

Plzen City – Tour at Glance

Stary Plzenec

First mention of Stary Plzenec (the old Plzen Castle) comes in 976 in connection with a battle in which the Bohemian forces defeated the Bavarians who had invaded Bohemia. It was an important castle, a centre of the entire region.



The following have been preserved up to the present day: the mounds, ditches, part of the walls, the foundations of some buildings plus, first and foremost, the St. Peter Rotunda, a large parish church from the 10th century and the best preserved building in Bohemia from that period.

The area surrounding the castle contained 5 churches, of which the Parish Church of the Virgin Mary is still standing. Originally Romanesque, it was reconstructed in Gothic style

in 1695.

Inside, wall paintings (the Christological Cycle) from the era of Charles IV have been preserved.

On the left bank of the Uslava there is the Gothic Church of John the Baptist.

Plzen - the general information

In [1295 a.d.](#), the city of Nova Plzen (New Plzen) was founded by Czech King Wenceslas II on the [confluence](#) of the Radbuza and Mze rivers, only 9 kilometers north-west of the original Old Plzen. This occurred at the crossroads of three important trade routes ([Nurnberg](#), [Regensburg](#) and [Sachsen](#)).



New Plzen was growing very rapidly and soon became not only an important commercial center, but also the third Royal Town in Bohemia following [Prague](#) and Kutna Hora.

Plzen has preserved its prominent position among Czech towns until the

present day, [700 years](#) after its foundation. With a population of more than 165 000 it is an important [cultural](#), [economic](#), transport, commercial and industrial center, known primarily for the products of [Plzener brewery](#) and [Skoda works](#).

Plzen is also considered a center of education. Besides a number of elementary and secondary schools Plzen is the home to the [University of West Bohemia](#) and the [Medical Faculty of the Charles University](#).

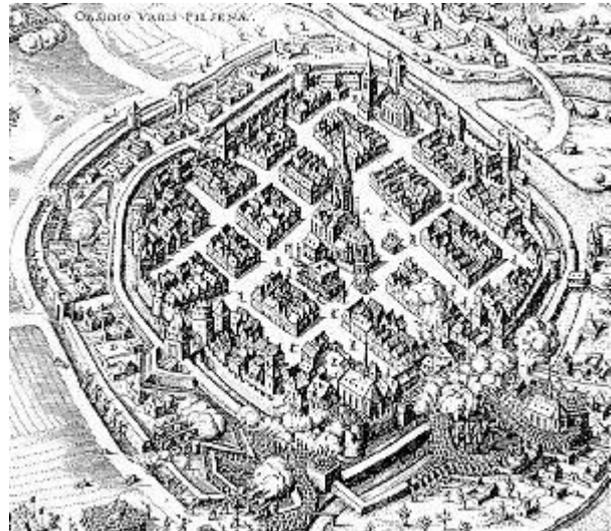
What were the 700 years of its history like?

At the beginning of the 15th century, Plzen was one of the original centers of Hussite movement, but after expelling the Hussite leader Jan Zizka and his allies in 1420, it became a firm bastion of the Czech Catholic Church until the 17th century.

Rapid economic and cultural growth could be observed in the second half of the 15th century and the following 16th century, which was also the period of intensive construction.

As early as 1468 the first Czech book, the Trojans Chronicle, was printed in Plzen. The Renaissance period, identified by lively ties with [Nurnberg](#) and [Regensburg](#), represents a period of full bloom in [Plzen's history](#). This period of prosperity was disturbed by the so called Thirty Years War.

In 1618 the city of Plzen was conquered for the first time in its history by protestant groups of count Arnost of Mansfeld.



A new period of growth came as late as the 19th century with the onset of Industrial Revolution. The world-known burgher, [Prazdroj brewery](#), was founded in 1848, engineering [Skoda Works](#) were founded in 1859, and an extensive railworad network was built in the period 1861 to 1876. Furthermore, the [Grand Theatre](#), the [West Bohemian Museum](#) and the [Jewish Synagogue](#) date back to this period.

The city of Plzen strode into the 20th century as a developed industrial, economic and cultural city, which was soon to experience the difficult setbacks of an economic crisis and two world wars. Plzen was liberated on May 6th, 1945, by the American army led by General G. S. Patton. After that, the city, as well as the rest of the country, were to ride out more than 40 years of totalitarian communistic dominion.

The capital of West Bohemia is nowadays again a sovereign city boasting with number of [historic monuments](#). Among them 13th century [St.Bartholomew's Church](#), [Renaissance town hall](#) reconstructed by Italian master-builder Giovanni de Statia in the mid 16th century, the unique [Brewery Museum](#), the [historic underground](#) with medieval cellars, [Franciscan monastery](#) and the [Church of St Anna](#) definitely rank. All these sites make up a part of the original checker board ground plan of the [historic downtown](#), which was declared an historic town reservation in 1989.

All visitors to Plzen and its splendid surroundings may discover a number of interesting sites, spend a pleasant vacation there and collect many unforgettable recollections and experiences.

The Plzen coat-of-arms

The city [coat-of-arms](#) is unusually complex and its symbols express the historical development of the city from its foundation up to 1578.



The city's original [coat-of-arms](#) was a silver greyhound in a red field, introduced by the burgesses at the time of the Hussite wars in order to emphasize their loyalty.

In 1434, in memory of their deeds under the last siege by the Hussites, they received a golden camel in a green field from Zikmund of Luxembourg.

In 1466 Pope Paul II enlarged the shield by two golden keys in a silver field and an armour-bearer holding half a spread-eagle in a golden field.

At that time the people of Plzen themselves put a picture on the shield of the oldest Plzen seal, i. e. the silver city gate in a red field, in which stands King Wenceslas II, a sword drawn in his right hand, and in his left a shield with the Czech lion. On the city wall there stands a bare-headed maiden holding two flags: the one in her right hand showing the Czech lion and in the left the Moravian eagle.

The Plzen [coat-of-arms](#) received its final addition in 1578 from Pope Gregory XIII - a shield-bearer which was an angel and three mounds with sprigs of olive and the inscription: **"In hoc signo vinces"** (In this sign shalt you conquer). In each corner there were two helmets and behind the shield a crossed halberd and commander's baton.

On the document of Pope Gregory XIII, now kept in the city archives, the [Plzen coat-of-arms](#) is for the first time illustrated in colour.

Plzen Guide: Products "Made in Plzen" for International Trade

At first you can see that Plzen is not only a [historical town](#) but also an industrial one. Many trades, especially drapery, ensured the prosperity of the town. Nineteenth century was an important period for the spirit of enterprise.

