

The Český ráj House of Nature



Český ráj viewed from the Little Lion rock

Welcome to the Bohemian Paradise (Český ráj) Protected Landscape Area and Geopark: to a land of sandstone ‘rock towns’, volcanic peaks, murmuring forests, flowery meadows and gleaming pond surfaces. Welcome to a land of distant views and deep valleys with gurgling streams, brooks and the magnificent Jizera River. Welcome to a landscape that has been inhabited by people for thousands of years, who built castles, chateaux and picturesque villages there. The gateway to this world is the Bohemian Paradise House of Nature in Dolánky, near Turnov.

The Bohemian Paradise Protected Landscape Area was established in 1955 as the first extensive protected area in the former Czechoslovakia within an area of 92 km². Fifty years later, it was expanded to a total area of 182 km². It also became part of the

first UNESCO geopark in the Czech Republic and in Central Europe. The area is bisected by the medium-sized Jizera River. The highest peak is the volcanic Kozákov at an elevation of 744 m above sea level, and the place with the lowest elevation is the

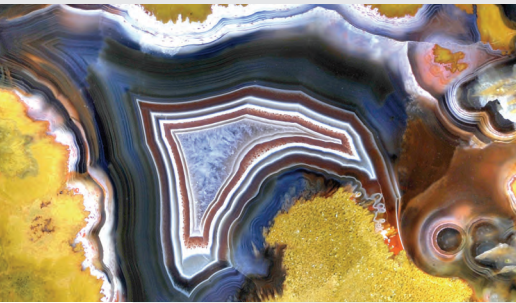
pond Žabakor at 236 m above sea level. The great natural diversity here is due to the differences in elevation, ruggedness of the cliffs, narrow valleys and shaded gorges, but also due to the wide floodplains and far-reaching ridges.

How did the Bohemian Paradise come about?



Journey to the Palaeozoic The landscape of the Bohemian Paradise began evolving 541–252 million years ago, when continental plates collided repeatedly and formed the supercontinent Pangaea. During this period of rapidly evolving life forms, mountain ranges formed that were then levelled over time by erosion. Volcanic activity and climate change caused the extinction of many species and marked the beginning of a new era. This period is documented by the Bohemian Paradise’s oldest rocks in the deep valley of the Jizera river between Semily and Bítouchov. The Bítouchov granite, called metagranite, crystallised 541 million years ago.

Tip for a trip: Rieger’s Trail – educational trail through the Jizera Valley



agate

The Bohemian Paradise is a region of old and young volcanoes. The oldest of them in the Kozákov and Tábor Range originated 260 million years ago, when magma erupted to the surface along fault lines in the earth’s crust. While the magma cooled, gases formed cavities in which crystallisation occurred, filling them with various kinds of gemstones. At first glance an ordinary rock, agate hides a fantastic world in its interior. Its beauty is revealed only after it has been split and polished.

Tip for a trip: The Nová Paka Town Museum and the Bohemian Paradise Museum in Turnov

The Bohemian Paradise House of Nature is a visitor centre that presents the natural, cultural and historical sights of this unique landscape in a permanent outdoor and indoor exhibition. It offers special programs for school groups and others who are interested, at the House of Nature or in the field. On the ground floor you can buy admission tickets, refreshments and souvenirs. The products on offer are made within the region or on site. There is also a large conference room available.

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www.dumprirody.cz/ceskyraj

The Bohemian Paradise House of Nature visitor centre is operated by: Středisko ekologické výchovy Libereckého kraje, p.o. (STŘEVLIK), Jizerská 190, 463 62 Hejnice, tel. +420 481 319 911, email: info@strevlik.cz, www.strevlik.cz

The Bohemian Paradise Information Centre at Bukovina in the arboretum near Hrubá Skála chateau presents the diversity and beauty of the Hruboskalsko area. **Sedmihorky 100**, 511 01 Turnov
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www.dumprirody.cz



The Bohemian Paradise Information Centre at Bukovina is operated by: Středisko ekologické výchovy Český ráj, z.s., Sedmihorky 72, Turnov, 511 01, tel.: +420 606 704 924
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The Bohemian Paradise Protected Landscape Area is administered and maintained by the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, Liberecko regional office, Bohemian Paradise Protected Landscape Area Administration (Správa CHKO Český ráj), Antonína Dvořáka 294, 511 01 Turnov, tel.: +420 951 424 713, e-mail: ceskyraj@aopk.gov.cz
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Published by the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (AOPK), 2018. ISBN 978-80-7620-000-5, first edition. Reprint © 2026 Text by a team of authors; photos by Petr Jenč, Petr Jan Juračka, Zdeněk Patzelt and Vladimír Šoltys; map by Jana Tomcová; graphic layout and typesetting by Zita Nielsen; translation by Sabine Borge, printing by U N I P R E S S, spol s r.o.; print run: 1 000.

