

# Gate

magazine for visitors  
to the Ústí Region

Issue No. 7

## Nature

Where the Captivating  
Mountains Meet

## History

The Fortress Town Cradled by Water

## Interview

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No Car, No Worries  
in the Czech Central Highlands

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**Gate to Bohemia**

Discover the Beauty of the Ústí region



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## The Author’s Invitation

I have just finished writing the seventh issue of the Gate to Bohemia and it is inevitable that I make certain calculations. It is said that in seven years a person changes completely. And over the past seven years, the Gate to Bohemia, as we have grown accustomed to calling the entire Ústí region, has transformed completely. Having once been an overlooked and underestimated region, it now has the largest increase in tourism in the country. People have begun to discover the beauty of the area and are surprised to see how much they have been missing due to their previous prejudices. I am no exception. I was born in the region and young people tend to perceive things differently and yearn for different experiences. Now I have returned to the area with humility and walk through this beautiful corner of the earth with my eyes wide open. In order to create this issue, I visited the magical places of Bohemian Switzerland, climbed the solitary Czech Central Highlands, lurked on the shores of the river Ohře, discovered the forgotten glory of the spas in Bílina, marvelled at the refinement of the buildings in the fortress town of Terezín, taken in the Lusatian Mountains, swam in the cool lakes of the Ore Mountains, sat on Casanova’s chair, tasted local wine, visited a number of interesting restaurants, travelled along beer trails, followed the efforts to have certain places added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, learned to see museums from a different point of view, followed the kingfishers and black storks along the treacherous banks of the river Kirmnitzsch, re-lived my childhood in the Czech Central Highlands – and, for you, I even overcame my fear of heights and discovered what it is like to parachute from the top of the hill Raná and see the beauty of the region from above. It was an incredible experience. And now it is your turn.



Rostislav Křivánek

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## Dear Readers!

This year, the Gate to Bohemia maps out the tourist attractions of the Ústí region from a global perspective. The attempts to get several places, areas and cities added to the UNESCO World Heritage List is the main theme. These places are no utopias - on the contrary, all four applicants stand a good chance of making the list and the Ústí region is doing everything it can to support their efforts. So far, the Mining Cultural Landscape of the Ore Mountains is the closest to being listed but Žatec – the town of hops, and the fortress town of Terezín are not far behind. The fourth candidate, the Franciscan monastery in Kadaň, has only recently been added as an applicant. Should any of the candidates be added to the UNESCO list, it would benefit the region greatly, as this is what catches the eye of travel agencies from all over world when they are on the lookout for tourist destinations. Tourism in the region has increased a lot but we are ready for an even bigger flow of curious people, tourists, athletes and pilgrims. We have plenty to boast about – from the beautiful scenery with rocks and gorges in Bohemian Switzerland, and the unique relief of the solitary hills and mountains in the Czech Central Highlands and Lower Poohří adorning the Elbe, to the picturesque landscape surrounding the majestic towns on the river Ohře, and the attractive and uncluttered beauty of the Ore Mountains. We are proud of the fact that the Ústí region can offer such a variety of experiences, and that the infrastructure, which makes each holiday or trip more pleasant and comfortable, is constantly improving. It is said that one of the most important things in any business is to be ready for success. Well, the Ústí region is ready. So, bring your family and friends – we will be happy to see you here.

  
Zdeněk Matouš

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Creative and graphic design: NOESIS s.r.o.  
DTP processing, production and printing: NOESIS s.r.o.  
Author of texts: Rostislav Křivánek  
Photos: Archives of the Ústí Region, archives of Czech Switzerland, archives of DA Krušné hory, o. p. s., archive of DA Dolní Poohří, o. p. s., Archive of DA České středohoří, o. p. s., Martin Rak, Tomáš John, Pavel Bergr, Rostislav Křivánek, Dan Fiker, Václav Sojka, Štěpán Malast, Jan Rendek, Petr Liebscher and others  
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# The Mysterious and Magical Bohemian Switzerland

***I think we have got to know Bohemian Switzerland rather well over the years, with me writing about it and you reading it. And so, I'm taking the risk of presenting you with a more personal story. My roots are firmly set in Bohemian Switzerland and since I am an incurable romantic, a lover of all mystery and a seeker of beauty and the magic of nature, let's visit this wonderful region a bit differently this time. I'll show it to you through my eyes. You may not find as many facts as you are used to but trust me when I say that Bohemian Switzerland is a place full of feelings and emotions that will take your breath away, like beautiful poetry. So, follow me and discover the mystery hidden among gorges, rocks and streams...***

## DOLSKÝ MILL

I love mornings when the fog rises from the silent river Kamenice, like a steam from a pot, spreading across the valley revealing only parts of the ancient walls full of furrows and shadows to the morning hiker. I love the rare moments when the sun rests on the walls of the mill, turning them gold like a precious relic left not by the saints, but by people hard at work, their shoulders scratched and bruised from carrying burlap sacks. I love being alone at Dolný Mill, leaning against the walls, listening to its stories. But I also love the moments when the valley is filled with people returning to these places, full of life and energy. I love the keen group of people who, despite the whims of the weather, renew the paths year after year, clean up the route, restore the walls, and preserve the ruins of old the mill buildings - all out of the kindness of their hearts. I have returned to Dolský Mill many times in my life. Sometimes I approach it from Jetřichovice with my feet soaked by the stream Jetřichovická Běla, that fragile fairy with buttercups in her long hair. Sometimes I descend the wild, rocky ravine from the forest cemetery by the village Vysoká Lípá, running down the grassy slopes from timbered houses at Kamenická hill, sometimes I pass through the village of Srbská Kamenice on a trail cut into the slope above

Ferdinand's gorge (Ferdinandova soutěska), and sometimes I follow the church trail that passes by the stone stairs trodden upon by thousands of repentant souls heading for mass at the Church of St. Peter and Paul (Kostel sv. Petra a Pavla) – and yet each time I approach the mill, it is like visiting an old friend. And as the years pass, our understanding grows. We resemble each other. I no longer want to look like the 20-year-old youth I once was; I want to age with dignity and enjoy it, with all the scars of time. Next time you walk through Kamenice valley, show that old stone man your respect. You will be rewarded with a moment of serenity, romantic scenery, and if you can hear it, perhaps even a story that is not often told.



## ŠAUNŠTEJN

Whenever I find myself in the lowest part of the village of Vysoká Lípá, I am drawn towards the 'shipwreck' hidden in the winding forest. There she stands facing west, tall and lean, and turned to stone over the centuries. Once I reach the shallow stone steps and the paths covered in roots that lead me to the keel of the ship called Šaunštejn, I lean my head back and look up in awe at the rocks reaching towards the sky. Entering the clefts of the rock and climbing upwards is almost eerie. The ladders are practically vertical, carved into the rock, and at the top, the sun shimmers like a 'sail' in colours that range from a smudgy blue to a foggy or metallic grey. The 'deck' is stuck in the clouds, surrounded by the forests and birds appearing on the horizon. More 'fossilised boats' can be seen quietly bobbing in the distance: the hill Děčínský Sněžník and the table hills in Germany. I let my eyes wander through the landscape and when I close them, I hear the nobleman Berka of Dubá loudly calling out instructions, and I know it must be an echo from the Middle Ages, when a fortress was built here to guard the Czech route to Lusatia. And I admit that as I stand on the rock above this circular pit with people milling around like ants, I feel like I am looking into the pot of fate, that everything that awaits us in life originates here.

## ZADNÍ JETŘICHOVICE

The magical spot of Zadní Jetřichovice falls into the category of places where there were once villages, settlements, inns, and forests or mills, but today only parts of walls remain, half-swallowed by greedy vegetation. Here, at the end of the world, far from the last outpost of civilization, in the canyon of the river Kírnitzsch (Křínice), where the great sandstone rocks rise from rich meadows guarded on the Czech side of the border by strict, silent forests, there is a place for sensitive souls. If you sit down here and let yourself be swallowed up by the deafening silence, you will find yourself lost in stories



of the past. Long ago, there was only a single path that did not cross the mountains to reach this place and it has always been known as the Czech road (Česká silnice). It connects the Czech Republic and Upper Lusatia. For years, woodworkers, foresters and drivers longed for somewhere they could sleep, and perhaps have a chin-wag or a beer... And so, the tavern that stood here long ago came to be. And around it, other buildings popped up. There were forest huts,

a gamekeeper's lodge, a farm, a hotel, another pub... It was a small universe in the forest cut off from everyone else. I often ride my bike along the Czech road from Jetřichovice, but even better is to head here from the village Mezní Louka following the beautiful track that cuts through forest on a steep slope. And every time I am amazed as the outlines of the buildings and the remnants of the walls reappear and human memory defies the march of time. The same bunch of volunteers that are restoring Dolský Mill (Dolský mlýn) spend in their free time hard at work here as well. And that is of great importance to me - not being indifferent to our own roots.

## HESSE CROSS

Not many people know this hidden spot. Horní Bělidla is a beautiful meadow on the edge of the hill Vlčí Hora near the town Krásná Lípá. It can be reached by following the yellow markings, but not many people do so. I always walk here from the lonely village Telenec. At first, the meadow covers the entire horizon, and then the lengthy ridge of the hill Ptačí vrch emerges and a cross rises from the ground. It used to be decorated with metal silhouettes of Passion figures. Today it is plain with a cast-iron Christ and a sandstone plinth. There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, more interesting and beautiful crosses in Bohemian Switzerland. But it is about the place. A pilgrim in a dusty cape rests his back against the cross - yes, it is him, the genius loci himself. Here, on the meadow surrounded by rugged forests, you have the sky to yourself. And when a storm comes in from Lusatia, there is no better viewing point. This is where my soul is open and death does not scare me.



## BELVEDERE

There are plenty of viewing points, lookout towers and rock plateaus in Bohemian Switzerland, but one place rises above all others. When I stood here for the first time, I had the firm feeling that this is where God likes to sit and enjoy his work. The beauty of the wide Elbe canyon is breathtaking. And above it, the rocks rise, like part of a bridge that collapsed long ago. The generous rock plateau not only provides a breathtaking view, but also reminds you of the joy of being alive and being able to take in everything before you. In fact, Count Clary-Aldringen felt the same way in the Baroque era when he built a viewing point, which was protected by a low wall, where he organised concerts and theatre performances for his guests. This later led to an artificial cave - the Baroque Grotto - and then an adjoining hotel being built. Resting against the cool stone, I gaze at the river crawling at the bottom of the canyon like a silvery snake, and I can almost feel feathers sprouting from my skin and wings from my shoulder blades.



## HIDDEN GEMS

*There are plenty of other magical spots that did not make it onto these pages: The Brother's Altar above the village Česká Kamenice, the Black Gate on the river Kírnitzsch, the former rock castle Falkenštejn, which has recently been made accessible to the public again, the Winter Cave of Faries in Křínické Valley... Ah, but the list would be too long.*



# The Peaks of the Czech Central Highlands

*A lot has already been said about the enchanting Czech Central Highlands in the Gate to Bohemia. It is the incredible volcanic mountain range on both banks of the river Elbe, a landscape of solitary hills emerging from the plain like a mole hill on a meadow, a place with a serene attraction, where the heart settles down overlooking a view that warms the soul. This time we will visit the lesser-known hills, or places that have recently changed. How can a hill change you ask? Well, perhaps there is a castle on top waiting to be restored, or a lookout tower may have been built, or a new path has been marked out. So, put on some sturdy shoes, pack your rucksack with a couple of kilos of dedication - and we're off!*

## HOŘIDLA

If you want to experience Hořidla at its best, you should climb this sandstone hill, a mere 372 metres above sea level, before the sunset. Following the path, newly marked in yellow from Jištěrp, or the equally new blue markings from the railway station Horní Řepčice. It is an easy climb to Hořidla. The metal lookout tower erected in 2008 takes you up fourteen meters and offers a surprisingly good panoramic view. You will see the hills Říp, Sovice, Ronov and



Vlhošť and the glimmering river Elbe... And if you look west, you will see the entirety of the Czech Central Highlands. As the sun approaches the horizon, the hills Hazmburk, Milešovka, Kletečná, Lovoš, and even Radobýl slowly begin to appear, then Plešivec, Dlouhý vrch, Trojhora, Panna, Kalich and Sedlo - all these hilltops bathe in the golden sunlight. It is a captivating sight that is not to be missed. In fact, from here we can see all the other places we are going to visit. If you are looking for a beautiful day trip - head down the hill from the lookout tower

and follow the new blue markings south west. Cross the forested hills and go past the natural monuments Skalka and Holý vrch, and you will reach the village Zahořany. Here, on a modest little hill, you will find one of the most spectacular churches from the Middle Ages, the Church of the Holy Trinity with its free-standing bell tower. From here, it is not far to the village Křešice, where the blue markings end right by the Elbe - and from here you can follow the Elbe cycle track in either direction or, a few hundred metres upstream, you will find the Nučnický ferry. It really is a beautiful trip. But we are still stood atop the lookout tower telling ourselves that it is impossible that it took until the third millennium for tourists and fans of lookout towers to discover this place... Exactly, impossible. Shortly after the war there was pub with a viewing platform - the remnants of this building are still clearly visible not far from the lookout tower. When is it suitable to come here? Any time. The lookout tower is open 24/7 all year round.

## KALICH, LITÝŠ, AND THE REMNANTS OF GLORY

Once upon a time three castles stood near the village of Třebušín. Vartenberk's castles Panna and Litýš held Žižka's castle Kalich in a firm grip. And yet - a one-eyed brute managed to whack Vartenberk over the head and claim his two castles. At that time the castles were famous, sturdy, perhaps even impenetrable. Today? Ruins. A few remnants of the walls, sprouting with lush vegetation, remain,



guarded only by jays and magpies. And yet the castles of the Czech Central Highlands are still extremely attractive places. Not only because of their tantalising history, but because of the views - and it is the views we are going to focus on today. Walking up to Kalich, you are in for a surprise, especially if you have been here before. Things have been quite busy here lately - the trees at the top of the hill have been cut down and the walls have been restored. It is as if the remains of the castle have climbed out of the ground to show themselves off to passers-by. The view of the countryside is stunning. You almost feel like you could stretch your arms out and start flying. Visiting Litýš is a bit more intimate. It is easy to reach the castle from the car park - about 400 metres up a slight incline. At the top, there is a dense group of trees surrounding the sturdy walls. In summer, this spot is mainly of interest to those keen on historical ruins. In spring and autumn, however, or even when the ground is covered in snow, it is an interesting place with unusual views.

## THE ICE-COLD BREATH OF THE SEA OF STONES

Next, we are going to visit a different kind of hill. There is neither a lookout tower nor castle ruins here; just a magnificent and vast sea of stones. It is one of the most unusual hills in Bohemia. Plešivec is a mysterious place and it is said that the King of ice lives in this hill. Below the extensive stone debris, an unexpected surprise is hidden. Snow and ice can be spotted at the foot of the hill even in the middle of summer, at just some five hundred metres above sea level. How so? It is due to the chimney effect: the ice holes and cracks surrounded by basalt boulders blow out an icy air current from within the mountain. It is hard to believe unless you have seen it. Plešivec is easy to reach - it is part of the educational trail running from Hlinná to Kamýk, which we have written about in previous issues.



## THE CELTIC VIEWING POINT

Flying a bit further north for our next trip we will end up in the hills above the hill Sebužín, where another metal lookout tower catches our eye - the lookout tower at the top of Varhošť. This is a unique place, and the Celts were most likely aware of that. Some people believe that the word Varhošť may even be of Celtic origin. No wonder. The view from here is probably the most beautiful view on this side of the Czech Central Highlands. The huge, fifteen-metre high metal lookout tower on a stone base stretches up from the forested basalt rocks. Trying to describe the view from the top is futile. Words can only do so much, you have to see it for yourself. So, here goes nothing: you can see the Elbe, almost all of the Czech Central Highlands, Bohemian Switzerland, the Ore Mountains, the peak of Ještěd, the Jizera Mountains..., do you see what I mean? Come here any time - the lookout tower is always open and the view is breathtaking whatever the season.



as well as the beautiful hill Milešovka. And the chestnuts? They are here, and they are even edible. Follow the chestnut avenue along the restored trail and to reach the castle in style. And if you come in October and bring the right equipment, you can even have a chestnut feast.

## PRAYER ON THE SECRET ALTAR

We will finish up with hill only a few people know about. And yet there is such a wonderful view from here that it could be placed among the best of the Czech Central Highlands. The hill Oltářík (little altar), also known as Hrádek, is a counterpoint to the well-known, popular and much frequented hill Košťálov. They rise opposite each other enclosing an extensive valley, and there is much to like about Oltářík. Firstly, it provides unprecedented panoramic views. Secondly, there is a dense stone tower, or what's left of one. Once upon a time, a small yet proud castle stood here. The ruins at the top of Oltářík are so picturesque that one will not know what to take a photo of first, the surrounding landscape or the masonry glimmering in the flickering sunlight.





# UNESCO, a Tourist Magnet

**There are currently 12 places in the Czech Republic registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Another 17 are on the so-called tentative list (meaning that the Czech Republic has decided to nominate them for the future) - and three of these are in the area we know as the Gate to Bohemia, i.e. the Ústí region. The Terezin Fortress, about which I have written elsewhere, the Mining Cultural Landscape of the Ore Mountains (hornická kulturní krajina Krušnohoří) and Žatec - the city of hops. The latter two will be covered over the next four pages. You should know, however, that yet another fascinating monument is already in line for the list - the Franciscan monastery in Kadaň. Attempts are being made to add it to the previously mentioned tentative list. Why are such efforts being made to add these places to a list? Because being on UNESCO means huge publicity and is a clear recommendation, like a Michelin star for a restaurant.**

## ŽATEC – THE MOST FAMOUS HOPS TOWN IN THE WORLD

Hops from Žatec are famous all around the world. They are top notch, a super brand, something extra. To a large extent, hops have shaped the entire royal town, given its inhabitants an income, made the local burghers wealthy, and even significantly influenced the structure of the town as well as the cultural landscape of its surroundings. There is no match for Žatec when it comes to this. It really deserves to be on the UNESCO list. Before we let you in on the status of the application, let's take a look at the town itself. It all began in the Middle Ages, sometime around the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, and in the centuries following, hops had to compete with vines in Žatec. It wasn't until sometime in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the cultivation of hops took over at the expense of vines. The land designated to growing hops then increased at a dizzying rate and Žatec became the largest producer of hops in Europe. It was then that the hops from Žatec became renowned

worldwide, and they are equally famous today. Nowadays, brewers all around the world simply nod knowingly without putting up a fight when someone says 'Žatec semi-early red-vine hops'. They really have been top of the market since being registered in 1941. Production was booming at that point and the city began to adapt. Hopper buildings sprouted up like hops after rain; warehouses and dryers experienced the largest building boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the buildings were so numerous that the city council issued a decree regarding urban planning discipline. Nowadays, walking through this suburb after dark, a strange feeling dawns on you, as if all the inhabitants of this picturesque square have decided to go on holiday all at once - the attractive and decorative façades of the burgher houses are completely dark, not a single light is on in any of the many windows. That is because these buildings are actually hopper buildings that have been deliberately made to look like a housing area. If you are lucky enough to see inside, you will not find any partitions, just one huge room ready for heaps of fragrant hops. Odd buildings like this can be found in other places, but this is the only place in the world where the whole



neighbourhood has been preserved. And I am not talking about a religiously preserved medieval street structure (three quarters of the houses in the city centre have a medieval core), or a breath-taking rooftop landscape sprinkled with typical openings for the air to enter the kilns. The town of Žatec is proud of its history and is doing everything it can to keep its genius loci as a hops town in a time that is somewhat turbulent regarding urban development. So far, so good. When tourists arrive in Žatec they do not know where to go first - right in the square, the smallest hop-garden in the world awaits them, and from

here they can get right to the heart of the town of hops. In a huge indented building, the former warehouse and packing centre of the company Pfister & Wüstl, you will find the biggest hops museum in the world. Right next door, in the Christl Brothers' former kiln and hops warehouse, a Hops and Beer Temple has been built. It includes a unique beer lighthouse, the only beer-themed astronomical clock in the world, and a craft brewery. The other traditional brewery in Žatec has recently been renovated and is very welcoming towards tourists, as you will see later in this issue. In short, Žatec proves that it is worthy of being added to the UNESCO list, not only due to its heritage, but also due to the care put in to preserving it all for future generations. And that corresponds almost perfectly to the criteria of the UN Education, Science and Culture Organisation.

## HOPS LIGHTHOUSE, ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK AND MUSEUM

Žatec is ready for an influx of tourists diligently crossing off all the items on the UNESCO list. Tourists are already delighted with their unique experiences here. Let's head to the heart of the town of hops: the square of Prokop the Great (náměstí Prokopa Velkého). There are two dominant features that cannot be missed here - a hops lighthouse, 45 metres high with a stylised hop-garden on the top, and a huge metal wall with gigantic gates -

the previously mentioned Hops Museum. I'll show you around. Actually, I can't, because as soon as I enter the building I become too captivated by the history of growing, separating, processing and trading hops. There are presses, kilns, furnaces, sprinklers, sticks from historical hop gardens, all kinds of tools, as well as boilers. And, of course, engravings, photos, posters... No need to worry about the kids, they will immediately start playing with the local goblin, Hop. Once we are done here, we will cross the square and go past the tram stop, which was symbolically built as a reminder of the tram transport project in Žatec at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which never came to be. Opposite the lighthouse, we will find the entrance to the Hops and Beer Temple and will be sent back to the lighthouse, this time equipped with entrance tickets. There is a lift inside the lighthouse but be careful - oh no! As soon as you move, you find yourself in the middle of a 3D projection, in a hot air balloon basket or inside a space craft. From the top of the lighthouse you get a breath-taking view of the city and a panorama of the Ore Mountains and the Czech Central Highlands.



Next, a mysterious labyrinth made up of sacks of hops awaits us. You can be sure that you will get lost in here. The Alchemist's workshop leads to the largest glass hop cone in the world. Once we have finished admiring its changing colours, we descend into the hall with a coat-of-arms, where, besides many other things, we can see the rear of the only hops-themed astronomical clock in the world. It is worth going outside to see it from the front. The beautiful face of the clock, measuring earthly and astronomical time and orientating us in the zodiac, is decorated with figures celebrating the beer harvest, including the mandatory ringing skeleton. Just as an astronomical clock should be... And the apostles? Oh, no - this astrological clock is somewhat ungodly, defiled with playing cards and hop cones. A few metres away, more adventurous visitors can try out the chimney hatch, and next up the friendly interior of the brewery At the Clock (U Orloje) awaits us... But more about that in the article about the beer trails. And finally, as promised, we present the current status of the UNESCO application: the ICOMOS assessor (International Council on Monuments and Sites, the advisory body of UNESCO) came and spent four days in the city, looking around, deliberating, and taking notes before leaving. The inhabitants of Žatec have a good feeling about it. Now we are waiting for the final decision. If everything goes well, Žatec could be on the UNESCO list as early as this summer. Should there be any additional inquiries or other requests, a final decision can be expected in 2019. Let's keep our fingers crossed for Žatec!



## THE MINING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE ORE MOUNTAINS

The UNESCO application for the unique cross-border Ore Mountains is just one step behind Žatec. First of all, let's clarify what the expression 'cultural landscape' means - it is a landscape that has been affected by the lives and actions of people, a landscape created by people. And as this is a mining landscape, it makes sense that the lives and actions that affected the landscape were connected to mining ore. The project includes 22 localities, of which 17 are on the German side of the border and 5 are on the Czech side. We will start at the other end this time - what is the current status regarding the application for the Ore Mountains? After some consideration, the first application was withdrawn in order to be edited and supplemented, making it as strong as possible. The second application was submitted in December 2017, when representatives of both states signed a joint Czech-German nomination in Dresden. The ICOMOS inspectors are due to visit the area this year and will reach a decision in the summer of 2019. So, let's take a look at what is so extraordinary about the Ore Mountains. It all began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when people searching for ore first arrived in the wilderness of these mountains. Ores of tin, silver, copper, iron, lead and uranium have all been mined here, as have many other precious metals, coal, limestone, mica and even Czech garnets. Such a wide range of mined raw materials cannot be found anywhere else. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the mining boom was already so great that the Ore Mountains became the most densely populated mountain region in Europe! Settlements, and later entire towns, were founded, rising from the valleys up the slopes to the mountains.



Mine workings and production sites appeared, and nature responded and adapted to what had been developing for centuries, creating unique biotopes. At the same time, a very specific culture and traditions and customs developed. And what remains of that today? A lot. Such as shafts, galleries, spoil piles, sink-holes (these are upside-down spoil piles, i.e. cavities in the ground around the excavated areas - one of the largest can be seen at Komářův vížka), preserved operational buildings, and also moats. There are also old mines that have been turned into lakes and mining trails. Interestingly enough, the importance of sites associated



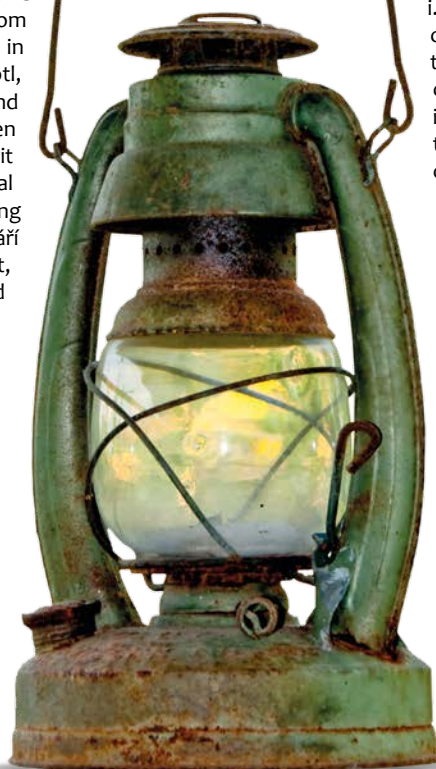
with the mining cultural landscape is divided more or less evenly between the Czech and German areas. This may seem odd as the ratio of 17 to 5 does not sound especially well balanced. On the German side, however, there are mainly individual workings and smaller units, while the Czech side has larger units. In any case, this is a breathtaking testimony to the gradual creation of a mining cultural landscape that should not be divided, and to limit it according to national borders would not make sense. It is about time we mention which specific locations are up for consideration by UNESCO. We shall leave the German part aside and focus on the Czech Republic. Three of the nominated areas are in the Carlsbad region - Jáchymov Mining Landscape, Abertamy Mining Landscape - Boží Dar - Horní Blatná and the Red Tower of Death (Rudá věž smrti) near Ostrov nad Ohří.

their Czech name Krušné hory from the word 'krušení') can be seen in the former mining areas of Knötl, Preisselberg, Komářův vížka and several others. In the Steinknochen district, we can even visit the historical gallery and cultural monument of St. Martin. The mining chapel of St. Wolfgang on Komářův vížka is also a remarkable sight, and not far above you will find the Great Sinkhole (Velká pinka), a cavity in the earth, which in places is as deep as 75 metres. There are also other galleries, sinkholes, surface mines as well as the invaluable Old Mining Trail (Stará hornická stezka), which has also been declared a cultural monument. The second location is the mining landscape on the hill Mědník above the village of Měděnec, far above the town of Klášterec nad Ohří. In the past, this seemingly innocuous hill, crowned by



## KRUPKA AND MĚDNÍK

It's time to take a closer look at two localities that fall under the Gate to Bohemia. First up is the unique and extensive mining complex around the historical town of Krupka. The town itself (which you can read more about in a few pages) is a perfect example of a settlement that developed around the first cassiterite (tin ore) findings. Cassiterite is an unusually rich mineral containing up to 78% tin. From the first few houses, Krupka grew to be a distinctly urban area gradually climbing the up slopes in several steps from the valley of the Horský stream. The town has a unique shape centred around a steeply rising street that widens into a square. The core Gothic and Renaissance elements of most houses have been preserved to this day. There are beautiful churches and remarkable houses. The area surrounding Krupka is a particularly valuable mining area. Clear signs of mining and crushing ore - (by the way, this word gave the mountains



the chapel of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (Neposkvrněného početí Panny Marie), produced ores of copper, silver, iron, lead and zinc, and even pyrite from which vitriol oil, i.e. sulphur, was obtained. Out of all the workings included in the Mining Cultural Landscape of the Ore Mountains, Mědník is exceptional in that it has the largest concentration of historical mining works in one place. It may be hard to believe, but there are more than 70 galleries, shafts and pits dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. The hill has practically been mined through and through. The roughly 100 metre stretch of double shafts, most likely from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, are a real rarity. From Mědník it is possible to peer into the depths of the hill - an entrance to the gallery of the Promised Land. Efforts are also being made to reopen the Gallery of the Virgin Mary, which was the first gallery museum to be opened, all the way back in 1910. One last note: The UNESCO



application was not only modified but also reduced, especially on the German side where only 17 of the original 85 sites are included. On the Czech side, only one site was left out. However, this does not mean that it is not worthy of a quick visit or even a thorough look round. If nothing else, it is extremely photogenic. I am talking about the limestone area in the village of Háj near the town of Loučná pod Klínovcem. Two beautiful polygonal shaft furnaces and parts of several other buildings

have been preserved. To the uninformed observer, it looks somewhat like a fortress. It was built sometime in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was in active use up until the 1930s. It is the oldest building of its kind in the Czech Republic. Since we just crossed our fingers for Žatec, let's do the same in favour of the Ore Mountains. If these two locations are added to the list of world class cultural gems, the prestige of the Gate to Bohemia will rise to the level it deserves.





