TIC BRNO

WHAT IS BRNO?
Technical Monuments



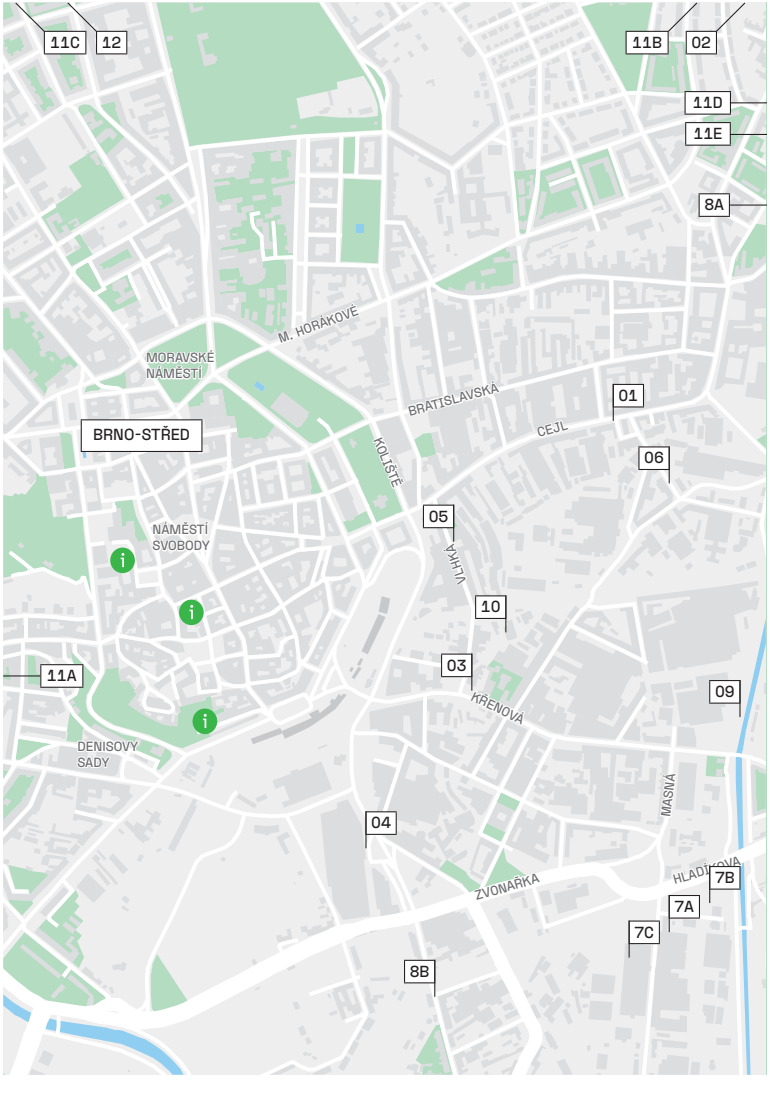
Technical Monuments

As the second largest Czech city and an important industrial centre in the 19th and 20th centuries, Brno has a lot to offer lovers of technical monuments. Especially the city's east side and both banks of the Svitava still host engineering companies with long traditions and grounds that are interesting sights in themselves – První brněnská strojírna, Zetor, Šmeral, Alstom, Siemens, and Královopolská strojírna to the north. Other spectacular industrial companies can still be seen even though their time has passed – we can recall the Kras complex of clothing factories, Zbrojovka in Židenice, and the more modern Lachema in Řečkovice.

What really turned Brno into a city was its textile industry. From the end of the 18th century, factories sprung up especially in the Brno suburbs of Horní and Dolní Cejl and later transformed into modern carding, spinning, weaving, and dyeing mills, the production of which was known throughout the world and gave Brno the nickname of the Moravian Manchester. Although the Brno textile tradition became history at the turn of the millennium, industry in the city has continued to develop in the modern spirit.

Let us here turn back to monuments to the famous period of the 19th and 20th centuries that have been left in the city over the past 200 years.

It is especially worth mentioning the dozens of scattered buildings of former textile mills; factory grounds; under – and above-ground canals, often older than the city itself; the complicated development of railway junctions; gasworks; power stations including the dam at the reservoir near the city; and the history of public transit, brewing, the soaring buildings at and around the exhibition centre, and many other places connected to industry, transit, and energy.





Textile suburb of Cejl

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, this originally suburban settlement with the German name Zeile (row) became a factory outpost of Brno. Dozens of textile factories sprung up on both sides of Dolní Cejl between the historic city, the Svitava River, and the Svitava Canal. Thousands of workers coming for work to Brno from surrounding towns changed the face of the city, and the factories turned Brno into the Moravian Manchester – an industrial city and the centre of Moravia. Although most of the textile factories have been turned into flats and offices, you can still find on Cejl about 20 palaces of industry. The most interesting palaces include the palace of the Schoeller brothers or the spinning mill of the Soxhlet brothers.

