

GLASS PRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL CZECH CRAFT

Prague, 21.7.2011 Discover the luxury, quality and history of Czech glass! Czech glass is a byword for quality and tradition throughout the world and today it is considered to be one of the most valuable jewels belonging to our heritage. The first glass factories were founded in the Czech Republic as early as 13th century and the development and use of glass have expanded into all branches since that time. Glass is a symbol of purity and luxury - so come to the Czech Republic and see its magic with your own eyes!

History of Glass in the Czech Republic



The first glassworks were founded in the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century in the unspoilt forests by the borders of the Krušné, Lužické, Jizerské, Krkonoše and Šumava mountains as well as in the region of Moravia. From the 1350s the oldest Czech glass factories smelted an almost clear, yellowish or greenish potassium-lime glass that was used in the production of stained church windows, goblets and glasses at that time.

At the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, some Czech glassmakers and their products overshadowed Venetian glass, unmatched until that time. Bohemia produced small goblets, kettles and larger glasses as well as stained glass, very popular during the Renaissance period. In the town of Sázava in the 1830s František Kavalír smelted the first chemically resistant glass in the world .

In the early 20th century glass products made in Harrach's glassworks in Nový Svět or Moser's glassworks in Karlovy Vary, for instance, were of exceptional quality as well. The first Owens' automatic bottle-makers were installed in Bohemia and machine production of flat glass was launched at that time.

Cherchez la Femme!



One of the most beautiful branches of glass production is the production of glass jewellery: **bijouterie**. Bijouterie is as old as mankind and has remained an integral part even until today. *Cherchez la femme* - and her desire to be even more beautiful! The history of Czech bijouterie dates back to ancient times. The first producers of glass jewellery were the Celts, who focused on the production of glass pearls, beads and buttons. Later, as late as the 9th century, craftsmen from Great Moravia and western Slovakia took over. Bijouterie, as well as a wide range of glass products, is symbolised by the town of **Jablonec nad Nisou**. <http://www.msb-jablonec.cz/navstevnicke-informace/>, <http://www.mestojablonec.cz/>. The local museum hosts permanent, year-round exhibitions and offers a comprehensive list of glass jewellery exhibitions.

Journey to the World of Glass

You can see with your own eyes the many possibilities of glass use in the town of **Dobrá Voda u Hartmanic**, situated in the Klatovy region in the mountain range of Šumava. The local Saint Vintř church features a **glass altar**. The individual parts of the almost 5m wide and 3.5m high sculpture are connected with a stainless construction and the whole altar weighs some 7 tons. <http://www.jiznicechy.org/cz/index.php?path=kost/dobra3.htm>

The popularity of glass as a material very much used in the Czech Republic is proven by the establishment of the “**Glass Route**”, taking tourists around the sought-after region of Český ráj (“Czech Paradise”). <http://www.cesky-raj.info/cs/historie-a-pamatky/tematicke-stezky/sklarska-cesta.html>. “Glass Route” implies a journey to places bearing the glass-making tradition and the region of Český ráj, located in north-east Bohemia, is one of the richest regions producing glass and glass products in the Czech Republic.

A glass factory in the town of **Harrachov**, for instance, exhibits beautiful handicraft articles in its museum.

<http://www.sklarnaharrachov.cz/muzeum.php>. The Harrachov glassworks "**Novosad a syn**" (**Novosad and son**) can boast its primacy: the production of **the tallest glass**, measuring an incredible 106cm and registered in the Czech version of the Guinness Book of Records in 2008. Beer lovers will certainly be glad to have an opportunity to drink their favourite beverage from it in a local brewery, forming part of the glass museum. <http://www.sklarnaharrachov.cz/index.htm>

A large proportion of leading Czech aristocratic families throughout Europe had their homes decorated with magnificent cut glass chandeliers and glass sets. These filigree hand-made articles were produced by the glass factory situated in **Kamenický Šenov**. The local museum offers its visitors a permanent exhibition as well as short-term exhibitions of the history and current state of glass art <http://www.muzeumskla.cz/>, <http://www.kamenicky-senov.cz/>.

The most famous glass producer is the factory **Crystalex**, located in the town of **Nový Bor** <http://www.crystalex.cz/>

It ranks among the leading European producers of glass for home use, including plain as well as decorated glass. The articles made by the Nový Bor factory are known around the world under the "**Bohemia Crystal**" brand.

Private glassworks situated near the town of **Hluboká nad Vtavou** will introduce you to all of the glass-making processes you may be interested in. In addition, you can make your own glass product, be it a vase, Christmas tree decoration or a set of glass beads.

<http://www.youtube.com/visitczech#p/c/88E32A4BAB8A9092/17/yZUOT8Z0LdA>

Materials Used in Glass Production

The main ingredients in glass production are glass (melting) sands. These are grainy, mostly light-coloured to white rocks (silica sands or less solid limes) containing, apart from silica as the prevailing component, grains of other minerals: usually feldspars, micas and the so called heavy minerals (e.g. garnets, zircon, tourmaline, magnetite). Clay minerals (e.g. kaolinite) are usually used as binders. The largest and the most important Czech glass sand deposits are to be found in the Czech cretaceous basin. The Czech Republic is endowed with the best conditions for glass production and that is why our glass articles belong to the world's top-class production.

Czech Glass in the World



Production of quality Czech glass reaches well beyond Europe - for example in Japan, near Tokyo, tourists can visit the **Bohemia Glass Museum**. Cut crystal glass, bijouterie, utility glass and chandeliers rank among successful commodities in Japan.

Even the **largest and the most famous American glass museum**, situated in the state of New York, does not seem to have enough of Czech glass: it has already opened its third Czech glass exhibition only this year so you will be able to admire almost 500 Czech works of glass this summer.

http://www.rozhlas.cz/svet/portal/_zprava/176692

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