

Chapter 11

DAY TRIPS FROM PRAGUE

11

Updated by
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 Sights
★★★★★

 Restaurants
★★★★☆

 Hotels
★★★★☆

 Shopping
★★★★☆

 Nightlife
★★★★☆

WELCOME TO DAY TRIPS FROM PRAGUE

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Find a storybook come to life:** A true medieval castle—babbling brook and all—can be found in Karlštejn.

★ **Take a historic tour:** The home of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination started World War I, is remarkably well preserved in Konopiště; look for the bear living in the moat.

★ **Visit spooky Sedlec:** The *kostnice* (ossuary) outside of Kutná Hora is a mesmerizing church decorated with human bones.

★ **Sample the wine:** It's not all about beer. Try the locally produced wine at pretty Mělník.

★ **Pay remembrance to the past:** In Terezín, a baroque fortress turned into a concentration camp is both powerful and chilling.

1 Český Šternberk. An enormous family-owned fortification perched high over the river.

2 Karlštejn. The quickest castle excursion ticks all the European fairy-tale fortress boxes.

3 Konopiště Castle. A castle with a moat of bears, a hall of horns, and an untamed park.

4 Křivoklát. An evocative 12th-century fortress, complete with a torture-chamber tour.

5 Kutná Hora. Home to a macabre bone church and a majestic cathedral.

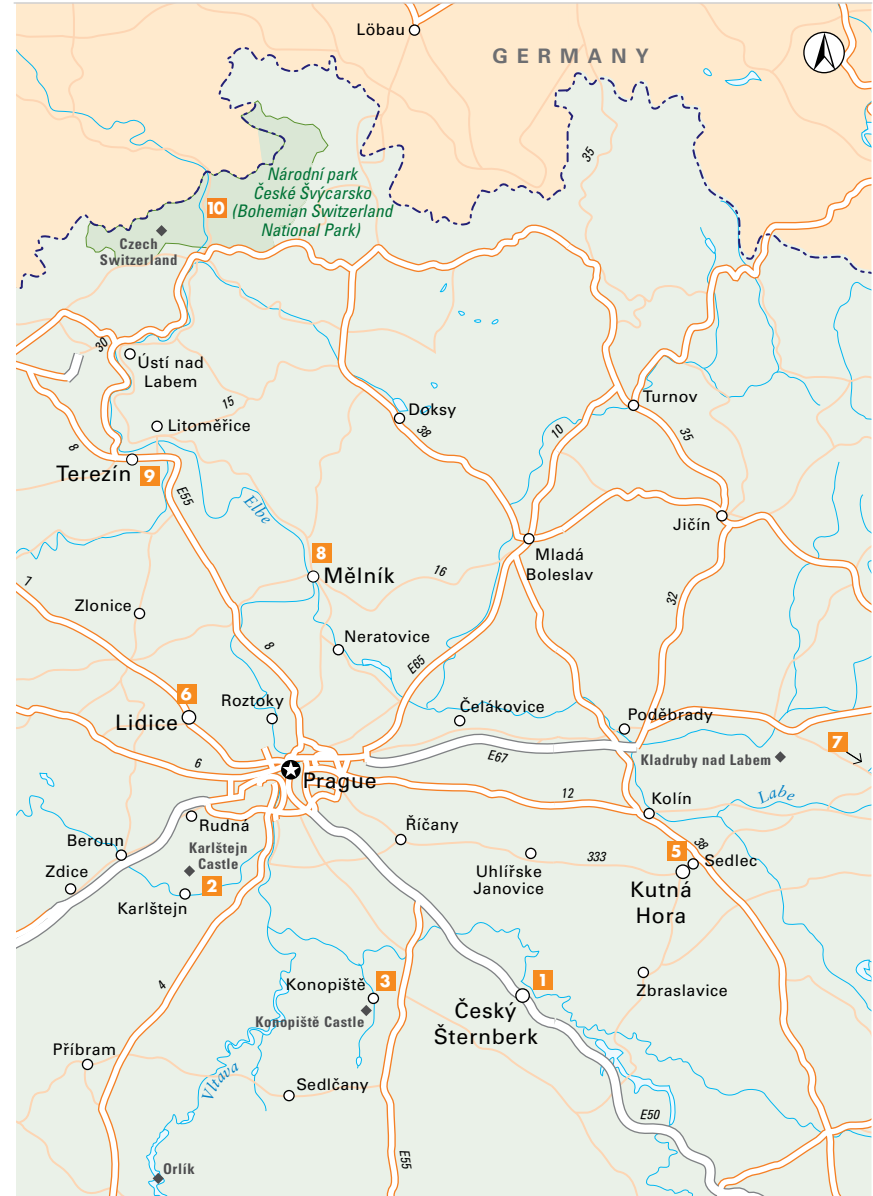
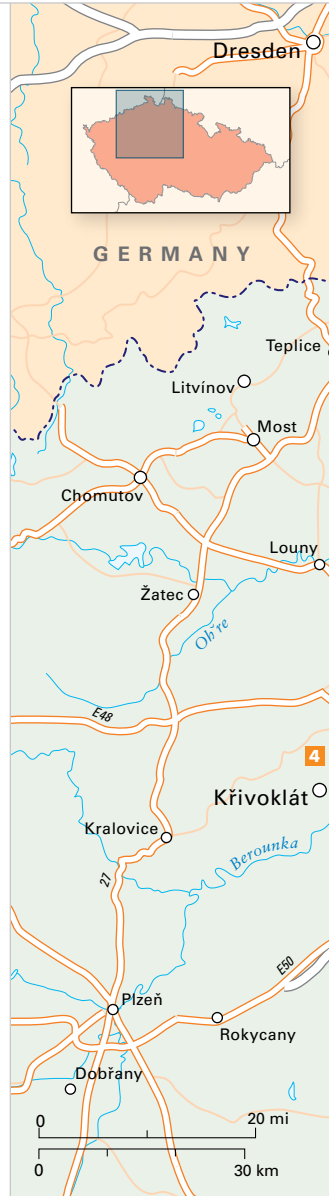
6 Lidice. A haunting memorial to the horrors of World War II.

7 Litomyšl. This pretty town is dominated by a UNESCO-listed Renaissance chateau.

8 Mělník. Toast this beautiful medieval town with a glass (or two) of delicious local wine.

9 Terezín. A glimpse into a former World War II Jewish ghetto and concentration camp.

10 Czech Switzerland. Excellent hiking opportunities in mystical landscapes.



As the saying goes, the world is a book, and those who don't travel read only one page. The same applies to visitors who come to the Czech Republic but visit only Prague. Don't get us wrong: it's a great page to read. But if you want the whole story, you need to get out of the capital and embrace the adventures beyond.

You can stay overnight or for a whole weekend, but it's not essential; there's plenty to do with just a few hours set aside. The UNESCO-listed Kutná Hora is worth a visit for its bone church alone; one of the most memorable, and strangely beautiful, attractions close to Prague. The surrounding town is charming, too, and offers plenty of options if you do plan an overnight stay.

There's more charm to be found in the myriad castles that dot the landscape around Prague. Karlštejn is a typical fairy-tale chateau atop a mountain; Křivoklát is a wonderfully secluded and quiet fortification; and Konopiště is the onetime hunting lodge of the doomed Archduke Franz Ferdinand. All the castles offer great hiking opportunities, but if hiking is your thing, it's worth going farther afield to the breathtaking Pravčická brána (Pravčická Archway), or rock bridge. Here, you can roam through the forest or take a guided boat ride through gorges. If you want to sample some Czech wine, Mělník has vineyards aplenty. And there are more sobering—in every sense—sights, too, such as Lidice and Terezín, which both tell terrible tales of the horrors of World War II.

Traveling may not come as easy as in Prague, with fewer tourist facilities, fewer English speakers, and fewer nightlife and entertainment options. But the trade-off will be more bang for your buck and a genuine feel for the country and its people, plus a real sense of adventure.

