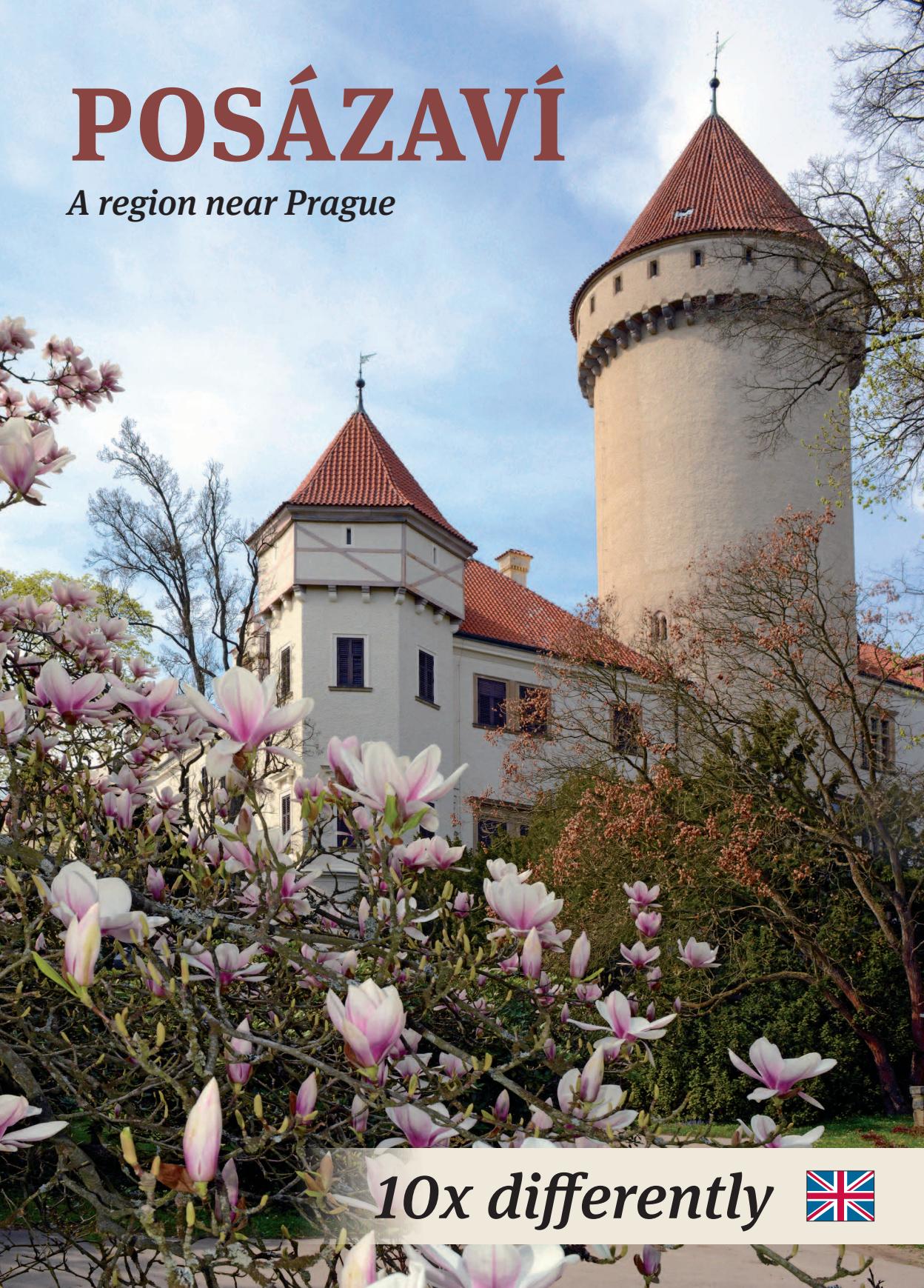


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A region near Prague



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Please accept our invitation to a place, to which River Sázava gave its name. Romantic, untamed, broody, vain, mysterious ... the river is just the same as the entire region, through which it runs like a golden thread. The spider web of its fine nets notionally teamed up old strongholds, castles, bridges, steel mills, mines, museums ... to create a unique chronicle of the millennial history of this picturesque corner of the Czech country. Chronicle, which is, even without the written words so easy to read! You just need to open it...



