

cultural kilometers

- a heritage roadtrip trough eastern europe





Servus! We are Frieda and Moritz, two students from Bamberg, and we invite you to join us on our heritage-inspired road trip through World Heritage Cities in Eastern Europe. Our route led us to well-known capitals as well as several hidden gems that were unfamiliar not only to us but also to most people we spoke to - yet each proved unquestionably worth a visit.

We chose “**cultural kilometers**” as the motto of our trip, reflecting the long distances we covered to explore each of the World Heritage Cities on our route.

In this brochure, we present our travel impressions alongside the key criteria that justified the World Heritage inscription of each city. Along the way, we also made a number of spontaneous detours to additional World Heritage Sites - from architecture to natural environments, discovering how diverse and multilayered the cultural landscapes of Eastern Europe truly are.

This collection offers an accessible overview of the cities we explored, the heritage that shapes them, and the moments that defined our journey.



9 cities. 5 countries. 3 side quests. 14 days. 2.068 km.



bamberg

kick-off 29.09.2025

We are starting our journey in Bamberg, the Franconian Rome and home of smoked beer. The both of us came to Bamberg to study and chose this beautiful city in part because of the reputation that precedes it. The City is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and OWHC-Member, because its historic city center has been perfectly preserved since the Middle Ages, showcasing a unique blend of medieval and baroque architecture. The town's layout and buildings reflect how a European city developed over centuries without losing its original charm.

seen sights

Old town hall, new residence, Bamberg Cathedral, Rose Garden, Little Venice, Alte Hofhaltung, zentrum welt-erbe,



What makes it so special for us is not just the heritage and architecture, but the atmosphere: lively and welcoming, yet cozy enough to feel like home. It's the kind of place where you can study and live — all while knowing that many people travel here just to experience

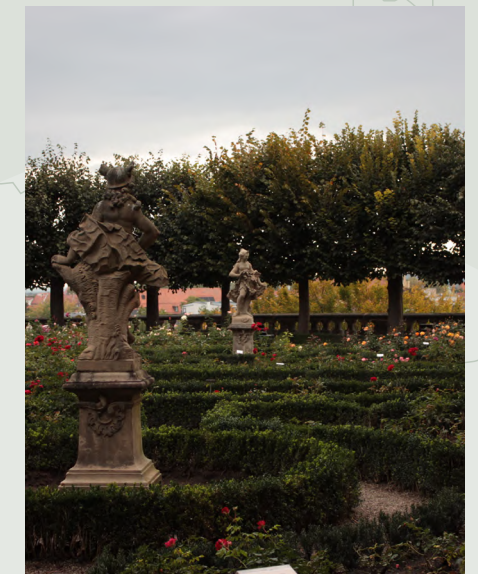
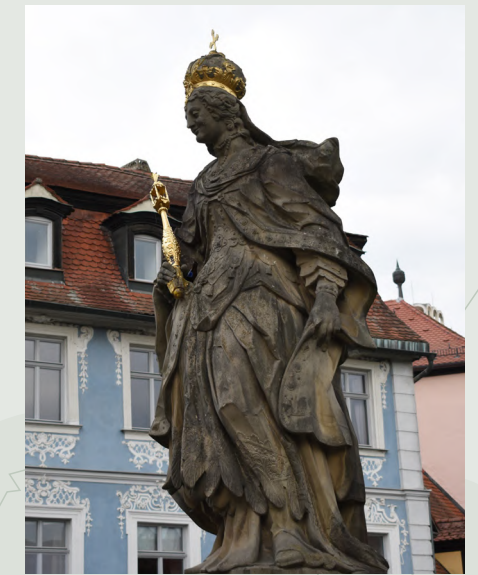
a fraction of what's right outside your door. Just the feeling of taking a refreshing dip in the Hainbad — the beloved river swimming area in the Regnitz — between summer lectures or after work gives you the carefree sensation of being on vacation.



criterion (ii): the layout and architecture of the Bamberg quarters dating to the Middle Ages and Renaissance has exerted a considerable influence on urban form and its evolution in Central Europe from the 11th century.

Criterion (iv): Bamberg is a remarkable and representative example of a city of the early Middle Ages in Central Europe because of both its plan and the large number of religious and secular buildings that it has conserved.

<https://www.ovpm.org/city/bamberg-germany/>
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/624/>