Planning

When to Go

Many of the Czech Republic's castles and monuments are closed November through March. Some, especially those closer to Prague, stay open year-round although with shortened hours. The busiest time for a visit is June through August; April and October are less crowded. When school is in session, expect school groups during the week.

Getting Here

In general, buses are faster and cheaper, while trains are easier to navigate and a bit more comfortable. Bus drivers don't typically announce the stops, so when boarding, ask the driver to let you

know when you should get off. If you are planning a trip, it's worth it to know your options ahead of time; visit www.idos.cz for an online timetable (an English version is available). If you are taking a bus from Florenc, go to the station a day or two before your trip and purchase your tickets. People with tickets board first, and you'll get an assigned seat (and not have to stand). The ticket will be printed with the platform number. There's a computer terminal in Florenc station where you can check bus times as well.

Guided Tours from Prague

Guided bus tours are available from several companies for Karlštejn, Konopiště, Kutná Hora, Český Šternberk, and Terezín. The ease of booking and traveling (compared with figuring out the train and bus schedules or renting a car) are often worth the time constraints and extra cost. Wittmann Tours specializes in tours to Terezín as well as to Jewish sites all over the country. If you are looking for something more specialized, Avantgarde Prague offers tailor-made tours.

Biko Adventures Prague

BICYCLE TOURS | FAMILY | Biko offers a gentle and family-friendly full-day tour by e-bike through small villages (with stops for beer and baked goods) to Hrad Karlštejn (Karlštejn Castle). It's around 65 km (40 miles) there and back. Other options include a bike tour through huge blocks of flats ending in a lush national park. [✉ Vratislavova 3, Vyšehrad](mailto:Vratislavova.3@vysehrad.cz) [☎ 733-750-990](tel:733-750-990) [🌐 www.bikoadventures.com](http://www.bikoadventures.com) [📄](#) *Line B: Karlovo náměstí.*

Premiant City Tour

GUIDED TOURS | This company has knowledgeable guides and a wide range of day trips, from Karlštejn to Kutná Hora. Standard tours, which are available in several languages, are in small groups,

but individual or private groups are also available on request. Book online or at the easy-to-find booths on Na příkopě. [✉ Na příkopě 23, Nové Město](mailto:Na.prikope.23@novemesto.cz) [☎ 606-600-123](tel:606-600-123) [🌐 www.premiant.cz](http://www.premiant.cz).

Wittmann Tours

GUIDED TOURS | Interesting and informative trips with a particular focus on Jewish sites and history. As well as offering day trips to the former Jewish ghetto of Terezín (with an optional add-on of Lidice) the company has a full day tour to Kutná Hora and Kolín, once the country's second main Jewish center. [✉ Novotrneho lávka 5, Staré Město](mailto:Novotrneho.lavka.5@novemesto.cz) [☎ 222-252-472](tel:222-252-472) [🌐 www.wittmann-tours.com](http://www.wittmann-tours.com).

Restaurants and Hotels

In general, food and lodging should be cheaper than in Prague, but some restaurants, especially those close to the center or near a tourist attraction, can be just as pricey. You won't find the same range of options either, and be prepared for fewer English speakers—but people will probably be friendlier than in the big city. Anyway, that's all part of the adventure.

Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit Fodors.com.

What it Costs In koruny

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under 150 Kč	150 Kč–300 Kč	301 Kč–500 Kč	over 500 Kč
HOTELS			
under 3,500 Kč	3,500 Kč–5,000 Kč	5,001 Kč–7,000 Kč	over 7,000 Kč

Český Šternberk

48 km (30 miles) southeast of Prague.

A real-deal Czech castle, complete with descendants of its 13th-century founders still living inside. Český Šternberk may not be the easiest day trip from Prague, but for history, atmosphere, and authenticity, it's hard to beat.

GETTING HERE

There are daily trains to Český Šternberk, but it isn't the easiest trip. Trains leave from Hlavní nádraží (Prague's main train station) and stop in many small towns on the way; you have to change trains in Čerčany, about one hour out of Prague. The good news is that the last leg, which runs alongside the Sázava River, is very scenic. Also, in summer you may be lucky enough to score a ride on an old-fashioned steam train; ask at the main station for the *parní vlak* (steam train). Whichever trains you end up taking, expect a two-hour journey time.

If you're driving, you will take the D1 highway out of Prague (the main highway to Brno) and take the turnoff to Český Šternberk, following Route 111 to the castle, which perches over the highway. The drive takes around 45 minutes.

TIMING

Summer sees the most tourists at Český Šternberk, and it can get very busy June through August. Nevertheless, the daily falconer displays can make a peak-time visit worthwhile. May and September are a little quieter yet still warm, while October has a historical festival that features "live" characters from the castle's history. From November to March, as well as midweek in April and October, the castle is open only by appointment.

Sights

Český Šternberk

CASTLE/PALACE | Dramatic Český Šternberk looms over the Sázava River and surrounding countryside and looks positively forbidding at night. Perched on an outcropping of rock, this 13th-century castle is not only striking from the exterior; it has the period interiors to match.

Founded in 1241 by Zdeslav of Divišov, it was originally built as a fortress. Amazingly, descendants of Zdeslav have remained in the castle, making it their residence through the centuries and up to the present day. Šternberk is the Czech spelling of the German composite word Sternberg (it was customary to use German names at the time), which roughly translates to "star on the hill." Look out for the eight-pointed gold star on the family coat of arms, which can be found throughout the property.

The exterior of the castle retains a late Gothic look, while the interiors were mainly redone in a baroque style. The latest major work was done in 1911, when electricity and water were added. Guided tours lasting around 45 minutes are required to see the interior, but the rooms are gorgeous and the guides are excellent. There are regular English-language tours in summer, but out of peak season it's best to call or email in advance to book your place.

Furnishings date back to the Renaissance and are either original from the castle or brought from other Šternberk properties around Europe. Beautiful frescoed walls and stucco ceilings can be found throughout, including the Knight's Hall lined with paintings. You'll see items in the rococo and Czech baroque style, Louis XVI furnishings, and an amazing collection of copper engravings dating back to the 17th century.



Český Šternberk, or the "Star on the Hill," lives up to its name.

Look out for a (literal) family tree, with portraits of generations of the Šternberk family. Its members included scientists, bishops, officers, and government employees, all of whom left their mark on aspects of the country's history. One even helped found the Národní muzeum (National Museum) in Prague.

During the nationalization period under communism, the castle was seized and became government property; however Jiří Šternberk agreed to stay on as caretaker and guide, thus keeping the family's connection to the castle. The Šternberks received the property back in 1992, and Jiří's son Zdeněk still lives in four rooms on the second floor.

There are some lovely walks in the woodlands around the castle. One route leads to Hladomorna, a stand-alone fortress tower you can climb during the summer for a fine view of the castle, river, and surrounding forest. ☒ Český Šternberk 1 ☎ 317-855-101 🌐 www.hradceskysternberk.cz 🗨️ Guided tour in English 230 Kč, night tour 300 Kč 📅 Closed Mon. Closed

weekdays in Apr. and Oct. Nov.–Mar. by appointment only.

Hotels

Parkhotel Český Šternberk

📍 | **HOTEL** | The Parkhotel—on the opposite side of the river from the castle—doesn't have much competition; it's one of the only hotels in town. **Pros:** magnificent view of the castle; quality seasonal food in restaurant; incredibly good value. **Cons:** not all rooms face the castle; breakfast not included; can only book by email or phone. 📍 Rooms from: 750 Kč ☎ Český Šternberk 46 ☎ 774-443-854 🌐 www.phcs.cz 📅 Closed Oct.–Mar., except for group bookings 🛏️ 19 rooms 🚰 No meals.

Karlštejn

29 km (18 miles) southwest of Prague.

If you've only a few hours to spend outside of Prague, going to Karlštejn is

an easy and delightful day trip. The town itself seems to exist mainly to support visitors to the castle, so if you are looking for some Czech authenticity this probably isn't the one to choose. But for castle lovers and nature lovers, it's a lovely outing.