## THE BIRTH OF A WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON

analysed Zaječice bitter water for the Swedish nobility, prompting large-scale export to all of Scandinavia. Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish newspapers were soon filled with advertisements for the miraculous mineral water from Zaječice and Sedlec. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian Tsar Peter I, a lover of Czech spas, gave an incentive to build a Russian spa modelled after the spas in Teplice and Carlsbad. And so Biliner water started to spread to Russia. In the tense Napoleonic year of 1812, Goethe persuaded Beethoven to go with him to Teplice and to visit Bílina, home of the fascinating hill Bořeň as well as the springs of the most famous German healing waters of the so-called 'German Vichy', as Teplice and Bílina were then known in Europe.

At that time, an imitation of the mineral water from Zaječice was under production in London and soon became the leading product in pharmacies in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was practically considered a panacea. Why an imitation you ask? Well, every spring has a certain strength and the technology used to collect water was only able to fill five bottles per minute at that time. Due to large scale export all around

After the Second World War, the Communist regime strived to cover up any trace of former German glory (for example, the forest park promenade was densely planted with fast-growing trees so that all traces of decadent aristocratic superiority disappeared), and to avoid the painful issue of the expulsion of the majority of the German population. However, the mineral water continued to be pumped and newly installed technology was more efficient, filling as many as 30 bottles a minute.



Having raced through a few key points on the time-line of the development of the phenomenon of mineral water from Blšina, Sedlec and Zaječice, we are back in 2018. The bottling plant looks shiny and new, the monument of the Reuss family has been repaired, the forest park has been generously revitalised and returned to its original state, and an interesting educational trail of over 40 kilometres, covering the changes made to the original park, has been developed in cooperation with the town of Blšina. The previously mentioned swimming pool still attracts guests and is complemented by a comfortable camping area. It lies in close proximity to one of the largest sports facilities in the country with tennis courts, mini golf, bowling, darts, a workout playground, two football fields as well as an extensive athletics training area.

According to current plans, it is possible that in the future nurses in 19<sup>th</sup>-century attire will be serving the beneficial spring water, the inhalatorium will re-open, and the original restaurants and forest cafés from the General Land Centennial Exhibition in Prague in 1891 will be up and running... There will also be excursions to the bottling station - an extremely interesting excursion jam-packed with fascinating information. It seems that those who own this Czech treasure know what they are doing, and that the Blšina spa is returning to its former glory. And not just



the spa - the export of water to Europe, Russia, China, the United States, and even to the places where it was traditionally consumed, i.e. Scandinavia and Britain, including regular deliveries to Buckingham Palace, has been revived... Who knows, perhaps, the reputation of Biliner water will be brought back to life and it will take back its place as the king of European healing springs. It may even be possible that there will be a new rendition of the historical event when the desperate Henry Mattoni wrote a letter to his friends lamenting that: 'Nobody in Carlsbad wants anything but Biliner water! I have stopped selling my own water and am ordering 80,000 bottles of Biliner water a month.' It is not often that the Czech Republic can be proud of a natural product that the whole world envies and imbibes with such enthusiasm!







# Where the Captivating Mountains Meet

**Bohemian Switzerland and the Lusatian Mountains are ancient lovers. For as long as anyone can remember they have been touching, intertwined, growing into each other, as one body one soul. Although they are very different in character (as lovers often are), they are very, very close. Recently, people have finally begun to see them as beautiful whole, full of remarkable, captivating and picturesque places, as a region where the two areas complement each other. It is worth exploring this area fully, all the way from the rocks of Tisá to the ridge of Ještěd. Hiking is not a new phenomenon here; the famous Ridgetrail (modrá Hřebenovka) has been around for some 115 years already. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it crossed the entire Lusatian Mountains and Bohemian Switzerland. Let's start where these two areas meet, in the west of the Lusatian Mountains.**



## STUDENEC – GUARDING THE MOUNTAINS

If someone were to ask me where the most poetic and picturesque place along the border between the two areas was, I would not hesitate before answering. This spot has a special place in my heart. I feel regenerated whenever I come here. The villages of Jetřichovice and Rynartice, and valley Pavlino údolí are some of the most popular tourist destinations in Bohemian Switzerland. Not many tourists go beyond valley Pavlino údolí to the shady banks of the stream Chřibská Kamenice, where the valley Na Potokách begins. As we climb upwards from the river along a steep, winding path to a forested peak, we soon realise that, although we are in the same spot, we are somewhere else entirely. It sounds strange until you experience it. Rising above the village Studený, Studenec is not only the first, but also one of the most

beautiful hills of the Lusatian Mountains. A little further on, just outside the village of Lipnice, there is a place full of calm, where your heart can relax. A sea of stones surrounds Studenec like a necklace as it leans against the hill Lipnický vrch, and beautiful meadows spread below the forested hilltops. Our first taste of the charm of the Lusatian Mountains. Although they are lower than the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands (Českomoravská vrchovina), they have the regal mountain character. At the top of Studenec there is a lookout tower, which has been restored thanks to the group of volunteers, Pod Studencem. From the lookout tower, you get a panoramic view dominated by the majestic Bohemian Switzerland. Descending into the saddle below Studenec, we find ourselves enchanted by the landscape of Krkonoše: vast meadows reaching towards the forest. In June, the meadows turn into an ardently blooming carpet of wild Lunarias. From here we can see one of the wonders of the Lusatian Mountains – the hill Zlatý vrch. Although it is not well-known, this stunning basalt wall is much more impressive than the better-known hill Varhany.

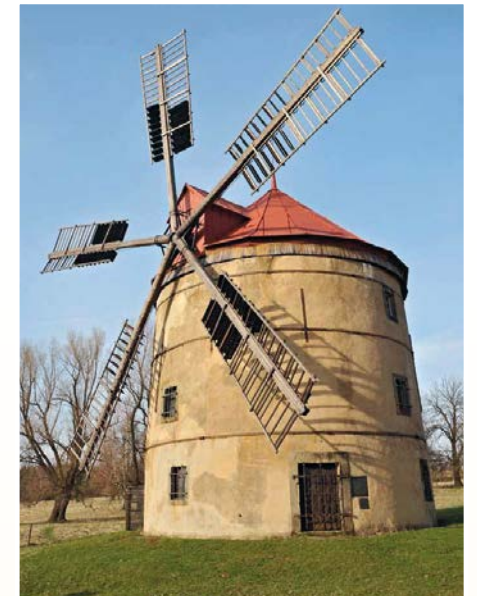
## VALLEY OF A THOUSAND BEAUTIES

There is a special feeling to the town Česká Kamenice – it is the symbolical meeting point of three distinct, yet related, regions – Bohemian Switzerland, including the Elbe sandstone rocks (Labské pískovce), the Lusatian and Czech

Central Highlands. From here we delve into the Lusatian Mountains following the friendly stream Kamenice. We move upstream through a stunning valley past an incredible rock formation named the Deserted Castle (Pustý zámek), where fossilized streams spurt across the rock making a curious fan shape. We pass through Mlýny and Kytlice, the first villages in the Lusatian Mountains. The houses in Kytlice are especially charming and spread out gracefully as they climb the winding slopes and silently calling, can you see it? Can you feel it? You are in another place, in the mountains reigned by the majestic peak Luž. Once we have passed Kytlice it is time to traverse the eponym of the Lusatian Mountains. An innocuous viaduct separates one region from the other. On the other side, streams filled with peat meandering across wet meadows suddenly appear. The landscape is suddenly different, resembling that of the Bohemian Forest (Šumava). And there, in the bend below the ridge of the hill Srnčí, the lake Hraniční rybník, glimmers in extraordinary beauty. The surface looks like a giant eye with eyelashes of algae and shrubs, like a perfectly polished mirror reflecting the chatter of the sky, the play of the clouds, and the proud sun. On the hillside above the pond, mysterious symbols are carved into the incredibly smooth, vertical wall of iron sandstone. Astonishingly, some of these symbols date back to the Middle Ages, perhaps as far back as the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## THE EMPIRE OF THE QUEEN OF FIR TREES

The path breaks off and leads us up into the hills, to the dignified and majestic lady of the western Lusatian Mountains. The queen's stone crown is a lookout tower whose walls burn in the summer sun and are covered in a white Persian rug in winter. I am talking about the hill Jedlová. Having climbed up to the lookout tower and had a good meal in the restaurant at the top, you can enjoy the high rope course or borrow a scooter to go back down – an unusual experience you are bound to enjoy. I sincerely recommend the lookout tower – the view from Jedlová really makes you will understand how intertwined Bohemian Switzerland and the Lusatian Mountains are and how they mirror each other. The nearest sight that can be seen from above, is the neighbouring Tolštejn. Don't miss this one. There is a spectacular ruin of a castle that once had numerous towers. The views are as wonderful as the legends that the pensive walls whisper in the evenings. The Hill of the Cross (Křížová hora) is not much lower as it rises above the roof of the Chapel of Holy Cross (kaple sv. Kříže), which ends one of the most beautiful Stations of the Cross in the Czech Republic, a late Baroque Passion pilgrimage leading from the Getseman garden (Getsemanská zahrada) past various stations all the way to the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre.



Far below us, in an irresistible hill, the echoes of the pick axes and hammers can still be heard today. Precious metals were mined here, and the gallery of John the Evangelist (Štola Jana Evangelisty) is a fascinating testament of this.

## FOOTHILLS AND PONDS

I do not know anyone who does not like mountains. Not many people know the Lusatian Mountains, which is a pity. They spread towards the southeast with a stunning beauty. We wave softly to them and head down to the Lusatian foothills. This will be a trip to the land of ponds, windmills and meadows full of fuzzy grass. The path takes us from the village Horní Podluzí past the goat farm in Žofín (try goat whey at its best). On the left, the pond Velký majestically reflects the sky and if you are lucky, you will see storks guarding the pond. Just ahead of us is the pond Světlík, above which you might catch a glimpse of a dignified white-tailed eagle hunting for prey. It is hard to believe your eyes when you see the windmill on the bank of the pond. This place is like a fairy tale and I cannot rid myself of the feeling that we have



crossed a magical border and entered another realm. The meadows with their fuzzy bundles of grass and thickset bushes and trees have the same charm and geniality as the Lusatian foothills. They are replete with water that, just a little further on, springs from the ground becoming the river Kitzsch (Křinice) – but more about that in another chapter.





# A Week Cycling Along the Elbe

As regular readers of the Gate will know, I have already written plenty about the Elbe Cycle Route (Labská stezka), the longest and most beautiful cycle track in the Gate to Bohemia. And yet I have realised that many people consider this wonderful track to be one-time bike trip, which simply follows the river banks with almost no elevation. But it is a magical journey that never ends. It is such a rich source of enjoyment that there are actually tens, or even hundreds, of attractive trips and activities along the way. In other words – getting your bike, throwing a tent on the rack and leaving your everyday life for a week to cycle along the Elbe is a great idea, especially if you have the energy to hike the odd hill grandly rising above the river. Cyclists say that going along the river is for city-dwellers, pensioners and mothers – but I am here to convince you that behind those twists turns, a Tour de Czech Central Highlands is awaiting. After all, a holiday is about enjoying yourself and experiencing as much as possible. We can have a rest at work, right?

## AROUND ŠTĚTÍ AND ŘÍP

Let's follow the river downstream from the town Štětí to the German border. I chose a romantic, spartan trip this time – camping. If you prefer B&Bs or hotels, you will find what you need at [www.ceskestredohori.info](http://www.ceskestredohori.info) where there is plenty to choose from. We, however, are going camping. We will pass four camps in great locations, so the route is easily up giving you enough time to explore the river and trails thoroughly. The campsites are located in Roudnice nad Labem (Cyklokemp BK Pod lipou), Litoměřice (Autokemp Slavoj), Ústí



nad Labem (Cyklokemp Loděnice) and Děčín (Kemp Děčín) – either on or in close proximity to the Elbe Cycle Route. So, with our camp set, let's take a look at the map. The map tells us that the total length of the Elbe Cycle Route, within the Gate to Bohemia, is 96 kilometres – a fit cyclist could manage that in day, right? But we are going to be visiting the surroundings as well. Just inside the Ústí region, the surroundings of Štětí await you. This area has plenty of unexpected and beautiful surprises that are suitable for anyone. The hills

above Štětí have an interesting and rugged landscape with views far into the distance, gems of folk and religious architecture, remarkable sandstone formations, pine forests, and trade routes. Interesting villages await you - Chcebuz (where the film Lidice was shot), Radouň (with a wonderful Jewish cemetery) and Brocno with its gems of folk architecture. Once you return to the river, you will be charmed by the rowing course in Račice and then the beautiful town Roudnice nad Labem with its castle, gallery, confectionery Dortletka, churches and chapels, its lookout tower, and most importantly – the trail up the hill Říp. Cycling up to the rotunda at the top is easy enough, so why not give it a go? Cross the bridge in Roudnice and continue along the river on the left bank – but don't worry, there are plenty of bridges and ferries, so trips to the other side of the Elbe are still possible! The ferry in Nučnický, for example, will take you to the beautiful church Počaply designed by Dientzenhofer and from there you can continue to the fortress town of Terezín, which you can read about in another chapter.

## AROUND LITOMĚŘICE AND ŽERNOSEKY

We are back on the right bank of the river – drawn by the breathtaking Church of the Holy Trinity (kostel Nejsvětější Trojice) in Zahořany – don't miss out on this scenery – it is so close. Then head around the bend of the Elbe to Litoměřice. This town is a real gem, packed with castle walls, parks, museums, galleries, religious monuments – including the Cathedral of St. Stephen (katedrála sv. Štěpána) with a tower, the lookout tower Kalich, underground

passages, the amazing breweries Biskupský and Labuť, a castle with a wine exhibition, cafés, monuments in honour of the poet Mácha... or a sensational swimming pool, where you can even spend the night. And when in Litoměřice, you mustn't miss the hills – Hlinná, Kamýk, Třebušín or even Ploskovic castle... Let's get



back to the river quickly, we only have two pages. Suddenly, Žernosecké lake opens up before us and it is impossible not to stop for a swim or to do some water sports. Continue across the wine region through the village Velké Žernoseky with its historical cellars. There is a ferry here, which will take you to the beautiful valley Oparenské údolí and the area below the hill Milešovka. The right bank leads us straight to the Gate of Bohemia itself. Why not trek up the hill Kalvárie with its three crosses that can be seen from miles around? And while we are climbing peaks – from the village Sebužín it is worth going up to the lookout tower Varhošť. This kind of view cannot be bought for money... We are back at the river and are passing the Průčelská ravine, where Karel May once wandered thinking up the plots for his Winnetou novels. It really is a beautiful valley!

## AROUND ÚSTÍ AND DĚČÍN

We are already nearing the camp in Brná as well as Ústí nad Labem with the Masarykovo lock, Střekov castle, a cable car to the castle Větruše, a zoo, the famous leaning tower, a wonderful museum... the list goes on. The beautifully renovated church of St. Florian (kostel svatého Floriana) in the neighbourhood Krásné Březno on the left bank of the river is not to be missed. Be careful not to get mixed up with Velké Březno, which is on the opposite bank and home to the brewery that makes Březňák (the 11<sup>th</sup> lager is extraordinary!), the legendary restaurant Tivoli, a chateau with a beautiful garden and, for the irreparable Contadors, a magnificent ride uphill to the peak Homole u Panny. You will never forget this one – the landscape is so beautiful it is touching. Be careful not to miss the third Březno, Malé Březno, a little further along. From here the road leads steeply up to Zubrnice, an open-air museum of folk architecture with a small railway museum – find



out more about the museum on another page. I could urge you to go even further to the villages Levin and Úštěk, but I will let you off and we can return to the river. Just a little more pedalling and we reach Děčín, where there is a nice camp by the bridge and a castle with beautiful gardens. There is also a zoo, a via ferrata in the centre, several viewing points (see which you prefer – Pastýřská stěna or Kvádrberk...), churches, one of the best basketball teams in the country, an aquapark, a brewery, and good food (gastronomic recommendations to follow). We can leave the Elbe Cycle Route for a while and follow Ploučnická bike trail for about ten kilometres around the beautiful, and once again clean, river Ploučnice. And forgive me for adding a more personal comment, but this river runs in my veins so I am especially fond of this place. You can follow the trail all the way up to the town Benešov nad Ploučnicí full of Salhausen castles and remains of the Saxon Renaissance. Let's hurry back, because what awaits us next is one of a kind.

## THE ELBE GORGE AND BOHEMIAN SWITZERLAND

The Elbe gorge (Labský kaňon) from Děčín to Hřensko is a treat you cannot get enough of. Captivating scenery, sandstone rocks reaching to the sky, beavers running around the paths, cormorants circling above, boats on the river, climbers on the rocks – unforgettable. From the village Dolní Žleb it is a great ride up the hill along the Thunovská 'pavement', a path paved with huge sandstone slabs, to the forests around the village Maxičky and across the border to Schöna and Schmilka on



the bank of the Elbe. An easier route is to follow the river and then catch a ferry over to Hřensko. And once we are there, you will not need much guidance – the Kamenice gorges, the natural stone bridge Pravčická Gate (Pravčická brána), Jetřichovice viewing points, Dolský Mill (Dolský mlýn)..., the entire Bohemian – and also German – Switzerland lies at your feet. I was right, wasn't I? Is this not a weeks' holiday jam-packed with adventure?





# I Remember Casanova Sat Here

Humans are odd creatures. How many people come to the castle in Duchcov just to see the rooms of the famous Giacomo Casanova, how many of them stand in front of me looking at the rose lying on my seat – and yet no one says a word to me. I could tell them everything! But no, humans are a vain and arrogant breed, who think that they are the only ones with a soul, feelings and memories. Yes, all they see is a chair, a piece of furniture, wood, tapestry and a couple of colours. I am glad I finally have the chance to tell someone what I know. Or at least some of it. If you want to find out more, it is worth taking a trip to Duchcov and going on the tour 'Casanova at the Castle'. I am here waiting, happy to tell you more.



## GIACOMO, ALIAS JACOB

Giacomo, who was never called anything other than Jacob round here, was an odd character. On one of his journeys around the world, our precious count Josef Karel Emanuel of Valdštejn was bewitched by Casanovas tales of his escapades, both romantic and otherwise, and invited him to our castle in 1785 when Jacob was 60 years old. You might think he was an old man, for the time anyway, but he still had thousands of demons in him. The count had asked him to arrange the library, and he was initially happy to do so. In time, however, he began to suffer from depression and bad moods, and felt that had been 'tidied up out of the way' (to be honest, he was quite right because he was prohibited from entering some European cities and his sins were constantly chasing him) and was unwanted.



Not by the count, who was almost always away somewhere, but by the castle staff. He was sick of his life in the castle but he did not just put up with it. One day, in the castle park (have a look at that too, it's beautiful and full of memories of Casanova), he had a clash with one of the count's servants, an unsophisticated cuckoo, an uncouth youngster – and the servant simply whacked him with his walking stick! With Casanova's own walking stick! On the other hand, Jacob furiously accused the castle chef of intentionally not cooking his macaroni properly, upon which he fled to the Clara-Aldringens in Teplice and refused to return. But after every sulky outburst, he would come back, shut himself in the study, and write and write and write. He mainly worked on his memoirs here: The History of My Life in which he faithfully portrayed his formative years, i.e. the famous story of his escape from the prison 'The Leads' in Venice. He also wrote the novel 'Icosaméron' here. As he sat on me reading it

aloud to some of the people from the castle, I was shocked – something like that had never been written before! It was the first ever piece in the genre science fiction – something I learned much later. You may think I am making it up, that a chair cannot remember what happened in a room – but more fool you! As people always think that I am just a piece of wood, they talk freely around me, and so I know all the secrets of the castle.

## THE WRONGED SEDUCER

Wronged even by Dorota, daughter of the count. She and Jacob were very fond of each other and they had such a nice relationship, almost like father and daughter. But when it became clear Dorota was expecting – who was the first suspect? Europe's most prominent seducer – Jacob Casanova. (By the way, by modern standards his conquests were not so numerous – as he sat here writing the book concept for his memoirs he counted 130... And if you promise not to tell anyone, I will let you in on the fact that there were also some boys among his conquests – but sssshhhh!) And how did the story with Dorota end? Jacob was greatly offended and defended himself furiously, before eventually taking Dorota to church priest, forcing her to admit the truth... The father of the child was a painter who had been working at the castle at that time. Casanova calmed down, and even made all the arrangements for the wedding of the parents-to-be. I also love reminiscing about the greyhound Mélampige. She was a gift to Jacob from Princess Lobkowitz and Jacob really loved her. When he was sat on me,

Mélampige would lie at his feet, so he wouldn't feel lonely. When she was naughty, he told her off in German, but otherwise he always spoke kindly to her in Italian. I can just picture him sat as close to the flaming hearth as possible, shivering in a fur coat (which he often wore even in summer as he grumbled incessantly that northern Bohemia was like Siberia and that he would freeze to death in the middle of July) while sharpening his quill and straightening his inkpot.



## THE REAL CASANOVA

What did Casanova look like, you ask? Well, you have probably seen the portraits of him – some look a lot like him. He was certainly not handsome but he was extremely attractive. His eyes were full of life and reflected all the chaos within him. He was very nervous, restless, sometimes bad-tempered, at times he looked

like an oddbod, but when he was telling a story – people looked up to him, regardless of age or gender – he was stunning. And boy did he have stories! He was born into a family of actors but it was a known secret that his real father was likely a nobleman who had courted his mother. He was supposed to become a priest, but became anything but that – a cashier, secretary, soldier, actor, violinist, sailor, gambler, mining engineer, lottery operator, secret agent of the inquisition – and the opposite a Freemason (for which the church threw him into the horrific prison 'The Leads' below the Doge's Palace in Venice), an agricultural reformer, as well as a journalist, poet, philosopher, writer... In most places, he was eventually exiled and expelled, partly due to fraud, and partly, of course, due to his amorous adventures. Wouldn't you also listen to the story of this man's life with your mouth open? Many times, it was so tense I was afraid my tapestry would split.

## I AM HIS DEATH CHAIR AND I AM PROUD OF IT

Well... no, I will tell you about that when you visit the castle. What is there to see here? There is a tour of six rooms in the northern wing of the castle, during which you get to know Wallenstein's collections, and then there is a special tour of the so-called billiard wing, which tells you about Giacomo Casanova's stay here. You get to see his office apartment, study, the library he looked after, and above all – you get to see me. I am not just a simple armchair



and the rose on my seat is no coincidence. I will never forget that day in June 1798. Jacob had not been feeling well the past few days; he had trouble walking and was not breathing well. That afternoon, 4<sup>th</sup> June, he shuffled around the room, looked at me, and collapsed into me exhausted. I heard his irregular breathing and then... suddenly silence. For a quite some time I held the dead body of my beloved Jacob. Yes, I am a mere piece of furniture. I do not even know what gender I am but I loved that charismatic man from the bottom of my wooden heart. Once you return from all the tours and have wandered through the castle park and have been amazed by the beautiful, dramatic and well-preserved Baroque Reiner fresco, once you finally stand before me, remember the extraordinary man who spent the last days of his life here. Go to his study and see if you can find the secret entrance. If you can, it is quite likely that you will meet Jacob's spirit. I often talk to him for hours.





# My Name is Ohrinka and I Am a Fairy

*Just to be clear – I have nothing against Rost'a. He has been writing the Gate to Bohemia for many years... but he still hasn't written a single article for children! Even though children make the best visitors, honestly – the very best! If they like something, they let you know straight away. And if they don't – oh dear, that's a different story! They've got so much enthusiasm in their eyes, such great smiles and so much joy! I am actually still a child as well, although us water fairies age a bit differently. My dad is the water spirit Ohrinek and my mum is a fairy just like me. She has a beautiful name – Egeria. This is my fairy tale and it is just for children. You adults needn't bother reading it!*



## WATER MAGIC

I'll start by telling you a secret – when you go on a trip somewhere near my home, the river Ohře, just call me and I'll come keep you company. I'll even show you around the most interesting and fun places. Tell your parents to go to a tourist information centre and pick up my workbook so that they don't get too confused about this. That's right – I've got my own workbook and there's going to be even more of them! It's called Hiking with Ohrinka and there are plenty of interesting destinations, tasks and riddles in it. I just made it up so that we could have some fun, kids. Adults always have fun one way or another but we need real fun! So – your parents will think that I live in that book, that workbook, and they won't keep asking you who Ohrinka is all the time. And then we can actually meet and, if we're careful, do some magic. You don't believe me? Here's the deal – whenever you are near the Ohře, I'll be here. Do you want to know how to find me? I'm a water fairy, so look out for water. You can always find me in the river Ohře. Just place your palm on the surface of the water, close your eyes and whisper, 'When the bells start ringing here, the fairy Ohrinka will appear'. I'll find you. You might not be able to see me though – adults certainly can't, they're completely blind, but even children sometimes have trouble seeing a little girl made of rippling water. But don't

worry – I'll really be there! I'll be in every well, in the puddles, in the barrels beneath the eaves, even in the waterworks, in the sink, or if you order a glass of water in a restaurant. And don't be scared if it starts raining – it's just me stroking your hair and your cheeks. So, keep an eye out for water. Wherever there's water, that's where I'll be. Even in the morning dew. Even in thick fog. And I'll show you places you'll never forget.

