

# East Bohemia



Contrast is the key to East Bohemia. The Polabí, the fertile area of plains radiating from the Labe river, is one of the flattest parts of the Czech Republic, but just 50km north on the border with Poland, the Krkonoše (Giant) Mountains escalate to the 1602m summit of Sněžka, the country's highest mountain. And while 1602m is minor league compared to the nearby Alps, there are enough alpine (with a small 'a') attractions to keep skiers, hikers and climbers active across all seasons. Come in winter and you'll be treated to very affordable skiing action, while in summer the resort of Špindlerův Mlýn transforms itself into an adventure sports hub.

Urban contrast is manifest in the busy provincial capital, Hradec Králové, with architectural design and the Labe river vigorously dividing the fascinating old and new towns. To the south is Pardubice, its beautifully preserved Renaissance square surrounded by an industrial halo that produced one of the 20th century's most notorious catalysts for destruction. Nearby the Renaissance splendour of the chateau at Litomyšl has achieved Unesco World Heritage recognition. Off the beaten track, hidden historical gems dominate quiet villages. The castles at Častolovice and nearby Opočno are exceptionally well restored, while the baroque sculptures of Matthias Bernard Braun overlook the sleepy town of Kuks.

Natural contrast shines in Adršpach-Teplice and Český ráj with their eccentric and bizarre landscapes carved across the millennia from sandstone. In Adršpach-Teplice your climbing or hiking will traverse hidden river valleys, while in Český ráj craggy castle ruins form part of the idiosyncratic vistas.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Uncover the many layers of **Hradec Králové's** (opposite) diverse architectural heritage
- Explore the soaring landscapes and brooding cliff-top castles of **Český ráj** (p255)
- Discover the rustic alpine charm of **Pec Pod Sněžkou** (p265) high in the Krkonoše Mountains
- Zigzag through the labyrinth of bizarre sandstone rock formations in the **Adršpach-Teplice Rocks** (p260)
- Relax amid the Renaissance arcades of **Litomyšl's** (p254) beautiful town square and World Heritage chateau



## HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

pop 95,000

Outwardly Hradec Králové might seem like the Czech Republic's most schizophrenic city, with the contrasting architectural styles of different eras slicing the East Bohemian capital in two. On the eastern bank in Staré Město, the old town frames the appropriately named Big square (Velké náměstí) with an elegant sweep of arcades and façades encompassing Gothic, Renaissance and baroque styles. To the northeast, Little square (Malé náměstí) continues the same architectural theme. West of the river, the new town, Nové Město, is a sprawl of grandiose Art Nouveau and functionalist buildings that are a fascinating, if slightly brutal, contrast to the flounce and

frills of the old town. Seemingly kept apart by both design and the Labe river, Hradec Králové's unity is secured by the vibrancy of its bars and restaurants, and a fine selection of galleries and museums that cast a non-judgemental eye over all the city's different histories.

## History

Two rivers and a hill: the ideal foundations for a fortified town. And it didn't take long for the local warlords to notice. By the 9th century, a stronghold had been constructed at the confluence of the Labe and Orlice rivers and within 300 years the fledgling city had become the administrative centre of East Bohemia.

Money flooded in and by the 14th century it was one of Bohemia's most important cities, becoming the seat of the kingdom's widowed queens (the name means 'Queens' castle') – a mixed blessing, as the immense fortifications that followed soon began to stifle further growth.

Although overrun by Swedish troops during the Thirty Years' War, Hradec Králové's reputation as a stronghold remained and with the merging of the Austrian and Hungarian thrones in the 19th century, its defences were once again bolstered, this time against the Prussians. Fortunately for Hradec Králové, the Prussians avoided the city when they marched south in 1866, trouncing the Austrians just east of the centre instead.

In the following decades the walls were pulled down, and Hradec Králové expanded explosively, guided by some far-sighted planning. Nové Město bears both the Art Nouveau and severe functionalist imprint of Bohemia's leading turn-of-the-century architects, particularly Jan Kotěra and his student Josef Gočár.

## Orientation

Staré Město, the old town, is squashed between the Labe and Orlice rivers. Nové Město begins west of Čs armády.

From the train and bus stations it's a 400m walk east into the heart of Nové Město, or 1km to Staré Město. Trolleybuses 2, 3 and 7 go from the train station to the edge of Staré Město.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Foreigners' police office** (☎ 158; Riegrovo nám) By the train station.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Tourist Information centre** (☎ 495 580 492; Velké nám; per hr 45Kč; ☎ 8am-4.30pm May-Sep, Mon-Fri Oct-Apr)

**Roxy Bar** (Masarykovo nám; per min 1Kč; ☎ 10am-3am Tue-Sat, 2pm-3am Mon-Sun)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Hospital** (nemocnice; ☎ 495 831 111; Sokolská) Located 500m south of the old town.

### MONEY

**Česká Spořitelna** (nr Čs armády & Palackého) Has an exchange desk and ATM.

## POST

**Main post office** (Zamenhofova) Opposite the train station. Another post office is on Čs armády.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist information centre** (Informační centrum; ☎ 495 580 492; www.ic-hk.cz; Velké nám; ☎ 8am-4.30pm May-Sep, Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) Sells maps, helps with accommodation and has internet access for 1Kč per minute.

**Tourist information centre** (☎ 495 534 482; Gočárova 1225; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Another branch in Nové Město.

## Sights

### STARÉ MĚSTO

The old town's architectural heart is at the west end of Velké nám (also known as Žižkovo nám). The oldest structure here is the brick Gothic **church of the Holy Spirit** (kostel sv Ducha), founded in 1307. Dour outside, the church is plain and lofty inside, illuminated by decorative stained glass.

Next door is the 68m Renaissance **White tower** (Bílá věž; adult/concession 20/10Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), built way back in 1589 and consequently no longer very white. The tower's original, 16th-century clock was ruined by a storm in 1828; the current clock dates from a 1993 renovation. Climb the tower to see (but hopefully not hear) the 9.8-tonne **Augustine Bell** (cast in 1506). Next door is the plain baroque **St Clement chapel** (kostel sv Klimenta).

Facing the square, the twin-towered, 15th-century, **former town hall** (*radnice*) has been converted into commercial office space. To the south of the square, at the end of a row of pastel-painted former canons' residences, is the skeleton of the **municipal brewery**, which was closed for restoration at the time of writing.

Sturdy arcades line the north side of the square; opposite is the Jesuits' **church of the Assumption of the Virgin** (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie), light and pretty despite its baroque baggage. This and the adjacent **Jesuit College** and **Bishop's Palace** date from the 17th century, when a bishopric was established in Hradec Králové. Tucked beside the church is a Josef Gočár modern addition, a staircase down to Komenského ulice.

A highlight of Hradec Králové is the regional **Gallery of modern art** (Galérie moderního umění; Velké nám 139-140; adult/concession 30/15Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Sun). Housed in a handsome Art Nouveau building (designed by Osvald Polívka)

is a superb collection of late-19th- and 20th-century Czech painting and sculpture, as well as changing modern exhibitions.

## NOVÉ MĚSTO – EAST OF THE RIVER

Nové Město begins from Čs armády, although the strip east of the Labe is more neglected than the clean-cut neighbourhoods west of the river.

Where Palackého meets the river is the **East Bohemia regional museum** (Krajský muzeum východních Čech; ☎ 495 512 462; www.muzeumhk.cz in Czech & German; Eliščíno nábreží 465; adult/concession 30/15Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), a graceful, Art Nouveau building of red brick, designed by Kotěra, with seated giants on either side of the door. Inside are old photos, clockworks, mammoth bones and a fascinating scale model of Hradec Králové dating from 1865, showing the fortress that bound the town for four centuries.

Down at the confluence of the two rivers is **Jiráskovy sady**, a wooded park which features a 16th-century **wooden church** brought from Ukraine in 1935.

## NOVÉ MĚSTO – WEST OF THE RIVER

Gočár's showpiece square, boxy Masarykovo nám, is overtly tidy and thoroughly functional, and best shows his wider vision for the city. Nowadays it's linked by a pedestrianised mall to the livelier Bačkovovo nám.

To the south are several brick school buildings designed by Gočár between 1925 and 1928. The most interesting is the **State Grammar School** (Státní gymnázium), with a severe façade like a textbook. Dominating a nearby corner is another arresting Gočár work, the wedge-shaped Protestant **Ambrosian chapel** (Ambrožův sbor). The outside looks overly austere but inside a lovely courtyard presents a softer countenance.

On Nám 28. října, search out the functionalist **church of the Blessed Heart of Our Lord** (kostel Božího Srdce Páně), with a dramatic arched space inside.

## Sleeping

The tourist office books private rooms from around 300Kč per person. The nearest **camping ground** (☎ 495 482 677; Stříbrný rybník) is 5km east of the centre (take bus 17).

## BUDGET

**Ubytovna ZVU** (☎ 495 511 175; www.hotelovydum.cz; Heyrovského 4; dm/s/d 210/290/580Kč) This hostel has

dorms and private rooms and is popular with workers from local construction sites. Book ahead.

**Penzion Amátka** (☎ 495 514 935; www.sweb.cz /amatka, in Czech; Malé náměstí 120; s/d 300/600Kč) Basic rooms with shared bathrooms, but a good location in the old town's quieter, smaller square.

## MIDRANGE

**Penzion Nové Adalbertinum** (☎ 495 063 111; www.adalbertinum.diecezezhk.cz; Velké nám 32; s/d incl breakfast 860/1320Kč; ☎) Comfortable rooms with modern furniture fill this 17th-century Jesuit college on the main square. Breakfast starts at 6.30am if you're seized by any monk-like urges.

**Pension U sv Lukáše** (☎ 495 518 616; www.usvateholukase.com; Uzká 208; s/d incl breakfast 1000/1400Kč) This stately townhouse near the main square conceals charming old-world rooms and a very good restaurant.

**Pod Věží Penzion** (☎ 495 514 932; www.pod-vezi.cz; Velké nám 165; s/d incl breakfast 1190/1575Kč; ☎) Comfy rooms, a fitness centre and in-room internet are all cunningly integrated in this slender building beside the even more slender White tower.

Also recommended:

**Hotel Stadión** (☎ 495 514 664; hotel-hradec-kralove-stadion@quick.cz; Komenského 1214; s/d incl breakfast 780/850Kč; ☎) Clean and basic digs beside the ice hockey stadium.