GETTING HERE

There's no bus service to Karlštejn from Prague, but it's a quick, simple, and scenic train journey (around 65 Kč) from the main station. Many trains leave every day from Hlavní nádraží—look on the schedule for trains heading to Beroun. When you arrive at Karlštejn station, simply follow the crowds across the river and up to the castle. On the very rare occasions where there's no one else around, here's what you need to do: Exit the station, turn right, and walk back along the small lane parallel to the railway tracks to find the town. Follow the signs reading "Hrad." After a few minutes, cross a bridge over the river, and turn right onto the main road, which resembles a small highway (the absence of a pedestrian sidewalk doesn't bother the locals). Be wary of traffic, but continue for another two or three minutes until you reach a road going up the hill to your left. This is the main road up to the village and castle.

A visit to Karlštejn can also be combined with a challenging 13-km (8-mile) hike through beautiful forests and along a small wooded waterfall from Beroun. Get off at Beroun train station, walk toward town, and make a right just before an underpass. Follow the red-marked trail through the hills and dales, passing through the tiny village of Svatý Jan pod Skalou before arriving in Karlštejn—just above the village—about three hours later. Don't set out without water, good shoes, and, above all, a decent local hiking map, available at the visitor center.

By car from Prague, take Highway 4—on the western side of the Vltava—to the edge of the city, then go right on Highway 115, southwest through Radotín.

Take the Karlštejn exit, which puts you on Highway 116, and after a few more minutes you end up beside the Berounka River. You can find a large parking lot at the bottom of the hill below Karlštejn. No vehicles are allowed on the road up to the castle.

TIMING

It's possible to visit Karlštejn all year round, but peak season is from Easter to October. In September, there's a wine festival, complete with tastings, craft booths, artistic displays, and a visit from Charles IV himself (sort of). December is also a good time to visit, as there are often Christmas concerts on weekends—and far fewer crowds than in summer.



★ Hrad Karlštejn (Karlštejn Castle)

CASTLE/PALACE | If it's a picture-book European castle you're after, look no further. Perched atop a wooded hillside, Karlštejn comes complete with battlements, turrets, and towers. Once Charles IV's summer palace, Karlštejn was originally built to hold and guard the crown jewels (which were moved to Prague Castle's Katedrála sv. Víta, or St. Vitus Cathedral, in 1619). There is a fairly strenuous hike up to the castle—lined with souvenir stands and overpriced snack bars—but it's worth the journey. Once you've reached the top, take time to walk the ramparts and drink in the panorama of the village and countryside below. There's a slightly bewildering list of different interior tours, but the pick of the bunch is Tour 2, which includes the castle's greatest treasure, the Chapel of the Holy Cross, which once held the crown jewels. Tours of the chapel are limited (and more expensive than the other tour route), so you must book in advance. There's an exterior tour, too, if it's a sunny day, or you can poke your head around the exterior courtyards at no cost. Because of its proximity



Karlštejn Castle is a 45-minute train ride from Prague, and one of the most convenient and popular escapes from the Czech capital city.

to Prague, it is the most-visited site outside of the Czech capital, so be prepared for crowds, especially in the high summer months. Email for tour reservations. ☒ *Karlštejn* 18 ☎ 311-681-617 🌐 www.hrad-karlstejn.cz 🗨 *Tours from 1320 Kč* ☹ *Tower closed Oct.–Apr., chapel closed Nov.–Apr.*

🍴 Restaurants

Pod dračí skálou
 \$\$ | **CZECH** | This traditional hunting lodge-style restaurant is the most rustic and fun of Karlštejn's eateries. To find it, follow the main road uphill out of the village about a third of a mile from town. **Known for:** large portions of good food; hit-or-miss service; accommodation also available. 📍 *Average main: 220 Kč* ☒ *Karlštejn* 130 ☎ 311-681-177 🌐 www.poddraciskalou.eu.

U Janů

\$ | **CZECH** | The best of the many touristy restaurants in the town proper, this spot

is just on the upper edge of the village, not far from where the castle path starts. It also offers a nice big terrace with slight views of the castle. **Known for:** good food at a reasonable price; location right on the main street; option of three suites and a double room. 📍 *Average main: 130 Kč* ☒ *Karlštejn* 28 ☎ 725-805-965 🌐 www.ujanukarlstejn.cz.

🏨 Hotels

Hotel Karlštejn
 \$ | **HOTEL** | The best "proper" hotel in town, the Karlštejn offers 11 modern but pared-down rooms. **Pros:** clean and modern rooms; outdoor pool with view of castle; free parking spaces. **Cons:** no restaurant for dinner; some rooms are poky; lacking an elevator. 📍 *Rooms from: 2400 Kč* ☒ *Karlštejn* 7 ☎ 311-600-900 🌐 www.hotel-karlstejn.cz 🗨 11 rooms 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

Konopiště Castle

45 km (27 miles) southeast of Prague.

Bears, hunting trophies, and history are found at the country residence of the doomed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose 1914 assassination ignited World War I and changed the course of modern history.

GETTING HERE

For being so close to Prague, Konopiště can feel a little remote. Trains leave from Hlavní nádraží to Benešov u Prahy and cost around 80 Kč. However, there's still another 2½ km (1½ miles) from here to Zámek Konopiště (Konopiště Castle). You can either walk the last leg (simply follow the signs), hop on a bus (438 or 455; 18 Kč) or take a taxi (though this will take longer than the bus). By car, take the D1 highway southwest toward Brno, and exit following the signs to Benešov. Signs on this road lead you to Konopiště.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS *Turistické informační centrum.* (Tourist Information Center) ☒ Konopiště, Benešov ☎ 317-705-681 for main tourist office in Benešov.

Sights

Zámek Konopiště (Konopiště Castle)

CASTLE/PALACE | Set in a huge, beautiful park, Konopiště Castle dates to the 14th century and is best known as the hunting lodge of the ill-fated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination sparked World War I. He no doubt had a whale of a time hunting on the grounds before he met his untimely end, and now visitors can wander the forests, gaze at the lake, and even watch plays in summer, as well as muse on the archduke's global significance. In a suitably historic touch, there's also bear who lives in the castle moat; he's a bit shy so you might not see him.

The castle itself is also worth a look, with a carefully preserved interior including

many original furnishings from Ferdinand's time. The rooms reflect his incredible opulence as well as his fondness for hunting—there are animal trophies and weapons everywhere. For a properly immersive experience, you can even stay inside the castle walls at a little pension.

Getting to the castle usually involves a ½-mile walk through the woods. It can be seen only on a guided tour; book in advance for an English-speaking guide. If one isn't available, ask for an English text to accompany the tour. An atmospheric night tour is also offered. ☒ Benešov ☎ 317-721-366 🌐 www.zamek-konopiste.cz 🗺️ Tours 300 Kč 🚫 Closed Mon. and Dec. –Mar.

Hotels

Pension Konopiště

🇰🇸 | **B&B/INN** | Konopiště is near enough to Prague that you don't really need to stay overnight, but if you fancy a night in the countryside, this pension inside the castle walls and attached to a motorcycle museum is a lovely option. **Pros:** great location; free activities like table tennis and pétanque; surrounded by nature.

Cons: no restaurant; narrow staircases; some rooms small. 🏠 Rooms from: 2200 Kč ☒ Konopiště 30, Benešov ☎ 317-702-658 🌐 www.penzion-konopiste.cz 🚗 6 apartments 🍳 Free breakfast.

Křivoklát

43 km (27 miles) west of Prague.

One of the most evocative castles in the country, Křivoklát is the real deal. A brisk walk up the hill to the top feels like a trip back in time as you leave the trappings of modern life behind.

GETTING HERE

A train is the best, and prettiest, way to reach Křivoklát. Trains depart from Hlavní nádraží, and a change in Beroun is required. The scenic ride will take about

1½ hours and cost around 100 Kč. Trains aren't all that regular, so check your return options before setting off. If you plan to visit over a summer weekend, the heritage train "Rakovnický rychlík" offers irregular but direct services from Prague; check 🌐 kzc.cz for details and timetables.

