

CZECH REPUBLIC

Kutná Hora: Historical Town Centre with the Church of St Barbara and the Cathedral of Our Lady at Sedlec

Brief description

Kutná Hora developed as a result of the exploitation of the silver mines. In the 14th century it became a royal city endowed with monuments that symbolized its prosperity. The Church of St Barbara, a jewel of the late Gothic period, and the Cathedral of Our Lady at Sedlec, which was restored in line with the Baroque taste of the early 18th century, were to influence the architecture of central Europe. These masterpieces today form part of a well-preserved medieval urban fabric with some particularly fine private dwellings.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1995

Agency responsible for site management

- Municipal Authority Kutná Hora
Havlíčkovo náměstí 552
28424 Kutná Hora
e-mail: kancelar@kutnahora.cz
Website: www.kutnahora.cz
- The National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites
Valdštejnské náměstí 3
11801 Praha 1
e-mail: stulc@up.npu.cz
Website: www.npu.cz

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (ii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

The inner historical town of Kutná Hora within the limits of the urban heritage reserve, plus the Convent Church of the former Cistercian Monastery at Sedlec as part of the urban agglomeration of Kutná Hora, which are being suggested for inclusion in the World Heritage List, meet the criteria of UNESCO directives in the sense of Article 29 para (ii). The historical centre of Kutná

Hora is the result of a complex evolution, in terms of both urban development and architecture. With its boundaries clearly demarcated, the town's setting in the surrounding landscape results in an exceptional appeal of the historical centre's panorama. The Sedlec Cathedral, the oldest in Bohemia, is an architectural treasure located on the grounds of the former monastery.

(i) Reasons for which the property is considered to meet one or more criteria posed on world heritage:

Re Article 24 para (i) of the UNESCO directives, the historical town of Kutná Hora was during the mediaeval period, from the early 14th century to the first third of the 16th century, after Prague the second most important centre of the Kingdom of Bohemia. This is apparent still today in the town's exceptional wealth of historical architecture, beginning with specimens of the Gothic style. The town's ground plan attests to complex evolution. Its agglomeration of architectures covering a wide variety of types and styles forms an exceptionally imposing and compact whole. A good many buildings meet top European heritage standards, representing precious documents of architectural history, above all covering the various phases of the Gothic and Baroque styles. The Sedlec Cathedral, the first of its kind to be built on Bohemia's territory, simultaneously exemplifies an early heritage preservation project linked moreover with the first grandiose manifestation of Neo-Gothic Baroque architecture. The interiors of many of the town's architectural monuments contain precious works of art including paintings, sculptures and applied art objects.

Re Article 24, para (ii), the panorama of historical Kutná Hora, bordered on the south-western side by the imposing Cathedral of St. Barbara, ranks alongside the most impressive sights of its kind. Of crucial relevance in that sense is the town's concentration of its main monumental architectures above a marked rift in the terrain formed by the valley of the Vrchlice brook. Kutná Hora's architecture of the Jagiellonian era (1471 - 1526) constitutes an important link in the evolution of the late Gothic style in Europe. The Cathedral of St. Barbara represents a unique work of cathedral architecture whose construction stretched over a period from the late 14th through the first half of the 16th centuries, Benedikt Ried's share in the building of St. Barbara's was broadly echoed in terms of influence throughout Central Europe.

The Sedlec Cathedral is a living document of the brilliance attained by Cistercian architecture at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, as well as testimony to an early heritage conservation project

carried out at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the first monumental-scale example of Gothic-style Baroque architecture designed by Giovanni Santini.

Re Article 24, para (iii), the historical centre of Kutná Hora is literally permeated with evidence of the long-vanished Mediaeval silver mining industry. At the time of their inception and Mediaeval operation, the town's mines ranked alongside the world's largest. In all, those early compounds, which were centred around a pit called Osel, occupied an area of several square kilometres, reaching as deep as 450 metres under the surface. The most interesting surviving remnant of mediaeval mining is St. George's Gallery whose 250-metre-long section is open to visitors, as part of the installations of the Kutná Hora Museum. The historical mines are protected under Government Decree on Heritage Reserve, of 1961.

Apart from the historical mines, the whole area of the town constitutes a living depository of material evidence of earlier settlement including remains of buildings, largely in the form of Gothic stone cellars underneath Kutná Hora's gardens and public grounds. The area occupied by Kutná Hora deserves a priority archaeological rating. Anticipated future surveys are likely to unearth several ruined Romanesque churches, notably underneath the Sedlec Cathedral, the site of the foundations of the original convent church dating from the second third of the 12th century.