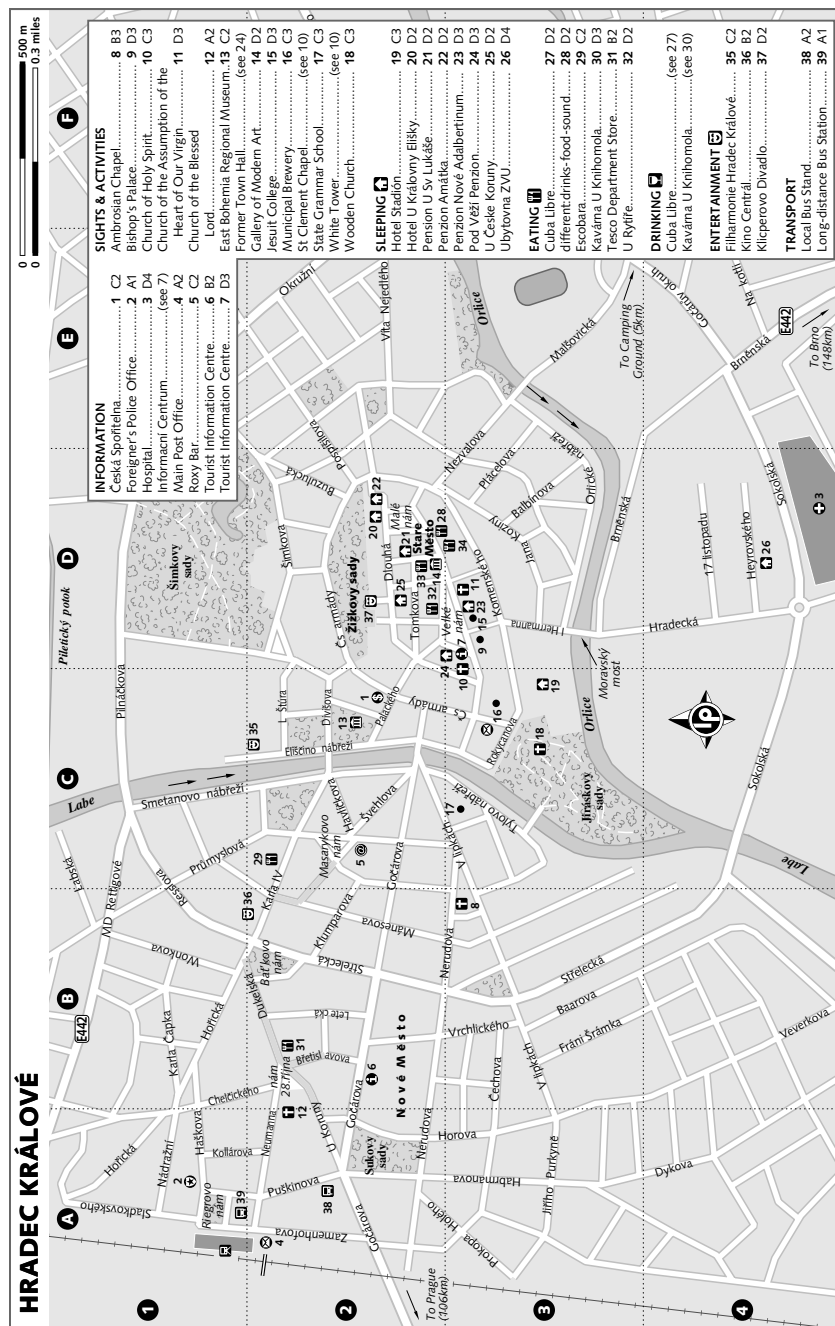
**U České Koruny** (☎ 495 540 490; www.uceskekoruny.com; Tomkova 180; d from 1350Kč; ☎) This funky restored building has a snug tavern downstairs. All the rooms are different colours, but they're all very comfortable.

## TOP END

**Hotel U Královny Elišky** (☎ 495 518 052; www.euroa-gentur.cz; Malé náměstí 117; s/d incl breakfast 2400/2800Kč; ☎) Hradec Králové's best rooms are in this renovated townhouse in quieter Malé náměstí. There are weekend discounts of up to 20%, and a fitness centre, sauna and pool.

## Eating

**different:drinks-food-sound** (☎ 495 511 380; Velké nám 22; snacks 50Kč, meals 80-120Kč; ☎ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Thu, 7.30am-1am Fri, 9am-1am Sat, 9am-11pm Sun) Expect tasty breakfasts, snacks and huge meals at this new eatery with brightly cinematic décor and Hradec Králové hipsters at the bar. Have a ciabatta sandwich and a latte while you hitch your laptop to their wi-fi network.



**U Rytiře** (☎ 603 464 389; Velké nám 144; mains 160-220Kč) The tasty Czech grills at 'The Knight', a popular spot on the main square, would go down well even without the funky young wait staff and medieval ambience.

**Escobara** (☎ 608 140 741; Karla IV 611; mains 170Kč) The curvy 1980s armchairs could be from a drug lord's super yacht, and you'll want to linger in them for the tasty pastas, grills and cocktails. There's a buzzy terrace for people watching in the summer.

Also recommended:

**Tesco Department Store** (Dukelská) Self-catering central.

## Drinking

**Kávárna U Knihomola** (☎ 495 516 089; Velké nám 26; mains 90-180Kč; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Thu, 7am-2am Fri, 10am-2am Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) Steaks, salads, coffee and cocktails fuel the city's bright young things in this lively bar-restaurant that's a popular haunt all day everyday. The site was one of the city's first bookshops (the name means 'At the Bookworm') and a cool literary ambience is still extant.

**Cuba Libre** (Malé náměstí 14-15; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 4-10pm Sat) This funky bar-art gallery is named after just one of the cocktails on offer; at least the owners didn't call it Screaming Orgasm or Dirty Banana.

## Entertainment

**Filharmonie Hradec Králové** (☎ 495 211 375; www.fhk.cz; Eliščíno nábřeží 777) The city orchestra stages regular classical concerts.

**Klicperovo divadlo** (☎ 495 514 590; Dlouhá 98) Theatre (usually Czech) is on the programme here.

**Kino Centrál** (☎ 495 213 613; Karla IV 774) For Czech and foreign films.

## Getting There & Away

Direct **buses** (☎ 495 521 742) link Hradec Králové with Prague (78Kč, 1½ hours) and Brno (130Kč, 2½ hours), with departures all day.

There are about 12 **trains** (☎ 495 537 555) a day to Prague (140Kč, 1½ hours), three to Brno (204Kč, 2½ hours) and dozens to Pardubice (34Kč, 30 minutes).

## PARDUBICE

pop 92,000

Like a sweet, gooey centre in a chewy piece of nougat, Pardubice's drop-dead-gorgeous Renaissance square is surrounded by the harsh realities of a sprawling industrial city. And just

to reinforce the incongruity of the juxtaposition, the city with (arguably) the country's most exquisite town square is also the home of the infamous Semtex plastic explosive that fuelled countless terrorist aspirations. Unlike neighbouring Hradec Králové, where the old town feels robust enough to counter the architectural muscle surrounding it, Pardubice's delicate heart and recently renovated chateau and gardens feel slightly fragile and under pressure from the encompassing greyness. Luckily the proud people of Pardubice protect what's left of their Renaissance heritage. With several elegant old town hotels and many lively bars and restaurants lining the main square, it's a breeze to tune out the city's harsher elements.

## History

Founded around 1340, Pardubice caught the noble eye of the Moravian Pernštejn family when they took ownership of the whole region in 1491. After giving it a bit of a makeover, the new landlords moved into the town's castle soon after. Over the next century, with the help of Italian artisans and the unexpected assistance of two devastating fires, the Pernštejns built Pardubice a glossy new Renaissance face. Though only a fraction of their legacy still stands today (thanks to the work of a Swedish siege army in the Thirty Years' War), the town centre remains achingly pretty.

## Orientation

Míru, the artery of 'new' Pardubice, is an 800m walk east along Palackého from the bus and train stations (or take any bus or trolleybus for 15Kč). On the east side of Nám Republiky is a Gothic gate tower into the old centre, Pernštýnské nám.

## Information

**Česká spořitelna** (Nám Republiky) Has an ATM and exchange desk.

**ČSOB** (Míru) Has an ATM opposite the main post office.

**Internet People** (Bratrančí Veverků 316; per hr 42Kč; ☎ 11am-9pm) One flight downstairs from ČSOB.

**Main post office** (Míru)

**Tourist information office** (☎ 466 613 223; www.ipardubice.cz; Míru 61; ☎ 9am-6pm) Has maps and accommodation information.

## Sights & Activities

### NÁMĚSTÍ REPUBLIKY

This modern square is home to three of Pardubice's oldest and most interesting buildings.

The most arresting, with its picturesque gables and needle-thin tower, is **St Bartholomew church** (kostel sv Bartoloměj), dating originally from the 13th century. Its present form dates from about 1515, when it was rebuilt after being razed by the Hussites.

At the other end of the square is the fine Art Nouveau **Municipal theatre** (Městské divadlo). On the eastern side, brandishing flags and pointy gables, is the 16th-century **Green tower** (Zelená brána; adult/concession 15/10Kč; ☞ 9am-noon & 1-5pm May-Sep, Sat & Sun only Oct), which you can climb for views over the town's two faces.

### PERNŠTÝNSKÉ NÁMĚSTÍ

This cobbled square is one of Bohemia's most handsome, completely enclosed by bright Renaissance buildings, including a genial, neo-Renaissance **town hall**. The square's most notable façade is the 18th-century, snow-white, stucco relief of Jonah being swallowed by the whale, on the house called **dům U Jonáše** (☎ 466 510 003; adult/concession 40/20Kč; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which contains a small gallery often showing surprisingly interesting and nicely avant-garde work.

Walk through the narrow alleys to the north and east of the square, beneath bulky stone arches supporting heavily sloping, virtually arthritic Renaissance buildings. Among the most venerable is the **house at Pernštýnská 11**, more or less unchanged since the 16th century.

### PARDUBICE CASTLE

The **castle** (zámeček; adult/concession 60/30Kč; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), filled with courting peacocks, is accessible from Zámecká, north of Pernštýnské nám. Inside is the renovated **palace**, featuring some exquisite Renaissance murals of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments. Opposite, in two smaller wings, are a superb gallery and a museum, both included in the entrance fee. The **East Bohemian gallery** (Východočeská galérie) has a permanent collection of 19th- and 20th-century Czech art, including unexpected modern sculptures around the grounds. A rather immodest exhibit on the role of the Pernštejns in Czech history is featured in the **East Bohemian museum** (Východočeská muzeum) as well as vintage postcards and coins from the days before Lonely Planet and credit cards.