If you're driving, the fastest way to Křivoklát is to follow Route 6 from Prague toward Karlovy Vary, and after Jeneč turn onto Route 201 via Unhoště to Křivoklát. The trip is about an hour. For a beautiful drive (and an extra 15 minutes) take the E50 Highway from Prague toward Plzeň, then exit at Křivoklát to Route 116. Follow this highway, which goes along a river before veering up into the hills, to Route 201, which winds back south toward Křivoklát. There's free parking just beneath the castle or paid parking just above it.

TIMING

In summer you'll see cyclists zooming around the region and locals visiting the castle in swarms. At the beginning of December, Křivoklát holds an Advent fair, complete with musicians, performances, and lots of crafts.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS *Křivoklát Tourist Information.* ☒ Nám. Svatopluka Čecha 82 ☎ 313-558-101 🌐 www.is-krivoklat.cz.

Sights

★ Křivoklát

CASTLE/PALACE | A man dressed as a monk asleep in the corner; children practicing archery; traditional craftsmen offering their wares—close your eyes in Křivoklát's strangely atmospheric courtyard and you can easily imagine the scene with hunters clattering back atop their horses. Because the castle is a little farther from Prague, it's much less crowded and more authentic, so you can let your imagination run wild as you wander the walls and gaze out on the surrounding forest and the Berounka

A Pagan Spring



Spirits swing to life in Křivoklát on April 30, when many Czech villages celebrate something called Čarodějnice. Roughly translated as "witch-burning"—a pagan-rooted festival to ward off the winter spirit and welcome the bounty of spring—it turns Křivoklát into a gleeful scene of Slavic festivities and mock Celtic battles. Hundreds of Czechs from all over come to enjoy the music, merriment, and cheap wine into the wee hours.

River winding lazily by below. The evocative name helps as well, even if it's a little hard to pronounce (it means "twisted branches" in Czech). There also aren't many signs, which helps with the feeling that you are having an adventure. You'll meet a lot of locals, rather than tourists, enjoying the castle, mainly because it's a national favorite thanks to its many romantic references in Czech literature. The river area is also popular with hikers and cyclists.

Křivoklát began life as a humble hunting lodge back in the 12th century. Greater things were to come, thanks to King Wenceslas I, who commissioned the first castle here. Future inhabitants expanded and beautified the place, including Charles IV and his son, Wenceslas IV. A number of fires significantly damaged the buildings, and toward the end of the 16th century it lost its importance and fell into disrepair. Following the Thirty Years' War, the Schwarzenbergs took over and revived it. It's been in state hands since 1929.

Take a tour of the castle and you'll pass through the Great Hall (one of the largest Gothic halls in Central Europe, second only to one in Prague Castle) plus another hall, both loaded with Gothic paintings

and sculpture; a beautiful chapel (another highlight of the interior tour), the castle library, a castle prison complete with torture instruments, and lots of hunting trophies. It's truly one of the more interesting castle tours around. Tours, which last from 20 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes, are offered regularly in Czech, and in the summer there are also tours available in English; there's no need to prebook, but check the website for times. Out of season, you can join a Czech tour and purchase a pamphlet with information in English.

Even without a tour, the castle is well worth a visit. You can walk along the castle ramparts, climb the tower (for great views of the surrounding countryside), or simply sit and nurse a beer in the beautiful courtyard. There's also a lovely 2-km (1-mile) woodland walk from the castle to a viewpoint above the river; follow the path marked with yellow paint, which starts across the road from the castle entrance. ☒ *Křivoklát 47* ☎ 313-558-440 🌐 www.hrad-krivoklat.cz 🗺️ *Full castle tour 400 Kč, Gothic palace long/short tour 340/240 Kč, ramparts tour 80 Kč* 🚫 *Closed Mon. Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar. (except festivals; check website for details).*

🍴 Restaurants

U Jelena

\$\$ | CZECH | The pleasant riverside setting and the hearty hunting theme—as well as proximity to the castle itself—are the main draws here, while the food, from the familiar *svíčková* (slices of beef loin in cream sauce) to more elaborate dishes like venison steak with Cumberland sauce, is decent if unspectacular. If you'd like to stay overnight, there are a few rooms upstairs, outfitted simply but with a cozy feeling thanks to wooden furnishings and pleasant lighting. **Known for:** riverside terrace; Czech dumplings; hunting lodge decor. 📍 *Average main: 180 Kč* ☒ *Hradní 53* ☎ 313-558-235 🌐 www.ujelena.eu.

Kutná Hora

70 km (44 miles) east of Prague.

Kutná Hora is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the town proudly boasts of its “10 centuries of architecture” that run the gamut from Gothic to cubist. The town is worth a visit any time, but the tourist season really starts in April. Historic peddlers, dancers, and fencers celebrate the city's silver-mining history at the Královské stříbření (Royal Silvering) festival held every June. There are also some traditional Czech eateries, a great silver-mining museum, and the stunning Chrám sv. Barbory (St. Barbara's Cathedral), which dates from 1388.

Nearby, Sedlec Ossuary, or the “Bone Church,” is one of the Czech Republic's most famous sights. The small chapel is decorated floor to ceiling with human bones. The shapes, chandeliers, and sculptures are strangely, hauntingly beautiful, adding up to a breathtaking and morbid memento mori.

GETTING HERE

Both buses and trains make the short trip to Kutná Hora, but the train is a better bet. The journey takes less than an hour and a ticket costs around 115 Kč. You will most likely be dropped off at the Kutná Hora main station, which is in the suburb of Sedlec, about 2 km (1 mile) away. If you are given a ticket that says *město* (city), that means you'll be going to the train station in town. However, since you are in Sedlec anyway, take advantage of the fact and walk about 10 minutes (signs point the way and there's a map in the station) to the bone church. You can then walk into town—about 25 minutes. It's an easy straight shot but not the most scenic.

Bus 381 leaves from Háje at the end of Metro Line C (red). It's a little cheaper than the train, but takes almost twice as long. By car, follow Vinohradská třída west out onto the E65, then take the D11



Sights

- 1 České Muzeum Stříbra B5
- 2 Chrám sv. Barbory A6
- 3 Kladruby nad Labem E1
- 4 Kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie C1

Restaurants

- 1 Dačický B5
- 2 Factory B4
- 3 Harmonia C5

Hotels

- 1 Hotel U Vlašského dvora C5
- 2 U Hrnčře B5

to Route 38 into Kutná Hora. If the traffic is clear, the drive should take an hour.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS Info-Centre Kutná Hora.

☒ *Palackého nám.* 377 ☎ 327-512-378
 🌐 www.kutnahora.cz.

Sights

České Muzeum Stříbra (Czech Museum of Silver)

FACTORY | FAMILY | A silver mine is a little more romantic than a run-of-the-mill coal mine, and this silver museum combines all manner of period mining and minting equipment with the real deal: the chance to tour a medieval silver mine. It's fun, but if you're claustrophobic it's worth noting that the tunnel is a bit tight and you're underground for about 30 minutes. The city boasted some of the deepest mines in the world back in the 16th century, and the trek nowadays will probably make you glad you weren't a miner. Tours start every half hour; last admission is 90 minutes before closing. ☒ *Barborská ul.* 28 ☎ 327-512-159 🌐 www.cms-kh.cz
 📖 *From 70 Kč, foreign-language explanation 20 Kč* 🕒 *Closed Dec.–Mar. and possibly in bad weather.*

★ Chrást sv. Barbory (St. Barbara's Cathedral)

