

# DARK TOURS: EXPLORE THE UNDERGROUND IN CARLSBAD OR PILSEN



Every year Carlsbad, Pilsen or Jilove u Prahy lure numerous tourists because of their spa, beer or gold mines respectively. Lately, their complex underground tunnels that run underneath the local houses and roads however have become a popular attraction as well.

In the last decade a number of cities and towns in the Czech Republic have opened their underground to the public. Often the tunnels are simply more or less well preserved remains of complexes that were built for various purposes in the past. Tourists can thus visit for example the underground tunnels in the spa city Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), the beer city Plzeň (Pilsen), or Jilove u Prahy.

**Spa goers and other tourists in west Bohemian Karlovy Vary can enliven their stay by joining two kinds of underground tours offered in the city.** Travelers may enjoy a walk under the local colonnade and observe the mineral springs rising several meters under the ground. Another tunnel leads under the Church of St. Magdalene where the visitors can explore the main charnel house.

**Plzeň (Pilsen) besides its famous brewery offers to the public a unique tour exploring the complicated maze under the city.** The complex of tunnels and passages connect numerous cellars of old city houses. In the past the cellars were often used as a refuge and stores in the time of wars. In times of peace people used the passages as storerooms for food as well as beer. The Plzeň underground complex is very old and spans ca. 19 kilometers. The tunnels go three stories under ground and the third one is flooded, so nobody really knows what is down there.

**Closer to Prague, Jilové u Prahy has been world known for its ancient gold mines.** One of the first people who discovered and mined the precious metal were Celts who lived in the region. During the rule of Charles IV the town had the biggest gold mine in Europe. Today more than a thousand of adits have been mapped under the city but only three of them are open to visitors. One of them is even accessible to people on wheel chairs. Naturally the biggest attraction of the tunnels are veins of gold that the tourists can find there as well as the common inhabitants of such dark places - the bats.

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