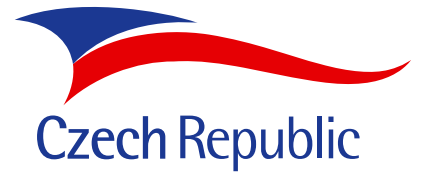


**A Touch of Magic**





## The Czech Republic

Something for Everyone,  
Whatever Their Interest



*The crown jewels of the Kings of Bohemia*

The Czech state boasts a history spanning more than one thousand years. For centuries the Kings of Bohemia ranked among Europe's leading monarchs and Prague was a place where artists, scholars and tradesmen from all corners of the world met. Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, the three historical lands that form the present Czech Republic, each boast a vast cultural heritage. Prague is a gem among large European cities in its own right. Many people believe the ancient city on the River Vltava is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Though it is the country's economic and cultural centre, Prague is far from the only attractive destination for tourists; testament to that is the fact that as many as twelve Czech towns and architectural monuments have been included on the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage.

However, historical monuments are certainly not the only reason the Czech Republic is worth visiting. Though relatively small in terms of its size, the country can offer many different types of landscape – ranging from fertile lowlands and deep forests to “rock towns” and mountains – all providing numerous opportunities for sports activities, both in summer and winter. The following pages would like to introduce you to the individual tourist regions of the Czech Republic. We would be glad if you draw inspiration from them while planning your next holiday.



*Early evening atmosphere on Charles Bridge*

## Prague

### A City in the Heart of Europe

Prague nestles on several hillocks on both banks of the River Vltava. Its location in the natural environment and over one thousand years of continuous architectural development make Prague one of the most magnificent cities in Europe.

Prague was lucky to escape the destruction of war as well as ill-considered reconstruction projects which have spoiled the appearance of many European metropolises. The city has expanded and transformed itself organically, step by step, with each epoch leaving an indelible imprint on its streets. As a result, Prague's historical centre represents a unique symbiosis of architectural styles, ranging from Gothic to Art Nouveau and Functionalism. A stroll through Prague is like a walk through the centuries, or leafing through a textbook of European architecture.

Prague is frequently referred to as Prague, the Magic City, but one need not believe in wizardry and magic to



*The upper part of the horologe with a movable skeleton*



*Ball in the Opera*

succumb to the seductive atmosphere of the Old Town or the Lesser Quarter. Especially in the twilight, the twisting alleys of the two districts seem as though they have been charged with energy. You can easily believe you have journeyed several centuries back in time and you almost expect to meet round the corner some of the many famous personalities who walked through these places before you.

Although the citizens of Prague are very proud of the history of their city, there is more to the capital than just its past; it is a lively modern European metropolis with all that goes with that. The city boasts numerous theatres, concert halls, music clubs, museums and galleries, Prague's stadiums and sports grounds regularly host international sports events and many international companies have their Central European headquarters in Prague.

#### ***The Old Town Astronomical Clock***

*The historical centre of Prague, the Old Town Square, boasts a Gothic Town Hall featuring a tower with a mechanical astronomical clock showing not only the time, but also the lunar cycle and the position of the planets. On the stroke of every hour the individual statuettes which adorn the clock are set in motion and a procession of twelve apostles can be seen moving in the tower windows.*