On the sea floor and up again During the Mesozoic era (252–66 million years ago) Pangaea began breaking up into individual plates, the collision of which created new mountain ranges worldwide – the Alps, the Carpathian Mountains and the Himalayas. At the end of the Mesozoic, 95 million years ago, today’s region of the Bohemian Paradise was covered by a Cretaceous sea, into which rivers carried sand and gravel for tens of millions of years. Soft clay filled in the space between the sand grains, forming sandstone layers several hundred metres thick, the foundation of today’s rock towns. During the Tertiary period (66–2 million years ago) folding of the Alps caused uplift of the sandstone, in which then a regular network of faults and crevices developed. The volcanic

activity and prolonged erosion that followed shaped the landforms further.

Tip for a trip: volcanoes of the Bohemian Paradise

Sun, water and wind During the Quaternary period the Bohemian Paradise landscape took the shape we see today. It was markedly affected by alternating glacial and interglacial periods. During the ice ages, erosion by water, with the help of the sun, wind and frost, formed a maze of deep and narrow passages along the crevices, separating not only into whole gorges and canyons, but also discrete rock pillars – and thus the rock towns were created.

Tip for a trip: Prachov Rocks educational trail



Tábor and Zebín

Volcanoes are among the dominant landscape features in the Bohemian Paradise. Massive eruptions took place alternately in various places. Through the sandstone layers the basaltic magma penetrated to the surface and today remains as a number of smaller conical hills: Veliš, Čerovka, Zebín, Humprecht, Vyskeř and Mužský. Some of these were chosen as sites to build castles or chapels; later, the hills were quarried for building stone, but today most of them are included in the reserve.

Tip for a trip: The stations of the Cross at Vyskeř



tafoni

The story of the sandstone pillars in the Bohemian Paradise began on the sea floor during the Mesozoic era, but their shape is still changing today. Secret sculptors – sunshine and water, pressure and salt – formed in the sandstone a great number of caves, alcoves, overhangs, cavities, rock arches, tunnels, rock windows, pseudokarren, mushroom rocks and balancing rocks. The rock surface is decorated by tafoni, which look like honeycomb. You will see all these forms along the educational trails through the rock towns.

Tip for a trip: Příhrazy Rocks educational trail



Did you know...

- That Trosky are actually the remnants of two volcanic vents? Volcanological research has confirmed that the taller Panna (the Virgin) is younger than Baba (the Hag).
- That the Prachovské skály rock town is among the oldest protected areas in Europe? It has been a reserve since 1933.
- That the Boskov dolomite caves, situated in Bohemian Paradise Geopark, contain the largest underground lake in the Czech Republic? The caves are open to the public.
- That the low-growing pine trees that grow on the cliffs can be up to 300 years old? Under these extreme conditions they grow very slowly.

Thank you for being considerate towards our natural heritage and for:

- camping and lighting fires only in designated places
- driving and parking your car only where permitted
- keeping to marked trails
- riding your bicycle on cycle paths and respecting nature and other visitors
- leaving animals and plants alone in their natural habitats
- not damaging the cliffs and not entering the caves
- taking your rubbish home with you



Forests in the Bohemian Paradise

After the retreat of the last ice age in the Quaternary period, the Bohemian Paradise area was covered by primieval forest. When people arrived here, the forest had to make way for settlements, fields and meadows. In the past two centuries, humans changed the forest to monocultures of pine and spruce, and brought in exotic tree species from faraway countries. Only fragments remained of the original forests – stands of maple and alder at the bottom of damp valleys; thermophilous sessile oak–hornbeam forests on south-facing slopes and tablelands; beech forests on poor sandy soils; and relict pine forest and oak forests on clifftops. Nowadays, trees that are native to the Bohemian Paradise, such as European silver fir, elm, linden, wild cherry and European beech, are once again being planted here.

Tip for a trip: Hruboskalsko educational trail

Water in the Bohemian Paradise

The Bohemian Paradise is a landscape of springs, gullies, brooks and streams, the waters of which are carried to the Labe River by the Jizera and Cidlina rivers. It is also a landscape of fish ponds and wetlands, peat bogs and hillslope springs. The Klenice Valley beneath Kost castle, the Libuňka floodplain and the Podtrosecká valleys with fish ponds constructed in the distant past, are host to dozens of mills, and their water wheels still can be heard clacking today. The picturesque Věžický pond, the largest pond Žabakor and even the smallest pools are home to a range of aquatic animals and plants.

