

CASTLES & CHATEAUX POPULAR EVEN IN CRISIS



Southern Bohemia in the Czech Republic is one of the most popular destinations for foreign tourists especially because of its numerous castles and chateaux. Last year almost one million sightseers explored the local historical sights.

In 2009 almost one million tourists visited castles and chateaus in Southern Bohemia in the Czech Republic. The year before (2008) there were even 60 thousand more visitors, reported Czech Press Agency.

According to the statistics released by the National Institute for the Preservation of Historical Monuments (NIPHM), **among the biggest attractions were the chateaus Cesky Krumlov, Hluboka and Cervena Lhota.** As the spokeswoman of the NIPHM Katerina Stychova said, a decline in the number of visitors in the historical monuments was expected but surprisingly the drop was not that significant.

Cesky Krumlov chateau is the South Bohemian number one historic sight for the last 15 years. In 2009, 311 thousand people visited the chateau and in 2008 it was even 27 thousand visitors more. "We were satisfied with the number of sightseers even though we welcomed fewer visitors. Taking into account the economic situation and general tendency of people to cut on holidays, we expected much worse results," said Pavel Slavko, the chateau warden.

The only historic sight in the region that did not record any drop in tourist numbers was chateau Cervena Lhota. According to their administrator, Jan Mikeš , it is because they have opened a new tour that has managed to attract many people. Even this year the chateau managers plan to further improve the quality of services so that tourists keep coming back. For instance, a small theatre for approximately 30 people is to be opened in the attic, which should lure visitors even in the evenings.

Other tourism sights also try to fight the declining tourist numbers with innovative services. New tours are for example being prepared at castle Rozmberk. Chateau Kratochvile is currently

reconstructing all exhibition rooms and halls. Most of the chateaux also open their premises to various cultural events and festivals, which proved to be an effective way to attract visitors from near and far.

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