

LITOMYŠL

The East Bohemian town of Litomyšl emerged in the 13th century on the site of an older fortified settlement on the Trstenice path - an important trading route linking Bohemia and Moravia.

The dominant feature of Litomyšl is the monumental Renaissance castle dating from the years 1568 - 1581. The buildings of the castle precincts are not only exceptional for their architectural refinement, but have also inscribed themselves in history as the birthplace of the Czech national composer, Bedřich Smetana. On the elongated square, which is one of the largest in the Czech Republic, stand a town hall of Gothic origin and a series of renaissance and baroque houses, many with arcades and vaulted ground floor rooms. One of the most important of these is the House "At the Knights" (U Rytířů) with its remarkable facade. In the past the town was also a significant religious centre; it was in Litomyšl in 1344 that the second bishopric to be established in Bohemia was founded.

The cultural traditions of the town go much beyond regional and national frontiers. The exquisite interiors of the castle, especially the baroque castle theatre, the amphitheatre in the castle park and Smetanas' house, all offer varied programmes of concerts and theatrical performances and thus enrich the life of the town throughout the year. Litomyšl came to public notice in a political context as well: in 1994 the meeting of the seven Central European presidents took place at the castle, and in 1995 the Spanish royal couple visited the town. The chateau complex was included in the UNESCO List of cultural monuments 1999. Litomyšl was awarded "Historical Town of the year 2000".

Modern architecture

Aside from the important historic monuments in Litomyšl, those interested in architecture can also find interesting and high-quality examples of architecture from the 20th century. The development of the city following the establishment of Czechoslovakia brought with it the development of new city suburbs (especially the Masaryk quarter). After the Second World War most of the new buildings had the negative features of architecture of the period - they had a lack of invention, and were often highly insensitive to their historic surroundings (housing estate behind Komenský Square, Hotel Dalibor, I/35 road). Further buildings of quality were mainly added during the 1990's.

Architecture before the Second World War

Modern architecture began to change the face of the city during the second half of the 19th century, when office buildings were built (post office (1858), district court on today's Ropkova Street (1865-67), and the hospital (1872-74)). At the beginning of the 20th century the most important building was probably Smetanův dům, and the neighbouring school for girls (D. Hnídek, builder J. Kreml, 1906), which replaced the old mill and tower. The opening of the Lidový dům (community hall) was also an important event for the city.

Over the course of the next few years, building work was carried out especially in the new Masaryk Quarter. The dominant feature in the quarter was the new grammar school (Prof. Ausobský, builder F. Rudolf, 1922-23), which was gradually surrounded by other buildings (district office). The industrial school was built in modern style (J. Tymich, builder F. Čtrnactý, 1929). New buildings also appeared in other parts of the city (Sokol hall in the Fügner Quarter, 1925), the number of which grew rapidly due to the construction of new detached villas.

Architecture of the 1990's

During the final decade of the 20th century several examples of high-quality modern architecture appeared. A tender process is carried out when drawing up projects for new buildings, involving the best architects in the country.

New primary schools have been built (III. ZŠ according to the plans of the Brno Burian-Křivinka architect's office), and the School of Restoration and Red Tower have been restored (M. Hulec). The number of sporting facilities has grown with the addition of the city sports hall by the III. ZS (Burian-Křivinka) and the tennis and squash hall (P. Hrůša, P. Pelčák).

New housing is of course being built - a new residential quarter near the hospital has been constructed, as has a new apartment block (M. Rudiš, V. Rudiš; a new block is being built to the plans of J. Pleskot).

Alterations to the heart of the city are taking place in a modern, yet sensitive to the historic nature of the surroundings, spirit - replacement of the paving stones on Smetanovo náměstí and Toulcovo náměstí and the surrounding streets, the "equestrian steps" by the church (all Burian-Křivinka) or the new alleyway under the castle (Z. Vydrová). The most imposing building work of this type has been the work on the monastery gardens.