The first steps in the industrialization of Plzen - the founding of [burghers brewery](#) in 1842 and the building of an engineering factory in 1859. The picturesque historical town gradually changed into an industrial town. The year 1899 played an important role, too. That year the first tram-car went on its way through Plzen. The whole system was designed by a Czech inventor Frantisek Krizik, who is also known for his invention of the arch lamp.



The original machine manufactory belonging to Waldstein was bought by Emil Skoda. Under his management it expanded very rapidly into a well-known enterprise. The [Skoda](#) is one of the largest heavy-engineering enterprise in Czech Republic. Its products, including electrical locomotives, trolley-buses, reactors for nuclear power stations, metallurgical and energetic machinery, heavy machine tools, etc. are exported to more than seventy countries.

Nevertheless the fame belongs to [Pilsner Urquell](#). It seems to be a paradox that the Plzeners had problems with the quality of local beer before the burghers brewery was founded. It was even necessary to import beer from other parts of Bohemia. But gradually the 12 grade beer became the most sought after beer.

The Prazdroj and Gambrinus are the best selling marks for export from 2.5 million hectolitres' production. But not only a brewing industry is established here: paper-making, food, building and printing industries are found here as well.

In Plzen neighbourhood there are rich deposits containing nonmetallic raw materials. They helped to develop glass and ceramics industry, oriented mainly towards building ceramics.

From Plzen the products then travel to all parts of Czech Republic and also further.

The Square of the Republic

The Square of the Republic (Namesti Republiky) measures 552 x 627 ft and is one of the largest medieval squares in the Czech Lands. It is divided by Riegrova and [Drevena Streets](#) into two parts - north and south.

In the smaller northern half there stands [St.Bartholomew's Church](#). In the past there was a graveyard around the church - this was abolished by Emperor Joseph II in 1789.

Between the [town hall](#) and [church](#), close to the sacristy, there used to be the splendid Renaissance building of the city's Latin School - this was demolished in 1829.



In every corner of the square there was a French Imperial fountain. The fountain in the north-east corner was in Baroque style and bore a statue of Roland, known in Plzen as Zumbera: in 1919 this was transferred to the Emperor's house alongside the town hall.

The square was cobblestoned in 1859. The buildings in the square still contain predominantly Gothic and Renaissance elements in the foundations, cellars and stonework.

In the courtyards on the east side, especially in courtyard no. 107, remains of the medieval walls are still preserved. The best preserved part of the square is its southern facade.

St. Bartholomew's Church



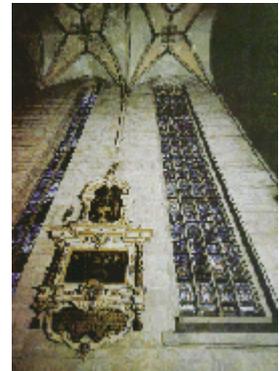
St. Bartholomew's Church is an outstanding building dating from the late 13th to early 16th century. It combines three developmental Gothic features on the principle of a three-part nave entrance hall. It is the dominant architectural feature of the city. Building of the cathedral commenced at the end of the 13th century with the presbytery, now no longer standing.

In 1322 when the Order of German Knights definitively gained a parish, the perimeter walls of the imposing three-part nave were built, including the run-outs of an intended cross-vaulted ceiling which, in fact, was never constructed.

In the 1330s, both towers of the western facade were built up to the same height and between them the valuable portal. Thus arose the notable post-Classical Gothic hall, a high room with three naves of the same height. On account of the monumental naves the presbytery under construction was demolished and a new, elevated one built, this in the reign of Charles IV. The tall, narrow windows with complex traceries basically replace the wall between the pillars of the apse. At this time only the northern tower was completed. This age renounced strict symmetry. The side portals date from 1400 in the spirit of Czech national post-Parler Gothic. The three-part nave of the time, only temporarily roofed over, was arched in the era of Jiri of Podebrady around 1480. The complex and picturesque late Gothic star vaults rest on three pairs of tall cylindrical pillars. At the same time the sacristy appeared and, above it, the treasury.

After a fire in 1507, the church was repaired 1510-1529 and alongside the southern hall, the richly decorated Sternberk burial chapel in late Gothic style was added. In the Renaissance period the gables of the ridge roof were renewed, receiving Venetian curves. The roof dormers were similarly decorated.

Then in 1663, a beautifully carved late Renaissance door was fitted to the west portal. In 1634 a wooden crucifix was erected on the inner pillar of the presbytery, this being the first appearance of Baroque in Plzen. The peak of Baroque (1713) added an iron lattice to the adjacent late Gothic Oliveta from 1468.



Striking changes in the appearance of the church date from the 19th century.

In 1803 a French Imperial clock was installed on the spire, in 1835 the spire was struck by lightning during a storm at night and was burnt. It assumed its present form in 1837, more slender and higher than before (at 331 ft 6 in the highest in Czechoslovakia).



1879 - 1883 the church, distinctly shabby, was restored in Purist style to the design of Josef Mocker, who re-Gothicized the gables and dormers and built a pseudo-Gothic hall onto the north portal. He also appreciably re-Gothicized the interior, removing the Baroque altars which had still remained after Joseph's intervention.

In the 20th century the Sternberk Chapel was restored almost from ruins under the supervision of Kamil Hilbert and was opened to the public in 1923. The interior of the church was greatly impoverished by Joseph's practicalism, 26 altars being removed and only 7 remaining. The main

Baroque altar was replaced by a pseudo-Gothic one, the work of J. Mocker which he designed himself. At the centre of the altar he left the famous Plzen Madonna, a work of European significance as one of the most notable statues belonging to the well-known Czech type of splendid Madonnas. It is a claystone statue about 4 ft 6 in high from around 1390. Either side of it on the altar there are wooden statues of saints from the abandoned altars of the 16th and 17th century. The pillars of the three-part nave carry statues of Calvary, which were originally high on the beams of the triumphal arch. They are statues of the Virgin Mary and St. John, compact in form, and a crucifix - the work of a Plzen master from the 1470s, one of the greatest artists of the time in Bohemia. The pulpit, with its rich chiselled circlings, dates from the same period.



The Madonna, known as the Madonna of Plzen

From the reign of Rudolph II there is a copy of Domenico Tintoretto's "Mary Magdalene" hanging on the pillar of the south nave of the church. On the north side of the nave, near the altar, there is the architectural epitaph of the Plzen burgess Matyas Bakalar of Sonnenburk (d. 1612), designed in the spirit of Dutch-German Renaissance. The pews in the nave are from 1699. The two confession boxes and Calvary in the presbytery are the work of Lazar Widman dating from 1765.