prague

30.09.-02.10.2025

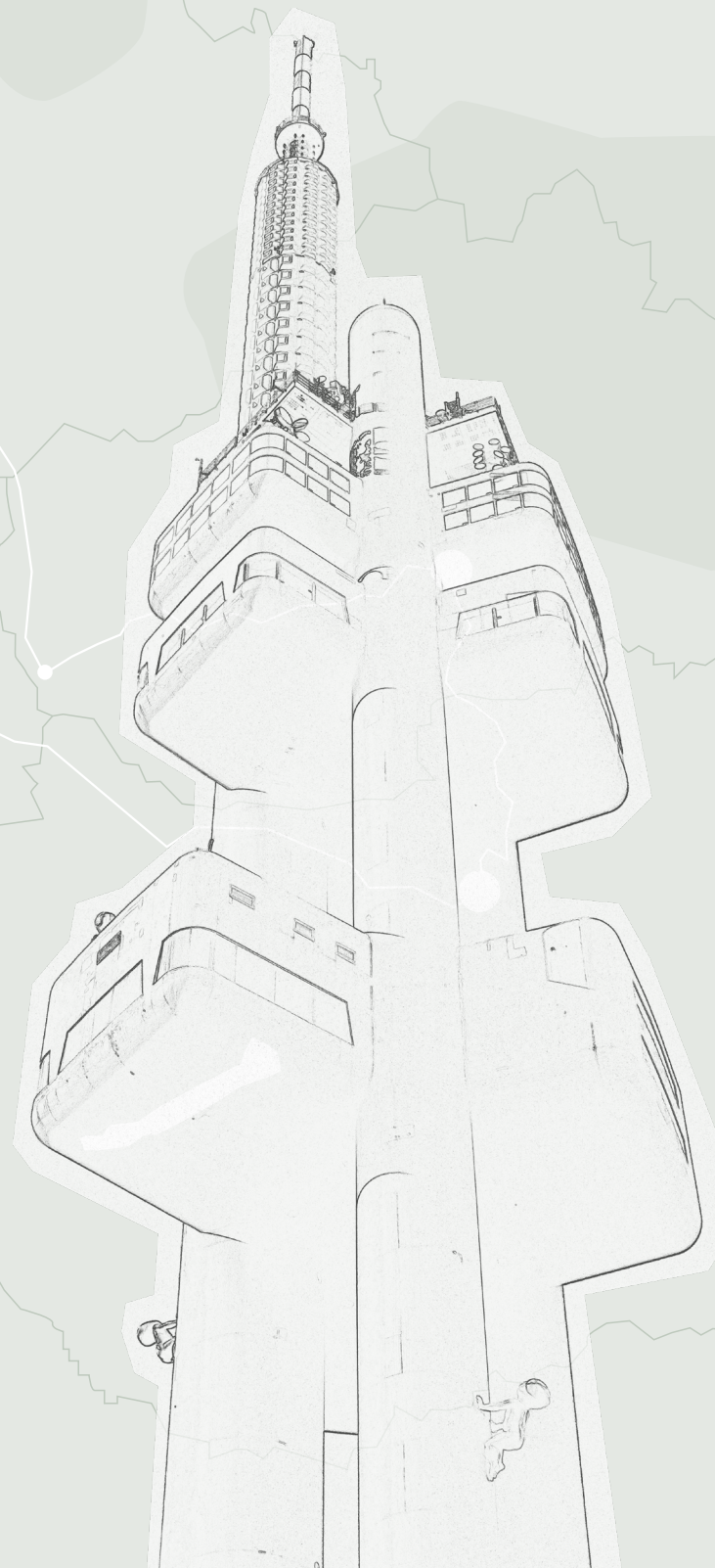
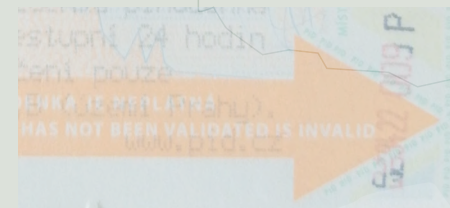
seen sights

Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, Astronomical Clock, Old Town Square, Dancing house, the powder tower, Vitkov, Žižkov Television Tower, Riegrovy Sady, Vyšehrad, historic center

Criterion (iv): Prague is an urban architectural ensemble of outstanding quality, in terms of both its individual monuments and its townscape, and one that is deservedly world-famous.

Criterion (vi): The role of Prague in the medieval development of Christianity in Central Europe was an outstanding one, as was its formative influence in the evolution of towns. By virtue of its political significance in the later Middle Ages and later, it attracted architects and artists from all over Europe, who contributed to its wealth of architectural and artistic treasures. [...] Since the reign of Charles IV, Prague has been intellectual and cultural centre of its region, and is indelibly associated with such world-famous names as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Kafka.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/616>

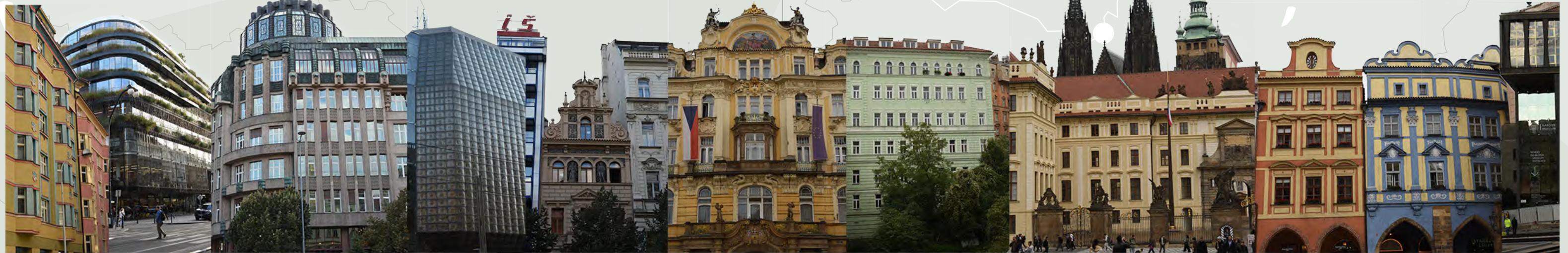


The city of many towers and ice-cream-colored houses

Prague impresses not least with its excellent Czech beer: The Czech capital is a UNESCO World Heritage Site because its historic center has been remarkably preserved, with a stunning mix of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture. The city reflects more than a thousand years of cultural and architectural development, from Prague Castle and Charles Bridge to the Old Town

Square, making it one of Europe's most beautiful and historically significant urban landscapes. We weren't only impressed by this part of Prague — we were just as captivated by the breathtaking views from other districts, such as the National Monument at Vitkov, Vyšehrad, and Riegrovy Sady, where the gaze is always drawn back toward the historic heart of the city.

As we wandered through the streets without any real plan, we were fascinated by the variety of façades: from painted walls, stucco details, glass and metal elements to the countless shades of color — from woodruff green, mint, and pistachio to cappuccino brown, strawberry pink, mango yellow, and apricot orange.