Re Article 24, para (iv), located within the borders of the historical town and in its proximity are two monumental cathedrals, both of which are of exceptional interest in terms of both ground-plan concept and architectural design. The Cathedral of St. Barbara is the product of gradual, highly varied dynamic evolution that lasted from the late 14th century until the first half of the 16th century, featuring highly remarkable vaulting systems and an interior furnished with an immense wealth of art objects. The Sedlec Cathedral has its most impressive feature in its blend of the original architectural conception dating from the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, and elements supplemented during a major restoration and redesigning project carried out during the high Baroque era. Beyond that, Kutná Hora boasts an imposing number of architecturally varied and interesting smaller churches, public buildings and merchant houses, most of which date from the late Gothic period and feature high-Baroque adaptations.

Re Article 24, para (v), Kutná Hora's late-Gothic merchant houses are superior in value to similar

historical urban housing compounds anywhere else in the Czech Republic. Of particular interest are their Mediaeval vaulted interiors. Thanks exclusively to the institution of the urban heritage reserve in Kutná Hora have these objects been protected from the perils of utilitarian adaptation. Kutná Hora's historical residential complex amounts to an exquisite document of the housing conditions of the town's inhabitants in its heyday as the silver-mining centre of the realm during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Re Article 24, para (vi), Kutná Hora is a town of great historical renown. It was there that King Wenceslas II launched a coinage reform which introduced the Prague groschen, a unit which was to stay in existence for a long time as one of Europe's most prestigious currencies and which laid foundations to the immense wealth of Bohemia's kings, the realm as a whole and the town of Kutná Hora in particular. The Kutná Hora coinage reform was doubtless directly linked with Bohemia's short-term acquisition of the Kingdom of Poland and, shortly thereafter, the Kingdom of Hungary.

Unparalleled anywhere else in Western Christendom has been the status of the grand Cathedral of St. Barbara, in that it was set up without a specific ecclesiastic function, purely as a monument to the town's endeavour for the supreme manifestation of its artistic and cultural aspirations.

The town played an important historical role during the Hussite Wars, and was throughout the Middle Ages one of the foremost centres of art in the Kingdom of Bohemia. On the whole, Kutná Hora can be ranked as Bohemia's second most important historical centre, immediately after Prague.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

*That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)**:*

In its urban fabric and its buildings Kutná Hora constitutes an outstanding example of a medieval town whose wealth and prosperity was based on its silver mines. As a result it was endowed with many buildings of high architectural and artistic quality, notably the Church of St Barbara, which had a profound influence on subsequent developments in the architecture of central Europe. Its stock of well conserved domestic buildings is also of great significance, since they illustrate the social and economic parameters that distinguish settlements of this kind exceptionally well.

Committee Decision

The Committee decided to inscribe the site under criteria (ii) and (iv) as an outstanding example of the medieval town whose wealth and prosperity was based on its silver mines. The Church of Saint Barbara and other buildings were underlined as having particular architectural and artistic quality and as having had a profound influence on subsequent developments in the architecture of Central Europe.

- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Law No. 20/1987 Coll. deals with the problems of the protection of cultural monuments and monument protected areas
- Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 16 417/87-VI/1 - declaration of historic centres of some towns Municipal Conservation Areas of August 31, 1961
- Decision on the establishment and declaration of the buffer zone of the Municipal Conservation Area of October 11, 1982
- Declaration of the Church of St. Barbara and the Italian Court a National Cultural Monument
- Regulations for potential new built-up areas and determining the main principles of possible advancement and development of the settlement, established through a zoning plan of the town since 1994, elaborated subsequently in 2001
- Programme of regeneration of the town, elaborated in 1992 and approved by the Municipal Authority in 1993. The latest updating was approved by the Municipal Authority on November 25, 2004 as the detailed plan for 2004-2010
- The strategic plan of development of the town, providing long-term coordination of public and private activities of the demographic, economic, social, cultural and ecological character in the territory of the town

- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Urban centre, religious use, visitor attraction

Management /Administrative Body

- Plans to establish a steering group in 2006
- Plans to appoint Coordinator
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: regional; local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Establishment of steering group, coordinator and elaboration of the management plan;
- Continuation of elaborating the town-planning documentation.