The early Baroque altars at the front of the side naves date from the period after the Thirty Years' War and the altars by the walls of the naves from around 1660. The two pseudo-Gothic altars are decorated with pictures of St. Wenceslas and St. Prokop by Frantisek Sequens (1836-1896), a native of Plzen.



The Sternberk Chapel is decorated with Renaissance wall paintings, by the wall on the plinth there is the pewter coffin of Bohunka of Lobkovice (d. 1609), exhumed from the ground. After restoration, the Czech altar was installed into the chapel. The altar is the work of Professor Jan Kastner from the late 19th century. The gallery of the tower, at a height of 195 ft, provides a fine view of the city.



House ref. no. 234

House ref. no. 234 (35 [nam. Republiky](#)), Archdeaconry. When the Order of German Knights gained rights to the Plzen parish, they bought the building opposite the Church. The present-day building was erected in 1710 by Jakub Auguston. It is the most beautiful and most valuable Baroque building in Plzen.

Upstairs there are rooms with a valuable stucco and artist's decoration. Above the portal there is the coat-of-arms of the Prague archbishopric.

St. Mary's plague column

 Link to the Historical center [video clip](#).



St. Mary's plague column in the north-west part of the [square](#) is by the Plzeň sculptor Kristian Widman and dates back to 1681.

It was commissioned by the Plzeň burgesses as an expression of thanks that, in 1680, the city

had been saved from the plague.

The stone balustrade with its statues supports a powerful plinth with a second group of four statues; the column is then completed by a head and, on it, a Baroque replica of the famous Plzeň Madonna.

The statues on the balustrade and plinth date from 1714 and represent St. Bartholomew, St. Wenceslas, St. Frantisek Xaversky, St. Ruzena, St. Antonin, St. Roch, St. Barbora and St. Florian.



The town hall

The town hall dominates the north side of the [square](#). In 1496 the Plzeň people purchased the largest building in the city and converted it into a town hall. The town hall was damaged by a large fire in 1507.



On the occasion of a visit to the city by some Italian bricklayers and stonemasons, the burgesses commissioned the Italian master-builder Giovanni de Statia to reconstruct the building into a splendid Renaissance palatial residence. Today it is an imposing three-storey building.

The ground floor, made up of rustic masonry and divided from the floor above by a plain moulding, is broken by a single entrance aperture. The first "lord's floor" is decorated with five windows with cornices, the second and third floors have smaller windows. Above the main cornice there is an attic, divided by pilaster strips into seven sections with a clock in the middle. Above the attic there is a second cornice with an architrave

and frieze, above which are three little painted gables with vases and weathercocks and, along the sides, a three-sided, richly detailed shield. The hipped roof bears chimneys and a turret from the 17th century. 1907-1912 the town hall was fundamentally reconstructed by architect J.Koula, who designed a new sgraffito decoration. The original Renaissance courtyard wing was raised in 1849.



Interior of the town hall



The portal leads into the so-called "Mazhauz" with its fine clove vaulted ceiling. In the ceiling there are hooks and rings which served for holding firemen's apparatus. The imposing staircase leading to the upper floors was created during Koula's adaptation. Nowadays there is an inner door linking the town hall with the neighbouring Emperor's House and thus it is possible to enter the Lord Mayor's parlour through this house or through the main hall of the town hall, a palatial are of splendid Renaissance design. Here in the recess there is a fresco of Christ on the cross, in the background a view of the city which, judging by the monogram G.S., was painted by the town hall's master-builder in 1578. Further, there is a beautiful Renaissance hearth and above it, cast in stone, the city's Baroque coat-of-arms.



On the opposite side there is a Latin inscription on the cartouche from 1599 in honour of Emperor Rudolph II who spent some time in the city. In the 1960s a concert organ was installed in the palatial hall. From here it is possible to enter the Lord Mayor's parlour, formerly magistrates quarters. It is decorated with a fine fresco by Frantisek J. Lux, a tableau of the victory of Emperor Charles VI over the Turks. The furniture in all these high-class rooms is pseudo-Renaissance from the time when the town hall was being adapted.

House ref. no. 290



The Emperor's House ref. no. 290 (41 [nam. Republiky](#)) is to the left of the [town hall](#). It resulted from the combining of two buildings in 1607 to the design of J.M.Filipi for Emperor Rudolph II, who bought it in order to have his own residence in the city.



It is a twostorey Renaissance building with a pantile roof. Outside on the central supporting pillar there is a Baroque statue of Roland, known in Plzen as Zumbera, transferred here from a Baroque fountain. The Classical restoration of the facade was carried out in 1793, the present appearance dates from 1913.

In the entrance hall there are tempera paintings depicting the Emperor as a man of justice from the early 17th century.

In the neighbouring room there is a plaque commemorating the formation of the National Committee in 1918.

House ref. no. 2

House ref. no. 2 (2 [nam. Republiky](#)) called "The White Rose" (U bile ruze), originally Renaissance, modified after 1585 to become a Jesuit College.



This plan fell through and the house had various owners; later there was an inn and hotel here where, in December 1799, the legendary Russian general Suvorov was put up. In 1818 the first Bohemian theatre performance was staged and later J.K.Tyl acted here.

The present appearance of the building dates from 1871.

House ref. no. 90 Salzmänn

House ref. no. 90 ([Prazska Street](#) no. 8) "Salzmänn" (U Salzmannu) - originally a Renaissance house which master-builder Jan Merlian (or Skarpalin) built for himself in 1584.

The house was constructed afresh in 1907 and only the beautiful portal with its Italian inscription remained. The house takes its name from an owner of the inn there, who was the first to take [Plzen Prazdroj](#) (Pilsner Urquell) beer to Prague in 1842.

House ref. no. 84 - Muzeum

House ref. no. 84 ([Prazska Street](#) no. 15) "The White Lion" (U bileho lva) - a sizeable two-storey corner building with a mansard roof and central protruding facade, containing an ostentatious Renaissance portal from the latter half of the 16th century.



In the early 19th century, the building was modified in Louis-Seize fashion. It was one of the largest and most expensive houses in the city. One reason for this was its proximity to the Prague Gate and there used to be a hotel here, dating from the 17th century at the latest.

In the 1980s it was remodified. Next to the house there used to be the Prague Gate with the home of the gateman; the gate was demolished in 1822.

