

# The development of the industrial city Hodonín (Czech Republic) from the perspective of tourism

Zagospodarowanie przemysłowego miasta Hodonín (Republika Czeska)  
na potrzeby turystyki

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the development of tourism and the transformation of a small, but significant for its industrial past, Southern Moravian town of Hodonín and its surroundings. The history of the city is briefly summarized and put in context with the progressing industrialization of the region (production of lignite and hydrocarbons, followed by a significant reduction of industries and, consequently, resulting touristic activities). Specifically, the most attractive regional touristic activities, such as enotourism, cyclo-tourism and water tourism, are listed in this paper. In particular, cyclo-tourism is strongly linked with enotourism as most of the cycling trails (included into the Greenways network) pass through the best known wineries in the area, and they also form a functional system of communication routes with basic cycling trails in the Czech Republic. The progress in the development of water tourism is, by contrast, enabled by industrial advancements, where the Baťa Canal (an important technical monument) has been utilized as a waterway. Eventually, the Museum of Oil Mining and Geology in Hodonín attractively introduces the tourists into the history and present state of oil and gas production in the region.

**Key words:** industrial tourism, technical monument, oil and gas exploration and exploitation, cyclo-tourism, enotourism, wineries

**Treść:** Artykuł porusza problem zagospodarowania turystycznego i przekształceń zachodzących w mieście Hodonín i w jego otoczeniu. To niewielkie miasto, położone w południowej części Moraw, było w przeszłości znaczącym ośrodkiem przemysłowym. Autorzy przedstawiają zwięźle historię miasta i rozwój przemysłu w regionie (wydobycie węgla brunatnego i węglowodorów). Po okresie uprzemysłowienia nastąpiło ograniczenie produkcji, połączone z rozwojem turystyki. Szczegółowo omówiono najbardziej atrakcyjne formy turystyki w regionie: turystykę winiarską, turystykę rowerową i turystykę wodną. Pokazano ścisły związek turystyki rowerowej i winiarskiej, ponieważ większość lokalnych szlaków

rowerowych (należących do sieci Greenways) prowadzi przez najbardziej znane w okolicy winnice. Szlaki te powiązane są zresztą z podstawowym systemem szlaków rowerowych Republiki Czeskiej. Natomiast rozwój turystyki wodnej umożliwiają dawne obiekty infrastruktury przemysłowej, takie jak np. Kanał Baťa, będący zabytkiem techniki, obecnie wykorzystywany jako droga wodna. Z kolei Muzeum Eksploatacji Ropy Naftowej i Geologii w Hodoninie wprowadza turystę w problemy historii i obecnego stanu produkcji ropy naftowej i gazu ziemnego w regionie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** turystyka przemysłowa, zabytki techniki, poszukiwanie i eksploatacja ropy naftowej i gazu ziemnego, turystyka rowerowa, turystyka winiarska, winnice

## Introduction

The areal extent of the Czech Republic is 78,866 km<sup>2</sup> and is subdivided into three main historical lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Although not a large one by its territory, the Czech Republic offers many various points of interest (natural, historic etc.) evenly distributed over the country. Tourism, as well as the whole economy of our country, has undergone some substantial changes in the past 25 years, with the reduction of heavy industrial production, including metallurgy and raw materials exploitation. With such a turn of events, our republic was eventually left with many industrial facilities, frequently extraordinary and highly valuable constructions, that remained abandoned or were dropped out of use (Tomíšková, Šimková, 2008). As these industrial sectors declined, the involved regions started to look for possibilities to employ the “suddenly vacant” labour force in and outside the sphere of innovative technologies, one of them being the development of tourism. This appeared to be a particularly challenging and demanding task in traditional industrial centres, which lack the conventional tourist attractions, as for example architectural, cultural amenities, baths and/or historical sights.

This article provides an example, which illustrates a miscellaneous story of a whole region that was originally strongly agricultural and famous for its viticulture and orchards. The exploitation of lignite and oil has changed this region for one and half century. However, having such strong roots in the traditional fields of production (wine making, etc.), the

return to these activities, after the decline of the mining industry, was not a very complicated process. These historical

changes will be exemplified by the Southern Moravian city of Hodonín and its surroundings (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Location of Hodonín in the Czech Republic (after [www.hodonin.eu](http://www.hodonin.eu)) • Położenie Hodonína w Republice Czeskiej (wg [www.hodonin.eu](http://www.hodonin.eu))