Tip for a trip: Podtrosecká Valley educational trail and the Bozkov dolomite caves

Humans in the Bohemian Paradise

The landscape of the Bohemian Paradise was discovered by humans as far back as the early Stone Age. During the late Bronze Age the density of settlements approached that at the beginning of the High Middle Ages. In the Iron Age the Celts, and later Germanic people, inhabited it; then 1 500 years ago the Slavs arrived. In strategic locations people built fortresses and castles which, during the Renaissance period, either fell into ruin or were modified into palatial residences. Baroque architects already conceived of the landscape as a whole in their designs and created extensive compositions, of which the so-called Valdštejn (Waldstein) landscape is an example, a line of seven architecturally significant places. The Romantic period saw the creation of palace parks, gardens and spas. The first excursionists arrived who, for the first time, called this region the Bohemian Paradise.

Tip for a trip: the Early Baroque Composed Landscape around Jičín

The peregrine falcon, emblem of the Bohemian Paradise and mascot of the House of Nature



This rare bird of prey with its perfect flight skills, hunting abilities and impressive eyesight has enjoyed people's exceptional interest for thousands of years. In the past few decades it not only became the emblem of the Bohemian Paradise, but also a symbol of the threats to nature, followed by its successful conservation. Currently five to seven pairs are nesting in the Bohemian Paradise. These nesting sites are strictly protected and are being monitored by employees of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic.



Beech forest at Prachovské skály (Prachov Rocks)



The Podtrosecká valleys with Rokytnický and Hrudka ponds

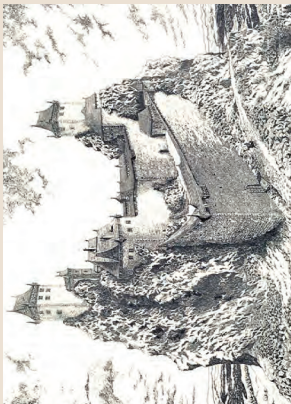


Kost castle at Sobotka

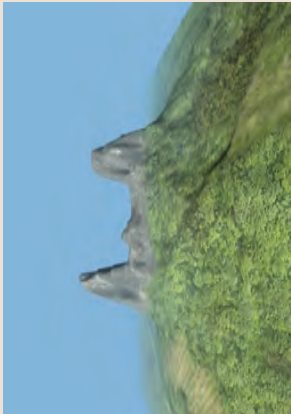


Illustration by Pavel Procházka

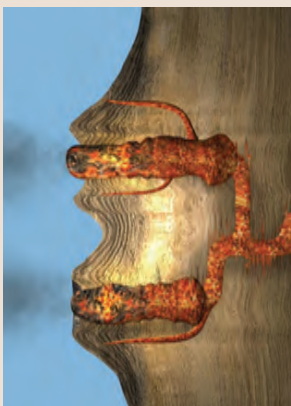
How did Trosky come about?



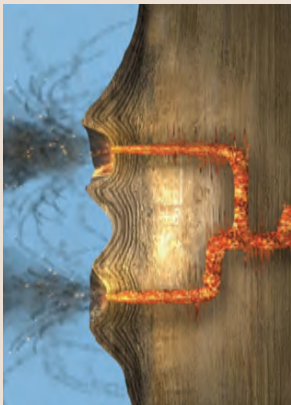
Reconstruction of Trosky castle in the Middle Ages. Illustration by Ladislav Tomáš



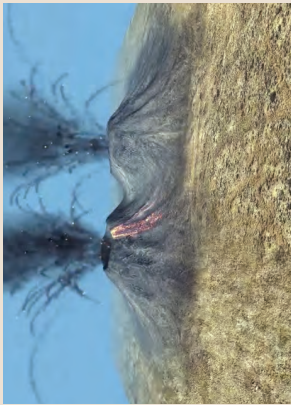
The softer slag deposits have been eroded and only the hard basalt vents remain, called Panna (the Virgin) and Baba (the Hag).



Two massive columns of partially cooled, and only the hard basalt vents remain, called Panna (the Virgin) and Baba (the Hag).



The red-hot magma burst through the sandstone bed, forming a dual-vent more viscous magma were squeezed into these double cones.



Trosky (514 m a.s.l.) is a Tertiary volcano that ejected volcanic slag.

From an animation of Trosky's origins by the Czech Geological Service (www.geology.cz/svet-geologie).