The water tower

The former water tower ([Prazska Street](#) no. 19) was built in 1532 for the then city waterworks.



At the same time it was constructed as a component part of the city's fortifications and Prague Gate.

After 1822 it had a storey added in French Imperial style; a late Gothic portal was placed here in 1912, this dating from around 1500 and coming from the demolished house ref. no. 197 in [Presovska Street](#) (Presovska ulice). There is a commemorative plaque on the tower to the well-known physician, Dr. Josef Skoda, a professor at Vienna University, who was born in the house next door 10.12.1805.

The Prague Bridge



The late Gothic Prague Bridge across the mill-race is by Ondracek and dates from 1520.

After it caved in 1920, [Prazska Street](#) (Prazska ulice) was extended along here.

On the bridge, between the two poplars, there is a Baroque Pieta (now restored) by Antonin Herich, dating from 1750.

The city walls

The remains of the city walls behind [house ref.no. 58](#) are an 88 ft long section of the city fortifications from around 1300: they are 23 ft high and the moated wall is from the 17th century.

The city walls continue further behind houses ref. nos. 301-307 from the late 18th and the 19th century; they form the so-called Plzen city "cvingr" - small craftsmen's houses, attached at the rear to the city walls. Another part of the city's fortifications were the Baroque bastions (panel fortifications jutting out) built in Plzen 1645-1649 by Colonel Jan Lacron. One has been preserved in [5th May Gardens](#) (sady 5. kvetna), diagonally opposite the [water tower](#). It was washed by the mill-race which ran from the Radbuza under today's museum and [butchers' shops](#) to the former lord's mill.

In [Krizik Gardens](#) (Krizikovy sady) on the lower side of the [Butchers' shops](#) (Masne kramy) there is a statue of St. Jan of Nepomuk by Ottavius Mott from 1685, based on the statue by Brokoff on Charles Bridge in Prague.

The statue originally stood on the bridge across the Radbuza, a location known as "Johns' Place" (U Jana), and was transferred to its present site in 1934.

Butchers' Shops ref. no. 353

Butchers' Shops (Masne kramy) ref. no. 353 ([Prazska Street](#) no. 18) have been located here since 1392, having been transferred from the square to the area of the city moat between the inner and outer walls.



In the Renaissance then Neo-Gothic period in the mid-19th century, they were modified and received Gothic battlements. The interior has a three-part nave basilican cross-section. Around the centre of the nave there used to be two rows of butchers' shops with right-angled Gothic portals opening onto the inner area of the building. 31 of them have been preserved.

1967-1971 the building was modified to the design of architect Frantisek Matejovic and became an exhibition hall of the West Bohemian Gallery.

The street between the butchers' shops and neighbouring building used to be the first city abattoir.

Surrounding Gardens Area

These appeared from the beginning of the last century on the site of the [city walls](#) and they border the old medieval city.



Gardens Area...



Today they are divided into several sections: 5th May, Safarik, Krizik, Kopecky, Smetana Gardens and Gardens of Petatricatniku.

From the mid-19th century, high-class buildings appeared around these gardens, thus creating an ostentatious circular avenue. Several monuments were placed here from the 1860s, these being the first public works of sculpture in this country.



House ref. no. 344 - Gerlach House

"Gerlach House" (Gerlachovsky dum) ref. no. 344 ([Drevena Street](#) no. 4) ranks among the most interesting buildings in Plzeň.



It has two storeys with a high gable and late Gothic portal, next to which is an attractive Baroque portal linked to the passageway. The original Gothic building was purchased by Jan Merlian who rebuilt it in Renaissance style in 1575. It was obtained in 1694 by Jakub Auguston and he modified it to its present form.

In 1913 the house was renovated for the Ethnographic Museum and was later linked with [house ref. no. 106](#) (Chotesovsky) on the [Square of the Republic](#) (namesti Republiky).

The composer Jan Gerlach lived here in the 19th century and the house is named after him.

The Frantisek Krizik Monument

Krizik (1847-1941) was an electrical engineer and inventor; the monument is a reminder that in the immediate vicinity he had his workshop, where he invented an electric arc lamp, the so-called "Plzen Lamp".

The monument opposite the [Continental Hotel](#) is the work of A. Holub and S. Kukral from 1936.

The West Bohemian Museum



The West Bohemian Museum is the dominant building in [Kopecky Gardens](#) (Kopeckeho sady) ref. no. 357.

It was built 1893-1902 on the proposal of the head of the Industrial Art Museum here, Josef Skorpil. The architecture is Neo-Renaissance with decorative fin-de-siecle elements, built to a design by E. Kroh, O. Volf and A. Dryak. The inner decoration is by sculptors G. Kloucek, V. Saff, J. Drahnovsky and painter A. Nemejc.

The Franciscan church

The Franciscan church and monastery are among the city's oldest buildings and, for all the calamities of the Hussite era and Thirty Years War, have, in essence, preserved their original early Gothic form.



They are from the Gothic period of the era of the last Premysl dynasty in the 13th century, i. e. an art form very precious in Bohemian history because of its rarity. The

church consists of two areas of almost equal length, the 67 ft long nave and the 75 ft long presbytery. The nave is divided by three pairs of rounded pillars into the main nave (43 ft high) and two lower side naves. The pillars are linked by pointed arches. Over the years the floor of the nave was raised by just over 3 ft, previously there were some steps leading into the presbytery.

The presbytery and nave have a Gothic cross-vaulted ceiling, despite being frequently damaged by events of war.

In 1611, in place of the ruined chapel, a new large and high Chapel of the Holy Trinity was built onto the north wing. In the chapel there is an altar with the Black Virgin Mary of Hajek (18th century) and tomb of the founder of the chapel, Jan Skribonius of Horsov.

In the latter half of the 17th century the eight-sided St. Antonin's Chapel with its cupolar vaulting and stucco decoration was built onto the north side of the nave. Inside there is a beautiful altar with acanthus leaf decoration and a picture of St. Antonin. The chapel is closed by a Baroque iron lattice from 1706.

The church's main altar is one of the most valuable Baroque altars in Plzen; it dates from 1696 and still bears traces of the Renaissance period. The main picture of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is a copy of a Rubens, in the centre there is a wooden Gothic statue of the Virgin Mary from the period after 1400, a replica of the stone statue from the main altar of St. Bartholomew's Parish Church. In the cloisters there used to be an older Madonna from the 2nd quarter of the 14th century: this is now in the National Gallery in Prague. To the left of the presbytery there is a relievo of St. Anna and the Virgin Mary with Baby, Jesus from the first half of the 16th century: this probably originates from Nuremberg, with whom Plzen had active trade and cultural links.



