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Under auspices of  
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and

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**EXCURSION GUIDE**



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## **Brno – Znojmo**

R52 is a high speed road from Brno to Pohořelice, continuing as I/52 to the Austrian border and Vienna. It has been built in the path of the Amber Trail connecting Northern and Southern Europe. It is a part of the expressway from Gdańsk to Vienna. 20 km are in operation, 33 km in preparation. Maximum transport intensity is 42,000 vehicles per 24 hours. A part of the motorway was built in line of the motorway from 1939 which should have connected Vienna and Wrocław and which has never been completed due to the war.

The section from Brno to Pohořelice is in operation since 1996. The finishing of the highway is blocked by environmental activists. They argue mainly with environmental damage of a sensible territory, with increasing transport load by transit and they suggest different option namely using D2 motorway (section Brno-Břeclav) and its linking-up in direction to the Vienna. Austrian side is constructing the motorway Wien – Drassenhofen which should connect the Czech R52 near Mikulov.

In 2010 Supreme Administrative Court accepted suggestions of two municipalities (Bavory and Dolní Dunajovice) and some natural persons and cancelled the territorial plan of the Břeclav district including the R52 road. Since then, the completion is an open question. But because the Austrians built their A5 to Mikulov, the Czech side will have to follow this direction sooner or later. Additionally, the route via Břeclav meets a big problem, namely crossing valuable floodplain forests. Moreover, the drivers will not be obliged to use longer connection via D2 and Břeclav without direct continuation on the Austrian side.

Also the northern end of the motorway is unclear. The problem consists in the linking of R43 Brno – Svitavy. Here the environmental activists also prevents the construction suggesting different variants.

## **POHOŘELICE**

The town is situated right next to the motorway. It is a wine town with 4,600 inhabitants. It was first mentioned in 1222 and a couple years later the town was given to the queen Kunhuta (regent of Bohemia in 1278-1285) and became the royal town. In 1945 a camp for German population displaced from Brno was organized here in the buildings used earlier by Nazis for Polish forced labours. During the existence of the camp 459 German people from Brno died in the camp as a result of exhaustion and dysentery.

The economy of the town was historically based on agriculture using the soils of the best quality. Freshwater fishing is a special branch in the town. At the present time, the geographical position with an excellent accessibility from Brno is the main aspect of the development. The town is a subject of residential and commercial suburbanization. Industry and logistic are situated in two industrial zones here.

## **ZNOJMO**

Znojmo is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest town of the South-Moravian Region with 34,000 inhabitants. The town is situated on a rock outcropping on the steep left bank of the Thaya (*Dyje*) River, about 55 km southwest of the regional capital Brno. Located near the border with Austria, it is connected to Vienna by railway and road.

A fortress at the site possibly already existed during the time of the Great Moravian Empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. From about 1055, Znojmo Castle served as the residence of a Přemyslid principality within the Bohemian March of Moravia and a strategic important outpost near the border with the Bavarian March of Austria. Few years later (1101), Luitpold of Znojmo, Duke of Moravia, established Ducal Rotunda of the Virgin Mary and St Catherine in this castle, later depicted by

unique scene of genealogy Bohemian and Moravian Dukes of Přemyslide dynasty and the castle was conquered and devastated by Duke Vladislaus II of Bohemia in 1145.

In 1190 Duke Conrad II of Bohemia founded the Premonstratensian Louka Abbey at Znojmo, which became the settlement area of German-speaking immigrants. The royal city of Znojmo was founded shortly before 1226 by King Ottokar I of Bohemia on the plains in front of the reconstructed castle. The town privileges were confirmed by King Rudolf I of Germany in 1278. The city became the strongest fortress in the south-western Moravian and an important market place.

In 1404 knights Jan Sokol of Lamberk and Hynek of Kunštát successfully defended Znojmo against much stronger armies of Albrecht of Austria and Sigismund Luxembourg (some hundreds of Czech against 25,000 Austrian and Hungarian). Albrecht of Austria died during the siege for dysentery, the emperor Sigismund felt seriously ill. He died in Znojmo later (1437) probably from cancer.

After the Hussite wars, the city flourished economically. Its economy was based on the trade with wine and fruits. Znojmo became a set of privileges and was a site of important historical events. The positive development was disrupted by the Thirty Years War followed by Turks threat and Napoleonic wars. In 1809 a battle between the emperor Napoleon and Austrian empire took place here. Archduke Charles of Austria tried to stop the French army here which chased the Austrian after the battle by Wagram. After the French reinforced came (100,000 men), the Austrians stopped the resistance. The peace treaty was signed in Vienna.



*St. Nicolaus church*

After the Prussian-Austrian wars, the economic development was renewed. Ceramic industry, cultivation and elaboration of cucumbers, wine and apricots and leather production became main economic branches. The railway from Vienna to Prague and Berlin (North-West Railway) was finished in 1871. That time, Znojmo was situated on one of the most important European railways (by the way, the time of a ride from Vienna to Děčín via Znojmo took 30 minutes more than time in comparison with the present stay).

