



PÍSEK TOP SIGHTS



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- Tourist information
- Transport connection search
 - Souvenir sales
 - Copying, scanning, printing
 - Public transport card top-ups
 - Electric bike battery charging
- Booking tours of the Písek's Tower
 - Sale of Tourist Guest Cards
- Rental of keys to the military cemetery



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DISCOVER PÍSEK...

A ROYAL TOWN

In 1243, King Wenceslas I dated one of his charters 'aput Pezch' – at or in Písek. King Přemysl Otakar II (1253–1278) established Písek as a fortified royal town with a castle. The place enjoyed the favours of subsequent rulers from the Přemyslid, Luxembourg, Poděbrad, Jagiellon, and Habsburg dynasties. The shield with the Czech lion in the town's coat of arms still symbolizes this royal heritage.

A MINING TOWN

One reason for founding the settlement that became Písek was the extraordinary wealth of gold deposits in the Otava River basin. From the late 13th century, gold panning was supplemented by deep mining. Mounds of panned material along riverbanks bear witness to the first method of gold extraction, while mine shafts in many locations still testify to the ancient mining tradition.

A HUSSITE TOWN

During the Hussite period, Písek sided with the Taborite faction and defied royal authority for over three decades. In August 1419, the Dominican monastery was plundered. A year later, the famous Hussite military leader Jan Žižka established his main camp here. Mikuláš of Pelhřimov, the only bishop of the Taborite clergy, had his permanent seat in Písek.

A REGIONAL CAPITAL

Since the High Middle Ages, Písek was the main town of the extensive Prácheň Region, named after the previous administrative center at Prácheň Castle near Horažďovice. After the mid-19th century, it was renamed the Písek Region. This important part of the Kingdom of Bohemia roughly covered the Otava River basin.

A TOWN ON THE OTAVA

The town of Písek is inseparably linked to the Otava River. Ancient Celts called it 'The Rich One' because of its gold-bearing sand and abundance of fish and pearl mussels. Písek is the largest settlement on the Otava, which was also called 'Písek's River'. The river's current also powered mills and floated timber rafts. Today, towns along the Otava cooperate on a tourism project called Otava.fun.

A TOWN IN A SEA OF FORESTS

Písek's forests, originally part of the royal domain, became town property in the early 16th century when Písek purchased the royal castle with its numerous estates. Among Czech towns, Písek owns by far the most forest land. The suburban sections have been transformed into landscaped forest parks with numerous trails offering active recreation in nature.

A TOWN OF SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

Building on the fame of 16th-century humanistic education, a gymnasium was established in 1778, a higher technical school in 1860, and later other secondary schools: agricultural school, girls' higher school, forestry school, business academy, technical school, and today also the Miroslav Ondříček Film Academy. The academic community significantly contributes to the town's intellectual character and atmosphere.

THE ATHENS OF SOUTH BOHEMIA

This nickname arose from both the developed educational system and Písek's overall cultural level, shaped by local institutions (1841 public library, 1884 museum), theatre and music societies, the tradition of local periodicals and the merits of individuals who lived and worked here (Adolf Heyduk, August Sedláček, Otakar Ševčík, and many others).

PENSIONOPOLIS

Since the late 19th century, Písek has attracted wealthy retirees as a pleasant place to spend their golden years. This nickname was further reinforced by numerous summer residences, guesthouses, and hotels. After 1989, the town underwent extensive renovations, and Písek is now considered one of the best places to live in the country – a comfort it gladly shares with visitors.



STONE BRIDGE

This medieval bridge is the oldest surviving one in the Czech Republic – even older than Prague’s famous Charles Bridge – and stands as a national cultural monument. Though we don’t know the exact years of its construction, stonemasons’ marks point to medieval craftsmen from the Písek-Zvíkov area and construction in the second half of the 13th century. This structure made of Vltava granite now rests on seven arches, measures approximately 110 meters in length, and is 6.25 meters wide. Originally, towers on both banks protected the bridge; the left-bank tower collapsed during a flood in 1768, while the other was demolished in 1825. The bridge features copies of Baroque sculptural groups – Calvary, St. John of Nepomuk with Angels, St. Anne with the Virgin and Child, and St. Anthony of Padua.

The bridge has survived numerous floods (including those in 1544, 1768, 1940, and 1954). In the 1950s, it was reinforced for potential military use, and extensive repairs in the 1990s helped preserve its structure before the devastating flood of 2002, the worst in modern Czech history. Colloquially called the ‘Old Bridge’ or ‘Deer Bridge’ (according to a legend about a deer that was the first to cross it), it now serves only pedestrians and is the venue for traditional events such as St. Martin’s Day celebrations.