## History of Hodonín

The city of Hodonín with its 26,000 residents is among the largest cities of the south-eastern Moravia region. The history of the settlement located on the right bank of the Morava River that has become Hodonín goes back to the late Stone Age. The settlement was situated on the Amber Road, which was an important trade route connecting the North Sea and the Baltic Sea in the north, with the Mediterranean Sea, in the south. An important site on the route, the crossing of the Morava River, was guarded by the fortress built by Bretislav I, Duke of Bohemia (1035–1055). The town privileges were granted to the village in 1228, by the Queen consort Constance of Hungary (spouse of the King Ottokar I of Bohemia). The development of the city was affected by the raids of Hungarian and Turkish armies, and also, during the Thirty Years' War. In 1645, the city was burned down by the Swedish army to such extent that there were just two inhabitable buildings left on the town square ([www.hodonin.eu](http://www.hodonin.eu)). The true expansion of Hodonín began 200 years later (1841), when the railway station was built on the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway, which connected Vienna with Kraków and with the Wieliczka salt mine (both were parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time, today in the area of Poland).

The Hodonín region experienced significant industrial development, due to the production of lignite in the South-Moravian Lignite Basin (lignite seams Dubňany and Kyjovice). Exploitation of the Dubňany seam commenced in 1824, in the eponymous city (9 km of Hodonín) at the mines Herbert and Adolf-Stefan. The Heinrich mine has started lignite exploitation in the Mikulčice village (10 km of Hodonín), in 1872 ([www.zdarbuh.cz](http://www.zdarbuh.cz)). In the following years, lignite was worked at 220 major mines and ca. 45 minor mines, and was utilized for house heating, in the glass making industry, brick plants and eventually in thermal power plants (e.g. in Hodonín). Other industrial branches started in the region in 1851 – a malthouse, in 1860 – brick plants, in 1866 – a sugar refinery, and in 1871 – the first steam mill. The kerosene street lighting (1859) later replaced with the electric street lamps installed in Hodonín in 1899 both proved the growing significance of the city (Mraka, Štarha, 1995). At that time, Hodonín's population reached about 10,000 inhabitants (the maximum number of residents was 34,000 in 1999).

The region experienced another important advancement in the 1920s and 1930s when oil and gas deposits were discovered, and petroleum production has started (Fig. 2). The "Moravská těžařská společnost" company drilled the first successful well in 1919, right at the south-western margin of Hodonín city, next to the farm named Nesyt. The oil reservoir



was located at 313 m depth. The name of the farm then gave the name to the oil field and also to the whole company: “Naftové doly Nesyt”. Another reservoir was discovered next to the Ratiškovice village in 1919. The commentators of that period labelled this event as the “discovery of the key to the Moravian treasury, the Moravian Pennsylvania”, referring to the “Pennsylvania oil rush” that took place in Pennsylvania in 1859, after the discovery of oil by Colonel Drake (Čizmář, 2004). In 1924, the reservoirs produced about 4 tank trucks of oil and the “Naftové doly Nesyt” became the major oil company in Moravia. The quickly expanding chemical industry began to widely utilize various oil derivatives. The demand for oil increased further, with the start of car production after the Great War. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, oil served as the source of asphalt, which was used in civil engineering and as a semi-product for production of soap, fats, polishing agents and resins that were applied in brewing.



Fig. 2. The Nesyt oil field in 1938 (authors' collection, 2004) • Pole naftowe Nesyt, rok 1938 (ze zbiorów autora, 2004)

The progressive growth of Hodonín city was also influenced by other activities outside the industrial segment. In 1865, the reading club Svatopluk was established, later renamed to the Educational Society Masaryk. It is important to mention that on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1850, the influential philosopher, scientist and politician, the founder of Czechoslovakia and its first president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (Fig. 3) was born in Hodonín. Among the important cultural events, it is worth mentioning the construction of the House of Arts in 1913, which became the main centre of fine arts in Moravia ([www.hodonin.eu](http://www.hodonin.eu)).

Since the 1950s, the attractiveness of Hodonín has been gradually increasing. For example, an ice arena (1958), outdoor swimming pool (1968) and zoo park (1976) were built. In 1978, the city was given the status of a bath health resort (in fact, one of the youngest bath health resorts in the Czech Republic), where muscular and cardiovascular systems are treated. The main healing agent in the city baths is the unique, iodine-bromine brine supplied from three deep wells. Due to the aforementioned reasons, as well as thanks to the large accommodation infrastructure, Hodonín has become a very important centre of tourism in the whole microregion.



Fig. 3. A statue of Tomáš G. Masaryk, the first Czechoslovak President, photo M. Klempa • Pomnik Tomasza Masaryka, pierwszego prezydenta Czechosłowacji, fot. M. Klempa

## Tourism in the Hodonín region

Step by step, enotourism, archeo-tourism, folklore-tourism, cyclo-tourism, bathing tourism, water tourism and, lately, even industrial tourism have been developing in the studied region. The most important ones will be described below.

