



# The Iron Trail / Železná Ruda

## 1 Železná Ruda – centrum



Length of Path 2,6 km

## Železná Ruda – centre

The Železná Ruda area lies in the so-called King's Forest. This name originally referred to an uninhabited area covered in dense impenetrable forests at the Bohemian and Bavarian border, a strip of land somewhere between Zdíkov at the southeast and Nýrsko and the northwest of Šumava. The so-called Světelská trail which connected Bohemia with the Bavarian town Zwiesel, cut through the dense forest in the place of today's Železná Ruda. Perhaps as early as in the 12th century, during the Bogen rule, the area is settled by Bavarians. In 1422, king Sigismund pledged King's Forest, including Nýrsko, Hamry, and Hojsova Stráž, together with the customs rights to Sir Bohuslav of Janovice and Rýzmburk. This pledge was conditional upon the opening of a so-called Rothkoth, an iron stockpile for iron extraction and appointing a crusher. A portion of the profits made by this endeavour would then go to the royal treasury.

In 1815, a local blacksmith Georg Schreil asked for leave to build a hammermill in Železná Ruda, because the smithy he took over from his father in 1801 burned down. He was given the permit the following year, on the condition of building the hammermill outside of town, precisely because of fire safety reasons. He was to pay yearly rent of 15 golden pieces to the owner of the estate, respectively to the guardians of then underage Franz Xaver Hafenbrädl. He was to buy wood from Bavaria. The hammermill most likely did not start functioning until after 1826, and it was definitely running in 1837. In 1841, Franz Xaver Hafenbrädl buys the indebted hammermill from Georg's son for 6 666 golden pieces. In 1843, he leased it out to hammerman Pánka. Lessees change until 1945. After that the hammermill was declared a technological heritage site, but its furnishings rotted, and the hammermill was rebuilt into a recreational facility.

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## 2 Železná Ruda



Length of Path 2,6 km

## Železná Ruda

Although there were crushers and ironworks in Hamry in 1690 already, the ore was imported from mines in Eisenstein. The original hammermills used to be in places called Einöde (Wasteland, beim Lindl), today's Hamry no. 46. Later sources seem to suggest that Czech settlers only took part in agricultural activities, while industries and crafts were being taken care of by German settlers, which laid the foundations for the Germanisation of the whole area.

Between 1429 and 1440, the free village of Hamry was pledged in total nine times and each time to the benefit to the crown. A couple of times, the yeomen had to pay out themselves in order to say subordinate only to the crown and outside of the influence of the gentry. For this, they needed a lot of money, so they multiplied the number of both hammermills and mineshafts and began to build glassworks. This brought in more settlers, likewise of German nationality.

The first hammerman in the Úhlava valley, which is known to us by name, was Adam. He built a hammermill in Železná Lhota in 1525. After exhausting the iron ore deposits in his immediate area, he began to import it from Železná Ruda, which was 13 km away. The road used to transport the ore will be called the iron road, Eisenstrasse. Later on, it also gives name to today's Hojsova Stráž.

We can only guess as to when exactly the Železná Ruda area began to process its own ore. In 1581, Jiří of Gutštejn writes in one of his reports, that there are three-fathom trees growing by the Hamry farmstead, from which we can assume that they are about 300 years old. If we follow this assumption, we can trace the beginnings of iron processing in this area back to the 13th century.

At some point before the year 1565, iron production was renewed by a Passau hammerman Konrád Geisler. He was most likely drawn to the area by the name Eisenstein. According to the above-mentioned visitation committee, Geisler smelted ore from the local limonite and siderite to which he added slag from the two former hammermills. The iron smelted in a primitive smelter was then transported to ironworks in Datelov (Todlau) and Zelená Lhota.

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## 3 Špičák – the railway overpass

Length of Path 2,6 km

## Špičák – the railway overpass

In 1689, he sold a part of the forest by Špičák as patrimony, thus founding Jiříkův Dvůr (Girglhof). In 1697, Wolf Heinrich put the mines and hammermill back into operation.

It was the hammerman Adam, originally from Germany, who in 1525 renewed the ironworks in Železná Ruda. He did so with the permission of the Železná Ruda pledge master Půta of Rýzmbek. It only operated for a short time, but it was soon after reopened again by a Passau hammerman Konrád Geisler. He was most likely drawn to the area by the name Eisenstein. When Geisler took on Melchior Fielder, a rich Passau townsman, as a partner, they built a more advanced forge – dymacka (smoking forge). The ironworks stood in today's Špičák and was the only inhabited place in the area. The yearly production of the ironworks was 160 q. From a hundredweight of ore it was possible to make up to 20 pounds (1 Bohemian hundredweight = 120 pounds = 61,56 kg; Vienna = 67,21 kg) of wrought iron (24% recovery rate).

The ironworks employed 12 people. Apart from the master there were his three apprentices and a smoker with his groom. There were also three miners and two charcoal burners. Raw iron and products made out of it were then transported by a groom. The annual production of the ironworks is estimated to be 160 q of wrought iron.

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