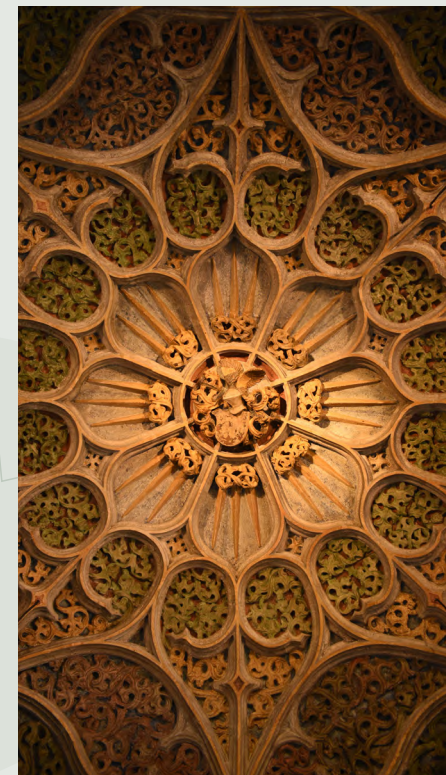


kutná hora.

02.10.2025

seen sights

St. Barbara's Cathedral, Sedlec Cathedral, Stone House, Italian Court, Gothic stone fountain, Dacicky House, historic center

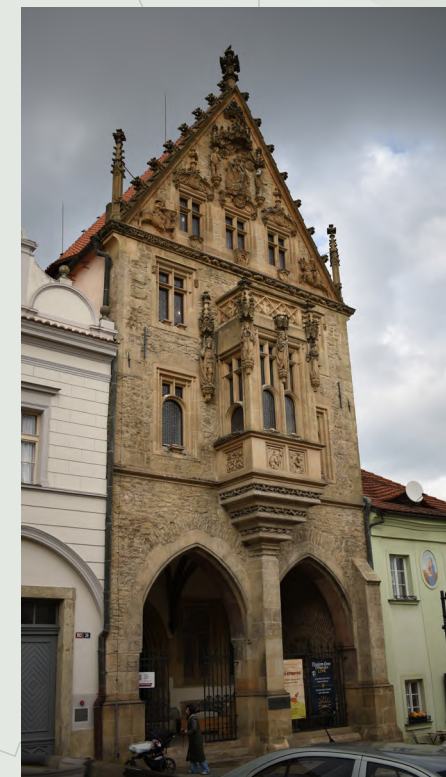


Criterion (ii): The urban fabric of Kutná Hora was endowed with many buildings of high architectural and artistic quality, notably the Church St Barbara, which had a profound influence on subsequent developments in the architecture of Central Europe.

Criterion (iv): The historic town centre of Kutná Hora, with the Church of St Barbara and the Church of Our Lady at Sedlec, constitutes an outstanding example of a medieval town whose wealth and prosperity was based on its silver mines.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/732>

<https://www.ovpm.org/city/kutna-hora-czech-republic/>



The medieval, historic town centre of **Kutná Hora** as a testament of its silver mining past, the Church of St Barbara and the Church of Our Lady at Sedlec are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Just a little over an hour's drive from Prague, this picturesque town is, for us, the first proof that it's worth exploring places off the beaten path. We arrived from Prague in the morning and first explored the streets of Kutná Hora on our own. Perched on the slope of a hill, the impressive St. Barbara's Cathedral stands as a venerable monument of Gothic architecture and part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Unfortunately, the funds ran out before its completion, so it was left only about half finished. Nevertheless, it remains a truly magnificent sight. Afterwards, we met Kristýna and her colleague Michaela. Their department is responsible for tourism and external relations. They gave us a presentation about their work with UNESCO, highlighting the 30th anniversary celebrations of Kutná Hora's World Heritage status.

One of the main challenges they face is that most visitors only stay for a single day. They would love to see more tourists spend the night, as Kutná Hora

has so much more to offer than just a day trip. Many travelers, ourselves included, tend to underestimate how much time is needed to truly experience the town. There are many more places worth visiting — such as the GASK gallery, the famous Bone Church and charming little coffee shops.

Many thanks to Kristýna and Michaela for their time and warm welcome.

In the afternoon, we departed for Třebíč.



(Note: The Sedlec Church lies lower than the current street level, which is why part of the building is now obscured by the road.)

třebíč

Criterion (ii): The Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius Basilica of Třebíč bear witness to the coexistence of and interchange of values between two different cultures, Jewish and Christian, over many centuries.

Criterion (iii): The Jewish Quarter of Třebíč is an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions related to the Jewish diaspora in central Europe.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1078>



02.-04.10.2025

seen sights

Jewish Quarter, St. Procopius Basilica, Jewish cemetery, Charles Square, Painted House, Town Tower, Mařenka viewtower



Třebíč, a charming town in the Vysočina region of the Czech Republic, is a remarkable place where Christian and Jewish cultures have coexisted for centuries. Its Jewish Quarter, the nearby cemetery, and the Romanesque-Gothic Basilica of St. Procopius together form a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognized for their exceptional testimony to peaceful coexistence between different faiths and cultures in Central Europe.



We followed the Jewish Heritage Trail through the historic quarter and visited the old Jewish cemetery, a peaceful place with a wonderful view over the town. Along the way, we passed several landmarks such as the round bastion Hrádek, Charles Square, and the striking Black House, its façade covered with fascinating historic graffiti. Each corner of the town seemed to tell its own story.

We ended our visit in the surrounding countryside, climbing to the local observation tower for a panoramic view of Třebíč and its picturesque landscape — a serene and fitting conclusion to a day filled with history, culture, and quiet reflection.

Side quests

On our way to Bratislava, we didn't want to miss the opportunity to visit another UNESCO World Heritage Site — the iconic Villa Tugendhat in Brno. With its clear lines, open spaces, and modernist elegance, the villa stands as a masterpiece of functionalist architecture designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich.