### THE GREAT PARDUBICE STEEPLECHASE

Renowned as the world's toughest horse-race after the Grand National at Aintree, the Velká Pardubická (Great Pardubice Steeplechase) was established in 1874 by Count Octavian Kinsky. Equine tradition flows deep in the Kinsky family's veins, beginning in 1723 when the Bohemian cavalry commissioned the aristocratic family to breed horses from the athletic herds running wild on their estates since the 15th century. In 1883, just nine years after the first running of the Velká Pardubická, another Kinsky (Count Karel) won the Grand National with a Czech-bred horse. The Velká Pardubická was suspended during WWII, and the 1946 return of the race drew a record 60,000 spectators. Auspiciously the 100th race in 1990 was the first running of the race since the end of communism. Each year in early October, huge crowds gather to watch the 6900m race that is a torrid event for both jockeys and horses. It's not uncommon for horses to be destroyed after breaking a leg, and each year animal rights activists protest the running of the race. The Velká Pardubická race is now an international affair and horses from as far away as France, Slovakia, Italy and Ireland line up for a crack at the winner's purse of 2,250,000Kč (around US\$100,000 at the time of writing).

### Sleeping

The tourist information office books private rooms, and there is a camping ground north of the river opposite the castle. Prices are generally on the high side.

**Arnošt** (☎ 466 613 668; www.hotel-arnost.cz; Arnošta z Pardubic 676; s/d from 570/600Kč, apartments 1440Kč; ☞ ☎) A makeover's given this former hostel a new spring in its step with a range of spacious rooms including family apartments. All rooms have kitchen facilities, and the Arnošt is easily the best value in town.

**Hotel Sport** (☎ 466 512 221; www.hotelsport.cz; Sukova Třída 1735; s/d incl breakfast 830/970Kč; ☞) Near the stadium, this 1970s spot is as boxy and safe as an ice-hockey goalie and a very reliable back up.

**Hotel 100 (Sto)** (☎ 466 511 179; fax 466 501 825; Kostelní Sv Anežky; 100; s/d incl breakfast 1000/1300Kč; ☞) A comfortable and confident patina of age surrounds this restored burgher's house in the absolute heart of the old town. That just makes it all the more charming.

**Penzion Atrium** (☎ 466 615 146; www.penzionatrium.cz; Smilova 343; s/d incl breakfast 1000/1300Kč; ☞ ☞) Clean and classy rooms sit atop a buzzy café, with a quiet garden out the back and a convenient location in Pardubice's more modern precinct.

**Hotel U anděla** (☎ 466 535 656; www.hotelzlandel.pardubicko.com; Zámecká 25; s/d incl breakfast 1100/1300Kč; ☞) Tuck yourself away in the stylish rooms in this traditional inn en route to the castle.

### Eating

**U Čtyr Prstu** (☎ 466 516 709; Pernštýnské nám; dishes 60-160Kč) Interrupt your stroll around Pernštýnské nám with coffee and cake at this *cosy kavárna*

(café). You never know when you'll get the chance to recharge in such Renaissance splendour again.

**U černého orla** (☎ 466 511 611; Pernštýnské nám; mains 80-140Kč) The tasty Czech favourites are priced very reasonably given the prime location right on Pernštýnské nám. There's another huge outside terrace to watch the world go by in old world charm.

**Pizzeria Galera** (☎ 466 530 083; Pernštýnské nám; pizza 120Kč) Old town crowds spill out onto the sunny alfresco terrace at Pizzeria Galera like your thin-crust pizza spills over the edge of your plate. The pizzas are simply huge. You have been warned.

Also recommended:

**Albert supermarket** (Míru 2672) For self-catering.

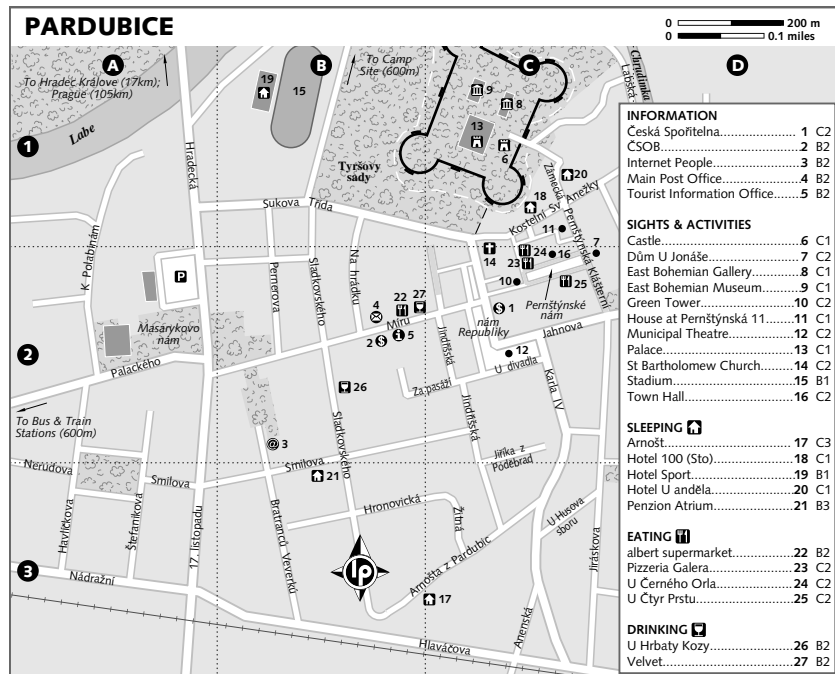
### Drinking

**U Hrbaty Kozy** (☎ 466 611 734; Sladkovského 507; ☞ 3pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 5pm-midnight Sat) Follow your thirst to this tiny watering hole. Look for the 'Sex Shop Pamela' sign, walk through the empty garage, and go down the stairs on your right to good times with a slight Irish accent. And don't worry, Pamela's nowhere to be seen.

**Velvet** (☎ 466 535 773; Míru 109) There's more subterranean shenanigans at Velvet, this time with specialty beers and a self-contained bowling alley. Adjourn to the bustling summer terrace at street level if you don't like drinking underground.

### Getting There & Away

Pardubice is 30 minutes from Hradec Králové by bus (23Kč) or train (34Kč). Buses go about



**SEMTEX**

Invented in 1966 by Stanislav Brebera, who was only paid a couple of hundred dollars for his efforts, Semtex plastic explosive was manufactured by Pardubice's Explosia factory for more than 30 years. Widely used by commercial miners, the original Semtex was odourless, highly versatile and devastatingly efficient (a mere 250g could down an airliner), making it an attractive proposition for terrorists. Nearly 700 tonnes, enough for 1.5 million of the bombs that brought down the Pan-Am jet over Lockerbie in 1988, was exported to Libya in the 1970s. More recently, Semtex was also the basis of the 'shoe bomb' which British al-Qaeda acolyte Richard Reid used in an attempt to blow up an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami in December 2001. In the post-9/11 environment production has fallen dramatically and now only 10 tonnes is exported each year, all produced at a new factory in Brno in South Moravia. Exports are now under strict government control, and all new supplies contain an identifying metal code and carry a distinctive vapour signature to aid detection. The name Semtex is now also known in the Czech Republic as a taurine-based energy drink (see [www.semtextculture.cz](http://www.semtextculture.cz)).

every half hour, trains go hourly. Tickets are available from machines in the station.

There are over a dozen direct trains daily from Pardubice to Olomouc (184Kč, two hours).

A visit is feasible as a day trip from Prague, best by fast train (130Kč, 1½ hours, approximately every hour). Buses take an hour longer but are a bit cheaper.

**OPOČNO**

Plots, schemes and intrigue put an interesting spin on this beautiful castle, which looms over the village of Opočno, 25km northeast of Hradec Králové.

There was a Přemysl fortress at Opočno by the 11th century, but after a later owner, Jan Městecký, abandoned the Hussite cause, it was trashed by disciples of the Hussite military hero Jan Žižka.

In the 16th century the fortress was converted by the Trčkas, one of Bohemia's richest families, into the neo-Romanesque chateau you see today. The last of the line, Adam Erdmann Trčka, was killed in 1634 in the course of a plot to assassinate Ferdinand II. The emperor then sold the chateau to the Italian Colloredo family, who lived in it right up until 1945.

In 1813, King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia, Austrian Chancellor Metternich and Russian Tsar Alexander II met here in the course of forming their 'Holy Alliance' against Napoleon.

**Orientation & Information**

The joint train and bus stations are 1.5km west from the castle: follow Nádražní to

Kupkovo nám then veer right on Zámecká. The chateau is a 400m climb from Opočno's renovated central square.

**Sights**

The prettified, pastel **chateau** (🕒 9-11.30am & 12.30-6pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, until 5pm May, Jun & Sep, until 4pm Sat & Sun only Apr-Oct, last tour 1½ hr before closing) is impressive partly because it still looks lived-in. The owner at the start of the 20th century, Josef II Colloredo-Mannsfeld, filled one end of the castle with his hunting trophies and artefacts from Africa and the Americas. Tours (in Czech) cost 40/20Kč (adult/concession), or 60/30Kč including a diversion into the armoury. It's worth spending the extra 25 minutes in the armoury to see an entire heavy metal video's worth of suits of armour. You might be surprised how small folks were in the old days.

All that remains of the older fortress is one cylindrical tower. The baroque houses around the chateau are worth a peek, as is the surrounding **Zámecký park** (🕒 7am-8pm).

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Penzión Podloubí** (☎ 443 641 885; [www.podloubi.zde.cz](http://www.podloubi.zde.cz); s/d 800/1200Kč; 📍) On the square opposite the castle entrance, this place has tidy rooms and a good restaurant.

**U Slunce** (off Kupkovo náměstí) On the road to the chateau, this is a bustling beer hall that's a top spot for lunch. Next door there is internet access at 1Kč per minute.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses run from Hradec Králové every hour or so (32Kč, 40 minutes). From Prague there are three buses a day (96Kč, 2½ hours).

**ČASTOLOVICE & AROUND**

The 13th-century stronghold of Častolovice, 31km southeast of Hradec Králové, was renovated as a Renaissance chateau at the end of the 16th century; it passed into the hands of the Šternberk (Sternberg) family in 1694, and then into the hands of the state at the end of WWII. The Šternberks reclaimed it in the 1990s (see boxed text p325), repairing the communist-era pillage and opening some of its 150 rooms to visitors. Current owner Diana Phipps Sternberg is a renowned interior decorator, and after emigrating to Britain in 1948 aged 12, returned to the Czech Republic in 1990 to assist Václav Havel's wife Olga in the post-communist makeover of Prague castle.

Highlights of the **chateau** ([www.zamek-castolovice.cz](http://www.zamek-castolovice.cz); adult/concession 90/45Kč; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) tour include a vast Knights' Hall with biblical scenes on the ceiling, the family's fine collection of 17th- to 19th-century furniture and portraits of every one of the Czech kings. The chateau is surrounded by a sedate, English-style park. The last tour (in Czech) is an hour before closing and an English text is available.

