

**Czech Republic**  
Land of Stories



# Best of

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# the Czech Republic



# Prague

the cornerstone  
of a magical  
labyrinth



Prague

## No Czech city has been written and talked about as much as Prague, the country's capital.

To stand on one of the most beautiful stone bridges in the world, Charles Bridge, and to look beyond the contours of its silent statues across the Old Town full of winding streets and charming squares up to where Prague Castle, with St Vitus Cathedral, shines on a hill is to have an experience of which even those who live here their whole lives never tire.

**The city of a hundred towers** is a mysterious labyrinth in which history interweaves with the present, a magical place where the most influential men in Europe have come together: rulers, generals, alchemists, Jewish scholars... It was here that Rabbi Loew once brought the clay Golem to life; Arcimboldo created his rich portraits from fruit and vegetables; alchemists' laboratories at the court of Rudolph II sought the Philosopher's Stone; Franz Kafka wrote his dark and oppressive works; the compositions of not only Smetana and Dvořák but Mozart and Liszt met with rapturous ovations; the church reformer Jan Hus preached; and Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Giordano Bruno and Tycho de Brahe pored over astronomical telescopes... Strolling around Prague today

means being part of all the magic and mysteries of the past. The city simply has an atmosphere that no other city in the world can match. You have to become one with it, to let it do its stuff, to become part of it at least for a while – perhaps then it will reveal its secrets to you too.

**Experience the Story of Prague Castle as told at a permanent exhibition on a Gothic floor of the Old Royal Palace at Prague Castle. It is a story that carries the secrets of the final resting place of the most important Czech rulers and saints, a place of historical artefacts, a place of historical styles combined in one unique complex, a place that safeguards the Czech Crown Jewels, the St Vitus Treasure and collections preserved from the past and also a place that is the magnificent seat of the president of the Czech Republic.**



## Highlights

- 1. Prague Castle**  
Climb the Old Castle Steps to Prague Castle and visit its courtyards and the interiors of the Old Royal Palace. From St Vitus Cathedral, head to the Golden Lane – at one time a haven for alchemists and charlatans.
- 2. Vyšehrad**  
Soak up the atmosphere of the Vyšehrad fortified settlement, where prior to the arrival of Christianity pagan princes prayed to forest deities and where today one of the most beautiful churches in Prague stands.
- 3. Charles Bridge**  
Take an early morning stroll across the medieval stone bridge, before its magnificent Baroque statues are besieged by crowds of tourists.
- 4. Old Town Square with the Astronomical Clock**  
Bear in mind that Old Town Square is the true heart of Prague. What's more, you can take in a procession of Apostles at the Old Town Hall's Astronomical Clock at the top of every hour! Then, while enjoying a beer or coffee beneath Baroque arcades, watch the bustle on the square and admire the towers of Týn Church.
- 5. The Jewish town of Josefov**  
Follow in the footsteps of Franz Kafka and Prague's famous rabbis to the narrow lanes of the former Jewish ghetto.
- 6. Palace Gardens**  
Relax on the terraces of the Baroque gardens beneath Prague Castle and stroll through the narrow, steep streets of the Lesser Town.
- 7. Municipal House**  
Take in a Mozart or Vivaldi concert at the Municipal House, the most magnificent Art Nouveau building in the Czech Republic.
- 8. Petřín Hill**  
Surrounded by trees at the top of Petřín, you will forget that you are in the heart of a metropolis.
- 9. The Infant Jesus of Prague**  
Visit the Church of Our Lady Victorious, where pilgrims pray to the famous Infant Jesus of Prague for protection and help.
- 10. Estates Theatre**  
Visit the Estates Theatre to watch The Marriage of Figaro, where it was personally conducted by the genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1787; the opera has been performed there ever since.



# Český Krumlov

a medieval gem on the  
banks of a river



One of the most beautiful historic towns in Europe, included on the UNESCO list of world cultural and natural heritage sites, is located in South Bohemia.

Enjoy one of the many theatre performances that take place from spring to autumn from a unique revolving auditorium.

Getting there from Prague:

🚗 173 km, 2:25 hrs,  
🚆 3:40 hrs, 🚌 3:00 hrs

Nearby sights:

- Vyšší Brod Cistercian Monastery
- Lipno Dam
- Rožmberk nad Vltavou Castle
- Zlatá Koruna Monastery

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



Its labyrinth of narrow and mysterious medieval alleyways has grown up within the grip of uncompromising rocky slopes, on a plain as large as the hand of a friendly giant. The Gothic town of alchemists and stonemasons, court jesters and proud aristocrats, crowned with a **beautiful Renaissance chateau** – the largest in the Czech Republic outside Prague – is full of mysterious magic and secrets. The winding alleyways running from the charming square are shaped by the omnipresent river Vltava, meandering through a town criss-crossed by its many bridges.

auditorium, tour one of the city's many galleries and museums or board a boat and enjoy the views of the town from the river.

