



▷ to reveal a contrasting colour beneath. We liked this sleepy town, and got chatting to woodcarver Jiri Netik, who was restoring an old house to turn into a school for carvers. He used to be a drummer in a rock band during the Communist era, which provided his passport out of Czechoslovakia. "I saw many old people woodcarving in Austria, Germany and Switzerland," he said, "but at home, the tradition was lost. There were only factories. I decided to bring carving back to my country".

Under the gaze of graffiti characters in doublet and hose, we finally set off on our 12km hike to Landstejn castle. The trail took us through forests with the warm scent of pine and wild strawberries, and out into fields awash with lupins of mauve, indigo and lilac, beautifully constructed like mini-Chrysler buildings. At the top of the hill stood a little white chapel and a log bench. It was far more tempting to sit awhile than to march 10km to Nova Bystrice in time for the narrow-gauge train to Jindrichuv Hradec. Instead we strolled down to Landstejn's sole bar, put up our feet with a bottle of Bud, and used Tomas's phone card to call a taxi.

Trebon is at the heart of a protected wetlands region. Its first fish ponds were constructed in AD1100, and the area now shelters rare plants, animals and birds, not to mention thousands of tonnes of fish – a fine sample of which (pike perch, carp, catfish, pike and trout) we happily tucked into at Supina restaurant. Greenways has put together a 43km educational bike route around the ponds, canals and rivers, but we hit town on the same day as a storm and after 3km ducked out in favour of Berta's Spa, where we indulged in a peat package, dredged from the local 12,000-year-old bog. It was a novel experience, especially when the white-coated attendant opened the sluices in the bath and a torrent of murky ▷

**Above: beauty and the beast – remnants of the iron curtain in Moravia; Below: something fishy in Trebon**