River Sázava





You can love it, admire it, you can condemn it and hate it, you just can't overlook it. It can be affable, magic, evil and dangerous. It used to be called Zazoa, Zazavia or Sassawa. Over the centuries, discussions had been led about where it rises. Finally, the wetlands in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands have appeared in its „birth certificate“. Then it embarks on its two hundred kilometers long journey to Davle, where it meets with the dark waters of Vltava River.

Sázava winds like a golden ribbon through forests, wetlands, meadows, cities and villages. It creates picturesque meanders, cuts into the deep valleys with steep slopes. Sometimes it flows lazily; elsewhere it rolls with the roar through its rocky watercourse forming fierce rapids. Only the weirs know how to tame it.

Sit into a boat, and let the river waves drift you all the way to Prague. They will take you to tramps' settlements, palaces and castles, ruins, rocky promontories, gold mines, churches and stone bridges. At first glance, they are just a silent, but yet such a telling chronicle of the region. They will tell you a lot, for example, a story of the life and times of the Czech King and Roman Emperor Charles IV or about the hunting passion of the successor to the Austro-Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand d'Este. You will understand why its landscape ravished painters like Jan Zrzavý and František Ženíšek, a writer Jaroslav Hašek, and a composer Josef Suk.

If you do not fancy a rickety boat ride, just lie down in the grass somewhere on the banks of the Sázava River, close your eyes and unleash your imagination. In the quiet murmur of the river you may hear the legend of Saint Procopius, the founder of the Sázava Monastery, story of Sázava raft-drifters or robber knights.



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Jílové u Prahy



Picturesque, ancient, magical ... and golden is a town of Jílové u Prahy. This precious metal was mined here for hundreds of years. Today, just miles of desolate, winding tunnels remain as silent witnesses of old mining. Embark on an adventurous expedition into the tunnels to explore the history of settlement, which for more than 650 years has boasted an epithet „Royal Golden Mine“.



The exact date of foundation of Jílové will most likely remain unanswered; according to some circumstantial evidence it already existed in the 13th century. What is certain is that the town was founded by the merging of mining settlements, whose origins are associated with gold mining. And, based on the amount of extracted precious metal, the town had either flourished or declined.

The most generous period was the time of the reign of Charles IV, who around the year 1350 confirmed a series of the town's rights and privileges.

Maybe it was then when a fortress was built, on foundations of which the Town Hall, which is among the historically, the most valuable buildings in the city, was erected. There is also touching history behind the Church of St. Vojtěch with a Gothic altar, which stands on the site of a wooden church from the first half of the 13th century. Its interior has enchanted the film director Miloš Forman, who filmed some of the scenes of his *Amadeus* here. Simple but all revealing is the name Coin (Mince) of one of the interesting buildings in Jílové – a stone house from the first half of the 14th century, whose owner was, Edward Kelley, the court alchemist of Rudolf II.

Fans of extreme experiences should not miss a visit to one of the Jílové's mines which were made accessible – St. Joseph Adit, St. Anthony of Padua Adit or Halíře Adit. „Treasures“, however, are not waiting for the visitors of the region only underground. For example, in nearby Žampach, the highest stone railway bridge in Central Europe.

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Military Technical Museum Lešany



You know, where small boys become big guys and their fathers and grandfathers nostalgic eyewitnesses? Well, in the Military Technical Museum in Lešany. With eyes wide open and a sly smile on their faces they move through the maze of halls and enjoy their trip in the history of not only the Czechoslovak military hardware. It will take them to the army barracks of the Austria-Hungary, of the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, to the battlefields of North Africa, to the eastern front of World War II and to the normalization period of Czechoslovakia.

Lešanské Museum is the youngest part of the Military History Institute in Prague. The object, in which it is located, has an interesting history. The locals could tell! For example the story of branch of the Flossenbürg concentration camp, which was established here in the years 1943–1945 as part of a German training area of SS units, or the story of a prison camp, in which the establishment changed after the Second World War. Then, for many years, it was occupied by soldiers.

The Military History Institute of the Army of the Czech Republic in 1995 opened a new chapter of its history.

Its unique exhibition captures in chronological snapshots the most important historical events of the Czechoslovak army from 1918 until 1962. It tries to show the technical skills of several generations of Czechoslovak constructors. Collections containing over 700 exhibits are presented in ten halls, under six sheds, but also outdoors. Among them are many



of world uniques, inter alia, Czechoslovak military vehicles from the years 1918–1939 or a collection of artillery pieces of ŠKODA System and motorcycles JAWA. The scope and composition of the collections of the Lešanské Museum rank among the most important European institutions of its kind.