Cejl 52, 64, 68
You can see the mill facades from the street and in some places enter the courtyards or see the back from the river.



Essler Spinning Mill

In the location of the original mill on an island in the Svitava in Obřany stands the gloomy building of the Essler Spinning Mill. This factory was built in 1912 in place of an older, single-storey mill by Ernst Essler, and at the time it was built it was the only factory in Brno made only from reinforced concrete. The spinning mill and connected weaving mill processed various plant materials and wool to make textile yarn, which was distributed to other Brno mills. In 1945, production was taken over by the national enterprise Mosilana, but continued in the building until 1992. Currently, the building is being considered for renovation. You can see the dilapidated building from a bridge over the Svitava, built unusually wide for a planned tram track, or from the train on the railway viaduct over the spinning mill.

Fryčajova 2
The mill is off limits to the public, but you can see the facade and courtyard from a bridge over the Svitava.



First Brno power station

Brno's Mahenovo divadlo (Mahen Theatre) was the first building of its type in the world to be lit by electric light. Installation of the lighting based on plans by Thomas Edison in 1882 required 1,920 lightbulbs with carbon filaments, 5 arc lamps, an electric fan above the stage, and a steam power station to supply electricity to the theatre. While the theatre was built on the road circling the city centre in place of the demolished city wall, the power station with seven generators with an output of 81 kW was concealed some way off on the edge of the industrial area of Dolní Cejl. The power station also served several Brno streets and direct current flowed from it into the city until 1898. The station building was damaged during bombing in World War II, but part of it still remains and currently serves as the theatre's joinery workshop.

Vlhká 5
From the street, you can see the power station's facade.



Second Brno power station

The city's second steam power station was only in operation for 14 years and led Brno on its journey from steam power to the age of electricity. This power station built in 1898 within a gasworks on Radlas street underwent constant expansion throughout its operation. It had an original output of 600 kW of modern alternating current, while several generators built from 1900 also sent direct current to the city's new tram lines. The elegant building functioned until 1912, when electricity began being sent to Brno from a modern thermal power station in Oslavany. A motor generator was then added to the building to regulate the electricity from Oslavany for the tram line. The power station has undergone renovations and now serves as an office building.

Plynárenská 30
Following sensitive renovations, a substantial part of the station can be seen from the street.



Vlněna and Mosilana

In the 1950s, all Brno textile mills were gradually nationalized and closed down or incorporated into one of two national enterprises, Vlněna or Mosilana. The consolidation of previously competing and isolated businesses led to the creation of an interesting factory complex with an unusual structure over the Svitava Canal. While almost all of the Vlněna buildings across Přízova, Mlýnská, and Dornych streets were knocked down in 2016 (the Nová Vlněna campus arose in their place), the Mosilana grounds among Křenová, Vlhká, and Cejl streets is accessible during the day with the porter's permission and still offers a unique industrial experience. Modern companies currently operate in the maze of production buildings in the location of the former Sdružené továrny vlněného zboží, Hecht weaving mill, and the company of Max Kohn and Gustav Schiketanz, pioneers in the Brno textile industry.

Křenová 19
The Mosilana grounds are open daily until 6PM; from Vlněna, only the Bochnerův palace remains.



Wannieck machine factory

Closely following textile production, the machine industry came to Brno, first to make textile machines and their parts and later expanding to a wide range of other devices. In 1865 between the contemporary upper and lower railway stations, the Wannieck machine factory was founded and began making equipment for sugar refineries and then steam engines licensed by the Swiss company Sulzer. After consolidation with První brněnská strojírna in the 1930s, the grounds transferred to Česká zbrojovka and production started on steam turbines licensed by the British company Parsons. After World War II, Vaňkovka became part of Zetor, and it remained so until 1996. After being shut down, the factory got lucky – instead of being demolished, its most interesting building was preserved as part of a shopping centre and gallery that are still open to the public.

Ve Vaňkovce 2
The most interesting part of the factory is accessible within the Vaňkovka shopping gallery.



Municipal slaughterhouse, starch factory, and meat market

This collection of historic buildings from 1895–1909 comprises a slaughterhouse, meat market, and stable. Vaulted halls with bricks in two colours complement the impressive, decorated top of the disused water tower. Livestock vehicles used to be pulled by steam locomotives along tram lines down Křenová street to Masná street. In contrast, the neighbouring starch factory has undergone sensitive renovations and now offers a pleasant retreat. On Masná street between the former starch factory and slaughterhouse stands the functionalist meat market from 1924 designed by Bohuslav Fuchs.