RELIGIOUS SITE | Getting to this beautiful cathedral is nearly as pleasurable as a visit to the Gothic church itself. It's about a 10-minute walk from the main Palackého náměstí along a road lined with baroque statues, from which you can gaze at the surrounding countryside and watch the massive shape of the cathedral come closer. From afar, the church resembles a grand circus tent more than a religious center. As the jewel in Kutná Hora's crown, it's a high point of Gothic style, although through the centuries there have been alterations and improvements. St. Barbara's was started in the late 1300s; it drew on the talents of the Peter Parler workshop as well as

two luminaries of the late 15th century, Matyáš Rejsek and Benedikt Ried. Upon entering, look up. The soaring ceiling is one of the church's most impressive features. It was added in 1558 and replaced and restored in the late 1800s. If you walk to the western façade, you'll see a lovely view over the town and the visibly leaning tower of the Kostel sv. Jakuba (Church of St. James). Do explore the whole of the church—gazing down at the splendor below from the elevated sections is particularly lovely. St. Barbara is the patron saint of miners, and glimpses of this profession can be seen throughout the interior, including Gothic frescoes of angels carrying shields with mining symbols. There's also a special Mintner's Chapel, which holds a statue of a miner, a novelty for its time. ☒ *Barborská ul.* ☎ 327-515-796 🌐 www.khfarnost.cz 📖 *120 Kč, combo ticket 220 Kč (incl. Sedlec Ossuary and Church of the Assumption).*

Kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (Church of the Assumption of the Virgin)

RELIGIOUS SITE | The Cathedral of the Assumption of Our Lady and Saint John the Baptist, to give it its full name, sits across the street from the ossuary at the former Sedlec Monastery. It exemplifies the work of one-of-a-kind architect Giovanni Santini (1667–1723), a master of expressive line and delicate proportion who fathered a bravura hybrid of Gothic and baroque. ■ **TIP** → **Tickets must be purchased from the nearby ticket office at Zámecká 279.** ☒ *U Zastávky, Sedlec* ☎ 326-551-049 🌐 www.sedlec.info 📖 *50 Kč, combination ticket 220 Kč (incl. Sedlec Ossuary and St. Barbara's Cathedral).*

Kostel sv. Jakuba (Church of St. James)

RELIGIOUS SITE | If you've already been to St. Barbara's, you'll have seen the tilting tower of this church next to the old mint. It doesn't keep normal operating hours, but go ahead and try the door anyway. It was originally built in the Gothic style,



The looming St. Barbara's Cathedral is a tribute to Kutná Hora's miners.

but a massive baroque transformation occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries; the onion dome was added in 1737. The baroque paintings on the wall are Czech masterpieces. ☒ *Jakubská* ☎ 327-515-796 🌐 khfarnost.cz 📖 *Free.*

★ Kostnice Sedlec (Sedlec Ossuary)

RELIGIOUS SITE | This is the reason many people outside the Czech Republic have heard of, and make the trip to, Kutná Hora. Forget all that beautiful baroque architecture and descend into the darkness with some bones. The skeletal remains of around 40,000 people have been lovingly arranged in the Kaple Všech svatých (All Saints Chapel), more commonly called the Bone Church. Built in the 16th century, this church forced the movement of a nearby graveyard. Monks from the nearby Sedlec Monastery decided to use the displaced cemetery bones to decorate the church with beautiful, weird, and haunting results. ■ **TIP** → **Check out the chandelier, as it's made with every bone in the human body. It's downright spooky.** ☒ *Zámecká,*

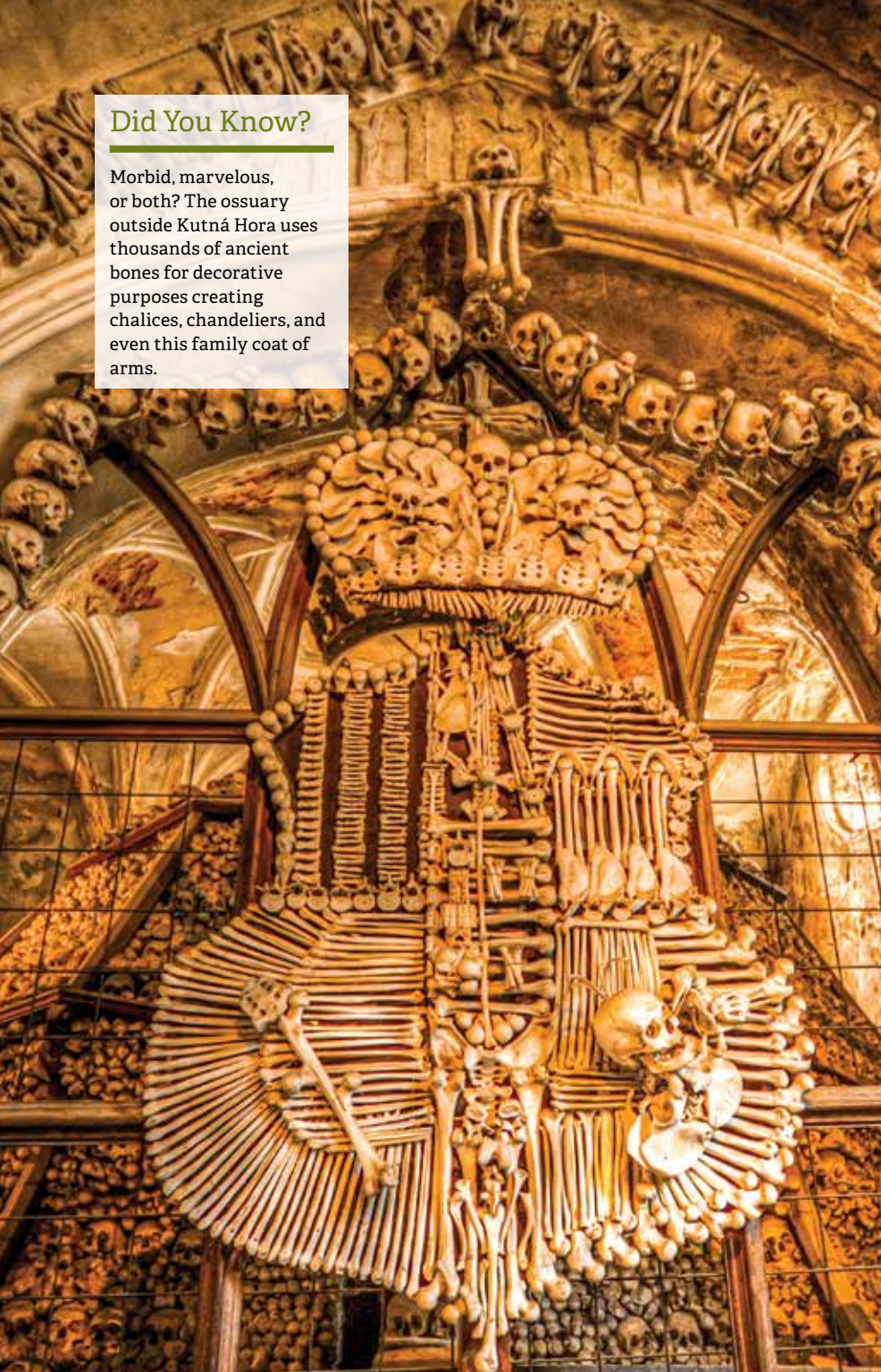
Sedlec ☎ 326-551-049 🌐 www.sedlec.info 📖 *90 Kč, combination ticket 220 Kč (incl. Church of the Assumption and St. Barbara's Cathedral).*

★ Národní hřebčín Kladruby nad Labem (National Stud at Kladruby nad Labem)

HISTORIC SITE | This national stud farm, established in the 16th century to breed and train ceremonial horses for the Habsburg court, was named a Unesco World Heritage site in 2019. Located 56 miles east of Prague and about a half-hour drive from Kutná Hora, in the town of Kladruby nad Labem, the Kladruby Stud is the first stud farm in the world to be listed. The Kladruber is a rare breed that is one of the oldest in the world with a population of only 1,200. Since the late 18th century, the Kladruber horses have come in two colours, grey and black. The former were used for royal ceremonies and the latter for high-ranking clergy. The Kladruby farm occupies 1,310 hectares (3,240 acres) of flat, sandy land and fenced pastures near the Elbe. The site, whose size has changed little since the

Did You Know?