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Castle Konopiště





From afar, the dominating sight the Konopiště Castle can be seen – The Big Tower protruding from the surrounding masses of green. Konopiště has gradually lost its features of French fortress, which was probably founded by the Bishop of Prague, Tobias of Benešov, near his ancestral seat around the year 1294. However, the dignity of the castle has not been lessened in any way.

In possession of the residence, which belongs to the most visited Czech sites, were many influential aristocratic families —Hodějovský family of Hodějov, Albrecht von Wallenstein, Michna family of Vacínov, Vrtba family of Vrtby, Lobkowicz family...

The Castle, however, is associated mainly with its last owner, the successor to the imperial throne, František (Franz) Ferdinand d'Este. Although he and his wife, Sophie of Hohenberg died at the hands of an assassin's 100 years ago, it seems the family has never left Konopiště. Authentic office, bedroom, dressing room, bathroom, children's rooms ...

Franz Ferdinand d'Este rebuilt the Konopiště Castle in the historicist style and he transformed its surroundings into a landscaped park. Ramble through its Rose Garden. You can admire beauty of the cold and small arms or armor in the so-called Esten Armory, which belongs to the most valuable and the most significant armories in Central Europe. Also unique is the collection of woodcarvings, paintings, and artifacts with the themes of the brave dragon-slaying, showcased in the Museum of St. George. Not only the eyes of the male visitors will be pleased with a shooting gallery, consisting of a movable automatic targets.



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Franz Ferdinand d'Este



If then, on June 28, 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand d'Este, followed the program of the official tour of the city of Sarajevo, the history of Europe might be headed in a completely different direction. If ... But the Archduke decided to go to Sarajevo hospital to visit people injured during the first unsuccessful attempt to his assassination. The car he traveled in turned into a wrong street, the driver stopped and wanted to back out, while the assassin Gavrilo Princip seized the opportunity and shot at the car several times. Although he had not fired the famous „seven bullets“, he hit his target. Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie did not survive the attack and they never returned to Konopiště to their three children.

What was Franz Ferdinand d'Este actually like? A man who for many generations became a symbol of the beginning of the First World War? Was he really explosive, vengeful and extravagant? Was he an able strategist, an avid hunter, a witty companion, a loving husband and father? Few historical figures raise so many controversial questions. Visit

to Konopiště Castle, a residence surrounded by the magic of nature, which became a home of the Archduke's family for many years, and which indelibly influenced the development of the whole region, may help you to find the answers.

Make sure, with your own eyes, that the Konopiště Castle has lost nothing of its splendor and glamour of the times of its last private owner. Or go to the bourg – to the nearby Benešov. From the local train station, where the Archduke often started his journeys – it is now reminded by the Imperial Lounge, which then served as a luxurious waiting room. Or enjoy the authentic atmosphere of the Benešov Brewery Ferdinand, which bears the name of its former owner.



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Town of Benešov





Although it is often referred to as a bourg of Konopiště Castle, Benešov existed much earlier than the original castle, which was probably built over the Konopiště Creek by Archbishop Tobias of Benešov. A fortified manor farm with a church and bourg on the granite promontory Karlov was apparently built by its founders, family of Benešovic as early as in the middle of 11th century to protect a major land route from Prague to southern Bohemia and Austria.

The Benešovic family longed to possess an urban-type seat. Therefore, they did not interfere with the establishment of a large market, or the construction of the Minority Cloister. And the development of Benešov was supported by other owners – Sternberg family, whose eight-pointed yellow star the city still has in its code of arms.

Embark on a leisurely stroll through the ruins of the Minority Cloister, peaceful Karlov, Church of St. Nicholas Church and Bell Tower with one of the oldest bells in Bohemia. On Masaryk Square, you can't miss the Church of St. Anne with Piarist School – proof that in the 18th century, Benešov was a centre of culture and education of the entire region. On the opposite side of the square stands a Town Hall overbuilt according to the project of the famous Czech architect Josef Pleskot.

A visit to the Museum of Arts and Design with an exhibition of drawings and graphics of the personalities of Czech art of the 20th century, with the first permanent exhibition of Czech and Slovak photography and with a unique collection of design and contemporary Czech sculptures and paintings can be an uncommon experience. It's all under one roof; just climb up just a couple of steps and walk into the Museum of the Podblanicko District. Benešov can be easily explored

on foot. However, you can give your tired feet a rest while riding the city ecotrain, which takes you to all the interesting places that you should not miss when visiting this city. Moreover, you can extend your ride to the nearby Konopiště Castle and back.



