

The glass heart of the Vltava River has begun to beat – the exhibition *VLTAVA Famed & Flowing* is open to the public

PRESS RELEASE

Prague, 4 September 2025

Five hundred carefully selected exhibits present the Vltava River as a living symbol of our national identity and highlight its significance in history, art and everyday life. Visitors will see rare literary monuments and archival documents from the 13th century, works of art and technical works, objects associated with important personalities and cultural phenomena that have shaped the image of the river through the ages.

The exhibition was officially opened by the wife of the President of the Republic, Mrs Eva Pavlová, who poured water into the glass heart of the Vltava, which had been transported to Prague Castle by a two-month Vltava relay. The exhibition *VLTAVA slavná & splavná (VLTAVA Famed & Flowing)*, organised by the National Heritage Institute and the Prague Castle Administration in cooperation with leading institutions established by the Ministry of Culture, will run at the Prague Castle Riding School until 4 January 2026.

"The Vltava is not just a river, it is the lifeblood of the Czech landscape, a living symbol of national identity and a never-ending source of inspiration for poets, painters and composers. The exhibition is a fascinating journey through time – exploring nature, technology, art and human creativity. It will remind us of the Vltava as a place of memories, stories and cultural heritage," said Nad'a Goryczková, Director General of the National Heritage Institute, adding that visitors will see a number of real gems: *"Among them are Bedřich Smetana's autograph, the original manuscript of the famous symphonic poem Vltava, Emperor Charles IV's 1366 charter on the navigation of the Vltava River, a reliquary for the remains of St. John of Nepomuk from the St. Vitus Cathedral treasure, Oskar Kokoschka's painting View of Hradčany and Charles Bridge, Egon Schiele's drawing Krumlov and the Vltava, and other important exhibits loaned to the exhibition by dozens of organisations and private owners from the Czech Republic and abroad."*

VLTAVA slavná & splavná (VLTAVA Famed & Flowing) stands out for its scope and concept. Prague Castle and the Vltava River are powerful symbols of Czech identity, so their connection naturally ties in with the programme marking the 150th anniversary of the premiere of Bedřich Smetana's symphonic poem of the same name. The exhibition in the Prague Castle Riding School

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is intended for a wide range of visitors – from individuals to schools, for whom it can serve as an inspiring supplement to their lessons," says Veronika Wolf, Cultural and Programme Director of Prague Castle.

The motto of the exhibition:

"Vltava! The word evokes a flood of ideas, images and impressions. It recalls poems and resonates with music. It is the main river of Bohemia, its artery, flowing through its heart, Prague. What would Bohemia be without the Vltava?" — František Kožík, Vltava (1959)

The main ideas of the exhibition are based on **three strong, interconnected themes**. The first is the original name of the river, *Wild Ahwa*, meaning "wild water" — a reminder of the untamed energy that shaped the landscape and human destinies. The second motif is the flow of the river — both real and symbolic — which connects time, space, people and stories. The third theme is the heart of the river – both metaphorically and as a physical place that still pulsates through the landscape and memory.

The artistic part of the exhibition includes iconic paintings depicting the Vltava River by Egon Schiele, Václav Špála, Jakub Schikaneder, Bedřich Havránek and Oskar Kokoschka. The allegorical concept of the river is illustrated by important sculptures by Stanislav Sucharda, Václav Prachner and other artists. Among the most significant exhibits are the original Baroque statue of Samson from the fountain in České Budějovice and the statue of St. John of Nepomuk by Jan Brokoff, which served as the model for the first statue on Charles Bridge," said Petr Pavelec, chief curator of the exhibition from the National Heritage Institute.

A large space is also devoted to the technical and natural wealth of the river. Visitors will see, for example, models of bridges and steamboats, traditional rafting tools, unique moldavites, gold and pearls in their raw form and processed into exceptional jewellery, coins and other artistic artefacts. Leisure-related topics have not been left out either – water sports and wandering, but also the legendary settlement of Ztracenka, which has become a symbol of romance and free life by the river.

For children, there is a **fun play area in the shape of a steamboat** with a range of games, tasks and surprises. Worksheets will help them discover the exhibition in a playful way. [A](#)

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special educational programme with experienced lecturers has been prepared for schools. The exhibition programme is complemented by themed guided tours with curators, which offer a deeper insight into the individual parts of the exhibition and the stories behind them.

The exhibition will also feature children's works submitted to the ***Vltava Through the Eyes of Children*** art competition, which have advanced to the final selection. They will be exhibited in the gallery on the first floor. A total of 1,543 works by children and groups from all over the Czech Republic were submitted to the competition.

The *VLTAVA Famed & Flowing* exhibition is being held as part of a project of the same name by the Ministry of Culture, initiated and sponsored by the National Heritage Institute. The project partners are the Czech Philharmonic, the National Museum, the National Technical Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague and the National Gallery in Prague. The event is held under the auspices of the President of the Czech Republic, the Ministers of Culture and Transport, and the governors of the South Bohemian and Central Bohemian regions.

The exhibition *VLTAVA slavná & splavná (VLTAVA Famed & Flowing)* will be held in the exhibition hall of the Prague Castle Riding School from **5 September 2025 to 4 January 2026**.

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