

## The regions of the Czech Republic

The country is divided into *14 regions*.



**Prague** is a treasure of all architectonic styles. Tourists mainly admire the city's historic buildings and music performed in the historic halls. The Romanesque period is represented by the *Basilica of St George* at Prague Castle or the ruins of the *Royal residence of Přemyslids* at Vyšehrad. The most important buildings of the Gothic period are *St Vitus Cathedral* at Prague Castle, the *Old Town Hall* on the Old Town Square, *Charles University* and *Charles Bridge* with 30 statues from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. There are beautiful Renaissance palaces in the Little Town. Unique Prague Baroque is represented by *St Nicholas' Church* or *Černín Palace* and the *Prague Loretto* on Hradčanské Square. The *National Theatre* and *National Museum* are neo-Renaissance buildings. There are also some very interesting Art Nouveau buildings, e.g. the *Municipal House* on Republic Square.

**South Bohemia** is a region of *numerous lakes* and *picturesque villages* with very typical architecture. The *Šumava* Mountains with the *Boubín Virgin Forest*, *Lužnice* and *Vltava* rivers and numerous lakes are a magnet for all nature lovers.

*České Budějovice* has a large quadratic square with valuable Renaissance and Baroque citizens houses. Another striking landmark is the Gothic-Renaissance Black Tower (72 metres high).

*Český Krumlov* is famous for its beautiful Renaissance Castle built on a high rock over the town. Brown bears live in the castle moat. There is an open-air theatre with a revolving auditorium there. Both Krumlov and Budějovice are very attractive medieval towns.

*Tábor* was built on the site of an older town and castle in 1420 by the Hussites and was named after the biblical mountain Tábor. It used to be the centre of Hussite Movement. It has a lot of historical buildings, e.g. the Old Gothic Town Hall with Renaissance gables, a Gothic Church, preserved remains of the fortifications and bastion, Kotnov Castle from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There is also the Jordán Pond, the oldest valley reservoir from 1492. *Hluboká*, built in English Tudor style, houses the Mikoláš Aleš Art Gallery.

**West Bohemia** is a region of world-famous *spa towns* – *Karlovy Vary*, *Františkovy* and *Mariánské Lázně*. Each year thousands of patients from all over the world come to take waters for drinking cures, baths or inhalations to

improve their health. Tourists can also enjoy the beautiful colonnades. The area around Karlovy Vary is famous for *china* and *cut glass*.

**Cheb** is a medieval town founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The most famous sight in Cheb is “*Špalíček*”, a group of little Gothic houses belonging to Jewish shopkeepers from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**East Bohemia** is the region of *the Giant Mountains* which is a national park since 1963. The main mountain centres there are *Špindlerův Mlýn*, *Pec pod Sněžkou* and *Harrachov*.

There is a very interesting *Safari ZOO* in *Dvůr Králové* and *Pardubice* is known for *gingerbread* making.

All visitors will be impressed by the sandstone formations in *Bohemian Paradise*.

*Kutná Hora* with a wonderful *Gothic church of St Barbara*, is the most valuable town preserve after Prague. It was a royal town in the Middle Ages where silver was found and mined and coins were made from it.

**South Moravia** is a region of *vineyards* and *folk architecture* and *customs*.

**Brno** is the metropolis of Moravia, a seat of *Masaryk University*. It has a well-known *exhibition ground* where trade fairs take place. There are architectural monuments from all historical periods. The *Gothic Cathedral of St Peter and Paul* dominates the city. A grim history surrounds the old Gothic and later Renaissance *Špilberk Castle* (rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century into a fortress) which later served as a state prison. A few kilometres north of Brno you can visit the *Moravian Karst*, a natural wonderland with the Punkva *Cave* and the *Macocha Abyss*.

**Telč**, a UNESCO town, is typical of the Renaissance period; there is a *chateau* and a square lined with *Renaissance houses with arcades*.

**North Moravia** is a region of industrial towns as well as mountain ranges. **Ostrava** is the largest town in Northern Moravia. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Rotschilids built *Vitkovice* there. Ostrava used to be a city of *coal-mining* and the *iron* and *steel industries*.

The nearby Jeseníky and Beskydy Mountains form popular recreation areas with plenty of walking trails. They also convert into excellent ski slopes in winter. The *Jeseniky* Mountains were declared a *nature reserve* because of their unique flora.

The *Beskydy* are situated on the Moravian-Silesian-Slovak border. The main places that people visit are *Lysá hora* (the highest peak), *Radhošť* and *Pustevny* with beautiful wooden houses built by the architect Jurkovič. Tourists also often go down to the Valachian open-air museum of folk architecture in *Rožnov pod Radhoštěm* that shows how life used to be.

**Štramberk** is a small town near Nový Jičín. Its centre is a historical town reserve. Below the round tower called *Trúba* (a part of former castle) lies the square with its Baroque houses. There is a cave called *Šipka*, in which the skeleton of a Neanderthal man was found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the bones of a mammoth and rhinoceros, tools and a fireplace, amongst other things.

**Olomouc**, the largest town preserve after Prague, is a cultural centre of Moravia. The last male member of the Přemyslid dynasty, King Václav the Third, was murdered at Olomouc Castle in 1306. It is the seat of the *Palacký University*. There are many valuable sights such as the ruins of the Romanesque *Palace of Přemyslides*, the Gothic *Cathedrals of St Wenceslas* and *St Maurice* and the Renaissance *Town Hall* with an *astronomical clock*. The Baroque *Holy Trinity Column* has been put on the UNESCO list.