

A book about the Jizera mountains ... and then only the forests

The exhibition is directly inspired by a book by naturalist Miloslav Nevrlý (*1933), which has shaped the relationship of several generations to their native mountains. Driven by his own passion and love for nature, the writer used his extraordinary literary talent to capture in his book a place that is home for the inhabitants of a part of northern Bohemia. As a traveller and storyteller, Miloslav Nevrlý accompanies the reader through the Jizera Mountains, their nature, their living and long-forgotten stories, the history of individual places and the phenomena associated with them. The book focuses on one limited part of the world, but it conveys the author's love affair with nature as a whole. Its content appeals in a complex way and on many levels to all nature lovers, and in its specific way, defines a unique image of the relationship between humans and the landscape, which must be admired and protected unconditionally. Take a trip to the forests and to the places described in A Book about the Jizera Mountains. Remember that nature was here long before you and explore it with respect, just as the author of A Book about the Jizera Mountains would have wished.

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*1 The Souš dam and the Bílá desná dam

I remember the Souš Dam from years ago: a real Nordic lake glistening among the forests. There were no houses, tents, camp sites on the banks, no boats on the water. The bizarre roots of uprooted tree stumps protruded from the coastal water, and meadow pipits scurried on the exposed, fragrant mud. August in the Souš Dam area then belonged to the calls of the common sandpipers: the northern marsh birds flew over the mountains, stopped at a large lake, and with a far-audible whistle, took a jerky flight just above the water from one empty shoreline to the other.

NEVRLÝ M.: About the Jizera Mountains Lakes and their Inhabitants. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 274

» A trip to the forest (10 km):

Take the trail from Desná past the Souš Dam to the Burst Dam (The Desná Dam, "Protržená přehrada" in Czech) on the Bílá (White) Desná River. Start in Desná at the 1937 memorial dedicated to the disaster on the Bílá Desná River. continue past the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary to the hill with the Church of the Ascension and then further on to the confluence of the two rivers, the Černá (Black) Desná River and the Bílá (White) Desná River, in the centre of the village. Here the tourist trails intersect, and you will follow the red trail to Riedl's Villa. From the Neo-Romanesque-Gothic tomb on the border of the villages of Potočná and Dolní Polubný, from which the local glassmaking king Wilhelm Riedel could gaze at his glassworks even after his death, you will continue along the red trail, which turns off the main road here and leads you along the Černá Desná River to the Souš settlement. The most romantic part of the entire trip awaits you; the river flows through a steep-sided valley full of rocks, rapids, cascades, basins and larger or smaller waterfalls, which are best seen when walking upstream. In the Souš settlement, leave the marked trail and continue along the road towards the Smědava area and the town of Hejnice. From this road through the forest, turn off at the crossroads behind the dam onto the yellow forest trail. After walking another two kilometres along it, you will stand on the embankment of the famous burst dam. Here you can see the remains of the original dam and learn about the circumstances of the whole catastrophe. A nature trail leads back to Desná, ending in the park near the wooden bell tower.

The Klogert's Stone - The oldest memorial

The oldest memorial in the Jizera Mountains commemorates Klogert's death in the 89th forest department of the Bedřichov forest district. A few metres below the green Government Trail ("Vládní cesta" in Czech) running from the village of Bedřichov to the Černá (Black) Nisa Dam or the Nová Louka mountain meadow, there is a stone set into the ground with the year 1674 carved in ancient letters. Occasionally, a wooden cross stands near to it, but the wood rots and falls, while the stone endures. There are several theories about the death of the woodcutter Klogert, but the most often repeated one claims that he was killed by a falling fir tree. On older maps, this place is marked as At Klogert's Fir ("U Klogertovy jedle" in Czech).