Don't miss the **Castle Museum**. Its imaginative exhibition includes a model of the castle as it looked in the 16th century, a lapidarium, presentations on life in past eras and even a cinema. The museum is open year round.

Losing yourself in the maze of proud Renaissance and Gothic houses, **sombre monasteries** and dignified churches is a real delight as there is a new surprise and a new secret around every corner. The town seems like a dream that changes with each exploration. And if you get tired of being lost, take a seat at the chateau theatre's revolving



Castle Garden

# Karlovy Vary

the seductive beauty  
of spa colonnades



Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad)

The most famous Czech spa, the importance of which far exceeds the borders of the country, lies in the westernmost part of Bohemia in the charming Teplá river valley.



Becherovka

The Czech Republic is interwoven with **healing springs** like gold thread running through a rare tapestry. Poděbrady in Central Bohemia, Moravia's Luhačovice, Janské Lázně in the north of the country... However, the highest number of healing springs is found in the famous "spa triangle" of West Bohemia.

Karlovy Vary, with its 12 hot healing springs and famous spring gushing up to 15 metres into the air is the real jewel in the crown of Czech spas.

Legend has it that the now world-famous spa spring was discovered in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the hunting party of king and emperor Charles IV happened upon it.

It is hard to resist Karlovy Vary's carefree spirit and the sense of stately calm on **the promenade** that runs between the splendid facades of grand houses and colonnades richly decorated with columns. Knowing that Peter the Great, Marie

Theresa, Bach, Goethe, Casanova and Beethoven have taken the waters here just adds to the experience.

You will discover another of the town's attractions if, as well as its health-giving waters, you try **Becherovka**, the famous local herb liqueur. Ascending a spa trail through woods to a height above the town and seeing it laid out deep beneath you is equally enchanting. Karlovy Vary will find a place in your heart and make you want to visit again and again.

If you visit Karlovy Vary at the start of summer you will experience the atmosphere of the biggest international film festival east of Cannes. You might even meet a Hollywood star on the red carpet. [www.kviff.com](http://www.kviff.com)



Karlovy Vary

Getting there from Prague:  
🚗 130 km, 1:40 hrs,  
🚆 3:20 hrs, 🚊 2:15 hrs

Nearby sights:  
• Jáchymov Spa  
• Františkovy Lázně  
• Loket Castle

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

# Bathe like a monarch in Mariánské Lázně



Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad)



If you're looking for a tranquil spot well away from the clamour of the city, Mariánské Lázně is the place for you.

From the time that Premonstratensian monks discovered a healing spring in some woodland it was over 600 years before the place acquired spa status, under the name **the Maria Spring**. In the 19th century spa facilities began springing up around it faster than mushrooms in the local forests. When the poet **Goethe** fell passionately in love with the young Ulrika there in 1823, a stay in Mariánské Lázně was an obligatory element of the social season. Guests also included Destinová, Wagner, Chopin, Kafka, Edison and hundreds of others.

healing springs with a high mineral salt content in the town and its environs.

Enjoy a **mineral bath** in the Royal Cabin, which was used by Great Britain's King Edward VII, or in the Emperor Franz Joseph Cabin.

**England's King Edward VII opened the first golf course in Bohemia here in 1905. The highlight of the club's history was when, in 2003, it won the right to use the title Royal Golf Club thanks to a generous decision by Queen Elisabeth II. This is just one reason why Mariánské Lázně is the jewel in the crown of Czech spas.**

**Getting there from Prague:**  
 🚗 170 km, 1:50 hour,  
 🚆 2:50 hrs

**Nearby sights:**

- The town of Chodová Planá
- Teplá Monastery
- Bečov nad Teplou Chateau

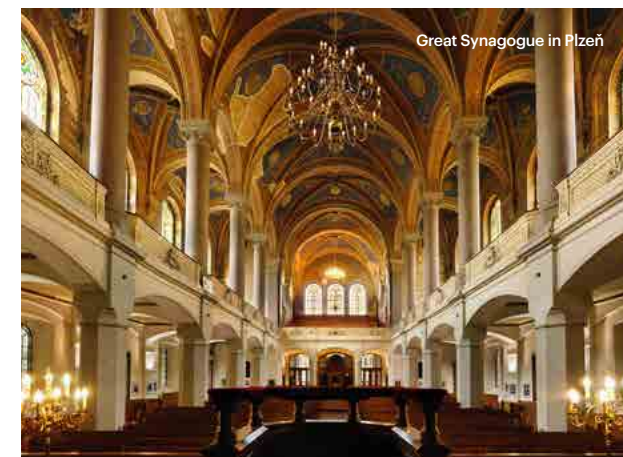
[www.marianskekazne.cz](http://www.marianskekazne.cz)

