

Lookout Towers and vantage points in the Glacensis Euroregion

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Since the early days, man has envied the birds – their view of the world, their chance to see far and wide. This might be the reason why our predecessors sought places from which they could get the best outlook. Naturally, a good observation post was vital. Primaeval man was able to watch the movements of animals which helped him to obtain food and survive. Good viewing was necessary to warn the tribe of any impending danger. The nearer we get in our travel through time to the Middle Ages, the more explicit the defence feature of lookout posts becomes. These may be the rocky mounds on which stood castles or fortified settlements, towers built of stones as the support points of castles or part of town fortifications. Last but not least, alongside the increasing density of the population in medieval towns, another important factor came into focus – timely perception of fire in the town. The threat of fire to a timber house even of an entire street, the lethal enemy of a mediaeval town, required a permanent watch taken from a point affording a very good view.

With the further development of civilisation and improvement of building technologies, the importance of watchtowers decreased. However, as tourism started to spread in the second half of the 19th century, such points acquired a more poetic function. Up to the present day, such structures form a remarkable network of lookout towers offering a wonderful view of towns, their surroundings and afar, right to the remote horizon.

As growing numbers of people became interested in tourism, points providing a good view were becoming more and more popular. Bare mountain or hill tops and isolated rocks were an open invitation to set up a vantage point. Where tall trees obstructed the view, tourist clubs or, sometimes, the councils of towns or villages, would pass a decision to build a lookout tower. Often such towers were part of a tourist chalet. World War Two put a stop to further expansion of the network. The boom of aviation, on the other hand, gave people quite a different view of the world. Lookout towers were no longer in fashion. Many ceased to exist and others only survived thanks to the great efforts of enthusiasts.



And it was not until the close of the 20th century that things started to change greatly. Alongside the expansion of communication technologies new telecommunication towers are being built, often on the site of a former lookout tower. Arrangements can often be reached with the investor to revive a lookout platform on their tower.

It was perhaps the inexorable, or even frenzied development of technology, that brought man back to Nature at the onset of the 21st century. More and more people are coming to enjoy walks or cycling in the countryside, admiring the beautiful views and images offered by nature. Looking from a plane is somehow not quite the same thing, either. It is surely very nice but the direct contact is missing, contact with trees, rocks, in short nature – with all the beautiful landscape around you. Just try it. You may be sitting on top of a rock. Far below you, a sports plane is flying along a river in the



Nevertheless, let us stop dreaming and return to real life. We would like to invite you for a walk around lookout towers and vantage points of the Glacensis Euroregion. We surely will not see them all, but we hope you will be tempted by this offer, though incomplete, to pay a visit in person to at least some of them. We are about to point out to you both the earlier mentioned towers of towns, castles, chateaux and churches, and lookout towers built for a specific purpose as well as vantage points within our Euroregion.



The Krkonoše Mountains and Podkrkonoší



The top of Sněžka seen from Studniční Mt.

St. Lawrence's Chapel on top of Sněžka and the wooden church, Wang, in Karpacz, Poland.

Our first stop will be at **Sněžka** (1 602,3m above sea level), the highest mountain of the Krkonoše (Giant Mountains) and also the highest point in the Czech Republic. Walking around the edge of this “heap” of mica schist and gneiss, affords one an unobstructed view in all directions. A plan placed on the lookout platform helps you locate mountains and valleys in the vicinity. You can reach the top of the mountain by different routes. You can use a chair-lift from Pec (when operating) or you can hike along the well marked tourists paths – either passing along the Obří důl valley upstream along the Úpa river or past Výrovka and the Luční Bouda chalet. As the paths will take you through biologically valuable areas, you will have to respect the instructions of the KRNAP (National Park) Administration and of the Alpine Rescue Service. Should you start at Pomezní boudy, a beautiful scenic trail will take you over Jelenka and Mt. Svorová. You can also have a really nice walk following the blue tourist signs from Karpacze, starting at the wooden church Wang.