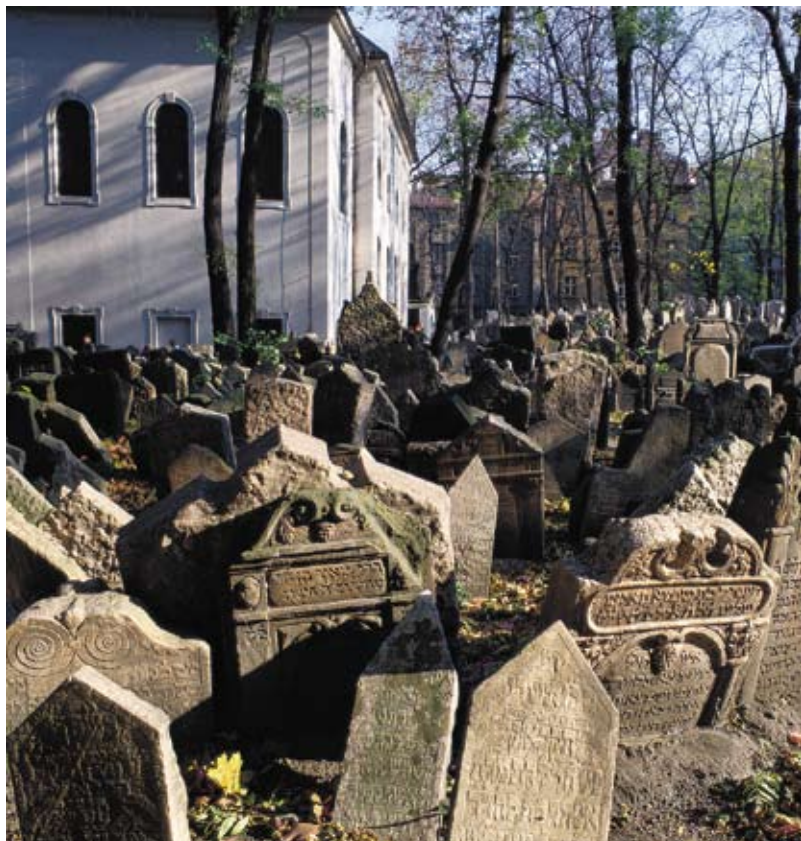
#### ***The Jewish Town***

*Prague's Jewish Town boasts an ancient cemetery containing several thousand Renaissance and Baroque tombstones and is one of the most valuable Jewish historical monuments in the world. The oldest surviving synagogue to be found in Europe, the local Gothic Old-new Synagogue continues to serve as a house of prayer for Prague's Jewish community to this day.*

## **A TOUCH OF MAGIC**



*The Dancing House*



*The Old Jewish Cemetery*



*The golf course near Karlštejn*

## Central Bohemia

### Leaving the capital behind for a while

Close to Prague you will find a number of remarkable historical monuments and places which are perfect for short as well as longer excursions. The most popular of them are Karlštejn Castle, the romantic Konopiště Chateau, the medieval mining town of Kutná Hora and the Baroque pilgrimage church at Svatá hora near Příbram. To the north of Prague you will find Říp Mountain, a focal point of this country, at least in the national mythology. It is believed that Čech, the fabled forefather of the Czech nation, decided to settle here with his people while looking around the landscape below him from its peak. And indeed he would hardly find a more beautiful and fertile land – or at least that is the legend.



*The Chapel of the Holy Rood – Karlštejn*

#### **Karlštejn Castle**

Located to the southwest of Prague, the impregnable Karlštejn Castle was built by Emperor Charles IV as a treasury for the crown jewels and holy relics. The highest floor of the large tower contains the Chapel of the Holy Rood, the walls and ceiling of which are adorned with gold and semi-precious stones. As well as that the chapel's decoration features a rare collection of almost 130 panel paintings. Dating from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, they depict male and female Catholic saints.



Czech garnets

## Bohemian Paradise

### A paradise in the heart of Bohemia

As its name implies, Bohemian Paradise (Český ráj) is one of the most beautiful regions of Bohemia. The local landscape is distinguished by its extraordinary diversity – you will find every kind of landscape here, ranging from fertile fields and meadows to sandstone “rock towns”. The region prides itself on numerous castles and relics of folk architecture, all further enhancing its appeal.

The Czech Hiking Club maintains a dense network of meticulously marked trails in the area which are very popular with lovers of hiking and cycling trips. Featuring deep canyons and sandstone towers rising to a height of 90 metres, the local rock towns attract both rock climbing enthusiasts and devotees of adrenaline sports.

#### **Czech garnets**

Once cut, Czech garnet, a traditional stone used by the Czech jewel industry, displays a beautiful deep, dark red colour. These semi-precious stones are found in Bohemian Paradise and they have been processed in the region for many, many years; in the past garnets were processed in almost every cottage in the area. Visitors to Turnov Museum can enjoy the opportunity to explore an interesting exhibition dedicated to precious stones, especially Czech garnets.