SAND SCULPTURES

Every year, the Otava riverbank transforms into an open-air gallery of giant sand sculptures – a playful tribute to Písek’s golden past. The town was founded to protect the gold-bearing sand deposits in the Otava River (in fact, ‘Písek’ means ‘sand’ in Czech). This unique project began in 2007, when the first works were created on the riverbank below the Stone Bridge. Since then, the event has been held annually; artists work in May and the exhibition opens during the ‘Pískoviště’ Festival. Building one three-meter sculpture requires about 12 tons of fine sand; only water is added to the material. Thanks to compaction techniques and surface treatment, the sculptures can withstand changing weather once dried. Regular artists include Josef Faltus, Jiří Kašpar, and Marián Maršálek. Each year has its own theme – from fairy tales to anniversary chapters of the town’s history to contemporary motifs (e.g. 2007 Fairy Tales, 2013 Písek’s 770th Anniversary, 2024 Timber Rafting, 2025 Freedom). The project sees annual innovations such as sculpture lighting, storytelling, animations, and placement at various locations along both riverbanks. The exhibition is free to view and accessible 24/7 along the riverside promenade. It typically lasts until the beginning of Advent, unless the sculptures are affected by high water (as happened in 2013 and 2024, for example).

■ Otava River embankment in Čechova Street near the Stone Bridge



ROYAL CASTLE & PRÁCHEŇ MUSEUM

The founding of the town was accompanied by the construction of a royal residence by order of Přemysl Otakar II. Of the originally square structure with three towers, walls, and a moat, only the western wing with a defensive corridor above the Otava River survives today. The castle has belonged to the town since 1509. In the mid-19th century, it was saved from demolition, and since 1902 it has housed the Prácheň Museum, which documents regional history, nature, and traditions. The most visited exhibitions include the Gothic Knights' Hall with copies of frescoes from 1479, a section dedicated to gold processing and mining equipment showcasing the techniques used to extract gold from the Otava River, a lapidarium with original sculptures from the Stone Bridge, and aquariums featuring native fish species from the Otava River and surrounding waters. The gallery spaces host regular fine art exhibitions; the museum also organizes lectures and educational programs for schools. The exhibitions earned the European Museum of the Year Award in 1996; another renewal of the exhibitions is now being planned. A must-see for visitors interested in medieval history and regional culture, the castle offers a fascinating journey through centuries of South Bohemian heritage.

■ Velké náměstí 114 | www.prachenskemuzeum.cz



ADOLF HEYDUK MEMORIAL

The house of poet Adolf Heyduk in Tyršova Street is a memorial to one of the most prominent figures in Czech poetry. The Neo-Renaissance building from 1900, designed by Jan Koula, features striking sgraffito decoration with motifs of Pegasus and a singing swan, which refer to the literary legacy of the 'Otava Nightingale'. On the first floor, the almost intact interior of Heyduk's apartment has been preserved: a sitting room, dining room, and study with an extensive library. Among the curiosities of the tour is a painted porcelain toilet.

The house hosted many notable figures – most of the literati of the early 20th century and also President T. G. Masaryk. From his marriage to Emilie Reinerová, a woman 23 years his junior, two daughters were born, who sadly died at an early age. Mrs. Heyduková later bequeathed the house to the town, and since 1937 it has served as the poet's memorial. The building is owned by the Prácheň Museum; guided tours and literary events are held here. A planned reconstruction aims to ensure the protection of the preserved interiors.

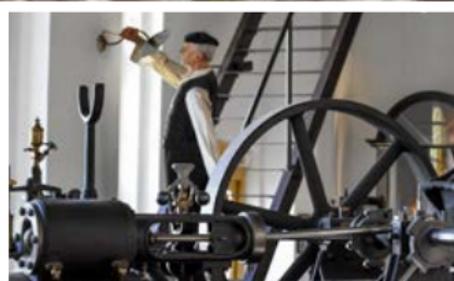
■ Tyršova 438 | www.prachenskemuzeum.cz



THE MALT HOUSE

The Malt House on the Otava River embankment dates from 1862–1864. Originally, townspeople produced malt here for local breweries; production ended in 1973, and the building then fell into disrepair for many years. After 2000, the town began transforming it into a unique ‘gallery through play’, a vibrant space full of art for children and their adults. Today it is the largest of its kind in the Czech Republic. In the spacious interiors, you’ll find interactive, experiential, and educational exhibitions. Among the permanent installations, the Anthill, Pilařiště, and Animarium stand out; other exhibitions change seasonally, inviting repeat visits. The Small Gallery hosts exhibitions of modern art with connections to the region. Throughout the building, art workshops, programs, and activities foster imagination and creativity. The Malt House is a member of the international Hands On! association and the New Network; in May it hosts the Pískoviště festival of children’s joy. Access to the exhibitions is possible through two passages the Velké Square. Programs run in time blocks; we recommend booking in advance. On the river side, a café with summer seating overlooking the Otava invites visitors to relax.