5. Management Plan

- No management plan
- Management plan under preparation, for completion and adoption by 06/2007
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Municipal Authority Kutna Hora

6. Financial Resources**Financial situation**

- Estate management is part of the all-town budget and as such the funds for the estate management are not separated.
- Subsidy programmes from the Ministry of Culture (the Programme of Regeneration of Municipal Conservation Areas and Municipal Conservation Zones, Programme of Rescue of Architectonic Heritage, Emergency Programme, Programme of Restoration of Movable Cultural Monuments)
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 30, as well as volunteer assistance in publicity and cultural undertakings and work of professional commissions and action committees

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, interpretation, visitor management
- Average: promotion; education

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Complex monument care through professional service from the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites including assistance regarding architecture, urbanism, care for historic verdure, archaeology, care for movable monuments. The technological laboratory of the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites in Prague provides specialized investigations
- Documentation centre of the Foundation Kutná Hora – a UNESCO Monument with the support of the Municipal Authority containing the archives of documentation and investigations
- Czech Museum of Silver with professional workers and the State District Archives
- National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites in Prague and the Faculty of Architecture of the Czech Technical College in Prague offer specialized educational programmes in the field of monument care
- Professional assistance from the National Committee ICOMOS, universities, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
- Extramural courses of the monuments care in the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites in Prague
- Publishing of methodological materials of the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites which aim to unify procedures in the preparation and assessment of the undertakings of repair and restoration of cultural monuments
- Professional seminars, workshops and other professional unrepeatable events are organized oriented at particular subjects from the field of the monuments care, repair of building objects and restoration of works of art

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: estimated at 200,000 in 2004
- Trend: slightly increasing

- Visitor facilities: tourist information centre, information system on the streets of the town, museums, galleries, accommodation, shops

10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the value of the site; monitoring exercises; condition surveys; archaeological surveys; transportation studies; tourism marketing analysis
- Results used as background materials in the elaboration of the town and regulatory plan and for the preparation of the strategic plan of development of the town. They will also be used in the creation of the management plan according to the operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of 2005

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Joint presentation and publicity: “The Czech UNESCO Heritage” at tourism fairs
- Travelling exhibition: “UNESCO Czech Monuments”, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Czech embassies abroad
- Celebration of 10 years of inscription of the town into the World Heritage List through an exhibition on the building development of the monument in recent years
- In cooperation with the Association of UNESCO associated schools, an information brochure on the UNESCO World Heritage is available
- Kutnohorské stříbření - a ceremony in costumes evoking the atmosphere of the most famous period of the town, with accompanying programmes
- Concert Week - organ concerts in the Church of St. Barbara
- Kutnohorské bienále - international guitar competition
- Ius regale montanorum - a ceremony and professional seminars on the occasion of the anniversary of 700 years of the mining code, in 2000
- Website: www.kutnahora.com

- Local participation: local inhabitants influence the estate management by the election of the municipal board of representatives and participate in the process of strategic planning. The public also participates in the discussing of development plans and gives opinion on the problems of town planning

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Repair of the majority of burghers' houses: Repairs of houses land-registry Nos. 29 and 30 in Barborská street; land-registry Nos. 64 and 122 at Rejsek Square; land-registry Nos. 170 and 171 in Šultysova street; the former municipal hospital land-registry No. 228 at Pirknerovo Square; the former District Authority land-registry No. 178 and house land-registry No. at Václavské Square; land-registry Nos. 521 and 543 at Jánské Square; land-registry No. 488 in the street U Jelena
- Repairs to monuments in the town including: Church of St. Barbara: - repair of the roof truss with new roofing of original slate, extensive static securing, restoration of the supporting system and restoration of the stone-sculptural decoration. Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Sedlec: - static securing of the building, repair of the roof truss, complete restoration of the interior. Italian Court: - overall repair, especially the roof, the plaster of façades, windows, restoration of the stone-sculptural decoration. Stone fountain: - overall restoration. Chapel of the Corpus Christi: - secured and repaired completely, prepared for use in occasional exhibitions. Stone House: - restoration of stone façade, repairs to roof. Church of St. John of Nepomuk: - restoration of the interior. Church of the Virgin Mary Na Náměti: - repair of the roof of the tower. Hrádek: - overall restoration of the monument, including repair of the facades. Chapel of the Holy Heart of Our Lord at the Nunnery of St. Ursula: - overall construction repair and complete restoration of the interior. Column of the Virgin Mary in Šultysova street: - overall restoration and securing of the monument. Gallery of Baroque sculptures in front of the Jesuit college: - securing and restoration
- Archaeological investigations at: Anenské Square, Komenského Square, Jánské Square,

area of the Jesuit college, part of municipal moat, the locality of the former Cistercian monastery in Sedlec

- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme in place
- Continuous monitoring by the National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites Centre, performed regularly since 1999. Each year reports are elaborated on the condition of the monument that are discussion. Social-economic indicators are also monitored and assessed by the Town Development Institute in Brno
- Key indicators: panorama of the town with the main dominants, its possible changes or impairment; the linking up landscape framework of the town, its preservation or possible changes; urban structure, its preservation and possible further development; development of public areas and municipal; development of the so-called roof landscape; the authenticity of the historic building and monuments fund

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: Conservation, Social, Economic
- Strength/Weaknesses of management: lack of management plan

Future actions:

- Creation of a management plan according to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of 2005