#### A TOUCH OF MAGIC



A view from the Marian vantage point – the Hrubá Skála area



Historical battle at Kost Castle



Kost Castle



*Hluboká Chateau*

## **Southern Bohemia**

### **A region of historical monuments and fishponds**

Southern Bohemia is one of the richest regions in the country in terms of the number of historical monuments. One could spend whole days and weeks visiting one historical town, chateau or castle after another. České Budějovice, a town with one hundred thousand inhabitants, is the centre of the region. Its Baroque Town Hall, square lined with Renaissance burghers' houses and Budějovický Budvar (Budweiser) beer are all popular with tourists.

Other attractive destinations include, for instance, the town of Jindřichův Hradec, the Renaissance Červená Lhota Chateau, built on the site of an older water-locked stronghold, the medieval royal Zvíkov Castle, rising above the confluence of the rivers Otava and Vltava, and the village of Holašovice, which has been included on the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage as a remarkable example of traditional rural architecture.



*Slalom below the Lipno Reservoir*





Fish harvest – the Rožmberk Lake

At the same time, the Southern Bohemian region has one of the healthiest environments in the country. In addition to hiking and cycling, canoeing and rafting on the local rivers are among the most popular forms of active relaxation here. Vodáctví (water sports) is a real phenomenon here, its popularity perhaps due to the fact that the Czech Republic has no sea. For many Czechs a several-day sailing trip down the Vltava, for instance, is one of the joys of summer.



Holašovice



České Budějovice – the square

#### **Hluboká nad Vltavou**

The neo-Gothic Hluboká nad Vltavou Chateau is perhaps the most romantic Czech manor. While its white battlements outwardly imitate old castles of the stronghold type, the chateau contains luxurious interiors which are – in view of the time of their origin – extremely sophisticated. The former chateau riding school is now home to the massive collections of the Aleš South Bohemian Art Gallery.

#### **Fish farming**

The spa town of Třeboň features a lovely square and Renaissance chateau and nestles amidst a plain dotted with numerous fishponds which originated from the 16th century onwards. The fishponds, which serve for the breeding of fish, especially carp, and the system of artificial river canals constitute a remarkable testimony to the technical skills of our forefathers. Observing the autumn fish harvest, combined with the draining of fishponds, is a very interesting experience.



*The Master of Třeboň – Christ on the Mount of Olives*



*The Black Lake*

## Šumava

### The green roof of Europe

The Czech Republic is lined practically along the entire length of its borders by a wreath of mountains. Šumava (Bohemian Forest), which forms the southern border with Austria and Germany, enjoys the status of National Park. The unique eco-systems, which are part of the original virgin forest and peat bogs, are especially valuable. Šumava offers ideal conditions for those who go in for active forms of summer and winter holidays. During the summer months you can enjoy hiking and cycling or water sports on the Lipno Reservoir.

In the foothills of Šumava lies one of the most beautiful and most frequently visited Czech towns – Český Krumlov. No photograph can express the special atmosphere of this ancient town, which is virtually wedged into the meanders of the River Vltava below the castle. Crowning a rocky promontory above the town, the Český Krumlov castle and chateau complex is one of the largest aristocratic seats to be found in Europe.

→ Český Krumlov – the chateau



*Vyšší Brod – the monastery*

#### ***The Black Lake (Černé Jezero)***

*Located at an altitude of over 1,000 metres above sea level, the glacial Black Lake is one of the largest lakes in Šumava. It takes its name from the colour of its water, which seems to be black because of the lake's depth (up to 40 metres in some places) and the reflection of the surrounding woods on its surface.*





St Bartholomew's Cathedral



The Large Synagogue



Beer

## The Plzeň Region

### The chief town of Western Bohemia

Thanks to its location the Plzeň (Pilsen) region is a place where European cultural influences have blended for centuries. Whatever you are after, you will find it here – historical monuments, harmonious nature, interesting events or excellent foods.

As early as the Middle Ages, the town of Plzeň itself was an important trading station on the road from Prague to Nuremberg. Having experienced rapid development in the period of the industrial revolution, the Plzeň of today is one of the Czech Republic's largest cities and home to a university. As well as that the town enjoys a rich cultural life.