2 A telecommunications tower and a lookout tower at Černá hora.

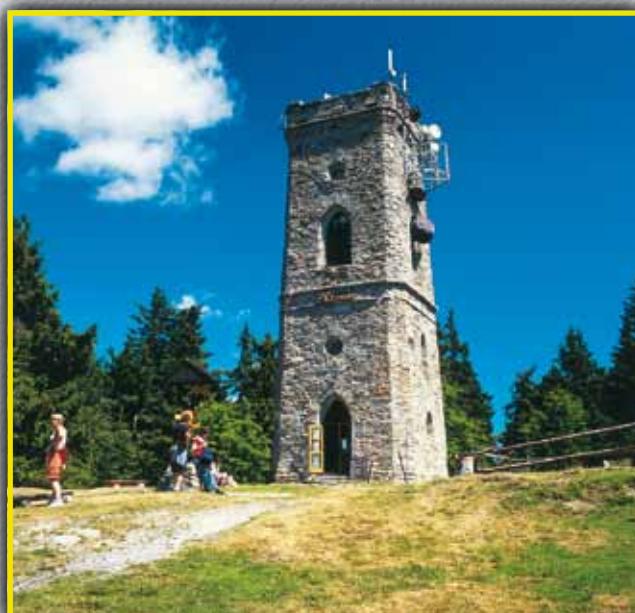
Černá hora (Black Mountain, 1299 m) has always been a frequently visited spot. No wonder, at the turn of the 20th century, a wooden lookout tower was built at Černá louka and was used by tourists until the 1920's. The current tower was situated on the support structure of a former cable-way, as that was replaced by a new modern one in 1981. Thanks to the efforts of the volunteer organisation Panoráma, visitors can now climb the 106 steps 21 meters high and enjoy the view of the Krkonoše and the Bohemian basin. And how to get up to the top of the mountain? If you are not prepared to walk, you can use the cableway. And on the way admire the views as they gradually open up to you.

It is not really possible to name all the places in the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše) affording pleasant views and beautiful scenery. Let us at least mention **Harrachovy kameny** (Harrach's Stones, 1421 m) above Dvoračky. When visibility is good, you can see almost the full length of the Krkonoše range.

North-west of Vrchlabí, at the top of Mt. **Přední Žalý** (1019 m), the only stone lookout tower on the Czech side of the Krkonoše Mountains was built in 1892. It was initiated by Count Jan Harrach but, in fact, it was already the third lookout tower built on that spot. The first one was made of wood and the second one of metal but it was unsuitable from the technical point of view. In winter, it is easier to get to the top when the ski lift is operating. Nonetheless, the view of the Labe valley and the massif of the Krkonoše is worth the small effort in the summer months, too. You can follow the red tourist signs along the Bucharova trail from Jilemnice to Horní Mísečky, or the yellow-marked trail from Vrchlabí (about 5.5 km long).

Hostinné – you can get a very interesting view of the town and its neighbourhood from the tower of the Town Hall, on the west side of the square. The Town Hall is first mentioned in the mid-15th century. In 1525, a Renaissance tower was added. After the fire of 1610, it was rebuilt by Italian builder C. Valmadin and ornamented with sgraffito plaster. Two figures, 4.80 m-tall giants, Rowlands, in Roman armour, were placed on its front facade in 1641. At the top of the tower is a gallery and a Baroque dome. As time went on, the Town Hall was reconstructed and changed in appearance a number of times. Its last renovation took place in 2002.

A view of Černá and Světlá (Black and Light) Mountains taken from the golf course in Mladé Buky.



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A stone lookout tower at the top of Přední Žalý.



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A stone lookout tower at the top of Přední Žalý.



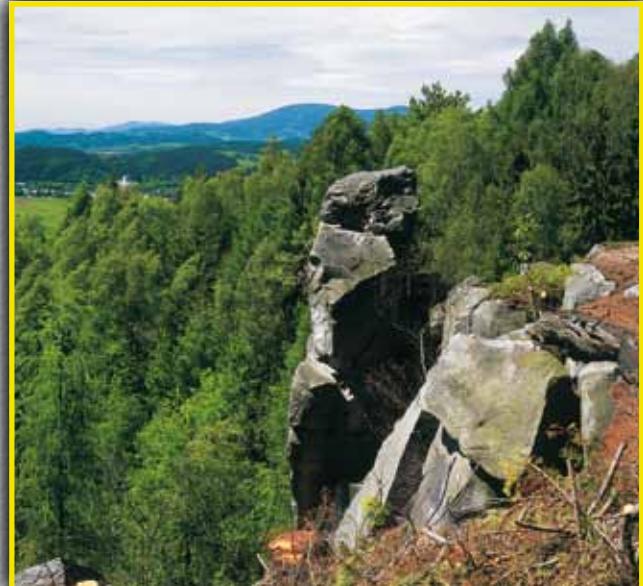


Marshal Ludvík von Gablenz's memorial at Šibeniční Hill.