NEVRLÝ M.: The Deaths of Woodcutters. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 266

» A trip to the forest (9 km):

The route Bedřichov – Nová Louka leads from Bedřichov past the Blatný pond, which was constructed in 1780 for the seigneurial sawmill, across the Nová Louka mountain meadow to a former hunting lodge, now a guesthouse and restaurant called Šámalova chata (Šámal's Chalet). The trail continues along the Government Road ("Vládní cesta" in Czech), in the vicinity of which you can find the Klogert Stone (GPS coordinates: 50.8025239N, 15.1320831E) embedded in the ground, past the Klikvová Louka nature reserve and back to the village of Bedřichov. Near the stadium, you can find the remains of the seigneurial game park of the Clam-Gallas family, constructed in 1848–52.

*3 Smrk – The queen of the Jizera Mountains

Smrk – the queen of the Jizera Mountains. I did not give it that title myself, in the last century they called the mountain "Königin des Isergebirges" ("Queen of the Jizera Mountains" in German). The highest point in northern Bohemia between the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše) and the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory), the top of the Czech side of the Jizera Mountains, only three metres lower than their Silesian peak. The pride of the inhabitants of the town of Nové Město pod Smrkem: it has always been "their" mountain. Nowadays, few people stray to Smrk: it stands on the Silesian border, steep and overgrown, with poor paths, without any view and without a soul there to offer refreshment or even a place to sleep to the wayfarer weary from climbing the steep wooden trail called Heavenly Ladder ("Nebeský žebřík" in Czech). And yet the highest mountain of the Jizera Mountains deserves its own chapter!

NEVRLÝ M.: The Smrk Mountain – Queen of the Jizera Mountains. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 284

Smrk ("Spruce" in English, "Smrek" in Polish, "Tafelfichte" in German), 1,124 m high, is the highest peak of the Smrč Highlands ("Smrčská hornatina" in Czech) and also the highest mountain in the Czech part of the Jizera Mountains. The borders of three regions have always met here: Bohemia, Lusatia and Silesia. Today, there is a pedestrian border crossing to Poland, and in 2003, a lookout tower was rebuilt here. The Polish peak "Smrek" (Spruce) has a height of 1,123 metres and lies just across the Czech-Polish border. The Jizera River rises on the southern slopes of the mountain, and near the top, on the western slope of the mountain, there is a natural monument called Klečoviště na Smrku (the dwarf mountain pine site on Smrk).

» A trip to the forest (6.7 km):

Head to the Smrk (Spruce) Mountain from the Smědava car park and follow the green Smrková (Spruce) Trail to the first signpost to the Černá (Black) Smědá lakelet. Continue along the green trail to the Předěl (Boundary Line) signpost (888 m above sea level). From there, follow the red hiking trail to the foot of Smrk (1,100 m above sea level). You can climb to the top of Smrk via the blue trail called the Heavenly Ladder ("Nebeský žebřík" in Czech).

The Štolpich road – The pride of the builders of the **Jizera Mountains roads**

The former pride of the Jizera Mountains – the "alpine road", called the Štolpich Road, leading from the village of Ferdinandov near the town of Hejnice up along the Velký Štolpich (The Great Štolpich Brook) dates back to 1891. A voluminous book was published about it, which showed every section of the daring and beautiful forest trail in dozens of pictures. Anyone who knows this road leading through the Štolpich gorge today would not recognise the old photographs: the flood of 1958 washed away the road in several places and its destruction was completed in the following years.

There used to be a large commemorative plaque on the Štolpich Road, but today there is only a huge stone bed carved into a huge rock on the right side of the lower bridge in the Štolpich gorge. People often ask what it

commemorated. The plaque was placed there by a branch of the Mountain Society to honour the eccentric Austrian Empress Elisabeth, who was murdered in Geneva in September 1898 by an Italian anarchist. It was removed in 1924.

