

Chapter 11

DAY TRIPS FROM PRAGUE

11

Updated by
Joseph Reaney



 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) on the edge of Kutná Hora is a mesmerizing church decorated with human bones.

★ **Sample the wine:** It's not all about beer. Try the excellent, 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 château atop a mountain; Křivoklát is a wonderfully secluded and quiet fortification; and Konopiště is the one-time hunting lodge of the doomed Archduke Franz Ferdinand. All the castles offer great hiking opportunities, but if walking is your thing, it's worth going farther afield to the breathtaking Pravčická brána (Pravčická Archway) 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

When traveling around the Czech Republic, buses are typically faster and cheaper, while trains are easier to navigate and 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 knowing your options ahead of time; search the best connections to and from Prague (covering all forms of public transport) at www.idos.idnes.cz/en. If you are taking a bus from Florence, buy your tickets online or at the station a day or two before your trip. People with tickets board first, and you'll get an assigned seat (so you won't have to stand).

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. There are also special-interest tours available, from guided bicycle day trips to Jewish-focused bus 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; about seven hours including stops. Others options include a bike tour of "Green Prague," which covers city parks like Petřín and Letná as well as the nearby nature reserve of Divoká Šárka. ☒ *Vyšehrad* www.bikoadventures.com.

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* ☎ 606-600-123 www.premiant.cz.

Wittmann Tours

GUIDED TOURS | This company offers 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 Kolin, once the country's second main Jewish center. ☒ *Novotného lávka 5, Staré Město* ☎ 603-426-564 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 a town 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 175 Kč	176 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 quintessentially Czech castle, complete with descendants of its 13th-century founders still living inside, Český



Český Šternberg, or the “Star on the Hill,” lives up to its name.

Šternberg 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 Šternberg, 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 2 to 2.5-hour journey time.

Alternatively, if time is of the essence, you can save up to half an hour by continuing on the first train from Prague to Benešov, then switching to Bus 791 for Český Šternberg.

If you’re driving, you will take the D1 highway out of Prague (the main highway

to Brno) and take the turnoff to Český Šternberg, 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 Šternberg, 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 Šternberg

CASTLE/PALACE | Dramatic Český Šternberg 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. Šternberg 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 Šternberg 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.

Look out for a (literal) family tree, with portraits of generations of the Šternberg 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 Šternberg 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.

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 Šternberg 1, Český Šternberg ☎ 317-855-101 🌐 www.hradceskysternberk.cz 🗨 Guided tour in English 260 Kč, night tour 350 Kč 🕒 Closed Mon. Closed weekdays in Apr. and Oct. Open Nov.–Mar. by appointment only.

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 half-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 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 (with its unusual cave chapel and rocky hilltop viewpoint) 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 *burčák* (young 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.

Sights

★ **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. On sunny days, there's also an exterior tour, or you can simply take a stroll around the courtyards at no cost. Because of its proximity to Prague, it is the most-visited site outside of the Czech capital, so be prepared for crowds, especially in the high summer months. ✉ *Karlštejn 18, Karlštejn* ☎ 311-681-617 🌐 www.hrad-karlstejn.cz 🚗 *Tours from 190 Kč* 🕒 *Closed Mon. 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



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

also available. 💰 *Average main: Kč220*
 ✉ *Karlštejn 130, Karlštejn* ☎ 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: Kč140* ✉ *Karlštejn 28, Karlštejn* ☎ 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: Kč2800* ✉ *Karlštejn 7, Karlštejn* ☎ 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 quite remote. Trains leave from Hlavní nádraží to Benešov u Prahy (1 hour; 90 Kč), but from here it's still another 2½ km (1½ miles) to Zámek Konopiště (Konopiště Castle). You can either walk the last leg (30 minutes; simply follow the signs) or hop on bus 438 (5 minutes;

14 Kč). By car, it's 30 minutes from Prague: join the D1 highway southwest toward Brno, taking exit 21 to Benešov. Signs along this road will lead you to Konopiště.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS **Turistické informační centrum.** (Tourist Information Center) ☒ Konopiště, Benešov ☎ 317-726-004 for main tourist office in Benešov.