Its **cast-iron colonnade** with a **Singing Fountain** – which resounds with classics of world music ever odd hour (in operation from April to October) – is a real gem and undoubtedly its most popular sight. If you have a romantic spirit, come back in the evening when the music is accompanied by a light show. You can then stroll and taste **the mineral waters** along a colonnade with a stately cast-iron structure and a wooden coffered ceiling. There are close to 100



Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad)

# Plzeň – the City of Beer and Culture



Great Synagogue in Plzeň

The name Plzeň carries the aroma of a freshly pulled beer.

However, before you sit down to a half-litre of the best Plzeň (Pilsner) **lager**, take a stroll around the historic centre of this ancient settlement. Be sure to take in the wonderful **Renaissance Town Hall**, built according to a plan drawn up by Italian builder Giovanni de Stafia. **The Gothic Cathedral of St Bartholomew** stands out on Plzeň's skyline, while **the Great Synagogue** (1893) is one of the largest Jewish places of worship in Europe.

Plzeň has an artistic and joyful spirit that it shares generously.

The living art that pulses through the streets is greatly complemented by several important theatres, a philharmonic orchestra, galleries, cultural cafés and countless music, theatre and folk festivals. Budding enthusiasts show off art that mashes up genres – in the shadow of the Cathedral of St Bartholomew, on the busy main street, in park and in underground clubs.

A rich programme features all kinds of arts events from theatre, music, dance, design and architecture, industrial and Baroque, to exhibitions and even new circus.

It would also be a mistake not to get to know the real spirit of the city. It is in the walls of houses and on the streets and squares and can literally be felt at every step. After all,



Pilsner Urquell brewery

**Discover the secret of beer-making in the cellars of the Prazdroj (Pilsner Urquell) brewery, which boasts a wonderful gate and a water tower reminiscent of a lighthouse.**

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

**Getting there from Prague:**  
 🚗 91 km, 1 hrs, 🚆 1:35 hrs,  
 🚆 1 hrs

**Nearby sights:**

- Plasy Monastery
- Kladruby Monastery
- Horšovský Týn Chateau

[www.visitpilsen.eu](http://www.visitpilsen.eu)



Plzeň

# Fascinating rock towns



## Bohemian Paradise



Discover the unique harmony of bizarre **stone towns**, deep pine forests, majestic **castles and chateaus** and get lost for a while in the Bohemian Paradise rock labyrinth – a **UNESCO geopark!**

The countless little paths that run through the rocks of Bohemian Paradise's sandstone rock towns and labyrinths are entrancing. You will pass through narrow crevices between rocks and climb between them until you reach wonderful lookout points. **The Mariánská Vyhlička** is regarded as the loveliest lookout in the Hruboskalské rock town. It affords wonderful views of Ještěd and in particular Hrubá Skála Chateau and the ruins of Trosky Castle.



Bohemian Paradise

Thanks to the work of natural forces you can admire effusions of volcanic mountains that today comprise spots overlooking the landscape with amazing views, including from the Kozákov Lookout, from the ruins of Trosky Castle and from Zebín Hill.

### Transport from Prague to Turnov:

🚗 90 km, 1 hrs,  
🚊 2:00 hrs, 🚋 1:30 hrs

### Nearby sights:

- Kost Castle, Sychrov Chateau
- Bozkov Caves
- Škoda Museum in Mladá Boleslav

[www.cesky-raj.info](http://www.cesky-raj.info)



Pravčická Sandstone Gate

## Bohemian Switzerland

At the Bohemian Switzerland National Park you will discover an unspoilt landscape of sandstone rock towns, gorges and lookout points perfect for walks and biking. The monumental sandstone arch **Pravčická brána** (Pravčická Gate) is not just a symbol of the national park – it is the largest natural rock arch anywhere in Europe.

A short distance away you will find the **Sokolí hnízd**o (Falcon's Nest) Chateau, once the holiday retreat of the Clary-Aldringen aristocratic family. At several places in Bohemian Switzerland it is possible to admire springs of crystal clear water that bubble up from large underground lakes.