## CASTLES WITHOUT BEDROOMS AND ANTLERS

Do you get really bored when your mum and dad make you traipse round a castle full of bedrooms with pictures of ugly people, and you're not allowed to touch or say anything because of the loud the lady at the front rambling on about a bunch of names and dates? I always just want to escape. The castles I'm going to take you to are much more fun. Let's start with Stebník. Walking around it is such an adventure. First of all – they've only just started renovating the castle and they're still uncovering the beautiful paintings on the walls that some silly people painted over. It's such fun to watch and to imagine what else might be hidden underneath. And then there's an exhibition of toys and prams, the kind our grandparents played with. And best of all – there's a huge park and a beautiful terrace garden by the castle and you

can run around and play princesses and knights or elves and hobbits, or whatever you want. Nový Hrad is a really fun castle, too. But it'll hurt your neck, trust me! They've got beautifully painted ceilings – in almost every room – and all of them are different! You'll get to see how people had a bath in the olden days, how they washed and how they went to the toilet – really, even the toilets are there! You can go up the tower and look at the view, and then go down to the cellar where there's a terrible dragon... or used to be, at least. Before I forget – Krásný Dvůr! That's some castle. The best



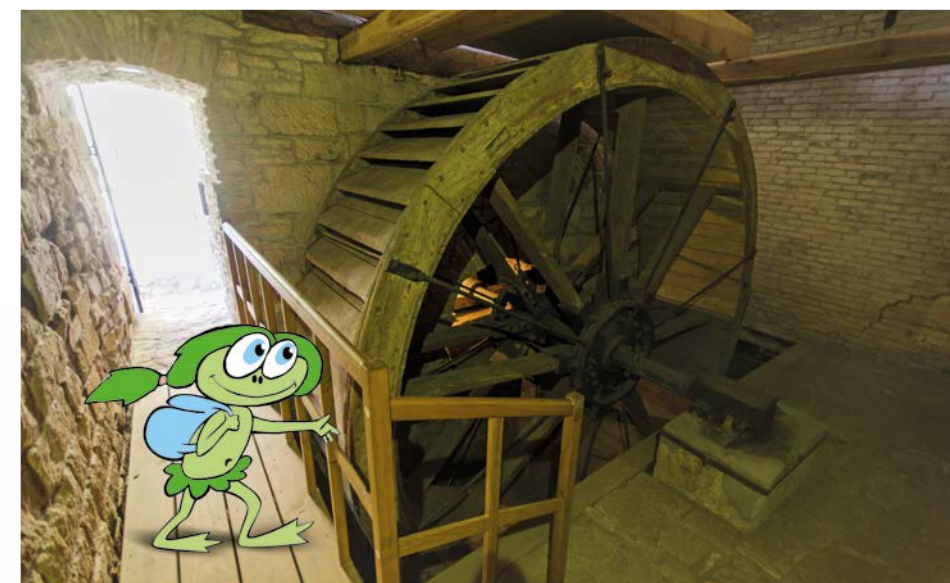
bit is the park – it's just amazing. You can get lost, run, hide, look for a hermit's cave, find all sorts of gazebos and other buildings, and then climb up the tower of some kind of small church. There's a great view from here, you've got to see it! And there are lots of other castles and ruins – like Hasištejn. That one's pretty scary when it's dark and you wander around the courtyard, climb the stairs, walk along the castle walls, and look into the tower. And this is just the beginning – there's loads more in my workbook.

## A DIFFERENT VIEW OF CHURCHES

Churches aren't that fun either, really. Unless we use our imagination – and of course to choose the right churches. Like the massive St. Nicholas Cathedral (chrám svatého Mikuláše). You know St. Nick, he goes around putting presents in stockings. This cathedral is in the centre of the town Louny and I bet you you'll never have seen a roof like this one before! It looks like the hills on the horizon. Oh, and don't forget to climb the church tower. The tower's a hero – it survived a huge fire in the city and from the top you can see the whole town. Beyond the town there are some strange mountains that look



a bit like chocolates scattered on a table. Where else could you go? I know, to Kadaň! There's a really mysterious monastery with a garden surrounded by a high wall there. As you go in, you walk through the corridors beneath some beautiful vaults, and you can hear the swinging steps of the Franciscan monks, who have been walking around with their hoods pulled down over their faces for hundreds and hundreds of years. There's so much to see here – like a real executioner's sword that was used to behead people, the nuns' old pharmacy, a medieval glassworks, amazing semi-precious stones... And you get to see how people lived in the Middle Ages – with no electricity or water supply, no television or Internet – it was completely different. Completely!

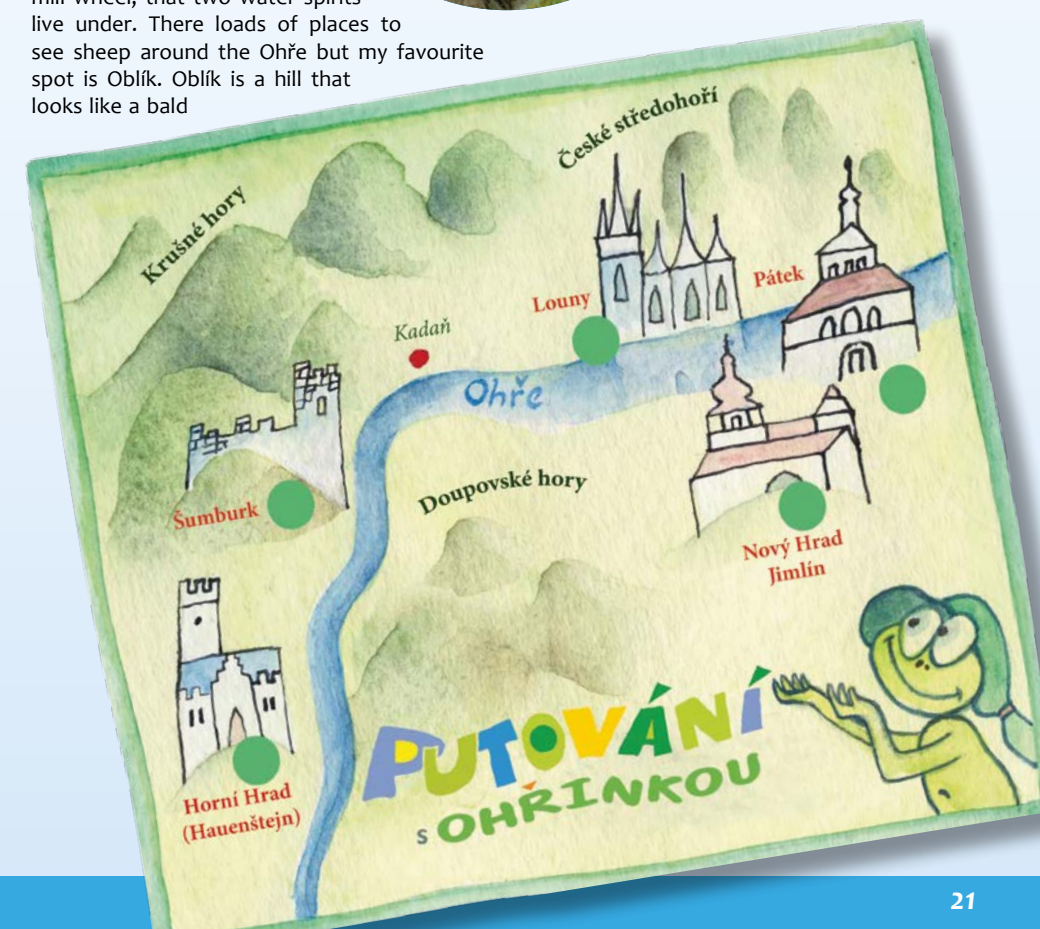


## WATER SPIRITS, SHEEP AND BIRDS

As I told you, my dad's a water spirit. That is, he's the water spirit of the river Ohře. But that does not mean he's not friends with water spirits that live in ponds, like those in Vernerův mlýn in Brloh. That's a great place as well – there two really nice ladies that show you the whole mill and explain how people used to bring bags of grains and pour into all kinds of machines to grind flour – and they also show you the huge machine that powered the mill when there wasn't much water. And they show you the massive mill wheel, that two water spirits live under. There loads of places to see sheep around the Ohře but my favourite spot is Oblík. Oblík is a hill that looks like a bald



man's head. There's a beautiful farm here and I'll show you the sheep and where they sleep, eat, graze, how they are sheared, and you get to stroke them while your parents buy yummy yoghurt and cheese. And the birds? We'll go to the lookout towers! The weirdest one looks like a ship stuck on a hill above the town Kryry. Or we can go to one made of stone that has recently been restored, so you can go up it again – it's called Vochlice and it's not far from the village Lubenec. Oops, I've been chatting away and the fish are already looking at me hungrily. I have to go feed them and pet the spawn. Bye, see you at the Ohře!





# Teplice

## A Tempting Buffet for Tourists

**Imagine the perfect holiday – someone invites you to a town full of beautiful, mysterious and wonderful places all entwined in stories. As you arrive in the town, you are greeted by people who provide you with a plan and tailor a programme based on your wants, your specific interests, and how much time you have to explore the town. What's more, they are very creative and offer experiences that you cannot not find elsewhere. Like it? Then let's go to Teplice, because this is where all that really happens. Your fabulous adventure starts at the tourist centre, Visit Teplice. It is just a few steps from the square Zámecké náměstí and I really recommend it.**



### THE TRAIN WITH A FAMOUS NAME

Whether you know Teplice well or not at all – coming here is always an interesting. The team at Visit Teplice do not 'overcomplicate' what the town has to offer, i.e. sights and buildings that have been preserved through time, but they are creative regarding additional experiences and even develop places that up until now have not been open to tourists. But one thing at a time. Visit Teplice's most conspicuous

attractions is the street train, Humboldt. It is named after one of the first people who consistently combined science and travelling. Today, he is as famous for his travels as for his scientific work. The free man Friedrich Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt travelled the world yet declared the view from the hill Milešovka to be most beautiful in the world. He loved northern Bohemia and could not let it go. A fitting name for a train that comfortably takes you to all the interesting places in Teplice – from the historical spa centre, including the castle park, through Šanovský park up the hill

Doubravská above town. And they do not just take your money, put you on the train and then let you stare ignorantly at the buildings and parks. Each journey is accompanied by a guide, who tells you all about the town that once had such nicknames as 'the Salon of Europe' and 'Little Paris'. The guides are even able to adapt to the passengers – something I have noticed several times. For example, when nursery-school children go for a ride, the guide shares the same information but using language that children can understand. Fantastic.

### THE TOWER OF DISASTER AND A MARTYR

So, you have been on the train have taken in the basics. And now you want to see the town in peace, preferably from above. Visit Teplice has a lookout tower right in the centre of the town. It is the tower of the Church of St. John the Baptist (kostel sv. Jana Křtitele) on the square Zámecké náměstí. This is an incredible experience – as you climb the tower an excellent exhibition informs you about the disasters of Teplice. The moral of the story is that 'all's well that ends well.' Whatever happened, in time Teplice was able to overcome it and even use it to evolve, for example, you pass the tower guard's room, where the tower guard actually used to live and guarded the tower as well as the town. Let's see if he is here today! He is asleep under the sheets. And in the window... flames. You see, the tower guard slept through the biggest fire in the history of Teplice. He did not warn the inhabitants in time and so many of the buildings burned down. A disaster? Without a doubt. On the other hand, this meant that the town was almost entirely rebuilt in the fashion of the time, which is what made Teplice the only Empire town of its

time. Unfortunately, not many of the Empire buildings remain today. The interesting stories continue, and suddenly you are at the top and have the same view of Teplice as the kestrel flying above you. And you can see all the places the tragic stories told you about in the exhibition. In fact, right next to you, there is the high tower of the orthodox Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (kostel Povýšení svatého Kříže). Once you leave the tower, let one of the guides from Visit Teplice take over. You will

find yourself in a brand-new pilgrim destination, literally face to face with a saint. If you listen to the guide carefully, you will learn that 'St. Clari, or Saint Clarus, was a martyr in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He is the patron of spas and the sacrament of marriage. His complete remains were given to the prince-bishop, the abbot of the monastery in Austrian Seckau, by Pope Urban VIII in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The abbot came from the Aldringen family in Teplice and in 1678 the remains were transferred to Teplice and deposited in this church. It was only recently that the dignified chapel we are about to look at was created for them' It really is a mystical experience. In front of you, in a coffin with a glass lid, lie the remains of an old martyr who was boiled alive in oil. Even the most convinced atheist may want to spend a moment sat here in contemplation.

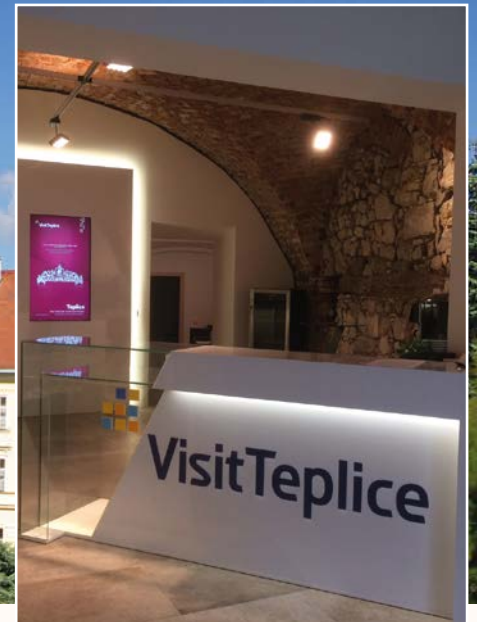


### BARTHOLOMEUS AND TALKING BOXES

Take another piece of advice from Visit Teplice and go to Bartholomeus, the former church of St. Bartholomeus. It has been reconstructed and rebuilt into a friendly and social meeting point. The nice and spacious café is complemented by exhibition areas and a permanent exhibition area on the upper floors. Within a few dozen minutes, however, the space can be

converted into a concert hall – which often happens. During advent, for example, there is a lovely festival called Charming Christmas, but there are concerts here all year round. A large exhibition called 600 years of Jewish Life in Teplice awaits you, as well as the world's only exhibition of Trnovany porcelain... That alone would actually suffice; you are much better taken care of here than in larger well-known tourist cities.

But Visit Teplice does not stop there. This year, they have two new developments. One is the Visit Tour system, which is actually a configuration program where you set up your own tour of Teplice according to the places on offer. You enter the date, the number of visitors and the places you want to see. The program then lets you know about how much time you will need and how much it will cost – I was staring at it with my mouth open. It is really revolutionary, especially for those considering group trips. And it is great news for everyone that the talking GPS boxes (don't expect any technical details or names from me), which



you perhaps know from Rome, will also be at your disposal in Teplice from now on. You can borrow one for a small fee at Visit Teplice (or perhaps at your hotel). Just choose what you want to see and the box not only takes you there, but also tells you where you are going and what you can see. Since I have always been a provocateur, I deliberately avoided the route that the magic box told me to follow – but hey, it realised and made me aware of it, and without a grudge began telling me where I had actually ended up: in a house that Beethoven had lived in – sensational! The tourist centre will, of course, advise you free of charge or you can pay for a personal guide, who will show you Teplice's many sights and look after you all day if you wish.



# The Lookout Towers of the Gate to Bohemia on the Radio



**There are plenty of lookout towers in the Ústí region and I try to cover them regularly in the Gate to Bohemia. I got quite excited a while back when I tuned in to the radio and heard Eva Bucharová at the top of the lookout tower on the hill Studenec shouting over the wind. Another fan of our viewing towers? And so I discovered the wonderful radio show about lookout towers in northern Bohemia. If you do not already know it, I recommend it. The show does not just provide regular reports via radio waves but, as with most serious radio stations, the good shows also have an online version and this programme even has videos to go with it. And where can you find these videos? Ok, let's start from the beginning...**

## ALL BECAUSE OF A NEW CAMERA

They have already made a remarkable number of programmes and I guess I should start by telling you where you can find them. Go to [www.sever.rozhlas.cz/porady](http://www.sever.rozhlas.cz/porady) and then you can browse, pick and choose, watch videos and travel vicariously. In addition to the videos and some basic written information, you can also find practical map data, GPS coordinates, and so on. Eva Bucharová is the author of the project, the presenter of the show and the woman on the front line. She diligently climbs all of the towers in search of their history and possible future. We asked her where she got this wonderful idea and it may surprise you that it did not start with an obsession or unlimited desire to map all the lookout towers in the Gate to Bohemia, but, paradoxically, a different radio report. Eva Bucharová was sat in her car where, tuned into the Czech radio, she heard a report about Komářův vížka. Her colleague

Gabriela Hauptvogel was talking to a group of volunteers and lookout-tower enthusiasts and learned that, despite all their efforts, the lookout tower connected to the restaurant could not be restored – firefighters and safety authorities were against it and getting past these two is not easy. For Eva, however, this was a moment of inception. She realised that she had no idea how many lookout towers there were in the Ústí region, what state they were in or what their future held. Yet she could actually benefit and help to save some of them! She soon found that as far as lookout towers are concerned, this is the most densely populated area in the Czech Republic. It was a short step from here to the project reporting on forty lookout towers. A few days before Eva set off to the first tower in Krýry, one of the most picturesque lookout towers in the country named after Friedrich Schiller, a new camera was delivered to the station. Eva was thrilled and decided to take it with her in order to back up the radio report with some shots for the website. But things turned out differently: an entire mini crew went with Eva, who ended up in front of the camera rather than behind it. So now we can watch her climbing hills and lookout towers while imagining that we are but a few steps behind.



## PEOPLE OF THE LOOKOUT TOWERS

The original intention of the project – to provide inspiration and advice for trips – soon expanded in a natural and spontaneous way as Eva started filming the amazing stories of the people who have been trying to save these age-old lookout



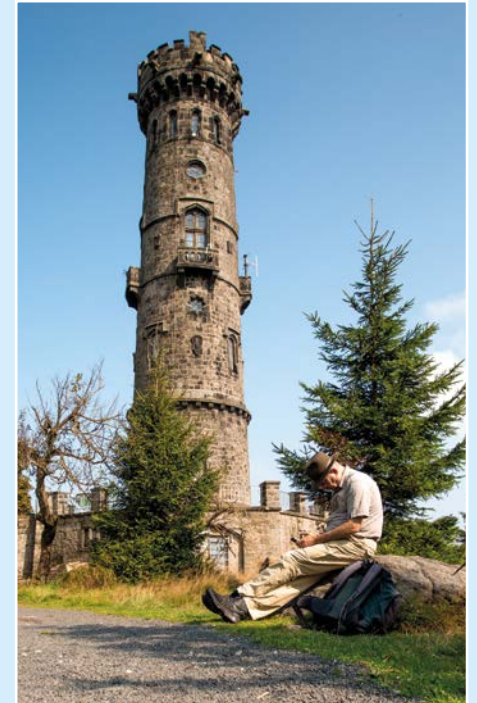
towers and give them a new future. At the hill Strážný vrch near the village Merboltice, I met a local group that had built a new lookout tower 100 years after the old one had disappeared. Then the Kants, from a local association originally created to save the Church of St. Giles (kostel sv. Jiljí), showed me the renovated lookout tower Vochlice na Lounsku. The church's stained-glass windows had been shown off at exhibitions in multiple cities worldwide, yet the fate of the old stone lookout tower did not leave the association unaffected. At Jedlová I heard the story of the Krejčí family, who stumbled upon the ruins of the lookout tower during an afternoon walk and started repairing it the very next day. Alongside the mountain associations of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, new associations were formed to look after the lookout towers and bring them back to life. The project took off, and last year it even had reason to celebrate as the local radio printed a beautiful calendar of lookout towers in the Ústí region.

## WHAT NOT MANY KNOW AND WHAT NEVER CAME TO BE

This kind of report starts long before you set off to make it. Every journalist or producer knows that you cannot do without proper research. It involves finding as much information as

possible and then only using some of it. And during this, often almost scientific, work plenty of interesting and even hidden facts are uncovered. For example... On the hill Kohout in the village Valkeřice in the Děčín region, the Varta of Franz Josef I was to be built. It was year 1908, the celebration of his 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee. However, a month before the celebration, it became clear that there was not enough money to finish building the lookout tower. Instead, a metal construction was quickly added to the top and this provisional construction is still there today. Or... One of our oldest and most beautiful

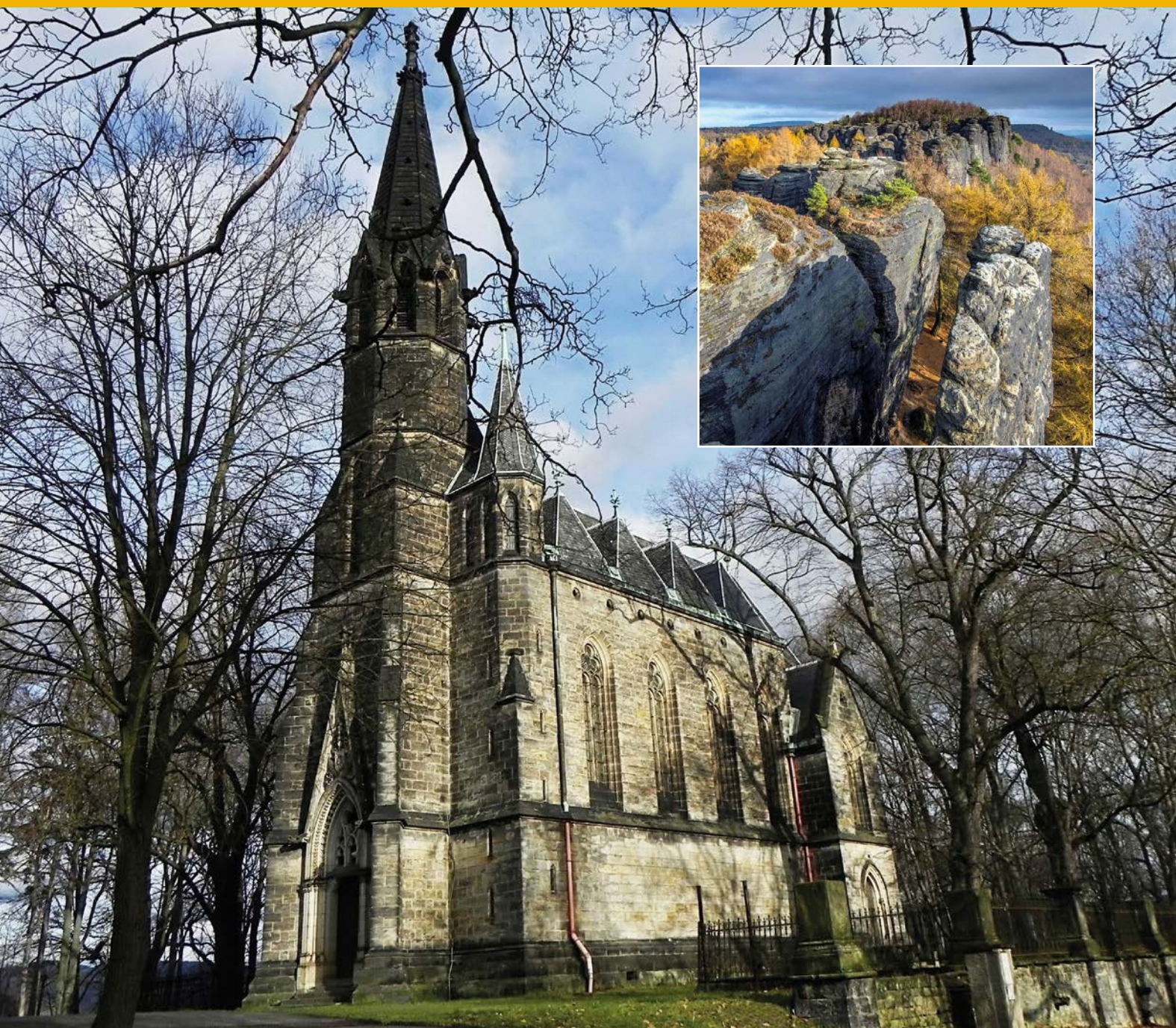
lookout towers, on the hill Děčínský Sněžník, was originally built in 1864 for triangulation purposes, not as a lookout tower. In 1936, a Berlin television signal was received in the Czech Republic for the first time by professor Fäber, right here on Děčínský Sněžník, during the broadcast of the Olympic Games in Berlin. Today, the 33-metre high tower is a technical monument. One more... Up until 1974, the border cut across the dancefloor of the lookout tower Hrádek in Varnsdorf. Boys went to the toilet in Germany, and girls in the Czech Republic. Isn't that delightful? It is of course impossible to broadcast every story, but even those that are not broadcast are often fun and memorable. For example, in Janov nad Hřenskem, on a new lookout tower of considerable height and with stairs made of transparent metal grids, the crew had to fight attacks of vertigo and nausea. (I can confirm that there is always a slight sway up there,



but the incredible view is worth it whatever the weather.) Or on Sokolí hill (Sokolí vrch) above Děčín, a bunch of radio broadcasters waded through in an impenetrable fog only to find themselves among a group of athletes, who had also stubbornly trekked all the way up, just to see more fog. Interesting experiences are part of the job – for example, the lookout tower Vítov in Náchkovice should only be climbed on windless days. But even when there's no wind elsewhere, there will likely be a gale here, as Náchkovice has 363 days of wind a year! So you see – it's hard enough just to climb all the lookout towers in northern Bohemia, let alone create audio and video reports. Just to be clear – whatever you miss on the radio can be found on the website. But remember, the project only makes sense if we put step two into action, i.e. get up off the sofa and climb as many lookout towers in the Gate to Bohemia as possible. Let's go!







# A Trip to Places Full of Secrets and Beauty

**Are you also fond of mysterious places with a depth to them, where you feel an odd tingle? I love them. I have spent years looking for them. They are often sacred buildings, places that are so full of human faith, longing, prayer, and the need for a higher authority that the accumulated energy does not dissipate and deeply affects even a complete atheist. If it is okay with you, I will take you on a short pilgrimage to such places, on the left bank of the River Elbe on the very edge of Bohemian Switzerland. We are already familiar with the left bank, but this time it is not the top tourist destinations that await us but a pilgrimage to the mystery and quiet beauty that is often hidden under a shabby appearance.**

## AN EERIE CHAPEL

I just have to start at a place that is very important to me personally. You know, however professional a writer is, his best work comes from within. So, come visit Chrást, once a medieval village, today part of the Letná district of Děčín. But I warn you – it is a bit scary. The Neo-Gothic chapel of St. John of Nepomuk is an eerie building. Shrouded in mist opposite the chapel, there is a vicarage that was originally built at the same time as the chapel. It has since been added to and now houses a restaurant and a hotel. Rooks crow menacingly from the trees and as a little boy, I was scared stiff every time I passed. This is where my Gothic novels took place, haunted by ghosts, where people were murdered in Agatha Christie's sleepy novels, where the Green Archer and Wallace's other characters lay in wait, where Dracula spent the night on his way from Transylvania... Then I read Natálie Belisová's *The Story of John's Chapel (Příběh Jánské kaple)* and was disillusioned. But I was already a big boy by then. Very big. But childhood is a chest locked with thousands of locks. When I returned to this spot after so many years, the same old fear was awaiting me, despite knowing that the Thunov Chapel (Thunovská kaple), as it has always been called, was built by the famous Josef Mocker, the same man who later used the plans of the Viennese architect Friedrich Schmidt to build the St. Vitus Cathedral near Prague Castle. And despite knowing that it was built upon the tomb of Thunov after the original Baroque chapel had been destroyed, and that



the remains of the princely clan were transferred to the Church of the Uprising of the Holy Cross (kostel Povýšení svatého Kříže) below Děčín Castle in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to increasingly audacious vandals. I also know that there was an exhibition about the history of the chapel at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that, during the tourist season, it opens every weekend with a guide to tell us about its past. I know all this, and yet as soon as the sky clouds over, the wind howls in the crowns of trees, or an owl screeches above the nearby pub – I am terrified. It is a wonderful fear. You should try it – it never gets old.