Another World Heritage "side quest" awaited us further along our route: the Lednice Palace, a complete contrast to the minimalist Villa Tugendhat. Transformed in the 19th century into a romantic Neo-Gothic residence, the palace is surrounded by an expansive landscaped park. As we walked through the grounds, we discovered charming surprises such as Roman-style aqueduct, an artificial ruin, and even a minaret rising above the trees.

This delightful encounter with nature and architecture offered a refreshing interlude before we immersed ourselves once again in the vibrant city life.

Lednice Castle

Criterion (ii): By combining the Baroque, Classical and Neo-Gothic architectural styles and by transforming the landscape according to the English romantic principles, Lednice-Valtice estate served as a model throughout the Danube region.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/763>

Tugendhat Villa in Brno

Criterion (ii): The German architect Mies van der Rohe applied the radical new concepts of the Modern Movement triumphantly to the Tugendhat Villa to the design of residential buildings.

Criterion (iv): Architecture was revolutionized by the Modern Movement in the 1920s and the work [...] played a major role in its worldwide diffusion and acceptance.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1052>



Bratislava is the only city on our trip that is not part of the World Heritage – but of course, there is still plenty to discover in Slovakia's Capital! Our brief stop in the lively city was especially memorable for its striking contrast between the historical and the modern. We wandered through the old town, taking in the bustling atmosphere of its streets. While strolling through the city center, two things in particular catch our attention: various statues – including Napoleon and the man in the manhole cover, Čumil, the “Sewer Worker” – touching him is said to bring good luck. In addition, we notice the high concentration of embassies from all sorts of countries located in the city center. In the narrow streets

bratislava

04.-05.10.2025

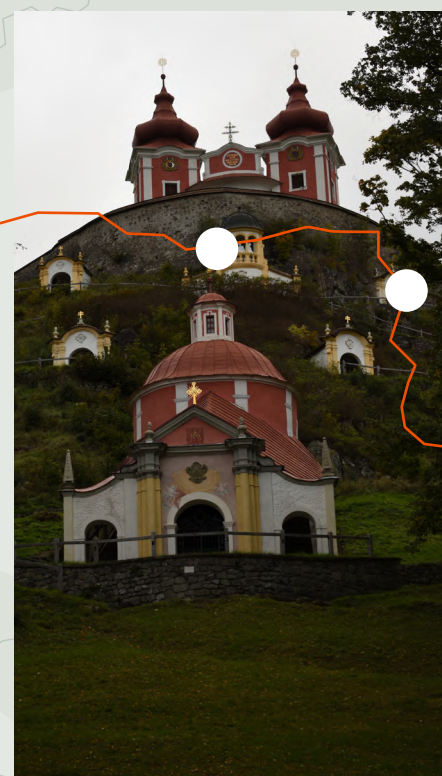
seen sights

Old town, Čumil, Castle

of the city center, there's a lively bustle (many Austrians take advantage of the short distance for a day trip) and the scent of cinnamon in the air feels somehow familiar, reminiscent of a Christmas market. In front of the castle, we were rewarded with an impressive view: the historic old town with its cathedral in the foreground, and the modern skyscrapers in the distance, their glass facades reflecting the setting sun.

Unfortunately, a city highway cuts across, among other places, the square in front of St. Martin's Cathedral. Similar to Kutná Hora and the Sedlec Church, the constant traffic and noise from the road disturb the otherwise historic and atmospheric setting.

A short but remarkable moment that perfectly captured the city's blend of past and present.



05.-06.10.2025

seen sights

Old town, Botanical Garden, Štiavnica Mining Museum (Štôľňa Bartolomej), Calvary Church



banská štiavnica

Banská Štiavnica is located in the country side of central Slovakia. If you exit the highway, you follow a winding, serpentine road through a hilly landscape, on the other side of which lies the old mining town. Banská Štiavnica is the oldest mining town in Slovakia and became wealthy thanks to its silver and gold mines. The town lies within the caldera of an ancient volcano and was home to the first Mining and Forestry Academy in Europe, founded in 1762. That's why Banská Štiavnica is a unique example of a historic mining town that played a key role in Europe's economic and technological development. Its well-preserved architecture, mining systems, and cultural landscape

reflect its outstanding universal value. During our stay in the mountain town, we visited the Štôľňa Bartolomej, which also serves as an open-air museum. For about 90 minutes, we were guided through the dark tunnel — a bit low in places for tall people like Moritz. Equipped with protective jackets, helmets, and flashlights, we descended about 50 meters underground. A walk through the old town and an evening visit to the botanical garden rounded off the day. Before setting off for Budapest the next morning, we climbed the Calvary Hill. The path leads past 19 chapels and two churches depicting the life

and suffering of Jesus Christ, as well as the sorrows of his mother Mary. The stations were built in the late 1740s. From the top, there was once again a magnificent panoramic view of the city and the surrounding landscape.

Criterion (iv): The urban and industrial complex of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity is an outstanding example of a medieval mining centre of great economic importance that continued into the modern period and assumed a characteristic and distinctive form.

Criterion (v): Banská Štiavnica and its surrounding area are an outstanding example of mining area which has become vulnerable to the potential erosion of its character and urban fabric, following the cessation of mining activities as well as the removal of the Mining Academy;

<https://www.ovpm.org/city/banska-stiavnica-slovakia/> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/618>



06.-08.10.2025

seen sights

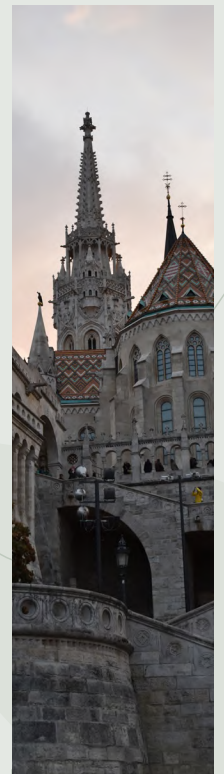
Buda Castle Quarter, Andrassy Avenue, Parliament, Historic Town, Fisherman's Bastion, Szent István park, Kós Károly tér

Criterion (ii): [...] Buda Castle played an essential role in the diffusion of Gothic art in the Magyar region from the 14th century. [...] As a result of the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in 1872-73, Budapest became once more a significant centre in the second part of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century due to the amount and quality of heritage built during those periods. It was a centre which absorbed, integrated and disseminated outstanding and progressive European influences of urbanism and of architecture as well as modern technological developments such as the Millennium Underground Railway, built under Andrassy Avenue, the first in Continental Europe, all of which was in line with its role as a metropolis.