Morbid, marvelous, or both? The ossuary outside Kutná Hora uses thousands of ancient bones for decorative purposes creating chalices, chandeliers, and even this family coat of arms.



16th century, includes fields and forests along with its classic stables, indoor and outdoor training grounds, all designed with the main objective of breeding and training kladruber horses. Visitors can enjoy a guided tour of the stables, of the coach room with the Kladruber Horse Exhibit, and of the Chateau. You can also tour the forester's lodge, climb up a hill to a viewing tower offering a unique view of the stud and its surroundings, and take a coach ride. ☒ *Kladruby nad Labem č.p. 1* ☎ 601-191-580 🌐 www.nhkladruby.cz/en 🚗 From 157 Kč 🕒 Closed Nov.-Mar.; Closed Mon.

Vlašský dvůr (Italian Court)
MUSEUM | Coins were first minted here in 1300, made by Italian artisans brought in from Florence—hence the mint's odd name. The Italian Court was where the Pražský groš (Prague groschen), one of the most widely circulated coins of the Middle Ages, was minted until 1726. There's a **coin museum**, where you can see the small, silvery groschen being struck and buy replicas. ☒ *Havlíčkovo nám. 552* ☎ 327-512-873 🌐 www.pskh.cz 🚗 From 85 Kč.

🍴 Restaurants

★ **Dačický**
\$\$ | CZECH | A medieval tavern feel and big plates of Czech food make Dačický a warm, authentic experience. The yellow walls decorated with cartoon-style murals, long, shared wooden tables, and the massive chandelier also add to the ambience. **Known for:** popularity with locals; good choice of draft beers; giant kebab with meat skewered on a sword. ☎ *Average main: 220 Kč* ☒ *Rakova 8* ☎ 603-434-367 🌐 www.dacicky.com.

Factory
\$\$ | AMERICAN | This popular, modern bistro-café serves fairly standard European-American fare, but everything is fresh and expertly made. That means pizzas

cooked crispy Neapolitan style, steaks that have been matured for 14 days, and fresh pasta that's cooked al dente. **Known for:** cozy cellar setting; friendly English-speaking waitstaff; phenomenal French fries. ☎ *Average main: 190 Kč* ☒ *Česká 1* ☎ 721-323-145 🌐 www.factorybistro.cz 🕒 Closed Mon.

Harmonia
\$\$ | CZECH | A charming spot just off Komenského náměstí near the Church of St. James, Harmonia serves good food at good prices. The small back patio is relatively secluded and the perfect place for an espresso and quiet conversation. **Known for:** generous portions; lovely quiet patio area; slow service. ☎ *Average main: 220 Kč* ☒ *Husova 104* ☎ 327-512-275 🌐 www.restaurantharmonia.cz.

🏨 Hotels

Hotel U Vlašského dvora
\$ | HOTEL | Lovely views from this hotel make it a nice option for an overnight stay in Kutná Hora. **Pros:** great views from room; nice breakfast; convenient central location. **Cons:** lots of steps; lack of a/c makes rooms hot in summer; some furniture a bit dated. ☎ *Rooms from: 1800 Kč* ☒ *Řijna 511* ☎ 327-514-618 🌐 www.vlaskkydvur.cz 🚗 10 rooms 🕒 Free breakfast.

U Hrnčáře
\$ | B&B/INN | If you are looking for a more rustic stay, head over to U Hrnčáře, where you will find basic decor but a good restaurant and a view of the Church of St. James. **Pros:** old picturesque building; good restaurant; exceptional value. **Cons:** steep stairs and no elevator; rooms are no-frills; no private parking. ☎ *Rooms from: 850 Kč* ☒ *Barborská 24* ☎ 722-222-578 🌐 www.hoteluhrncire.cz 🚗 5 rooms 🕒 Free breakfast.

Lidice

18 km (11 miles) northwest of Prague.

No more than a speck on the map to the northwest of Prague, this tiny village became a part of the tragic history of World War II. Adolf Hitler ordered Lidice to be razed to the ground as a lesson to the Czechs and a representation of what would happen to anyone who opposed his rule. The act was a retaliation for the assassination of the Nazi leader Reinhard Heydrich by Czech patriots. On the night of June 9, 1942, a Gestapo unit entered Lidice. The entire adult male population was shot, nearly 200 men; about the same number of women were sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The children were either sent to Germany to be “Aryanized” or accompanied the women to the death camp. By June 10, the entire village was completely wiped out.

The name Lidice soon became an example around the world of the brutality of Nazi rule. A group of English miners from Stoke-on-Trent took up the cause and formed Lidice Must Live, an initiative to build a new village of Lidice. The city is adjacent to the memorial, which is an amazing and beautiful site, albeit one that is usually visited only by school groups. For most tourists, and even Czechs, heartbreaking Lidice still doesn't seem to be on the map. If you are driving and plan to go to Terezín, make Lidice a short stop on your way.

GETTING HERE

It's a shame that an important memorial so close to Prague can be a bit tricky to reach by public transportation, although it's a quick trip once you are on board. There's no train service to Lidice, but there is a regular bus service from Zličín, at the end of the Metro Line B (yellow)—the same place you can get the airport bus. Tickets (24 Kč) are purchased directly from the driver. You can also get

Bus 300, Prague–Kladno, from the stop above Metro station Nádraží Veleslavín (Line A). Either way, the trip takes about 20 minutes, and you'll be let off at an intersection across from the memorial itself.

By car, Lidice is an easy 30-minute journey. From the Dejvice area, follow Evropská třída out of Prague past the airport, then continue west on D7 until you see the well-marked memorial, with a parking lot, beside the highway. If you're driving, it's ideal to combine this with a trip to Terezín, about 30 km (18 miles) farther along in the same direction from Prague.

Sights

★ **Památník Lidice** (*Lidice Memorial*) **MEMORIAL** | There is an eerie silence at Lidice. The lovely green rolling hills, small pond, babbling brook, and groves of trees are typical of the Czech countryside, but somehow the events that happened here remain in the air. It's incredibly moving to walk around the empty area, constantly reminding yourself that within living memory, this was a thriving village before the Nazis effectively erased it from the map.

You'll first enter the colonnade that houses a small museum. Inside you're introduced, through a series of films and photographs, to the original inhabitants of the city. German documentation from the time describes the horror of the mass murder in a disturbingly straightforward fashion. From here, the grounds of the memorial are free to wander, or you can secure an English-speaking guide to escort you around the entire area for 500 Kč (book in advance through the website).

The most visited and evocative sight in Lidice is the Monument to Child Victims of War. This life-size sculpture of the 82 children gassed by the Nazis is haunting in its detail, particularly the delicate facial expressions. Sculptor Marie Uchytlová

dedicated two decades of her life to the project. On the opposite side of the path is a stark cross, which marks the place where the men were executed.

Walk to the end of the field to see the former location of the town's cemetery, or head back toward the entrance to a vast rose garden; the west portion of the garden is planted with light-color roses to honor the children.

The museum entrance fee also includes access to Lidická galerie, home to a permanent exhibition of contemporary art donated by artists from around the world, and Rodinný dům č. 116, an example of the typical 1950s houses that make up the new, thriving village of Lidice. Both are around a 10-minute walk west of the rose garden. ☎ *Tokajická 152* ☎ *312-253-088* 🌐 *www.lidice-memorial.cz* 📄 *90 Kč, guided tour (in English) 500 Kč.*

Litomyšl

160 km (100 miles) east of Prague.

This small Eastern Bohemian city is renowned for its picture-perfect, UNESCO-listed arcade castle. It also has one of the country's prettiest town squares, as well as the annual summer opera festival **Smetanova Litomyšl** (🌐 *www.smetanova-litomysl.cz*), named for renowned composer and local boy Bedřich Smetana.