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There is a unique vantage point on the outskirts of **Trutnov**. In 1868, a memorial was built in honour of Marshal Ludvík von Gablenz, who defeated the enemy there in one of the battles of the Prussian-Austrian War in 1866. The cast-iron 20-m-tall obelisk is hollow and there are steps inside leading right to the top. The place has been the Marshal's final place of rest since 1874. The memorial can be visited and climbed only on special occasions.

The "wandering" sandstone formations, called **Čížkovy kameny** (Čížek's Stones), are certainly worth your attention. East of Trutnov – Poříčí, they tower up over the Úpa river valley (632 m). The nicest way to get there is from Bohuslavice nad Úpou, following the green signs. The path will first bring you to the southern section. The al-



Černá Mt. and Přední Žalý seen from Čížkovy kameny (Čížek's Stones).

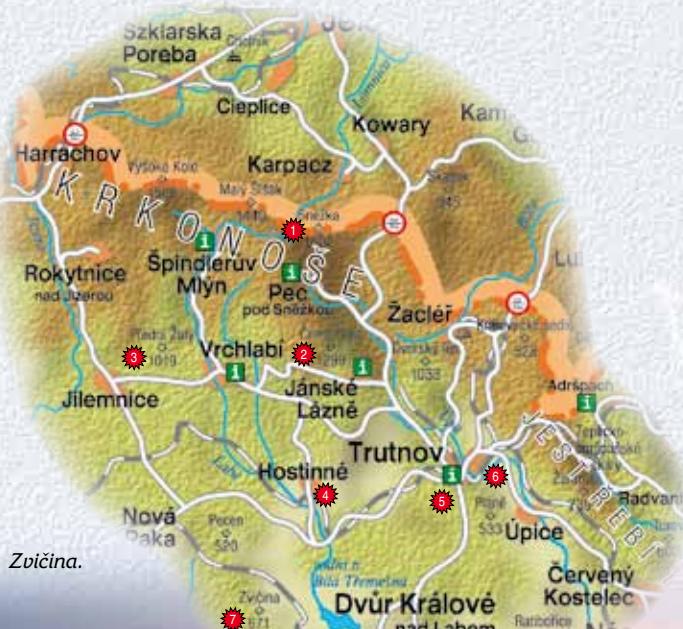
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most one-kilometre long, diversely rugged, rocky wall gives you a restricted view of Podkrkonoší. The northern section is formed by independent rocks with a prominent "mushroom" formation right next to the trail and one peak rock. The view is partially obstructed by the overgrown forest.

Some 8 kilometres from there (along the green, red and again green tourist trails), is the highest peak of the Jestřebí Mountains, **Žaltman** (739 m) with a nice lookout structure to which admission is free.

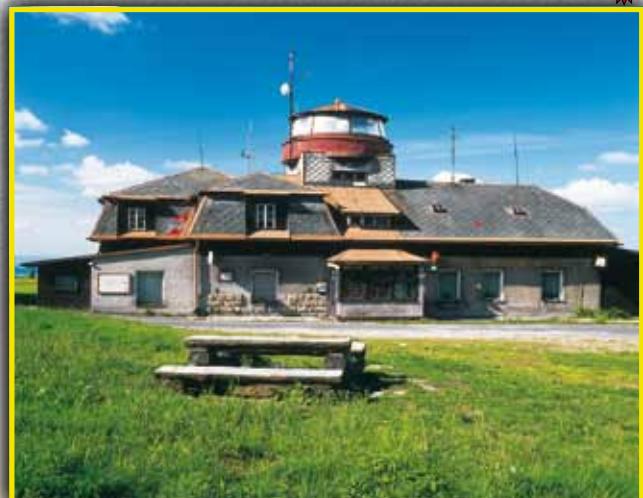
A major lookout tower of the Podkrkonoší (region close to the Krkonoše Mountains) is at **Zvičina** (671 m) which dominates the area. After a string of arguments between Czech and German tourists, the Rais Tourist Chalet was built, and, in 1926, a lookout tower with a glass revolving dome was annexed to it. However, there is currently no access to the tower. Nevertheless, when visibility is good, you can see quite an extensive portion of Bohemia (some people claim that almost one-third) from the top. The peak is the crossroads of hiking trails, but you can also get there by car, either from Dolní Brusnice or Miletín.