## DIENTZENHOFER AND THE TOMB OF A SPINNER

We are still in Děčín, almost down by the Elbe in the Rozbělesy district. Here, in the middle of the industrial zone, there is a gorgeous and forgotten Baroque jewel – a church built according to the plans of Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer himself. Can you imagine that since the 1950s it has been used as a warehouse? Instead of angels, a pulpit and an organ, the church was full of aluminium. Luckily, this cultural Czech monument is now gradually being restored. As you gaze, lost for words, at Dientzenhofer's architectural curves, take note of the little parish next to it. It is beautiful. The mystery continues, but this time we leave Děčín and head uphill towards the hill Děčínský Sněžník, to the village Libouchec. If you follow the road from here towards Tisá, you will see that the path wraps around a small, forested hill. There, hidden among the trees, is the beautiful Art Nouveau burial chapel. Friedrich Wilhelm Botschen was an astute entrepreneur, owner of a spinning mill for velvet and silk, and a benefactor of the region. At the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he built the family



## VISITING THE PATRON OF SEAMEN AND A WATERFALL

Our journey along the marvellous sacred sites by the riverbank continues from the hill Děčínský Sněžník down to the Elbe and along the bank to the village of Dolní Žleb. You can get here by train or by bike, and now also by car. The road was built only recently, but even before you could still drive here by catching a ferry across the river from the opposite bank. This is still an option today. Before I forget, if you go by bike, just before you get to Dolní Žleb you will see the legendary statue of St. Adalbert of Prague looking out over the water. Why is it legendary? The seamen passing by years ago, and even today, believed that St. Adalbert protected them against all kinds of trouble. Therefore, according to the unwritten custom of the saint, seamen sound their siren and throw small coins into the water in honour of St. Adalbert. So, we are in Dolní Žleb. Why did I bring you here? In this former shipping and timber village we find the last little church on the left bank, the Holy Trinity (Nejsvětější Trojice), small and charming in late Baroque style. What I like best about it is its position on the bank of the Elbe, in the lap of the valley below the rocks loved by so many climbers. But to be honest – the main reason I brought you here is because a lovely new path has been marked out this year. From the station, the path slopes gently upwards along the bank until it suddenly hits the Klopotský creek, which flows into the Elbe about 100 metres below. The path continues along the river bed upstream and uphill. We are entering an area previously unknown to hikers. It does not take long until we reach the next mysterious spot, which was also created the human hand. From a height of more than three metres, the most beautiful waterfall in Bohemian Switzerland gushes into the lake. It is a wonderful spot for a swim. It used to be part of the power system of the former mill. Today, only the romantic scenery of a wild and untamed valley remains. The path continues into Germany where you can turn off towards the beautiful mountain table Zschirnschein, across the Czech Gate to Boku, from where you can follow the Thunov road, paved with great slabs of sandstone rock (another mysterious place!) back to Dolní Žleb.

tomb, where he was buried in 1913. After the war, the chapel was dilapidated and the only hands caring for it were those of vandals. Today it is not in good shape, but times are changing. An association to restore it has been founded, and fundraising has begun. The association often engages in detective work – recently, for example, it had a design for the stained glass windows made based on shards that had been found. Once you have seen this touching place, it is quite possible that you too will want contribute.

Just take a look at the following website to see what is needed: [www.kaplelibouchec.cz](http://www.kaplelibouchec.cz). A little higher, in Tisá, there is another sacred structure – and another interesting place, where the rocks of Tisá rise up creating what from below seems like the stone palisade of a giant fortress. The unpretentious late Baroque church of St. Anna (kostel svaté Anny) with a single nave is also interesting as, despite a regime that did not look kindly upon religion, it never ceased to serve its purpose.



# The Fortress Town Cradled by Water

*In marketing, the expression 'spontaneous knowledge' means knowledge you have without any help. We could almost claim Terezín to be spontaneous knowledge as most people are familiar with it, even outside the Czech Republic. It is also true, however, that the overwhelming majority only know Terezín as a concentration camp (not everyone knows it was actually used by the Prague Gestapo as a prison), at best they will have heard of the large Jewish ghetto from which people were transported to the death camps. Few people have yet to ask themselves when this fortress city was built and what it was used for before this tragic and frightening chapter of human history. Off we go to the Terezín Fortress. It is a gripping and informative trip.*

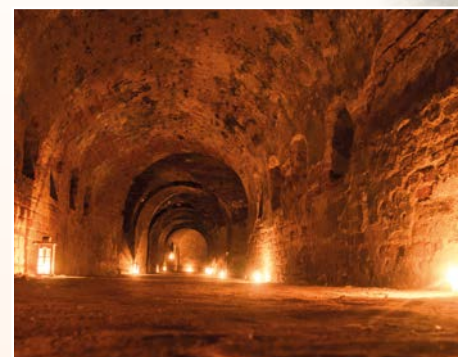
## A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN EUROPE

A group of enthusiasts recently embarked upon reviving the influence of the fortress on the town. In just a few years, a tremendous amount of work has been done and Terezín's fortress is becoming a tourist destination attracting people from all over the world, who are surprised by its unique features. If we take into account the unique way the fortress was defended by a combination of ramparts, underground passageways that measured were an incredible thirty kilometres and were filled with explosives, water manoeuvres – flooding the ditches and basins, artificially creating torrential waves..., we reach the conclusion that no other European fortress can compare.

## THE BARRIER, THE BASE AND THE FORTIFIED POINT

Here and there you may hear people say that since it was never conquered, Terezín never fulfilled its purpose. But that is actually not true. Researchers bringing Terezín's glory back to life have discovered a sort of 'fortress manual' in the archives and uncovered some surprising facts. First of all – the fortress was not built to be conquered. On the contrary, it had three clear functions, most of which have been fulfilled. Firstly, it was a sort of castle on the road between Saxony and Prague. The fortress town was built to be able to guard and bombard the Elbe and the Emperor's

The lethargy and the inaction that Terezín experienced during forty years of socialism paradoxically makes it relatively easy to rediscover the fortress' original functions. There are no pedestrian zones, hotels and entertainment establishments common to similar places around the world. It was also impossible for the town to expand as it was surrounded by a geometrically perfect system of walls, ramparts and ditches. Nor was it possible for agriculture to develop much – and so what we have today is more or less the same as could be found here during the Baroque period when the fortress town was built under the reign of Marie Terezie – hence the name.



Road (and later the railway) without being attacked from above (hence Terezín does not stand directly on the Elbe, below the rising hills of the Czech Central Highlands). Terezín fulfilled this function exemplarily, e.g. during the war in 1866. The second purpose was to create a standby and logistic base, not only for the fortress, but for the entire Austrian army! That is why the barracks and the hospital are so large. The hospital was not just for those wounded when defending the city, but for those fighting all sorts of wars – during the Napoleonic wars in 1813, some of the wounded ended up in Terezín. The fortress bakery baked 60 tonnes of bread a day – an amount the defenders of the fortress could hardly have eaten alone. So Terezín fulfilled this function as well. The third purpose was to build a strong fortified point on the road leading north from Prague. With a strong enough garrison, no enemy would dare pass and hence run the risk of an attack from the fortress army. This was the only purpose that was not fulfilled. Not due to the layout of the fortress but the insufficient strength of the garrison. The Austrian army was never able to fill the fortress with staff. During the war in 1866, there were so few soldiers that they would not have been able to defend the fortress had it been attacked. The commander of the fortress at that time apparently claimed that with more soldiers, the battles at Jičín and Hradec Králové would have ended differently.

## SURPRISINGLY RICH ECOSYSTEM

Now we know that Terezín is a jewel among Europe's fortress cities and that it is worth coming here to see it. But before I tell you about the specific exhibitions, I would like to share a surprising fact. It has been found that Terezín has significant natural wealth. Thanks to the surrounding walls and ditches, the town composes a remarkable ecosystem, a biotope for a surprising number of animals and plants. The recent repairs of a water ditch provide a great example. Due to the repairs, frogs and other amphibians had to be moved. It was thought that there would be hundreds of them, but there turned out to be thousands! There are black storks, and sheep grazing in the ditches. This is such a handy way of cutting the grass, that other protected species and plants have



been reintroduced. Two sides of the town are bordered by artificially created basins below the level of the river which were designed to be flooded with water in the event of an attack. One is now a golf course, the other is basically wild. There is a floodplain forest flooded connected to the ground water creating huge areas for wildlife to develop in.

## WHAT TO DO IN TEREZÍN

When you arrive in Terezín, leave your car in the large car park in the northwest of the town. This is where the information centre is, where you will learn what you need to know. This is also where the fortress's Retranchement 5 can be found. Inside, there is an interesting and snappy exhibition covering the history of the fortress from Marie Terezie to Masaryk and beyond. This is also where the tours of extensive and complex underground passageways start. The tours cover the advanced system of mined tunnels that run below the surface far beyond the boundaries of the fortress and take you places 'civilians' never see. The Bastion 5 is also found here and its underground passageways are completely accessible for wheelchairs, which, as far as I know, is unique the Czech Republic. On the other side of the town, the interactive and entertaining Kavalir II awaits you with an engaging and illustrative exhibition of the soldiers' life in the barracks. There is also a Museum of Nostalgia hosting an exhibition of shops, and the La Grace Museum, where you can board a Czech naval sailboat. Lastly, there is a Geocaching Museum and a games centre with

## Hidden Gems

Terezín is part of the project Discover the Baroque in the Gardens of Bohemia, a project definitely worth exploring. Among other things you can visit Litoměřice's churches and see them in a new light.



The Josephine festivities are the largest of their kind in Europe. This year, in the new premises around Retranchement 5, you can enjoy shows of battles taking place in the ditches (comfortably viewed from the grassy valleys), a historical market, ceremonial processions, experiencing the life of a soldier, craft workshops, and being immersed in a Baroque atmosphere.



# Take a trip to Klíny

*There are huge ski resorts with tens of kilometres of slopes that bore you the very next day. And then there are small family-friendly resorts. Come here for a week and you will never want to leave. But you can always return when the hills you have grown to love are no longer covered in white snow but thousands of blooming flowers. This is typical of Klíny in the Ore Mountains. As if being a lovely, pleasant place was not enough, every year there is something new to discover that adds to the rich entertainment here. Quite frankly – I am a bit biased towards Klíny, but not unfairly so. The people who run this area deserve it. You can really count on them. When they say something, they mean it. If they tell you there will be a new bobsled next year, you can trust that there will be... actually, there already is. And if I am already taking you for an adrenaline-filled ride down Klíny's bobsled, it would be silly not to show you the full range of the area's beauty.*

## A SUMMER ELDORADO

You know what the winters are like in the Czech Republic... There are times when you are desperately hanging on the weatherman's every word while your skis gather dust in the cellar. But in summer you can always enjoy a trip to the mountains, whatever the weather. Klíny is home to a lovely hotel, Emeran, with bright, comfortable rooms, balconies with a view of the grassy slopes and the forested hillsides of the picturesque Czech Central

Highlands on the horizon. It also has a pleasant wellness centre where tired hikers and athletes can enjoy a Finnish sauna, a bio sauna, hydrotherapy, a gym or a massage. The high altitude of the restaurant provides a uniquely beautiful view – whether it is the sunshine melting the butter as you have breakfast, or illuminated clouds floating by as you eat dinner. Pork collar with potato dumplings, rabbit legs in cream, steak tartar, mushroom risotto, chops served with a creamy mushroom sauce, semolina porridge... I really do not know what

to recommend first. A small craft brewery has also recently been added, so alongside your mean you can enjoy beers that cannot be found anywhere else. Enough – we are not here to lie around eating! We are here to make the most of the sports facilities. There is a multipurpose sports hall with a wonderful climbing wall and another climbing wall outdoors as well as a rope course in the forest. But you are, of course, wanting to get back to the main attraction, the brand-new bobsled. Let's go – it will be my first time, too.



## THE BOBSLED AND OTHER FUN

Look at that! The design is fantastically simple and, as I soon find out, completely safe. One part of the track goes down the slopes, the other through the forest. The part in the forest stays put in winter (advertising the summer track), whereas the part on the ski slopes is dismantled in the autumn. You do not go down the hill shut inside a large pipe as the bobsled is attached to the upper side of a pipe. There is only one seat, but two seatbelts. Children under eight can go with their parents and there are seats for young children. Unless I miscounted, there are 14 turns, and a bridge crossing the road; all in all about one kilometre, or three minutes' worth of incredible fun. The speed? A maximum of 45 km/h. You can use the breaks but it is impossible to fly off when going round the bends. It is a completely different way of experiencing Klíny's slopes. A cable car takes you back up – and down we go again! Once we are tired of the bobsled, we can try the bikes, the scooters or the single track in the Bike Park. The blue and red tracks are open for scooters and bikes, the red is for bikes only. This is an excellent place for children – there is a forest gym, a parkour area for children in the forest, minigolf, tennis courts, a playground... The advantage, of course, is that you do not have to spend the whole day within area – the beautiful Ore Mountains are just a step away. The reservoir Fláje and the Moldava plains are both within reach and it is a stone's throw to Germany. The network of cycle paths and cycle tracks takes you everywhere. Wherever you go, you will marvel at the raw, harsh beauty of the mountains

which were the most populated European hills in the Middle Ages. Nature is at its best here, showing off like a model on the catwalk. Even if the weather is not great, cycling through the fog as the wind blows it away and the sun breaks through is a delightful experience.

## WINTER ALL AROUND

If it snows in the mountains, you can usually rely on Klíny having snow. Although the altitude is not that great, the climate is favourable. Klíny



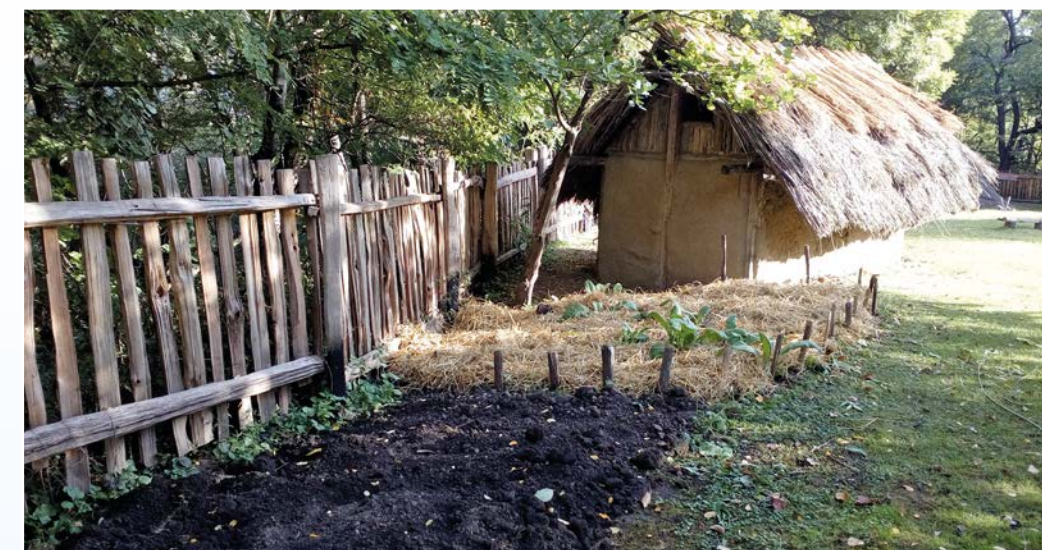
is especially suitable for cross country skiers. They can be seen here all day or even at night wearing headlamps. The routes have their starting point three minutes from the hotel and many routes cross the German border. The trails are beautifully made, surrounded by the attenuated Ore Mountains silently reaching upwards through the chilly air and cowering trees frosted with glittering diamonds. The total length of the tracks? More than you can cover in a week. Klíny is one of three resorts

that together compose the White Trail. In total, they add up to about 180 kilometres of well-kept trails! And if we include the previously mentioned trails in Germany, there is a good 250 kilometres... For those not keen on cross-country skiing, have you heard of fatboy? It is a special bike with wide tyres specially made for riding on snow – great fun. Or perhaps snowkiting? You can borrow a kite and an instructor will help you catch your first gusts of wind. And by the way – there are no crowds here! You will find yourself in one of the last oases of calm and silence. Or do you prefer slopes? It is no Courchevel, but for families with children or for laid-back skiers who do not need to go downhill for an hour without stopping, Klíny is ideal. One good thing is the lack of crowds as the capacity of the car park naturally limits the number of visitors. There are three slopes, blue up at the top and red further down. The snowcats work diligently (by the way, you can arrange an evening ride on a snowcat, which is an unusual experience). There is also a snowpark that illuminates some of the slopes so you can go skiing even in the evening. Among others, there is a chair lift with four seats. As for the evenings, there is plenty of entertainment – either at Emeran in Klíny or a few miles below in Litvínov. If you have children, you will appreciate the great playroom. The playroom is separate from the other rooms and you can drop your little ones off here to play with other children until you try to drag them off again. During the day they are outdoors and in the evenings there are parties and masquerades. It really is hard to find a better place to enjoy a family holiday. You might have already guessed that I love this place, right?



# The Memories of Royal Towns

There were times when the word ‚museum‘ was followed by grumpy faces and visions of boredom, endless columns of text, and showcases reflecting lights precluding one from seeing anything... Museums have since become more interactive – places where people have fun and move about. The museums in Lower Poohří, more specifically in the three royal towns – Kadaň, Žatec and Louny are good examples of this. Don't just expect three regular buildings, that would be to underestimate these beautiful historical towns. Enough already, we have little room for so much beauty. So...



## KADAŇ – TO THE CASTLE, THE MONASTERY AND THE TOWERS

Kadaň is a town that has flourished over the past few years. It is a historical town of unprecedented beauty and it is delightful to walk through the square, along waterfront or the medieval streets. The museum is almost ubiquitous, spread out over five locations. Let's start at Kadaň Castle. Here, in the captivating environment of spacious medieval cellars, archaeological finds are mixed with information about the history of the castle,

a lapidarium accompanied by drawings, models and a timeline. The second museum site is a late Gothic bastion, part of Kadaň's city walls. You can literally touch history here. You can try out the blades of a Frankish throwing axe, feel the weight of a knight's sword from the Middle Ages, or try on plated gloves or iron hats from the time of the Hussite wars. Next, our steps lead us towards the river Ohře, to the breathtaking area of the Franciscan monastery. The museum's exhibition is divided into three parts. The first guides us through the town's past and is very interesting – among



other things, it includes an executioner's sword and the oldest seal of Kadaň. The second part takes a look at the life of the Franciscan monastic brothers. Surrounded by gems of Gothic architecture, you will be amazed by the Renaissance paintings and Baroque furniture. You can also see inside the monastery church. Finally, the third section is for those interested in geology as it includes a mineralogical walk, fossils and archaeological excavations. I mentioned some towers – yes, there are in fact two and it is possible to climb both of them. You cannot miss Kadaň's Gothic tower connected to the town hall. It gives the main square character. The roof of the white tower is adorned with the characteristic crabs and is incredibly beautiful. Entering the town hall chapel, we immediately notice several rooms with remarkable ceilings and the tower keeper's flat. We can take a closer look at the components of the tower's adornments – a mysterious inscription, a gargoyle in the form of a dog, a decorative crab and a festive weathervane. The best part, of course, is at the top – an indescribably beautiful view of the entire town and the neighbouring tower St. Nicholas and the Mikulovická gate. St. Nicholas tower can also be climbed for a different view of Kadaň.

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Žatec, the hops metropolis, naturally has a Hops and Beer Temple and the largest hops museum in the world. But we have written more about that elsewhere. Today we will visit the Regional Museum of K.A. Polánek. I highly recommend it. The historical exhibition about the prehistory and the history of the town with its beautiful model of the Žatec chain bridge complements the otherwise unique exhibition, however small it may be. It is called the Žatec Time Machine and is entirely interactive and very engaging. Once you enter the small room, you have two options – either to read the information next to the photos on the walls and to view the map of the city – or to utilize the tablet and slip into the amazing – and not so easy (!) puzzles. I tried it myself and ended up running like mad from photo to photo, taking pictures of the QR codes, rummaging in the mysterious chest, answering the questions on the tablet, moving the photographs around the map – and I still did not find all the keys I needed to get the treasure. Luckily it is possible to pause the game whenever and save it so that you can continue on your next visit. School children play it with great enthusiasm and I am sure you will too. But I warn you, it is not easy. The museum also has another two exhibitions. The first one is a truly beautiful burgher villa with perfectly preserved neo-Renaissance interiors and a very natural gallery, the paintings are simply part of the rooms. Stunning. The last exhibition is the Old Paper Mill. The name does not mislead you; it really is in the restored paper mill. In

## ŽATEC – DELVING INTO HISTORY

this exquisite space you will find an exhibition about history of Žatec's industry. And finally, I cannot help but mention the hops exhibition. It is unique and cannot be seen anywhere except Žatec, in the Homulupulus Museum. In one of the fortification bastions, we are drawn into a charming hoax as we follow the fictitious history of the ancient brewers, or homo lupulus. Local prankers, sorry – the members of the Hops Defence, once installed an ‚excavated grave – archaeological finding‘ in the middle of the square. Their findings consisted of a ‚huddled skeleton holding a tankard‘. This museum is a continuous series of great gags, jokes and pranks.

Louny is a town that has flourished over the past few years. It is a historical town of unprecedented beauty and it is delightful to walk through the square, along waterfront or the medieval streets. The museum is almost ubiquitous, spread out over five locations. Let's start at Louny Castle. Here, in the captivating environment of spacious medieval cellars, archaeological finds are mixed with information about the history of the castle, a lapidarium accompanied by drawings, models and a timeline. The second museum site is a late Gothic bastion, part of Louny's city walls. You can literally touch history here. You can try out the blades of a Frankish throwing axe, feel the weight of a knight's sword from the Middle Ages, or try on plated gloves or iron hats from the time of the Hussite wars. Next, our steps lead us towards the river Ohře, to the breathtaking area of the Franciscan monastery. The museum's exhibition is divided into three parts. The first guides us through the town's past and is very interesting – among



## LOUNY – FROM THE SLAVS TO THE HUSSITES

The mysterious city of the moon, with its magnificent St. Nicolas Church, right at the edge of the Bohemian Central Mountains (České středohoří) is proud of its Hussite past. The museum is housed in one of the most valued houses in Louny, the Gothic house of the Sokol of Mory. The late Gothic bow window levitating above the street draws us into the beautifully preserved Gothic hall and the two exhibitions. The first one is historical and focuses on the history of north-western Bohemia in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period which was a significant for the entire region. During the Hussite wars, Louny and Žatec played a very important role supporting the Hussite power in northwest Bohemia. The exhibition captures and documents this tumultuous time from the early reign of Charles IV through the Hussite Wars to the accession of George of Poděbrady to the Czech throne. The second exhibition is equally interesting as it is interactive.



The exhibitions main topic is the Louny steppe in the Czech Central Highlands. This spectacular landscape is located a couple of kilometres outside Louny on the very shore of the river Ohře, near the village of Březno u Loun. In a glade surrounded by a dense grove, right on the bank of the river, an archaeological open-air museum awaits us. It emerged based on practical experiments aiming to verify the lifestyle of the old

Slavic and Germanic people. Hence, we find ourselves in the middle of a village from the first half of the first millennium and can walk through the huts, admiring the characteristically long houses that people built in the early Stone Age. We can try out how they made fur or fire, dried herbs, fed animals... Our final museum is also a part of city walls, this time the walls of Louny. Here we enter the world of petrified wood, i.e. fossilized wood. The museum is even called the Stone Forest. It is not big but

you are bound to remember it. Yes, the selection of museums in the royal towns of Lower Poohří is incredibly rich and well worth a visit.



# Krupka in Full Bloom

*I have already taken you to the historical mining town of Krupka but that does not stop me from inviting you here once more as many things worth exploring have recently started happening. Let's start by reviewing what we already know about Krupka. Since the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Krupka has lain at the very foot of the Ore Mountains, in the depths of the steep stony slopes above the stream Horský. Since 1959 it also includes the former village Bohosudov, from where you can take the cable car up to Komáří vížka with its uncountable points of interest. Let's take a walk through Krupka.*

## WALKING AROUND THE HISTORICAL TOWN

We will start at the former girls' school of the Order of the Merciful Nuns of the Holy Cross, which has been carefully rebuilt and now hosts the town hall and tourist information centre. One of the main sights – the Basilica of the Virgin Mary of Sorrow is just across the street. This breathtaking Baroque building is surrounded by cloisters and chapels. It was built by the Broggis and is a significant Czech pilgrimage site – an extraordinary experience. We climb the hill Kalvárie and head towards Krupka's historical centre. We pass the remarkable late Gothic church of St. Anne (kostel sv. Anny), open during the tourist season, on Cínová Street (a rather telling name, as the Czech word ,cín' translates to ,tin') and the Gothic Church of the Holy Spirit (not open, it is completely empty but still dominates the town) to Husitská Street (a somewhat inappropriate homage to the Hussites, who pillaged and burned the town), which gradually widens into a sloping kind of ,street square'. And here we have to stop and take in the recent changes. As far as sights are considered, our eyes are drawn to the beautiful but towerless Gothic Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie). Behind the church there is a wooden bell tower on the hillside. The bell used to call the miners to work. Both of these sights are inaccessible, but they are reminders of past times. A few years ago, the town took over the church and began a generous reconstruction. Within the next few



years, it will be possible to admire the famous cassette ceiling, the Holy Stairs with its unique set of Baroque sculptures Ecce homo, and a high-quality organ which will be used for concerts. The church will serve cultural events and religious services. Another new tourist magnet is the Fireman Museum in the beautifully restored Baroque parish building. Inside, we can enjoy a charming exhibition of firefighting equipment with many unique objects, rare pieces of firefighting equipment, as well as shooting targets, uniforms, helmets, sirens, hoses... And the pump with two vacuum pumps can only be seen here! Next up is a visit to the Krupka Castle. It was deserted following the Thirty Years' War but gained popularity during the Romanticism as it became a popular destination for spa guests from Teplice. It is still romantic and nowadays hosts a pleasant restaurant in the Panská House, a building from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which Šternberk had built among the remains of the walls and towers.

