

Volunteering in Tišnov 2019/2020

Tišnov

Tišnov is a small town (around 10,000 inhabitants), yet it is a great town, too! Within Czechia, it is a brand name for its civic activism in the fields of life style alternatives to consumerism, sustainability projects and innovative education.

When we say Tišnov we often mean the whole micro region with many bigger and smaller villages, including tiny hamlets where the roads end. The landscape is characterized by many green hills and valleys with small rivers and streams, plenty of forests, meadows, rocks, gothic ruins and castles. The whole area is covered by a dense network of hiking trails, ideal also for biking, running or horse riding.

As for other sport activities in Tišnov, one can go skating on the ice ring in winter, inline skating on two tracks in summer, go to the gym, play football on smaller public pitches, use a pump track and an athletic field. There are also tennis courts and a bowling arena. A nice swimming pool is in Kuřim, an easily accessible town in the neighbourhood.

Cultural activities in Tišnov include a cinema, a venue called MěKS regularly hosting musical events of various genres and theatre performances. There is an interesting town museum and a gallery.

A big advantage of Tišnov is its proximity to Brno and the connectivity with this popular student city. Trains go practically every 30 minutes (until about midnight) and the ride takes cca 35 minutes.

There are two supermarkets in Tišnov (Albert and Tesco), several grocery shops and many other small retail shops. What you cannot get in Tišnov you surely get in Brno.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tišnov>
www.tisnov.cz (only Czech)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brno>
<https://www.gotobrna.cz/en/>

ZaHRAda (the Game Garden) school:

Established by a group of local citizens, mostly parents not satisfied with the educational approach of state schools in the area, looking for innovative education styles reflecting the fast changes in the world around. That was in 2014. The school has been accredited by the Czech Ministry of Education. It is not exactly a state school, though. It is run by an

Association for Community Education called Hnízdo (the Nest) that decides about the most important issues through an assembly formed by its members (school staff, parents and other interested members of public).

As for the program at school we are gradually adopting Montessori approach and methods but, at the same time, remain open to other inspirational educational streams like e.g. Intuitive Pedagogy. This school year (2019/2020) we have three “classrooms“, two with children aged 6-9, and one for children aged 10-13. The three groups have their names: **Jabloň (Apple tree)**, **Třešeň (Cherry tree)** and **Líska (Hazel tree)**. There are about 40 children attending these groups daily and 9 members of the teaching team (each class has its head teacher and an assistant teacher, there is a language teacher, afternoon group manager, afternoon club manager), the principal and there are several other external members of the staff. Some home schooled children come only twice a week for expeditions and community Fridays (a day when most activities are shared by all three groups).

www.skolazahrada.cz

<https://cs-cz.facebook.com/skolazahrada/>

A day at ZaHRAda

The school starts every day at 8:30 by a morning circle in all three classrooms (the exception may be on days when an expedition is organized by children or adults), on Friday all three groups get together at a big morning circle.

After the morning circle, serving as an information channel for teachers and students, the daily program starts. In **Jabloň** and **Třešeň**, children sign up for demos the teachers had prepared and posted on the writing board. Demos are Montessori style instruction units, learning aids, or other, presentations, usually not longer than 20 minutes They should serve as a motivation tool for children to discover and learn something new. Children have a lot of space to choose what they are going to learn and how and they are directed to self and peer learning and teaching as much as possible. The daily program regularly ends at 12:30 by a closing, day evaluating circle. At **Líska** (children aged 10-13), the program may be a bit different, Montessori techniques are combined with different teaching and learning styles. Lunch time at 12:45. Currently, children can choose from two types of meals: vegetarian and vegan meals prepared by volunteers among parents or they can go to a canteen at a nearby school for a meat including lunch. (Volunteers, of course, can use these options too).

After lunch, older students may have afternoon classes and for those who do not the afternoon school group (younger children) and afternoon club start. Children are offered various regular, as well as irregular, activities, including e.g.: visual arts, music, gardening, cooking, science experiments, original play, religion etc. They may also go for an expedition (zoo, library, gallery, biking trip...)

The school also provides other hobby groups after the closing of the afternoon school group and club at 16:00.

These activities vary from martial arts through football, visual art studio to a fishing group.

What are the volunteers expected to do?

Well, mostly speak English (and other foreign languages) to the children as well as adults, the main purpose of the project is to create an environment where other languages are naturally present to boost the motivation of children (and adults) to acquire them in their lives.

That means, volunteers are supposed to be present at school during the morning programs, including expeditions, as well as during the afternoon programs. They are asked to volunteer for the school six hours every working day.

Their activity should come from what each of the volunteer personally likes or masters doing. They can prepare their own demos and projects (games, treasure hunts, presentations, cooking activities, sport...), help with preparing learning aids and tools, take part in expeditions and so on. Enough time will be granted for preparation of any activities (within the 6 working hours) as well as maximal support from the teaching staff. Volunteers are also invited to join activities with kids as they feel like, try the learning aids by themselves or just watch what is going on in the classroom and make notes. Their feedback might be very valuable for the busy teachers.

Regular meetings will be held once a week with the teaching team to discuss possible activities, observations made and all necessary information including planning school days.

Outdoor nursery Kalužníček (Little Puddle Man)

Kalužníček Outdoor Nursery has been active for 10 years – it is one of the oldest outdoor nurseries (also called forest kindergartens) in Czechia. Their philosophy is based on conviction that the nature itself is a sufficiently stimulating environment for a healthy development of children, physical as well as mental. We believe that the most important thing we can give to children at pre-school age is a lot of love and understanding, accompany them with empathy through their experiences and help them to find ways leading to fulfilling all their needs, including self-reliance, conflict solving, clarification of personal boundaries or acquiring new skills. We believe that each child has their own development pace and we respect them the way they are.

<https://cs-cz.facebook.com/pg/LesniRodinnyKlubNaTisnovsku/posts/>

Volunteers in Kalužníček

A day in the nursery develops in relation to current weather conditions and group present at the given day. The guides manage the course of the day: Morning Circle, Expedition, Return, Lunch, Afternoon Siesta and Free Play.

The volunteers bring the playful element. It is up to their personal likes how they approach the

children – body moving games, visual and musical activities, experiments, observation or learning activities, all is welcomed.

This school year, we would also like the volunteers to lead an English learning program. Our nursery has been providing the children with a playful, musical English learning program for four years. The lectors have access to a database of video and song-based lessons. All materials are fully at disposal and it is, in general, enough to go through the lesson a bit ahead, it should not take much time. Especially at the beginnings, an experienced lector will be ready to train and explain how it works. The lessons usually take place twice a week (one identical lesson as the groups are not exactly the same every day). During the remaining days, it is enough to play the songs and offer games to revise vocabulary, available in paper form for all lessons.

Volunteers spend at the nursery six hours, every working day, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is located in Lomnička u Tišnova, a village around 3km away from Tišnov, accessible by bus, bike, walk or car with some of the parents.