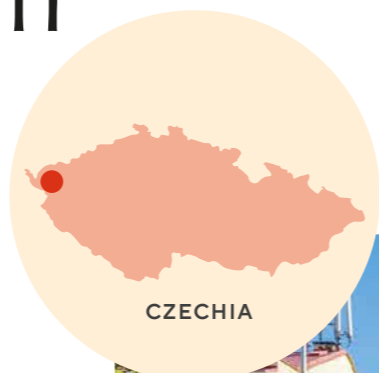


Soak up the spa waters in Western Bohemia

📍 Natural springs, architecture, forest hikes

🕒 September



The slowly rising sun kisses butter-yellow buildings, as the soft breeze casts the scent of linden blossom. An early morning stroll through slumbering Františkovy Lázně (Franzensbad), the tiniest and loveliest of the Czech spa towns, is an almost meditative experience – until a sip of musty spring water brings you back to earth with a bump.

The restorative effects of this region’s natural springs were well established by the time of Franzensbad’s foundation in 1793, with its ‘drinking cure’ in high demand across the Holy Roman Empire. As the spa town grew, it attracted more visitors from across the German border – including a certain Ludwig van Beethoven.

Today, every aspect of Františkovy Lázně, from its belle époque buildings to its

leafy parks, is tailor-made for relaxation and recuperation.

Taking the waters

You’ll never forget your first taste of the spa water. Strong, salty and sulphuric, it’s an assault on the senses. But as the story of Františkovy Lázně began with these mineral-rich waters, so should you. Promenade along the main street, Národní, and fill your cup at the taps lining the way to the Glauber Pavilion, an ornate, oval-shaped, neoclassical building where the springs bubble up into grand glass cabinets. These represent just a handful of the two-dozen springs dotted in and around the town, with others accessible along walking trails.

Check into a local spa hotel for a water-based treatment – or, even better, a signature ‘hot peat bath’ ritual. Who knew that lowering yourself

Right: The well of Glauber IV, a drinking cure with high concentrations of minerals

Below: Habsburg-yellow buildings and manicured gardens



Q&A

What’s the ‘vibe’ at Františkovy Lázně? It’s a calm place with beautiful nature, from old parks to, of course, the healing springs. From spring until autumn, the town comes to life with visitors (and patients) from many countries.

Favourite spot? I love the location of our fish restaurant – it’s by Swan Lake in the Westend Park. The best view is from the Harvey Spa Hotel.

Any other tips? Visit the New Colonnade with its healing springs, the Salingburg Lookout Tower and the Soos Nature Reserve. And drink the spa water, because it definitely works!

Is it worth visiting other spa towns nearby? Yes! Combine Františkovy Lázně with Mariánské Lázně and Karlovy Vary. They’re all under UNESCO, all beautiful and have a lot to offer.

Eva Pešlová, Restaurace Rybářská bašta



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into rotting plant matter could be so relaxing? This immersive experience leaves a lingering warmth, said to help ailments ranging from stress to sciatica and obesity to osteoarthritis.

Getting lost in nature

The trickle of water fountains and the trill of birdsong combine to create a soothing soundtrack for a walk in the park. More than half of Františkovy Lázně's centre is given over to a blend of manicured lawns, flower gardens and fishponds, while the area around sees meandering rivers empty into wide lakes – most notably, Amerika, an important migration stop for nesting waterbirds. The forest-clad hills that hug the town offer days of exploration along sun-dappled woodland paths, while the nearby Soos Nature Reserve (colloquially known as the 'Czech Yellowstone') has a boardwalk through ancient peat bogs and salt marshes.

Right: A temple to the springs, the Glauber Pavilion

Far right: Augustaplatz, a tranquil square in Baden-Baden, Germany

Soaking up culture

Unwinding doesn't have to mean switching off. Františkovy Lázně can stimulate your mind as it relaxes your body, whether it's through admiring the gorgeous Habsburg-era architecture or listening to classical concerts in the Městské sady gazebo. But start and end each day outside, strolling along the quiet streets, picnicking in the park or gazing up at the star-filled sky. You'll feel an inner peace bubbling up inside you like a natural spring.

Don't Miss

- **Savouring salty spa water in the Glauber Pavilion**
- **Delving into local history at the Town Museum**
- **Peering into peat bogs at nearby Soos Nature Reserve**



Other Quiet Central European Spa Towns

Baden-Baden, Germany

Curative waters, colonnaded buildings and chic boutiques combine to create this magnificent Black Forest retreat. As Germany's most renowned spa town, it has attracted everybody from Queen Victoria to Victoria Beckham. Amble along the quiet streets or head into the forested hills.

Don't miss

The chandelier-filled Casino Baden-Baden, considered to be one of the most beautiful in the world (yes, there is a strict dress code).

Hévíz, Hungary

Centred around the largest natural thermal lake in Europe, Hévíz offers year-round warm-water bathing. Check into one of the town's high-end hotels for the best spa facilities. Although just a short hop from the shores of Lake Balaton, Hévíz eschews the lake's tourist hordes to create a haven of serenity.

Don't miss

The nearby Festetics-kastély, a baroque palace complex with a spectacular library and chapel; it's surrounded by picture-perfect gardens and a sprawling nature reserve.

Find Your Joy

Getting there

There is one direct train from Prague's main station to Františkovy Lázně each morning –

and another back each afternoon. The journey is just under three hours. You can also go by bus, though it takes a little longer.

Accessibility

As a spa town and health resort, Františkovy Lázně is uncommonly wheelchair accessible. Most of the spa hotels have a handful of accessible rooms, while

many local cafes and restaurants provide easy access and accessible toilet facilities. However, visiting the hills and nature parks will require a greater level of mobility.

When to go

July and August offer the best strolling weather and a host of outdoor events. September is a quieter option, with vibrant

autumn leaves and mushroom picking in the woods.

Further information

- Accommodation choices include spa hotels, B&Bs and camping.
- frantiskovy-lazne.info

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