The sensitively sculpted Group of the Apostles dates from the same time. On the north side of the nave there is the Pieta altar, an interesting work from the latter half of the 17th century. It displays a sensitive depth and woeful pathos.

Opposite there is a rococo pulpit from 1740, on whose top is St. Frantisek in a flaming chariot drawn by little angels, the work of Lazar Widman. In the south nave there is the small carved rococo altar of St. Jan of Nepomuk. The pews date from the same time. The Chapel of the Virgin Mary of Lourdes was established in the 1880s under the choir-stalls. The church's Gothic spire had its upper section removed in 1567 as it was in danger of collapse - it was completed as late as 1676. At the front to the west side there is a large stone tablet with the letters MH and AH, monograms of Matyas Hauf and his wife, Anna: they bequeathed the money for the completion of the tower. The western facade of the church

is the masterpiece of Jakub Auguston, post-1723. The simple portal contrasts with the richly engraved rococo door.

The monastery was built at the same time as the church and its cloisters have been preserved in the original Gothic form. The most striking feature is the east side, whose vaulted ribs extend to the ground and the windows are decorated with cross-profile wainscoting.

The rarest part of the monastery is the Chapel of St. Barbora from 1370-1380, which has kept its stellar vaulted ceiling of the monasterial chapter halls, supported by a central column. The vaulting collapsed during the Hussite wars and was rebuilt in 1460 with the column.



Interior of the St. Barora chapel

At that time the chapel was covered in wall paintings from the life of St. Barbora. The vaulted squares are filled with large figures of angels and floral ornaments. The naive wall pictures reflect the efforts of the times to achieve a realistic portrayal of the countryside; the style of the figures is of long, curved folds in a schematically condensed form.

The Plzen frescoes rank among the first of their kind in Bohemia. 25 years ago frescoes were transferred to the chapel from the abolished Dominican monastery: these had previously formed part of a museum collection. The oldest view of the city is also depicted here. The frescoes date from the same period as the painting from the Svihov Chapel (the 1520s).

In the cloisters there is a Renaissance stone pulpit bearing the year 1543, the same as on the window of the monastic oratorium, which can be seen in the presbytery near the pulpit of today. The monastery was extensively damaged during the siege of Plzen in 1618 by Arnost Mansfeld's army of the Estates, and was repaired in 1645 by Colonel Jan Lacron, who completed the city's fortifications. In the sacristy there is a copy of the votive plaque of the Plzen burgess, Karel Kasperek, from 1538 by the monographist I. W., the best and most gifted pupil of Lukas Cranach; the original is now West Bohemian Museum.

The entrance from the street to the church has been gated since 1925; at the sides there are some less impressive statues by the Plzen sculptor Ludvik Wildt from 1857. The path to the church continues between two walls, the recesses containing statues of 14 helpers. The area surrounding the monastery is currently under repair.

The Church of St. Anna

The Church of St. Anna and St. Ruzena Limanska was built onto the monastery over a period of almost ten years to the design of Jakub Auguston, and was completed a year after his death in 1735.



It is one of the most outstanding works of this Plzen architect in Baroque. The entrance is linked to the protruding corners of the towers and is completed by two domed superstructures joined by a rectangular gable finished in triangular fashion and a wall niche with a statue of St. Anna.

Inside there are frescoes by F. Julius Lux (in the presbytery The Most Holy Trinity, in the central field St. Anna is introducing the Virgin Mary to the church service, above the choir-stalls the Virgin Mary is taking Dominican monks and nuns under her protective cloak, below the choir-stalls Christ is appearing to St. Ruzena Limanska).

In the 1950s the church was loaned to the Orthodox Church. After modifications an icon was installed in front of the Baroque altar. The architect Jakub Auguston, jr. (c. 1670-1735) is buried in the crypt.

The front of the church and monastery face onto P. Bezruc Street, at the end of which no. 31 has sgraffiti by M. Ales of St. Wenceslas, St. George, a page and a dragon.

The State Research Library

 Link to the Historical center [video clip](#).

The State Research Library ([Bedrich Smetana Street](#) no. 14) - originally a convent of Dominican nuns.



It was built 1711-1714 by Jakub Auguston on the site of five houses which had been burnt, and which were purchased by Countess Katerina

Vratislavova of Mitrovica. Of the original construction, the northern facade has remained untouched, linked on both floors by a parallel row of pillars and balanced by the sequence of the windows.

The exterior has changed considerably with subsequent modifications; the courtyard had the library hall added in the 1960s. The refectory was also modified and Baroque frescoes restored. The monastery was discontinued in 1782 and was purchased by the city for use as a school.

1804-1809 the master-builder S. M. Schell built the Philosophical Institute onto the monastery on the site of the moat, this in the Classical style of Louis XVI. The tower of the former Litice gate was also attached to the building. Schell's imposing construction created a new dominant feature in the south-east part of the old city.

In the 20th century a Baroque portal was transferred from [house ref.no. 139](#) in the square to the building on B. Smetana Street, and the other tower in the [Smetana Gardens](#) was given the portal from house ref. no. 249 in Bezrucova Street.

Under the passageway of the tower there is a large area from when the town originated, used for purposes of safety. On the part of the building facing B. Smetana Street there is a plaque commemorating the works of Bedrich Smetana 1840-1843, with his portrait by J. Stursa, and a second plaque recalling the work done here by the national revivalist, Professor J. V. Sedlacek.

House ref. no. 166

House ref. no. 166 ([Bedrich Smetana Street](#) no. 4) from 1897, built to the design of architect Frantisek Krasny and the first fin-de-siecle house in Bohemia.

It is a terraced house with three storeys and a half attic floor. The floors have complex fin-de-siecle decoration.

House ref. no. 139

House ref. no. 139 ([B. Smetana Street](#)) is a modern corner building which was erected in 1911 on the site of an original Gothic building later reconstructed in Renaissance style and then rebuilt by Jakub Auguston in 1731.

During reconstruction, the splendid Baroque portal was transferred to the [State Research Library](#) in B. Smetana Street (ul. B. Smetany).

In the Hussite period the building belonged to Katerina Pabiankova and Jan Zizka lived here 1419-1420. Up to 1835 the regional authorities were based here.