### Transport from Prague to Hřensko:

🚗 130 km, 1:50 hrs,  
🚊 1:30 hrs to Děčín  
From there, buses go to Hřensko-Mezná.

### Nearby sights:

- Ústí nad Labem
- Děčín
- Velké Žernoseky

### Other rock towns in Bohemia

wonderful Kokořín, Broumovsko, Adršpach-Teplice Rocks  
[www.kokorinsko.ochranaprirody.cz](http://www.kokorinsko.ochranaprirody.cz)  
[www.broumovsko.ochranaprirody.cz](http://www.broumovsko.ochranaprirody.cz)  
[www.skaly-adrspach.cz/en](http://www.skaly-adrspach.cz/en)

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

# Mysterious Kutná Hora



Kutná Hora: Historical Town Centre with the Church of St Barbara and the Cathedral of Our Lady at Sedlec



Kutná Hora

## Kutná Hora, a silver town, deserves its second title "the country's treasure chest".

Its silver mining wealth helped the Czech kingdom to flourish.

Its mysteries include cathedrals, monasteries, noblemen's houses, mysterious corners, vaulted cellars and gems of **Gothic and Baroque architecture**, urban planning and sculpture. In the Middle Ages silver was mined there, coins were minted, trade blossomed and it was even the seat of Czech kings.

Standing beneath the arches of the Church of St Barbara, one of the most beautiful Gothic cathedrals in Europe, is an awe-inspiring experience. You can also stroll through the courtyard and chambers of the Italian Court, once the palace of King Wenceslas IV, or descend with bated breath into the ossuary of a Cistercian monastery, taking in with a mixture of awe and unease its altars, coats of arms, chandeliers, pyramids and obelisks made from the bones of plague victims. Another attraction is the unique Gothic Stone House, where you can become a medieval craftsman or cook for a while...



Kutná Hora

Alongside the **Church of St Barbara**, the historical heart of the town is the **Cathedral of the Ascension of Our Lady and St John the Baptist**, which is included on the **UNESCO World Heritage List**.

When touring the town don't neglect to visit the **Stone Fountain** and the Italian Court, which served as the central mint and the seat of Czech kings. In the **Czech Museum of Silver** you can learn about local silver mining in a very lively manner. On the museum tour you will pass – equipped only with a lamp, helmet and miner's tunic – through the 250-metre tunnel of a medieval mine.

**The Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region (GASK) is located in a former Jesuit college and focuses on Czech modern art of the late 19th and 20th centuries. GASK also shows contemporary art.**



Kutná Hora – Church of St Barbara



Cathedral of Our Lady at Sedlec

Getting there from Prague:  
🚗 84 km, 1:30 hrs, 🚊 1 hrs

### Nearby sights:

- Ossuary at Sedlec
- Žleby Chateau
- Český Šternberk Castle

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

# Třebíč – a town of tolerance



Jewish Quarter and St Procopius' Basilica in Třebíč

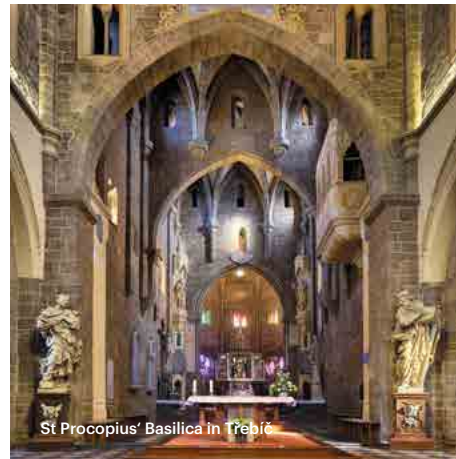
Jews and Christians side by side, peaceful and friendly neighbours with different faiths but one destiny.

Třebíč's Jewish Quarter is one of the oldest and most valuable in the Czech Republic and is the only Jewish historical landmark outside Israel included on the **UNESCO World Heritage List**. The preserved ground plan, which comprises 116 surviving houses and narrow alleyways, represents the original extent of the ghetto.

You will find various kinds of tombstones in the **Jewish cemetery** in the centre of Třebíč, with their styles documenting the development of Jewish burial art from the Renaissance to Baroque to Classicism.

The oldest dates from 1625. The cemetery was created in close proximity to the Jewish quarter on the slope Hrádek – i.e., on a hill outside the town, following the Jewish tradition. Covering almost 12,000 square metres, it is one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in the Czech Republic.

When in Třebíč be sure not to miss the **Basilica of St Procopius**, while the town's Karlovo náměstí is one of the largest squares in the country. And climb the lookout tower at the Church of St Martin for a great view.