The chateau makes an easy excursion from Hradec Králové, or you could make a long day trip full of chateaux and castles, including those at **Kostelec** and **Doudleby nad Orlicí** (respectively about 2km and 7km beyond Častolovice on Hwy 11), and at **Rychnov nad Kněžnou** (a few kilometres on to Vamberk and 5km north on Hwy 14). In fact there are some 30 castles and chateaux, from Romanesque to Renaissance, in a 50 sq km area around Hradec Králové.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses run about hourly from Hradec Králové (38Kč, 35 minutes). All the castles (except Rychnov) are on the railway line from Hradec Králové.

At least two buses a day go to Častolovice from Prague Florenc (96Kč, 2½ hours). There are also a few direct trains (184Kč, 2½ hours).

**KUKS**

Few of the region's sights are as ghoulish as **Kuks** (☎ 499 692 161; [www.kuks.cz](http://www.kuks.cz) in Czech; adult/concession 50/30Kč, in English 100/60Kč; 🕒 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, until 4pm Sep, until 4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct), the spooky carcass of a fine baroque building on the banks of the Labe river. While the present structure would hold its own as

a devilish lair in a horror movie, Kuks was originally constructed in the early 18th century as an immodest monument to art patron Franz Anton von Sporck's bulging bank balance. Having discovered a mineral spring on his land, 30km north of Hradec Králové, Sporck set out to impress his neighbours with the ultimate 'water feature', erecting a deluxe spa complex, complete with baths, infirmary, chapel, racecourse, theatre, gardens, guest-houses and a chateau. The concerts, salons, hunts and lavish parties at this upper-class 'resort' briefly made it a rival to the West Bohemian spa towns.

The party ended in 1740, two years after Sporck's death, when a massive flood washed away many of the buildings and destroyed the spring. All that remains today are the **chapel** and **infirmary**, a big staircase leading nowhere, and a fine collection of **statues** depicting the 12 virtues and 12 vices by Matthias Bernard Braun (1684-1738), one of Bohemia's masters of baroque sculpture. Challenge yourself to work out what each statue represents before resorting to the English translations. Another highlight is a wonderfully restored **18th-century pharmacy**. Above the door of the pharmacy is (allegedly) the horn of a unicorn. That's funny. We could have sworn it was from a narwhal.

All the sights are included in the 45-minute guided tour but you'll need the English text to get the most out of it. Definitely consider stopping if you're in the area, otherwise give it a miss.

**Braunův Betlém**

About 3km west of Kuks is '**Braun's Bethlehem**', an al fresco gallery with several extraordinary religious sculptures – hermits, saints and biblical scenes, some with little grottoes behind them – all but one by Braun, hewn directly from the rock outcrops scattered through the woods. This is all that remains of another Sporck project, which once had fountains and chapels as well.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses come from Hradec Králové (32Kč, 30 minutes) about hourly, stopping at Kuks village, across the Labe from the infirmary. South of the infirmary is a whistle stop on the railway line.

To get to Braunův Betlém, walk west on a red-marked path from Kuks village or on a

yellow path from the infirmary. By car, drive 3km west from Kuks village to Žireč, turn left, cross the railway and climb for 2km to a car park on the far side of the woods; it's an 800m walk from there.

## LITOMYŠL

pop 10,200

Founded in the 13th century as an important stop on the Trstenice trading route linking Bohemia and Moravia, Litomyšl is best known for its stunning 16th-century Renaissance chateau, and as the birthplace of Czech composer Bedřich Smetana, who was born here in 1824. More recently the town hosted the 1994 summit of seven Central European leaders including Václav Havel, and Poland's Lech Walesa. If you're into Eastern religions or crazily energetic art then a simple house in a side street should not be missed.

## Orientation

Litomyšl straddles the Loučná River, with the old town curving around its northeastern edge, and the modern city, including the train and bus stations on the opposite bank. To get to the town's main square, Smetanovo nám, from the bus station, walk northeast across the river on Mařákova, and then turn left into Šmilovského. From the train station, cross the river and walk southeast on Bernardka, and then left into Ropkova. From either the bus station or train station it takes less than five minutes to walk to Smetanovo nám.

## Information

**Česká spořitelna** (cnr Smetanovo nám & Špitálská) Has an ATM and exchange desk.

**Post office** (cnr Smetanovo nám & Jiraskova ulice) At the northern end of the main square.

**Tourist information office** (☎ 420 612 161; www.litomysl.cz/ic; Smetanovo nám 72; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri & 9am-2pm Sat Oct-Mar) Books accommodation and provides transport information and internet access (1Kč per minute).

## Sights

**Smetanovo náměstí**, the town's main square, is a slender procession of arcades and burghers' houses with baroque and Neoclassical façades. At No 110 is the 16th-century **Knights' House** (U rytířů) festooned with vigorously detailed carvings of knights and merchants and now housing an art gallery. Northeast of the main

square is the **chateau** (zámek; ☎ 464 615 067; www.litomysl.cz/zamek; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Tue-Sun Sep, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct), built by the Pernštejns in the 16th century and added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 1999. Additional baroque features were grafted onto the original Renaissance sgraffito arcade style in the 18th century. The 50-minute **Tour 1** (adult/concession 80/40Kč) takes in the ostentatious state rooms and the **18th-century theatre** where local boy Smetana made his piano debut, and **Tour 2** (adult/concession 80/40Kč), also 50 minutes, includes the chateau's **chapel** and the banqueting rooms. If you don't want a guided tour, visit the pretty **castle gardens** (admission free; ☎ 5am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm Sun). Bedřich Smetana was born in the former **castle brewery** (adult/concession 20/10Kč; ☎ same as castle), in the grounds, and the building now hosts a modest **museum** about the life of the composer of the nationalist epic *Má vlast* (My Country).

Southeast of the castle, in a nondescript bungalow in a quiet residential lane, is the wondrous **Portmoneum** (Terézy Novákové 75; adult/concession 30/20Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) where the walls, ceilings and furniture are covered in the hyper-real paintings of the idiosyncratic Josef Váchal. Váchal completed the paintings from 1920 to 1924 for the owner of the house, Josef Portman, and the proto-psychedelic images blend Christian iconography and Hindu inscriptions with a deliciously ghoulish bent. It's all wonderfully weird like some forgotten album cover from an obscure 1960s rock band.

## Sleeping

**Restaurace & Penzion Pod Klášteřem** (☎ 461 615 901; www.podklasterem.cz; B Němcové 158; d/apt incl breakfast 1040K/1440Kč; ☎) Sunny rooms and a spacious apartment are tucked away in a quiet garden underneath the castle ramparts. The restaurant translates Moravian tastes with Italian flair.

**Pension Petra** (☎ 461 613 061; www.pension-petra.cz; B Němcové 166; d incl breakfast 1000Kč; ☎ ☎) In a newly restored heritage building, lots of potted plants and a strict nonsmoking policy earns this place two green thumbs up.

**Hotel Zlatá Hvězda** (☎ 461 614 834; www.zlatahvězda.cz; Smetanovo nám 84; s/d incl breakfast 1200/1800Kč; ☎ ☎) Litomyšl's poshest hotel began life as a 14th-century brewery. In the foyer there are signed photographs of all the Central Eu-

ropean bigwigs who stayed there in 1994. No doubt they liked a drink or two as well.

## Eating & Drinking

**Pizzeria Bella Napoli** (☎ 461 612 767; Smetanovo nám 91; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-11pm Mon-Fri) Try not to be lured in by the garlicky aromas wafting across the main square.

**Pekarstvi** (Smetanovo nám 73; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Tasty baked goodies with the tourist information office on one side and a fruit shop on the other.

**Buddy Bar** (☎ 461 616 789; Smetanovo nám 73; ☎ 2pm-2am Mon-Fri, 6pm-2am Sat, 6pm-midnight Sun) This nautically themed bar rocks to well after midnight most nights. Don't go overboard though.

## Getting There & Away

Buses are the best way to get to Litomyšl as the train station lies on a quiet secondary line. From Hradec Králové, there are around 20 buses a day (54Kč, one hour). Heading east to Moravia, regular buses run to Olomouc (90Kč, two hours, eight daily), and Brno (80Kč, 1½ hours, 12 daily). If you insist on arriving by train you'll need to change at Choceň, (34Kč, one hour).

# ČESKÝ RÁJ

Spectacular landscapes dotted with the ruins of audaciously located castles make this maze of sandstone 'rock towns' and basalt volcanic fingers a rugged contrast to the prettified backdrops found elsewhere in Bohemia. Walking trails weave through the bizarre landscape as Český ráj ascends gently to morph into the foothills of the Krkonoše mountains. During the Czech National Revival, poets, sculptors and painters were inspired by the compelling panoramas, and today the collages of weirdly shaped sandstone and basalt attracts hikers and climbers. Summer (June to August) gets exceptionally busy so try and do the smart thing and visit in spring (April to May) or autumn (September to October).

The towns of Turnov and Jičín are the most convenient bases for exploring Český ráj. With a grand 17th-century square and some good restaurants Jičín is the more interesting and appealing. The towns are linked by road and rail and there's a lot to see and do in their respective old town centres.

A small part (92 sq km) was designated the Bohemian Paradise Protected Landscape Region in 1955, though 'Český ráj' is used loosely for a much wider area.

## Information

The tourist offices in Jičín and Turnov stock maps and can book accommodation. Also check out www.cesky-raj.info for more local info.

SHOCart has a large-scale map of *Jizerské Hory a Český ráj* (1:100,000, sheet No 203) as well as the more detailed *Český ráj Mladoboleslavsko* (1:50,000, sheet No 21). The best map for cyclists is SHOCart Active's *Český ráj - Velká Cykloturistická* (1:50,000, sheet No 112). The best map for the Prachovské skalý formations is *Geodézie ČS Plán města Jičín - Prachovské skalý* (1:7000), which looks like a cheap leaflet (but isn't). There's also a 1:10,000 map of *Prachovské skalý* (Prachov Rocks) by Kartografie Praha.

## Walks

A good, short option is to take a bus from Jičín to the Prachovské skalý rock formations, where there are easily enough walking trails to occupy a morning or afternoon.