NEVRLÝ M.: About Old Paths. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 314

» A trip to the forest (17 km):

Wander through the Jizera forests to the Hejnice Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The trip starts in Bedřichov, at the terminus of the public transport route No. 101 from Jablonec nad Nisou. Follow the yellow trail past the small reservoir along the well-known ski route towards the Nová Louka mountain meadow. After leaving the quiet forest enclave, continue on the green trail. Go past the U Gregorova Kříže (At Gregor's Cross) crossroads and continue along the Hejnice trail to the well-known junction called Hřebínek (a refreshment kiosk). From Hřebínek, the route descends through the Malý (Small) Štolpich valley along the so-called Rauscheck Road. Soon, views of the slopes of the Zadní (Back) Divočák Mountain and the Přední (Front) Divočák Mountain and the valley to the town of Nové Město pod Smrkem will open up on the left. The path, lined with ancient beech trees and massive rocks, descends sharply into the valley of Malý Štolpich to the Nad Ferdinandovem crossroads. From here, you can already see the rocky and wild slopes of the Ořešník Mountain with its summit cross. You will continue walking uphill for about half an hour to the Velký (Great) Štolpich waterfall, and as far as to the second bridge, you will be following the legendary Štolpich Road, completed in 1891. It connected the village of Ferdinandov with the Smědava area. From the waterfall, you will ascend towards Ořešník. The lookout rock has been accessible since 1898, when the Hejnice branch of the mountain association had a steep staircase carved and equipped with a handrail. After descending to the town of Hejnice, the trip can end with a tour of the Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, or the exhibition hall located in the former Franciscan monastery. The train station is about 10 minutes away.

The Empress Elizabeth Memorial: GPS coordinates: 50.1638533N, 17.0852181E

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The Jizerka – The crown of the Jizera Mountains

I often come to Jizerka, from the north or the south, also by a trail from the west through the forests, and a bunch of times at dusk from the east, from the Jizera marshes, but still: blessed be the bygone day of my first visit there! The sun was setting, and mistle thrushes were flying out of the meadows and dropping down into the woods with a sharp cry. The forests I emerged from were still dripping with rawness in May, but Jizerka was already damp and warm. I stood above the settlement for a long time: the air was still and the soft scent of the early evening was wafting down the slope. The smoke rose to the sky. A heavenly peace was hovering over Jizerka. I didn't see any people, but there were sounds from the area below the slope of the Bukovec Hill that indicated their presence, perhaps bells, maybe dogs howling. A woody, milky scent. Deep below, the running water shone. Bell towers on rooftops. And then only the forests, all around in every direction, the immense forests of the Jizera Mountains and the Giant Mountains. The old settlement lying in their midst like their crown.

NEVRLÝ M.: Jizerka – the Crown of the Mountains. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 19

» A trip to the forest (6.5 km):

You can choose a route to the Jizerka settlement from the car park in the saddle near the Smědava restaurant. From the Smědava chalet, follow the E3 Hřebenovka green trail. It initially leads along a forest asphalt road. At the Černá (Black) Smědá crossroads, the trail turns left and continues along a gravel path that takes you to the Předěl (Boundary Line) crossroads, where you join the red trail and continue to the Zelený kámen (Green Stone) crossroads. Here, you take a narrow path that transforms into wooden walkways and a beaten track, which will take you to the Pytlácké Kameny (Poachers' Stones) Mountain. From there, follow the red trail to the Jizerka settlement. You can return to Smědava along the Tři iseriny (Three Iserines) nature trail.

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The Královka – The most famous lookout tower in the **Jizera Mountains**

The most famous lookout tower in the Jizera Mountains is Královka or, as it used to be called, König's Height ("Königova výšina" in Czech). A wooden tower stood on the mountain ridge above the village of Bedřichov as early as 1888–1906. When a storm in November 1906 uprooted it, the present stone tower was built very quickly: its foundation stone was laid at the end of May 1907, and the opening ceremony took place as early as in September of the same year. The old Královka mountain chalet, which had stood near the tower since 1890, burned down in 1933, and so the present chalet was built in the following three years right next to the lookout tower.