Criterion (iv): Buda Castle is an architectural ensemble which, together with the nearby old district (the Buda Castle Quarter) illustrates two significant periods of history [...]. The Parliament is also an outstanding example of a great official building on a par with those of London, Munich, Vienna and Athens, exemplifying the eclectic architecture of the 19th century, whilst at the same time symbolising the political function of the second capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Andrassy Avenue (1872-1885) and the Millennium Underground Railway (1893 - 1896) are representative examples of the implementation of planning solutions associated with the latest technical facilities of the day to meet the requirements of an emerging modern society. [...]

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/400>

<https://www.ovpm.org/city/budapest-hungary/>



budapest



Budapest's UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Castle District with Buda Castle, the banks of the Danube, and Andrásy út – bring together an impressive range of architectural styles, from medieval fortifications and Baroque splendor to elegant Neo-Renaissance design.

Our exploration began with a climb up Castle Hill. From the top, we were rewarded with a wide view over the city and a tangible sense of its history. Numerous construction sites stood out, suggesting both the reconstruction of historic buildings and modern rein-

terpretations. Building new structures in the style and appearance of older ones may strike some – particularly heritage conservators – as unusual, yet it also results in a harmonious and visually appealing overall composition. The path then led us down to the Danube. In the warm evening light, the Parliament building shone as a perfect photo motif. Our walk through Buda eventually took us past the Fisherman's Bastion and back to our accommodation.

The next day, we crossed the Danube to explore Pest. Along Andrásy

út, with its Neo-Renaissance façades and grand layout, one can trace the principles of modern urban planning from the 19th century. Beneath it runs the Millennium Underground – one of the oldest metro lines in Europe and itself a UNESCO World Heritage site. Of course, when visiting Budapest, you can't go without having a portion of goulash and langos!

In Szent István Park, the influence of the Bauhaus style becomes visible. The park was created to bring more green space to the densely built-up city. A little further from the center, in

the Wekerle district, lies Kós Károly Square. Its design follows the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement, creating a cohesive and almost village-like atmosphere. Altogether, the city presents a rich mosaic of architectural eras, blending different styles into a unique urban character.

Side quest: Neusiedlersee

Criterion (v): The Fertő/Neusiedlersee has been the meeting place of different cultures for eight millennia, and this is graphically demonstrated by its varied landscape, the result of an evolutionary and symbiotic process of human interaction with the physical environment.

https://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=772



On our way to Vienna, we took the opportunity to make a stop at Neusiedlersee – coincidentally also a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2001. The lake is the westernmost steppe lake in Europe and stretches across the border between Austria and Hungary. It is characterized by its shallow depth – averaging only about 1.5 meters – its wide reed belts, and its rich variety of wildlife. The Fertő/ Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape represents thousands of years of interaction between humans and nature in this unique region.

We noticed that the water appeared somewhat murky, which is due to the lake's slightly saline content – up to 2 g/L salt. In comparison, freshwater typically contains less than 1 g/L salt. After a pleasant walk along the lakeshore, we continued our journey.



vienna

08.-10.10.2025

After arriving in Vienna and settling into our apartment, we still had time for a short walk between Ottakring and Schönbrunn.