## KRUPKA WANTS TO JOIN UNESCO!

Yes, the UNESCO World Heritage List is the leitmotif of most of the town's current activities. It makes me wonder how important it is, not only for people but also for a town to have goals and set out to achieve them. It takes inventiveness, investment, and, most importantly, a certain amount of obstinacy. Krupka, for example, became a partner of a Czech-German scientific project, ArchaeoMontan 2018, mapping the history of medieval mining in the Ore Mountains. This project itself is not related to Krupka's UNESCO application but supports it indirectly and adds to the town's positive features. The partnership program is primarily focused on the research work of archaeologists, historians, geologists and land surveyors and one of its main results is having restored a burgher house with Gothic cellars and turned it into the Krupka Mining Landscape Information Centre. If the town's UNESCO application is successful, this information centre will become a point of contact promoting the entire region. And I do not want to jinx it – but if it is not successful, Krupka will still have a modern and multi-purpose information centre. Let's take a look at it. You must see what this building, set in a row of burgher houses in Husitská Street, looked like prior to the renovation. Poverty and suffering, ruins in fact. A close eye was kept on it and as the front wall and the Gothic



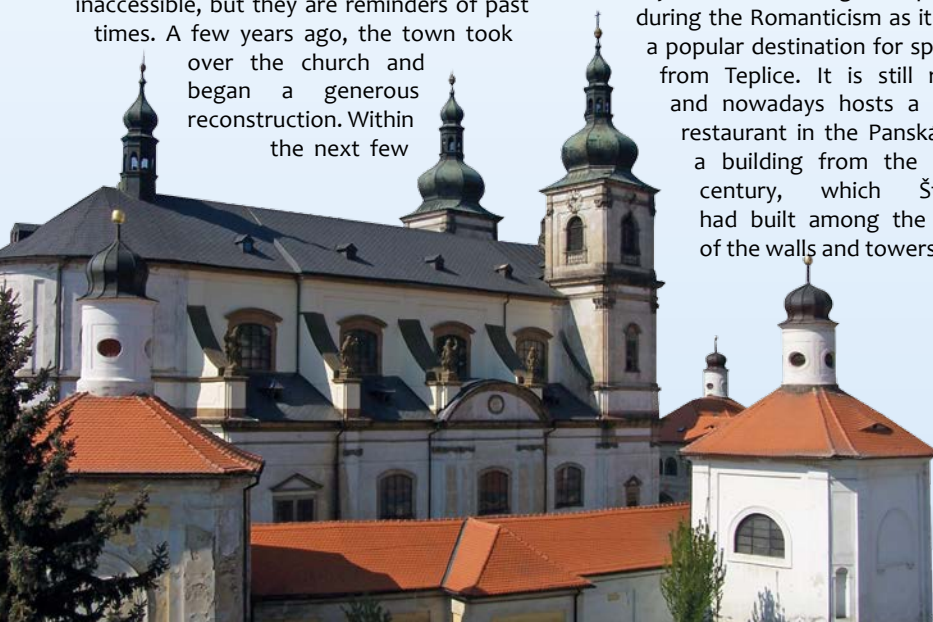
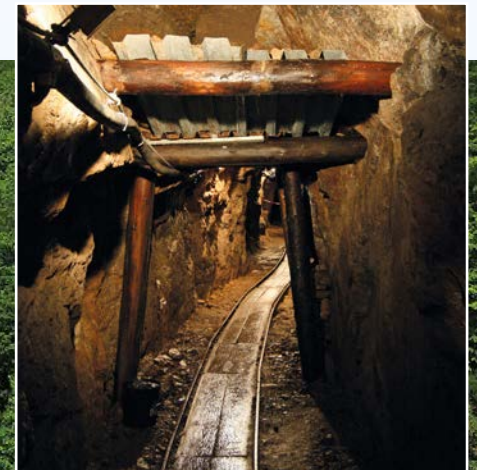
vaults on the ground floor were meticulously preserved and redeccorated and a completely new house was built within this structure. The result is wonderful. On the ground floor we are welcomed by a cheerful woman who can provide any necessary tourist information as well as background information, just as in any other information centre. One floor up, we discover an exhibition of mining artefacts. More exhibition areas and conference rooms are found on the third floor, and on the top floor there is an educational space used for lectures and corporate training events. Considering the fact that the house was about to fall to pieces, the transformation is tremendous. But the Information Centre is far from being the only thing supporting UNESCO's advisory bodies.

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MEDIEVAL MINERS

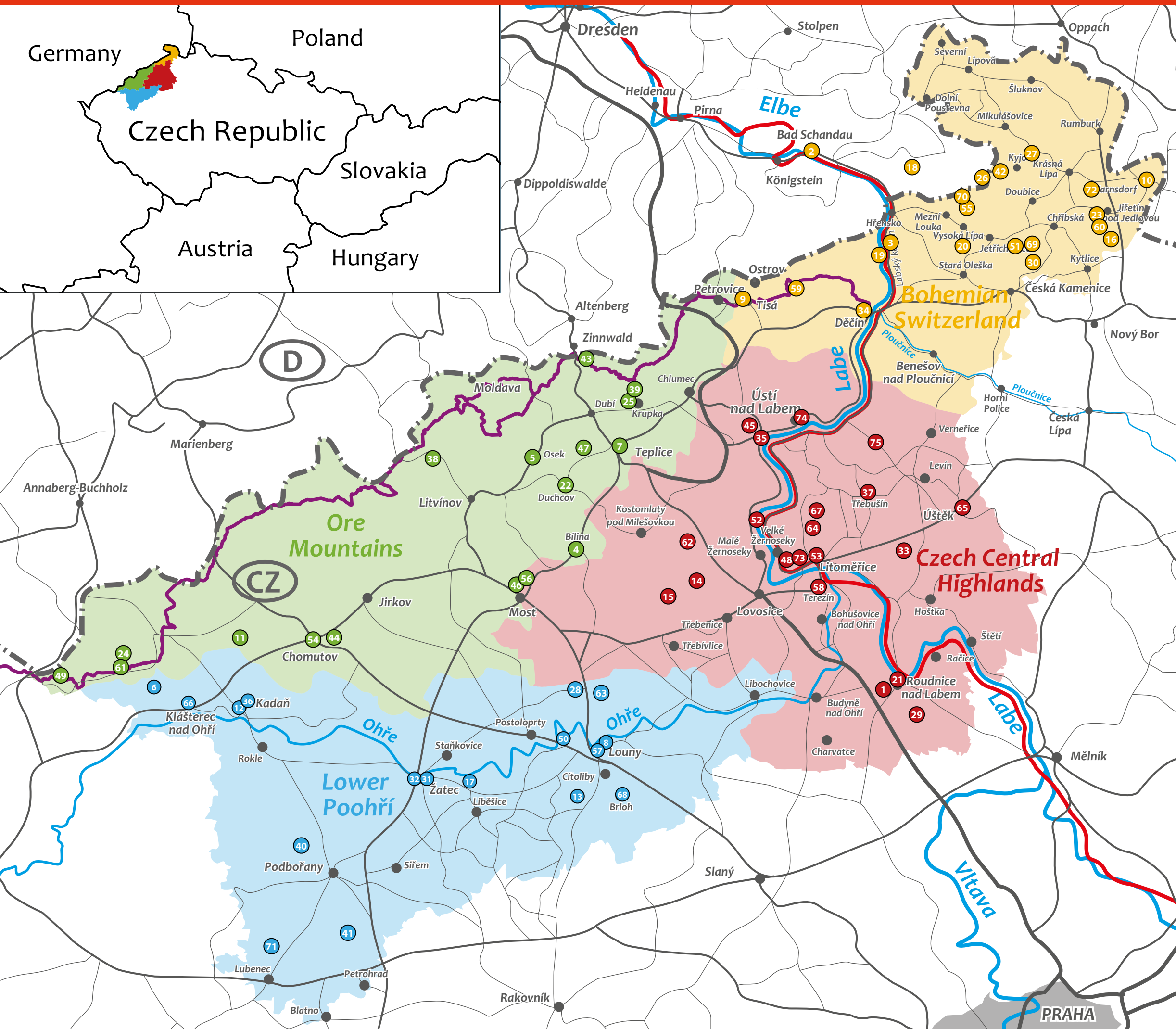
As part of the project ArchaeoMontan 2018, the town has built an educational trail with two circuits that follow in the footsteps of the miners. It is a great walk. There are 16 boards with information along the way and the trail takes us through the most interesting mining sites in the area. Almost anyone can walk the shorter circuit without any difficulties. It is 4.5 km and goes from Husitská Street under the castle, through Horská street almost all the way to the gallery Starý Martin, via Víska and the hill Zaječák, and along the shooting path back to the Information centre. The longer circuit is only a little over ten kilometres but the elevation is considerable and requires a certain level of fitness. It runs through the historical mining areas Preisselberg and Knötel, past the Chapel of St. Wolfgang all the way to Komáří vížka, past Lake Kotelní and back to town. And that is not all. The town is also not indifferent to its characteristic medieval mining square or the street that climbing the hill. The area is considered an urban conservation area but that alone does not change anything. Most houses are privately owned and the town can only motivate and support them in repairing and maintaining their homes. The houses that have been officially identified as monuments can receive



a grant from the state. The others, however, are included in the urban conservation area but, as they are not monuments themselves, cannot receive any grants. However, two years ago a subsidy program to help restore the exterior appearances of houses in the urban conservation area and the Krupka Mining Cultural Landscape was initiated. The town's resources support the repairs of facades, windows and roofs. The result is a range of colourful houses that is slowly blossoming – last year, eight facades were repaired and this year the interest is even greater. As part of the repair, signs providing information about the history of the houses are added. Isn't this a great idea? And you can even support it – simply spend a day as a welcome visitor in this cosy, historical town.







**Clues:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Airfield in Roudnice nad Labem       | 40 Krásný Dvůr Castle                       |
| 2 Bad Schandau                         | 41 Kryry lookout tower                      |
| 3 Belvedere                            | 42 Kyjovské valley                          |
| 4 Břilinská Kyselka                    | 43 Lake Dlouhý                              |
| 5 Brewery Černý orel                   | 44 Lake Kamencové                           |
| 6 Brewery Chalupník                    | 45 Lake Milada                              |
| 7 Brewery Monopol                      | 46 Lake Most                                |
| 8 Brewery Zloun                        | 47 Lake Otakar                              |
| 9 Burial Chapel of the Botschen family | 48 Lake Píšťanské                           |
| 10 Café Dlásk                          | 49 Limestone in Háj u Loučňan pod Klínovcem |
| 11 Castle Hasištejn                    | 50 Open-air archaeological museum           |
| 12 Castle Kadaň                        | 51 Pavlino valley                           |
| 13 Castle Nový Hrad                    | 52 Porta Bohemica                           |
| 14 Castle Ostrý                        | 53 Puppet gallery                           |
| 15 Castle ruins Oltářník               | 54 Railway Museum in Chomutov               |
| 16 Castle ruins Tolštejn               | 55 Rock castle Šaunštejn                    |
| 17 Castle Stekník                      | 56 Sand quarry Braňanská písečná            |
| 18 Castle Winterstein                  | 57 St. Nicholas' Church                     |
| 19 Dolní Žleb                          | 58 Terežín Fortress                         |
| 20 Dolský Mill                         | 59 The hill Děčínský Sněžník                |
| 21 Dortletka                           | 60 The hill Jedlová                         |
| 22 Duchcov Castle                      | 61 The hill Mědník                          |
| 23 Gallery of John the Evangelist      | 62 The hill Milešovka                       |
| 24 Gallery of the Virgin Mary          | 63 The hill Oblík                           |
| 25 Gallery Starý Martin                | 64 The hill Plešivec                        |
| 26 Gorge Obere Schleuse                | 65 The Museum of Devils                     |
| 27 Hesse's Cross                       | 66 The Porcelain Museum                     |
| 28 Hill Raná                           | 67 Varhošť lookout tower                    |
| 29 Hill Říp                            | 68 Vernerův Mill                            |
| 30 Hill Zlatý vrch                     | 69 Village Studenec                         |
| 31 Hops Lighthouse                     | 70 Village Zadní Jetřichovice               |
| 32 Hops Museum                         | 71 Vochlice lookout tower                   |
| 33 Hořidla                             | 72 Windmill – Světlík                       |
| 34 Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk       | 73 Winery Vinařství pod Radobýlem           |
| 35 Chateau Větruše                     | 74 Zoo Ústí nad Labem                       |
| 36 Kadaň Monastery                     | 75 Zubrnice open-air museum                 |
| 37 Kalich Castle                       |   |
| 38 Klíny Sports Complex                |   |
| 39 Komářův vížka                       |   |

- The Elbe path  
— The Ore Mountains central cycling route



# Cycling along the River of the Blue King

Together with the river Kamenice, the river Kirnitzsch (Křinice) is one of the two arteries of Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland. Its source is in the thick groves between the towns Krásná Lípa and Studánka and it weaves its way through two national parks before flowing into the splendid, ancient Elbe in the spa town of Bad Schandau.

*I like this river very much. I see kingfishers, I wander amidst the calm noise of the silence, and more than once a dignified and inconceivably beautiful black stork has passed over my head, flying from the surface of the water to the trees. Recently a cycle path was created along the river so now, with a few compromises, it is possible to cycle along the entire length of the river from its source to the mouth. Do you want to join me?*

## FROM THE THREE SOURCES TO THE BORDER

The river Kirnitzsch has a total of three sources hidden away in a forest about 3.5 kilometres from Krásná Lípa's beautiful square. In the silence of the forest, you will find a gazebo covering one of the springs, the other two are surrounded by a bulky lattice. I do not know how often you have stood at a river's source, but it always makes me feel solemn. The intensity and liveliness of springs have always fascinated me. It is one of the wonders of our planet that, within a few kilometres, such a small trickle can grow into a full river. Like all toddlers, Kirnitzsch has a rocky start. It staggers and stumbles through the high grass using all its strength to hollow out a riverbed on its pilgrimage. After about a kilometre and a half it comes across its first challenge – to fill the little lake named Klabeček. A little further along, Kirnitzsch jubilantly flows into Krásná Lípa only to seemingly disappear below the square. The river is still here, underground. Since 1874 it flows through a pipe covered by the paving. Today the imaginative sculpture, a symbolic bridge with sandstone statues representing the four elements and a piece of stony riverbed, by the Kadaň sculptor Herbert Kizsa reminds us of the river's existence. The actual river flows two metres below but just beyond the square it pops up again, catches its breath and hurries on past Krásný Buk, down into the valley Dlouhý Důl. In Dlouhý Důl the river bathes the feet of the beautiful lakeside houses enjoying



the carefree atmosphere of the surrounding meadows. Just past the village of Kyjov the responsible task of creating the Kyjov valley awaits. Kirnitzsch has been working on it for thousands of years creating one of the most beautiful landscapes in the region. It then rushes past the former Dixův Mill (Dixův mlýn) before patiently grinding and gnawing at the great sandstones that have been pierced by the power of the water. For as long as anyone can remember, people have wandered among the streams and rivers. The path through the Kyjov valley is amazingly beautiful. The meandering Kirnitzsch is beautiful, comforting... just gorgeous – and round here it is not unusual to catch sight of an unmistakably blue body creating a neon line above the river. It is a kingfisher, the valley's most beautiful inhabitant and king. Rivers are impervious to the whims of humans; they do not pay attention to boundaries made by the human hand. People have understood this and often let the rivers themselves be the borders. On either side of the former settlement Zadní Doubice, the Kirnitzsch does just this. A footbridge bridges the tranquil and natural transition between two countries, between the Czech Republic and Germany. Just a few hundred meters away from here, we can see the 1640 Wolf Plaque with a poetic text by a forester, who once killed two wolves here.

## UP, DOWN AND AROUND THE MILL ČESKÝ MLÝN

We are back at Kirnitzsch, a river whose bottom is covered with golden sand surrounded by stones covered with moss. We cross the border bridge from the former settlement Zadní Doubice and find ourselves on German territory, in Saxony. And then we come to a crossroad,

a marvellous place yet... It seems something is missing. Yes, it really is. Look into the forest on the opposite bank of the river and you will see some ruins. This is where the popular and frequently visited mill Český Mlýn stood. And it was no teeny-tiny house but a spacious

restaurant. In the 1950s, however, bulldozers were put to work. From here, we take another jump, this time to the left to the picturesque Niedermühle, which functioned as both a mill and saw. From here only pedestrians, not cyclists, can continue. This is where the river Kamenice climbs through the rocks and emerges carrying boats through gorge of Obere Schleuse. Lock your bike here and set off on foot – this is a wonderful, romantic spot. Then back at the crossroad, we climb a somewhat steep hill to the charming village of Hinterhermsdorf. If you fancy, you can



take a trip from to the nearby Weifberg lookout tower before heading back down to our guide, the river. It is waiting for us at the bottom of the ravine, glittering and captivating. Some pools are so irresistible one must stop for a while and paddle in the icy water on the soft riverbed, hollowed-out as if home to whale. The river's embrace is gentle, adorned with vegetation, birds weaving back and forth and the hum of the bees.

## AMONG ROCKS AND THE PEACEFUL MOUTH OF THE RIVER

Yes, it is possible to follow the river further without getting lost. But... There are so many

things to see in the surrounding mountains... For example, just a few hundred metres up the hill where the Historischer Bärenfang is hidden among the woods, there is a historical bear trap. In the middle of the forest, the old armoury Zeughaus awaits us with its cultivated and wonderfully varied buffet. A few meters further on we find the self-service presentation centre of the Saxon Switzerland National Park. While we are at it, we let ourselves be lured to one more place. We can hide our bikes in the woods and set off along the rocks. Soon we run into some crooked steps, followed by some ladders – and voilà – we are at the top of Winterstein. The extensive rocky plateau, where a watchtower once stood, provides unrivalled panoramic views of a large part of Saxon Switzerland. Irresistible! But we are back at

Kirnitzsch and we continue past Neumannmühle with its small exhibition of traditional mill technology, past the Lichtenhain Waterfall (artificially created in 1830 as a tourist attraction – and at regular intervals it really does attract tourists). The number of agricultural and service buildings along the river increase the closer we get to the river's mouth, and a sea of graceful purple impatiens glows around us. Believe it or not, already in 1898, a tram trafficked this valley from the banks of the Elbe to the heart of the rocks. I highly recommend dismounting your bike for a while to visit Bad Schandau! The Kirnitzsch calms down and runs humbly through the spa area in an orderly fashion until we can see the famous Eiffel Tower of Bad Schandau – a lift that carries its passengers up a rock wall and dominates the small town. And there it is. The Elbe opens her wise arms embracing the grateful Kirnitzsch and together they wind their way to the sea. We ride the last metres along the waterfront to the hooting of the steamboats set against the iconic Lilienstein. Having crossed the bridge above the Elbe, we stop at the train station and take our bicycles on the train from Děčín to Rumburk. From Rumburk it is then just a short and easy ride back to Krásná Lípa. An amazing trip.



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



# No Car, No Worries in the Czech Central Highlands

*It is easy to get used to the comfort of our own car taking us wherever we want to go, and many of us often tend to park right under the stairs of the lookout tower or at the entrance to the castle. We have become lazy and traverse even the most pristine nature with our beloved engines. 'Hang on,' I hear voices in disagreement, 'we cannot get anywhere without a car ...' I do not know what it looks like elsewhere, but in the Ústí region public transport works too well for such excuses. And the Czech Central Highlands serve as a glowing example. You don't believe me? Just you wait.*

## THE CLATTERING TRACKS

Going by train is always kind of romantic. It is not every day you get to open the window and let the wind play with your hair, watch the landscape slipping past, and perhaps even sing a little – no one can hear you over the noise. This rings especially true if you are on a track with a story, or even a railway museum. We will start with the legendary Plum track (Švestková dráha) as the track in the Czech Central Highlands used to be called. This year it turns 120 years old. The track used to lead through infinite plum orchards and avenues that stretched as far as the eye could see. The locals called it Zwetschenbahn or Powidlbahn. After the expulsion of the German population, the new regime coined a poster slogan saying that plums could not feed the nation, and so the orchards were replaced with lengths of corn and wheat, Soviet style. This route is still breathtaking even without its blue plums. It is among the greatest jewels of the Czech Central Highlands showing you castles and ruins such as



Hazmburk, Košťálov, Oltářík... and there are just so many beautiful hills along the track between Lovosice and Most. And the Podřipský track lies not far from here. During the tourist season you can go a sightseeing ride through the villages Libochovice via Budyně nad Ohří and Mšené-lázně, right around the fabulous Czech hill Říp ending in Roudnice. Part of the route even winds over the cancelled railway line – don't worry, the tracks are still here but no trains

run here during rest of the year. I promised another attraction too and here it is: Zubrnice Railway Museum. The track goes from Ústí nad Labem, from below Střekov Castle, through Velké Březno, where you can get out to see the famous brewery and the charming chateau, up into the mountains to Zubrnice, a village that is also an open-air museum. The Railway Museum hosts a historical transport office and a waiting room; you can see the old carriages and engines, and even go for a ride on the handcar!

## ALL ABOARD!

The Elbe is the life-giving artery of the Czech Central Highlands, but it has also been a transport route for as long as anyone can remember. Despite plenty of changes regarding flow regulation, the Elbe is still used for shipping; this is an immortal tradition. This is good news for us because seeing the Gate to Bohemia from deck is an invaluable experience. The line 901 traffics the route between Roudnice, Litoměřice

and Ústí during the weekends of the tourist season. In addition to this, there is a boat from Ústí nad Labem to Píšťany. If you want to go on a private boat trip, you can rent a small boat, Marie, at the wonderful lake in Píšťany. Since we are on the topic of boats on the Elbe, it would be wrong not to mention the ferries. These almost retro vessels connecting the two banks of the river are increasing in popularity and use. In the Czech Central Highlands, there are six of them – between Nučnice and Nučnický, Lovosice and Píšťany, Velké Žernoseky and Malé Žernoseky, Dolní Zálezly and Církvice, Neštětice and Svádov, and finally between



Velké Březno and Povrly. The ferries open up hiking and cycling opportunities and there is a certain charm to paying the pensive Charon a coin to take you from one bank to the other...

## TAKE YOUR BIKE TO THE MOUNTAINS BY BUS

We tend to take busses for granted. But it is often hard to find a good connection when heading out to the countryside. Not so in the Czech Central Highlands. The network of busses is well planned and efficient, not only for locals but also for tourists – despite the fact that these two groups have very different needs. The busses often go to places many tourists never visit – which is a pity. If you ask me, I recommend taking a bus to Kostomlaty pod Milešovkou. The leeward side of the highest mountain in the Czech Central Highlands is stunningly beautiful yet rather unknown, despite its magnificent and romantic,

castle ruins with a lookout tower, the remarkable Church of St. Lawrence with the preserved Romanesque masonry, and picturesque surroundings. And how about catching a bus to the foot of Říp and then walking up to the rotunda? Just take bus 646 from Roudnice to Rovný. Hikers of course have more choices than cyclists, since they can also take advantage of network of bike busses. After all, no one can really stop you from getting on a bus simply because you do not have a bike. Talking about bike busses – here are a few tips. First of all – take the bus from Litoměřice up to the plateau. It is beautiful and one of a kind. Get on your bike here and criss-cross your way across the plateau and then down to the Elbe. It is breathtaking. A similar experience awaits you in Děčín, where you can take the bike up the hill Děčinský Sněžník. The ride down is exceptional! Keen cyclists probably already know that the terrain in Czech Central Highlands is ideal for cyclists who like medium-intensive and varied routes. For those not keen on hills there is always the idyllic Elbe Cycle Route (read about it on pgs. 16–17).



## ONE FOOT ON THE WING OF AN AEROPLANE

Still not enough? How about trying a scooter? Throughout the entire season you can ride across the area surrounding the hill Říp. It is possible to rent a scooter below Říp and set off on one of the five marked routes. They all pass Říp and it is up to you at which of the several collection points you want to return the scooter. What other means of transport can I offer? I know – a cable car! Head to Ústí nad Labem for this. After walking around this remarkable town with the most leaning tower north of Pisa, the hilliest zoo in the Czech Republic, an interesting museum and the romantic castle Střekov, go to the shopping centre, Forum, to take the cable car up to the chateau Větruše. Here you can walk along the ridge of the hills and see waterfalls, basalt rock formations and get a great view of the Elbe. There is one more special means of transport to discover in the Czech Central Highlands – the aeroplane. At Roudnice airfield you can book a sightseeing tour on board one of the planes Cessna 172 and Cessna 152. Taking a look at this beautiful area from above is not a bad idea at all. These two pages are not enough for me to mention all the great public transport that allows you to leave your car at the hotel. And so I will just point you to the site [www.ceskestredohori.info](http://www.ceskestredohori.info), where you can find everything you need.

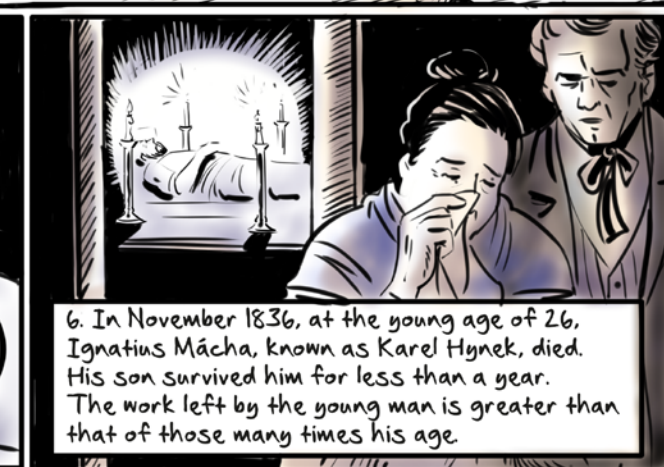
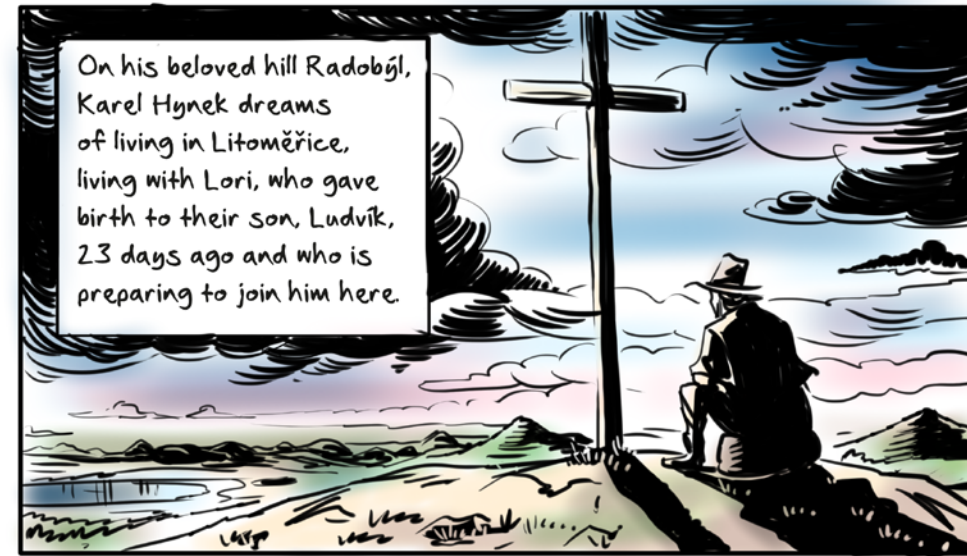




# Mácha's Pilgrimage to the Gate to Bohemia

Written by Rostislav Křivánek

Drawn by Petr Herold





# The Joy of Swimming among the Foothills and Mountains

**Quite frankly, not many tourists go to the Ore Mountains intending to go for a swim. Which is quite logical – the cold water combined with a slightly harsher climate can be deterring. But that is clearly a fallacy or I would not be writing this article. So you know what is coming: we will start off with the lakes and ponds in the foothills, those frequented by many. Then we will look at a lake just preparing for a rush of holidaymakers. Finally, an unusual pleasure awaits – guaranteed secret tips for swimming in mountains and small lakes and ponds in the foothills. All this from someone who has travelled to every corner of the Ore Mountains. Ready? Got your blanket, towel, radio, snack, swimsuit, sunglasses and sun cream? Then let's go.**

## MILADA, ALIAS THE HUGE FLOODED QUARRY

Strictly speaking, Lake Milada lies somewhere on the border between the Czech Central Highlands and the Ore Mountains, in Chabařovice near the town Ústí nad Labem. At the start of the millennium, it was still just a gaping pit, the result of the coal mine quarry in Chabařovice. What to do? Fill it up and recultivate it? In the end, the so-called 'wet alternative' prevailed, and the pit was filled with water. It was no small job – it started in 2001 and was not finished until nine years later! The result is a water surface of more than 250 hectares and a maximum water depth of 24.7 metres. In time, a large beach allowing visitors to enter the water gradually, was developed. It is a real paradise for those keen on water sports such as windsurfing or kiteboarding. An educational trail has been set up around the lake. Why? It

is, of course, incredibly interesting to compare the state of the area today to how it was during the intensive coal mining. They are like chalk and cheese. Milada is also situated in a rich environment where purple loosestrife, bladderworts and many other rare plants grow. Nature immediately seized what she was offered. In some places mushrooms, such as *Leccinum griseum*, *Suillus*, Wood blewit, and even *Helvella* – a mushroom that has not previously been found within the Gate to Bohemia, grow abundantly. Unfortunately, *Helvella* does not taste too good, so it is best to just admire it. And animals? In addition to the sixteen species of freshwater molluscs, perch and pike, catfish and rudd and other fish, 190 bird species have their home here, as do foxes, otters, stoats, badger, moufflons and deer. It is an area where human recreation and nature's natural development are in harmony with each other.