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Jemniště Castle

What was the view the famous Czech architect František Maxmilián Kaňka saw when climbing on a small hill near Jemniště in the 20's of the 18th century to meet the wishes of the owner of the local estate count František Adam Trauttmansdorff to build a new castle for him? Who knows ... However, one thing is certain. Elegant two-storey building, which was established here, deserves to be known as the Baroque Pearl of Central Bohemia.

The castle burnt down in 1754 and only of St. Joseph's Chapel with decorations by a painter Václav Vavřinec Reiner and sculptor Matyáš Bernard Braun was spared. After a devastating fire, the count Francis Adam Trauttmansdorff rebuilt and newly furnished the entire castle. The appearance of aristocratic residence hasn't changed much since then. Only the garden has changed into a beautifully maintained romantic English park.

Since 1868 Jemniště Castle is associated with the Stenberg family. The present owner Jiří Sternberg lives in the residence together with his wife Petra, son Vojtěch Václav and daughter Isabel. They reconstructed the castle and made it available to the public, arranged the exhibitions, opened a **Cafe Custozza** selling original, homemade desserts. They furnished **romantic suites** they cook prepare their own game dishes for the guests. They created a wedding hall, founded **alpinium**, **rosarium** and planted hundreds of plants and trees in the Park. Come and see for yourself! Or let yourself to be intrigued by the unique style of the Hunting Dress Code by Petra Sternberg brand from the workshop of the Lady of the Castle.

The richly furnished rooms evoke the impression that their residents have gone somewhere for just



a moment. How did the lords of the castle live? Do you want to try yourselves? You just need to rent one of the suites. And then unleash your imagination – who in the past fell into the bed with a canopy, used the hand-painted sink, warm themselves by the fire in the fireplace...? Or enjoy a stroll through the landscaped gardens or have them prepare a picnic in the recesses of the Castle Park.

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Castle and Park in Vlašim





It was in 1744, when the very young owner of Vlašim estate Maria Josepha, countess of Trautson and Falkenstein married Karl Joseph, count of Auersperg. And together they started to write a new history of the castle, whose foundations were laid on promontory above the river Blanice early in the 14th the century. Around their representative aristocratic residence they built a unique natural landscape park with many romantic structures and corners. The Chinese pavilion, Old Castle, Bard's Grove, Canary Island, garden pools, Venetian fountain, Cupid's temple, Samson's pillar... Some of them have been preserved until the present day.



The remains of the original gothic castle preserved only in the architecture of the north wing with the tower. However, all of the noble families holding the castle in their possession left their imaginary signature here. Among them were, besides the lords of Vlašim, to whom the second Archbishop of Prague, and mentor of Charles IV. Jan Očko belonged, and also, for

example, Trčka family of Líba, Stranovský family of Sovojovice, Klenovský family of Ptení or Vostrovce family of Kralovice.

The present neoclassical appearance of the mansion is the work of the last aristocratic owners, Princes of Auersperg. Inspired by the antiquity, Gothic, Orient and the nature they turn down the fortification, filled the ditches around the castle and transformed the original game enclosure into a romantic park. Some famous classical music composers found their inspiration here, for example Bedřich Smetana, who spent his youth in nearby village of Růžkové Lhotice or Gustav Mahler, who

visited his relatives in Vlašim. Since 1945 the castle has belonged to the town. It houses the Museum of Podblanicko District and a vocational school.

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Český Šternberk Castle





The majestic castle standing on a rocky promontory above the River Sázava arouses admiration and interest from far away. Originally a defensive medieval castle, its appearance can be deceiving. Behind thick stone walls is located an interior equipped with historical furniture and utility art items, which bring closer the history of the castle and the life stories of its founders, members of the old Czech noble house of Stenberg, who still own it.



The castle was built by Zdeslav of Divišov on a strategically very convenient place around the year 1241, who named it after his family coat of arms – eight-pointed golden star. The trendy language of those times was German, so the castle became a „star on the mountain“, and Zdeslav began using a new epithet „von Sternberg“.

In the Middle Ages the castle grew in strength, its walls were fortified and defensive towers were built. One of

them, a forward defensive bastion with the lip, which has been preserved to this day, became known as Dungeon in a romantic 19th century. After the Thirty Years' War, no one wanted to live in a medieval castle anymore, so it was therefore necessary to customize it in a new fashion. Many elegantly furnished lounges and main representative hall with the coats of arms of famous ancestors were created.

