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HISTORY AND LEGENDS

More Czech castles and chateaux

Since space in the magazine is limited, we decided to cover some interesting Czech castles and chateaux on the website. So here are some more tips of places not to miss.



Prague Castle

Not only is Prague Castle listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest castle complex in the world, it is also the most visited Czech monument. Originally founded in the 9th century by prince² Bořivoj of the Přemyslid dynasty, Prague Castle has been undergoing³ changes ever since. Last December, a new permanent exhibition was opened in the Chapel of the Holy Cross – the Treasure of St. Vitus, which shows relics and important religious objects dating back to St. Wenceslas or to even older saints.

Český Šternberg

The gothic Český Šternberg is one of the few Czech castles to have remained for the most part in the hands of the same owner. In fact, a member of the Šternberk family still lives in the castle today. One of the most interesting things to see is the family's extensive print collection of more than 500 copperplate engravings¹. And the Sázava river, flowing below the castle, is a great place to take a walk, or to explore by canoe.



Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou

Situated in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, this monumental Baroque chateau is one of the largest in central Europe. The complex also includes the large Baroque church of St. Margaret and an ornamental garden. Inside the chateau you can see how people lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the garden is used for various cultural events and music performances.



Karlštejn

Founded by Charles IV in 1348, Karlštejn is one of the most picturesque castles to look at and offers lovely views of the surrounding countryside from its **hilltop perch**⁴. Charles built it as a place to keep the **crown jewels**⁵ and **holy relics**⁶. The Chapel of the Holy Cross where they were kept is the most beautiful part of the castle, decorated with gold, precious stones and paintings. According to a popular legend (which inspired the play *Noc na Karlštejně*), no women were allowed to stay at Karlštejn, but this is not true. When visiting Karlštejn, you can also enjoy walks in the nearby forests and see the **deserted limestone quarries**⁷ nicknamed “Americas”.



Žebrák and Točnick

Žebrák was built in the late 13th century and later enlarged by both Charles IV and Wenceslas IV. After it was damaged by fire in 1395, Wenceslas decided to build a new, bigger castle, Točnick, on a higher hill just some half a kilometre from Žebrák. So today you have the unique chance to see two medieval castles almost next to each other. At Žebrák, you can walk around the **fortifications**⁸, including the tower and dungeon, and at Točnick, you can explore the great palace and enjoy super views.



Buchlov

One of the biggest and most beautiful Moravian castles, Buchlov, was originally built in Romanesque/Gothic style and then rebuilt in a Renaissance style to become more comfortable. Although the owners later moved into a newly built palace, the castle was already being used as a museum in the 19th century, and therefore didn't turn into ruins. If you visit Buchlov, enjoy the views of Chřiby hills from there, and also look for the “**Linden**⁹ of Innocence” in the castle courtyard. According to a legend, a **wrongly accused**¹⁰ boy planted the tree **upside down**¹¹, saying that it would nonetheless turn green and prove his innocence. And it did.



Český Krumlov

The fairytale feel of the town of Český Krumlov is not only due to its narrow streets with picturesque old houses but also its castle. Built in the mid-13th century, it was taken over by the Rožmberks, a powerful aristocratic family, in 1302. The original medieval castle has been rebuilt many times, so today it is a mix of styles – Italian Renaissance, Baroque and even some Rococo. It offers great views over the town, and another attraction is its castle gardens, at first beautifully **manicured**¹² and then slowly becoming more natural. They include a 20th-century open-air theater with a **revolving auditorium**¹³.

VOCABULARY

- ¹ **copperplate engraving** ['kɒpəpleɪt ɪn'greɪvɪŋ] – mědirytina
- ² **prince** – kníže
- ³ **to undergo** [ʌndə'gəʊ] – prodělat, podstoupit
- ⁴ **hilltop perch** [pɜːtʃ] – vyvýšené místo na kopci
- ⁵ **crown jewels** – korunovační klenoty
- ⁶ **holy relics** ['həʊli 'reɪlɪks] – svaté ostatky

⁷ **deserted limestone quarries** [dɪ'zɜːtɪd 'laɪmstəʊn 'kwɒrɪz] – opuštěné vápencové lomy

⁸ **fortification** [fɪ'keɪʃ(ə)n] – opevnění

⁹ **linden** – lípa

¹⁰ **wrongly accused** – neprávem obviněný

¹¹ **upside down** – vzhůru nohama

¹² **manicured** ['mæɪnɪkjʊəd] – upravený

¹³ **revolving auditorium** [rɪ'vɒlvɪŋ ɔːdɪ'tɔːrɪəm] – otáčivé hlediště