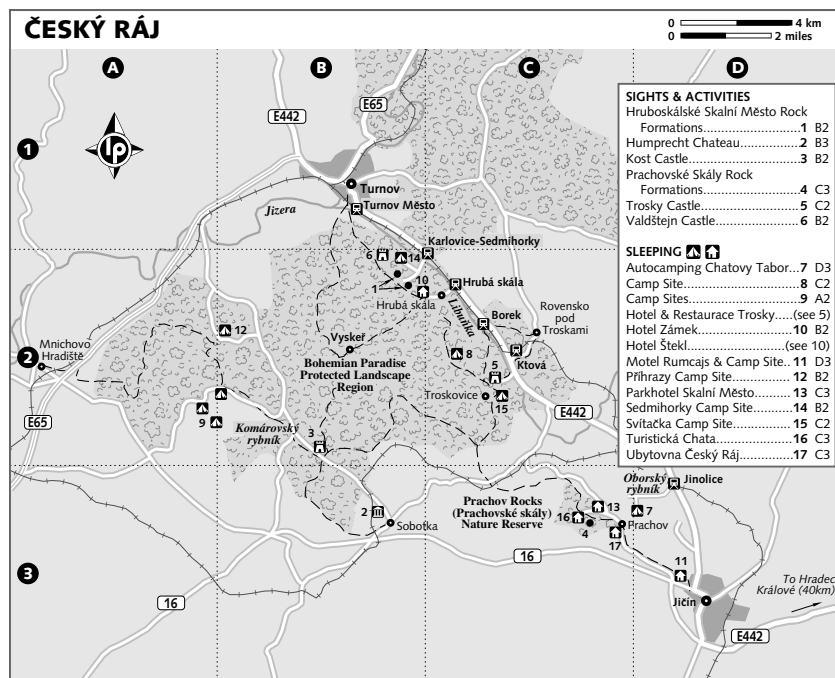
Option two is to take a train from Jičín or Turnov to Hrubá skála and see Trosky castle, the Hruboskálské skalní město rock formations and Valdštejn castle (13km total) before returning on a train via Turnov Město.

The most direct (red) trail from Jičín to Turnov is about 32km, possible in one long day for fit hikers. If you've got the gear, it's worth planning a leisurely two or three day expedition, camping en route.

Bikes can be hired for around 300/1200Kč per day/week.

## Climbing

The sandstone formations at Prachovské skalý are renowned through Europe for rock climbing. Your best source of local information is Hudy Sport in Jičín (p258) which hires all necessary gear including harnesses, karabiners, ropes and helmets. It can also provide information including weather reports, location recommendations and local climbing regulations. Ask for David Hanak who has climbed all across the Czech Republic. If he's not at the shop, there is almost always someone else who speaks good English that will be able to help.



## Getting There & Away

During the day, trains run from Hradec Králové to Jičín (76Kč, one hour) and Turnov (110Kč, two hours) every hour or two. Buses also make the run from Hradec Králové to Jičín (50Kč, one hour) and Turnov (70Kč, 1½ hours). From Prague it's an easy 1½ hours to Jičín (84Kč).

A local train chugs between Turnov and Jičín (40Kč, 45 minutes) about every two hours, and local buses service all the villages that aren't near the railway line.

## Getting Around

From Turnov, a tourist bus travels six routes through Český ráj. Routings are available from tourist information offices or are published in the annual *Český ráj* newspaper (12Kč), which is available at tourist information offices.

## PRACHOVSKÉ SKÁLY

This is the biggest *skalní město* (rock town) – a labyrinth of sandstone pinnacles, caves and passages – in Český ráj. The rocks are accessible (admission 30Kč) via colour-coded hik-

ing trails from two points on the minor road beyond Motel Rumcajs: Ubytovna Český ráj (red trail) and the Turistická chata (green, yellow and red trails). All three trails meet up. A full loop on the green trail is about 5km (up to two hours) and covers the main sights.

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation here is overrun in summer, when you're better off booking ahead from Jičín.

**Autocamping Chatovy Tabor** (☎ 493 591 929; tent per person 60Kč; ☹ Jun-Sep) This camp site is just southwest of Jinolice.

**Ubytovna Český ráj** (☎ 493 524 626; per person 150Kč; ☐) Hostel veterans will feel right at home in this simple place.

**Turistická chata** (☎ 493 524 641; per person 220Kč; ☹ mid-Apr–Sep; ☐) More substantial, this place has chocolate-box charm and a popular restaurant.

**Parkhotel Skalní město** (☎ 493 525 011; www.skalni-mesto.cz; s/d incl breakfast 800/1360Kč; ☐) Pleasantly upmarket (but not too much), this place has well-tended lawns and comfortable rooms.

## Getting There & Away

From Turnov, there is a tourist bus which runs six routes through Český ráj. Routes are available from tourist information offices or are published in the annual *Český ráj* newspaper (12Kč), available at tourist information offices.

From Jičín, local buses also run right past these places about every two hours; stops are labelled 'Holín (Prachov skalní město)' to the Parkhotel or 'Holín (Turistická chata)' to the Turistická chata. Or you could walk it, a relatively easy 8km hike from Rumcajs Motel at Jičín.

## HHRUBÁ SKÁLA & AROUND

Another 'rock town', Hruboskálské skalní město is a dull uphill hike from the Hrubá skála train station; turn right across the tracks and follow the blue trail 3km to the Hotel Štekl car park. From here, take the red trail southeast to **Trosky castle** (6.5km) or northwest to **Hruboskálské skalní město** (1.5km) and Valdštejn castle (another 1.5km).

**Valdštejn castle** (www.hrad-valdstejn.cz; adult/concession 30/10Kč; ☹ 9am–4.30pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, until 4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct), dating from the 13th century, was used variously by Hussite rebels, bandits and Albrecht of Wallenstein (Valdštejn; see p205) and has now been renovated.

## Sleeping

**Sedmihorky camp site** (☎ 481 391 162; www.campsedmihorky.cz; tent per person 100Kč; ☐) A 1.5km hike from the Karlovice-Sedmihorky train stop, this pretty spot has a pond with a little beach. Open all year round.

Guarding the trail heads are two year-round hotels:

**Hotel Zámek** (☎ 481 389 681; www.hrubaskala.cz; in Czech; s/d incl breakfast 700/820Kč; ☐) Here's your chance to stay in a romantic cliff-top castle. And if you're doing that you may as well stay in one of their 'luxury' rooms (s/d 1420/1960Kč).

**Hotel Štekl** (☎ 481 389 684; www.hotel-stekl.cz; s/d incl breakfast 680/900Kč; ☐) In the style of an Italian villa, the Štekl is a reliable backup just minutes from the trail.

## Getting There & Away

From Turnov there is a tourist bus which runs six routes through Český ráj. Routings are available from tourist information offices or are published in the annual *Český ráj* newspaper (12Kč), available at tourist information offices.

By train, the most convenient access to Hruboskálské skalní město is from the stations at Hrubá skála or Turnov Město (red trail; 5.5km). Express trains do not stop at either station, but at least 10 daily local trains serve Turnov–Jičín and Turnov–Hradec Králové (via Jičín).

## KOST CASTLE

Lying 15km west of Jičín, **Kost castle** (☎ 493 571 144; www.kinsky-dal-borgo.cz; adult/concession 150/70Kč; ☹ 9am–6pm Jul & Aug, 9am–4.30pm Tue–Sun May, Jun & Sep, 9am–3.30pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct) is on a minor road a few kilometres from the village of Sobotka. Dramatically situated atop a crag overlooking a tranquil pond, Kost is one of the best preserved Gothic castles in Bohemia. A four-person apartment can be booked through the castle's website (June to September 2000Kč, and October to March 1500Kč).

Kost castle can also be reached via a 6.5km hike on a red trail from Sobotka, or a 10km red or green trail from Hrubá skála.

## TROSKY CASTLE

Like a pair of extinguished cigar butts, the crooked towers of **Trosky castle** (www.trosky.cz; in Czech & German; adult/concession 40/25Kč; ☹ 8.30am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Aug, until 4pm Tue–Sun Sep, until 4pm Sat–Sun Apr & Oct) teeter on twin basalt towers, setting the scene for one of the most dramatic ruins in the country. Built around 1380 by Honoratus of Vartenburg, the strategically placed castle has changed hands frequently over the centuries; in addition to its many lawful owners was a gang of 15th-century robbers who terrorised the countryside for several years.

The higher tower is called Panna (the Maiden) and the other is Bába (the Granny). Panna and some lower walls were restored in the early 1990s and the views, from 514m above sea level, are awesome whether you are looking up at the castle from the main road, or down across the plains from the towers themselves.

At the foot of the towers is the sprawling **Hotel & Restaurace Trosky** (☎ 481 382 290; www.hotel-trosky.cz; s/d 405/810Kč; ☐). Alternatively, follow the green trail 1km south to the very basic **Svitacka camp site** (per person 60Kč).

## Getting There & Away

The odd bus from Turnov stops below the hotel, from where it's 500m up to the castle. Better alternatives for walkers are local trains

(not express) to Ktová plus a 2km hike up the green trail, or to Borek plus a 4km walk up a blue trail. It's also possible to walk from Hruboskálské skalní město.

## Jičín

With a pretty main square, leading to a bustling main drag, Jičín is the best base for exploring Český ráj. The Hapsburg warlord Wallenstein (Valdštejn; see p205) was a big fan and made it the centre of his personal duchy of Friedland, transforming the old castle into his flash abode from 1625 to 1633, and even building a mint to make the town's own coins.

### Orientation

Husova, the pedestrianised main street, is a block north of the bus station, or 700m north of the train station. Head west along it towards Žižkovo nám and continue beneath the red-topped gate tower into the main square, Valdštejnovo nám. Both of the squares and much of Husova have been pedestrianised.

### Information

The useful **tourist information centre** (městské informační centrum; ☎ 493 534 390; www.jicin.org; Valdštejnovo nám; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Oct-May) sells hiking maps, books accommodation and has transport schedules. It also rents bikes for 275/1100Kč per day/week.

**Hudy Sport** (☎ 493 535 985; jicin@hudy.cz; Husova 59; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) An outdoor activities shop that provides information about local rock climbing. Climbing gear is also available for hire.

**Jičín Café Internet** (1st fl, Husova 1058; per min 1Kč; ☎ 10am-9pm) East of the main square.

**KB** (Valdštejnovo nám) Adjacent to the tourist information centre. Has an ATM and exchange counter.

**Post office** (Šafaříkova 142) East of the main square.

### Sights

You can enjoy a bird's-eye view of town from the Gothic **Valdická gate** (Valdštejnovo nám; adult/concession 15/10Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Jun-Aug, 2-5pm Tue-Sun Apr, May & Sep). You enter the square past the unsteeped Jesuit **St James church** (kostel sv Jakuba), which has a Renaissance façade and a baroque interior.

The square and its Renaissance façades are dominated by the chateau built by Wallenstein's Italian architects. A rather uninspiring

**regional museum** (okresní muzeum; ☎ 493 532 204; www.mujiicin.cz; adult/concession 60/30Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) fills eight halls of the chateau, with archaeology, local history and art exhibits.

A block west of the square is the big, crumbling Gothic **St Ignatius church** (kostel sv Ignác).

### Sleeping

**Motel Rumcajs** (☎ 493 531 400; Koněvova 331; tent/hut per person 60/280Kč, motel room s/d 260/435Kč; ☎) About 1.5km northwest on the Sobotka road, this camp site also has a restaurant, bungalows and motel rooms.

