

Open-air museums are an integral part of the Czech cultural heritage. With the exception of the Museum of Moravian Wallachia in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, their origins lie in the period after the Second World War, and especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Some regional open-air museums in the Czech Republic (no central open-air museum ever having been established) were however founded at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the vernacular architecture collection at Chanovice in 1994, the Middle Vltava Village Building Museum at Vysoký Chlumeč in 1999). Open-air museums are seen as a means of preservation in particular for those examples of vernacular architecture that cannot be left on their original sites – through the transfer of selected structures to an artificial environment that retains an acceptable degree of authenticity. The aim of such transfers should be to approximate the original local reality of the structure, its environment and interior fittings. Open-air museums thus draw together valuable evidence for villagers' way of life and their subsistence and farming strategies, with particular emphasis on farming and rural craft production. The presentation of folk customs and habits is among the most conspicuous ways in which these types of museum are active in the Czech Republic. It might fairly be said that open-air museums have an important role to play in preserving the traditions of folk culture. Open-air vernacular architecture museums are always attractive to visitors, thanks to their exhibits and the opportunities they afford for presenting information.

In Central Bohemia there are four open-air conservation museums – The Polabské (Elbe) Ethnographic Museum at Přešov nad Labem, the Vernacular Building Museum at Kouřim, the Middle Vltava Village Building Museum at Vysoký Chlumeč at the Slaný Region Ethnographic Museum at Třebíz (the latter, a vernacular architecture museum, is not run by the Central Bohemian Council). With the exception of the Vernacular Building Museum at Kouřim, which was from inception intended to be a museum of the building techniques employed in the Czech Lands (a concept adhered to until 1989), all were intended to be regional museum – covering the middle Labe (Elbe), the middle Vltava and the Slaný region. The open-air museums at Přešov nad Labem, Kouřim and Vysoký Chlumeč have been based almost entirely on transfers, while the Slaný Region Ethnographic Museum preserves buildings in situ. At all of the Central Bohemian open-air museums the aim to present the building materials, construction and decorative motifs employed in the village structures of the relevant regions.

