

In the Footsteps of Women's History

History walk



1. Jiřina Šiklová Library

The Jiřina Šiklová Library (formerly the Gender Studies Library) is one of the largest libraries specializing in feminism and gender studies in Eastern and Central Europe. It was founded in 1992 in the apartment of Jiřina Šiklová, a sociologist and dissident, and has grown to its current size through collaboration with Czech and foreign feminist and queer organizations, universities, publishing houses, foundations, and individual supporters. The library holds a variety of books, journals, and publications on topics such as the labour market, balancing work and personal life, equal opportunities, raising children and education, gender stereotypes and discrimination, feminism, gender and queer studies, etc. In addition to academic literature, we also offer poetry, fiction, and comic books, with some titles suitable for younger age groups.

Come take a look inside the library located at Masarykovo nábřeží 8. We are open every Monday and Tuesday from 9:00 to 15:00, and on Wednesdays from 12:00 to 18:00.

What's next?

Leave the library and walk a hundred meters downstream. The number 16 indicates that you are standing in front of a building with heads sticking out. Keep your head up!

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)



2. Hlahol



The Hlahol Singing Society in Prague was founded in 1861. It started as a male choir with 120 members. In 1873, Hlahol expanded its activities to include a female choir, which featured Eliška Krásnohorská, whom you will read more about today. Apart from singing, she played the piano, but due to her mobility limitations, caused by rheumatism, she was unable to pursue this musical talent.

The slogan of Hlahol was “Through singing to the heart, through the heart to the homeland,” which highlights the group's important patriotic role at that time. The choir's work included not only concerts, but also participation in unveiling memorials of famous figures, funerals, and the laying of the first stone of the National Theatre. During the First Republic, the society housed famous actresses Adina Mandlová and Hana Vítová.

Hlahol is significant in feminist history because in 1911, it hosted the first meeting of women active in the Czech women's movement. It was historically the first event for International Women's Day in Prague, then known as the International Day for Women's Voting Rights. The key ideas for IWD were civil and political equality between men and women, involving women in decision-making processes, implementing voting rights for women, and eliminating gender discrimination. Reminding and celebrating this day is very important because it means supporting and agreeing with equal opportunities for women and men in employment, politics, education, family, and public life overall. This day can also serve as a reminder that even though there have been major improvements in certain areas of women's position and rights since the first IWD, the situation is still not sufficient in all areas and countries.

What's next?

Continue downstream and turn right on the first street. Go around the church that is in front of you from the left and look for a plaque with Eliška Krásnohorská's name on the building behind it.

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)





3. Minerva

Minerva was the first girls' gymnasium in Central Europe, and its establishment in 1890 marked a watershed moment in the history of Czech women's education. The doors for higher education had been opened for women. The original intention was to establish Minerva as a public girls' gymnasium, but as that idea did not succeed, the gymnasium was opened as a private school. It was

not until 1908 that Minerva became authorized to issue matura certificates; until then, the Minerva students had to obtain their graduation certificates at a public boys' gymnasium.

The instruction was initially covered by teachers from boys' gymnasiums because women were still unable to obtain the credentials required for teaching at that time. However, the classes were shadowed by supervisors – older married women overseeing the morality of both students and teachers.

One of the significant figures who took part in founding Minerva was Eliška Krásnohorská. She faced strong criticism from important politicians and literary men during her efforts. For example, Alois Jirásek wrote this comment on his refusal to sign the petition for establishing Minerva: "...please consider the amounts of Latin and Greek, physics, history, mathematics (not to mention other, relatively easier items) – girls from middle schools should master all that in four or five years! I'm afraid that would entail too much strain and a lot of trouble." Among the critics was František Ladislav Rieger, a patriot and important politician. It is said that when Minerva opened and the first fifty students enrolled, he brought Eliška Krásnohorská an apology accompanied by a bouquet of roses.

The interest in studying at Minerva continued to grow. Despite the mentioned obstacles, the shift towards access to education for girls became unstoppable.

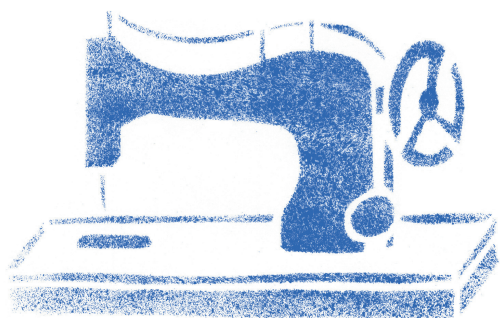
Eliška Krásnohorská aimed to give women access to universities and obtain university degrees. This was also later achieved by the women's movement. After 1897, girls in the Habsburg monarchy, thanks to the emperor's decision, were allowed to study at the Faculties of Arts, and from 1900, at the Faculties of Medicine. Studying law became available to women after 1918.