St Procopius' Basilica in Třebíč

Take the educational trail that leads you through one of Europe's best preserved ghettos, a place that reflects the ingenuity of its inhabitants as regards usage of the space allotted to them. Get to know the stories of **Třebíč's Jewish settlement!**



**Getting there from Prague:**  
 🚗 180 km, 1:55 hrs, 🚝 2:45 hrs

**Nearby sights:**

- Zelená hora, Žďár nad Sázavou
- The town of Znojmo
- The town of Jihlava

[www.visittrebic.eu](http://www.visittrebic.eu)



Třebíč

# Žďár nad Sázavou – a town marked by Santini's genius



Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelená hora

Visit one of Santini's most distinctive works – the Church of St John of Nepomuk in Zelená hora.

The building, which has been included on the **UNESCO World Heritage List**, was intended to celebrate the remarkable figure of **St John of Nepomuk** – and you yourself can judge how successful its creators were.

St John of Nepomuk is symbolised by a **five-pointed star**, in reference to the legend that a five-pointed crown appeared in the place where he met his death in the river Vltava. The symbol is also visible in other elements of the construction. The church's dome is dominated by a large red tongue, another symbol of torture. It is surrounded by a ring of flames through which the rays of the sun shine, while some windows are also in the shape of a tongue.

The most important statue in the church is of course that of the martyr who is standing on a globe and appears to be ascending.

While the Church of St John of Nepomuk is the main reason people visit Žďár nad Sázavou, it is by no means its only historical landmark of note. The Cistercian



Church of St John of Nepomuk



Chateau of the Kinský family and the monastery

**Getting there from Prague:**  
 🚗 159 km, 1:50 hrs, 🚝 2:45 hrs

**Nearby sights:**

- Lipnice nad Sázavou Castle
- Pernštejn Castle

[www.zelena-hora.eu](http://www.zelena-hora.eu)