The dominant feature of Plzeň's historical centre is the over one hundred metre-high Gothic tower of the Catholic Church of St Bartholomew. Also noteworthy is the Plzeň Synagogue, the second largest in Europe and the third largest in the world. Built in the late 1800s, the structure features a Byzantine-Moorish-style front façade with two towers; it was modelled on an older synagogue in Berlin (which, however, no longer exists).

#### **Pilsner Urquell**

*Plzeň is a real phenomenon for all lovers of beer. The name of this Western Bohemian town is featured in the names of hundreds of beers all over the world which imitate a production method introduced more than 150 years ago by the local brewers. However, there is only one true Plzeň beer – Pilsner Urquell. There are regular tours of the brewery where this beer is made.*



*Drinking cure*

## A TOUCH OF MAGIC



*Mariánské Lázně –the Singing Fountain*

## Western Bohemian Spas The curative power of Nature

In Western Bohemia balneology boasts a tradition spanning many centuries. The archives show that people were aware of the curative properties of the local springs as early as the Middle Ages. It is not only patients suffering from diseases who make use of the sophisticated services provided by the local spas; visitors from all over the world come here in search of rest and relaxation.

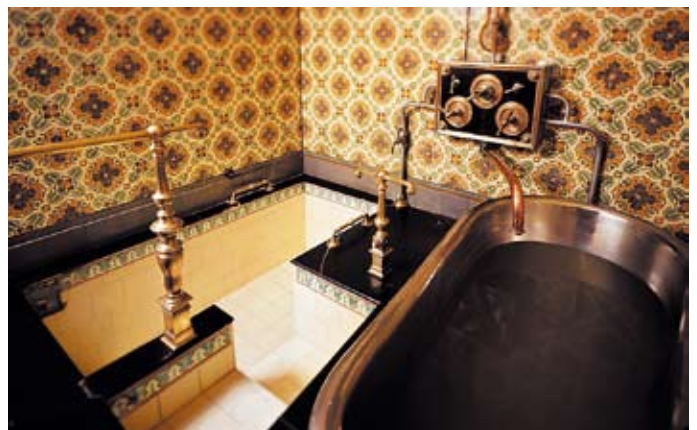
The most famous of the local spa towns – Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně – form what is known as the Spa Triangle. In the 1800s the most prominent figures of European politics and culture met in these elegant spas, which today abound in luxurious hotels and casinos. Peat and natural gases are employed for curative procedures here, in addition to thermal and mineral springs.



*Karlovy Vary – a stroll on the colonnade*

### ***The Karlovy Vary International Film Festival***

*Europe has only four film festivals in the prestigious A category – Venice, Cannes, Berlin and Karlovy Vary. Taking place at the beginning of July, the annual Karlovy Vary film festival is attended by many young people, who converge on the town equipped with just tents and rucksacks. Foreign film stars also praise the event's unique atmosphere.*



*Karlovy Vary – the Imperial Bath*



Ještěd



The horse – your friend

## The North of Bohemia

### History in a piece of glass

The massif of the Jizerské Mountains forms a natural border between the Czech Republic and Poland. The most impressive part of the mountain range is the central plateau with expanses of marshland and peat bog, framed by dwarf pines and tiny birches. In the summer the Jizerky, the short name for the mountain range, are crowded with lovers of cycling, while in the winter the local gradual ridges and mild slopes prove ideal terrain for cross-country skiing enthusiasts.

Apart from beautiful scenery, the area of the Jizerské Mountains prides itself on a glorious tradition of glass making. The first glass works appeared in their foothills sometime in the 1300s, and the manufacturing of glass and artificial jewellery continues to be an inseparable feature of the region. The area's focal points are the towns of Liberec and Jablonec nad Nisou, both located in the southern foothills, and Frýdlant in the northern foothills.