From various types of tourism, we can surely mark enotourism as the oldest one, and as strongly connected to folklore tourism in the region of interest. For a long time, Southern Moravia has been a synonym for fertile and prosperous land. From time immemorial (it is assumed that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, the Roman legions imported grapevines here), vineyards and wine cellars (even whole wine cellar streets) have created the unmistakable nature of the Southern Moravian landscape. Hodonín is no exception. Wine and viticultural traditions are inseparable parts of each village and city. Wine festivals are among the main annual events with the St. Lawrence Festival as the leading celebration. Such events usually encompass the performances of folklore ensembles, brass bands, dulcimer bands and, of course, wine and new wine degustation. However, the main event in each village is the folk costume feast (Fig. 4). The culmination usually takes place on that Sunday which is the closest to the name day of the saint who is the patron of the local church. During the feasts, the “Slovácko Verbuňk”, the solo impromptu dance of hundred-years-long tradition can be watched (originally performed by the young conscripts), accompanied by singing. It is listed among the Intangible UNESCO monuments.





Fig. 4. Typical folk costumes of the region, photo M. Klempa • Typowe stroje ludowe regionu, fot. M. Klempa



Fig. 5. Unique historical wine cellars Petrov–Plže, photo M. Klempa • Unikalne, historyczne piwnice winne Petrov–Plže, fot. M. Klempa

Bicycle touring has become a huge phenomenon, that has experienced a boom in the last two decades and, which still plays a major role among trends in active free time spending and relaxation. The Greenways programme, managed by the Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation creates the conditions for such activities in the region (Flamik, 2000).

The Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation is a member of the Environmental Partnership of Central Europe consortium (founded in 1991), along with the four similar foundations affiliated in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Among the main projects of the Partnership are the Prague–Vienna and the Kraków–Moravia–Vienna Greenways, and the Moravian Wine Trails.

The Moravian Wine Trails is the network of blazed bicycle trails leading through all ten wine-growing regions of Southern Moravia. Each of the wine-growing regions has its own viticultural bike trail that is connected to the main Moravian Wine Trail, starting in Uherské Hradiště and continuing to Znojmo villages. This wine trail differs from usual bike trails by its special marks. Wine trails are labelled with respect to the attractiveness of the land, the picturesqueness of the villages, the presence of wine cellars and other important historical monuments (Moravské vinařské stezky, 2007).

The longest of the described wine trails (113 km) named “Vinařská stezka Podlužím” leads through Hodonín. Among the main places of interest along this trail is the Baroque castle (built in 1642), which now hosts the Museum of Masaryk, with a permanent exhibition dedicated to the first president of Czechoslovakia and to the history of the city. Next, there is the St. Lawrence church built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the town hall built in Nurembergian Art Nouveau style. In the nearby Petrov village, tourists can visit one of the most interesting wine cellars in whole region – Plže (National Protected Area, see Figure 5 and 6). The oldest of these cellars were dug in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Moravské vinařské stezky, 2007).

Archeo-tourism in the region deserves attention, as well. Not far, south-westwards of Hodonín, near the Kyjovka stream is the village Mikulčice, famous for its archaeological excavations in the Slavic hillfort. This early medieval hillfort was one of the most important strongholds in the whole Great Moravia State, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Visitors can experience two exhibitions: The Great Moravian Mikulčice – “Castle in the Morava river meadow” and “Second church – the sacral architecture of the castle” (www.promoravia.blog.cz). Open-air walking paths present to the visitors the foundations of several discovered churches and the castle (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6. Entrance to a wine cellar, photo M. Klempa • Wejście do piwnicy winnej, fot. M. Klempa



Fig. 7. Remains of early medieval settlements, photo M. Klempa • Pozostałości wczesnośredniowiecznego osiedla, fot. M. Klempa



## Industrial tourism in the Hodonín region

Among other tourist branches that experienced rising popularity, we have to mention the youngest branch – industrial tourism.

Lignite exploitation has declined since the 1990's, and the last mine – “Mír” was abandoned in 2014. The most significant remnant of mining history is the Baťa Canal (Beran ed., 2013). Construction of this technical and natural monument was completed between 1934–1938, as a co-investment of the world-famous businessman – Jan Antonín Baťa, “The Shoemaker”. Originally, the 60-km-long canal was used for the transport of lignite from the Ratiškovice mine to the Otrokovice power plant and for irrigation of meadows and fields. Some parts of the waterway follow the natural Morava riverbed and some others were dug. Nowadays, the canal is navigable from Kroměříž to Hodonín and is widely used for water tourism. Without permission, it is possible to navigate small boats with up to 20 kW engines and at a maximum speed of 20 km/h ([www.bataknalodi.cz/batuv-kanal](http://www.bataknalodi.cz/batuv-kanal)). One of the interesting technical monuments is the tilted lignite dispenser (lignite was

loaded from carriages to boats) located in Sudoměřice (see Fig. 8). The nearby Ratiškovice village offers a visit to the Museum “Ve vagóně” (literally “inside the railway carriage”). The history of lignite mining in the region and transportation along the Baťa Canal is documented inside the two carriages. In the Dubňany village, there are also exhibitions concerning the history of mining and glass making industries.

