

Spas, Museums and Music

A visit to the Czech Republic
nourishes both body and spirit

By Wendy Lindsay

The Spa Triangle

With renewed international interest in spas and natural health, more and more travellers are re-discovering healthy holidays in the Czech Republic.

Marianske Lazne, Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), and Frantiskovy Lazne (Franzenbad) are referred to as the Czech "Spa Triangle." The mineral springs in this region were discovered back in the Middle Ages and are credited with relieving a wide range of ills including



The bridges of Prague span the Vltava River. Left and below, the Imperial and Esplanade hotels.

Under sunny skies in historic Marianske Lazne, near the Czech Republic's western border, Emperor Franz Joseph waved to the crowds as he cantered regally down the promenade on his gleaming mount. Nearby, elegantly clad Edwardian ladies with lace parasols strolled beside an

ornate baroque colonnade. It was as if the clock had been turned back to the second half of the 19th century, the heyday of the Czech spa towns.

The occasion was the 200th anniversary celebrations of Marianske Lazne's famous mineral springs. Long known by its German name, Marienbad, the spa town attracted no-

bility and intelligentsia from across Europe. Over the years, Mark Twain, Chopin, Goethe, Freud, Kafka, and British King Edward VII (and, reportedly, his mistress) came often to "take the waters." Today palatial summer houses that once accommodated visiting aristocracy have been converted to spa hotels, such as the opulent

Hotel Esplanade, where visitors can relax in luxury during a spa holiday. We sipped spring water through the spout of special mugs, soaked in a mineral bath, and swam in the spa's warm mineral pool. Combined with some hiking, the wonderfully fresh mountain air, and the delicious meals, it really was invigorating.

Photo: Christophe Boissieu/Corbis
Photos: Jim Hubbard/Alamy (pool); Wendy Lindsay (hotel).