■ Velké náměstí 113 | www.sladovna.cz



THE MUNICIPAL POWER PLANT

The oldest publicly operating water power plant in Bohemia was created by converting the original Podskalský Mill. After a successful demonstration by František Křížík, who illuminated the center of Písek with arc lamps on June 23, 1887, three dynamos were installed in the building in 1888. Following a test period, the power plant was officially launched on August 31, 1888 – making Písek one of the first electrified towns in Central Europe. The original waterwheel drive was replaced in 1901 by two Francis turbines. The machinery has been protected as a cultural monument since 1991. After extensive reconstruction in the 1990s, the power plant resumed supplying electricity to the grid and from 1997 also functioned as a technical museum. Today, the building is awaiting further renovation, and guided tours with experts from the Prácheň Museum are occasionally organized for visitors. The town council has approved a revitalization project which aims to restore the complex to its appearance from the early 20th century. The proposed use of exhibition and cultural spaces encompasses the entire complex, including the building on the adjacent island below the weir.

■ V Podskalí 2537 | www.prachenskemuzeum.cz



TOWN WALLS & PUTIM GATE

When the town was founded, a continuous ring of fortifications with a moat was built; the western section was naturally protected by the Otava River. Three gates guarded by massive towers led into the town: Prague (or Lower) Gate by the bridge, Budějovice (or Upper) Gate on the opposite side, and Putim Gate in the southwestern part. For centuries the fortifications were maintained, but in the 19th century they lost their military purpose and were gradually demolished.

Visible remnants of the walls can be found along the promenade above the river, opposite the post office (a round bastion called 'Baba'), in Komenského Street, in Budovcova Street (a semicircular bastion), and in Bakaláře Piazza where the outline of the walls is marked in modern paving. The best-preserved section is in the southwest, where a Gothic moat has been made accessible and the Písek town flag in blue and yellow flies from a surviving bastion.

Unfortunately, the gate made famous by the nationalized student song 'When I Walked Through Putim Gate' no longer stands here – the tower above the gate disappeared as early as 1812, and the gate itself was demolished in 1836.



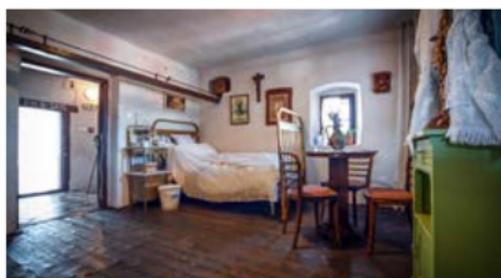


HOUSE SIGNS

In the Middle Ages, houses had no descriptive numbers – these appeared in Písek only after 1770. Instead, house signs served for orientation: painted motifs, sgraffito, sculptural reliefs, or actual objects attached to the façade. Signs recalled the owner's name, their trade, or an important event; they were often decorative and a matter of pride for the house's inhabitants.

Písek has preserved a considerable number of these monuments. A striking example is the sign of the House at the Elephant opposite the Stone Bridge – a classicist building from the early 19th century whose garden now hosts cultural events. On the Main Square you'll find the houses At the Golden Ship, At Saint Anne, At the Three Crowns, At the Golden Bell, and At the White Lion. Further examples are hidden in Drlíčov Street (At the White Lamb, At the Silver Denarii) and in Fráňa Šrámek Street, where among others you'll find the houses At the Golden Ball and At the Balls – both decorated with cannonballs found during the demolition of the Putim Gate.





CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY & PÍSEK'S TOWER

The early Gothic three-nave structure was built in the second half of the 13th century; its interior conceals Romanesque and Gothic wall paintings. After a fire in the 16th century, the gables on the northern side were redesigned in Renaissance style. Between 1741 and 1743, the Baroque Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk was added to the southern side, featuring a period veduta (townscape) of Písek and an exterior statue of the saint. Following architectural modifications by Josef Mocker at the end of the 19th century, the church is adorned with Neo-Gothic furnishings. In 1975, the Písek Madonna was stolen from a side altar – the original 14th-century work is now replaced by a replica of the town's patron image.

