendary of the Dietrichstein forests. There's a very interesting exhibit about his life in the spot where his cradle used to be. The castle is also connected with a tale of the river. Ice floes used to pile up in the meander under the castle every spring and the Libochovice residents lived in fear year after year that the river was going to spill out. In the 1930s, in urgent crisis, when the employment rate was reaching eight percent (from today's perspective, it was actually no crisis at all), there was a new bridge built next to the Ohře riverbed and the river was straightened and re-directed into a new basin. This was primarily done as a public investment to shake up the economy.

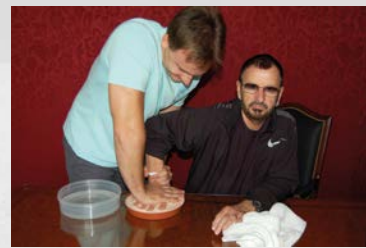


One person can make a difference

On the outskirts of the town of Terežín, in a building with the amorous name of Kavalír II (it used to house a bakery during the war), a Crystalline touch is awaiting everyone who comes here. It's the name of a museum which has no parallel in the world, where at the same time you're expected to actually touch the showpieces. And because the exposed artefacts are made of crystal, the name is not exaggerated. You will literally be able to shake hands with numerous celebrities as the exposed works of art are their hands – perfect glass copies of hands to be exact.

SHAKE RINGO STARR'S HAND

Jan Huňát, a Czech glassmaker, came up with this worldly original idea and especially the technology (they're protected by a trademark). This remarkable artist acquired erudition in Železný Brod, and experience for example in the Moser glass factory. He has left traces of his aft form at various places around the world, such as in the Church of St. Patrick in Dublin or the Church of St. Mary in Sydney. The Crystalline touch is his dream come true. Visiting the museum is a hard to describe experience. There's something for everyone. Even those for whom the majority of museum exhibitions are in one way or another inaccessible – the blind and visually impaired. You can have eyes like a hawk, but you're going to be equally ecstatic. Crystal handprints of important politicians, athletes, artists and exceptional people of modern history are first and foremost beautiful. And if one happens to be a chiromancer, he can, in the fragile palms of the hands, read for example the story of humanity (Sir Nicholas Winton), the desire for freedom (Václav Havel, Lech Walesa), the unification (Richard von Weizsäcker), the synergy of knowledge and experience (Madeleine Albright), the beauty of music (Ringo Starr), a magical fantasy world (Adolf Born), optimism and enthusiasm (Arnost Lustig), but also about viscous resistance and mastery (Jaromír Jager, Ivan Lendl, Dominik Hasek, Anatoly Karpov). Some of the celebrities even put their own creativity into the exhibit – for example the Crystalline touch of Václav Havel is based on his initiative completed with a sentence: "Hope isn't optimism. Hope is a certainty that something makes sense." Besides the tour, you will also get a thematic interpretation about the personalities and the works themselves. Even pupils and students will find something to entice their attention. The museum has prepared educational interactive lessons supported by a haptic experience, in other words a tactual experience, for them. The Crystalline touch will simply allow you to experience something you didn't expect. The human hand is a perfect image of the soul, and captured in crystal it illustrates the motto of the whole exhibition: "One man can make a difference." And so let me invite you to come and experience a harmonious synergy of great people and the master craftsmanship of the Czech glassmakers.



Holy stairs with humility and awe

Rumburk is in many ways a remarkable city. Those who really cares about it may find many unique traces of human history here. One of them doesn't take more than one minute to find. All city directions are pointing to it. You might even say that all Rumburk roads lead to the Loretánská chapel. And no wonder. This extraordinary religious monument is not only of interest because of what was happening in it, as the centuries passed by, but also what is happening here today. Stubbornly, step by step, with a clear ambition and dedication, a few people under the guidance of Klára Mágrová are trying to accomplish a miracle. And miracles are happening regularly year after year.

AS ONCE WAS JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF PILATE

That which was left by the generations before us is coming to life and gaining former splendour and even purpose in the Loreta. No, the Capuchin monastery is not being reconstructed, but the Rumburk Loreta is once again the unequivocal spiritual centre of the city. Based on the Loreta festivities, never-ending exhibits and inventive events, it is clearly obvious that Rumburk and cross-country residents, even tourists from afar, are coming here and are amazed. The Loreta treasures are being repaired and very carefully restored step by step, crown by crown. So far, the last gem of the necklace of the Loreta are the Holy stairs. They are twenty-eight stairs symbolising a staircase in Pilate's house which Jesus Christ ascended to receive the death sentence on Good Friday. We can find fifty-three metal crosses on the staircase which are protecting the remains of the Saints. On three stairs, there are two crosses next to each other which remind us during our ascent that the blood from Christ's wounds dripped here. It is possible to climb them, but only with deep humility while kneeling. The Chapel of the Calvary of Christ on the cross is located above the staircase, thieves on the right and left, the Virgin Mary, St. John and the suffering souls in Purgatory. The Rumburk Holy Stairs are above all unique thanks to the rich entourage of wooden sculptures.