GETTING HERE

It's possible to get from Prague to Litomyšl with public transport, but it's a little complicated. You'll need to take a *rychlík* (fast train) from Prague's main station to Česká Třebová (about 1½ hours), then switch to a local bus (23 or 25, about 30 minutes). The whole journey will cost around 220 Kč. For drivers, it's even more complicated. Take the E67 east, then follow the signs to Pardubice (you'll join Route 35, then 37). Take the 324 exit off Route 37 (signed Hrobice), then follow a number of small roads—namely 2987,

2985, and 2984—to connect to Route 36. After around 10 km (6 miles), turn right at the roundabout onto Route 35 (signed Olomouc) and follow this all the way into Litomyšl. The journey takes just more than two hours on a clear day.

Sights

★ **Státní zámek Litomyšl** (*Litomyšl Castle*) **CASTLE/PALACE** | Built in 1568, this towering Renaissance chateau is a rare example of the “arcade” castle style in northern Europe. As you approach, the white-walled exterior appears to be made from thousands of bricks, but on closer inspection, it becomes clear the pattern has been achieved through intricate *sgraffito*. Each “brick” is etched into the plaster and has its own design, often incorporating imagery from the Old Testament or from classical mythology. Head into the courtyard to find even grander and more elaborate wall frescoes. While the exterior has remained largely unchanged for the last 450 years, the interior has a number of high baroque architectural additions. To see them, two guided tours are available: the first takes in a set of 12 castle rooms plus the perfectly preserved 18th-century baroque theater, complete with original stage machinery and decorations; the second takes in another set of 12 rooms as well as the elegant, vaulted castle chapel. Each tour lasts just 50 minutes, but if you have time for only one, choose the first. Tours are in Czech, but an English transcript is provided. It's also possible to visit the castle cellars—home to a permanent exhibition of contemporary sculptures by Olbram Zoubek—for a wine tasting and to stroll around the pretty castle gardens. ☎ *Jiráskova 93* ☎ *461-615-067* 🌐 *www.zamek-litomysl.cz* 📄 *Tours 150 Kč each* ☹ *Closed Mon. and Oct.–Mar.*

Mělník

40 km (23 miles) north of Prague.

This pretty town, on the confluence of the Vltava and Elbe Rivers, is the closest place to Prague to go for homegrown Czech wine. Every autumn, usually in late September, the town celebrates what is likely the region's best Vinobraní, an autumn festival held when barrels of young, still fermenting wine, called *burčák*, are tapped. If you happen to come at this time, look for the rare red-wine version. Even outside of wine season, Mělník has plenty of reasons to visit, with a historic center featuring a hilltop chateau, a baroque church with bone-filled crypt, and a hidden underground network.

GETTING HERE

The only direct route to Mělník is by bus. Nos. 349 and 369 depart from Ládví on Metro Line C (red) and take between 35 and 50 minutes. Tickets cost around 35 Kč and can be bought from the driver. You'll be dropped off at the bottom of the hill, and it's a short, signposted walk up to the town center with all the sights. If you're coming by car, take Highway 9 from Prague's northern tip, which heads all the way to Mělník. Park on the small streets just off the main square (head in the direction of the towers to find it).

In the summer, an all-day boat trip along the Vltava River is a lovely option. Check out Prague Steamboat Company's website for sailing times.

BOAT TRAVEL Prague Steamboat Company.

✉ Rašínovo nábř., Staré Město ☎ 734-761-003 🌐 www.praguesteamboats.com.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Turistické informační centrum Mělník.** (Tourist Information Center Mělník) ✉ Legionářů 51 ☎ 315-627-503 🌐 tictmelnik.cz.

Sights

Chrám sv. Petra a Pavla (Church of Sts. Peter and Paul)

RELIGIOUS SITE | With origins dating back around 1,000 years, this is one of the oldest churches in Bohemia, with a dramatic Gothic interior. But it's what lies beneath, and what rises above, that's really of interest. Below the church is a crypt with an ossuary, containing the skeletal remains of 10,000 to 15,000 people. Like a smaller-scale version of Kostnice Sedlec in Kutná Hora (but without the tourist hordes), bones and skulls are arranged into various sculptures, including an anchor, a cross, and a heart to symbolize hope, faith, and love. The remains date from between the 13th and 18th centuries, and have been used by academics to learn about diseases in medieval Europe.

Above the church soars the 127-foot tower. Climb to the top, through rooms of exposed stone walls and wooden beams, past the three 15th-century bells and the intricate clock mechanism, and you'll emerge onto an open-air platform. From here, you can enjoy the best panorama in Mělník, with views of the town in one direction and vistas of the rivers, vineyards, and rolling hills in the other.

If you are visiting outside of summer, email to arrange access to the crypt and tower. ✉ Na Vyhliďce ☎ 731-518-750 📧 farnostmelnik@seznam.cz 🌐 www.farnostmelnik.cz 🕒 Church free, ossuary 40 Kč, tower 50 Kč 🗄 Closed Mon. Closed Nov.–Mar. except by appointment.

★ **Mělnické podzemí** (Underground Mělník)

LOCAL INTEREST | Under the historic center of Mělník lies a secret: a network of underground passages leading to a medieval well. Half-hour guided tours from the Tourist Information Center take you down into the tunnels, which were dug out of the sandstone rock in the 13th and 14th century and used as storage rooms,



The town of Mělník lies on a high ridge overlooking the junction of Bohemia's two greatest rivers, the Labe and the Vltava.

wine cellars, and shelters during times of war. After a short walk, you'll come to the beautiful and unique medieval well. At 184 feet deep and 15 feet wide, it's the largest well in the Czech Republic—yet from above ground in the main square, you wouldn't even know it exists. ✉ **Turistické informační centrum Mělník, Legionářů 51** ☎ 315-627-503 🌐 tictmelnik.cz 🕒 Free.

★ **Zámek Mělník** (Mělník Chateau)

CASTLE/PALACE | The town's castle may be petite but it hovers grandly over the confluence of the Labe (Elbe) and Vltava Rivers. On entering, the courtyard's three dominant architectural styles jump out at you, reflecting alterations to the castle over the years. On the north side, note the typical arcaded Renaissance balconies, decorated with *sgraffiti*. To the west, a Gothic touch is still easy to make out. The southern wing is clearly baroque (although also decorated with arcades).

Inside the castle, you can walk through 10 ornate rooms filled with paintings, furniture, and porcelain belonging to the



old aristocratic Lobkowitz clan, as well as a vestry chapel. In particular, look out for the Big Hall, which is decorated with 17th-century European maps and *vedute* (views) of cities including London, Paris, and Madrid.

Day-tripping wine lovers can also tour the wine cellars under the castle and book a wine tasting. The town is known best for its special Ludmila wines made from these grapes. As the locals tell it, Emperor Charles IV was responsible for bringing wine production to the area. Having a good eye for favorable growing conditions, he encouraged vintners from Burgundy to come here and plant their vines.

The castle also has a good restaurant, looking out on the vineyards, river, and fields beyond, as well as a café and wine bar. ✉ **Svatováclavská 16** ☎ 315-622-127 🌐 www.lobkowitz-melnik.cz 📞 Castle 110 Kč, wine cellar tour 50 Kč, wine tasting from 140 Kč.

Restaurants

Němý Medvěď

\$\$ | **BURGER** | Although billing itself primarily as a microbrewery and beer bar, this lovely cellar restaurant also serves the city's best burgers. Choose your beer (there are usually eight options on tap: a mix of home brews and beers from other Czech breweries), then dive into the extensive burger menu, including delicious vegetarian and vegan options. **Known for:** atmospheric cellar with vaulted ceilings; great selection of Czech beers; monster 21-oz. "Grizzly Daddy Burger."  *Average main: 250 Kč*  *Nám. Míru 27*  773-898-122  www.nemymedved.cz.

Hotels

Pension Hana

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Most of the better accommodation options in the town are on the outskirts, but this small home with a garden is a 10-minute walk from the center. **Pros:** tasty breakfast; cyclist friendly; public swimming pool nearby. **Cons:** a little basic for the refined visitor; Wi-Fi can be patchy; no toiletries supplied.  *Rooms from: 1300 Kč*  *Fügenerova 714*  603-512-485  www.penzion-melnik.cz  11 *rooms*  *Free breakfast.*

Terezín

48 km (30 miles) northwest of Prague.