The church's monumental tower was built after 1489 by Master Mikuláš Písecký to serve as the town watchtower. Today's gallery and spire, reaching a height of 71 meters, date from 1757. The tower is open to the public – the climb of 210 steps leads past the bells and the tower keeper's dwelling with its clock mechanism and smoke kitchen to a gallery at approximately 42 meters, offering views of the town, Písek Hills, and Šumava Mountains (guided tours; reservation recommended).

■ Bakaláře | www.pisek.eu/vez



HOTEL DVOŘÁČEK

This monumental Neo-Renaissance building was constructed in 1899 on the site of medieval ramparts near the removed Upper Gate. At the turn of the century, it was the most luxurious accommodation in southern Bohemia. From 1907, the hotel housed the school of world-renowned violin pedagogue Otakar Ševčík. Originally bearing the ostentatious name 'Dvořáček's Hotel at Archduke Franz Ferdinand,' it was simplified to 'Hotel Dvořáček' after 1918 and renamed 'Interhotel Otava' between 1960 and 1994.

The façade between the first and second floors is decorated with a band of eleven sgraffiti depicting scenes from the history of the town and its surroundings, designed by national painter Mikoláš Aleš and executed by Josef Bosáček. Among the motifs you'll find gold panning on the Otava River, a knights' tournament from 1479, the Town Festival of 1744, and the scene 'Písek Students Greet Zvíkov Castle' – Aleš allegedly painted himself with his back turned toward the Písek schools where he hadn't excelled.



VELKÉ NÁMĚSTÍ: MONASTERY CHURCH & TOWN HALL

In the southwest corner of the main square, the **Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross** recalls the former Dominican monastery, which was burned down in 1419 by local Hussite radicals. After post-White Mountain restoration, it functioned again, but under Emperor Joseph II the monastery was definitively dissolved. The church façade is decorated with striking Renaissance sgraffito ornamentation from the 16th century; above the left portal is the Dominican coat of arms. After the monastery's dissolution and the opening of the church toward the square, its orientation was changed, so the Baroque main altar now faces west.

The **Town Hall** is a two-story Baroque building (1740–1767) with two towers; the town administration moved here from the castle. Above the façade is a tympanum with the town's coat of arms and allegorical statues of Justice, Strength, and Patience. From the balcony, where Písek town flags fly, the republic was inadvertently proclaimed as early as October 14, 1918. Every daytime hour, a carillon sounds from the town hall tower.

The Main Square is awaiting reconstruction that will modernize the public space.

■ Velké náměstí 114



ALŠOVO NÁMĚSTÍ & MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

The original medieval heart of the town features a square with a **Marian plague column** from 1715, surrounded by a mosaic of buildings from various epochs. A significant structure is the former **Citizens' Savings Bank** (1888–1889) with sgraffito decoration and paintings. Modern architecture is represented by the former knitwear industry store and the opposite savings bank.

The historicist section is represented by the expansive school building from 1857–1859 featuring attributes of education, a figure of Christ at the peak of the gable, and the motto 'Come here, son, learn to be wise'. After a two-year reconstruction, the modernized building became the new home of the **Písek Municipal Library** in April 2019, an institution with a tradition dating back to 1841. Architect Jan Svoboda utilized the original layout and yellow façade, while a concrete extension serves as offices and book storage. The lending spaces are designed in a modern style and also function as a community centre. Among the most significant changes is an enclosed courtyard with a relaxation garden, outdoor stage, and terrace by the café and lecture hall. The library is conceived as a living space where town visitors are also welcome.

■ Alšovo náměstí 75 | www.knih-pi.cz



ENJOY THE ART

The 'Enjoy the Art in Písek' circuit transforms the town into an open-air gallery. On the left bank of the Otava River near Podskalský Weir, you'll find the sculpture 'Waiting for the Silver Wind,' commemorating writer Fráňa Šrámek. By the Church of the Holy Trinity stand stone sculptures including the photogenic 'Window' and a seating area dedicated to violinist Otakar Ševčík. In 2025, the project was enriched with school sidewalk art on the theme of 'Freedom'. Further on at the Exhibition Grounds, you'll discover a 'lost' bench, and in front of the Stone Bridge, a poetry dispenser. Each year, the project is enlivened by innovative giant sand sculptures on the riverbank and occasionally on the promenade on the opposite shore. Between the Stone Bridge and the former municipal power plant, the route is complemented by a drinking fountain donated by the Rotary Club and a bench inspired by František Křížik with a small figurine that entices passersby to look up at the historic lamp. The circuit installations are continuously expanding; information can be found in the current leaflet or in the Smart Guide digital guide. The easy route offers rest stops, refreshments, and photogenic backdrops.





