

North Moravia



To lazily pay heed to the reputation endured by North Moravia, you'd assume (wrongly) that the region is a shabby grab bag of industry and mining, all isolated by the tyranny of distance from the interest and influence of faraway Prague. And while some areas do retain a distinct grittiness, there's simply too much of interest to give the region the travellers' cold shoulder.

The glorious cityscape of Olomouc (possibly Central Europe's most underrated), hosts an urbane population inspired by a lively influx of students. Thanks to a profound lack of tourists, Olomouc provides the truest sense of what Prague would be like without the crowds: in a word, fabulous. Contrasting with the city's lively present and future is a fascinating and ancient ecclesiastical history that is unmissable.

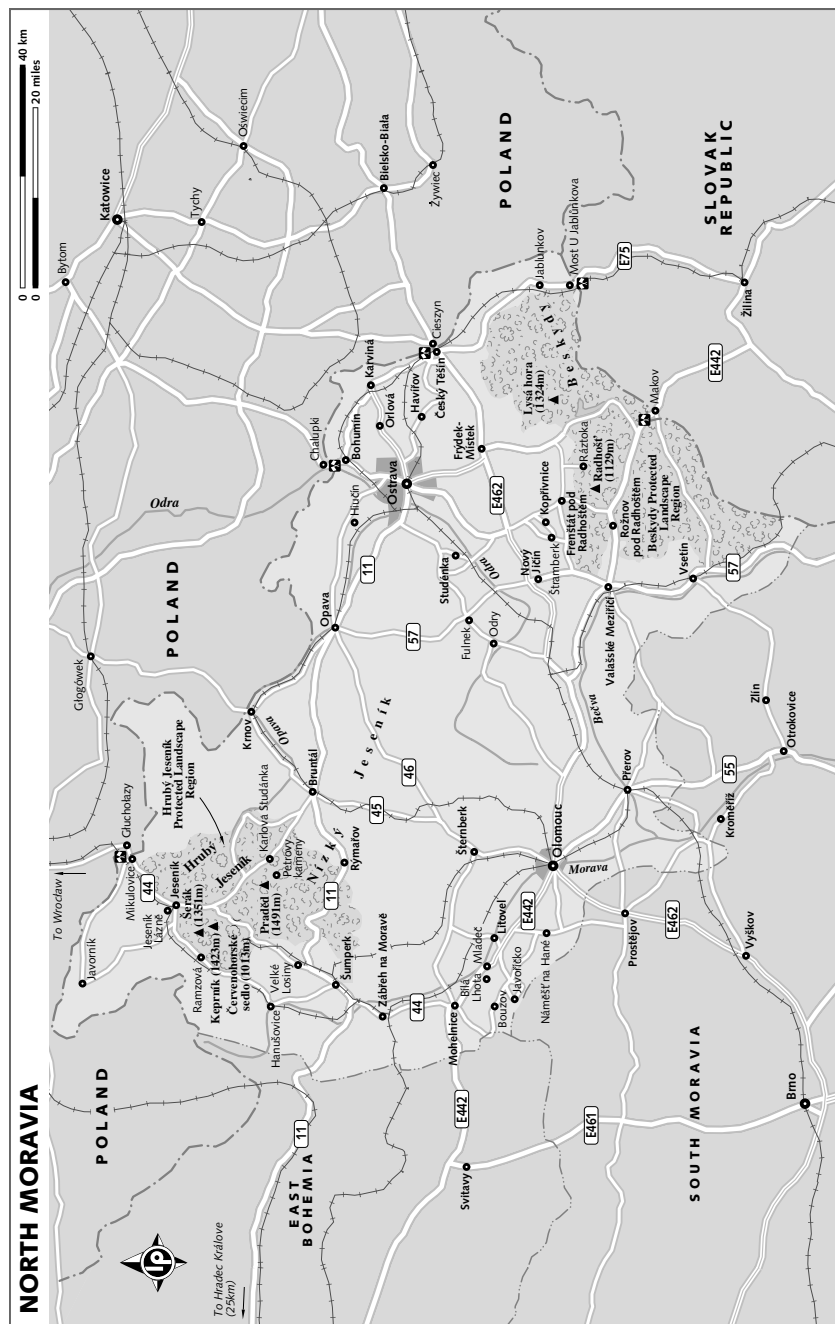
In the looming northern steel town of Ostrava a proud industrial heritage is being reborn with the energy of the 21st century. On the weekend crowds gather in one of the country's biggest party scenes, which can get a tad crazy – who says Moravians are reserved? There's more celebration of industry at the fascinating Tatra museum in Kopřivnice.