NEVRLÝ M.: About the Lookout Towers of the Jizera Mountains. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 51

» A trip to the forest (2.2 km / 11.5 km):

A dominant feature of the Královka complex in the village of Janov nad Nisou is a stone lookout tower, which is popular with tourists. In good weather, the tower offers a beautiful view of the Jizera Mountains, the Giant Mountains ("Krkonoše" in Czech), Poland and Germany, the Bohemian Paradise ("Český ráj" in Czech), the Ještěd Mountain and the town of Jablonec nad Nisou. The complex also includes a restaurant and a playground. The so-called Ant Trail ("Mravenčí stezka" in Czech) leads from Bedřichov and is ideal for a walk with children, then you can continue from Královka to the Prezidentská (President's) Chalet. If you want to choose a longer route, start from the village of Hrabětice, continue through the forest to the Josefův Důl Dam on the Kamenice River via the Josefův Důl reservoirs. At the end of the second dam, take the yellow trail to the former glassmaking village of Kristiánov and then continue along the blue trail to the Nová Louka mountain meadow. From Nová Louka, you can follow the yellow trail to the Královka lookout tower.

*7 The Uhlířova Čapka rock – The mother of rocks in the **Jizera Mountains**

The rock rises like a granite bastion from the slopes of the Stržový Hill. The Uhlířova Čapka rock (The Coal Miner's Cap rock) was the first ever climbed rock and therefore became the mother rock for the climbers of Liberec. The so-called Dříčský Komín (the Dříč Rock Chimney) of its valley wall was climbed as early as 13 September 1891, and it was from here that mountaineering started its triumphant journey in the Jizera Mountains.

p.174

Close to the Uhlířova Čapka (Coal Miner's Cap) rock you can find the Oldřichovské Bučiny (Oldřichov Beech Forests) nature trail: Leave your car at the Oldřichov Saddle ("Oldřichovské sedlo" in Czech) and take the clearly visible trail starting near the car park and the local pub U Kozy (At the Goat). The walk leads through the Lysé Rocks ("Lysé skály" in Czech) to the rock castle. Along the way, you will pass through a rare area of Jizera Mountains beech forests, which are interesting not only for their natural composition, but also for the various rock massifs and formations found in the surroundings.

Jizera Mountains

I approached the Štolpich waterfall noiselessly, from above, via the route from the Ořešník rock. It was a weekday and I was surprised to see a lone boy by the waterfall. He was maybe seventeen years old. The wind was blowing and the boy neither heard nor saw me. He stood quietly, thinking about something. High above the waterfall, a spruce tree lay uprooted over the raging Štolpich waterfall. It extended from the rocks of the right bank to the area below the destroyed Stolpich Trail ("Štolpišská cesta" in Czech) on the opposite side. The tree was huge, but it didn't lie horizontally. Its end was covered by an almost impenetrable thicket of branches, its central part above the waterfall was bare. I stood up in the forest and watched how the danger attracted the boy like a magnet. Twice he advanced to the trunk, twice he retreated. He had no one to show off to, he was alone in the woods and he also knew that no one would come to his aid. The waterfall was thundering and deep; perhaps ten metres below the trunk, the water was raging on the boulders. Then the boy tossed his head, took off his backpack, and stepped onto the fallen tree. He walked slowly, but steadily. The bark was already partly peeled off, the wood rotten. He looked ahead of him. Above the greatest depth, just above the waterfall, he paused for a moment, but immediately resumed his cautious, yet light step. He came to a tangle of branches. Their resilient netting prevented walking, and in places, the boy had to crawl along the thin end of the spruce on his knees. He crossed successfully. He stepped out onto the road and waved his arms triumphantly above his head as a sign to himself of his own victory. This gesture told it all. Then he went back over the upper timbered bridge to the other side, picked up his backpack and disappeared into the woods. He had earned his day.

p.177

» A trip to the forest (5 km):

The easiest way to the Velký (Big) Štolpich waterfall leads from the town of Hejnice, through the village of Ferdinandov, along the Velký Štolpich valley, following the green and yellow trail to the crossroads by the waterfall. For its entire length, there is a hard-surfaced forest trail, originally a

NEVRLÝ M.: About the Rocks. A Book about the Jizera Mountains,

» A trip to the forest (1.3 km):

The Štolpich – The most romantic waterfall in the

NEVRLÝ M.: About the Rocks. A Book about the Jizera Mountains,

road. A more difficult option (forest trail, rocks, steep ascent) is the red trail of roughly the same length via the Ořešník lookout rock (800 m). The waterfall can also be reached from the ridges of the Jizera Mountains by following the yellow and red trails.