The Jizerské Mountains – a view of the landscape

#### **Ještěd**

*If viewed from a distance, the Ještěd television transmitter, designed by the architect Karel Hubáček, resembles a spaceship ready for take-off. At the same time, however, the transmitter has been placed sensitively in the landscape, adding an elegant aerodynamic point to the cone-shaped summit of the mountain of the same name. Inside the tower you will find not only technical equipment, but also a hotel and restaurant providing breathtaking views of the area below.*



*The Central Bohemian Highlands – Porta Bohemica*

## **North-western Bohemia** A gateway to the country

Located mid-way between Prague and Dresden, the Central Bohemian Highlands is one of the most picturesque Czech mountain ranges. The famous traveller Alexander von Humboldt, among others, praised its beauty. The local hills owe their characteristic cone-like shapes to their origin: they are all extinct volcanoes. The highest of them, Milešovka, rises 300 metres above the surrounding landscape. The narrow gorge through which the River Labe (Elbe) forges its way to the north is traditionally called Porta Bohemica – The Gateway to Bohemia.

The region boasts several important urban monument reserves, including the towns of Litoměřice, Kadaň and Terezín. The last mentioned location, a Baroque fortified town, was transformed into an infamous ghetto during World War II; Jews from all over Europe were interned there before being transported to Auschwitz and other death camps.



*Czech Switzerland – the Pravčická Gate*

### ***The Pravčická Gate***

*The fantastic scenery of sandstone “rock towns” on the Czech-German border was discovered in the late 1700s by romanticists, who named it Czech Switzerland, or Saxon Switzerland. Czech Switzerland’s most famous natural monument is the Pravčická Gate, a rock bridge 21 metres high and 26.5 metres long; it is the largest natural formation of its kind in Europe.*



Snow holes



The meanders of the Labe



A panoramic view of the Krkonoše Mountains

## The Krkonoše Mountains

### Greetings from the highest peaks

Stretching along the Polish border, the Krkonoše Mountains is the largest Czech mountain range. Although their peaks reach altitudes of just 1,500 metres or so above sea level, the climate of the Krkonoše has a Nordic character. As a result you can encounter plant and animal species here which do not otherwise occur at our latitude.

Visiting, for instance, the source of the Labe, one of Europe's major rivers, can be an interesting experience indeed. Located at an altitude of 1,386 metres above sea level, the site is marked by a stone wall with the emblems of twenty-six Czech and German towns through which the watercourse passes.

Thanks to its beautiful scenery and favourable snow conditions, the Krkonoše National Park is one of the most popular recreational resorts all year round. The chief centres here are Špindlerův Mlýn, Harrachov and Pec pod Sněžkou. Located directly on hillsides, a number of mountain chalets offer accommodation to visitors.

Hiking enthusiasts will find 800 kilometres of marked hiking trails in the Krkonoše Mountains, while lovers of winter sports can make use of 400 cableways and ski lifts and 500 kilometres of cross-country skiing trails.

- ← The road to "Vysoké kolo"
- Sněžka (1,602 m)

#### Sněžka

With a height of 1,602 metres above sea level, Sněžka is the highest peak in the Czech Republic. Located right on the Czech-Polish border, this rocky massif forms a distinct dominant feature which "governs" the surrounding plateaux. The mountain is accessible from the Czech side by cableway. There is a post office on the top of the mountain, so you can send a postcard to friends from the highest place in this country.







Telč – the square with the fountain and the Marian column



St John Nepomuk's Church at Zelená Hora

## The Vysočina Region

### A region on the border

The Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, which forms the border between Bohemia and Moravia, boasts three historical monuments featured on the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage within just a few dozen kilometres of one another: the towns of Telč and Třebíč and the pilgrimage church at Zelená hora near Žďár nad Sázavou.

The Vysočina Region is, however, famous not only for its historical monuments, but also for its picturesque hilly landscape, interwoven by the valleys of numerous rivers and streams. While in the summer the local countryside enchants visitors thanks to its diversity, winters are unexpectedly harsh here if seen in the context of Central Europe. Thus, for instance, Nové Město na Moravě is able to host one of the events of the Cross-country Skiing World Cup.