7A Masná 7, 7B Škrobárenská, 7C Porážka 1
Most of the area is open to the public or is part of private companies' outdoor space.



Brno railway stations

Some railway stations are not in the timetable even though they receive daily stops from trains, usually carrying freight. In addition to dozens of closed Brno stops and stations (a preserved building in Zábrdovice, the railway yard at the old station in Královo Pole, stops and buildings in Husovice, Líškovec, Jehnice, Holásky, and Ivanovice), it is worth visiting Dolní nádraží (Lower Railway Station) not far from the Brno centre, used throughout 2019 for diverted passenger traffic. Those interested in Brno railways will also enjoy a visit to the forgotten Brno-jih station far from the city or the lookout over the shunting yard in Maloměřice. From the footbridges above the yard, one of the largest Czech railway stations looks like a model – practically every day small and large fans of railways watch the automatic sorting of wagons to humps.

8A Kulkova 1, 8B Rosická 1a
You can visit Maloměřice station and the Lower Railway Station except for the areas with tracks.



Svitava bank line

Since 1890, this municipal siding has led freight trains to many industrial businesses spread across both banks of the Svitava in southern Brno. The original Svitava line had a detour to connect the upper and lower railway stations, and about 10 sidings ran from it to various factories. In 1962, the connection to the upper and lower railway stations was removed and the Svitava bank line was connected through a new branch over the river to the Židenice station. A walk along the parallel bicycle path offers views of still operating and closed factories (Šmeral, Alstom, the old and not far off new Mosilana, Linde, the former starch factory and slaughterhouse) and so is a treat for lovers of Brno industry. A short-haul freight train runs along the siding daily at irregular times, usually around 9 a.m.

The right bank of the Svitava
The line on the right bank is entirely accessible from the parallel bicycle path.



Svitava Canal – Ponávka

Every resident of Brno must know some of the legends about Ponávka. It dips into the ground and shoots back up somewhere among the factories on Cejl, and no one knows exactly where it runs from or to. Brno used to be interwoven with many strands from the Svratka, Svitava, and Ponávka, with the water powering many mills. All that remains today is the winding Svitava Canal. While since 1993 the Ponávka itself has run through a tunnel from Královo Pole under Lesná to the Cacovický Canal, on Radlas, Špitálka, Vlhká, and Škrobárenská streets you can still walk over bridges and the remains of banks that once formed the most romantic part of the city. After being shortened, the Svitava Canal runs 3.6 km, of which almost 1 km runs through underground tunnels, and it joins the Svratka under the bicycle path by Jeneweinova street.

Tkalcovská, Radlas, Špitálka, Škrobárenská
Most of the stream is accessible among buildings and in former factories.



Brno bridges and footbridge

This is a selection of the most interesting bridges:
A Tram bridge over the Brno Exhibition Centre (1965) – an elegant, asymmetric bridge bent in every direction.
B Railway arch viaduct in Obřany (1952) – this stone arch bridge was originally to be decorated with statues.
C Footbridge over the reservoir (2003) – built under Veveří Castle in place of a bridge destroyed in 1945.
D Arched tram bridge in Maloměřice (1928) – a reinforced concrete bridge that was the only bridge in Brno to survive World War II.
E Footbridge over Maloměřice railway station (1981) – a four-km footbridge offering a view of the shunting yard from a height of 12 m.

11A Veletržní street; 11B over Obřanská street, the Svitava, and Mlýnské nábřeží street; 11C over the reservoir under Veveří Castle; 11D between Valchařská and Selská streets; 11E between Slaměníkova and Kulkova streets



Reservoir on the Svratka

The Kníničky reservoir is a long-delayed project built during 1936–1940 in a narrow ravine made by the Svratka near Brno. In 1939, before it was finished, it stopped a flood wave and so became and important element protecting Brno. In 1945, the new reservoir weathered an attempt to blow it up by the Germany Army. Water from behind the 23.5-metre-tall concrete dam runs a Kaplan turbine made by the Brno company Ignác Storek (now the Šmeral machine factory) with an output of 3.1 MW and forms an extensive artificial lake used for recreation and, since 1946, trips on unusual accumulator boats. A never completed part of the reservoir was to be the Kníničky water treatment plant for one million city residents on the left bank under the dam.

Přehradní 488
The dam can be accessed from below or above; visits to the power station happen only occasionally.

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photos: Jiří Kalina, Františka Uřičářová

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text: Jiří Kalina

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