The old synagogue

Up the road from the [hotel](#), in the courtyard of house no. 5, there is an old synagogue from 1859 built to the design of Martin Stelzer, now in disrepair and deserted. There was a Jewish graveyard on the site of what is now Palacky Square (Palackeho namesti).

In 1504 the inhabitants of Plzen extracted privilege from King Vladislav. All Jews were banished from the city and could stay there only during the day.

A change came about after the liberation by Joseph II, when Popper and Dusenay, Jewish businessmen from Prague, purchased the former building of the Plasy monastery, [ref. no. 281](#) in [Dominikanska Street](#) (Dominikanska ulice). From then on, the Jews began to assert themselves and a testament to their expansion was the old synagogue of 1859, next to which was also a school and ritual slaughterhouse. This operated until 1892.

The J. K. Tyl Theatre

[Smetana Gardens](#) (Smetanovy sady) ends with the first-class building of the J. K. Tyl Theatre which was constructed 1899-1902 to the design of Antonin Balsanek. It is built in Neo-Renaissance style with fin-de-siecle elements.



The theatre was purposely built in contrast to the Prague National Theatre and was intended to underline the patriotic and cultural strivings of a new, powerfully developing Bohemian Plzen.

It is decorated with sculptural works by leading Czech artists, e. g. the sculptors F. Hergesell, V.

Amort, F. Stránský, L. Saloun, F. Rous, A. Procházka and painters J. Mandl, F. Urban, F. Fröhlich, K. V. Masek. The curtain was designed by Augustin Nemejc.

Recently, in 1982, the theatre underwent expensive renovation and now shines again in its full glory. On the southern apron there is a statue of Tyl by Alois Soper.

The synagogue



At no. 11 [Gardens of Petatratniku](#) (Sady Petatratniku) there is a modern synagogue, built by R. Stech in 1892 to the design of architect Fleicher in Romantic Moor-Romanesque style. The two towers neatly contain the divided facade, culminating in the three-sided gable.

The synagogue was an indication of the rich Jewish community in Plzeň which, however, was practically decimated by the Nazis.

Mala Street

The solitary narrow lane on the site of medieval Plzeň to be preserved up to the present day (up to the end of the 19th century there was also Katovská Street on the site of today's General Post Office).

Now, however, it is demolished and the houses with doors on the north side have been knocked down.

The Roosevelt Bridge



The street ends with Roosevelt (formerly Saska) Bridge, built 1849-1851 by master-builder Martin Stelzer on the site of an old ford across the River Mže.

It linked up with the then completed Karlovarská

(Karlovy Vary) highway.

The bridge was a gallery of ornamental sculpture, brought here from other locations. In the middle there is a large crucifix from the mid-19th century, cast in the Plasy ironworks.

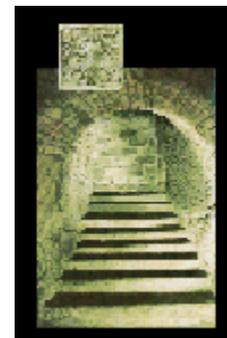
In the 1980s the bridge was renovated and the front part nearest the town rebuilt.

Plzen Historical Underground

 Link to the Underground [video clip](#).



The entry and stairs into the Underground



Plzen's underground is an integral part of a structural historical development of [Plzen](#), established 1295 at the confluence of rivers Mze, Radbuza, Uhlava and Uslava, in the middle of Plzen [hollow](#).

An important administrative centre of this region was originally the castle of the house of Premysl in [Stary Plzenec](#), 15 km south of Plzen, declared by written documents back to 976.

In the end of the 13th century Czech king Wenceslas II decided to move the centre of royal power in West Bohemia to the new king town [New Plzen](#), as the town was called at that time. The new town was built in broad-minded style. Around an oblong square there were situated regular blocks of houses delimited by a rectangular network of streets. The Gothic outlook of citizen houses was usually damaged by following reconstructions.

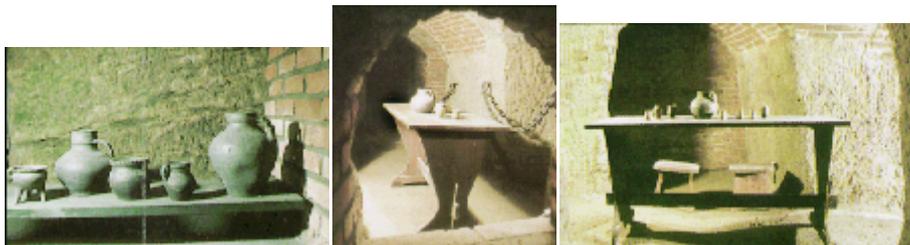


Plzen's historical underground was begun during the 13th century and finished during the 19th century. The underground is constituted by two or three level cellars, that were used for preserving food, for



manufactures, for malt-houses and wine-vaults. These cellars were also used for technical purposes as galleries bringing water to the water supply tower and as sewage and wells. The oldest houses were located in the front parts of the lots, in the back-yards were situated stables, sheds, free yards and wells. Large number of wells at a restricted area dissolved the level of bottom/lower water in the whole town. Dry wells were secondarily used as cesspools.

Archeological research of these wells/cesspool was very successful, many subjects declaring the everyday-life in a medieval town were found. Choice of these finds of ceramics, glass and wooden products is exhibited in the part of the historical underground that is opened for the public.



In the beginning of the 16th century water supply became critical. Municipal authorities therefore decided to build new waterpipes, many changes of the water regime were connected with and a [water tower](#) with a machine, that pumped water by a system of level pumps. The water was held in a leaden reservoir and led in wooden pipes to the public fountains at the main square. The [water tower](#) is, even today, one of the dominants of the look of Plzen.



The water system in the Underground



Another important achievement connected with Plzen's historical



underground was building up of the outlet sewer, in which the water was drained from the town slaughter-house at southern part of the town. This sewer was made from bricks and financial subsidy to this project was given by the guild of Plzen butchers, the



building up was finished in 1637. During the following three hundred years the sewage system was connected to this sewer. This system was one of the best systems used in Czech towns of that time.

In the publicly opened part of the underground you can see typical exhibits of specialized municipal cellars from 14th and 15th centuries. Also the methods of construction of backbuildings and technical background are shown here. Archeological finds and subjects showing everyday-life in a medieval town are installed in this exhibition. Part of the underground was, thanks to municipal authorities, opened for the public. It helps you to understand the past of one of the most important medieval royal towns in a very pleasant and interesting way.