The tower of the church of St. John the Baptist in Dvůr Králové nad Labem is nowadays used as a lookout point.



Rais's Tourist Chalet at the top of Zvičina.

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Adršpach and Teplice Rocks, Křížový Hill, Jirásek's Rocks, Ostaš and Broumov Walls



The **Adršpach and Teplice Rocks** (Adršpašsko-teplické skály) are something like a “city” among rock towns. The bizarre rock formations are sure to provoke the fantasy of every visitor. The name of the place itself indicates that it consists of two rocky areas. The northern section, the Adršpach Rocks, are separated from the Teplice Rocks by the extensive Vlčí rokle (Wolf Gorge). The whole area offers a number of wonderful vistas, especially, if you happen to be a mountaineer. But if that is not the case, you need not worry. There are several places affording a lovely view.

Starozámecký vrch (Old Castle Hill) – the ruin of the Adršpach Castle, which you will find south-west of Dolní Adršpach. When you enter the rocks, follow the red, and later, the yellow tourist signs (about 2 km, in all). The castle was built in the 13th century. There are still remnants of its cellars in the rock and some fractions of the walls. The path leading through an area called Království (the Kingdom), and up to the castle is lined with imposing rock towers.

The **rock castle, Střmen** lies among the Teplice Rocks, just under one kilometre from the entrance into the rock town. There is a steep climb, using steps and ladders, up to its ruins. It is not known when it was built, in later years it belonged to the Masters of Dubé, just as Adršpach. Most likely both the castles were demolished by the Silesians.

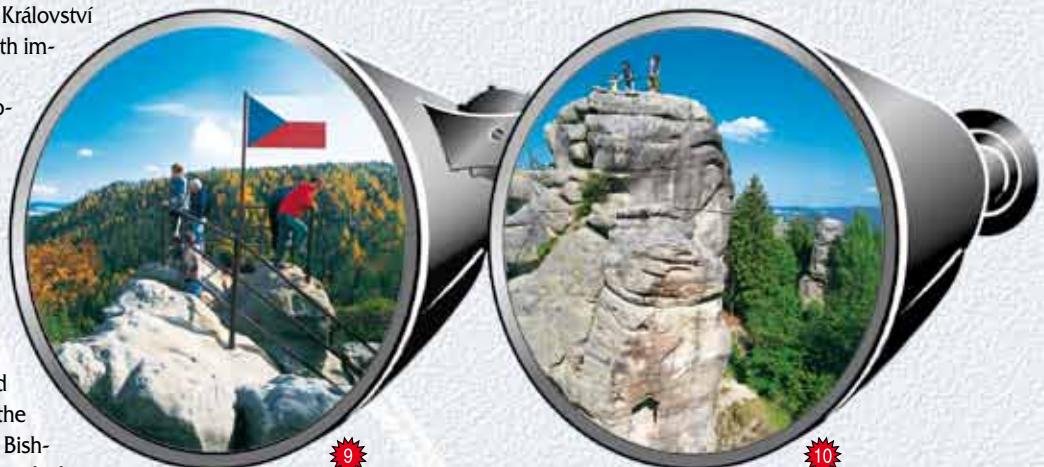
Skály (the Rocks, Jirásek's Rocks) offer an impressive view. They are the remains of a ruined castle, not far from the village of Skály, in the south, an area also called Bischofstein or the Bishop's Stone. Most likely, the castle was built towards the end of the 14th century. The remaining walls and vaults, how-

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A view of a rocky town taken from the Adršpášký castle.

ever, come from a later stronghold, built around 1546. The mansion Skály, in a village of the same name, was built in 1666 and rebuilt in the Empire style in 1825. There is also an interesting view from the hill Čáp (the Stork) (786 m) on the other side of the valley. (Follow the green trail from the village for about 2 km.)

Though dozens of thousands of visitors stream into Adršpach Rocks in the height of the season, the **Křížový vrch** (Cross Hill), standing opposite, is a little neglected. The region is mainly popular with mountaineers and people who love the quiet of nature. It was named after the Way of the Cross. There is a collection of cast-iron reliefs along the way that will take you up to a plateau where an iron cross is standing. And it is from the edge of the plateau that you can see the beautiful scenery of the Adršpach rocks and the surrounding landscape. At the far end, you will see the Krkonoše range and its peak, Sněžka.



