

# Pilsen

Pilsen is a city in Western Bohemia and it lies on 4 rivers – **the Úhlava, the Úslava, the Mže, the Radbuza** and all these rivers form the Berounka river. Pilsen is the capital of Pilsner region and it is the fourth most populous city in the Czech Republic – it has more than 170 thousand people. It is an economic, industrial, political, commercial, cultural and educational centre.

There are many famous people who are somehow connected with Pilsen – for example the famous composer Bedřich Smetana, Josef Kajetán Tyl - the famous playwright, Josef Skupa the famous theatre professor and the father of Spejbl and Hurvínek puppets, Miroslav Horníček - a famous Czech actor, Antonín Procházka a well-known playwright and actor, Kateřina Emmons Kůrková - the Olympic champion in shooting, Karel Gott a famous Czech pop singer.

Pilsen became a town in 1295 when the Czech king Wenceslas II founded it. Soon it became one of the most important towns as it lies on important routes leading to Norimberk and Regensburg. Emperor Rudolf II established his seat in Pilsen at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1839 the **Pilsner brewery** was founded. The beer produced in Pilsen soon became well known and also widely imitated. In 1898 the trade mark Pilsner Urquell was created to say that this beer is the original. In the second half of the 19th century Pilsen began to be a very industrial town. In 1869 Emil Škoda started the Škoda works, which became the most important company in the country and a supplier of arms to the Austro-Hungarian Army.

In 1899 the first tram line started in the city. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 Pilsen was liberated from Nazi German by American soldiers under the leadership of General Patton. Since 1990 Pilsen organizes an annual **Liberation festival**, which takes place in May and this festival is also attended by American and Allied veterans. People can see imitations of battles, cars and vehicles used in battles and other attractions. **Patton Memorial** was built here to commemorate the liberation of Pilsen.

In Pilsen, there are many historical sights such as the **Gothic Saint Bartholomew's Cathedral** with its tower, which is the tallest church tower in the Czech Republic with its 102 metres. The Cathedral was founded in 1292. Other important sights include the **Renaissance Town Hall** again in the Republic Square. The Town Hall is the seat of Pilsen municipality and ceremonial hall used for weddings. In Klatovská Street there is a large **Jewish Synagogue**, which is the largest synagogue in the Czech Republic. Pilsen is also famous its **historical underground**, which is a complex of corridors, cellars and hundreds of wells under the historical parts of Pilsen. It was built since the 14<sup>th</sup> century and with its extent of 17, 5 km belongs to one of the biggest historical underground systems in Central Europe. Other famous place of interest is **the J.K.Tyl's Theatre**, which is built in neo-renaissance style and was opened in 1902. In 2014 the **New Theatre** was built to replace the damaged Chamber Theatre. Among the well-known galleries is the **gallery Meat Market**, which is built in neo-gothic style. The building of a real meat market was built in 1392 in Gothic style and served as a market till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After a reconstruction in 1972, it has served as a gallery, concert place and educational centre. A very important museum is the **West Bohemia Museum**, which is the most important museum in Pilsner region and a centre of scientific work. Another important museum is the **museum of brewery**, where people can learn interesting facts about the origin and production of this famous Pilsner drink. **Water Tower** is another historical sight near the Republic Square. The oldest mention about this place is from 1532. This tower served as town waterworks and it also had a protective function as it was a part of town fortifications.

People interested in science and technology can visit **Techmania Science Center** where they can observe and try many things connected with science. Visitors of Pilsen can admire a lot of beautiful **Mikoláš Aleš sgraffiti** on the walls of Pilsen houses.

Pilsen is the seat of **the ZOO and Botanical Garden** with its Japanese garden and **Dinopark**. There are also a lot of ponds in Pilsen suburbs. There are also a lot of parks, the biggest one is in the part Bory, smaller ones are for example in Kopeckého sady or Smetanovy Sady.

People interested in culture can visit **theatres** (J.K. Tyl's theatre, the New Theatre, the Alfa theatre for children), **cinemas, galleries, museums** and young people will like the number of various clubs, pubs and restaurants. People interested in sports can visit the **football stadium in Štruncovy sady**, hockey fans and ice-skaters can visit two **winter stadiums**. People interested in swimming and water sports will enjoy their stay in **the swimming pool in Slovany** with many attractions inside.

Pilsen was chosen to become **European city of Culture** for the year of 2015. Every year the title is devoted to two cities from the countries in the European Union to support European cultural cooperation. The city with this title usually gets more attention from abroad and many tourists come to see this place. In Pilsen there were many cultural events that year – such as the opening celebration, giant puppets, festival of light called Blik Blik...

Pilsen is also an educational centre. There are many primary and secondary schools, Pilsen is the seat of the West Bohemia University and the Medical Faculty of Charles University.

Pilsen is a very important transport junction, it lies on the highway D5 to Norimberg. Other big routes connect Pilsen with Prague, Karlovy Vary, Strakonice. There are 3 types of public transport in Pilsen – buses, trams and trolleybuses. Pilsen also provides transportation to and from surrounding and remote villages and towns. There is a bus station and a railway station in Pilsen. There are also many hotels, motels and private accommodation for visitors of Pilsen.