The Brewery Museum ref. no. 58

 [Link to the Brewery Museum video clip.](#)

House ref. no. 58 ([Veleslavínova Street](#) no. 6) Renaissance from the 16th century with a Classical facade from the early 19th century, projecting out into the street.



In the rear wing the malt-house is well preserved. Its construction follows the course of the old city walls, parts of which are preserved behind the house.

Between the malt-house and the walls there runs a little old Gothic lane. In the courtyard there is the Gothic licensed brewer's gate from

[Mala Street.](#)

Since 1958 the building has contained the brewery museum, covering the brewing of beer from its very origins up to the present day.

Beer has been brewed in Plzeň since 1295 when the town was founded. However, the genuine "Pilsener", as it is known all over the world, is connected with the name of The [Burghers Brewery](#) (today's Prazdroj brewery), built more than 500 years later, in 1842.

Our Brewery Museum, the only one of its kind in the Czech Republic, tries to document the way from home products made by burghers authorized for brewing, to the drink of today's standard quality.

Founded in 1959 in an historical building, in which there was a malthouse as early as the 15th century, and a famous beerhouse in the 19th century the Museum has collected many examples of maltsters', brewers' and innkeepers' trades.

A fully equipped coopers' workshop, an old Czech malt-kiln, a carrier's waggon and a functioning model of a steam brewery are among the attractions; the interiors themselves (including the original lager cellar, hewn in sandstone) are also noteworthy.

A chronological history of the Plzen

- [X. century](#)
 - [XIII. century](#)
 - [XIV. century](#)
 - [XV. century](#)
 - [XVI. century](#)
 - [XVII. century](#)
 - [XVIII. century](#)
 - [XIX. century](#)
 - [XX. century](#)
-

X. century

976 first records of Plzen castle

992 Bishop St.Vojtech founds a small monastery and the church Kostelec P.Marie (of Virgin Mary) now of [St.George](#) in Doubravka

XIII. century

1295 on the order of King Wenceslas II the locator Jindrich founds a town called Nova Plzen (New Plzen) on an area of approximately 20 hectares consisting of a [rectangular network](#) of 15 streets and a [square](#)

XIV. century

1307 first written record of a [brewery](#) in Plzen, the document bears the oldest known town seal

1320 John of Luxembourg further extends the town area

1328 first record of the city's Latin School

XV. century

- 1411** Jan Hus writes a letter to the people of Plzen expressing satisfaction with their moral quality and appeals to them to maintain their fortitude
- 1414** burgesses, led by the preacher Vaclav Koranda senior, expel members of the Order of German Knights from the city
- 1419** in November Vaclav Koranda brings a troop of South Bohemian Hussites led by Jan Zizka
- 1420** in March the Hussites leave the city and go to the town of Tabor. Plzen still inclines towards Rome
- 1421** Zizka besieges Plzen for the first time, but without success
- 1427** the Hussites besiege the town, they later besiege it in **1431** and **1433-1434**
- 1434** 19th September - Zikmund's Golden Bull liberates the inhabitants of the town from taxes, duties, tolls and other fees
- 1449** Plzen becomes a member of the Strakonice Anti-Podebrady Union
- 1460** Great Lake founded in Bolevec
- 1466** Plzen people secede from King George of Podebrady
- 1466** residence of the Prague Chapter in one kind in the town up to **1478**
- 1468** Plzen inhabitants acknowledge Matthias of Hungary as Czech King
- 1468** first Czech book "Trojan Chronicle" is printed in Plzen
- 1480** Plzen inhabitants obtain a city magistrate's office

XVI. century

- 1507** great fire, two-thirds of the town burn down, other fires in **1525, 1526, 1601, 1604, 1729, 1792, 1835**
- 1546** after the death of Matous Svihovsky, last priest of the Order of German Knights, the city gains a patron's privilege to the parish church
- 1578** the city council passes a bill according to which no non-Catholic may become a burgess in Plzen, since then Plzen was always a faithful Catholic town
- 1599** Emperor Rudolf II flees from the plague to Plzen and stays here until **1600**. The town temporarily becomes the capital of the empire

XVII. century

- 1618** 21st November - Plzen is conquered by the army of the Estates led

by Arnost Mansfeld

- 1633** from December **1633** to February **1634** Albrecht von Wallenstein is staying in the city, he is murdered in Cheb on 25th February **1634**
- 1635** the plague in Plzen, again in **1648, 1680, 1714; 1832** - cholera
- 1681** a [plague column](#) is erected in the square, it is the first public expression of Baroque in the city
- 1695** Jan Sladky Kozina, leader of rebels in the Chodsko region, executed in Plzen, his dead body hangs on the gallows for one year

XVIII. century

- 1714** Dominican convent founded
- 1776** a grammar school set up in Plzen
- 1779** raabization (land reform) introduced an city lords' estates
- 1786** city population 5,246
- 1788** council authorities set up in the city
- 1795** start of the demolition of the [city walls](#)
- 1799** passage of the Russian Army, allies with Austria against Napoleon, 16-18th December General Suvorov stays in the city

XIX. century

- 1804** Philosophical Institute set up
- 1818** first Bohemian theatre performance in Plzen
- 1819** first Bohemian school "of the 3 R's" founded, the first Czech school in the city
- 1827** foundation of the D.L.Levit tannery, the third largest in Bohemia
- 1832** first stone theatre built in Plzen and hospital opened
- 1835** spire of [St Bartholomew's Church](#) on fire
- 1836** 2nd February - death of professor J.V.Sedlacek, representative of the first revivalist generation in Plzen
- 1840** Bedrich Smetana studies in Plzen **-43**
- 1842** [city brewery](#) starts brewing beer
- 1849** [Sasky](#) (later Roosevelt) Bridge opened
- 1856** 11th July - death of J.K.Tyl in Plzen, buried in Mikulas Cemetery

- 1858** telegraph link with Mariánské Lázně opened, gas-lighting set up in the square and main streets
- 1859** foundation of the Waldstein Engineering Works, purchased in 1869 by Emil Škoda
- 1859** the whole [square](#) cobblestoned (now the Square of the Republic)
- 1861** death of J.F.Smetana on 18th February, representative of the second generation of Plzeň revivalists
- 1861** Plzeň-Fürth im Wald railway track opened (further tracks to be opened are: **1862** Plzeň-Prague, **1868** to České Budějovice and Vienna, **1872** to Cheb, **1873** to Zatec, **1878** to Železná Ruda)
- 1866** almost a two-month occupation of the city by the Prussian Army
- 1889** new city waterworks built on Homolka hill
- 1899** city power station built and electric trams introduced (Bory - Lochotín), constructed by František Kržík
- 1899** the [Škoda Works](#) becomes a joint-stock company