#### **Telč**

*Telč prides itself on having one of the most beautiful squares in the Czech Republic, if not the whole of Central Europe. Featuring a Baroque Marian column and two fountains in its centre, the oblong square is lined by historical patrician houses with arcades. The Renaissance Telč Chateau, which has a beautiful garden, is an important historical monument in its own right.*



A coach ride

## A TOUCH OF MAGIC

# Eastern Bohemia

## An encounter across centuries

A diverse region, Eastern Bohemia offers mountains, fertile lowlands, affluent towns and out-of-the-way villas which recall both distant past and the eventful history of the 20th century. The border mountain ranges feature preserved large underground strongholds and bunkers dating from the period of World War II which are today open to the general public. Visitors can explore numerous chateaux and historical towns, including Litomyšl which is on the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage.

Located in the northernmost corner of the region, the complex of Broumov Monastery is a gem of the European Baroque style, as is Kuks Chateau, where a unique gallery of Baroque statues is set in the open air in the nearby forest. Matthias Bernard Braun, one of the most prominent 18<sup>th</sup>-century Prague sculptors, fashioned them directly in the local sandstone rocks.



Litomyšl – the chateau with the fountain



← Kuks – the chateau

### **The Horse Museum**

Lovers of horses should pay a visit to the Slatiňany stud-farm, the centre of breeding of Staré Kladruby black horses. The Slatiňany herd consists of 250 horses, including 80 colts up to three and half year old. Staré Kladruby horses were originally bred to serve for ceremonial purposes at royal courts. The story of their breeding reaches back to 1579 and visitors can learn more about it at Slatiňany Chateau.



*Brno with the Church of St Peter and St Paul*

## **Southern Moravia** With a wine grape in the emblem

An affluent and fertile region, Southern Moravia has preserved its highly distinct character to this day. Its chief centre, Brno, is the second most densely populated city in the Czech Republic after Prague. Brno is renowned not only for its historical monuments, but also its modern Functionalist architecture. The Tugendhat Villa, a world-renowned work by the architect Mies van der Rohe, is today open to the general public.

A number of South Moravian castles and chateaux are simply waiting to be explored. Just a stone's throw from Brno stands Slavkov Chateau. Slavkov is known – under its German name Austerlitz – to all who are interested in the Napoleonic Wars. In 1805 the Battle of Three Emperors (The Battle of Austerlitz), took place here, with Napoleon defeating the allied forces of the Austrian Emperor and Russian Tsar. Hundreds of military history enthusiasts, many clad in period uniforms, have come here to recall the event.



*Slavkov – the re-enactment of the Battle of Austerlitz*



*The Tugendhat Villa*

Close to the border with Austria a unique romantic park stretches between Lednice and Valtice chateaux. Covering an area of more than 180 square kilometres, the park is an interesting testimony to the period cult of nature, history and exoticism. Artificial ruins, antiquity-style shrines and summerhouses scattered all over the park had no other purpose than to form a lovely setting for horse riding trips and excursions into the countryside.

Not far from the Austrian border lies the town of Znojmo, one of the most ancient seats in the Czech Republic. The local Romanesque Chapel of St Catherine with valuable wall paintings bears witness to the town's former importance. The murals are believed to portray the Princes of Bohemia from the Přemyslid family which ruled Bohemia and Moravia from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of the paintings depicts Přemysl the Ploughman, the fabled founder of a Czech royal dynasty.

### ***Vranov nad Dyjí***

*Perched high on a rock above the River Dyje, Vranov Chateau is one of the most spectacular Baroque structures of its kind in Moravia. Its current appearance is the result of adaptations carried out by the prominent imperial architect Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach. The monumental oval Hall of Ancestors, with its ceiling and walls adorned with scenes celebrating the Althan family, is a unique testimony to the lifestyles of Central Europe's aristocracy.*

### ***Viniculture***

*The tradition of wine growing in Southern Moravia stretches back to the period of the Roman Empire. The most popular varieties here are Grüner Veltliner, Müller-Thurgau and Tramin. Having one's own vineyard and wine cellar is part of the traditional lifestyle in the local rural areas. Southern Moravia is a region where folk customs and traditions (and not only those concerning wine) are observed to a greater extent than in other parts of the Czech Republic.*

## **A TOUCH OF MAGIC**



*The Tugendhat Villa – the interior*



*Vranov nad Dyjí – the chateau*



*Wine cellars in Petrov near Hodonín*



Radegast



Ostrava – the town hall

## Northern Moravia and Silesia

### With mountains within sight

The natural focal point of Northern Moravia and Silesia, Ostrava is the third largest city in the Czech Republic. Its character has been greatly influenced by the long tradition of coal mining and iron ore processing, as well as the proximity of the Beskydy Mountains which offer excellent conditions both for summer and winter sports.