Sights

Zámek Konopiště (Konopiště Castle)
CASTLE/PALACE | Set in a huge, beautiful park, Konopiště Castle dates from the 14th century and is best known as the hunting lodge of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. 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. In a suitably historic touch, there's also a bear who lives in the castle moat. 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. You can even stay inside the castle walls at a little pension. Getting to the castle usually involves a 1/3-mile walk through the woods. It can be seen only on a guided tour; book in advance for an English-speaking guide. ☒ Benešov ☎ 317-721-366 🌐 www.zamek-konopiste.cz 📄 Tours from 240 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: Kč2200 ☒ 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. The scenic ride from Hlavní nádraží, with a change in Beroun, takes about 1½ hours and costs 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, then take exit 25 onto Route 236. The trip is about an hour. For a beautiful drive (and an extra 15 minutes) take the E50 Highway from Prague toward Píseň, then exit at Beroun 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, Křivoklát ☎ 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 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.

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.

Today, Křivoklát offers some of the more interesting castle tours around. There are five to choose from, with Tour 3 ("The Grand Tour"; 390 Kč in English) the most comprehensive. Over the course of 1 hour and 40 minutes, visitors will see the Great Hall, one of the largest Gothic halls in Central Europe (second only to the one at Prague Castle), the beautiful chapel, the castle library, a prison complete with torture instruments, and lots of hunting trophies. Tours of the castle are offered regularly in Czech and less regularly in English (check the website for times), but you can always 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, Křivoklát ☎ 313-558-440 🌐 www.hrad-krivoklat.cz 📄 Tours from 240 Kč 🕒 Closed Mon. Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar. (except festivals; check website for details).

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. Historical 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.

A little out of the town center, 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 125 Kč. You will most likely be dropped off at the Kutná Hora main station, which is in the suburb of Sedlec, about 3 km (almost 2 miles) from the center. But that’s fine, as you’re only a 10-minute walk from the bone church; signs point the way and there’s a map in the station. From here, you can then walk into the town center along the main road in about 30 minutes. Alternatively, wander down to Kutná Hora–Sedlec train station (passing the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin on your left) and cross the tracks to follow the riverside path west; it takes five minutes longer but it’s infinitely more pleasurable.

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

VISITOR INFORMATION

There are four official tourist information centers in Kutná Hora. The main one is at Kollárova 589, just off Palackého náměstí, but there are also offices at the main train station, in the courtyard beside St. Barbara’s Cathedral, and just down the street from Sedlec Ossuary. Each sell tickets and provide free maps and information all year-round.

CONTACTS Info-Centre Kutná Hora.

✉ Kollárova 589, Kutná Hora ☎ 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 chance to tour an actual medieval silver mine. With the first tunnels dug in the 1300s, by the 1500s Kutná Hora had some of the deepest mines in the world. The trek nowadays—through low, narrow, and claustrophobic tunnels—will probably make you glad you weren’t a miner. The 90-minute guided tours (with around 30 minutes spent underground) start roughly every half hour during the summer months, with English-language tours once or twice a day; check the website for timings. In late spring and early autumn, English-language tours are only on request.

■ **TIP** → Taller people may struggle with some of the lower sections of the mines, while wider people will find some tighter sections a challenge. For those who are both, this is probably an experience to skip.

✉ Barborská 28, Kutná Hora ☎ 327–512–159 🌐 www.cms-kh.cz 🚗 From 70



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

Kč, foreign-language explanation 20 Kč
🕒 Closed Dec.–Mar. and in particularly bad weather.

★ **Chrám sv. Barbory** (St. Barbara’s Cathedral)

CHURCH | Getting to this beautiful cathedral is pleasurable enough; it’s about a 10-minute walk from the main Palackého náměstí along a road lined with baroque statues. But the church itself is the jewel in Kutná Hora’s crown, resembling a grand circus tent more than a religious center. 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.