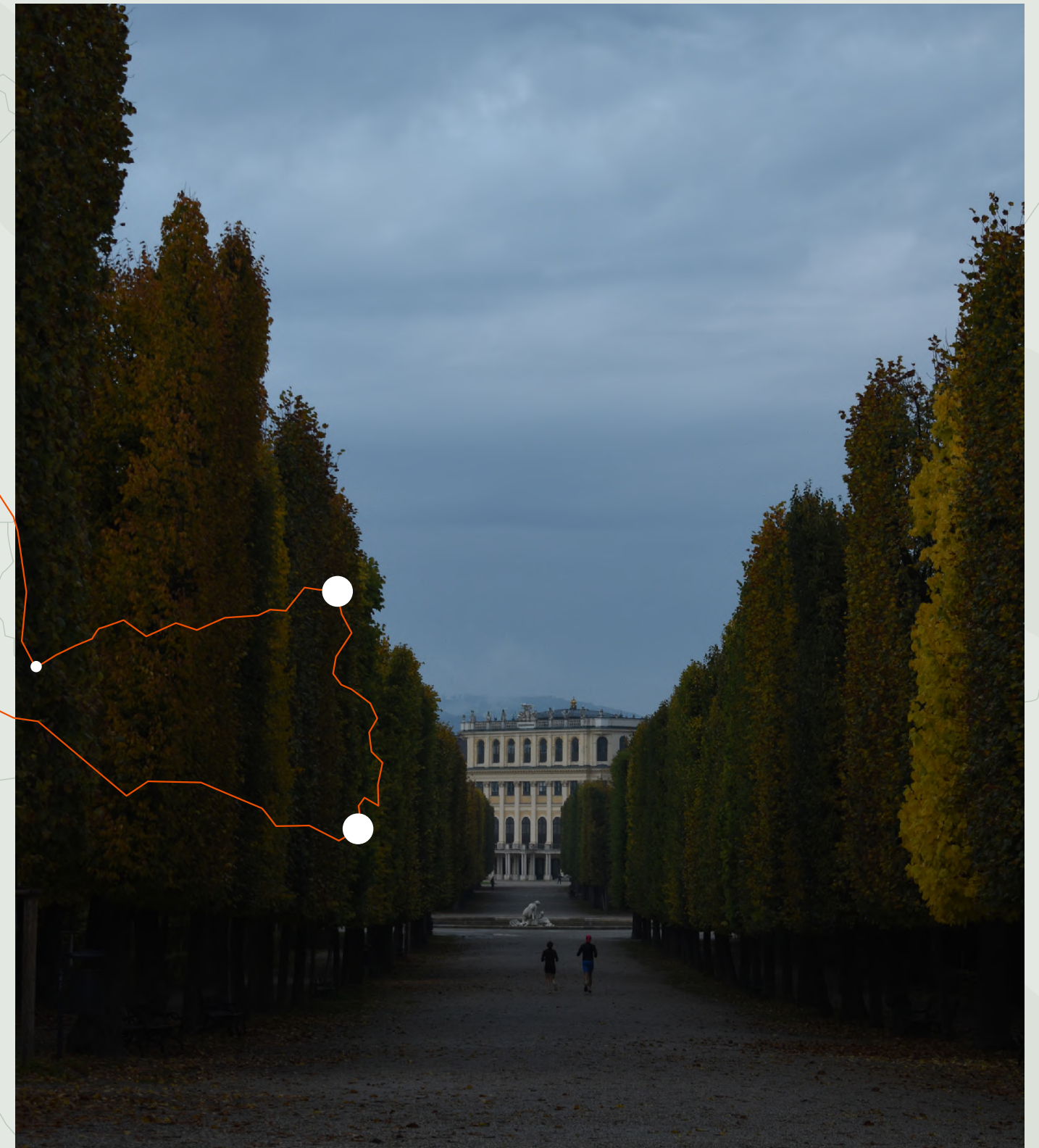
The following day, around midday, we had arranged to meet Lara from the Municipal Directorate (Magistratsdirektion der Stadt Wien). On our way there, we took the chance to stroll through Vienna's historic center and visit the Belvedere Palace. Lara greeted us with great warmth — before we even had time to make sure we were in the right part of the building, a door opened and we were kindly invited in. She gave us an insightful presentation about Vienna and its World Heritage sites: the historic city center, which is managed by the municipality, and Schönbrunn Palace with its park, which fall under state administration. Unfortunately, the historic center has been on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger since 2017, as new

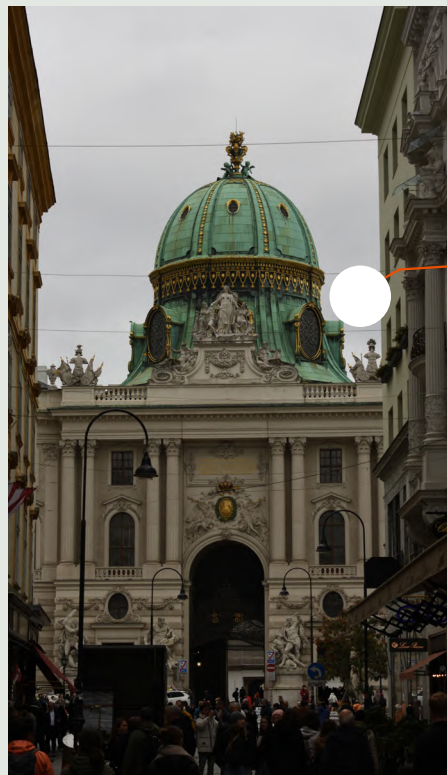
construction projects — such as a planned high-rise at Heumarkt and various attic conversions — threaten its historic character. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to develop solutions that will preserve the site's status in close cooperation with UNESCO. Have you ever heard of a Grätzl? Lara told us more about this uniquely Viennese concept and what makes it so special: In Vienna, a Grätzl refers to one of the city's distinctive small neighborhoods, each with its own unique charm and strong sense of local community. Before we said our goodbyes, we asked for a recommendation for a good Wiener Schnitzel — which we eventually enjoyed at Café Eiles. A great tip for anyone who'd rather skip the long lines in front of trendy cafés! Alongside good food and a cozy atmosphere, it becomes clear — at the latest here — that Vienna does not live up to its reputation as an unfriendly city!

Even though it is not part of the UNESCO World Heritage, we really wanted to visit the urban development area of Seestadt. It is located outside of Vienna, far from the tourist crowds, and most likely only people interested in architecture and urban planning find their way here.

At the end of subway line U2, housing for around 25,000 people is being built here in several construction phases. Like slices of a cake, the neighborhoods are gradually being developed around an artificial lake (which, by the way, is full of fish). The idea is to learn from each completed section of Seestadt and apply those insights to the next. From the first neighborhood, for example, one of the key takeaways was, that the city needs even more green spaces.

We ended the evening with a leisurely walk around Schönbrunn Palace, just a short distance from our apartment.





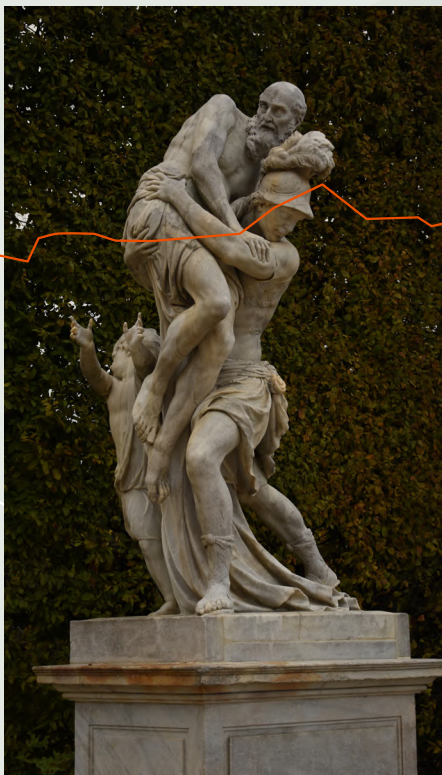
Historic Centre of Vienna

Criterion (ii): The urban and architectural qualities of the Historic Centre of Vienna bear outstanding witness to a continuing interchange of values throughout the second millennium.