## LAKE KAMENCOVÉ JEZERO, ONE OF A KIND

The popular Lake Kamenčák in Chomutov has already been written about so many times, so we will just mention it briefly – it is the only lake of its kind, as its water can best be described as dead. This is due to the extraction of alum, an aluminium potassium sulphate mineral. Today, it is impossible to tell how and when it actually happened, but the water, which presented a daily struggle in the quarry, increased taking over not only the quarry but also the surrounding meadows – flooding whatever it touched. There used to be some sought-after spa institutions here as the local water contains one percent alum, which precludes almost all life in the lake. The only living creatures here are protozoans. And it does not just concern



fish, but also plants, especially the plague of most water areas – cyanobacteria and algae. That is why the water in Lake Alma stays clear from year to year. Submerging yourself into this water is beneficial to human health as, due to its slightly astringent effects, it reduces perspiration even in extreme heat (alum is added to antiperspirants), and so there are have several reasons why we should head to the outskirts of Chomutov. The first time you submerge yourself into this water, you will realise how addictive it is. In addition to this, the infrastructure is good, the lake has a newly renovated jetty, a nice campsite, and is next door to the Chomutov zoo.

## MOST – WHERE THE HOLIDAYMAKERS WILL HEAD NEXT YEAR

If someone were to ask you what an artificial lake was, having read this article, you would be able to reply that it is a lake made by man. Up until the end of the last century, the coal mine Ležáky was situated where you today can find the lake Most. The lake will soon have been filled with water and the surrounding environment recultivated. The lake will have an area of 311 hectares and the deepest point will reach 75 metres. I had the opportunity to go and have a look at it even though it is not open to the public until 2019. It is a wonderful place and will be great for swimming!

## PLACES FEW PEOPLE KNOW – A SECRET PARADISE

I was wondering who to ask for some expert advice regarding swimming spots in the Ore Mountains, but I did not have to think long. The man who let me see the lake Most, not yet open to the public, might know. Martin Bareš is part of the wonderful project Offroadsafari.cz, a group that takes people on really interesting and thematic trips off road in the mountains and around. In response to my question, he gave me dozens of places for a good swim in the Ore Mountains, he is simply an expert. „Martin, you haven't got a list of the top 5, have you?“ I asked him – and here it is:

1. Rudolice v Horách on cycle track 3079, in a place called „In the Hole“ (V Díře), there is a lake and a few cottages on the edge of the forest. It is usually deserted. The water is beautiful brown and there is a peat bog. The lake is completely clean and there are stones along the edge of the water.



2. Near Košťany u Oseka, there is a large lake, Barbora, and a much smaller lake, Otakar, both is surrounded by a forest. The water is crystal clear, the edge of the water surrounded by stones, and there are breathtaking views of the entire ridge of the Ore Mountains.

3. Braňany u Mostu – the two beautiful lagoons of the Braňany sand quarry are surrounded by trees, have beautifully clean water, and sandy beaches. There are also plenty of small beaches for privacy. And it is not far to the carpark.

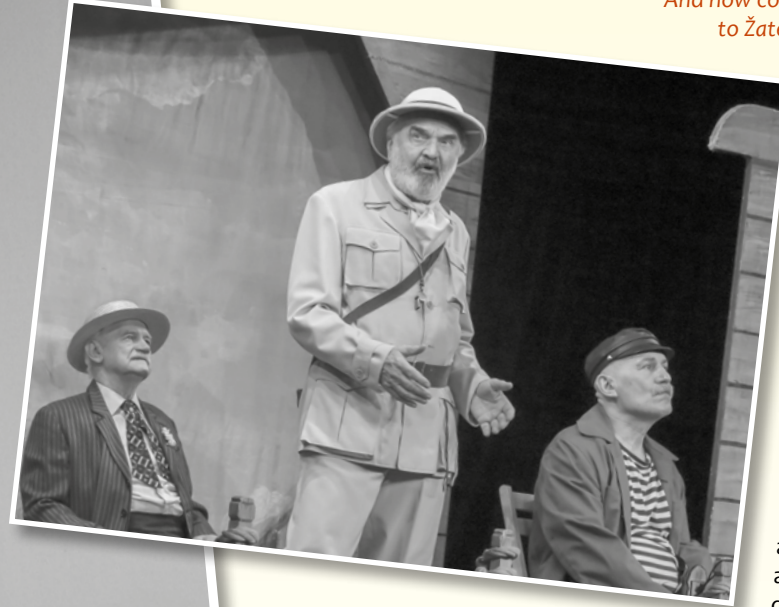
4. Cínovec – Lake Dlouhý. The cool water is a golden brown and is surrounded by a sandy beach. The carpark is almost right by the water.



5. Jeníkov u Duchcova is a stone quarry that has been filled with water. It is a beautiful place with very clean water that is surrounded by sharp stones. You can park nearby at Jeníkov.

Thank you, Martin – perhaps we will run into each other there this summer. I just hope that not all our readers will come at once... Is not that enough? Do you want to discover your own spots? Alright then. Here are a few other tips: Lake Kotelní in the forest near Komáří vížka above Krupka (near the trail In the Footsteps of Miners); the lakes below the former fluorite mine in Moldava; the lake at the rest stop Tři smrky on the marked yellow track from Český Jiřetín to Moldava; Lake Radní at Dlouhé Louky in the direction of Moldava and Fláje; a tiny reservoir by Gabrielina hut (follow the blue trail from Brandov); the beautiful peat bog Lake Volárenské – a former sand quarry – along cycle path 23 from Rudolice to Kalek; Lake Černý in the forest near the road between Zákoutí u Blatna and Kalek; the beautiful Lake Novoveský near the hill St. Sebastian (sv. Šebestiána), or perhaps the sinkhole at the former mine in Měděnec. There are far more, but this should be a good start for finding your private paradise. Now let's just hope for some tropical weather!





# Žatec Is Always with Me

## An Interview with Zdeněk Svěrák

*It is impossible to tell how much the places we live in have influence our lives. Some places we forget almost completely and can barely remember, others are connected to fragments of experiences and feelings, and yet others have a permanent place in our heart, even though we have not been there for many years. The place where you start your real life after finishing school, where your marriage for the first time looks like a real marriage and not a race from place to place, where your two kids are born, where you start developing your ambitions and dreams – this place will be a part of you forever. For Zdeněk Svěrák, this place is the town Žatec.*

After graduating from university, Zdeněk Svěrák and his wife Božena started working at the elementary school in Měcholup. They taught together and played amateur theatre – according to Zdeněk, Božena was considerably better at it. Zdeněk directed a play for the first and last time and when he left the school, Božena took over his class. High school, that was Zdeněk's dream – he had studied to become a teacher of Czech and literature at high school. This is where he started to really enjoy teaching. For the first time, the classroom was not full of shouting and fidgety children, but eager eyes waiting for him to teach them something. In Žatec, his first play, Why Turtles Do Not Have Ears, saw the light of day, and although he soon left to work for the radio in Prague, he and his wife had spent four years of their lives in Žatec and this is where their children were born...

This is also the time when the cinematic glory of Žatec all began – something you can assure yourself of in the film museum, located in a former malting house in Žatec, where else? With one of the most picturesque squares in the Czech Republic, its narrow streets, houses that have seen plenty, and a tower from which you can see it far into the surrounding hills, Žatec is an extremely creative town. A town full of sights for film lovers, including the Svěráks.

*Do you think being born on Teacher's Day, on the same day as the great teachers of several nations, was some kind of sign?*

Not only Comenius, but also Maxim Gorky, Bohumil Hrabal and many other people were born on 28 March. Perhaps I was predestined to become a teacher and then a writer.

*Your first teaching job after graduating was in Měcholupy if I am not mistaken. Could you tell us a bit about you how you and your then future wife moved Měcholupy (if you moved there together), what it was like, and how you ended up in Měcholupy of all places?*

At that time (in 1958) those that graduated from the Pedagogical University were sent out on placements wherever they were needed. My future wife and I were happy to go anywhere as long as we could go together. So we found ourselves in the village of Měcholupy, near Žatec. We arrived a few days before the school year started so that we could take part in the night-time grain threshing along with the other teachers. That was a given back then. We fed the sheaves from the harvester to the threshing machines. We were accommodated separately. I stayed with the Lešáks and Božena with the Hájeks.

*And how come you moved from Měcholupy to Žatec?*

We had trained to become high-school teachers but in Měcholupy we were placed in an elementary school with a promise of being able to teach the higher levels if we did well. At the beginning of my teaching career, I made the mistake of being too kind and entertaining so I had discipline problems. The constant shouting in class made me lose my voice. By the time we moved to Žatec, I had learned my lesson and was able to play the role of a strict teacher. I soon got a job at a grammar school and my wife at an agricultural high school. We didn't have to focus on keeping students in order and were able to pass on our knowledge. I enjoyed it. If it weren't for the endless dictations and essays that had to be marked, leaving me no time for my literary work, I might've stayed.



*You are remembered as being a very popular teacher, although you had a rather funny nickname – Mr Berry. Where did that come from?*

The children there had spent all their lives around hops and then along I came from Prague and was supposed to teach them about harvesting hops. I spoke about hop berries and they all laughed because they had always called them cones.

*Both your children were born in Žatec. To what extent did that change your time in Žatec?*

Yes, our daughter, Hana, was born in 1961 and our son, Jan, in 1965. As well as marking essays, we now had to wash and iron nappies.

*What places did you like visiting in and around Žatec? What did you like about the place? And finally, what has stayed with you to this day?*

You can't forget your first placement. There were many beautiful places in Žatec. The square with the Hošťálkovský house and the school building in Komenský Avenue. The grammar school is a remarkable building. We played amateur theatre and organised poetry evenings in Jitřenka. We took our children for walks along the river Ohře. And my students and I went to the picturesque village Stekník to see the hops...

*What was it like to say goodbye to the town where you had had your first teaching job? Where did you go?*

I went to work at the Czechoslovak radio in Prague telling myself that if my dream of becoming a writer didn't work out, I would return. My wife stayed in Žatec with the children and we got a flat in the neighbourhood Podměstí.



*Do you ever visit Žatec or Měcholupy? I guess you go there with the theatre, but how about just for a trip? Do you have time for trips with your busy schedule?*

You are right. I have so little time that I only ever come to Žatec with the theatre.

*It is looking forward to things that keeps us alive. What are you looking forward to?*

I have a habit of finding things to look forward to. Right now, I'm looking forward to Christmas. I love a white Christmas and we may well get one this year.

### Zdeněk Svěrák

\* March 28, 1936, Prague

He studied to be a teacher, worked at the radio and at Barrandov, co-founded the famous Czech character Jára Cimrman, and together with Ladislav Smoljak, he co-authored all the Jára Cimrman plays, in which he has acted since they started in 1967. His writing also includes short stories, song lyrics, and mainly screenplays either in cooperation with Smoljak (such as Ball Lightning; Seclusion Near a Forest; Mareček, Pass Me the Pen) or alone (such as Waiter, Scarper!; My Sweet Little Village; Three Veterans). He has written the screenplays for most of his son's, Jan's, films, including the Academy Award-winning Kolya. He is also a prominent film actor. He has been a sponsor of the charity project Centrum Paraple since 1994.





# Filmmakers are Discovering the Gate to Bohemia

Countless films have been shot in the Ústí region. Recently, however, the interest in this location has been unusually high. There is a double boom, one supporting the other. No other region in the Czech Republic is experiencing such a steep increase in tourism and the interest of filmmakers seems to go hand in hand with it. It is no wonder; the Gate to Bohemia offers an incredibly wide variety of interiors and exteriors that look great on screen yet are not too well known. There are rock formations, idyllic meadows with gems of folk architecture, the picturesque hills of the Czech Central Highlands, historical royal towns, raw and scenic mountains, romantic waters, castles, chateaux, lookout towers, breathtaking sceneries where the landscape is complemented by sacral architecture, but also industrial areas, mining landscapes, spectacular villas from the First Czechoslovak Republic, factories, and locations ideal for fairy tales or grim war films. There is something for everyone. And the greater the interest is, the more appropriate the decision to set up the Ústí Regional Film Office, or FKÚK, makes sense.

## fkūk.

Filmová kancelář Ústeckého kraje

### THE ÚSTÍ REGIONAL FILM OFFICE

What does this office do? That is actually the most interesting thing about it – it does almost everything. Bára, who is the heart and soul of this office, never knows what the next day will hold. The phone may ring with a request to stop the traffic on the motorway for a number of hours and finding a motorway tunnel for a Korean film, or someone may ask if some scenes from a sunny French vineyard could be shot around Ústí nad Labem. One could hardly imagine such tasks, so I guess they

exact image in mind, perhaps even providing a sketch of what they want. It is then up to you to put the catalogue away and set out to find, say, a typical house with a garden and a cobbled path winding its way up to the door. How do you do that? Nothing is more important than that personal contacts.

### VISITING LOCATIONS

There is such a thing as a 'location tour'. Directors, producers, architects, screenwriters, location managers – all parties interested in making a film are loaded onto a bus in Prague and set off to look for locations. They are taken on a tour, from one interesting spot to the next and the aim of the tour is clear – to catch these people's interest..., no, to captivate them. They traverse the countryside, enter buildings, look at interiors – while talking... And hearing the filmmakers interest and excitement during those discussions is a sign of how well FKÚK is doing its job. For example, the director Dan Svátek recently went on such a tour looking for a building that could be used as a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics in an upcoming film. Bára immediately started to sniff out possible locations. 'The former sanatorium in Jetřichovice!' was her first idea but it turned out that this amazing building, built during the First Czechoslovak Republic, did not have any electricity which would have made shooting there



impossible. Bára, however, did not want to give up on the idea of a film, based on a book by Ústí-local Josef Formánek, being shot in the Ústí region. And then her colleague Helena got an idea – the former castle of Černín, now a psychiatric unit in Petrohrad na Podbořansku. In the end, 80% of the film is being shot here and in other



locations in the region. Filmmakers love keeping the locations close together as travelling between them can be pricey.

### FILMS GIVE LIFE TO TOWNS AND VILLAGES

All this shooting is beneficial for the region. It is hard to imagine any better promotion. We are still a long way from herds of tourists from all over the world coming here to see the famous film locations the way there are tours of Paris showing where Amélie of Montmartre was shot. But not even the best marketing can compare to watching a fairy tale shot at Dolský Mill (Dolský Mlýn) or the castle in Ploskovice, or an adventure film set in the monastery in Doksany. The films also bring money and job opportunities to the region. The town Most, for example, came to life for a few months when a new TV series, written by the well-known duo Kolečko and Prušinovský and aptly named 'Most', was shot there. During these months the film crew were staying somewhere, eating, drinking, and they needed extras and craftsmen... An unnamed joiner from Žatec, for example, was given the order of his life by the film crew when he was asked to produce all the benches for the church. Films are a breath of life for the region and those in charge of towns and villages are coming to realise this more and more. For example, in Lenešice u Loun there is a half-dilapidated sugar factory. The authorities wanted to demolish it and use the land for building plots until an American production team appeared wanting to shoot a war film



here. The Film Office started negotiating and the authorities postponed the demolition until after the film had been made. This is no easy job – negotiating with the authorities, councils, getting access to public spaces and places otherwise closed to the public. And as the shooting draws closer, taking care of more eye-catching features – such quickly getting hold of a doe, a tanker, or a houseboat that can be burned on the Elbe. And on top of this, having to organise a headquarters for the crew, accommodation and an integrated rescue system. This is the case with the second series of the popular series Rapl, which will mainly be shot in Ústí nad Labem.

### KEIRA KNIGHTLEY IN PŘEDLICE

This kind of thing also provides plenty of interesting experiences, of course. When the 'French' scenes of Robert Sedláček's film Palach were being shot in the vineyards above Velké Žernoseky, the girls from FKÚK went through every single box of grapes because the supplier had accidentally delivered the wrong grapes. Instead of the small ones

used for making wine, regular large grapes had been delivered, and those could not be used in the shot. I asked Bára and Helena about their best experience so far. 'Definitely Keira Knightley in Předlice!' That's right, the famous actress walked along famous 'war' street Na Nivách, while the huge Hollywood crew for the film The Aftermath – about 250 people – was looking for a villa in the Ústí region that could be used as the Gestapo headquarters. I have one last tip for you to end this chapter about films. When FKÚK receives a request,



Bára avails herself of all contacts and gets tips from friends, people familiar with the sights around here, tourist agencies and information centres, actually from anybody. So, next time you are wandering through the Gate to Bohemia and you find yourself saying 'this would make a perfect film location', do not keep it to yourself, let me know. I will pass your ideas on to Bára – and perhaps you will be rewarded by seeing some of the scenes of a famous film shot in your location.



must have been real. It is a rather adventurous and fun job, at times worthy of a detective. We all have a cinematic vision encoded in us. When driving with the radio playing as you gaze into the landscape, your visual and aural perceptions connect and you find yourself in a film that has just started in your mind. Films are the go-to art form for us – just think about how many times you have looked around and said, 'This would be perfect for a film...' And that is exactly what the people at FKÚK think about all day every day. But how do you make sure filmmakers are aware of these captivating locations? It is, of course, possible to prepare a catalogue (which they are currently working on) but in reality there are many other options. You may diligently pick out the most spectacular locations, only to have the production team arrive with an





# A House Touched by History

We have visited Rumburk together before. This little-known, but remarkable town has a special atmosphere due to its town villas and purpose-built constructions, primarily built during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are also some magnificent Baroque monuments – the Trinity column on the square is in many ways unique, and the Loreto chapel with its cloisters and the Holy Stairs adjacent to the monasterial Church, is one of a kind. The streets with timbered houses, originally built for craftsmen, are equally stunning, as is the Station of the Cross above the town, and the lookout tower on Dymník... There are many reasons to visit this town, which during its greatest glory was called Little Paris of the North. Let me add one more reason to come here – the Rumburk Museum.

## THE REAL RUMBURK REBELLION

Last year, after years of hard work, a brand-new exhibition was opened in this charming house. It is captivating. The museum itself is captivating, because as soon as you reach the doorbell, which easily awakens corpses miles away, you step right into the past. You will be completely engrossed and forget all about the time, which seems to move differently here. On the ground floor, there is, among others, an exhibition about the Rumburk rebellion, an event worth remembering not least as it is now 2018 – 100 years after the founding



of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Personally, I always enter this room holding my breath as if the accursed men of the 7<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment were here. These worn out, hungry, tired and desperate men longing for peace started a rebellion in May 1918. Tendentious historians later described the rebellion as a conscious resistance against the Austro-Hungarian oppression, practically a precursor of the socialist revolution. Yet the history of the revolution is very touching and approachable. The exposition is sensitive and humble as it describes history through human stories. But I am getting ahead of myself; I have not mentioned what else is waiting for you right inside the museum, namely the locals. This is one of the nicest things



about the Rumburk Museum – they take good care of you. Of course, if there is a large group coming, it is best to book in advance but otherwise just walk in. You will be greeted with a smile (which does not happen all that often) and a tour of the exhibition. That's right – at this museum the visitors are accompanied by a guide, who enhances the experience and effect of the exhibition.

## FROM STOCKINGS TO FRIND

We follow our guide upstairs where we find the new exhibition which has been put together over many years. We are in a regional museum, so naturally the exhibition focuses on the features, history and spirit of Rumburk and its surroundings. I do not know about you, but I love how these museums long to find their genius loci and document it through exhibits, which often have such an intricate and remarkable fate that they could be an exhibition in their own right. The stocking workshop is an example. The concept was coined long ago when Mrs. Kozlerová appeared offering



the museum her mother's estate. She had stubbornly held on to it, despite numerous comments about it being a load of old junk that should be thrown away. Thanks to this, the museum acquired some very rare exhibits of wooden hosiery machines, wooden moulds for producing of stockings, and other typical items that are now forgotten. At the time, however, hosiery was very widespread in the area. We asked Ester Sadiv, the curator of the museum, about the purpose and aim of the new exhibition: 'First of all, we wanted to tear our visitors away from all the technology and stress of today and take them to a different era. We also wanted to change the previous, often rather distorted,

understanding of Rumburk and bring it closer to the truth and reality. This reality was always harsh rather than easy, but it was also very poetic and undoubtedly varied and interesting. The most valuable collections that make up the backbone of the exhibition are the estate of the pianist and composer August Stradal, the paintings by August Frind, and examples of typical nativity scenes from the Bohemian Netherlands, as the Šluknov Hook is often called. 'Ester is right – the beautiful paintings by the artist August Frind really unify the whole exhibition – there is at least one of his paintings in each exhibition room and one of the highlights of the tour is a visit to Frind's studio. Frind was an artist who categorically rejected any modernist trends and stubbornly remained in the field of classical painting. As he was also one of the first photographers in the region, his paintings are de facto records documenting people in their everyday lives.

## A DUMPLING MONSTER ABOVE THE CLAVICHORD

The variety and value of the exhibits are exceptional. From the „Treasure Hidden in the Reeds“, the room dedicated to the Lake Velký and the nesting of the crane; and the once famous, picturesque Münzberg family inn at Tolštejn, whose owner was quite the original, a collector of curiosities from all over the world and a tireless educator of every visitor; to the previously mentioned room dedicated to August Stradal. One of the most precious exhibits is Stradal's clavichord, which, as many exhibits at the Rumburk Museum, has a very touching story. The instrument was almost destroyed but has been repaired thanks to the support of patrons and even minor contributors. Today it is in such good condition that it is occasionally used in concert. Stradal was one of Ferenc Liszt's students, as well as his friend and confidant. Part of the exhibition is, therefore, also devoted to this leading romanticist composer. You



will no doubt be surprised by the casting of Liszt's hand, which is much smaller than one would expect a piano virtuoso's to be. There are many other popular exhibits, such as the legendary Dumpling Eater, a charming music box full of moving figures: a monkey playing the violin and a greedy creature eating endless amounts dumplings – this particular exhibit is of course from Münzberg's famous collection of curiosities. Personally, I find the nativity scenes to be the most charming part of the exhibition. Not many people know that the Bohemian Netherlands used to be a region dedicated to nativity scenes. The Rumburk Museum looks after, repairs and shows off these local pieces of dexterity, ingenuity and diligence all year round. We can see the moving parts of Kiesslich's nativity scene, which unfortunately was not preserved in its entirety; a rare mining nativity scene; and a beautifully preserved and carefully altered nativity scene in a cupboard. The latter was made by Dominika Rudolf (1863-1899) from Studánka, the background painted by Eduard Kindermann (1867-1949) from Jiříkov and all in all it takes up almost half the room. I cannot help but finish up with Auguste Frind – his painting Twelfth Night (Večer tříkrálový) is not only an amazing work of art but, above all, a very intimate insight into the workshop of Florian Liebsch, a classic creator of nativity scenes. The museum has also managed to get hold of the original figurines that Frind painted in the picture. And that is the the Rumburk Museum in a nutshell – the tireless effort of its staff to look for and find the real spirit of the town's past and its beautiful surroundings.





# The Czech Central Highlands? Perfect for children!

**We all know it; going on trip with the children can be an idyllic day of fun or pure hell. There are two things children just cannot stand – being uninterested and being bored. By the way, a child's level of boredom is a measurable physical unit. It is exactly 400 metres long. Unless there is something interesting, funny, amusing or scary every 400 metres, however incredibly beautiful the surroundings are, children get bored and annoyed (or annoying). The Czech Central Highlands, however, is paradise for children. We have hinted at this a couple of times in the Gate, so let's go through it thoroughly this time, going from one spot to another, from one attraction to the next. We will stop at all the places that have something for children, thus increasing the likelihood of a successful family outing. You are bound to enjoy it too!**



## THE WORLD OF TRAINS, BIG AND SMALL

Girls and boys of any age love trains of all sizes. Big trains involve a wonderful and often unusual experience – going on a train trip, feeling the clatter of the tracks and seeing the landscape rush past the window is somehow different to riding a bus or going by car... Even better if you are on a historical train set along a museum track that takes you to an open-air museum village and a museum of old carriages. What child would not enjoy that? Where can you find this train? It leaves from Ústí nad Labem and goes slowly uphill to Zubrnice. As for small trains, children love that Gulliver feeling they get. Children are so small themselves that they are instantly attracted to anything that is smaller than them. A model railway with little houses and characters that runs through the country side... all children dream of having this in their room. Head to Trmice, on the outskirts of Ústí nad Labem, where you will find a Neo-Gothic chateau. From the outside you would never guess that its inhabitant has fulfilled his childhood dream – right here in the halls, chambers, hallways and rooms of the Trmice Chateau. This man really loves his trains and his miniature world of railways will captivate both you and your children

## BEARS – REAL AND STUFFED

The zoo is always a safe bet. The zoo in Ústí nad Labem even scores extra points as it has so many animals. The large zoo is on a hill and has a children's corner full of animals. The elephants go for walks among the visitors and there are wonderful orangutans as well as leopards, giraffes, rhinos, seals, caimans, monkeys... and bears, of course. The bears are very popular, especially since not every zoo has Malaysian bears. They are playful and it would be easy to spend hours watching them but then you would not have time for their relatives who live in the romantic delicate Ploskovice Chateau, which is fit for a princess. As you have probably guessed, these bears are teddy bears and they really live here – they read the newspaper, eat, sleep, sit, work, play... they simply live their teddy-bear lives in a chateau surrounded by a beautiful park. This exhibition was inspired by the famous exhibition of teddy bears in Skagen, Denmark and it really suits the Ploskovice Chateau.



## PUPPETS IN THE WHITE TOWN

Litoměřice is a white royal town on the river Elbe, a historical town, with city walls and parks weaving their way around the rare and beautiful churches. Everybody likes this town. But what



about children? Will they have fun here? My experience says they definitely will. Take them to the puppet gallery in one of the bastions, where there is a variety of puppets sleeping, playing, and dancing on several floors. Or take them to the workshop for handmade paper in one of the other bastions, where they can learn about how paper becomes paper and try to make a sheet of paper themselves to take home. Children generally do not enjoy sightseeing in towns but in Litoměřice it is different. Go to the information centre and get a copy of the Playful Guide to Litoměřice. During the summer holidays, the cartoon characters Zdislava and Štěpán show children the most interesting and most remarkable church buildings in the town and give them so many puzzles, riddles, tasks and the mysteries to solve that your children will run through the city completely out of breath. And it will be quite a challenge for you too! For example, do you know who was bound to a pillory, what purpose the roof of the Kalich house served, what the attribute of Saint Catherine is... and would you be able to design your own altar? A piece of advice – just let the children get on with it, they will manage on their own and will be happier when they succeed.

## SCOOTERING AMONG OSTRICHES AND THE FOREFATHER OF CZECHS

Everyone should go to the hill Říp at least once in their life. Start by telling your children about how dragons used to fly over Říp, it might get them interested. Once you are on your way, you can stop worrying because the rotunda at the top of the hill is such an unusual and mysterious building that you won't need to convince the children to go there. The legend about the Czech forefather and the views will also keep them entertained. And we have not even started going downhill yet! Rent a scooter at

the top and race the wind going down. There are several places around Říp where you can return the scooters. There is heaps of fun to be had here: Right below the hill there is a workshop of folk traditions. Another idea is to go to Roudnice, where a secret pond with miraculous golden ducks awaits children in the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. In Roudnice you can also climb the lookout tower, have a wander round the Podřipské Museum or enjoy some delicious cake at the wonderful café Dortletka – you won't find cake like this anywhere else. Or go a bit further, perhaps to the lavender farm in Židovice, or a little further yet to the ostrich farm.