After the origin of independent Czechoslovakia, German population of Znojmo tried to tear the city from the new state. Economically, a problem of the city on the periphery began to show for the first time in the history. After the Munich agreement (1938) German efforts were filled and Znojmo became a part of the Third Reich. Czech and Jewish population mostly moved to the Czech inland. The city was liberated at May 8, by the Red Army. About 15,000 German from Znojmo were displaced to the American Occupation Zone in Germany. They were substituted mostly by people from Bohemian-Moravian Highland and also from eastern Moravia.

After the establishment of Iron Curtain, Znojmo really felt its peripheral position. Austrian markets were lost, movement the people across the borderline strongly limited. On the other side, some industrial branches were localized here within the “socialist industrialization” like machinery, food and wood processing industry. Znojmo became a starting point to the tourist and recreation areas of Vranov water reservoir and Thaya valley. Because there is no competitor in a wide surroundings, Znojmo plays an unquestionable central role for some dozens of villages.



*Viaduct of the North-Western railway in Znojmo. Louka Abbey in background.*

At the present time, Znojmo shows signs of the post-industrial society. It changed its character for a city of education, health and social care, culture, sport, tourism. The industrial zone Přímětice has so far hardly attracted anyone interested in business.

There are numerous sights in the city. The historical centre is an urban conservation area since 1971. The Gothic Church of St. Nicholas and the Late Gothic Town Hall tower are the most recognizable landmarks. St. Nicholas Church was built in 1348 by Emperor Charles IV, and the town hall, with its 75 m high tower, dates from around 1446. Overlooking the Dyje River valley, on the edge of the medieval city, there is Znojmo Castle, dating back to 11<sup>th</sup> century, founded by Přemyslid dukes. The only remains of the castle used by the Přemyslid dukes is the Romanesque Rotunda of Saint Catherine, the interior of which is covered with 11<sup>th</sup> century frescoes depicting biblical scenes and illustrating the life of Přemysl. At the present time, the brewery is situated in the castle complex. Under the city and castle a vast labyrinth of connected passageways and cellars can be found. Znojmo

Catacombs, developed in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century for defensive purposes contains wells, drainage, fireplaces, trap doors and escapeways that led beyond the fortifications of the city.

The Louka Abbey was found by the prince Konrad Ota in 1190. The building was plundered by the Hussite army in 1425. Its reconstruction has never been finished because the emperor Josef II. canceled the Abbey within his reforms in 1784. Later a tobacco factory and the garrison was there. Now, only a small part is used by the company Znovin as a museum of wine. The remains dilapidate. The fort of St. Hippolytus from the 9<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the most important fortresses of Grand Moravia Empire. The military importance was combined with the ecclesiastic function in 11<sup>th</sup> century. Provostry of Military Order of the Crusaders of the Red Star was found here.



*Romanesque Rotunda of Saint Catherine in the complex of the Znojmo castle*

## **VRANOV NAD DYJÍ and its micro-region**

Vranov nad Dyjí is a market town with 860 inhabitants. It lies on the Dyje river, 3 km north of the Austrian border close to Hardegg and 22 km from the historical city of Znojmo. While there exists a written record about a castle at Vranov location dated in 1100, the nearby settlement was first mentioned as a village as late as in 1323. Between 1790 and 1882 the town had a manufactory for earthenware; after 1820 the manufactory began producing ceramic based on the methods of Josiah Wedgwood.

The municipality was industrialized during the central planned system by some affiliates of big factories in inland. These affiliates was closed first after 1989. At the present time, Vranov is a centre for a relative wide but rarely settled hinterland. It is perceived as a starting point to the Vranov water reservoir, Vranov chateau and other sight in its surroundings. Unfortunately, the tourism in the territory has extremely seasonal character. Thus, winters are empty and sad here.

The chateau Vranov (11<sup>th</sup> century) was originally a royal castle as one of fortresses defending the southern border of the Czech state. After extinction of the military function, the castle was rebuilt as a chateau. At the present time, the chateau is a state property. It is open for public.

The whole dominion of Vranov has been intentionally arranged to create beautiful and fashionable area – the designed landscape. The adaptations started during the reign of Althans in seventies of 18<sup>th</sup> century by mostly creating lighthouses (follies), e.g. one close to Čížov with a wild boars game park around it. They continued when the dominion belonged to Hilgartner with establishing a new village Lesná (originally Liliendorf) in 1792 with a pheasantry nearby and has been finished until half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Mníšek family. They developed especially farm yards, which were connected to other objects with a system of alleys, and viewpoints, to observe the beauties of the property – like viewpoint Tanečnice or the Clary's cross (according to fashion of Romanticism). Due to its historical and artistic value the whole landscape surrounding Vranov (and also Bítov) has been established in 2002 a Landscape Heritage Zone, with cultural – historical protection.