Church of St John of Nepomuk

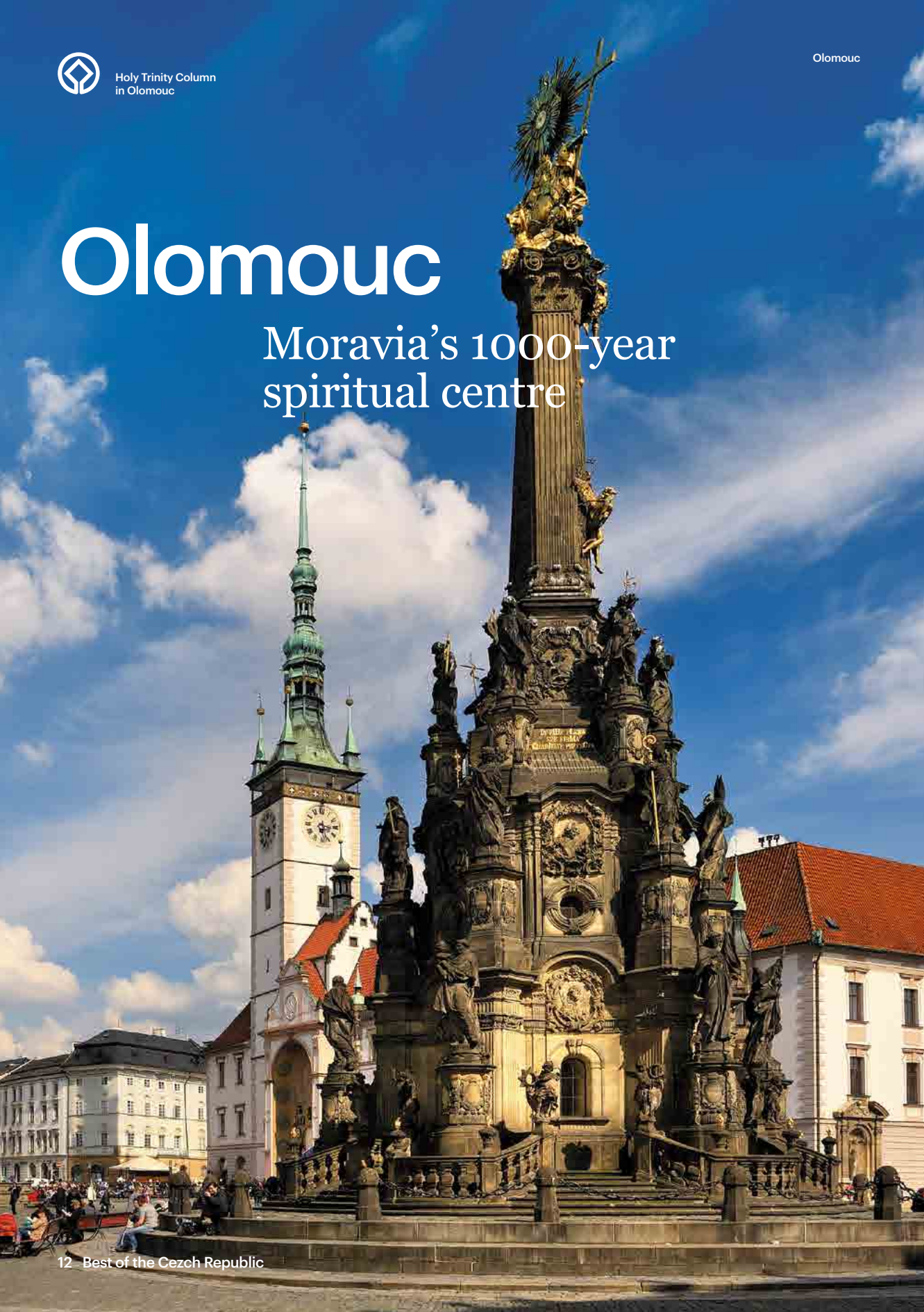


Holy Trinity Column  
in Olomouc

Olomouc

# Olomouc

Moravia's 1000-year  
spiritual centre



Holy Hill near Olomouc

In the very heart of Moravia, amidst the most fertile land in the country, in a district known as Haná, proudly stands the ancient city of Olomouc, since time immemorial one of the most important centres of the Bohemian kingdom.

Imbued with a special dignity and spiritual power, it is full of history, a **city of Baroque wonder** and reverence to God.

Visiting Olomouc is like meeting a wise and venerable old man who has travelled many roads and whose word is worth a hundred books. One is taken aback at every turn by the unexpected number of important and imposing historical landmarks – grand cathedrals, charming little churches, splendid burghers' palaces and monumental monasteries.

It boasts the captivating **Bishop's Palace**, a masterpiece of European Romanesque architecture, Gothic churches and cathedrals, Renaissance palaces with richly-**decorated facades** – but above all Olomouc Baroque. Wonderful fountains, the Archbishop's Palace,

the Hradisko monastery (known as the El Escorial of Moravia), the pilgrimage **basilica on the Holy Hill** and, first and foremost, an imposing, **UNESCO-protected plague column**, the largest Baroque group of sculptures in Central Europe. It also has one curiosity – a workers' astronomical clock from 1955.

The Haná region stands out not just for its hospitable climate but also healthy natural regional specialities. The local cuisine's most famous product is the cheese **Olomoucké tvarůžky**. Delicious, low in fat and with a distinctive aroma, it is available in various forms in local restaurants. [www.tvaruzky.cz](http://www.tvaruzky.cz)



Cathedral of St Wenceslas

**The Holy Trinity Column in the centre of Olomouc is a pinnacle of Central European Baroque and is a UNESCO protected historical landmark.**