Today, it's hard to imagine that women had to fight for the right to education. However, to this day, we can still encounter prejudices about which careers and types of schooling are suitable for women, and which ones are considered more suitable for men. Girls are often told not to pursue technical fields, while boys are discouraged from nurturing professions.

What's next?

Cross the small square and turn right onto the street with the blue tooth. Go straight, cross the road where the tracks lead, and continue straight to the next main road. Do not cross it but turn right towards the dancing house. Just go a little further - to the place where you'll get the five. Stop at the house and look up.

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)



4. Women's Czech Production Society

Ženský výrobní spolek český (Women's Czech Production Society) was an educational and charitable association active from 1871 to 1972. Established by Karolina Světlá and Eliška Krásnohorská, it was one of the first women's associations in Central Europe. The primary goal of the Society was to establish a business-industrial school, where girls gained practical skills for their lives. Here, girls attended lectures in business, industry, and craft disciplines; they also studied the arts of drawing, wood engraving, and languages. These skills were intended to provide them with employment in case they didn't marry or became widows. Poor girls had newly acquired this option to learn crafts, which helped them sustain themselves, for example, as seamstresses or housekeepers. They also obtained practical contacts for housing through a local advertising platform and were taught financial literacy with the help of savings banks.

The Society published a journal called *Ženské listy* (Women's Letters), which soon became the central periodical of the women's emancipation movement. Some of the active members of the Society included **Sofie Podlipská, Věnceslava Lužická, Ladislava Čelakovská, or Jindřiška Flajšhansová.**

Places like the Women's Production Society helped women obtain the necessary knowledge and skills for independent adult life. In its first twenty years of existence, ten thousand girls became members of the Society, with nearly half of them attending all activities for free due to proving their destitution. Unlike the American Ladies' Club or the Minerva gymnasium, the

education in the Women's Czech Production Society was accessible to **girls from poor families**. The Society fought for its position as a distinctly social institution, which allowed small children to accompany their mothers to the courses — a practice that was quite modern and uncommon at the time.

Among the women who played a significant role in founding the Women's Czech Production Society were:

Emílie Bártová (1837–1890) was a Czech feminist and suffragette, member of the American Ladies' Club, and co-founder of the women's associations Minerva and Women's Czech Production Society.

Karolina Světlá (1830–1899) was one of the most significant Czech female writers and feminists. She took part in founding the American Ladies' Club and the Women's Czech Production Society.

Eliška Krásnohorská (1847–1926) was a pivotal leader of the Czech women's movement and a key initiator of women's education efforts.

How equal is the working environment today? The Labour Code stipulates that every employer must treat all their employees equally and fairly. That applies to both working conditions and remuneration. Everyone has to get paid the same amount for the same work. Women and men, even when they carry out the same work in the same occupation, don't always get the same pay; women take 10% less than men (in the Czech Republic). On average, women earn less money than men in both the Czech Republic and throughout the European Union. This phenomenon is known as the Gender Pay Gap (GPG). Women in the EU earn, on average 13% less than men per hour. It's even more in the Czech Republic, with women earning on average 16,4% less than men (Eurostat, 2020). This average divide is caused by women working more in fields with lower wages (mostly in education or care professions), while men work in fields with higher pay (engineering, IT, etc.). Additionally, men are more represented in decision-making and management positions, which tend to be more profitable overall. Women are also typically limited by unpaid labour, such as childcare and housekeeping, which they perform the most, taking time and resources away from building and pursuing their careers.

What's next?

Step back onto the street, follow the parachutists in hiding, you can even leave them a flower, but then continue. Turn left around those who study high tech. Continue and stop before buying anything, lift your head and you will see a Czech symbol. You will stand in front of the house where Františka Plamínková spent the first years of her life.