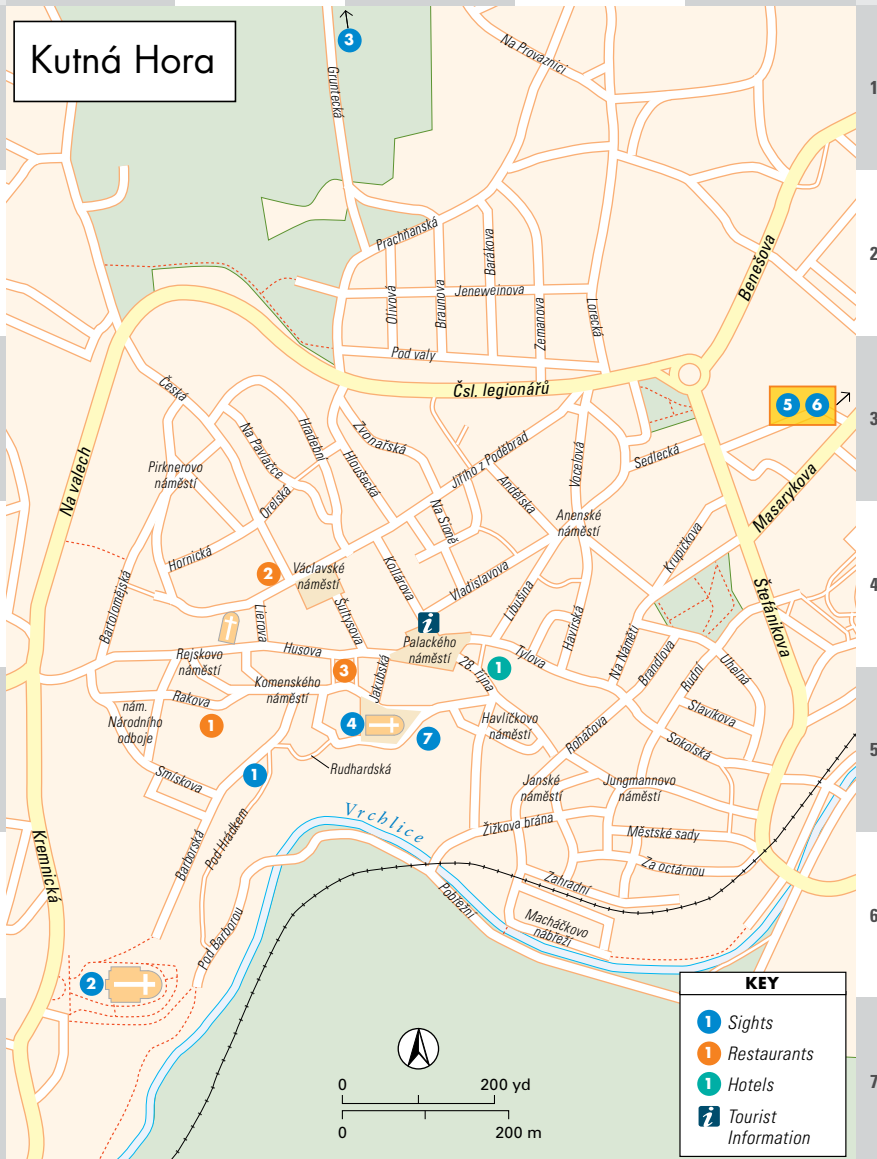
Upon entering, look up. The soaring ceiling is one of the church’s most impressive features. It was added in 1558 and replaced and restored in the late 1800s. Take the stairs up to the elevated section for closer views of the ceiling and the lavish organ. There are also some interesting casts of reliefs and other decorative church elements here, including a

sculpture of angels carrying the miners’ guild coat of arms. The balcony has lovely views over the garden and the town center, including the visibly leaning tower of the Kostel sv. Jakuba (Church of St. James).

■ **TIP** → Avoid paying an extra 50 Kč for opera glasses; you get close enough to the ceiling that you don’t need them. ✉ Barborská, Kutná Hora ☎ 327–515–796 🌐 www.khfarnost.cz 🚗 160 Kč, combo ticket 300 Kč (incl. Sedlec Ossuary and Church of the Assumption).

Katedrála Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (Church of the Assumption of the Virgin)
CHURCH | 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.

Kutná Hora



- Sights**
- 1 České Muzeum Strážba B5
 - 2 Chrám sv. Barbory A6
 - 3 Katedrála Nanebevzetí Panny Marie C1
 - 4 Kostel sv. Jakuba C5
 - 5 Kostnice Sedlec E3

- 6 Národní hřebčín Kladruby nad Labem E3
- 7 Vlašský dvůr C5

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

- Hotels**
- 1 Hotel U Vlašského dvora C5

■ **TIP** → Tickets must be purchased from the nearby ticket office at Zámecká 279. ☒ U Zastávky 280, Sedlec ☎ 326-551-049 🌐 www.sedlec.info 📞 160 Kč (incl. Sedlec Ossuary); 300 Kč (also incl. St. Barbara's Cathedral).

★ **Kostnice Sedlec (Sedlec Ossuary)**
RELIGIOUS BUILDING | 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, so monks from the Sedlec Monastery decided to use the displaced cemetery bones to decorate the church with beautiful, weird, and haunting results. Look out for the chandelier, which is made with every bone in the human body, as well as the Schwarzenberg coat of arms, which includes a raven (assembled from various small bones) pecking the eye of a Turkish warrior. ☒ Zámecká, Sedlec ☎ 326-551-049 🌐 www.sedlec.info 📞 160 Kč (incl. Church of the Assumption); 300 Kč (also incl. St. Barbara's Cathedral) ☺ Closed Mon. Nov.–Jan.