**Penzion Lucie** (☎ 493 531 192; www.penzion-lucie.cz; Fugnerova 197; s/d incl breakfast 600/900Kč, apt 1500Kč; ☎) Another new(ish) opening is this spic-and-span *penzion* on a quiet street just off Husova. Downstairs is a sleekly modern restaurant with not a stuffed animal in sight, and there's even a swimming pool in the back garden.

**Hotel Rieger** (☎ 493 533 752; http://hotelrieger.top.web.cz; Nám Komenského 34; s/d incl breakfast 990/1290Kč; ☎) This newly opened partner hotel to the Hotel Jičín has cosy rooms and a funky bar-pizzeria downstairs. You even get to experience the country's best breakfast buffet in the dining room at the Hotel Jičín.

**Hotel Jičín** (☎ 493 544 250; www.hoteljicin.cz; Havlíčkova 21; s/d incl breakfast 1100/1450Kč; ☎) With a high-profile corner address, Jičín's best hotel doesn't disappoint with comfortable rooms and delicious breakfasts.

### Eating & Drinking

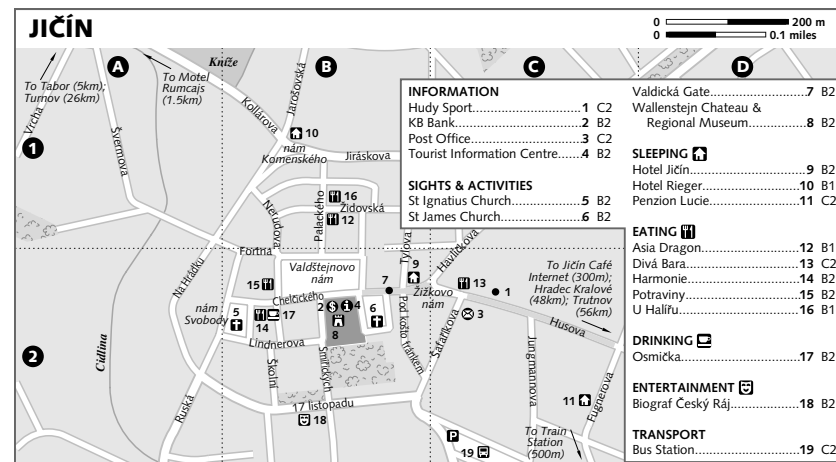
**Divá Bara** (☎ 493 524 887; Husova 39; mains 100-200Kč) The trendy bricks and stainless steel décor combine with sports on the big screen and steaks on the big plates. Jičín's younger crowd laps it up. We can personally recommend Divá Bara as a top spot to watch the ice-hockey playoffs.

**Harmonie** (☎ 771 651 916; Chelčického 39; salads 80-160Kč) Specialising in salads, this light and bright wine bar provides a healthy balance to the meaty Bohemian dishes served elsewhere in town.

**Osmička** (☎ 606 113 388; Chelčického 8; ☎ 9am-midnight, to 2am Sat, from 1pm Sun) Jičín's trendies line up for coffee, cake and cocktails in a surprisingly sophisticated, wee spot.

Also recommended:

**Asia Dragon** (cnr Palackého & Židovská; mains 60Kč) For cheap, Asian eats.



**U Halířů** (cnr Palackého & Na Příkpech) Takeaway bakery treats.

**Potraviný** (Valdštejnovo nám 77) Self-catering on the western side of the main square.

### Entertainment

**Biograf Český ráj** (☎ 493 532 823; 17 listopadu 47; tickets 80Kč) English-language (eventually) films make the rounds at this cinema.

### Getting There & Away

To get to Jičín from Prague it's best to go by bus (84Kč, 1½ hours). To access the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks there is one bus daily from Jičín to Trutnov (63Kč, one hour) and an extra four Monday to Friday.

### TURNOV

Turnov has plenty of cheap lodgings and is a convenient, if dull, Český ráj gateway. A reason for visiting is the town's heritage as the centre of garnet (*granát*) mining in East Bohemia.

### Orientation

The town square is Nám Českého ráje. The train station is about 1km west, across the river on Nádražní. Regional buses (to/from Jičín, for example) stop at the big bus station by the river; Prague and other long-distance buses deposit you by the train station.

### Information

**ČSOB** (Nám Českého ráje) Has an exchange desk.

**Information centre** (☎ 481 366 256; info@turnov.cz; Nám Českého ráje; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, until 4pm Sat,

until 2pm Sun Jul & Aug, until 5pm Mon-Fri, until noon Sat Sep-Jun) Stocks hiking maps and books local and regional accommodation. It also has a couple of internet terminals (1Kč per minute).

**KB** (Palackého 192) Has an ATM.

**Main post office** (Skálava) Just off the main square.

### Sights

In the major tourist areas of the Czech Republic you'll see Granát Turnov stores selling jewellery that uses Bohemian garnets. This co-operative is the only company authorised to extract garnets from two remaining mines in Bohemia, and it supplies other retailers in the Czech Republic. Be aware, however, that some garnets for sale are actually from Germany or Poland, so ask for a certificate of authenticity to ensure you're buying authentic Bohemian garnets. In Turnov you can visit the **Gallery Granát** (☎ 481 325 989; www.granat.cz; Nám Českého ráje 137; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, to noon Sat) for examples of jewellery incorporating the semiprecious stone dating back to the 18th century. In town are four Granát Turnov stores, and you can secure good discounts at the factory shop on nám Českého. Turnov is also a good place to buy unset stones if you have a favourite jewellery designer back home.

### Sleeping & Eating

The information centre can help with private rooms and other cheap places.

**Hotel Alfa** (☎ 481 320 078; www.sweb.cz/alfahotel; Palackého 211; s/d incl breakfast 350/700Kč) The 1960s



furniture in the lobby graduates to 1970s stylings in the so-so rooms at this good-value backup.

**Pension U sv Jana** (☎ 481 323 325; www.svatyjan.euroregion.cz; Hluboká 142; s/d incl breakfast 700/1000Kč) There's a café downstairs and a restaurant on the 1st floor at this tidy place just off the main square.

**Korunní Princ** (☎ 481 324 212; www.korunniprinc.cz; Nám Českého ráje 137; s/d incl breakfast 920/1240Kč; P) In a prime location on the main square, Turnov's top hotel has a good Italian restaurant downstairs and reliably comfy rooms.

**Restaurace U Belgického Dvora** (☎ 481 321 357; nr Nám Českého ráje & A Dvořákova; mains 70-130Kč) Try the local Svijany beer with the tasty Bohemian dishes at this popular spot offering nonsmoking lunches from 11.30am to 1pm.

**El Paso Mexican** (☎ 604 284 147; Markova; mains 90-160Kč) Elvis on the stereo, cacti and wagon wheels add up to relatively authentic eating south of the (Polish) border.

**Pizzeria Korunní Princ** (☎ 481 324 212; Nám Českého ráje 137; pizza 100Kč) Quirky bric-a-brac and tasty food lifts the Korunní Princ to *numéro uno* in Turnov's pizza stakes.

## Getting There & Away

There are direct trains to/from Prague (130Kč, two hours) and around 10 buses (88Kč, 1½ hours).

From Turnov, there is also a tourist bus which runs six routes through Český ráj. Routings are available from tourist information offices or are published in the annual *Český ráj* newspaper (12Kč), available at tourist information offices.

## ADRŠPACH-TEPLICE ROCKS

The 'rock towns' of Český ráj may be more well-known, but the country's most rugged and dramatic formations are the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks (Adršpašsko-Teplické skály), hidden away in the Broumov highlands (Broumovská vrchovina), a protrusion of East Bohemia that juts into Poland.

Situated tantalising close to the main road, within minutes you can hike into concealed natural cloisters, ringed by spectacular sandstone rocks with imaginative monikers like 'Giant's Armchair' and 'Sugar Cone', amid

a soft carpet of sand and pine needles. Well-marked paths lead through luscious pine forests and spectacular valleys. Summer gets busy with local tourists and German and Polish visitors, and you'll need to book accommodation in advance. Come in winter, when snow can linger as late as mid-April, and you'll have this crazily entertaining landscape largely to yourself.

There are two clusters of formations: Adršpach Rock Town (Adršpašské skalní město) and Teplice Rock Town (Teplické skalní město). They now comprise a single state nature reserve, 15km east of Trutnov.

At each 'rock town' you pay 50/20Kč (adult/concession) admission. The tourist office at Adršpach can supply the excellent *Adršpašské skály Teplické skály* (1:16,000) trail map.

## TEPLICE ROCK TOWN

About 200m west of the Teplice nad Metují-Skály train station is a car park and the Hotel Orlik. From here a blue-marked trail climbs the valley of the **Skalní potok** (Rocky stream), making a 7km loop through some of the more impressive formations.

About 1km along, those not subject to vertigo or shortness of breath can detour by stairs and ladders to the **Strmen castle ruins**. This and neighbouring formations were the site of a 13th-century wooden castle, destroyed in 1447 when the Hussites hiding in it were defeated.

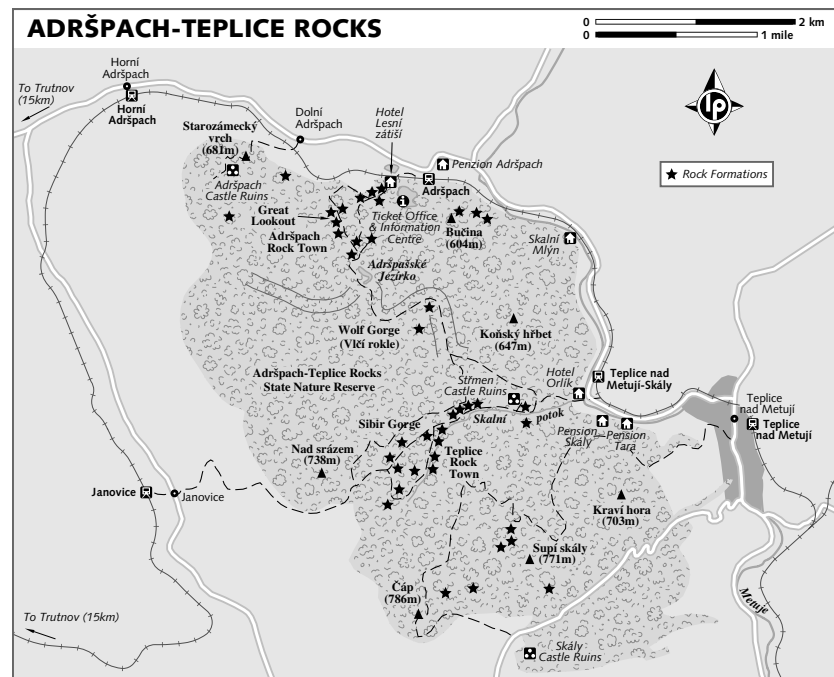
Two scenic trails continue along the valley floor to Teplice Rock Town. Here you can follow walkways through narrow rock clefts, to the cool, ferny **Sibiř gorge** (Siberia gorge).

