

One of the New Tourist Phenomena: Dark Tourism

New kinds of tourism include, among others, travelling to "dark" history. Apart from Second World War themes, with typical destinations such as the towers of Terézín, Lidice, etc. that are stressed more often, there are also many places in the Czech Republic that could attract tourists keen on dark stories.

These include:

Ossuary in Sedlec near Kutná Hora

Earth from the Holy Land was scattered in a local cemetery under the rule of Ottokar II. Victims of the plague epidemic in 1318, about 30,000 bodies, were buried here.

Bones were stored in the lower chapel after the Hussite wars when the cemetery was phased out. Its interior was remodelled in 1709 by the famous architect Jan Blažej Santini Aichel. It was probably at this time when altars and bone decorations were created; the ossuary decoration as we know it today originated in 1820 when it was renovated [1]. The remains of some 40,000 people are estimated to be stored here.

<http://www.kostnice.cz>

Mělník Ossuary

Together with the Sedlec Ossuary near Kutná hora, the ossuary located in the town of Mělník ranks among the biggest ossuaries in the Czech Republic. It is located in a crypt under St. Peter and St. Paul's provost's Church presbytery. According to the construction process of the presbytery and the writings on its walls, it served its purpose until the 1530s. Since before memory the church had been surrounded by a cemetery which was not big enough to hold the remains of the many victims of plague epidemics and that is why gravediggers would take the bones and store them in the ossuary. Ossuaries or charnel-houses used to be constructed near parish churches with cemeteries. Mělník Ossuary served its purpose until 1775 when the church cemetery was eliminated. According to a governing decree from 16 August 1678 bones stored in ossuaries were to be buried in the ground, and in Mělník Ossuary they solved this issue by walling in the windows and entrance. The cemetery was relocated to St. Ludmila's Church in the town's suburb.

The Ossuary holds the remains of about 10,000 to 15,000 people of different ages, sex and ethnic origin as bones found around Mělník, the remains of the Thirty Year War and other conflicts were gathered there.

<http://www.salefni.cz/melnik/index-en.htm>

Vamberk Mummies Stored under Broumov Monastery

The vast cellar of Broumov Monastery holds 34 mummies from St. Prokop's Parish Church in Vamberk. When excavation work took place at St. Prokop's Church in Vamberk in the 1960s, the local sewerage system was damaged and wastewater flowed into the crypt. Due to climatic changes (higher moisture in particular) a number of mummies started to rot and some of them had to be buried in the ground as they were in an advanced state of decomposition. 34 out of the original 50 mummies were saved and temporarily stored in a depository of the District Museum of the Orlické Mountains, situated in the town of Vamberk. Eventually, the adult, as well as two child mummies, were transported to Broumov Monastery in 2000.

You can see the Vamberk mummy exhibition for an extra admission fee after visiting the monastery.

<http://www.klastar-broumov.cz/index-en.htm>

Capuchin Crypt in Brno

The Order of Friars Minor Capuchin is a monastic order and one of the three branches of the Franciscan order. Its members are colloquially referred to as "Capuchins", from the Italian word "cappuccio" (hood), because of the significantly long and pointed hood of their habits, distinguishing them from the Minorites and the Observants. Capuchins came to the countries of the Czech Crown around 1610 via Vienna and established themselves in Prague, Olomouc and Brno. The Capuchin tomb also holds the remains of the famous pánoubour commander, baron Trenck (1711 - 1749) who died in 1749 in the Spilberk prison. The crypt also features a famous saying: "We were once what you are now - you will be what we are now". Rather dreadful curiosities decorating the place are chandeliers made of human bones.

<http://www.discovery.cz/brno/capuchin-monastery-tychov>

Museum of Torture in Český Krumlov

Medieval cellars in the ancient town hall building (Náměstí Svornosti no. 1) were restored and they now feature the exhibitions of the Museum of Torture. The authentic premises take visitors back to the cruel times of the Middle Ages when torture was in full bloom and the guilty as well as the innocent were tortured by the most cruel methods and specific sophisticated torture instruments and tools.

Almost 100 torture instrument exhibits are displayed in the area of more than 400 m². The exhibition features 10 wax figures and two unique audiovisual effects: witch burning and a decapitation.

<http://www.ckrumlov.cz/uk/meslo/frmy/mustor.htm>

Macoča Abyss

Everyone who has visited the Moravian Karst knows that Macocha ("Stepmother") Abyss is nicknamed after a certain stepmother who allegedly threw her stepson into its mouth. It turned out that the legend handed down from generation to generation might be true, as described in historic resources (Vigilias, 1663). Unfortunately, Macocha is also a frequent suicide destination, with people coming there for this purpose from the Blansko, Znojmo, Prostějov, Hodonin and Brno regions. Sometimes these people did not know Macocha before, had never visited it and went there out of despair. However, the forested edges and sheer rock sides of Macocha Abyss attract other visitors, as well: adventurers from all around the country, including poets, writers and painters.

<http://www.citavemk.cz/punkenti-cesty/>

Church of St. Jacob the Bigger in Prague's Old Town

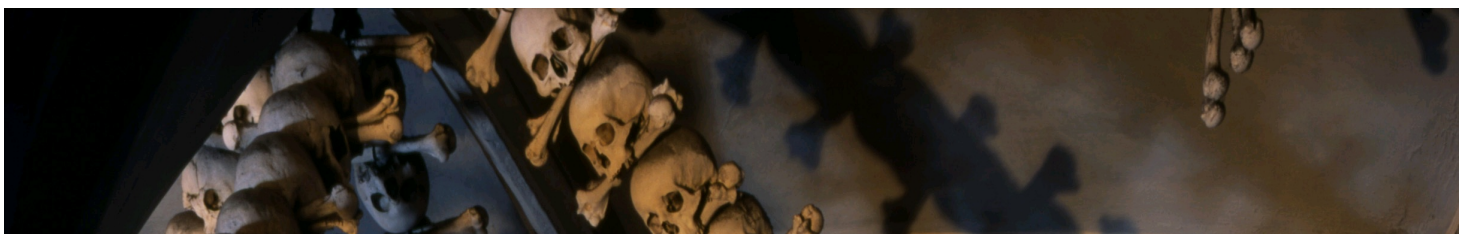
There are several legends associated with this church. One of them talks about a robber who stayed in the church after prayers and got down to his business at night. When he tried to reach a wooden statuette of the Virgin Mary, she grabbed his hand. She held the robber so firmly he could not get free and had to wait all night until a surprised priest arrived. What's more, he could not even move any more and they had to cut his hand off. It was decided to hang it by the church entrance to remind all the passers-by of one of the Ten Commandments. The robber repented his sin and his hand has remained in the church until today. <http://stjosefa.praha.eu/en-church-of-st-jacob-the-bigger-in-old-town.html>

There are many other places with a "dark" history in the Czech Republic, rich in legends on the borderland between fact and fiction, many inexplicable mysterious phenomena and enigmas. Another Czech speciality is its old castles and chateaux, riddled with "scary" stories. And this is exactly what attracts tourists to the Czech Republic: **history connected with tales.**





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