Water reservoir Vranov was built in 1930 – 1933. Its dike is 60 m high and 292 m long. The area of the reservoir is 763 ha, volume of water 31.5 mil. m<sup>3</sup> (permanent volume), maximum deep 58 m. The reservoir has energetic, anti-flood and recreation functions including fishing. Water transport is in operation (renewed in 2006). The village Bítov had to retreat to the construction of the reservoir. New Bítov was built according to unified mode in a different place nearby.



*Chateau Vranov*

Vranov is a centre of a micro-region which consists of small and very small villages with limited own activities and emigration tendencies. Before the WWII, the population was preliminary German and was engaged mostly in agriculture. After the war, the majority of population was displaced. Original German population was substituted by Slavonic people. However the pre-wars numbers of inhabitants have never been reached. Some villages lost

more than a half people. Social milieu was characterised by a poor relation of new settlers to their settlements and neighbours. Such an atmosphere has been changed only slowly. Moreover, the Iron Curtain isolated the area from the Austrian side whereas from the Czech side it was a periphery with limited access of non-residents. Maintaining relative intact nature was the only advantage.

The micro-region, especially villages on its west, is distanced from all regional centres both in Czech and Austrian sides. Vranov itself is too weak fully to ensure jobs, services and other central functions for its hinterland. The railways avoid the area (with the only exception – village Šumná). The productive economy felt almost down. The connection with Austrian municipalities is not good due to the deep valley and landscape protection. The unemployment reaches a high level. Many people (preliminary men) commute on a long distance and fore more days (e.g. truck drivers, workers at large construction sites etc.). Surprisingly, the level of entrepreneurial activities is over average – because the people have hardly any possibility.

In such a case, the tourism development is the only branch which remains. There are excellent natural conditions and architectural heritage in the area. In the short 50 km long section of the borderland, 12 castles, chateaus or their ruins on both sides of the border can be observed. Natural beauties are represented by the Podyjí National Park. Abandoned houses are very attractive for the second housing. Problem consist in a poor tourist infrastructure and insufficient level of services.

## **PODYJÍ NATIONAL PARK**

The National Park was found in 1991. It protects near-natural forests along the deep Dyje River valley. It is a biom whose well-preserved state is unique in Central Europe. It connects to the smaller Nationalpark Thayatal in Austria (found 2000). The area of the park is 63 km<sup>2</sup>, of it buffer zone counts 29 km<sup>2</sup>. Forest covers 84 % of the territory.



*Meandering Dyje R.*

The values of the park consist mainly in unique geomorphology (deep canyon of meandering river) and a general preservation of the area (42 km of inhabited river valley) which is preconditioned by unsuitability for any construction and peripheral position emphasized by the Iron Curtain in 1950s – 1980s.

The rich biodiversity of the park is preconditioned by the fact that through the valley, thermophilic Pannonian species migrate from the east whereas submontane species from the west. They meet in the territory with very different habitats: scree fields, wetland meadows, dry meadows, rocks, hot heathlands, prairie fallows. On these habitats 77 protected plants (of it 18 species of orchids) can be found. Different animals live in the National Park: 65 species of mammals, 152 species of birds, 7 species of reptiles and 32 species of fishes. The last group is disturbed by both water reservoirs – Vranov above the area and Znojmo below the area. The reservoirs change the temperature conditions and hinder the migration of species.

There are about 130 ha agricultural land in the National Park. The farmers apply the principles of eco-agriculture. Farms with sheep and horse breeding are combined with agritourism.

## **LECHOVICE wine cellars**

Lechovice wine cellars Ltd. is the greatest self-vineyards producer in the Znojmo wine region. The tradition of wine growing is connected with Louka Abbey. The main cellar was built in the period 1723 – 1837. The stable temperature in the cellar is 12 °C. About 230 ha of vineyards belong to the company.

The company produces about 1 million bottles per year. Aromatic white varieties Sauvignon, Pálava or Savagnin are the best known. Aurelius, Chardonnay, Müller Thurgau, Neuburger, Pálava, Pinot gris, Welschriesling, Riesling, Sylvaner, Veltliner are the other white wines whereas André, Cabernet Sauvignon, Blaufränkisch, Merlot, Blauer Portugieser, Pinot noir, St. Laurent, Zweigeltrebe are red wines. Following categories of wine are offered: quality wine, Kabinett wine, the late harvest, selection of grapes, ice wine, straw wine, sparkling wines, liquer wines, rose wine. The company applies classical production in wooden barrels and the modern way in steel tanks. The certificate of the food security ISO 22000 has been reached in 2011. Lechovice sparkling wine matures in the bottom of the Vranov water reservoir in the deep of 40 m, temperature 5 °C and the pressure of 5 atmospheres.