From the blue loop trail's west end, follow the green then another blue trail 4km to a yellow trail, which meanders 3km north up **Wolf gorge** (Vlčí rokle) to connect with Adršpach. A yellow trail that starts just before Strmen and continues 4km north up Wolf Gorge is much shorter.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Orlik** (☎ 491 581 025; www.orlik.hotel-cz.com; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; P) Very popular, especially at the weekends, the Orlik is a good place to recharge and relax. The bar is a popular social hub for locals

**Pension Skály** (☎ 491 581 174; www.adrspach-skaly.cz; Strimenské Podhradí 132; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; P) This new *pension* has a cosy restaurant and bar and even cosier rooms for post-hike relaxation.



**Pension Tara** (☎ 491 581 122; s/d 500/1000Kč; P) With alpine looks, well-kept lawns and a rustic bridge, this traditional place has a quieter and wilder riverside setting.

**Skalní Mlýn** (☎ 491 586 961; www.skalni-mlyn.cz; s/d incl breakfast 580/1060Kč, apt 2160Kč; P) In a quiet setting between Teplice nad Metují-Skály and Adršpach, the rustic rooms and friendly dogs make this restored river mill a special place to stay if you have your own transport. There's also a four-bed log cabin available from July to October (600Kč per person) and the excellent restaurant is recommended all year round.

## ADRŠPACH ROCK TOWN

These rock formations are easiest to reach from Adršpach train station.

The green trail makes a 2.5km loop past the Czech Republic's tallest sandstone towers, a duet of rushing waterfalls and **Adršpašské jezírko**, a tiny lake concealed in a compact canyon.

The green trail also takes in the **Great lookout** (Velké panorama), where you can admire the rolling sea of pinnacles escalating above the

pinnes before threading through the **Mouse hole** (Myší díra), a barely shoulder-width vertical fissure.

You can make a good cross-country hike south on the yellow trail (via Wolf Gorge) to the Teplice nad Metují-Skály train station.

There is a small **information office** (☎ 491 586 012; www.skalyadrspach.cz; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) by the Adršpach train station.

## Sleeping & Eating

Both these places offer good discounts for stays of more than one night.

**Pension Adršpach** (☎ 491 586 102; www.adrspach-skaly.cz; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; P) Situated 300m from Adršpach on the road to Teplice, this modern place discreetly overcomes a lack of old world charm with comfortable rooms, an excellent restaurant and a friendly Border collie.

**Hotel Lesní zátíší** (☎ 491 586 202; s/d incl breakfast 550/1100Kč; P) The rock trail conveniently begins just outside, but the good-sized rooms are in some need of sprucing up. However, the restaurant's a busy hikers' hub come lunchtime and you just can't beat the location.

## Getting There & Away

Regular trains make their way from Trutnov to Teplice nad Metují (46Kč, 1¼ hours) via Adršpach (40Kč, one hour).

## TRUTNOV

Trutnov is little more than an opportunity to regroup before changing trains for Teplice.

## Orientation

The main square, Krakonošovo nám, is 500m southeast of the bus station along Horská, and a bit further along from the train station across the Úpa river.

## Information

**Česká spořitelna** (Horská 5) Opposite the bus station. Has exchange counters and ATMs.

**ČSOB** (cnr Horská & Nádražní) Has exchange counters and ATMs.

**Tourist information centre** (☎ 499 818 245; Krakonošovo nám 72; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Provides hiking maps and a list of private rooms.

## Sleeping & Eating

The best cheap accommodation option is a private room – inquire at the information centre or **Agentura KLÍČ** (☎ 499 818 308; www.klic.travel.cz; Halíčková 7; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-3pm Fri). Otherwise, hotels are quite expensive. Rates increase around 15% during the ski season.

**Hotel Krakanos** (☎ 499 819 190; www.hotel-krakanos.cz; Barvišská 41; s/d 650/1000Kč; 📍) Newly renovated, this heritage hotel has friendly staff and comfortable rooms. The beer garden is Trutnov's best place to try the local Krakanos beer.

**Penzion Pohoda** (☎ 499 819 025; www.penzionpohoda.com; Horská 7; s/d 1000/1400Kč, apt 1600/2000Kč) Another recent renovation, the Pohoda has bright wood-floored rooms and spacious, family-friendly apartments on a quiet pedestrian mall.

**Hotel Adam** (☎ 499 811 955; Halíčková 7; s/d incl breakfast 1050/1550Kč) A nicely baroque foyer sets the scene and the rooms don't disappoint in this friendly place that offers weekend discounts of up to 30%.

**Pizzeria Santa Maria** (Na vrchu; pizza 85Kč) Checked tablecloths and summery colours produce a touch of the Med in this gateway to the mountains.

**Restaurant Grill** (☎ 499 810 470; Krakonošovo nám 72; mains 80-170Kč) Big coffees and even bigger ice creams go down well on the summer terrace. In less perfect weather there's warm as toast open grills for meaty platters.

**Cajovna u Zeleného** (☎ 603 779 234; Krakonošovo nám; snacks 70Kč; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, from 2pm Sat, from 5pm Sun) Enjoy a global selection of teas and stuffed pita bread at this relaxing hippy-drippy haven overlooking the main square and just opposite Grand Hotel.

## Getting There & Away

Buses run to Trutnov throughout the day from Prague (131Kč, 2¾ hours), Hradec Králové (50Kč, 1¼ hours) and the main Krkonoše centres.

There are trains to the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks every two hours or so, stopping at Teplice nad Metují (46Kč, 1¼ hours) and Adršpach (40Kč, one hour). Note that most express trains do not stop at Teplice nad Metují-Skály, so change to a local train at Teplice nad Metují or walk.

# KRKONOŠE

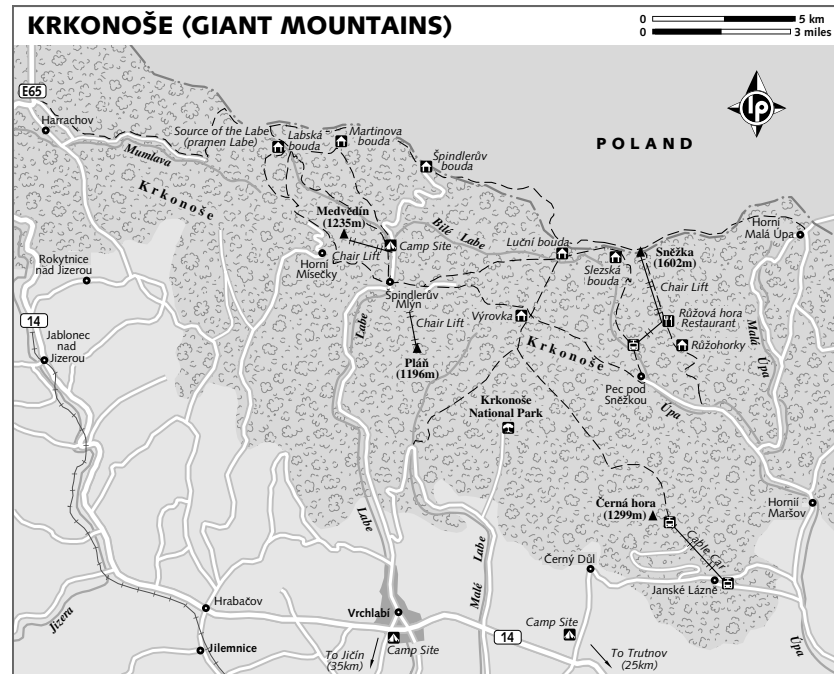
In a country of rolling hills and humdrum plains, the Krkonoše ('Riesengebirge' in German) form the Czech Republic's rugged apex. Historically the northeastern borders of ancient Bohemia, the imposing 'Giant Mountains' are now one of the country's last true wilderness areas. Looming above the Polish frontier, and swathed in spruce forests amid undulating valleys, this rugged hinterland is surprisingly easy to get to and enjoy.

With a growing reputation for more affordable winter sports than other parts of Europe, the mountains are now studded with resorts and easily reached by good roads and bus services. Even the 1602m summit of Sněžka, the Czech Republic's highest peak, can be accessed via a leisurely chairlift. In the area's resorts there's everything from the bustling, wannabe atmosphere of Špindlerův Mlýn to the more rustic simplicity of Pec pod Sněžkou.

And if sitting in a chairlift is too passive, there's superb hiking away from the towns and villages. Once the snow melts, the region's vistas can be shrouded in a cape of mist and drizzle, but it's worth persevering to discover the hidden valleys amid the dense woods and lofty summits.

## Orientation

Most 'villages' in the park are functional resorts with innumerable places to sleep and



eat. The main centres are Harrachov for skiing and Špindlerův Mlýn and Pec pod Sněžkou for walking.

Vrchlabí is sometimes referred to as the park's 'gateway', but in fact the bigger resort centres inside the park have better information, a wider range of accommodation and restaurants, and it's easy to reach many of them directly from Prague and Hradec Králové.

## Information

National park information centres in the main towns have brochures, maps and accommodation advice. For up-to-date trail and weather information, go to the nearest Mountain Rescue Service (Horská služba) in Špindlerův Mlýn or Pec pod Sněžkou.

Kartografie Praha has a *Krkonoše* (1:50,000) map with details of the main centres and colour-coded hiking trails. There is also a two-part, 1:25,000 map.

## Activities

There are walking trails galore, including the red-marked **Czech-Polish friendship trail** (Cesta

česko-polského přátelství) along the border ridge. Couch potatoes, and travellers with children, can get up into the high country year-round via chairlifts at Pec pod Sněžkou (to the summit of Sněžka) and Špindlerův Mlýn, and via a cable car at Janské Lázně.

Link roads, some with limited (or no) public motor access, are a treat for cycling enthusiasts. And of course there's skiing in winter. It's possible to rent ski equipment at Harrachov, Vrchlabí, Špindlerův Mlýn and Pec pod Sněžkou. In high season a day's ski pass costs from 550Kč to 750Kč.

## Sleeping

There are literally hundreds of hotels and chalets in the park. The hotels tend to be full year-round, but in the summer many chalets at lower elevations are used for *penzion* or private accommodation. For two people, figure on about 800Kč and up, with breakfast, but prices can skyrocket in ski season – quoted prices are for the cheaper summer season.

The local word for a mountain hut, chalet or hotel is *bouda* ('b' on maps), a term originally used for shepherds' huts. Other

more-or-less equivalent Czech terms are *chata* and *chalupa*. There are some comfortable, and popular, *boudy* along the high-elevation trails. You should try to book these at least a few days ahead; inquire at a park information centre.