Lifestyle continued to change, and so, at the beginning of the 20th century, the castle was electrified, equipped with modern bathrooms and heated by central heating. At the same time Jiří Sternberg had a picture family tree painted and collected copper engravings from the period of the Thirty Years' War. He created a unique collection of 545 prints, which belongs to the most important and largest of its kind in Europe.

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Glassworks František Sázava





It's all fault of a big whirlwind, which in 1833 swept over the town of Sázava. No one wanted the fallen trees, which were left behind. Then, someone thought to offer them the owner of the glassworks in the nearby Ostředek Franz Kavalier. He enthusiastically agreed, but to avoid transporting the wood from far away, he decided to build a new glass factory by Kácek Mill near the Sázava River. And since he has never had far from words to deeds, in June 1837 he opened St. Procopius's or Grandmother's glass works. Its capacity gradually ceased to be enough for a thriving company. In 1882, his son Joseph built the second factory in Sázava and called it after his father.

The destiny of František Glassworks was sealed about 100 years later, after opening of new plants and production halls of Sázavské Glassworks. Its importance declined, and it slowly fell into disrepair. First signs of approaching of better times came in 2010, when it was registered on the list of cultural heritage of the Czech Republic and second turn of luck came when Josef Viewegh's Foundation Glassworks František decided to come to its rescue. In the spring of 2014, it opened a Center of Glass Art here.

In the authentic environment it gives the visitors a remarkable testimony to the ingenuity, resourcefulness and skills of the glassmakers. For example, through a unique collection of works of art created by glass makers at international symposia in Nový Bor. The fragile beauty artists let you look under the hood of their craft, through creative residential workshops, discussions, lectures and conferences.



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Sázava Monastery

Legend has it that the Premyslid Prince Oldřich got lost in the woods on the prowl around the river Sázava. There he met the hermit Procopius, whose magnanimity and wisdom captured his interest. To the evidence of his respect, Oldřich helped Procopius turn his hermitage on the rocky banks of the river into the monastery and Procopius became its first abbot...

As the first Czech saint canonized by Rome, he came to Sázava sometime after 1009 and established a functional hermit settlement around himself. With the help of Premyslid Princes he transformed it into not only a major Benedictine abbey with the old Slavonic liturgy, but also into the centre of Slavonic literacy and arts.

In its thousand-year history, the Sázava Monastery did not enjoy just the good times – it has experienced its ups and downs. Even though Slavic monks were expelled at the end of 11th century, their Latin successors did forget Saint Procopius and in the following centuries they further promoted his memory. Even in a tumult in the period after Joseph II abolished monasteries in 1785, interest in Saint Procopius survived. The Saint Procopius legend lived on in the works of authors, researchers, historians, and archaeologists... And it contributes to the unmistakable atmosphere of the place closely associated with the history of the Czech state. Therefore, it rightly beholds the title of national cultural monument.

Try to follow in the footsteps of St. Procopius. Discover the magic of places, which he passed on his journey through the region.



They are surrounded by mysteries and interesting stories. For example, the Devil's Furrow, which according to legend, was ploughed by St. Procopius who harnessed the devil into his plough. Miraculous power is also attributed to Vosovka spring well where the Prince Oldřich and St. Procopius allegedly met and which is famous for miraculous healings of the sick.

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Prague





The hundred-spired capital city Prague belongs to the most visited European cities. From Posázaví to its threshold it is just short drive by car, train or bus. And maybe because of that the citizens of Prague discovered in the 20's of the 20th century the magic of the River Sázava. In an effort to search for peace and quiet they came here in their free time to escape the bustle of the capital city and they stayed in the log cabins, chalets and cottages on the picturesque river banks or steep rocks above the romantic watercourse. And they keep escaping all the way to present...



To a man longing for unusual experiences, knowledge, adventures and fun, Prague has certainly a lot to offer. It is not only a textbook of architecture with a surprising amount of sights, but also a modern city full of life.

The historical core of Prague covering an area of 866 hectares was registered in 1992 on the list of world cultural and natural heritage of UNESCO. A walk through its streets may change to an interesting trip into the past. It will take the visitor to the Prague

Castle, to the Charles Bridge, Old Town Hall with astronomical clock, a unique Jewish quarter...

Prague, however, is not just a tourist open-air museum; it is primarily a vibrant metropolis with lots of exhibition halls, theatres, cinemas, cafes and restaurants. Come and see!



Photograph Lubomír Stiburek

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