Just the word "Terezín" (Theresienstadt in German) immediately recalls the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust for Czechs. Originally built as a military city in the 18th century, Nazis quickly saw its potential and removed the 7,000 original inhabitants to turn the city into a Jewish ghetto and the fortress into a prison. Terezín was the main Nazi concentration camp in Bohemia, but it wasn't designed as a death camp, even though in the end more than 38,000 people died in either

the ghetto or the prison. The city was supposed to be a "model" Jewish settlement, part of a humane façade the Nazis presented to the Red Cross in 1944.

GETTING HERE

There's no train service directly to Terezín. Several buses leave the Nádraží Holešovice station daily, and weekends offer a bit more choice. The trip lasts almost an hour and typically costs 105 Kč each way.

If you're driving, take the E55 north out of Prague (this is the main highway going to Dresden and Berlin) and head toward Lovosice. You can either take Exit 35 at Doksany and follow the country road straight to Terezín or continue to Lovosice, and from there turn right; the road leads directly into Terezín. There's a large parking lot next to the Malá Pevnost. The trip takes about 50 minutes. To visit Střekov, follow the road signs from Terezín to Litoměřice, then take Highway 261 to Ústí nad Labem.





VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS Terezín Tourist Information.

 *Nám. ČSA 179*  775-711-881  www.terezin.cz.

Sights

Památník Terezín – Magdeburská kasárna (Terezín Memorial – Magdeburg Barracks)

MUSEUM | Under the Nazis, this unassuming building was primarily used for administration offices, but today it is a fascinating and important education facility. There's an excellent re-creation of how a former dormitory would have looked, plus exhibits detailing the arts in Terezín. Inspiring displays show how people in the ghetto continued to hold literary, musical, theatrical, and artistic happenings.  *Týrsova 204*  416-782-225  www.pamatnik-terezin.cz  180 Kč (incl. Ghetto Museum), combination ticket 220 Kč (also incl. Small Fortress).

★ Památník Terezín – Malá pevnost






(Terezín Memorial – Small Fortress)

MUSEUM | The most powerful aspect of Terezín is that you don't need much imagination to visualize how it looked under Nazi rule. When it was a Jewish ghetto, more than 59,000 people were crammed into this camp. Terezín was actually an exception among the many Nazi concentration camps in Central Europe. The Germans, for a time, used it as a model city in order to deflect international criticism of Nazi policy toward the Jews. In the early years of the war—until as late as 1944—detainees had a semblance of a normal life, with limited self-rule, schools, a theater, and even a library. (Pictures drawn by the children at Terezín are on display in Prague's Jewish Museum.) As the Nazi war effort soured, the conditions for the people in Terezín worsened. Transports to Auschwitz and other death camps were increased to several times a week, and eventually 87,000 Jews were murdered in this way. Another 35,000 died from starvation or disease.





The enormity of Terezín's role in history is most starkly illustrated at this former military fortress. From 1940 to 1945, it functioned as a jail, mainly for political prisoners and others resisting the German occupation, holding them in abject conditions. Around 30,000 prisoners came through here during the war. A tour through the fortress is chilling; you'll first visit the administrative area, where new prisoners were brought, and then glimpse their cells, crudely furnished with stone floors and long wooden beds. Not much has been done to spruce up the place for visitors, leaving the original atmosphere intact. As a military prison, 150 people could be held in the cells; under the Nazis, it was typical to have 1,500 prisoners held in the same space. There was no gas chamber here, but the appalling hygienic conditions led to many deaths, and about 300 prisoners were

executed. Many of the juxtapositions are deeply cruel, such as the swimming pools for guards and their families, which prisoners would pass on their way to their execution.

Those who did not die in detention were shipped off to other concentration camps. Above the entrance to the main courtyard stands the horribly false motto "Arbeit macht Frei" (Work Brings Freedom). At the far end of the fortress, opposite the main entrance, is the special wing built by the Nazis when space became tight. These windowless cells display a brutal captivity.

 *Principova alej 304*  416-782-225  www.pamatnik-terezin.cz  180 Kč, combination ticket 220 Kč (incl. Ghetto Museum and Magdeburg Barracks)  *Crematorium closed Sat.*

Památník Terezín – Muzeum ghetta (Terezín Memorial – Ghetto Museum)

MUSEUM | Told in words and pictures, the town's horrific story is depicted at the Museum of the Terezín Ghetto, just off the central park in town. A short documentary is also shown in many languages. Tell the staff that you speak English; they'll let you roam the building and flag you down when the next English-language video is being shown.  *Komenského 148*  416-782-225  www.pamatnik-terezin.cz  180 Kč (incl. Magdeburg Barracks), combination ticket 220 Kč (also incl. Small Fortress).

Restaurants

Terezín has very little in the way of services for visitors. There are a couple of depressing haunts, serving mostly inedible pub standards from menus run off on mimeograph machines. Duck out of town to nearby Litoměřice down the road about 2 km (1 mile). Buses run regularly from the main square, and it's barely a five-minute ride. After the heavy atmosphere of Terezín, it's refreshing

to walk down the tree-lined main street between colorful buildings bustling with shops and people.

Radniční Sklípek

\$\$ | CZECH | This spot is a local favorite, and it's easy to see why. Here the setting, a Gothic cellar with arched ceilings, is as pleasant as the food.

Known for: deliciously hearty Czech food; summer terrace on lovely city square; hosts occasional wine-tasting events.

☎ *Average main:* 225 Kč ☒ *Mírové nám.* 13, Litomerice ☎ 731-422-013 🌐 www.radnici-sklipek.cz.

Czech Switzerland

110 km (68 miles) northwest of Prague.

Czech Switzerland, also known as Bohemian Switzerland, is a picturesque region with towering sandstone cliffs, fairy-tale landscapes, quaint villages, and excellent hiking and biking opportunities, all just 90 minutes' drive from Prague. It lies on the Czech side of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains north of Děčín on both sides of the Elbe River. Confusingly, you are not in Switzerland; the name was inspired by the Swiss artists Adrian Zingg and Anton Graff, who were reminded of their homeland by the geography of northern Bohemia. While you cannot cross into Switzerland here, you may find yourself in Narnia—several scenes of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* were filmed at the Pravčická Archway here.

GETTING HERE

Czech Switzerland may seem like a bit of a hike from Prague, but it can be done in a day with some forward planning. Take the train to Děčín, which takes just more than 90 minutes (and costs just under 200 Kč), followed by the local bus to Hřensko, the nearest village, which takes another 35 minutes or so. The driver, or the tourists getting off, will let you know where the best stop is for the hike to

Pravčická Archway. If you're driving, head north on the E55 to Ústí nad Labem, then switch to Route 62. There are plenty of paid parking lots in Hřensko.

Sights

★ Pravčická Brána (*Pravčická Archway*)

NATURE SITE | The largest natural rock bridge in Europe, Pravčická Archway is the symbol of the gorgeous national park that is Czech Switzerland, which sits on the border with Germany. To reach the archway, you can either start walking from Hřensko (follow the red hiking route) or take a local bus to a stop called Tři Prameny. From here, it's a lovely and atmospheric walk up through the forest to reach the rock formation, which comes complete with a museum and restaurant called Falcon's Nest—supplies are brought in via pulley. This being the Czech Republic, there's also a pub where you can order fine beer in the shadow of the bridge itself. For an entrance fee of 75 Kč, you can scramble around nearby rock formations, which have a similarly alien appeal, for a better vantage point.

A series of gentle, well-marked hikes on pretty forest trails and mossy gorges will take you on a circular route back, ending up in Hřensko. The highlight of these trails is being punted along the river—when the paths run out—in a precarious boat with a ferryman who tells you (in German and Czech and hand gestures) how the rocks over your head look like different animals and monsters. Each boat trip costs around 50 Kč.

☒ *Hřensko* ☎ 412-554-286 for local tourist information 🌐 www.pbrana.cz
🕒 *Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.*