

TIC BRNO



Water tanks under Žlutý kopec



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Ensuring drinking water for Brno is a problematic issue that has been addressed since the city's founding. The acute need for a permanent and abundant supply of water for Brno's expanding population in the 19th century required a fundamentally new solution. The existing Brno water tanks could not cover the demands of the population or industry, and so the city council decided in the late 19th century to create a new water source. Thus arose the Pisárky conduits, drawing water from the Svatka River where the former Kamenný mlýn (Stone Mill) settlement stood. From 1869 to 1872 in Pisárky, waterworks were built based on a British system proposed by Thomas Docwra. The water was treated in three open biological filters and drawn through powerful steam pumps into two pressure zones. The water tanks for the lower zone were built under Žlutý kopec, and the higher zone was created at Špilberk Castle with a tank in the east bastion.

Žlutý kopec gradually became the site of two giant brick water tanks, to which two concrete reservoirs were later added. This quartet of monumental underground objects is hidden in an inconspicuous garden area between Tomešova and Tvrdého streets on the eastern slope of Žlutý kopec. The Pisárky conduits were not

very successful. Soon after their launch, complaints about quality proliferated, such as, "In summer the water is too hot, and in winter too cold, soft and without a refreshing taste." It was suitable only for washing, heating, and industry. These complaints led to the decision to initiate preparations for a new, more abundant source of high-quality water. This was eventually completed with the Březová conduits, ceremoniously opened in 1913. From then, Brno had two water supplies. High-quality drinking water from Březová nad Svitavou and water from the Pisárky facility that did not meet the standard for drinking. The water tanks under Žlutý kopec thus served for non-drinking water until 1997, when they were definitively shut down. In 2014, following consideration about their possible use, they were designated to be destroyed.

Photos of the monumental reservoirs' interiors published on social networks, and unprecedented public interest in visiting these sites, led in 2019 to their becoming a heritage site and thus being protected from destruction.

These days, you can visit two huge brick water tanks – now open to the public.

1	TIC BRNO: Water tanks under Žlutý kopec
2	TIC BRNO: IC Panenská, Ticket sale for guided tours of the Water tanks under Žlutý kopec
3	TIC BRNO: IC Radnická
4	TIC BRNO: IC Main Railway Station





Oldest water tank

The first and oldest of the four underground reservoirs sits in the north-west of the grounds near Tvrdého Street. It was built from 1868 to 1872 and is formed of a giant reservoir closed in with brick and divided into 11 parallel parts connected by a corridor on the north side. It measures approximately 45×45 m, and its vault is 6 m high. Each of its brick-lined walls is lightened by six arched windows compressed in shape. The barrel vaults supported by walls and spaced-out pillars were lined with red brick using the best technology of the time (at the same time as the completion of the Red Church, the German House, and the gymnasium under Špilberk). Individual sections have concrete gutters running through

them. The regularity and precision of the structure gives the feeling of an infinite and continuously receding space. It is a masterful example of the skill and craft of the builders of this industrial city. It is possible to enter this reservoir only through a small entry shaft in the north-west corner near a chamber for fixtures built into the hill by Tvrdého Street. This section also has preserved fragments of inlet and distribution fixtures, which are, however, severely corroded by the damp environment.



Brick water tank

The second reservoir built under Žlutý kopec surpasses the oldest reservoir in its monumentality. The breathtaking space of the largest tank is hidden under the southern part of the grounds. The gigantic structure, measuring 45×75 m with a height of 8 m, gives the impression of a brick cathedral. From a flat concrete bottom grows a forest of 70 pillars with semicircular arcades supporting a system of barrel vaults. Just as the rest of the structure, the spaced-out pillar bases shaped like truncated pyramids are lined with red bricks. The south-west section also has preserved corroded inlet fixtures. The second oldest tank was built from 1896 to 1900 in the back of the grounds and at the time was apparently the largest underground structure in Brno. Just as

the oldest reservoir, this tank was built by digging down from the surface and, after being lined with brick, surrounded in a 1.5-m layer of soil.

Both brick tanks were also insulated from ground water leakage and water leaking out from the reservoir by a 0.5-m layer of white clay. A path used to run between the tanks where a technical building for the tanks' guard was built in the 1970s.



Two concrete reservoirs

The most recent of the trio of structures under Žlutý kopec is a two-chamber concrete water tank connected to the chamber for fixtures and the narrow entry. It was built from 1916 to 1917 on the highest terrace in the western section of the grounds in a location where part of a crag known as Helgoland stood. The reddish massif had to be extracted to build the tank.

The two adjacent reservoirs are both built from monolithic concrete supported by a system of 87 concrete square pillars. The southern, larger chamber has a rectangular shape measuring 45×30 m, while the northern chamber measures 35×30 m. The concrete roof arches at a height of 6 m with a system of groin vaults, and the flat floor

has a system of drains. Both reservoirs are in a very good technical state and their empty spaces are filled only with unbelievably long echoes.

This set of four underground reservoirs is a unique historical architectural heritage site without parallel in the Czech lands. It is evidence of extraordinary technical industrial architecture in an untouched form with preserved elements of technical equipment creating an exceptionally valuable work. In accordance with heritage preservation and attempts to protect cultural heritage, the complex of historical water tanks under Žlutý kopec was declared a cultural heritage site in 2019.



Tours of the Water tanks under Žlutý kopec

The unbelievable genius loci of this underground temple attracts attention from the general public and even experts in water and natural resources management. Unprecedented interest in these spaces has also been demonstrated by film companies that want to take advantage of the rareness and monumentality of these structures in their projects.

The first stage to open these underground reservoirs was completed in 2022, and so far two have public access. Guided tours last 90 minutes.

The current schedule can be found at: www.podzemibrno.cz
Ticket sale: Tickets cannot be purchased at the site! Buy tickets online or at the THIS IS BRNO information centre, Panenská 1 +420 513 039 035 panenska@ticbrno.cz

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