MUNICIPAL ISLAND

The island was formed by sand deposits before a great river bend, and its public use is intertwined with rich history: as early as 1814, sharpshooters had a shooting range here with a dance hall and tavern, in the rainy summer of 1852 a theatrical company led by J. K. Tyl performed here at a loss, and in the mid-19th century, river baths and a municipal swimming area were established. The town became the island's owner in 1876. Access was long provided by two wooden footbridges that were dismantled each winter and rebuilt in spring. Only in 1929 was an iron footbridge with concrete pillars constructed.

A recreational restaurant opened in May 1890, and the island experienced lively activity until the mid-20th century. On the site of a fire-destroyed building, a replica half-timbered structure was built, and the island reopened in 1996. After the devastating flood of 2002, rapid restoration followed, and since 2018, a design restaurant facility offering Dudák brewery beers has been open here, including a year-round restaurant and accommodation. The site also offers children's playgrounds and romantic views of Písek.

■ www.restauraceostrovpipek.cz



JEWISH HERITAGE

In the centre of Písek, between Smetanova and Soukenická streets, stands a pseudo-Romanesque **synagogue** with elements inspired by Moorish architecture, dating from 1872. In the post-war period, it served as a warehouse; in 1995, it was returned to the Jewish Community in Prague. It is now undergoing gradual reconstruction and is occasionally open to the public.

Outside the town, a **Jewish cemetery** was established in 1879, which suffered serious damage during the 20th century, was restored in the 1990s, and today serves as a memorial site. Among those buried here were Kamila Stösslová, muse of composer Leoš Janáček, and poet Richard Weiner, whose remains were later transferred to Písek's Forest Cemetery. The grounds are freely accessible to the public.

The town also bears the memory of Holocaust victims in its streets: since 2019, 22 '**stolpersteins**' (stumbling stones) have been laid in front of victims' homes, found for example on Velké náměstí (Main Square) and in Heydukova, Smetanova, Jungmannova, Prokopova, and Žižkova streets. At the entrance to the park from Nerudova Street, a **Linden Tree for Holocaust Victims** has grown since 2018.





PALACKÉHO GARDENS & HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL PARK

In the town centre, there are two green oases where nature intertwines with history.

Palackého Gardens were created in the 19th century by filling in the town's defensive moat; remnants of fortifications and the 'Baba' bastion recall the old fortifications. The park is adorned with the Empire-style Schrenk Pavilion, a meteorological column, and several monuments. In the central part stands the Fráňa Šrámek Theatre with its allegorical sculptures; various events take place in the adjacent space in front of the music pavilion called the 'shell'. The promenade is lined with trees – massive oaks, memorial lindens, and others – offering a pleasant place for gathering and relaxation. In the park, you'll also find numerous dining establishments; among them, Restaurant 'U Reinerů' stands out with its tradition dating back to 1844.

On the opposite riverbank, on the site of a former cemetery, lies the **Memorial Park** with preserved tombstones of notable figures and original boundary chapels. The local Church of the Holy Trinity from the 16th century now serves as a venue for concerts and ceremonial events.



DAGMAR ŠIMKOVÁ FOOTBRIDGE

The footbridge, designed by Písek native Josef Pleskot, was completed in autumn 2018. The technical solution combines elements of both suspension and cable-stayed construction. The architectural concept works with the motif of 'two arrows': approaching from opposite banks, they meet and pass on the bridge. The angular structure, 140 meters long, serves pedestrians and cyclists. On both sides, it connects to improved sections of cycle paths and sidewalks totaling approximately 1.5 km in length. It thus newly links the Hradiště and Václavské předměstí districts with the town centre and the industrial zone.

The structure bears the name of Dagmar Šimková, a woman imprisoned by the communist regime – nearby stands Villa Marta, connected with the fate of the Šimek family. Behind the villa is a local curiosity: an artificial ski slope. Further along, past the camping, a path leads to the U Smetáka excursion restaurant and along sports trails to Ševčík's Pavilion in a bend of the river. In close proximity to the footbridge on the left bank, you'll find a modern children's traffic playground; upstream on this side are a First Republic-era river swimming area and two via ferratas.