XX. century

- 1902** new hospital opened in Bory
- 1902** new building of [theatre](#) opened (now the J.K.Tyl Theatre)
- 1906** 4th May - death of František Schwarz, representative of the third revivalist generation in Plzeň
- 1917** 25th May - explosion catastrophe in munition factory in Bolevec, 300 people dead
- 1917** 14th August - martial law declared in Plzeň revoked after 14 days
- 1918** 21st June - shots fired on children in Koterovská Street, six children dead
- 1918** 28th October - the Czechoslovak Republic declared
- 1924** [Greater Plzeň](#) created with the incorporation of villages of Doubravka, Doudlevice, Lobzy and Skvrňany - population now 108,023
- 1938** occupation of the border area by Nazi forces, Litice near Plzeň attached to the Reich
- 1941** trolleybus operation begins
- 1942** city authority set up in Plzeň, incorporation of villages of Bolevec, Božkov, Bukovec, Cernice, Hradiste, Koterov, Radobyčice, Újezd
- 1942** 11 air-raids on the city, 6,777 houses damaged or destroyed, 926 -45 lives lost

- 1945** 5th May - spontaneous uprising by the Plzen population against Nazi occupiers
- 1945** 6th May - early morning the American Army came to Plzen, city liberated from Nazi rule
- 1945** [Medical Faculty](#) of [Charles University](#) set up in Plzen
- 1948** [Pedagogical Faculty](#) set up in Plzen
- 1949** [Technical College of Engineering and Electronics](#) set up in Plzen
- 1953** 1st June - demonstration of Plzen population against the currency reform, suppressed by the People's Police and Communist authorities. Removal of the Liberation Monument with statue of T.G.Masaryk
- 1957** building of housing estates in the city suburbs (**1957** Slovany, **1961** Doubravka, **1966** Bory, **1968** Slovany, **1974** Lochotin, **1989** Vinice)
- 1972** population of Plzen reaches 150,000
- 1976** administrative unit of today's Plzen-city set up. After various campaigns villages are definitively incorporated or separated. Further villages to be incorporated are: Cernice, Radobycice, Koterov, Cerveny Hradek, Krimice, Radcice, (Litice already incorporated in **1970**)
- 1985** first section of the new Medical Faculty Hospital in Lochotin opened
- 1990** 1st July - population of Plzen 175,038

Plzen Guide: Plzen today

Every town is a living organism. As an organism regenerates its cells, so does a town. After some time its appearance changes corresponding with the needs of its inhabitants. It is twice as much true in the case of an important town, whether it concerns economy, social or cultural areas.

Nowadays Plzen is a metropolitan town (the third largest Czech town) and the capital of West Bohemia. New suburban districts are connected with one another by a network of trams, buses or trolley buses. Looking towards the northern slopes you will be attracted by the modern building of the University Hospital. Even old parts of the town with protected historic buildings were invaded by modern houses. The building of the Commercial Bank is situated on the bank of the river Radbuza opposite the House of Culture, which offers many possibilities how to spend one's leisure time.



Each of us like to participate from time to time in activities of some kind of sport. There are several swimming pools, tennis courts, a centre for international competition in shooting, a stadium for athletics and soccer, body-building centres here.

Because Plzeň is known for its cyclists there was also a stadium built for cycling track. In the winter you can skate at the ice stadium or swim in an indoor pool.

The summer season is more favoured with tourists because they can go for short or long trips in the [surrounding areas](#). The ponds at Bolevec with two autocamping areas is a suitable place for nature - lovers and helps to accommodate visitors of this town.



After the sightseeing and recreation, some of you and especially children will welcome the visit to the [Zoological Gardens](#), to see all kinds of exotic and local animals. By analogy, you can be pleased with the different colours, shapes and sizes of plants in the neighbouring Botanical Gardens.

Plzeň Guide: Culture in Plzeň

Although Plzeň is an industrial town it also has some good cultural traditions.

In 1468 the first Czech book was printed here - the Trojany Chronicle. During the National Revival, the end of 18th and the beginning of 19th century, there worked many significant personalities at the Institute of Philosophy. There has also been plays at the Czech theatre. The Czech plays were performed in the Plzeň [theatre](#) - there also worked a Czech play-wright, Josef Kajetan Tyl, who died here in 1856.

Also, world-famous puppets Spejbl and Hurvinek were born here. In honour of their creator Josef Skupa (1892-1957) there is a Puppet Show Festival held every other year in Plzeň.



The [Theatre of J.K.Tyl](#) has an excellent reputation in Czech Republic, too. It has three scenes and four ensembles: the play, the



opera, ballet, operetta, and the demanding dramaturgy. This theatre is

said to be a transfer stop for actors to Prague theatres, since many outstanding actors and actresses started their successful careers here. But the theatre is not the only thing here.

The [West Bohemian Gallery](#) is an important centre of art not only for Plzeners but for the whole Bohemia. The gallery is situated in the Gothic building of the [former Butcher Shops \(Masne kramy\)](#). It houses interesting exhibitions of the past and the present.



Remarkable are also the collections in many departments of the [West Bohemian Museum](#).

The [Brewery Museum](#) should not be left unnoticed either. It specializes in documenting the development of the brewery industry.

The Ethnographic Museum exhibits items of the life and culture of people in the Western Bohemia region. Several folk dancing groups continue to develop this tradition for the future.

Every spring the cultural festival, Smetana's Days takes place here and the autumn is reserved for the festival of Czech film productions "**Finale**". Very popular is the summer Jazz festival "**Jazz on the Street**".

Also children are represented in the cultural life. Every second year young aspiring artists accompany the festival of the radio plays "**Prix Bohemia**", with their works of art. The best works are exhibited at the first Czech Gallery of Children's Creative Expression - one of four galleries of this kind in Europe.



The Plzen showground is a place for regular commercial events. Well-known is a gastronomical exhibition "**EX Plzen**" followed by an international folklore festival.

The folk and country music festival "**Porta**", which is held at the amphitheatre in the suburb of Lochotin, is very popular with the young audience.

The cultural atmosphere is completed by education. Plzen is the residential town of two universities: the [University of West Bohemia](#) and the [Faculty of Medicine of Charles University](#).

There is also a Conservatoire and many professional secondary schools and training colleges.

The newly restored [State Science Library](#) holds almost two million books. So when asked where to find culture, you may already have an answer.