Beskydy is one of the most unspoiled parts of the Czech Republic. In the deep Beskydy forests you can still encounter large beasts of prey such as bears or wolves. Lovers of folklore and folk customs are recommended to visit the Rožnov pod Radhoštěm Open-air Museum of Rural Architecture, which is dedicated to the conservation of traditional Beskydy wooden architecture.

The town of Opava, an important historical centre of the Czech part of Silesia, prides itself on a wealth of architectural monuments dating from different epochs, the most notable of which are the Gothic brick church built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by the Order of the German Knights and several Art Nouveau buildings, de-

#### **Radegast**

*In the 1930s a three-metre-high, seven-tonne statue of Radegast, whom the old Slavs worshipped as the god of sun, hospitality, fertility and victory, was installed on Radhošť Mountain in the Beskydy Mountains. Legend has it that a Radegast sanctuary stood there in the past, and that a gold statue and treasure accumulated by pagan priests are hidden inside the mountain.*

#### **Hukvaldy**

*Located in the foothills and dominated by the ruin of a huge medieval castle, the village of Hukvaldy is the birthplace of the famous composer Leoš Janáček (1854–1928), whose most famous works include the operas “Jenufa”, “Káta Kabanová” and “The Cunning Little Vixen”. A regular open-air festival dedicated to Janáček’s music is held at the castle in the summer.*

signed by, among others, Josef Maria Olbrich, a native of Opava. Olbrich's most renowned achievement is the Art Nouveau Pavilion in Vienna. Located in the western part of the region, the Jeseníky Mountains attract hikers and skiing enthusiasts alike. The local micro-climate has beneficial curative effects. The Jeseník Spas, the first hydrotherapeutic sanatorium in the world, was founded in 1822 by Vincenz Priessnitz, the pioneer of this curative method. In its vicinity, mainly on the slopes of Studniční Hill, sixty registered and named springs rise from the earth.



*A statue of Bystrouška (The Cunning Little Vixen) in Hukvaldy*



*Rožnov pod Radhoštěm – the open-air museum of rural architecture*



*Beskydy – Pustevny in winter*



*Rožnov pod Radhoštěm – the Magi*

## Central Moravia

### The fertile garden of Moravia

The university city of Olomouc, located in the heart of the fertile Haná Region, was the cultural and administrative centre of Moravia from the early Middle Ages onwards. The Baroque period left the most distinct imprint on the appearance of town, contributing a number of churches and palaces, as well as the Holy Trinity Column, the largest and most spectacular monument of its kind in the world, in the main square.

Not far away from Olomouc you will find Svatý Kopeček (Holy Hill), one of Moravia's most important pilgrimage sites. Perched on a hill and accessible by a double alley of linden trees, the Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary is – thanks to its location and artistic decoration – a perfect example of Baroque art.

Another attractive tourist destination, the town of Kroměříž served for centuries as the summer residence of the Bishops of Olomouc. Renowned for its parks and gardens, the town also boasts a notable chateau picture gallery which is one of the most remarkable in the Czech Republic.



Olomouc – the Caesar Fountain



Cakes



Kroměříž – the summerhouse in the Flower Garden

#### **Traditional cuisine**

The Haná Region is known for its rather special culinary tradition. Olomoucké tvarůžky is one of the most aromatic – one could even say smelliest – kinds of cheese in the world. Although its aroma may not be pleasant to everybody, gourmets rate it very highly indeed. Lovers of sweets will undoubtedly want to try Haná cakes with plum jam and cottage cheese filling.



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This sign denotes official certified accommodation facilities



This sign denotes official tourist information centres

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## A Touch of Magic

CzechTourism  
Vinohradská 46  
120 41 Praha 2  
+420 221 580 611  
[info@czechtourism.cz](mailto:info@czechtourism.cz)