NATIONAL STUD FARM

The first stud farm for breeding horses for military needs was established in the early 19th century closer to the town centre. A century later, it no longer met requirements, and in 1902 a new complex was built in open countryside beyond the urban area. The complex comprised 32 buildings, including the main building and stables, as well as an indoor riding arena, smithy, and others, covering an area of 4.6 hectares. The austere yet elegant complex with unplastered red brick masonry, inspired by North German brick Gothic with decorative elements of Baroque and Art Nouveau, is an example of late Historicism.

The stud farm continued operations even during the turbulent periods of the 20th century and has long supplied breeding stallions. Today, the stud farm combines functional breeding with the preservation and presentation of historic spaces. In the large courtyard stands a bronze model of the breeding stallion Ardo, designed by sculptor Myslbek; this horse served the artist as a model when working on the equestrian statue for Wenceslas Square in Prague. Since 2010, the complex has been registered as a national cultural monument and offers regular guided tours, equestrian shows, and seasonal events for the public and professionals alike.

■ U Hřebčince 479 | www.zemskyhrebcecpisek.cz



ALONG THE OTAVA RIVER VALLEY

Along the gold-bearing Otava River, you can hike from Písek in both directions on marked hiking and cycling trails. Within the town itself, eight bridges and footbridges span the river, allowing you to create your own route according to your preferences and fitness level.

Upstream along the Otava, head along 'Smeták' (a local outing tavern) via the trail to Zátavský Bridge and onward to the confluence with the Blanice River and the picturesque village of Putim.

Downstream, you can head toward Jiráskovo Embankment, where you'll find several unconventional playgrounds – a parkour course, pump track, barefoot walking path, an original children's playground made from living willow, and a marble run with hand-shaped tracks and a slide. Continue to the popular recreation spot 'U Sulana', and a few kilometers further to the 'gas pipeline' footbridge, which offers another crossing point over the river.



The riverbanks are also lined in places with rocks popular among rock climbers, and via ferratas can be found here as well. The river is also used for various types of water sports.



PÍSEK HIGHLANDS

'Písek – a town in a sea of forests' – this slogan aptly captures the charm of the connection between the historic settlement and the forests of the Písek Highlands. This belt of forested hills stretches approximately 15 km southeast from the town to the Vltava River. Once a royal hunting ground and later a source of timber for Prague's construction projects, the area also conceals traces of its gold-mining past; it was precisely this mining activity that gave the upland its name 'Písek Mountains'. The highest point is Velký Mehelník (633 m above sea level) with the legendary 'Robbers' Table', where recent clearing has opened up views toward the Šumava Mountains.

Local forests are owned by the town of Písek and serve both economic and recreational purposes. They offer a network of marked hiking and cycling trails, nature trails, a mouflon enclosure, and attractive destinations such as the Živec tourist chalet with its rope park, or the year-round Jarník observation tower. In the picturesque valley above Logry, you'll find the 'U Malířských' outing tavern.



Parking is available at several starting points ('U Vodáka', near the forest management headquarters, etc.). During summer weekends, the area is served by a municipal bus line.



- 1 STONE BRIDGE
- 2 SAND SCULPTURES
- 3 ROYAL CASTLE & PRÁCHEŇ MUSEUM
- 4 ADOLF HEYDUK MEMORIAL
- 5 THE MALT HOUSE
- 6 THE MUNICIPAL POWER PLANT
- 7 TOWN WALLS & PUTIM GATE
- 8 HOUSE SIGNS
- 9 CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY & PÍSEK'S TOWER
- 10 HOTEL DVOŘÁČEK



- 11** VELKÉ NÁMĚSTÍ: MONASTERY CHURCH & TOWN HALL
12 ALŠOVO NÁMĚSTÍ & MUNICIPAL LIBRARY
13 ENJOY THE ART
14 MUNICIPAL ISLAND
15 JEWISH HERITAGE
16 PALACKÉHO GARDENS & HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL PARK
17 DAGMAR ŠIMKOVÁ FOOTBRIDGE
18 NATIONAL STUD FARM
19 ALONG THE OTAVA RIVER VALLEY
20 PÍSEK HIGHLANDS



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Publisher: Town of Písek, Velké náměstí 114, 397 01 Písek
Texts: Town of Písek, Department of Education and Culture
Photos: <https://mediabanka.piseckem.cz/>
Graphic design: Píseckem, s.r.o.
Print: fronte s. r. o.

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Subject to change
Not for sale

ISBN: 978-80-908298-0-0