Outside of the cosmopolitan 'double-O' axis of Ostrava and Olomouc, the rugged Jeseník Mountains (Nízký Jeseník) bordering Poland contain pretty spa towns and some fine opportunities for hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing. The terrain is lower in the Beskydy mountains bordering Slovakia, but there's nothing second-fiddle about the traditional architecture and interesting Wallachian culture surrounding Štramberk and Rožnov pod Radhoštěm.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the stunning **Holy Trinity column** (p271) in Olomouc, the country's most underrated city
- Catch the quirky midday display of Olomouc's proletarian **astronomical clock** (p269)
- Discover the rustic past amid the traditional wooden buildings of **Štramberk** (p280) and Rožnov pod Radhoštěm's **Wallachian open-air museum** (p289)
- Party hard in the raucous bars and clubs of Ostrava's notorious **Stodolní ulice** (p279)
- Relax and recharge in the delightfully wooded spa town of **Jeseník Lázně** (p275)





OLOMOUC

pop 105,000

As countless tourists embrace the overt charms of Prague and Český Krumlov, Olomouc (*Olla*-moats) exudes a subdued appeal, emerging as the travellers' equivalent of a special restaurant that is your own little secret. An old town square rivalling that in Prague for scale and beauty, combines with the youthful vivacity of a modern student town amid the graceful campus of the country's second oldest university. Some of Moravia's most impressive religious structures play host to a thrilling history, and a youthful population looks to the future with a quiet confidence. And, with tourist numbers at a mere trickle, Olomouc is one of the Czech Republic's best-value cities.

History

Legend has it that Olomouc was founded by Julius Caesar. It later became a major seat of administrative power when Moravia and Bohemia were united in the 11th century, then a bishopric in 1063. Olomouc has the bearing of a capital city, and was the Moravian capital from the 12th century until it was occupied and looted by Swedish troops between 1642 and 1650. It has been the seat of the metropolitan archbishop of Moravia since 1777. Industrialisation passed it by until well into the 20th century.

Orientation

The main train station (*hlavní nádraží*) is 2km east of the old town, over the Morava river and its tributary the Bystrice (take tram 1, 2, 5 or 6 heading west). The bus station is 1km further east (take tram 4 or 5).

The old town is around the two linked squares of Horní (Upper) and Dolní (Lower) náměstí. The eastern part of the old town, with the Přemysl palace and the university, lies along narrow Ostružnická and třída 1.máje.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Tycho (☎ 585 225 095; Ostružnická 3) A good source of maps.

EMERGENCY

Foreigners' police (Cizinecká policie; ☎ 585 223 333; Smetanova 14) In the police building, near the train station.

INTERNET ACCESS

Both of these options provide internet and Skype at 1Kč per minute.

ISiC Net (třída 1 Máje 12; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10am Sat & Sun) 50% discount for student card-holders.

Internet U Martina (Ostružnická 29; ☎ 9am-midnight)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital (Nemocnice; ☎ 585 851 111; Pavlova 6) South of the centre, on tram routes 1, 4 and 6.

MONEY

Česká spořitelna (Horní nám 17) ATM and exchange counter.

KB (třída Svobody) ATM and exchange counter.

ČSOB (Dolní nám 28-9)

POST

Main post office (Nám Republiky) There is another branch on Horní nám.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Beristo is a free bi-monthly events guide available in bars and clubs. It's in Czech, but the club and cinema listings are useful. *DDD* magazine is similar and available from bookshops for 10Kč.

Main tourist information office (Olomoucká informační služba; www.olomouc-tourism.cz) town hall (☎ 585 513 385; Horní nám; ☎ 9am-7pm); train station (☎ 585 785 620; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Sells maps and makes accommodation bookings. Both branches sell the Olomouc Card (3/5 days 160/340Kč), which includes free entry to sights and discounts at hotels. If you're only staying a few days, you may not get value from the card.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Čedok (☎ 582 228 831; Nám Národních Hrdinů 4;

☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Books train, plane and bus tickets and helps with accommodation.

CKM (☎ 585 222 148; www.ckmolomouc.cz; Denisova 4; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Books travel tickets, sells ISiC and HI cards, and advises on budget accommodation.

Sights & Activities

HORNÍ NÁMĚSTÍ & AROUND

The splendid, polymorphous **town hall** (*radnice*) in the middle of the square was built in 1378, though its present architectural style and needlelike **tower** (věž; admission 15Kč; ☎ tours 11am & 3pm Mar-Oct) date from 1607. Note the **oriel window** of the 15th-century chapel on the south side and don't miss the **astronomical clock** on the north side, remodelled in communist