Criterion (iv): Three key periods of European cultural and political development – the Middle Ages, the Baroque period, and the Gründerzeit – are exceptionally well illustrated by the urban and architectural heritage of the Historic Centre of Vienna.

Criterion (vi): Since the 16th century Vienna has been universally acknowledged to be the musical capital of Europe.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1033>



Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn

Criterion (i): The Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn are an especially well preserved example of the Baroque Princely residential ensemble, which constitute an outstanding example of Gesamtkunstwerk, a masterly fusion of many art forms.

Criterion (iv): The Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn are exceptional by virtue of the evidence that they preserve of modifications over several centuries that vividly illustrate the tastes, interests, and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/786>

seen sights

historic center, Schloss Belvedere
Gardens of Schönbrunn, Seestadt



regensburg

Criterion (ii): Regensburg's architecture reflects the role of the city as a medieval trading center and its influence on the region north of the Alps. Regensburg was an important trading center on the continental trading routes to Italy, Bohemia, Russia, and Byzantium. [...] This enabled an important exchange of cultural and architectural influences to be made which are characteristic of the city's townscape even today.

Criterion (iii): The Regensburg Old Town displays an extraordinary testimony of cultural traditions in the Holy Roman Empire. In the high Middle Ages, Regensburg was a favorite meeting place for Imperial Assemblies, but in more recent European history the city also made its contribution as the seat of the Perpetual Imperial Diet from 1663 to 1806. The remains of two royal palaces which date from the 9th century and also the numerous well-preserved historical buildings are evidence of the one-time wealth and the political significance of the city.

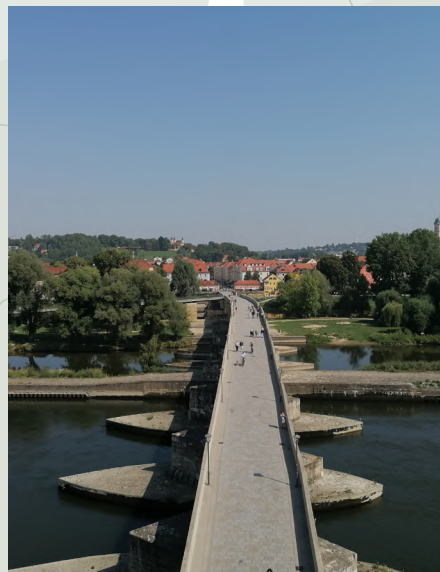
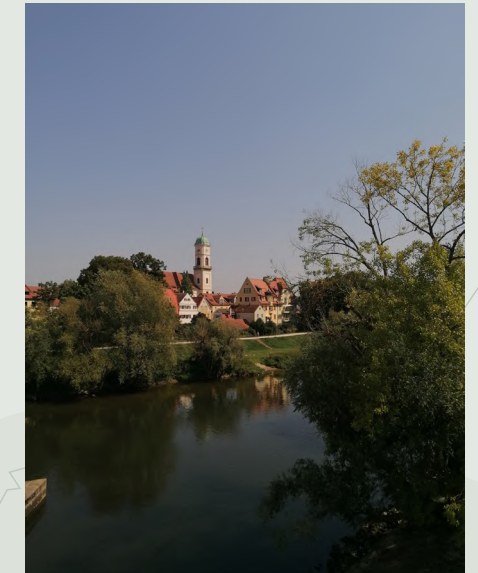
Criterion (iv): The Old Town of Regensburg is an excellent example of an inner-European medieval trading town whose historical stages of development are well preserved. The development of trade from the 11th up to the 14th century in particular is illustrated thereby extraordinarily well.

<https://www.ovpm.org/city/regensburg-germany/> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1155/>

14.08.2025/ 11.10.2025

seen sights

historic town center, Stadthof, St. Peter Cathedral, medieval town hall, stone bridge, document Neupfarrplatz, World Heritage Visitor Center, Salzstadel, Danube, Goldener Wälder, Walhalla



Regensburg! The last stop on our journey – or perhaps the first?

Back in August, we visited Monika from the World Heritage Center – when the sun was still shining bright! Traveling by train from Bamberg is quite a journey, and we especially felt it on the way back (warm regards to Deutsche Bahn).

On our walk from the train station to the World Heritage Center, we passed a large “fly agaric” mushroom (Milchschwammerl), whose original function as a milk-selling spot amazed us — we had seen exactly the same kind of shop in East Westphalia! It turns out there were around 50 of these across Germany. Today, the one in Regensburg serves as a kiosk, while in East Westphalia, it would typically be a small snack stand.

Passing by the cathedral, we finally arrived at the World Heritage Center on the banks of the Danube. After visiting the historic roof structure with Monika – once used for storing salt – the three of us set out for a tour of the city. We first crossed the Stone Bridge

to the opposite bank of the Danube. From there, we made a detour past the Cinema Paradiso, a popular open-air cinema in Regensburg and potential swimming spots in the Danube, which we planned to try out later.

Back on the other side of the Danube, we visited the sculpture of the “Golden Waller,” which, after the incident at Lake Brombach in the summer of '25, had become a pilgrimage site for grieving catfish enthusiasts.

After visiting the cathedral and enjoying lunch, we finally made our way to Monika's office at the town hall.

Time and again, we came across the red Regensburg coat of arms with its two keys. Monika explained that the keys symbolize the city's historical connection to Saint Peter, its patron saint, who is traditionally depicted holding the keys to Heaven.