★ **Národní hřebčín Kladruby nad Labem (National Stud at Kladruby nad Labem)**
FARM/RANCH | Located 15 miles northeast of Kutná Hora, this national stud farm was established in the 16th century to breed and train ceremonial horses for the Habsburg court. In 2019, it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site—the first stud farm anywhere to be listed—in recognition of its vital role in protecting and promoting the rare but ancient Kladruher breed. Covering 1,310 hectares (3,240 acres) of flat, sandy land and fenced pastures near the Elbe, the site includes fields and forests along

with its horse breeding and training grounds. Visitors can take a guided tour of the stables, home to a mix of gray and black horses—in the past, the former were used for royal ceremonies and the latter for high-ranking clergy—as well as explore the coach room, the chateau, the forester's lodge, and the observation tower. ☒ Kladruby nad Labem 1, Kladruby nad Labem, Kutná Hora ☎ 601-191-580 🌐 www.nhkladruby.cz/en 📞 Tours from 180 Kč ☺ Closed Mon. and Oct.–Mar.

Vlašský dvůr (Italian Court)
HISTORY 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. The regular, self-guided tour (120 Kč) takes you through the Royal Mint museum, where you can see the development of the groschen and other Bohemian coins throughout the centuries, from the tiny haléř of the mid-1400s to the giant, pocket-filling Tolar of 1630. A more extensive tour (300 Kč) includes a visit to the cellar and the Royal Palace. ☒ Havlíčково nám. 552, Kutná Hora ☎ 327-512-873 🌐 www.pskh.cz 📞 From 120 Kč ☺ Closed Mon. in Nov.–Mar.

🍴 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, the 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: Kč240 ☒ Rakova 8, Kutná Hora ☎ 603-434-367 🌐 www.dacicky.com.

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.

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 firmly al dente. **Known for:** great burgers and fries; cozy cellar setting; friendly English-speaking staff.  *Average main:* Kč225  Česká 1, Kutná Hora  721-323-145  www.factorybistro.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:* Kč2100  řijna 511, Kutná Hora  771-226-021  www.hotelykh.cz  10 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.

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 (30 Kč) are purchased directly from the driver and the journey takes around 30 minutes. You can also get Bus 300, Prague-Kladno, from the stop above Metro station Nádraží Veveslavín (Line A); this route takes about 20 minutes. Either way, 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*)
HISTORIC SIGHT | 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 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-colored 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, Lidice ☎ 312-253-088 🌐 www.lidice-memorial.cz 📄 150 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.smetanovallitomysl.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 Choceň (about 1½ hours), then switch to a local bus (28 or 34, about 30 minutes). The whole journey will cost around 225 Kč and take just over two hours.

For drivers, it's also a little complicated. Take the E67 east, then turn off at junction 84 (signed to Pardubice). You'll join Route 35 towards Časy, then switch to Route 36 to Holice, before rejoining Route 35 all the way into Litomyšl. The journey takes around 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 190 Kč each ☺ Closed Mon. and Nov.–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 a bone-filled crypt, and a hidden underground network.

GETTING HERE

The best way from Prague to Mělník is by bus. Take bus 400 from Střížkov on Metro Line C (red), which takes around 30 minutes, or bus 369 from Ládví (one

stop closer to the center on Metro Line C), which takes around 45 minutes. Either way, tickets cost 60 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, Mělník ☎ 602-679-552 🌐 ticmelnik.cz.

👁 Sights

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



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

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 Vyhlídce, Mělník* ☎ 731-518-750 📧 farnost.melnik@dltm.cz 🌐 www.farnostmelnik.cz 📠 Church free, ossuary 40 Kč, tower 50 Kč 🕒 Closed Mon. Closed Nov.–Mar. except by appointment.

★ **Mělnické podzemí** (*Underground Mělník*)

OTHER ATTRACTION | 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 centuries and used as storage rooms, 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, Mělník* ☎ 602-679-552 🌐 ticmelnik.cz 📠 60 Kč.

★ **Zámek Mělník** (*Mělník Château*)

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 local 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, Mělník* ☎ 315-622-121 🌐 www.lobkowitz-melnik.cz 📠 Castle 110 Kč, wine cellar tour 50 Kč, wine tasting from 140 Kč.