### Getting There & Away

Buses are the most convenient way into the Krkonoše, with numerous daily direct services from Prague to Pec pod Sněžkou (155Kč, 3½ hours) and Špindlerův Mlýn (137Kč, three hours), and others via Hradec Králové, Vrchlabí and Trutnov. In the ski season there are also direct buses between Pec pod Sněžkou and Brno (230Kč, five hours).

The nearest fast-train junctions are Vrchlabí and Trutnov, with connections to Harrachov, Rokytnice nad Jizerou and Svoboda nad Úpou.

### Getting Around

There are regular hourly buses between Vrchlabí and Špindlerův Mlýn (21Kč, 25 minutes). Getting to Pec pod Sněžkou from Vrchlabí or Špindlerův Mlýn usually means a change at Trutnov or Svoboda.

### VRCHLABÍ

Although billed as the gateway to the peaks, Vrchlabí actually feels a long way from the wilds. Despite an unsightly suburban sprawl, it's an okay place to get organised and you will probably have to make a transport connection here at some point.

### Orientation & Information

The town straggles inconveniently along the Labe for several kilometres. From the adjacent bus and train stations it's 1.5km north (cross the river and take the second right on Slovanská, which becomes Krkonošská) to the town centre at Nám Masaryka. Nám Míru, overlooked by a church tower, is a further 200m north.

#### WARNING

Despite the relatively modest elevations, it's usually windy and extremely cold year-round at the higher elevations. Even in summer, mountain fog creates a hyperthermia risk (see p467 for details). Don't go up without the appropriate gear.

The **town information centre** (☎ 499 451 111; www.vrchlabi.cz; Krkonošská 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is south of Nám Masaryka; a **Česká Spořitelna** (Krkonošská) with an ATM and exchange desk is another 30m south. A **park information centre** (☎ 499 421 474; Nám Míru; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) has maps and brochures.

Check your email at **Internet Café** (1st fl, Krkonošská 182; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-11pm Sun), opposite the tourist office.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are *Zimmer frei* signs across town.

**Vejsplachy camp site** (☎ Jun-Sep) This camp site is several kilometres southwest of the centre on Pražská třída, the road to Prague.

**Hotel Labut** (☎ 499 421 964; www.hotellabut.cz; Krkonošská 188; s/d 870/1160Kč; ☎) A cosy spot on the main drag, the Labut's rooms are plain but comfortable. Downstairs there is a good games room with billiards, table football and chess on offer.

**Hotel Gendorf** (☎ 499 429 629; www.gendorf.cz; Krkonošská 153; s/d incl breakfast 975/1300Kč; ☎) Vrchlabí's flashiest spot has very comfy rooms, a top restaurant and offers loads of fortifying treatments in its Wellness Centre. Check the website for good discounts on midweek rates.

**Klasika** (☎ 499 421 260; Nám Masaryka; pizza 90Kč, s/d 500/1000Kč) This atmospheric Italian spot has a huge terrace for beer and wood-fired pizza, and will arrange good-value rooms for when you need a lie down after eating and drinking too much.

### Getting There & Away

Vrchlabí is connected by regular buses to Prague (118Kč, 2½ hours) and Hradec Králové (68Kč, 1½ hours). Buses run frequently all day to Špindlerův Mlýn (21Kč, 25 minutes) and (usually indirectly) to Pec pod Sněžkou (41Kč, one hour).

### ŠPINDLERŮV MLÝN

With the highest hotel density of just about anywhere in the country, Špindlerův Mlýn has more in common with a theme park than a functioning town. Views tend to be of high-rise hotels rather than mountain peaks, but there are countless accommodation options and come winter this becomes the largest recreation centre in the region: forget about the vistas and get out on the slopes. Traditionally the resort has been only about winter activi-

ties, but a range of outdoor fun not needing snow is now growing in popularity.

### Orientation & Information

From the bus stop, the **Mountain Rescue Service** (Horská služba; ☎ 499 433 230; Svatopetrská) is 500m east, after a right turn at the post office.

There are dozens of information offices. **Infocentrum** (☎ 499 433 148; www.spindleruv-mlyn.cz; Predni Labska 47; ☎ 8am-7pm) is 200m north of the bus stop and can help with accommodation. A second, private **Information Centre** (☎ 499 433 407; www.spindl.com; Svatopetrská 297; ☎ 9am-6pm) is just before the mountain-rescue office and has internet access. Both can advise on skiing, cycling and other activities.

### Sights & Activities

A **chairlift** runs northwest to the top of Medvědin (1235m) for 100/130Kč one way/return, and another runs south up Pláň (1196m).

You can hike up to the **Labe headwaters** on a blue-marked trail heading north and northwest. At the top of a nasty 200m ascent at the end of the valley is the Labská bouda chalet; the **source of the Labe** (*pramen Labe* on maps) is about 800m further on, along the red trail. Return to Špindlerův Mlýn on the red trail south via Horní Mísečky, or on a green trail east via Martinova bouda, making a round-trip of five or six hours.

In summer you can ride a **bobsled** (☎ 499 433 430; www.bobovka.cz; adult/concession 80/60Kč; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-10pm Fri-Sun) down the hills above town. **Yellow Point Adventure** (☎ 499 433 505; www.yellow-point.cz; Svatopetrská 278) can arrange everything from abseiling and climbing, to paragliding and all-terrain scootering.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are dozens of hotels and *pensions* in and around town – shop around or ask at the information centre.

**Autokemp** (☎ 499 523 534; tesspindl@quick.cz; tent per person 70Kč; ☎ year-round; ☎) About 1.5km up the valley road from the bus stop, this camp site is owned by the Krkonoše National Park.

**Pension Pohoda** (☎ 499 523 539; www.pension-pohoda.cz; Svatý Petr 231; s/d incl breakfast 550/1100Kč; ☎) Run by a friendly family, this *pension* has a spa and sauna. Window boxes and a pine-bedecked restaurant provide just the right amount of alpine appeal after a big day on the slopes.

**Penzion Erika** (☎ 499 523 247; www.penzionerika.cz; Špindlerův Mlýn 223; s/d 580/1060Kč; ☎) Drag yourself out of your super-comfy rooms to the cosy brick-lined bar and restaurant downstairs at this tidy spot surrounded by nice gardens; not overly alpine but a good choice for a summer, spring or autumn visit.

Eating out is pretty much confined to the hotels and *pensions*, but **Pavilon** (Predni Labska 47, in the same building as Infocentrum, does a decent pizza.

### Getting There & Away

There are at least a dozen buses a day to and from Vrchlabí (21Kč, 25 minutes) and Prague (137Kč, three hours).

### Getting Around

A bus runs from the Špindlerův Mlýn bus stop up the Labe valley to Špindlerův bouda on the main Krkonoše ridge (1100m). See tourist information for the latest timetable.

### PEC POD SNĚŽKOU

Known to its friends as plain old 'Pec', this has some of the best skiing in the Czech Republic and an enviable location beneath the country's highest peak. It's not the Alps, but then you're not paying Alpine prices. In contrast to the Disneyland atmosphere of Špindlerův Mlýn, Pec retains an old-fashioned charm, with many heritage wooden buildings lining its main drag. Get past the communist-era architectural horror show that is the Hotel Horizont, and it's a great alternative to Špindlerův Mlýn.

### Orientation & Information

**Veselý Výlet** (Jolly Jaut; ☎ 499 736 130; www.veselyvylet.cz; ☎ 9am-5.30pm), near the bus stop, is a little gallery with excursion ideas, accommodation advice and internet access (1½Kč per minute). It also publishes an excellent free brochure full of regional lore and relevant excursions. A further 30m downhill from the bus stop, there is an information board with a phone that links directly through to various accommodation options. Online see www.skipec.com and www.pecpodsnezkou.cz for more information.

The **national park information centre** (☎ 499 896 213; tespec@quick.cz; ☎ 8am-4.30pm) is 200m up the hill on the unnamed main street at No 172. A further 400m along is the **Mountain Rescue Service** (Horská služba; ☎ 499 896 233).

There is a KB ATM opposite the Enzian Grill in Pec's main drag.

## Sights & Activities

### CLIMBING SNĚŽKA

In the 19th century you could get carried up Sněžka (Snow Peak) for six gold coins and 40 Kreuzers. Today, unless you take the chairlift, it is a three-hour climb or a five-hour round-trip. From near the Hotel Horizont, climb the green-marked Čertový schody (Devil's staircase) trail northwest to a chalet at Výrovka, then north up the red ridge trail to Luční bouda chalet.

A blue trail crosses a marshy area east to Slezská bouda on the Polish border, from where you make your assault on the treeless summit of Sněžka. The peak is bang on the border (Poles call it Śnieżka). You must share your triumph, and the grand views, with Czech and Polish guards and an army of tourists who have come up the easy way by chairlift from both sides.

From Sněžka, take the yellow ridge trail south to chalets at Růžohorky, and then descend along a steep green trail back to Pec.

If you can't handle the climb, walk 300m back from the bus stop and about 1.5km up the valley of the Úpa to the chairlift (*lanovka*), and ride right to the top. The two-stage trip (300Kč return) takes half an hour each way. There's a restaurant halfway up, at Růžová hora.

## Sleeping

The hillsides above Pec are thick with chalets, many open to tourists in summer.

**Penzion Sněžka** (☎ 603 336 764; penzion.snezka@tiscali.cz; s/d incl breakfast 390/780Kč) The cosy rooms atop this pub have globe table lamps so you can plan your next trip. To get there, head 250m downhill from the bus stop and turn left.

**Penzion Nikola** (☎ 499 736 151; www.nikolapec.cz; s/d incl breakfast 550/1100Kč; 📍) Overlooking the park information office, Nikola has alpine charm, with carved wood décor and snug rooms.

## Eating & Drinking

As in Spindlerův Mlýn, most of Pec's eateries are in the hotels and *pensions*, but the following two are stand-alone options, and all the better for it.

**Rag-Time Bar** (U Zeleného Potoka 213) It's official. We've found the Czech Republic's cosiest bar. Grab some ski-buddies and share a 2.5L *mojito* (600Kč) amid antique skis and retro sports shirts. Come for happy hour (7pm to 8pm), and then return after dinner at the Enzian Grill.

**Enzian Grill** (☎ 499 736 357; U Zeleného Potoka 209; mains 150-250Kč) With meaty grills, loads of different beers, and a top-notch wine list this spot is surprisingly cosmopolitan given its mountain location. Winter is exceptionally cosy inside, and in summer the lively terrace is the place to be seen in Pec.

## Getting There & Away

There are regular buses to Pec from Trutnov (25Kč, 30 minutes), Hradec Králové (78Kč, two hours) and Prague (153Kč, 3½ hours).