



Treasures of Moravia

Great houses and gardens in the heart of Europe

13-20 June 2025 (ML 706)

£4,080 • 8 days

Speaker: Martina Hinks-Edwards

A little-known corner of Central Europe with a fascinating architectural patrimony and enchanting landscapes.

Unspoilt historic towns, Renaissance palaces, extraordinary Baroque palaces and churches.

Several UNESCO World Heritage sites, including Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat, and newly restored chateaux and gardens.

For a couple of decades in the ninth century the Great Moravian Empire encompassed not only Czech and Slovak lands but also parts of what are now Austria, Hungary and Poland. This agglomeration of territories rapidly disintegrated, and neighbouring Bohemia began to take shape and take priority.

Ever since then Moravia has been the lesser member in an enduring partnership with Bohemia. Yoked together, they fell together under Habsburg suzerainty in 1526, emerged together in 1918 to form (with Slovakia) the new Czechoslovakia, and stayed together in 1993 to form the Czech Republic (shorn of Slovakia).

It may have been politically provincial but it was a prosperous area and quite close to the chief metropolis of Central Europe, Vienna. Its rich architectural and artistic patrimony includes fine Renaissance country houses, outstanding Baroque palaces and churches, bizarre buildings by Jan Santini-Aichel, historic gardens both formal and landscaped, galleries of fine and decorative art, and much beautiful streetscape in towns and villages. The rolling landscape and craggy hills of South Moravia are also known for producing the finest wines in the Czech Republic.

Moravia gets better every year. Architectural conservation proceeds apace, hotels and restaurants are improving, and more and more museums and historic buildings are refurbished and restored to their former glory. In spite of these developments Moravia is much less on the tourist track than Bohemia and remains fairly unspoilt.

Itinerary

Day 1: Třešť. Fly mid-morning from London Heathrow to Prague and drive south into Moravia. First of two nights in Třešť.



Lednice, after Josef Vaic (1884–1961).

Day 2: Vranov nad Dyjí, Uherčice. Perched high above a gorge close to the Austrian border, the great oval Hall of Ancestors (1688) at Vranov is one of the most impressive Baroque creations in Central Europe, the work of the greatest architect and painter in the region at the time, Fischer von Erlach. The Renaissance chateau in Uherčice, recently restored after decades of neglect during the Communist era, features unique stucco decoration in its Oval Hall, created by Baldassare Fontana. Visit also the grand Banquet Hall, famed for its impressive acoustics and excellent wall paintings.

Day 3: Telč, Lednice. Telč is a tiny town with the loveliest square in the Czech Lands, lined with Renaissance and Baroque façades above a meandering Gothic arcade. The castle here was extended in stages during the 16th century with a series of halls of brilliant, eccentric decoration around elegant, arcaded courtyards; a jewel of the Northern Renaissance. Further south, on a vast estate straddling the Austrian border once owned by the Liechtensteins – the richest magnates in the Habsburg Empire – Lednice has a superbly crafted Gothic Revival mansion,

magnificent Baroque stables by Fischer von Erlach and a landscaped park dotted with architectural follies. Overnight in Lednice.

Day 4: Valtice, Brno. Valtice, the wine capital of Moravia, is also home to perhaps the grandest of the Baroque country houses in the Czech lands, serving as the main seat of the Liechtensteins until 1945. The palace contains one of the most sumptuous interiors in Moravia – a unique chapel by Antonio Beduzzi (1726). Visit also the marble-lined Spanish stables, the vast Winter Riding Hall and the painstakingly accurate reconstruction of an 18th-century theatre complete with authentic stage machinery. Continue to Brno, the second largest Czech city and present capital of Moravia. First of four nights in Brno.

Day 5: Brno. Morning visit to Villa Tugendhat (subject to final confirmation), a superb house by modernist architects Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich. Free afternoon or an optional walk through the core of Brno. One of the loveliest and most interesting cities in the former Habsburg Empire, Brno is a showcase for historic buildings of many centuries and

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continued

scene of a rich cultural life.

Day 6: Bučovice, Kroměříž. Bučovice has a splendid Renaissance mansion with arcaded courtyard and stucco interiors of a quality virtually without equal in northern Europe. Continue on to the Bishop's Palace at Kroměříž to see the magnificent Rococo hall and fine art collection, including works by Titian, van Dyck and Jan Brueghel the Elder. The 17th-century Flower Garden, with its central pavilion and immense colonnade, is an astounding survival.

Day 7: Pernštejn, Lysice. First documented in 1285, the Gothic-Renaissance Pernštejn Castle stands as one of the best-preserved medieval castles in the Czech Republic. Visit the entrance hall with its remarkable diamond vault, the Knights' Hall, and the newly restored terraced garden dating back to the early 19th century. The chateau at Lysice combines a Baroque exterior with primarily 19th-century interiors, including a Neo-Renaissance library. The chateau garden, which reopened in 2024 after extensive renovation, has an orangery, a historic fighouse with an 1880s sliding roof, and a spectacular garden colonnade.

Day 8: Žďár nad Sázavou. Drive to the pilgrimage church of St John Nepomuk (1722), a Baroque-Gothic creation by the maverick architect Santini-Aichel and among the most bizarre and fascinating buildings of the 18th century. Continue to Prague for the flight to Heathrow, arriving early evening.

Lecturer

Martina Hinks-Edwards studied English at Charles University, Prague. She began working for MRT while still studying, firstly as an interpreter for groups visiting the Czech Republic, and from 2004 as a tour leader with a wide breadth of knowledge of the country's cultural history. She has led tours throughout the Czech Republic and has a particular interest in 20th-century Czech history and architecture. The countless accolades she has received over the years from her clients, is a reflection of her energy and enthusiasm for the job.

Practicalities

Price. Two sharing: £4,080 or £3,820 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,430 or £4,170 without flights.

Included: Air travel (Euro Traveller) on scheduled British Airways flights (Airbus A320 & A319); travel by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 6 lunches (including 1 packed lunch) and 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and local tour manager.

Accommodation. Chateau Hotel, Třešť (zamek-trest.cz): an adequate and well-located conference hotel set in a converted chateau. **Hotel Galant, Lednice** (galant.cz): a 4-star hotel conveniently situated next to Lednice Castle. Décor and furnishings are dated but adequate. **Hotel Grandezza, Brno** (grandezzahotel.com): a 5-star hotel located in the heart of Brno's historic centre, The Cabbage Market. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking on this tour, some of it up slopes or up steps. To be able to enjoy the tour it would be essential to manage daily walking and stair-climbing without any difficulties. There is also a fair amount of driving. Average distance by coach per day: 82 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Connoisseur's Vienna*, 23–29 June 2025.