In the four niches that surround the central staircase a scene is shown in which Pontius Pilate pronounces "Ecce homo" while gazing at Christ being whipped by soldiers. A bit lower, the Deriding Jews are lining the Christ's symbolic journey. The culmination of the journey to restore the Holy stairs was their new consecration by Monsignor Jan Baxant, the bishop of Litoměřice, in September 2012. The whole extraordinary complex is complemented by two other buildings on both sides of the Holy Steps – a Prison, symbolising the Mocking of Christ, and the Holy Sepulchre. I should point out that there is a carefully restored Station of the Cross on the walls of the cloister, which culminates with the Holy Stairs. It's apparently clear that this is a wonderful place, powerful and beautiful in both senses of the word, both inside and outside. The Rumburk Loreta is a place you shouldn't miss during your travels for at least two reasons – to gather yourselves and calm your soul, no matter what your belief, and so that you can admire the beautiful human perseverance and dedication, thanks to which this rare monument is going in the opposite direction to many other historical treasures. Not merely left to collapse into itself, but moving towards new glory and splendour.



Chaga chaga choo choo

“Perhaps, it will seem to you that we're at the Gate of railroad fans, especially shuttle trains on endangered lines. This feeling is absolutely true. The cultural dimension of the landscape is not only accentuated by villages, towns, roads, avenues of trees, orchards, walls, and small religious monuments, but also by the railroad – and for a very, very long time. The Podřipský and Středohorský engine trains run on other utterly charming and attractive lines.”

TRAIN TRACKS THROUGH PODŘIPSKO AND ČESKÉ STŘEDOHOŘÍ

A funny thing happened last summer when one of the passengers who had no idea that she had boarded a tourist train at the train station excitedly reported that on the line between Roudnice to Litoměřice are services like in the Pendolino – even refreshments! That's exactly the way it is. In order to preserve the lines running through the impressive natural sights of the Podřipsko, České středohoří and Úštěcko the KŽC Transport organisation has started operating two historic engine trains. One referred to as Podřipský runs in the summer months (this year from June 15 – September 7) every weekend in the direction of Litoměřice, and it takes the nicest detour you can imagine. You'll pass by the mythical Říp, Mšené spa, by the water castle in Budyně nad Ohří, in sight of the Libochovice fairy-tale castle and end up in Litoměřice, or Louny, depending on which connection you choose. You can get off anywhere and go on a trip and then idyllically take the train back again. The Středohorský engine train takes you by Ploskovice where another castle tale is awaiting you, all the way to Úštěk, for example to Helfenburk Castle, the Calvary in Ostré or the Museum of devils. But you can also take it across České středohoří, via Třebenice (do you know the local Museum of Czech garnets?), all the way to Most. This line would be the biggest tourist attraction if it were somewhere in America, but they would have to build it in an artificial countryside. Here, it's a line that has been operating for decades in a countryside that has no comparison anywhere in the world. And it's also becoming a sensation, even though in a Czech way, slowly, but hopefully, surely. As a matter of fact last year, every now and then, tourists had to stand in the railcars. And apart from the train simply taking you where you want to go, the already mentioned services are outstanding! Besides the surprising refreshments (including draft beer!), each of the connections also has a Bixium trailer, information boards here and there along the line. And what are you going to ride? The towing cars are models from 1958, the connecting cars are five years

a museum tracing the history of railways in the county you are passing through. Additionally, you can come across younger – so actually they're also showpieces! Let me add that bicycles are welcome for transport and that there are cycle-buses connecting with the trains, and even the cruise boat in Litoměřice.

I think the Friends of the shuttle trains club is going to continue growing, including with you. Everything you need to know can be found at www.stredohori-podripsko.cz



photo: Archive of KŽC

Mattoni Ústí nad Labem Half Marathon 15 September 2013



COME AND RUN THE CZECH REPUBLIC!

- Half Marathon (21, 0975 km)
- 2Run (10 + 11 km) – new!
- Relay (3× 5 km + 1× 6 km)
- Handbike (19 km)
- Family Run (3 km)

The race is a part of the RunCzech running league.