## AMONG SCARY DEVILS AND THIEVES

The thief Štětko lives in the cave Mordloch, not far from the town Štětí and the silver serpent of the Elbe. He has lived there since the Middle Ages and is neither a brute, nor a murderer. He has adapted and understands that it is no longer the Middle Ages and that people rob



differently nowadays, more efficiently, usually virtually. And so he has turned good and takes tourists on tours along his educational trail. He prefers showing children around and although you might not catch a glimpse of him, you can rely on the information boards he has placed along the way. You will learn about the history of the region, the railway, the old trails and the people who have worked and lived here in the near and distant past. You will see beautiful nature and historical sights, as well as crosses in the fields and hidden among the rocks in the deep forests along the paths. And don't worry if you do come across Štětko and his band. As mentioned, he is a good guy. The same cannot be said, however, about the devils raging in the Museum of Devils in Pikartská Tower and in the hellish cellars of the Medieval town of Ústě, opposite the tower. Some of them are, of course, wooden and they are not dangerous – and there is plenty of those. Others, however, come to life every now and then, and then you will hear them screeching and making a racket. Oh my – escaping a devil that has decided to punish you for your sins is no easy feat. This is a great place for children to learn about the Czech devils, a unique tradition that often has untamed features. And since you are already here, just opposite you will find the World of Water (Vodní svět), where you can calm down among large aquariums with freshwater fish.



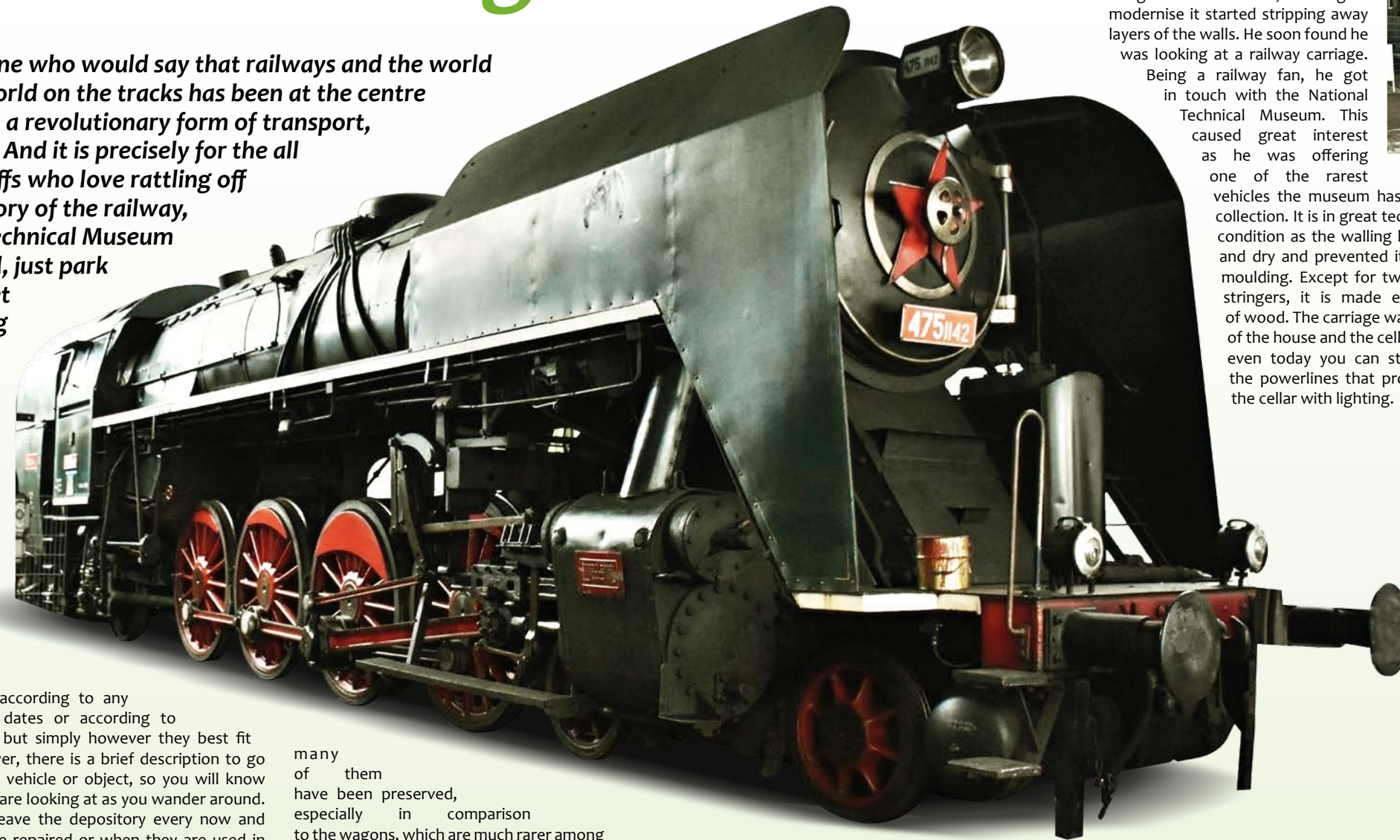
# The Irresistible Charm of Engines and Carriages

**I must say that I have yet to meet someone who would say that railways and the world of trains are not interesting at all. The world on the tracks has been at the centre of attention for almost 200 years, first as a revolutionary form of transport, nowadays more likely as a nostalgic one. And it is precisely for the all the railway nostalgists, especially the buffs who love rattling off engine numbers and facts about the history of the railway, that the railway depot of the National Technical Museum in Chomutov is intended. It is easy to find, just park in the carpark in front of the supermarket Globus and follow the marked path along the tracks. This year, the opening hours have been extended significantly and the museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Thursday to Sunday from April to the end of October. If you are a railway fan, this simply is a must. If you are just a curious admirer, it is an engaging experience.**

## TREASURES IN ROTUNDAS

In two linked 'rotundas', i.e. semi-circular depots built in Chomutov before the First World War and completed in the 1930s, you will find 46 tracks with almost 100 vehicles. Many of them are rare, sometimes even the last examples in the world. The National Technical Museum bought this space about five years ago. I must emphasize, that it is first and foremost a depository. That means that the rail vehicles are resting and that it is possible to look at them in the meantime. It is not a classic museum in the typical sense of the word, so the 'exhibits' have not been

lined up according to any historical dates or according to the type, but simply however they best fit in. However, there is a brief description to go with each vehicle or object, so you will know what you are looking at as you wander around. Vehicles leave the depository every now and then to be repaired or when they are used in a film of some sort. The number of vehicles hence varies, but generally there are about 95 of them on show. It is quite a spectacle, even to the point of being overwhelming. What is on show? Well, practically anything that is in some way connected to the railway – engines powered by steam, electricity and diesel, carriages, saloon cars, quarry tubs and their parts, cable cars and other railway vehicles and their components, cable cars, narrow-gauge vehicles and vehicles for special purposes... a perfect mix. The oldest exhibit is a steam engine from 1870. This engine is right at home here as it was built to be used on the Ústí–Teplice track and often passed Chomutov when in service. It is clear that most people come to see the steam engines. Surprisingly



many of them have been preserved, especially in comparison to the wagons, which are much rarer among the exhibits.

## EVEN ENGINES HAVE A STORY TO TELL

Personally, I found the 'life stories' of the individual vehicles the most fascinating. Some stories are documented, others are based on suppositions and yet others you must create yourself. Such as who used to travel in the Rothschilds' saloon car – just set your imagination free and see if you can travel within this limited time frame. We know more about the saloon cars that trafficked the Ústí–Teplice track. It was actually an inspection carriage, but due to its luxurious interior it was also used for transporting important guests, for example on the route Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary) – Dresden. The rear window is made of glass and there is a comfortable chair with a table. Watching

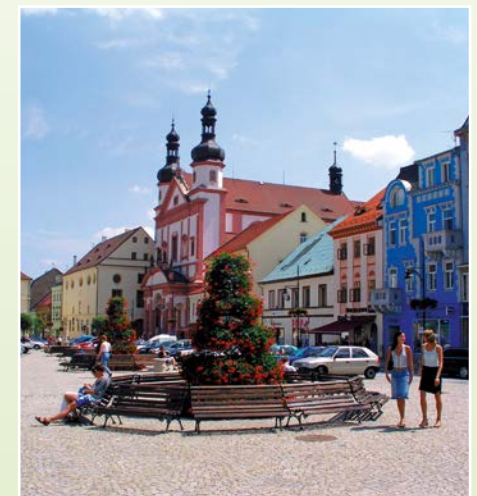
the passing landscape from here must have been remarkable. The stories from the trolley were probably more ordinary, but what about that one that was produced sometime in the 1860s? Perhaps the Czech character Jára Cimrman once travelled on it? Or how about Hurvínek – a small

were assigned land to build houses on and were given decommissioned wagons to use as temporary housing until they had built their house. One of the employees, however, misunderstood and used the carriage as the frame for his house. Two years ago, somebody bought the house and, wanting to modernise it started stripping away layers of the walls. He soon found he was looking at a railway carriage.

Being a railway fan, he got in touch with the National Technical Museum. This caused great interest as he was offering one of the rarest vehicles the museum has in its collection. It is in great technical condition as the walling kept it and dry and prevented it from moulding. Except for two iron stringers, it is made entirely of wood. The carriage was part of the house and the cellar and even today you can still see the powerlines that provided the cellar with lighting.



of the state railways, and was taken out of service sometime in the 1920s. It then started serving as an ancillary wagon up until 1990s when it almost ended up in the scrapyard but was saved by the National Technical Museum. There are also vehicles it makes sense to spend a bit more time looking at. For example, the massive homemade factory train made for the car factory in Mladá Boleslav. To curb your astonishment at the mix, allow me a brief explanation – the chassis comes from an old coal carriage and a lorry cabin has been attached to it. The tank from an old motor engine has also been added and, I am honestly not kidding when I tell you, there also is a curious cage that hides the motor from an MiG-15. This motor is still equipped with a massive mouthpiece, which blew the snow away with a great force. As it was so powerful, the vehicle was used for other tracks in the area. Czechs are often hardcore DIYers. What they do not have, they make. Is that still not enough? Then how about the refrigerator car from the brewery in Pilsen? There was a time when it was commonplace on Czech tracks but today it finds itself among the rarities. How should I end this lightning tour...? I know! With the largest, longest and, most importantly, the fastest steam engine



## AN ANCIENT CARRIAGE AND A BOLD SNOW BLOWER

Another of the rarities is a sheet-metal wagon for transporting coal. There used to be 23,000 of them but today only one remains. To be honest, you would never guess that, a common mortal will likely not notice, but experts will be impressed. The collection also includes the last steam engine made for the Czechoslovak Railways in 1958. It was the end of an era. Moving on – let's take a look at a carriage made by František Ringhofer in 1875 for the private Rakovnice–Protivín track. When the company went bankrupt, the carriage became property

in the Czech Republic. This 26-metre long champion holds the record among steam engines – just over 162 kilometres per hour! And that is just a small taste – so off you go to Chomutov!



# A Town Devoted to Porcelain

A few years ago, I shared a story in the Gate about the birth of the porcelain production in Klášterec nad Ohří and why this town has been called a 'porcelain town' for centuries. It is a charming story worth repeating. A count from Klášterec nad Ohří, František Josef Thun, was very fond of a certain Jan Mikoláš Weber, director of the estate and chief forester. When Weber turned 60, he was granted a pension by the count, remaining in his good books. And we know what happens when an industrious man retires... 'How about if I just...?' Jan Mikoláš asked himself when opportunity came his way. In Černýš, above the winding river Ohře not far from Klášterec, a kaolin deposit was discovered. 'That could be turned into porcelain', Jan Mikoláš thought delightedly and asked the count for a trial firing. To be frank, the initial results were poor. Neither the first nor second attempt produced any results worth mentioning. Not until 1794 was the third firing successful. Well... the porcelain was not great, it had a yellowish colour making it look dirty, but it was porcelain!

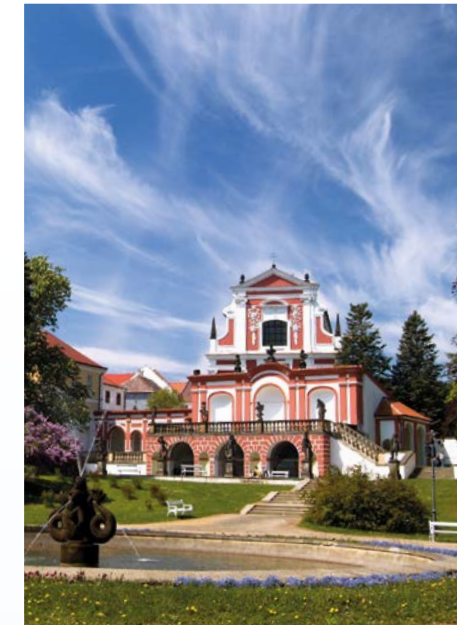


## CHOCOLATE AND CLOCKS ON THE PATH TO THE CASTLE

Yes, that is how it all started. The charming thing is, that Weber's first few unsuccessful attempts have also left a clear trace in Klášterec, more specifically in the Museum of Porcelain, which is where we are going now. One of the main exhibits in the museum is a pink cup and a saucer embellished with the inscription 'Vivat Böhmen'. This cup was pulled out of the kiln during that historic third firing. It is the oldest piece of porcelain from Klášterec and probably also the oldest piece of porcelain in the entire Czech Republic! But one thing at a time. When you arrive in Klášterec nad Ohří – a town well worth visiting, the river Ohře flows affectionately through the town and into a splendid English park, where you can see the deep reddish-brown facade of the romantic castle, originally Renaissance, rebuilt in a British Neo-Gothic style, reflected on the surface of the river. Anyway, when you arrive, park in the square and head towards the castle. Along the way, you may well be intrigued by the unique Clock Museum, which we have previously written about in the Gate. Or perhaps the smell of fresh pralines and truffles will lead you to the chocolaterie U Karolíny, but eventually you are bound to find your way to the castle park. Here you will stand captivated before the magnificent sala terrena – a summer terrace with a veranda



and an arcade – and spend time looking into the eyes of the magnificent sculptures of Jan Brokoff, and all the while the colourful and unusual castle building draws you in like a magnet. Take a stroll through the picturesque park before wandering through to the castle. Besides our main destination, i.e. the tour of the exhibition at the Museum of Czech and Oriental Porcelain from the collections of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, there is also the option of taking children on a tour based on Vítězslava Klimentová's fairy tales and Matěj Kopecký's puppets (I will bet you anything you will like it). There is also a third option that first takes you through an exhibition of precious stones and the castle library, then you climb up the castle's observation tower and you even go to the tomb of Thun, in which lie the remains of the family of count Thun-



Hohenstein family, which owned the estate from 1623 until 1945. (By the way, you will not miss out on the porcelain on this tour as you can see the porcelain family tree of the Thun and Hohenstein counts in the tomb.) We, however, are going to focus on the porcelain tour.

## THE MUSEUM OF PORCELAIN – BEAUTY WHEREVER YOU MAY TURN

The porcelain from Klášterec has given character to the town for over 200 years. And as it is also the second oldest porcelain town in Bohemia, it is only logical that the Museum of Decorative Arts decided to install a porcelain exhibition here at the beginning of the 1950s. This was also when the Renaissance interior of the castle was restored with rich stucco ornamentation, creating the perfect backdrop for the delicate exhibits. In the 21 rooms of the piano nobile, one can see and admire the full development of Czech porcelain from the initial experiments to the present day. You will see a truly unique collection of beautiful specimens originating from Klášterec nad Ohří, Slavkov, Březová, Kysibl, Chodov, Nová Role, Dalovice and Prague. The 200 years of fragile white history is presented through beauty so delicate that it takes your breath away. The exhibition's finesse lies in its chronological arrangement – each room has a certain style such as Biedermeier, Art Nouveau, Historicism, Empire, Art Deco or Functionalism. Since you are at the castle following the guide conscientiously, you are not limited to the peering at the labels and boards but can listen to a guide leading you through the history of the town, the Thun family, and, most importantly, the production

of porcelain, not only in the Czech Republic, but also in Europe and the Orient. Part of the exhibition is devoted to historical Chinese and Japanese porcelain, as well as porcelain from Meissen, Vienna and Berlin – factories that have had a significant influence on the development of Czech porcelain production. By the way, do you know where porcelain first originated? You probably do, even children know – in China of course. We know for sure that China was producing porcelain as early as the 7th century and that how it was produced was a strictly guarded secret. They managed to keep the secret up until the 16th century, when it was unveiled by the Japanese. This fragile mystery was uncovered in Europe 200 years later.

## PORCELAIN SOUVENIRS FROM KLÁŠTEREC

Okay, so we already know that Klášterec nad Ohří is a porcelain town. But is it just nostalgia, or is this tradition still alive today? Indeed, it is. I would like to say that this is a given, but it is not quite so simple. After the Second World War, the company's headquarters was moved several times and the porcelain factory in Klášterec became part of a larger unit. In 1958 the name of the noble family Thun was removed from the title and the porcelain became known as Carlsbad porcelain. In the late 1960s, a reconstruction of the historical area of the factory was initiated. The original kiln, where Weber fired his first successful items, fell to pieces and today even the contours are barely visible. In 2002 any remaining historical buildings were demolished... Yet this was not the end of porcelain production in Klášterec nad Ohří, the promised land of porcelain. The name of the count who made the local porcelain famous returned to Klášterec. Today the porcelain factory in Klášterec is part of the largest Czech porcelain manufacturer, Thun 1794, based in Nová Role near Carlsbad. The fragile beauty continues to thrive here. If you book in advance, it is possible to go through the factory and get a picture of which way the trends are going and what kind of porcelain is popular nowadays. Either way, in the factory shop you can choose a souvenir from the wide range of porcelain which has been an integral part of the town for two centuries.





# Take a Deep Breath and... Fly!

*I do not know how often you pass this beautiful three-peaked hill, which dominates the royal town Louny. Together with the hill Oblík, it creates the southern gate to the Central Bohemian Mountains (České středohoří) and answers to the name Raná. I come here a lot. I often slow down and enjoy watching the flock of paragliders circling the three peaks, flying off the hillsides and returning as if they were really flying with their own wings rather than the paraglider. And each time I tell myself – I will try it one day. That day has come. But remember – I am only doing it for you, for the readers of the Gate. You see, I am not into adrenaline. I am actually rather timid and cautious. But how else can I introduce you to the local flying school, if not through personal experience.*

## RANÁ, THE PERFECT HILL FOR FLYING

As Peter Garbier, alias Garboš, asks our wide-eyed group of different genders, ages and physical builds, to take a seat, I see disappointment on some faces and relief on others (including mine had I had a mirror). The introductory course to paragliding starts off with quite a lot of theory, so we will spend a good part of the six hours on the ground. We soon understand that we are not messing about; this is an absolute necessity. It is essential to go over at least the most basic concepts of aerodynamics and thermal physics – what makes the paraglider fly, what you can and can't do, how not to damage the paraglider,

what is safe and dangerous. We need to know how buoyancy is created, how it depends on the profile and the speed of the wings, and how to use the steering cords... And also how dependent everything is on the weather – on the wind and the sun. It was not easy to pin down a date for the course. We were guarding our phones, waiting for Garboš to call and let us know whether the weather was appropriate. Now we start learning the basics – how to attach the harness, recognising the front and back of the paraglider, what the chambers and ears are, how the paraglider actually unfolds, how to secure it safely, and, most importantly, how to check that everything is secure. And here we are, up on the hill, attached, equipped, and eager. First task – running on the flat with the paraglider behind

us. Shouldn't be too difficult. Right, and now use the front cords to get the paraglider into the air... Whoa! It is not that hard! Surprisingly, it is not a question of strength but your grip and somehow I figured out faster than I thought I would. Garboš shows us how to get the paraglider to lift using just our little fingers. It is not possible to take off just like that so we learn how to steer the paraglider to the left and to the right high above our heads, sweeping it... „Okay, team, up we go!“ bellows Garboš setting off. I immediately realise that this

is when the wheat is separated from the chaff because it is just uphill all the way. No ski lift, no cable car. Just you and your legs. Some are discouraged. We have traipsed about halfway up the hill when Garboš puts us in line and we set off running one after another. The conditions are good with a bit of a breeze – the paragliding newbies are set. I start running. The first time nothing happens. The second time I get the right grip and my paraglider moves upwards. My feet brush the ground another couple of times, but I can already feel the pull, the strength pulling me away from the ground. To be honest – at first I was a bit like a jumping flea but after about half an hour I got into it – and suddenly I was really flying! This a feeling you just cannot get elsewhere! The paraglider and the harness weigh about 12 kilos but you don't even notice it. As the ground disappears below, the feeling that you have grown wings and are flying of your own accord is inevitable. I feel as though I am as high as a jet plane flying halfway across the country. How far did Garboš say the record was? 212 kilometres, all the way to Vyšší Brod. Only? Well, reality was a bit different. I reached a height of less than

The second part starts some time later. You need this part to get a pilot license, which you must have to go paragliding. This part is called „Landing“. In addition to the strengthening your skills on the slope, you learn how to attach the winch to the car. The adepts for the pilot licence are taken up to a height of 300-600 meters and are tested on complex figures, sharp turns, collapse the paraglider and then re-inflate it. It takes about three weekends. Once you have passed the exam you can get you license. But a wise man but does not stop there. There are plenty of courses on how to improve, from intermediate courses to safety courses, which are carried out high above the water surface of the Nechranická dam. The result? Partly, more practice and confidence, but also the opportunity to become a tandem pilot or even an instructor.



factor is the thermal physics, climbing currents – such as those rising from hot asphalt or a stove. Paragliders actually rescued Raná, this captivating kingdom of marmots and grass, as

they started to cut the grass and let sheep and goats graze here. Raná with its three peaks, facing southeast, is generally very suitable for flying, which the first fliers with wooden paragliders discovered in 1932. I sit looking at the landscape. I am off. Not because of the adrenaline rush, no, I am really not into that. I am scared even on a roundabout. It is because of that feeling. Flying is a beautiful feeling. And if you are properly trained and do not mess about, it is safe, too. But it is not just that. Until I tried it, it would never have occurred to me that paragliding was not about adrenaline, but rather a kind of inner peace. It teaches you a lot about yourself. As you are supposed to start running and take off from the ground, your biggest security in life, the layers of anxiety start to fall

and you feel pure joy. I would even call it a kind of meditation. The left and right hemispheres become equal, coordination somehow becomes straightforward. It is cleansing because it so absorbing that everything else is blocked out. We have forgotten how to play and relax – and flying is just that. It is something you does for yourself only. And how many such things do we do in life? I am off, and that is that. How about you? Will I see you on the grassy slopes of Raná? I am not going to provide you with a website or Facebook page. If you really want to go, you can find the flying school at Raná. See you in the air!



10 metres and flew about 250 metres downhill. And landed smoothly, oh so smoothly, just like running down stairs. In half a day we all achieved much more that we had dared to hope for. All but one of us managed to get off the ground. But it is clear that this was just a first taste. We even had some observers, people who wanted to see what an introductory course is like. Now it is up to us. There is a full-length course for those who want more. The first part of the course is five days long and runs from morning till evening. This course also starts off with the theory, going more in depth: aerodynamics, meteorology, thermal physics, being considerate towards nature, regulations – it is a lot, but it is essential. Then, depending on the weather, 8 to 10 flights from Raná, i.e. basic flying in good conditions.

## MORE LIKE MEDITATION THAN ADRENALINE

I am sat at the top of Raná, looking at the shining ribbon of the river Ohře, listening to the wind, which I now understand that little bit better. I will never watch the weather forecast the same way again. The weather is incredible magic and paragliders are experienced magicians. I used to just say the weather was nice. From now on, I am interested in every parameter. A paraglider does not so much need the wind as the sun, because the decisive





# Vines suit the Elbe slopes

**And vines are not only pretty – they thrive here and the drink made from the local grapes tastes great! Anyway, we have been mapping the local wineries in this magazine for some time, so it's hardly news for you. However, the vineyard under Radobýl (Vinařství pod Radobýlem) is nearly new. And if not new, then definitely the youngest member of the vineyard family of the Czech Uplands. It is a fairytale-like story. Once upon a time there were two people from Teplice who loved wine. They always wanted to have a vineyard and make wine. They started to look for a suitable location and, of course, they ended up in the most logical place – in the Elbe valley between Litoměřice and Velké Žernoseky.**

## VINEYARD UNDER RADOBYL

The Radobýl Hill, one of the most remarkable and most beautiful hills in Czech Uplands, eaten into by a stone quarry, decorated with an ancient cross, rises towards the skies just a stone's throw from Litoměřice. When the current owners of the vineyard first stood under the hill and looked at the slopes, weedy with bushes hiding illegally dumped rubbish, they saw something completely different – a vineyard. It may have been a vision from the distant past as it was the Radobýl slopes that were given to the Litoměřice townsfolk by Emperor Charles IV in 1359 to grow vines. “I hereby give Radobýl hill to the town of Litoměřice to hold on condition that you will divide the land and create vineyards,” he is alleged to have said. And he strongly recommended Blue Burgundy because he really knew about wine. Over 650

years later two keen people started to build vineyards on the green fields, you'd want to say, however, this was not the case with the Radobýl slopes. In order to start making wine as soon as possible, they bought part of a vineyard in the nearby villages of Velké Žernoseky and Michalovice – it takes three years for a new vineyard to yield grapes suitable for wine making. There had never been any vineyards in the location where they started, so there were no architectural traditions to follow. So they invited a famous architect from Teplice, Petr Sedláček, who designed a modern and effective vineyard for them. You can't miss the elegant building. The vineyard was started and the first acres of the Radobýl slopes were once again serving their original and praiseworthy purpose. Anybody who is not arrogant or vain knows that wine is a gift from God. That's why there should



be a chapel in the vineyard as well. The owners didn't waste any time and employed Petr Sedláček's father-in-law, architect Milan Míšek, who designed a beautiful minimalist chapel with a bell tower housing a bronze bell. So the greatest sommelier blessed the harvest of the first Radobýl wine in 2016.

## CLEAR, DRY AND ELEGANT WINES

As if it wanted to obey the Emperor's recommendation, the vineyard bet on red grapevines. Pinot Noir and Fratava grow in a large part of the vineyard. They didn't listen to pessimists who said that it's pure nonsense to grow red grapes in this latitude, and the first harvest proved them right. The subsoil is great here – the dominant basalt absorbs heat and gives it out to the roots even when the sun doesn't shine. And the marlite sediment adds lime and minerals. However, it would be a pity not to grow white grapes here as well. It's especially Mopř – it enjoys extreme popularity locally, so why not join in with the craze?, then Rhine Riesling – ideal for the local bedrock, Muscat Yellow, Müller, Pinot Grisio and Gewurztramine. All that's needed now is proper wine making techniques and good technology. New, brilliantly shiny tanks and barrels made of two kinds of oak filled the rooms of the new vineyard building. The work is done via modern methods yet follows ancient and proven vineyard traditions. The results are quality dry wines – you won't find much residual sugar in these local wines. The vineyard owners believe that those who really like wine will like their products. I myself have to admit to being surprised at how soon they were able to produce wine typical for this region provided that it should be grown, harvested and processed well and with wine making knowledge. And there is another advantage – they are not afraid to call their wines gastronomic. These days, when it is becoming common to pair food with wine, not only in top-class restaurants, it's only logical. So when you go on the road connecting Litoměřice and Velké Žernoseky, stop in Žalhostice at Vinařství pod Radobýlem. You can buy local wine and they will also be happy to show you their business and vineyard.