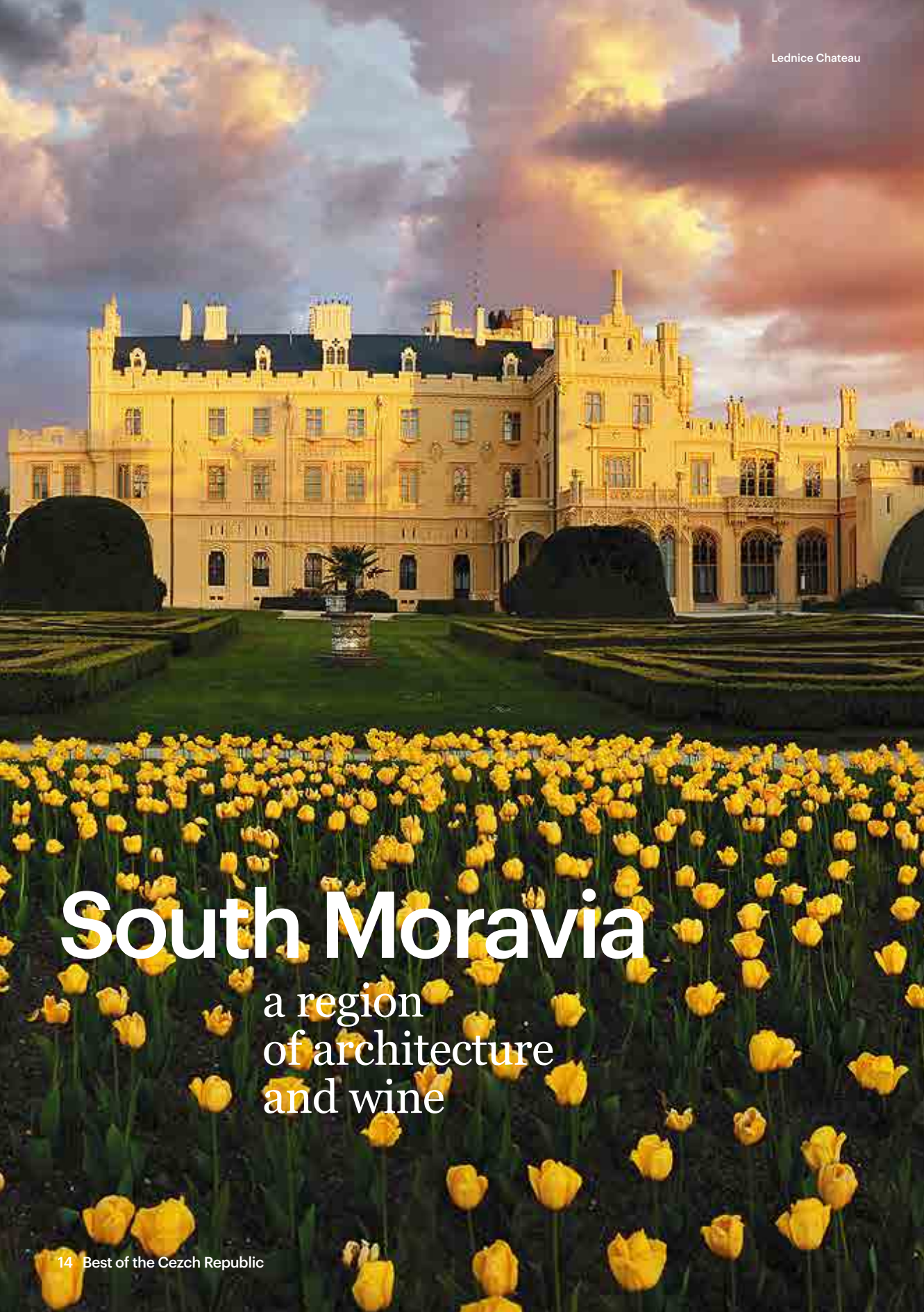
**Getting there from Prague:**  
 🚗 280 km, 2:40 hrs,  
 🚆 2:20 hrs

**Nearby sights:**  
 • The Holy Hill near Olomouc  
 • Bouzov Castle  
 • Helfštýn Castle

[www.tourism.olomouc.eu](http://www.tourism.olomouc.eu)







Lednice Chateau

# South Moravia

a region  
of architecture  
and wine



Tugendhat Villa

## Brno



Tugendhat Villa  
in Brno

The second largest city in the Czech Republic is located in the fertile lowlands of South Moravia. Brno is a city where one never feels lost, because despite its size it is intimate and friendly. Its dominant structures are the Gothic **castle of Špilberk** and the neo-Gothic Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul – even though the two were built 650 years apart.



Brno  
Lednice-Valtice  
Complex

It is a magical experience to encounter, next to each other, its opulent Baroque churches and modernist exhibition palaces (Brno is the trade fair centre of the Czech Republic), plague monuments, fountains and noblemen's palaces, a monumental neo-Renaissance theatre and numerous Functionalist gems. One of the most important Functionalist buildings in the world, and one of the most fascinating villas, is the **Villa Tugendhat**. The **UNESCO-protected** villa was built in 1930 by the world-renowned architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and is a wonderful example of modern architecture.

**Getting there from Prague:**  
🚗 210 km, 2 hrs,  
🚆 2:40 hrs, 🚊 2:50 hrs

**Nearby sights:**  
• Slavkov (Austerlitz) Chateau  
• Moravian Karst

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



Brno



Valtice

## The Lednice-Valtice Complex



Lednice-Valtice  
Cultural Landscape

In a romantic landscape lies a unique complex of historic buildings beautifully set in natural surroundings.