🍴 Restaurants

★ **Němý Medvěd**

\$\$ | **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: Kč250* ☒ *Nám. Miru 27, Mělník* ☎ 773-898-122 🌐 www.nemymedved.cz.

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 (Bus Line no. 550909) leave the Nádraží Holešovice station daily, and weekends offer a bit more choice. The trip lasts 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.

VISITOR INFORMATION

CONTACTS Terezín Tourist Information.

☒ *Dukel. hrdinů 43, Terezín* ☎ 775-711-881 🌐 www.terezin.cz.

👁 Sights

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

HISTORY 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. ✉ *Tyršova 204, Terezín* ☎ 416-782-225 🌐 www.pamatnik-terezin.cz 📞 210 Kč (incl. one of Small Fortress or Ghetto Museum), 260 Kč (incl. both).

★ Památník Terezín – Malá pevnost

(Terezín Memorial – Small Fortress)

HISTORIC SIGHT | 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, Terezín* ☎ 416-782-225 🌐 www.pamatnik-terezin.cz 📞 210 Kč (incl. Magdeburg Barracks); 260 Kč (also incl. Ghetto Museum) ☹ Crematorium closed Sat.

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

HISTORY 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, Terezín* ☎ 416-782-225 🌐 www.pamatnik-terezin.cz 📞 210 Kč (incl. Magdeburg Barracks); 260 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; occasional wine-tasting events. 📍 *Average main: Kč275* ✉ *Mírové nám. 12, Litomerice* ☎ 731-422-013 🌐 www.radnicni-sklípek.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 SIGHT | 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 95 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. 📧 *Hrensko*
 🌐 www.pbrana.cz 📞 95 Kč 🕒 Closed
 weekdays Nov.–Mar.

Krkonoše

129 km (80 miles) northeast of Prague.

Known as the Giant Mountains, this lofty range of craggy peaks stretches across the Czech Republic–Poland border, with dedicated national parks on both sides. The Czech side is immensely popular with locals in the winter months for its array of pristine ski slopes, and from spring to autumn for its well-marked hiking and mountain biking trails. The biggest draw of all is Sněžka, the country's highest point at 5,259 feet (1,603 meters). But that's just one of dozens of stunning peaks to explore here, so strap on your hiking boots or jump on your bike to discover a world of gentle river valleys, flower-filled meadows, tumbling waterfalls, dense green forests, and unforgettable mountain vistas.

GETTING HERE

The edge of Krkonoše National Park is around a two-hour drive from Prague, so it's possible to start early and come for a day's hiking. Alternatively, you can stay in a resort town for a night or two and really lose yourself in the mountains. Either way, most people use three main towns as their base for exploring the park: quiet and green Harrachov in the west, charming and characterful Špindlerův Mlýn in the center, and bustling but well-located Pec pod Sněžkou in the east (right at the foot of Sněžka).

Buses to Krkonoše leave from Prague's Černý Most station, at the eastern end of Metro Line B (yellow). It's a little over two hours to Harrachov (FlixBus), 2.5 hours to Špindlerův Mlýn (Arriva bus 690290), and about three hours to Pec pod Sněžkou (Arriva bus 690250).

By car, start by heading northeast on the D10 from Prague. For the central and eastern parts of the park (including Sněžka), you will continue to Mladá Boleslav, then switch to Route 16 heading northeast. Continue on Routes 293/295 for Špindlerův Mlýn or Routes 325/14/296 for Pec pod Sněžkou. For the western edge of the park, stay on the D10 until Turnov, at which point you'll "turnov" to Route 10 all the way up to Harrachov.

Sights

Sněžka

MOUNTAIN | Straddling the border between the Czech Republic and Poland—with one side belonging to each country—Sněžka is by far the most popular mountain ascent in Krkonoše. Luckily, the routes are long enough for the hiking groups to be spread out, so it rarely feels like you're part of a big crowd. Most visitors from the Czech side start and end in the resort town of Pec pod Sněžkou: a strenuous hike leads up through blueberry-filled forests and across gentle waterfalls to the summit, where you can stop to soak up the sweeping panoramic views with a cold beer (from the bistro or cafe), before heading back down the other side of the mountain and across the slopes of Růžová hora into town. The route is around 8.5 miles (13.5 km) altogether, so plan for around six hours including stops. For non-hikers, there's also a cable car running from Pec up to the summit; it takes around 15 minutes and costs 330 Kč each way (620 Kč return) in peak season.