## EVENTS DEDICATED TOWINE

Let me invite you to 3 really interesting events dedicated to wine from the Gate to Bohemia. The first one is quite young but its first test year clearly showed its prospects and potential. “Open cellars of the Czech Uplands” is a great opportunity to see cellars, some of which are not normally open to the public, talk about wine, ask whatever you want and, of course, taste and taste and... in short, as much as you can take. You'll see traditional historical cellars as well as modern facilities and you can taste the differences between the vineyards to suit your own palate. The day long event will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> September. You needn't worry about drink driving – extra public transport will take you wherever you need. And you can even travel by boat. However, if you don't want to wait until September, you can visit “Roudnice Tasting” on 9<sup>th</sup> June. This will be the 6<sup>th</sup> year of this event, which takes place in Lobkowicz Castle in Roudnice nad Labem. Over 20 wine makers from the Litoměřice and Mělník viticultural subregion will participate, you will be provided with a well-arranged catalogue and your very pleasant task will be to responsibly taste, assess, evaluate and above all enjoy one of the most brilliant drinks man has ever invented. Roudnice Tasting is traditionally complemented by a show of regional products and crafts, a musical programme and fun activities for children

who, of course, are not really interested in wine... Next, on the last day of June, yes – 30<sup>th</sup> June – there is “Porta Bohemica Wine Walk,” which is the most touristy event of the three. But don't worry, it's no strenuous walk, you'll walk along a three kilometre route up the Elbe River from the ferry in Malé Žernoseky to Lovosice. There will be 5 stops awaiting you along the route offering tasting of wines from the vineyards you'll be visiting at that very moment. And if your admiration of the landscape prevents you from proper tasting, there is one more opportunity to do so at the end of the walk in Osmicka forest park in Lovosice – here, you can taste all the wines again and dance to the music at the Altros music festival. By the way, over 350 people joined the wine walk last year and this year it's going to be even more, so you certainly won't feel lonely.





# Following the scent of beer

Traditions are a message sent by those who were here before us. They are a kind of code we should remember in order to get a better understanding of both the past and the present. Wise people respect traditions. Well, two of the most important Czech traditions are hop growing and the art of beer brewing. The Czech saying that a government which increases beer prices will fall is justified. Beer is our liquid bread and few can resist the smell of hops. We have been making an effort to map the local breweries throughout the whole region for years. However, it's almost impossible as new ones spring up literally overnight and there are more and more of them all the time. And now there is an idea to include some of them in the Ore Mountains Beer Trail. This is a great idea indeed. The trail connects more than 15 breweries in Bohemia and Saxony and follows historic routes, paths and coach tracks. Since the locations from Žatec to the Saxon part of the Ore Mountains are very attractive for tourists and the connection between gastronomy and tourism is very trendy, this new initiative of the Lower Poohří Tourist Agency promises exceptional experiences.

## ORE MOUNTAINS BEER TRAIL

Tradition is tradition, but when did beer brewing really start in Bohemia? The Celts brewed beer in the country in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and Slavs, who forced the Celts out, brought their know-how of brewing beverages from fermented oats with them as well. However, for a long time beer was made without hops. The ingredient without which we can't imagine beer, was first mentioned in our country around the year 1000. Some time later, in 1265, King Ottokar II of Bohemia awarded Žatec the brewing and mileage rights (the latter prevented competition from out-of-towners). Similar hop beer was brewed in Saxony at around the same time, so we can honestly speak of a thousand year old tradition. You have already read about the phenomenon of Žatec hops on previous pages. And breweries included in the Ore Mountains Beer Trail use Žatec hops. That's one thing that connects them. Another thing is a unique, individual and jealously guarded style of beer brewing at every single brewery. It's



not about mass production and flooding our planet with beer; very often everything that is brewed is drunk in the adjoining taproom. And that's the beauty and attractiveness of craft breweries. And adding that you can not only eat and drink in the breweries on the trail, but also look around the facilities, or play a game with a beer card that can win you attractive prizes when you fill it out, you definitely won't be bored. Let's have a look at the breweries on the Czech part of the trail that participate in this project.

## FOLLOWING BEER ALONG THE OHŘE RIVER

Before going to Žatec, the beer Mecca, we'll start a bit further east, in the royal city of Louny. Zloun brewery brews both lagers and ales. Take my advice and try the remarkable Lyon 13° and while you are enjoying it, let me tell you that this is not an attempt at an international name – Lyon was the Celtic name of this beautiful city. And now it's time for Žatec. There are two breweries waiting for you here. The first one is the traditional, restored and renovated **Žatec Brewery**, which started business in 1800. Today you can look around the brewery facilities and also climb to a lookout point on the water-tower (Vodárenská věž). It is one of two Czech breweries participating in the project which doesn't have its own restaurant, but you can find the beers brewed here in many pubs and restaurants across the country. And you can buy a bottled local beer known as Seventh Step (Sedmý schod) in hundreds of shops. They only brew classic lagers, many kinds of them, including dark and light gluten-free ones. On the other hand, the brewery which is a part of the Temple of Hops and Beer, called the Astronomical



## BEER IN THE ORE MOUNTAINS

From the Lower Ohře Region we move to the Ore Mountains. The first brewery on our journey has a name that brings up many questions. It is in Chomutov, only brews beer and although it doesn't have its own pub, you can buy its beers in 3 restaurants in town. And its name? **Karásek and Stülpnér**. The first man was a famous robber and the other one a poacher. They knew each other and used to go for a beer together. Their territory covered both Saxony and northern Bohemia, which makes this brewery an ideal stop on our beer travels. When we have seen the operations, we'll go for a beer in a nearby restaurant. That's if one is enough for us, as the selection at the Karásek and Stülpnér brewery is really wide regarding both taste and brewing methods. In Osek, an interesting tourist town, there is the **Black Eagle Brewery (Černý orel)**. It is a family-run brewery, which is a part of a famous restaurant. It focuses mainly on classic beers complemented by special ales. The biggest hit, which the local beer lovers have got used to going for here, is Dvanda, a Pilsen-type lager brewed in a double-mash style using only Czech ingredients, bitter with a great taste. The restaurant is also worth mentioning; it was popular even before it boasted beer making technology. **Monopol** brewery in Teplice is located in a spectacular building. It used to be known as the famous Variete zum Schwan and the interior of the restaurant with its brewery tastefully reminds us of those times. The old-world style of the restaurant with its beautiful secession ceilings is complemented by the smell of lagers on tap straight from the tanks. The polished copper tanks reflect the activity in the room, where it's certainly very pleasant to eat and drink. Now we come to Ústí nad



Labem, to the last participant in the project for now – **Na Rychtě** brewery. Another interesting building, great cuisine and a more than 150-year-old history await us here as well. The beers on tap are brewed here and also drunk here, you can't buy them anywhere else. And they are



wonderful, their top beer, Mazel, became the Beer of the Year in the Czech Republic a couple of years ago. If you continue to follow the Beer Trail, it will take you to Saxony. There you can visit **Freiberg** brewery, **Rechenberg** private brewery, **Christian Fiedler** brewery will be waiting for you in the town of Scheibenberg, a local beer association in **Lößnitz**, and then **Zwönitz** brewery, **Alte Schleiferai** in Erlbrunn and a beer factory in **Lengefeld**. Your experience will then be complete and you'll be able to get a perfect idea of the richness and depth of beer traditions in this region, which covers two states, and which is also dotted with top-class tourist destinations.



# Wandering daintily around Děčín

Děčín. The western gate to Bohemian Switzerland, the last Czech city on the Elbe and also the one with the lowest altitude, a city surrounding the wonderful Thun castle, and two cities, in fact – historically speaking – Děčín and Podmokly, a charming city with its quiet corners, sights, views and beautiful surroundings. You know it very well from this magazine. It's difficult to find another way to look at it – yet it's possible. Let's walk through Děčín in all directions and let's search for houses from which lovely smells emanate. In other words, let's wander round Děčín's restaurants, because a gastronomic boom is also happening here.

## STAGE I – FROM THE ELBE UP THE HILL

We'll arrive in town in style, via the Elbe River, or, more precisely, along the river via the Elbe Route. The first house proudly bears the name **Kocanda**. This picturesque pub on the banks of the Elbe features a spacious terrace and they offer classic Czech cuisine prepared in a modern way. Pilsen beer on tap from a tank is available here, meals are prepared with quality fresh ingredients, and they grow their own herbs and make their own side dishes. Whether you have steak tartare, slowly cooked beef broth, beef sirloin, veal cheeks or duck confit, one of their steaks or the famous pork knee, you won't regret it. Only a few steps away is the wonderful smell of the **Kozinec** bistro. Here you can enjoy, for example, a delicious baguette with herring, light salads or the great grilled gilt-head bream and wash it down with home-made ginger lemonade. Since we came by bike, we'll settle for the night under canvas, in Děčín's camp site. Not only can you



get a nice sleep there, but there is also the tiny **Cyklostop** bistro with good regional beer and something to chew on – particularly regional products. Tourists can really taste the region they've entered. Now we'll go on foot almost to the Castle Lake (Zámecký rybník), where there is the pleasant **Fabrika** restaurant located in a former siphon bottle factory. It would be a big mistake not to try their schnitzels – they really know how to prepare them. Their choice of cosmopolitan cuisine offers delicious grilled king prawns, veal hanger steak with oyster mushroom sauce, Norwegian Gravad lax, Italian gnocchi and genuine Czech tender pork knee. And before I forget – finishing off with grilled pineapple with ice-cream is a must! Now we have to walk uphill a bit along Kamenická street. There we can smell two other places. The first one is called **Farmář** (Farmer). And really – they use fresh and organic products from local farmers, the meat on the open grill makes your mouth water, beers from Děčín and Varnsdorf are on tap... What to eat? Well, for example, grilled ribs, chopped beef, steaks, burgers, or risotto with mushrooms from the local woods. Or simply bread with roast duck meat spread... And, only a few metres higher, on the edge

of the city, there is the **Výpřez** restaurant waiting for us by the road. Here it would be mistake not to taste the delicious veal cheeks in red wine with mashed potatoes, spaghetti carbonara, a steak and, of course, cinnamon pancakes.

## STAGE II – ROUND THE SQUARE AND THE CASTLE

We are heading downhill back into town, straight to Děčín square. Here we find the famous and popular restaurant in the **Česká Koruna** hotel. The menu is based on classic Czech cuisine complemented by proven elements of continental and world cuisine. How about starting with the tender beef tongue on



celery salad and continuing with, say, rocket salad with pear and walnuts, beef steak in dried bacon with Madeira wine sauce, pork tenderloin marinated in crushed pepper and sea salt with grilled halloumi cheese, or grilled rainbow trout fillet in a sesame seed crust? If you love Czech cuisine, there is beef tenderloin, goulash,

duck... And maybe chocolate fondant to finish with – and your stomach will thank you. Close to the square, under the castle and the famous castle garden, there is the newly restored **U růžové zahrady** restaurant. They prefer French cuisine there but they complement this with dishes from other parts of the world. So it's French onion soup, boeuf bourguignon, grilled duck breast with plum sauce in port



wine, or marinated pork ribs or even Namibian flank steak. It always pays to go to the Rose Garden itself and the castle as well. What's more, there is the famous **Na cestě** pancake house. In this friendly social place you'll be served by disabled people and I can guarantee that you'll enjoy both their pancakes and their smiles. You can also try very good fair-trade coffee, teas by Grešík, home-made lemonade... We are approaching the bridge that will take us to the Podmokly part of the city, but at the start of the bridge we'll stop in the **Houpač koník** bistro. Everybody can find something they like there, whatever their tastes, vegetarians,

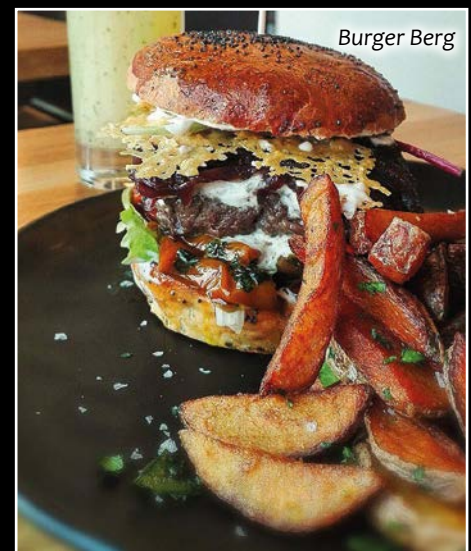
vegans and meat-eaters alike. You can enjoy a great breakfast here (from 7 o'clock) – for example sour dough bread with marmalade and coffee from the local coffee roasting house. They also support local farmers, prepare meals from local and fresh ingredients and change their selection according to the season. You can have a vegetarian burger, chickpea goulash or genuine Czech baked pasta with ham ("šunkofleky"), stuffed peppers... and, most importantly, there is a wide range of home-made soups.

## STAGE III – GETTING TO KNOW PODMOKLY THE GOURMET WAY

We are on the left bank of the Elbe. There are two quite new businesses on the embankment under the dominant Shepherd's Wall (Pastýřská stěna) with its unique via ferrata. Both focus on burgers but each in a different way. And both are good! **Karls grill'n'bar** is closer to the bridge. They do it the local way; their meat is from an organic farm in Verneřice, the beers on tap are from Děčín and Liberec, their coffee comes from a local coffee roasting house, they have pastry baked according to their own recipe. They make burgers, steaks, nachos, salads and they also have something for vegetarians, vegans and those with a gluten-free diet. Sitting at the bar, you can watch the chefs at work. I can't speak highly enough of their Lumber Jack burger but you can't go wrong with any of the other choices. **Burger Berg** next door is oriented more towards Tex-ex, so apart from hearty hamburgers you can try Mexican delicacies as well, for example great quesadillas, burritos (the ones with chopped



chicken or the ones with slow-cooked beef are really delicious), tacos, and also juicy hummus. And the aforementioned burgers? You can't miss the game ones! The meat is mainly organic from Czech farms or hunts. The last two restaurants are waiting for us a short distance from Děčín main train station and within sight of the regional museum. This doesn't mean that you can't get decent food anywhere else in Děčín, but I personally guarantee the quality of the aforementioned restaurants and bistros, as do many happy locals. So let's have a look at the more and more popular soup house **Mezi domy**. As the name suggests, it's mostly soups that are enjoyed here – and they have a really wide choice. The place is modern, light and pleasant and you can enjoy not only soups there but also hearty breakfasts (from 8 o'clock), very good Doubleshot coffee, home-made desserts and pancakes. And now we've come to the end of our gastronomic tour. Now we may have to fight for food. The craft bakery **U Ondáse** is a Děčín phenomenon. Not only have they won many awards and have a certificate stating that they bake the best bread and rolls in the region but they keep widening their selection



of breads and sweet pastry, which results in a phenomenon that is rare in the Czech Republic these days – a long queue. But it's definitely worth waiting – Ondás's buttermilk bread and rolls are simply delicious!



# Golden Hands



Czechs are said to have “golden hands”. It is especially true for Bohemian regional products. As we have mentioned here many times, one of the wonderful reasons to set off on a journey may also be a souvenir, a piece of jewellery, an original product or some food you cannot get anywhere else; something that’s worth travelling for. This is the great attraction of regional producers.

We map them regularly and there will be no exception in this issue of Gate. Make sure you don’t eat too much before reading this text as this journey will lead you to really sweet delicacies that will make you hold your breath and close your eyes in pure bliss. The train to sweet paradise is about to leave – get on quick! Our sweet train only makes stops at places with prestigious labels: Regional product, Regional food or Best product of Přemysl the Ploughman’s Region, all of which certify originality and quality.



## CZECH CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

Starting from the Czech Uplands, we can’t start anywhere else but at Dortletka, which means in Roudnice nad Labem. Dortletka is a sweet shop named after an original dessert the recipe for which has been in the family for over 100 years. The delicate chiffon “dortletka” is weighted down with awards. It is similar to macaroons stuck together with a secret coffee cream

and covered in a mixture of ladyfingers and coffee made to a recipe brought from Vienna by the grandfather of Jaroslava Michalcová, the owner of today’s sweetshop. The truly great dortletka is accompanied by heartily-made traditional Czech sweet classics and sweet innovations – for example the Říp mountain joining fine marzipan tones and peach taste. Our next stop is in the white city on the Elbe River, Litoměřice. Petr Strmeň’s sweetshop Cukrárna na Masaryce is well-known among the locals and tourists are also starting to discover it. Apart from light raspberry cake and delicious carrot cake, they come especially for a real rarity – moss cake. Yoghurt cream and fresh strawberries or raspberries are complemented by spinach sponge – extraordinary! There is one more compulsory stop in Litoměřice – Dana Mlenská’s Chocolate Laboratory a short distance from the square. Fabulous chocolate fondants which you really must try are made here.



## THE ORE MOUNTAINS

Our train hoots before a tunnel and we are in the arms of the Ore Mountains. In Liboucheč the brakes squeak at Janka Kovandová’s Confectionery, where it would be a mistake not to try the caramel “větrník”. Now it’s time for something different – how about some gingerbread? Why not – we are in Dubí u Teplic, where Jitka Horčíková bakes famous the Dubí gingerbread. Crispy, sweet-smelling with honey and spices, and so beautiful! They even designed and baked a model of the famous Dubí Venetian-style church! Next stop is Bělušice u Mostu. Why? Because a special delicacy awaits us there – dried plums. Well, their correct name is “Karlátka of Plum Railway”. Hand-picked and dried without any additives or preservatives, from Karla Ščepková’s family farm. The castle over there – that will be Hněvín, which means we are in



Most. A different delicacy is waiting for us there – croissants from the foothills of the Ore Mountains baked in Petr Süsser’s bakery. They are really huge and come with a wide variety of fillings – nougat, apple, vanilla cream, walnut, eggnog, cocoa, fruit mix, bacon and cheese. Our last stop under the Ore Mountains

is in Chomutov. We can choose from 3 cafés – Café v Domečku, Café Atrium or a mobile Café on the Road. A social business called Masopust, which employs 16 people with disabilities, offers many treats in all three cafés, above all the award-winning “Poppy cake from the Ore Mountain Foothills”.



## BOHEMIAN SWITZERLAND

It’s time to head to Bohemian Switzerland. First stop: Varnsdorf. Here we stop at Café Dlask. František Dlask, confectionery master, makes cakes using recipes from all over the world and tests them very patiently and almost scientifically and won’t offer them for sale until he likes them himself. The result is a number of delicious classics (e.g. proper cream rolls, cognac acorns as high as the Matterhorn, punch cake spongy to the bottom...), and really original delicacies. Prestigious awards have been won by the regional speciality Aunt Alenka’s Cake from an old family recipe, blueberry cake from the sweet local blueberries, and recently also by the greatest gem – Dlask’s větrník (butterscotch-topped swirly choux bun). Even though I’m only a humble conductor on the sweet train, let me tell you that you simply won’t get a better větrník anywhere else in this galaxy! We are now in Rumburk and Martina Janečková awaits us on the platform and hands us her heavenly “four seasons biscuits” through the window. They



are hand-made with nuts, fruit and herbs from Bohemian Switzerland and change according to the season – what’s ripe goes into the oven. We have something to chew on until we get to Děčín – mmm... We’ll be quite busy in Děčín. Let’s start with chocolate from the Jordan & Timaus factory. Here they continue with the tradition of making chocolates with various fillings; their big inspiration was chocolate delicacies made by the legendary local Diana chocolate factory, which were exported all over the world. We can enjoy them in a café on Husovo Square.

Our next stop is only a stone’s throw away – a bakery and snack-bar called U Ondáse. We’ll make an exception there and even though it’s not sweet, we’ll taste some delicious bread – Ondás’s buttermilk bread and rye bread – and we’ll get back to sweet intoxication with their butter pies. We are in Teplická Street now, which takes us away from Děčín to the Ore Mountains, but we’ll enjoy one last Bohemian Switzerland pleasure, “walnut caress”, which comes from the local confectioners owned by Petra Peštková. And while we are here, we’ll have the award-winning cream-curd cloud.



## LOWER POOHŘÍ

Ohře is in view! Our train stops by Karolina’s Chokolaterie opposite the castle in Klášterec nad Ohří. In addition to hand-made chocolate, ice-cream, home-made lemonades and various desserts they also offer the award-winning Klášterec Honey Balls – hand-made truffles with cream, honey, vanilla and chocolate, all rolled in blanched almonds. Delicious! As you can never have enough truffles, let’s stop for a while a little further from the picturesque Ohře valley, in Liběšovice in the Podbořany area. Miluše Procházková runs a business there and prepares not only charming flower arrangements, but also home-made



truffles from the finest chocolate, hand-made according to modernised old family recipes. Our journey ends in the beautiful and charming Verner’s Mill in Brloh village within sight of the Royal City of Louny. Apart from a rare exhibition showing a miller’s life and flour-milling technology, you can see..., oh, you can even take part in a great event “Quincing in Brloh Mill”. The traditional but half-



forgotten fruit, the quince, is successfully grown there. And during the event quince jams and damson cheeses are made, in the autumn of course, when quinces ripen. Everybody off!



# Events not to be missed

**We live in an age of adventure. What we have seen is not enough, we want new experiences, unexpected sensations, we want surprises, non-traditional and wonderful things. If this is true for you, you'll be glad to know that there are events that will definitely satisfy these cravings. Have you ever been on a theatre train? Have you sat on the most beautiful motorbike in the world? Or how many brass bands and majorettes have you seen at the same time in the same place?**



## CUPBOARD ON A TRAIN

The first of the unusual events is the work of a theatre project called Kredenc (Cupboard). It is a really great idea. Imagine getting on a lovely local train of the famous Plum Railway (I wrote about it elsewhere in this magazine) at Lovosice station, sitting down, and when a conductor comes, he doesn't check your ticket but includes you in a story. The story goes on all the way there, to Most and Louny, and back, and the landscape of Czech Uplands, which passes by, plays one of the main roles. It starts when it's still light, finishes when it's dark and you'll have some extraordinary experiences during the three-hour journey. Not only will you participate in

a performance on the train, wonderful characters and stories will take place behind the train windows and, what's more, the train stops here and there and you can go outside, among the trees and you will run into giant puppets, soldiers resting after a long march, a girl called Lenora, who looks as if she's stepped out from the pages of Erben's Kytice, a man looking for his own head, Ulrika von Levetzow shining with the lifelong love of the old poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and even Karel Hynek Mácha wandering around... You'll experience a performance on the border between theatre and Nouveau Cirque and you'll never be sure what is real and what is only an illusion. At the end of the journey there will be theatre lights outside and you'll be a different person getting off the train, changed by the extraordinary experience surrounding you, with your head full of sights, stories, sensations and feelings. And it's not only a story in its own right. The question of fragile relations between Czechs and Germans who lived here together for many generations in the magical and unique Czech Uplands, only to be separated and set against each other, will come alive inside you. You'll experience catharsis like in any good theatre performance but this time you'll be a part of it. Anyway, its creators lightly promise: "No big philosophy,



only dreams, old wives' tales, nonsense and adventure." This extraordinary project rightly attracted a lot of attention last year, so it was clear that the company would do anything to show it again this year. They succeeded so I am excited to invite you to one of the ten performances that will be shown from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Come to Lovosice train station and become a part of the unique ride. Perhaps we'll meet there because I definitely won't miss it.

## ŠTĚTÍ FULL OF BRASSY TONES

Štětí is a city dedicated to paper and surrounded by beautiful and still undiscovered sandstone rocks, picturesque villages and religious sights. This is where the Elbe actually enters the Ústí Region. The city is usually quiet and friendly but everything turns upside down once every two years. Overnight, Štětí turns into the capital of brass music. Brass bands from all over the country plus orchestras from other European countries come together here. The mood changes, the streets are full of visitors, music can be heard from every imaginable place, girls in shiny uniforms practice marching and formations... FEDO, the national brass orchestra festival of long tradition, is about to start. This pleasing and unique parade first took place in 1969, when Jaroslav Bílý, the band leader of the Štětí brass orchestra, came up with it and worked tirelessly to make it happen, and then became an inseparable part of it for nearly 40 years. For



completely – Saturday morning is dedicated to several concerts which are played at Hus Square

the first ten years the festival took place every year, then changed to a two-year cycle, which it has successfully kept to ever since. And what is Štětí like during the festival? It would be really difficult to describe it, you have to come and see it for yourself. This year the event will take place in Štětí between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June. But not to leave you in the dark



and then orchestras and majorettes start to parade through the city to meet again at Hus Square for a great afternoon concert. After that there is a competition for dancers with batons dressed in imaginative costumes, as we know as the sport of majorettes, and Saturday ends thundering with a massive firework display. Sunday morning fills the city with concerts again and the festival ends with the traditional Monster Concert in the afternoon, where you can listen to hundreds of musicians playing together. And I forgot to mention its younger brother, FERODO, an associated rock-brass orchestra festival, which attracts an audience of all ages!

## MOTORBIKES AS WORKS OF ART

Every year, at the end of August, Bohemian Switzerland Days take place in the picturesque town of Krásná Lípa. It is always a great day full of music and sports. There is the traditional market which sells regional products, the town is full of runners because of the Parkmaraton for children and then the Cross Parkmaraton for adults, which takes you round the beautiful local landscape and partly through the National Park, then a festive concert, often in a rock style, starts... Together with the western gate

to Bohemian Switzerland, this is enough to make you want to visit this town, which has made great progress in the recent years to become a full-scale and attractive tourist centre. And I haven't mentioned the main attraction yet! On Saturday morning the air is filled with the smell of petrol and a motorbike parade thunders into the town in a cloud of revving up and



rumbling. To me, these bikes are the most beautiful in the world – and prove me wrong! Čechia-Böhmerland, motorbikes built by the mechanic Albin Hugo Leibisch, were made in Krásná Lípa from 1927, only a few steps away from the square where their meetings are held now. The three-metre-long shiny beauties come from all over Europe. It's wonderful, it's a work of art, it's... something you just have to see for

yourself! When production started, there were pessimists who nicknamed them "runaway benches," or "mobile scaffolding" but where are they now? – and the fame of Leibisch's motorbikes has been persevered. This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event, for which people in historical overalls and leather helmets, and with waxed moustaches arrive proudly and with dignity on the square, hooting loudly, and line up their many bikes of impressive colours and unique designs. There are usually about 30 of them and they literally come from all over the continent. From my own experience I can say that the proud owners are very friendly and let you touch their bikes and side-cars, even have a picture taken on their seats. So, there are three unique events – what do you say we meet there?



# Dresden International Airport – Your gateway to North Bohemia



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

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

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

The direct connection of Dresden Airport to the A4 Motorway, almost 3,000 parking spaces close to the terminal building and a compact terminal with a high-speed railway station and a conference centre provide an integrated concept that allows for comfortable arrivals and departures or holding meetings and conferences. It takes about 45 minutes on the A4 and A17/D8 motorways to get from Dresden to Northern Bohemia. Passengers can change from S2 high-speed railway to trains to the Czech Republic at Dresden Main Station. The journey from the airport to the main station only takes about 20 minutes. In addition, there are modern yellow Regiojet coaches travelling from Prague to Dresden Airport. According to surveys, the airport is also popular because of its sophisticated design and friendly and capable employees. There is a shop, "Gate 14", where passengers and visitors can buy snacks, drinks, travel necessities, and many original gifts.

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

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

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

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**Bohemian Switzerland**

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



**Czech Central Highlands**

[www.ceskestredohori.info](http://www.ceskestredohori.info)



**Ore Mountains**

[www.krusne-hory.org](http://www.krusne-hory.org)



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