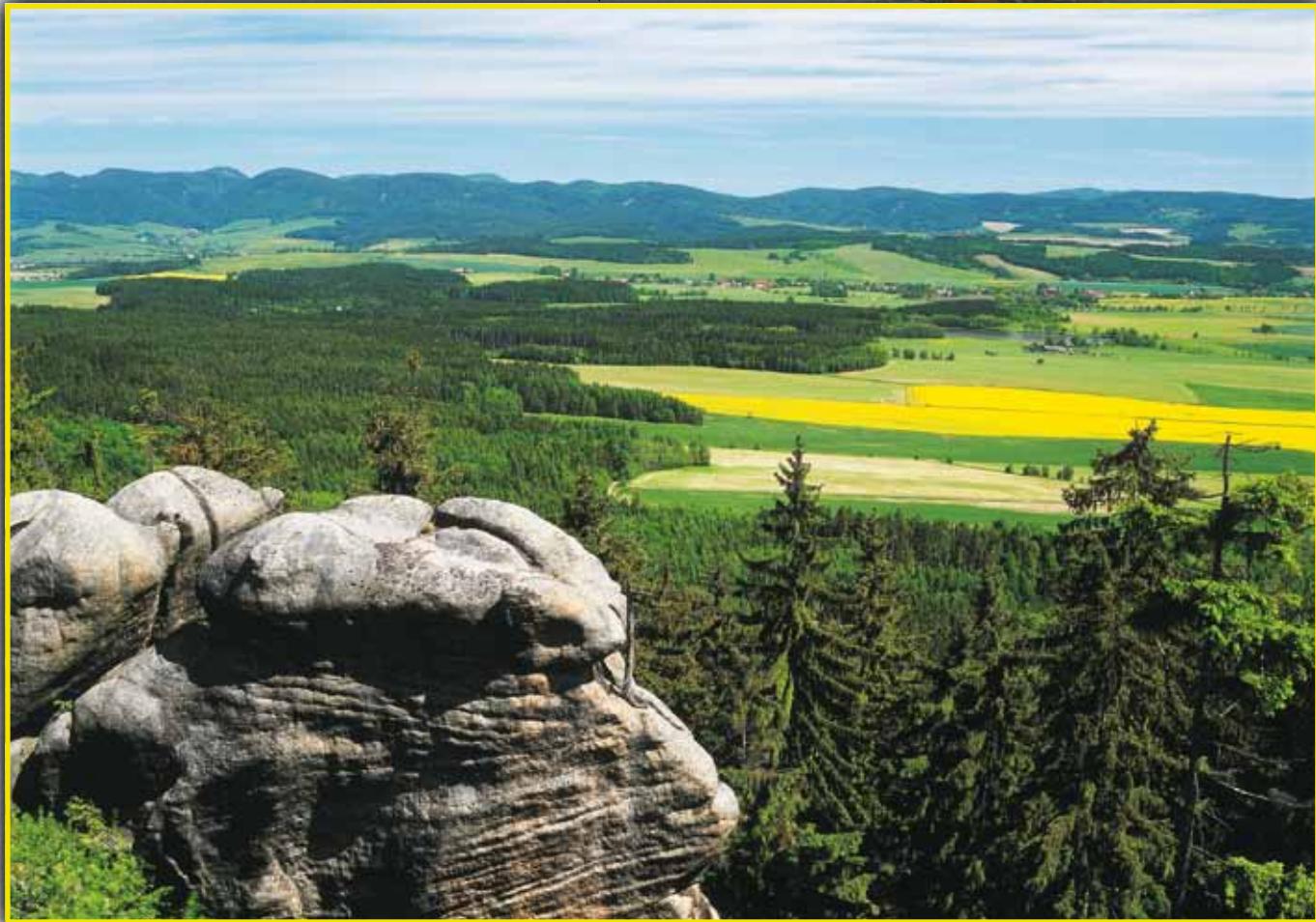
Vantage points built at rock towers of ruined castles, Střmen and Skály.



From Skály, you can see the entire Polička region and as far as the Orlické Mountains. 11

As a natural wall protecting the inner land, the massif of the **Broumovské stěny** (Broumov Walls) towers over the Broumov and Police nad Metují area. There are no dominant towers as in the areas mentioned above, but you will find here gorges, glens and also wonderful vistas. Let us name at least three: **Hvězda** (the Star) – a point near the chapel of Our Lady of the Snows, **Supí hnizdo** (Vulture's Nest) – a vantage point over Kovářova rokle (the Smith's Gorge, just a small detour from the A. Jirásek's trail) and **Modrý kámen** (the Blue Stone, 686 m) (follow the red signs, about 3.5 km from Hvězda) – a rocky site overlooking the Broumov region.