RUNCZECH

Official race hotel: Best Western HOTEL VLADIMIR
More accommodation offers at: www.runczechhotels.com

www.runczech.com

Title partner



Official partners



Media partners



Patrons

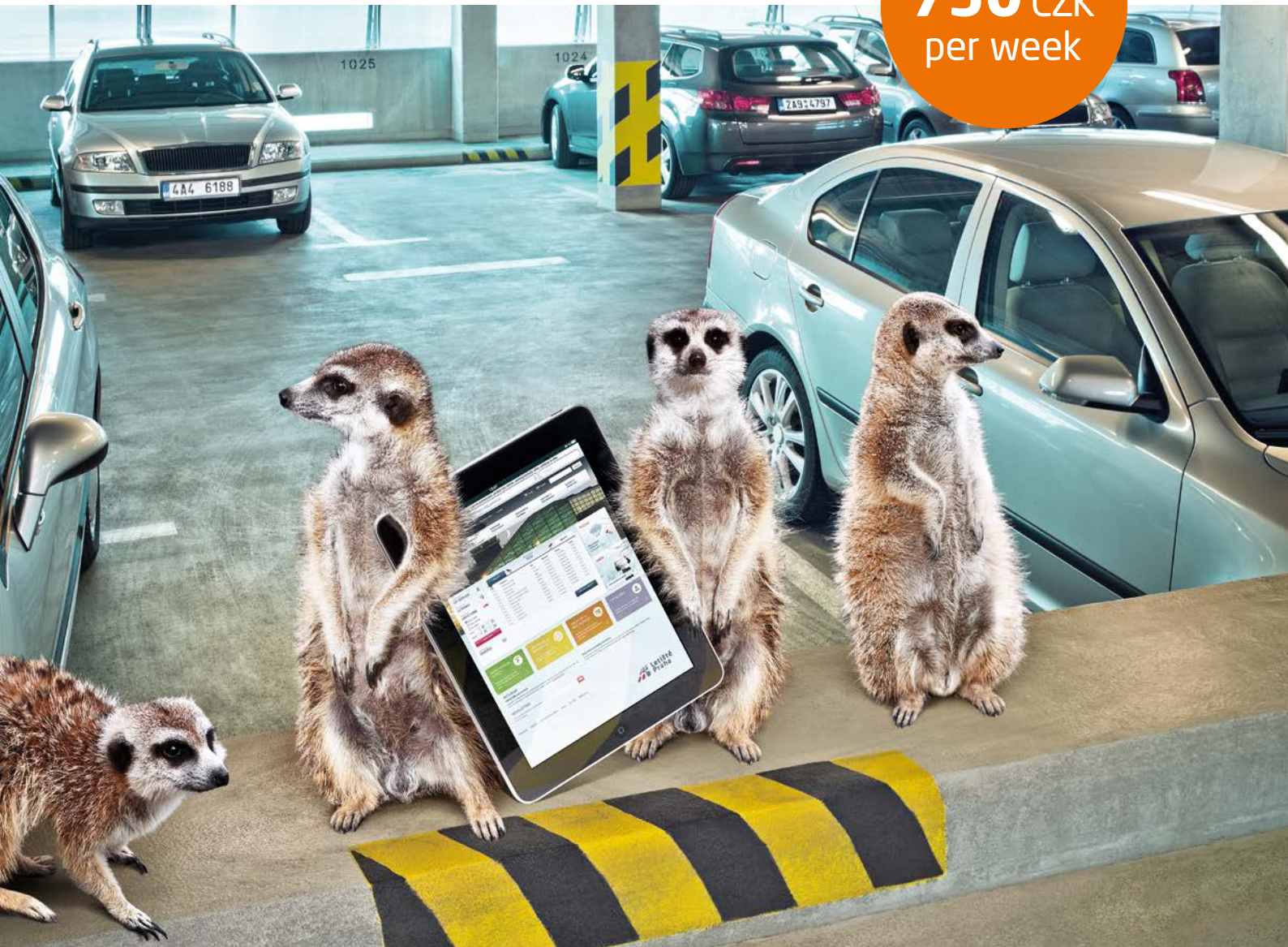


KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR CHEAPER PARKING

ONLINE RESERVATIONS
AT WWW.PRG.AERO

Park comfortably and conveniently
in our secure garages. Online
reservations for covered parking areas
available online at discount prices.

from
750 CZK
per week



Reach the World