The current oil and gas production sites gradually moved more and more outside the Hodonín city, but the headquarters of the oil company (Czechoslovakian Oil Fields, later Moravian Oil Fields – since 1992 transformed from the state-owned enterprise into the joint stock company MND, a.s.) always resided in Hodonín. Architecturally, the remarkable building of the MND headquarters is nowadays an inseparable part of the city.

The tourists interested in oil production history can visit the monument at the oldest Nesyt oil field or the Museum of Oil Production and Geology in Hodonín, established in the historical building of the former Austro-Hungarian military barracks (Fig. 9). A very interesting exhibition captures the tradition of oil production in Czechoslovakia, the geology of Moravia and the history of petroleum exploration.



Fig. 8. Technical monuments - tilted lignite dispenser on Baťa Canal, photo M. Klempa • Zabytek techniki – podnoszony dozownik węgla brunatnego na Kanale Baťa, fot. M. Klempa



Fig. 9. Historical building of military barracks – today's Museum of Oil Production and Geology in Hodonín, photo M. Klempa • Historyczny budynek koszar – obecnie siedziba Muzeum Eksploatacji Ropy Naftowej i Geologii w Hodoninie, fot. M. Klempa

## Conclusion

During the last 15 years, industrial tourism has shifted to the fore of the European Union's interest. This type of tourism offers knowledge of local history, based upon the monuments of industrial heritage, and also provides new experiences and adventures of discovery. One of the ways to present the indispensable values of the continuity of European civilization is to link the monuments of European industrial heritage with tourist routes leading across the continent.

Technical monuments attract a few interest groups of potential tourists. These would not be just nostalgic “Steampunk nature” or enthusiasts of all kinds of technics, but

perhaps also students of engineering and technology, who are keen to discover examples of machinery that they learn about. It is possible to establish cooperation between various public sector organizations. This trend shows the tourist potential of Czech technical monuments. Of course, the way from closed factories or closed mines to successful tourist products is very long, costly and difficult to organize. However, it is worth pursuing, because the Czech Republic has a great potential in this field.

Generally, it can be stated that the tourism has undergone essential changes, similar to the whole economy of our country, particularly over the past 25 years. Heavy industry retreated into the background, when mining, quarrying and the

metallurgical industry slowly ceased production. With the demise of these types of industry, the affected regions were seeking various options to employ the excessive labor force, rather poorly prepared to take jobs in the innovative high-tech industry. One of these ways was to develop the branch of tourism. In typical industrial districts which cannot offer “traditional” tourist attractions, as e.g. historical or architectural monuments, cultural institutions and events (museums and galleries) or, at least, spa and wellness resorts, this was a complex and long-lasting process.

The example presented here is the Hodonin region, originally a farmland, famous for wine making and gardening, where mining of lignite, oil and natural gas, and quarrying of industrial stones (granite, marble, etc.) lasted for almost one and half centuries. After the closure of the lignite mines and decline of petroleum production, the transition to other activities – particularly to the tourist sector – has become much easier.

There are a lot of other technical attractions (especially contemporary ones) in the Hodonin region, which could be presented to a wider audience. In many cases, it can be done by the simple development of short branches to the existing

wine cycling trails. For instance, the Podluží tourist trail may include the oil collection centres in the Hrusky and Podvorov municipalities, together with Tvrdonice technological equipment for underground gas storage. Alongside the trails, it is also possible to see the typical surface mining equipment called mine trestles, which are typical elements of the local, post-industrial landscape. Integrating the traditional tourist attractions, with industrial tourist objects provides other yet undeveloped tourist potential.

In the discussed region, a vast number of other technical monuments exist, that may catch public attention. Such objects should at least be identified and described. In many cases, they can be accessed by minor detours from the main wine trails. Near the already mentioned Podluží Wine Trail, we can find an oil collection centre near Hrušky and Podvorov villages. We can also visit a type of midstream technology plant, at the Tvrdonice underground gas storage facility. Typical sucker rod pumps for oil production can be seen along the whole trail, which contribute to the specific nature of the regional landscape. Significant touristic potential still exists when traditional tourist sites are integrated with industrial monuments.

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