At this point, our paths parted: Monika returned to the World Heritage Center, while we continued our tour with a visit to Neupfarplatz. There, we explored the underground remains of the Roman legionary camp Castra Regina

and learned about the medieval Jewish quarter.

Once we returned to the World Heritage Center, we treated ourselves to some sausages from the Historische Wurstkuchl before heading to the Danube to cool off.

Regensburg greeted us as a lively, welcoming city — loved by locals and students alike. We were especially happy to be there in summer, when you can even take a swim in the Danube. The old town has a special charm, especially because it's not just a backdrop, but a place where people really live, meet, and enjoy life.

On our road trip, our route eventually took us back along the Danube – a constant companion throughout our journey – to Regensburg. This time, we were headed to visit the Walhalla.



thank you.

During this journey, we gained several valuable insights. We learned that it is worth giving lesser-known places a chance, as some of our most memorable experiences came from cities we had never heard of before. We also realized how important it is to allow enough time for these places and the people living there - to explore beyond the main sights, to understand their heritage, and to appreciate their character at a slower pace. These moments often revealed the true depth and diversity of the World Heritage Cities we visited.

It also doesn't hurt to stray from the planned route every now and then; we often discovered beautiful places precisely through these spontaneous detours.

Blog2025:

<https://www.owhc-youngtravelling.com/category/owhc-2025/cultural-kilometers/>

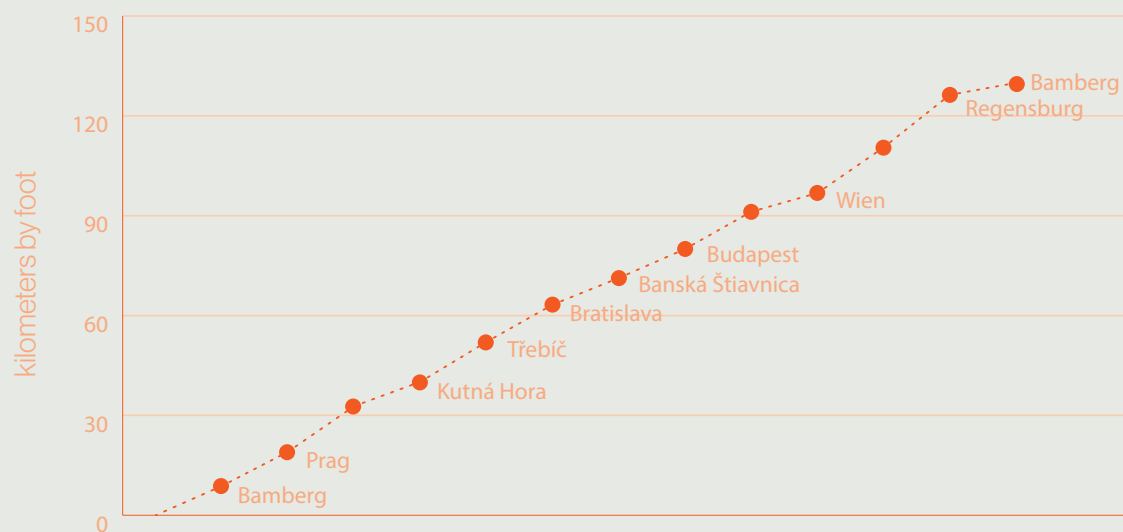
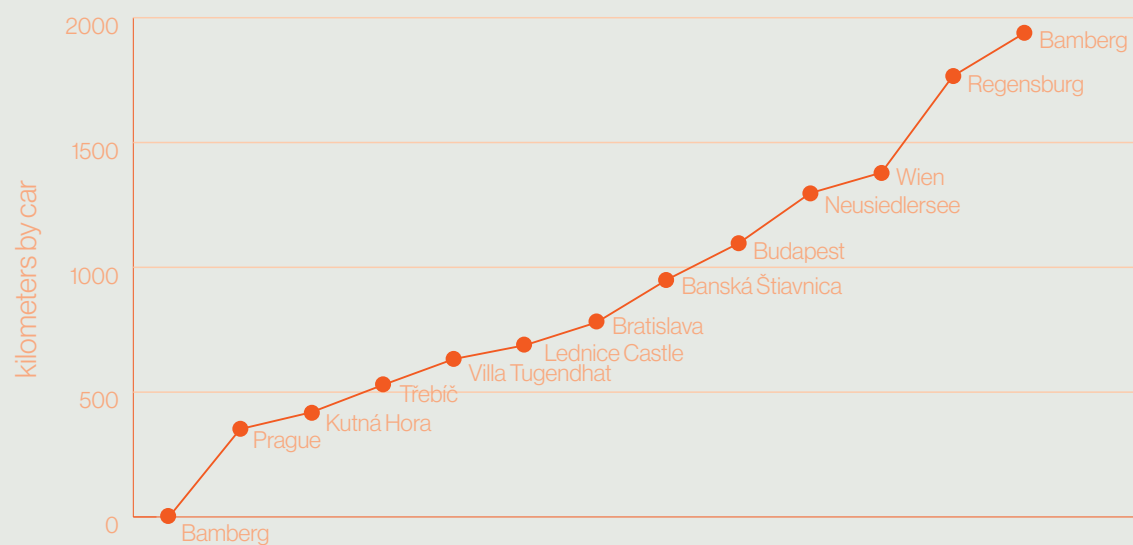
Traveller2025:

<https://www.owhc-youngtravelling.com/traveller-2025/>

1938 / 1938 km

We would like to thank the OWHC for this given opportunity - especially Monika from the World Heritage Center in Regensburg, Kristýna and Michaela in Kutná Hora and Lara in Vienna.

1938 / 1938 km



Cultural kilometers

Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/cultural_kilometers/