The Jizera – The queen of the Jizera Mountains rivers

Forests, which often give names to mountains and ridges, change, but rivers have been flowing unchanged since time immemorial. Their queen is Jizera, which also gave the mountains their name. Everyone agrees that the origin of the name is both pre-Slavic and pre-Germanic, probably Celtic. The root of the word is said to be traced back to the ancient Indian isirás, which means swift, rapid, fast-flowing, fresh, strong. The Czech transcription of Jizera (mentioned as Gizera as early as 1297) is taken directly from the Celtic base, so it is not a translation from German.

NEVRLÝ M.: About Ancient Names. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 234

» A trip to the forest (19 km):

The starting point is the Harrachov – Mýtiny railway station. From there, follow the green trail up the steep hill until you reach the top, where, after about 500 metres, you will encounter a state border tourist crossing. At the crossroads, turn left onto the unmarked gravel road and follow it for its entire six kilometres. The trail runs along the contour line, almost on the flat, high above the Jizera River. On a clear day, there are beautiful views of the Czech side of the mountains. A gentle descent will bring you to the mountain settlement of Orle. Between 1754 and 1888 there was a glassworks in the settlement. Today, it consists of only a few buildings surrounded by forest. You will then head back to the Czech side. First, go straight ahead, pass the first turning (green trail), and after about 400 metres, turn left at the second turnoff (cycle route No. 22) onto the forest trail. The path runs downhill on a rocky forest trail and approaches the mighty Jizera River.

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The Jizerka Peat Bog Nature Reserve – The Great Jizera Meadow – the pearl of the Jizera Mountains

The most extensive and most beautiful peat bog of the Jizera Mountains, the Great Jizera Meadow ("Velká Jizerská louka" in Czech) or the Jizera Peat Bog ("Rašeliniště Jizery" in Czech), has been included by UNESCO in the European network of the most important sites of wetland plant communities with the requirement of full protection.

NEVRLÝ M.: The Green World of Peat Bogs. A Book about the Jizera Mountains, p. 98

There is only one sound hovering over the August marshes: the dry rustle of dragonfly wings. Giant creatures with the monstrous names of aeschna and sympetrum fly over the still brown waters, mirroring their colourful bodies and reigning over the closed world of the Jizera peat bogs, just as the Mesozoic pterodactyls once did: they ruled the warm oceans. More than ever, a bitter, almost tropical scent rises from the green swaying carpets of peat moss. The cotton grass on the banks of the pools is at its most beautiful then: its white tufts sway from the marsh, and distant are the days when it stood there in the cold June rains with its ugly dark inflorescences. August also brings to the Jizera Mountains the softness of the ageing summer; summer's end in the mountains. During those days I saw the Great Jizera Meadow for the first time in my life. A memorable month and a memorable day -Ihave loved the Jizera Mountains ever since.

NEVRLÝ M.: August – the Month of Bitter Scents. A Book about the Iizera Mountains, p. 105

» A trip to the forest (7 km):

The Tři iseriny (Three Iserines) nature trail (the Bukovec Nature Reserve – the Jizerka settlement – the Jizerka Peat Bog National Nature Reserve) introduces visitors to the diversity and richness of the nature of the Jizera Mountains and its historical curiosities. Its first stop is on the southern edge of Jizerka, and it ends at a viewpoint overlooking the uplands of the Jizerka Peat Bog National Nature Reserve. The trail has twelve stops along its six-kilometre span and passes through the Bukovec Nature Reserve, the ancient gold-mining, glass-making and wood-cutting settlement of Jizerka, and continues through the Jizerka Peat Bog National Nature Reserve.

Walk on the marked trails only. Outside the settlement of Jizerka, it is forbidden to ride bicycles along the route of the nature trail.

