

**Přemysl Otakar II Square** has always been the natural centre of the city and is almost perfectly square, measuring 132 x 137 metres. After the city's foundation, it was the site for markets, and later witnessed other important events in the city. Around the circumference of the square stand 48 historical buildings, the most important of which is the **Town Hall**. Its imposing appearance served to reflect the importance of the city. The present-day appearance of the historical town hall is in the Baroque style dating back to 1727-1730, based on a design by builder A. E. Martinelli. The monumental façade is emphasised by three towers, of which the highest central one is equipped with chimes from the year 1995. Four allegoric statues on the parapet of the town hall represent the bourgeois virtues of Justice, Courage, Wisdom and Caution. The extensive façade bears the city's coat of arms above the central window, surrounded by the county coats of arms of Moravia, Bohemia and Silesia. The grandest room inside the building is the ceremonial hall, whose vaulted ceiling is decorated by a fresco depicting the biblical scene of Solomon's Judgement dating back to 1730.

In the middle of the Square stands one of the symbols of the city, the Baroque **Samson's Fountain**. It was created in the years 1721-1726 by stonemason Zachariáš Horn, while the sculptures were created by Josef Dietrich. The top is adorned by a statue of the biblical Samson wrestling with a lion. The fountain is among the largest in Bohemia and holds about 200 m<sup>3</sup> of water. Not far from the fountain is the **Erratic Boulder**, marked with a cross. In the past, there was an execution scaffold here, and to this day legend says that anybody who crosses the Erratic Boulder after ten p.m. will not find his way home and will wander the city until the morning.

From the Square, continue to the **St. Nicholas Cathedral**, originally a Gothic building from the 13th Century. However, it burned down in the 17th century and today's appearance is Baroque. There are three statues situated on the façade - St. Wenceslas, patron of the Czech lands; St. Nicholas, patron of the České Budějovice bishopric; and St. Auratian, the patron saint of České Budějovice. The interior of the church is very simple. The most important part is the main altar from the 18th century with a painting of St. Nicholas.

Next to the church stands another symbol of České Budějovice, the 72 metre high **Black Tower**, sought by visitors for the unique panorama of the city and surrounding area from the gallery. The Gothic-Renaissance tower was completed in 1577 and served as a belfry and watchtower. There are six bells in the tower, the largest of which is called Bumerin, weighing in at 3 429 kg.

From the Black Tower, go down U Černé věže Street where there are two buildings worth seeing. One is the architecturally valuable **Wortner's House**, whose façade is decorated with battlements and corner towers. It was built in the middle of the 16th century in the style of receding Gothic and upcoming Renaissance architecture. Today, it houses the Aleš South Bohemian Gallery. Opposite stands the Art Nouveau **U Hájíků** department store from the year 1911. Let us return to the Black Tower and take Hroznová Street to the corner of Kněžská Street and Kanovnická Street, the site of **Kneissl's House** decorated with the oldest sgraffito designs in the city. Across from Kneissl's House stands the Baroque **Chapel of the Mortal Anxiety of the Lord**, which currently serves Greek Orthodox believers. Kněžská Street will take us to the former Church of St. Anne with the Capuchin monastery, which was established by Queen Anne in the early 17th century during her visit to České Budějovice. Today, it serves as the **Otakar Jeremiáš Concert Hall**. Kněžská Street leads into Dukelská Street, at the start of which stands the representative Neo-Renaissance building of the **South Bohemian Museum**, which was opened in 1903. In the museum, you can visit the permanent exhibition devoted to the history, ethnography and nature of South Bohemia, as well as thematic exhibitions. Next to the museum, built in the same style, is the **Slavie Cultural Centre** standing on the very banks of the Malše River, just like the neighbouring Empire-style building of the **South Bohemian Theatre**. The original construction dates back to 1819 and was most recently reconstructed in 1990.

On the façade stands a bust of Josef Kajetán Tyl, which recalls the fact that he performed here for the last time in his life. On the other side of the theatre is a monument to Emmy Destinn, a world-famous opera singer who died in České Budějovice in 1930. Walk around the theatre along Dr. Stejskal Street back to the main square.



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