A view from the Star (Hvězda) of the do Broumov Basin and the Javoří Mountains. 12





You get a really splendid view of the Crown (Koruna) from the village of Božanov.

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Below the Broumov Walls, right on the border with Poland, lies the village of Božanov. The dominating feature of the village and the area is a steep mount, **Koruna** (the Crown, 769 m), which affords a view of part of the Broumov valley, the Polish Szczeliniec Mountains and Bor, and, when the weather is good, the Jeseníky Mountains.

When you visit this peculiar corner of our country, do not forget to go to the hill, around which many legends have been woven - **Ostaš** near Police nad Metují. It is a table mountain, recognisable from afar due to its specific shape, in which rocky mazes are concealed. The blue trail makes a circle through the Horní Labyrint (the Upper Labyrinth), from the car park to the highest peak (700 m), the so-called Frýdlant lookout point. As a reward for your effort in passing through the Labyrinth you will get a beautiful view of the Broumov Walls. To make the list from this area complete, mention needs to be made of the lookout tower standing, since 2002, on the highest peak of the Javoří Hills – **Ruprechtický Špičák** (880 m), not far from the Czech-Polish border. When you climb 22 meters up the 100 steps of the telecommunication tower, you will get a wonderful view of the Broumov region, the Krkonoše and Javoří Mountains, and the Polish Owl



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The chapel of Our Lady of the Snows on Hvězda and a metal lookout tower on Ruprechtický Špičák.

Mountains, and if you look south, the Orlické (Eagle) Mountains will come into sight. You will get to Ruprechtický Špičák from Meziměstí along the blue trail (9 km) or from Ruprechtice following the yellow signs (6 km) – the last portion of both trails is quite a steep climb. So, if you are not so agile, you can drive to the top of Ruprechtice and then walk the remaining 3 kilometres to Špičák. The lookout tower is open and free to all.

The Broumov Basin drowned in low inversion, Broumov Walls, the Szczeliniec Mountains and Bor seen from the lookout tower on Ruprechtický Špičák.

Orlické hory and their foothills



A view from Jirásek's Chalet at Dobrošov in the direction of the Orlické Mountains.

Nové Město nad Metují was founded in 1501. The late-Gothic town has a castle, which was turned into a Renaissance chateau in 1558-68. Its Baroque features date from the period 1651-60, when it was reconstructed according to the plans of architect Carlo Lurago. Then, in the years 1909 to 1915, the whole complex was restored and



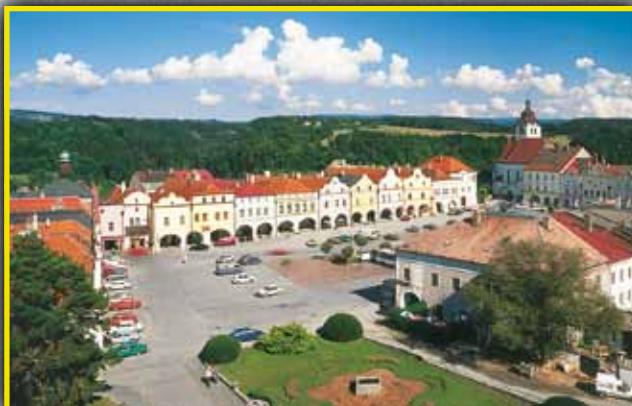
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Jirásek's Tourist Chalet at Dobrošov and the tower of the Náchod castle..

The originally Gothic **castle of Náchod** was built in the mid-13th century as a stronghold to guard the mountain pass from Bohemia to Polish Kłodzko. It had been reconstructed many times before the 18th century, mainly in the Renaissance and Baroque styles. As time passed, many major noble families have owned it, even some Czech kings. Visitors can see the town, Náchod, and its surroundings, not only from the castle tower but also from the terraces. On the other side of the valley, you can see Jirásek's Tourist Chalet with its lookout tower at **Dobrošov** (see field glasses).



Looking from the tower of the castle in Nové Město at the beautiful Renaissance town square.

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The tower in Dobruška is part of its Renaissance Town Hall, built in the 16th century.

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