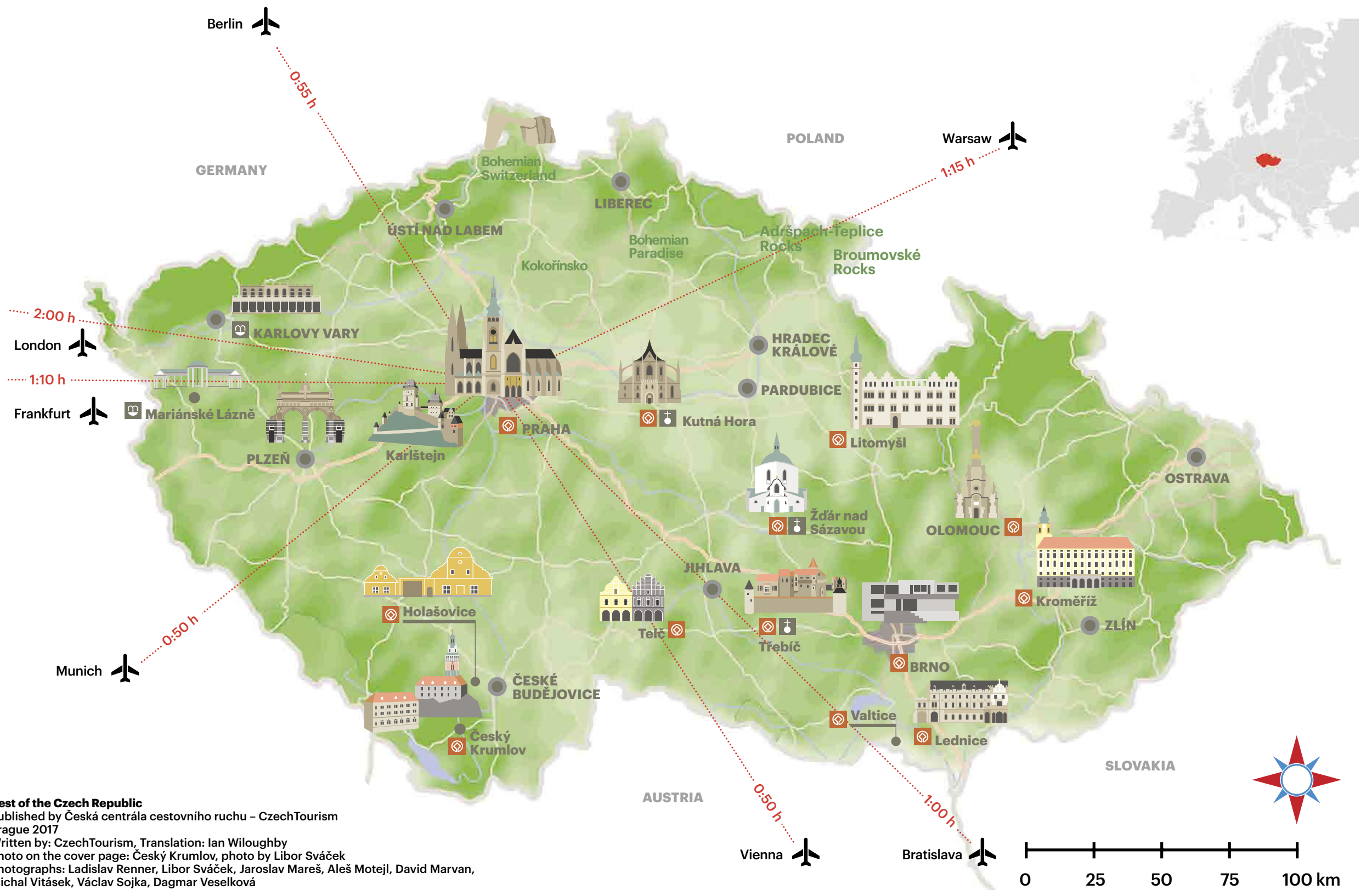
The majestic Baroque **Valtice Chateau** is on one side and the stately **Lednice Chateau**, built in the Tudor Gothic style, is on the other, surrounded by a system of artificial lakes and river channels. In between, there are Chinese gazebos, bridges, romantic summer houses, hunting lodges in the Empire style, a colonnade with beautiful vistas and even a **minaret** from which there is a splendid view of the countryside; this is the Lednice-Valtice Complex, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

**Climb onto a bicycle and cross a landscape of wine cellars in a wine-growing micro-region known as the "Blue Mountains" on the Velkopavlovická Wine Trail.**  
[www.stezky.cz](http://www.stezky.cz)

**Getting there from Prague:**  
🚗 255 km, 2:30 hrs,  
🚆 2:40 hrs

**Nearby sights:**  
• Pálava Protected Landscape Area  
• Mikulov Chateau  
• Valtice Chateau

[www.jizni-morava.cz](http://www.jizni-morava.cz)



ISBN: 978-80-7513-161-4, First Issue



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**Tugendhat Villa  
in Brno**