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)





5. The Birthplace of Františka Plamínková

Františka Plamínková (1875–1942) was a Czech politician, member of the National Socialist Party, senator, journalist, teacher, feminist, and organizer of the Czechoslovak and international women's movements. She became one of the key figures in the history of women's emancipation. She joined the Women's National Council, an umbrella organization for women's associations to coordinate feminist activities, where she collaborated with Milada Horáková, among others. Františka Plamínková also helped abolish the celibacy requirement for female teachers (in 1919) and introduce women's suffrage (in 1920). The support of women's voting rights from President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, his wife Charlotte, and their daughter Alice Masaryk was fundamental.

The civic engagement of Františka Plamínková led her to become the first woman to hold a senatorial seat in 1925. On September 14, 1938, she wrote an open letter to Adolf Hitler. In the violent aftermath of the Reinhard Heydrich assassination, she refused to denounce the act of resistance, leading to her arrest and imprisonment, first in the Prague Pankrác, and later in the Small Fortress in Terezín, where she met Milada Horáková. From there, she was transported for her execution at the Kobylisy Firing Range on 30 June 1942.

A hundred years after electing Františka Plamínková as senator, the representation of women in decision-making positions has increased, but considering that women make up half of the Czech population, it remains inadequate. In 2022, there were only 18.5% of women in the Senate of the Czech Republic. In the Chamber of Deputies, women hold approximately one-quarter of the seats. If these decision-making positions are dominated by men, they are thinking and deciding about important things based on their lived experiences, and the experiences of women get lost. That is why it's essential for women to be more involved in decision-making about important topics and in leadership roles, such as serving as senators, deputies, ministers, judges, and managing employees at agencies.

What's next?

Go to the park and look for the woman guarding the entrance to the subway.

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)





6. The Monument to Eliška Krásnohorská

The name Eliška Krásnohorská (born Alžběta Pechová) is primarily associated with her copious literary output and patriotism. She is less known for her key role in the history of the Czech women's movement. Krásnohorská was a pioneer in Czech women's education. She was born on November 18, 1847, and became a poetess, writer, and librettist. Throughout her life, she remained unmarried, which meant facing significant societal restrictions at the time. It was not common for women without male accompaniment to participate in public life, and they could only realize themselves within households. At the time, an unmarried woman was often considered a burden to her family. Working for money was not considered honourable for them. One of the few options for sustaining oneself was literary work, which later made Krásnohorská famous. She received help from Karolina Světlá, a married woman who was older and a significant inspiration to Eliška. Světlá had already opened doors here and could introduce her to other literary figures.

Apart from her literary output, Krásnohorská contributed to establishing a girls' gymnasium and advocating for them to have the option to study at universities. Thanks to Eliška Krásnohorská and a number of other active women, women today can study, make decisions about their careers, relationships, living independently, participating in sports, voting, or going for a walk alone, which was not commonplace in the past.

Take a look at all the things women today can do: <https://zenymohou.cz/en/women-can/>

The author of the monument to Eliška Krásnohorská, reminding us of her legacy in the Czech literary, patriotic, and women's movements, is Karla Vobišová-Žáková, the first Czech professional female sculptor. She sculpted the monument in 1931 at the expense of the Women's Czech Production Society, and the author was awarded a distinction by the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts.

What's next?

Go across the tracks to the second half of the park and look for the one who was an advisor to Eliška.

(Not sure where to go next? Look at the map on the last page.)





7. The Bust of Karolina Světlá

Karolina Světlá (whose real name was Johana Nepomucena Mužáková, born Rottová) was born on February 24, 1830, in Prague. She was one of the most important Czech writers and

Together with Vojtěch Náprstek (founder of Náprstek Museum), she founded the American Ladies' Club, the first society where women could discuss the topic of women's emancipation together. She co-founded the Women's Czech Production Society with Eliška Krásnohorská in 1871 and contributed to the Women's Letters for many years. She married Petr Mužák, a piano teacher, from Světlá in Podještěí. Her husband's birthplace later inspired her literary pseudonym and her work. She was born in a house on what is now known as Karolina Světlá Street, where a memorial plaque commemorates her. Among her most famous works are *Černý Petříček*, *Vesnický román*, *Kříž u potoka*, *Nemodlenec*, *Frantina*, and *Kantůrčice*.

Karolina Světlá rejected the division of societal roles according to patriarchal norms and rules, as well as the term "women's literature" or "literature for women." "Are there two kinds of nature, two kinds of truth?" She asked in her notes. In 1867, the magazine *Květy* published her article *About the Raising of a Woman*. This text is considered one of the first contributions to the women's question in the Czech lands.

The Bust was created by sculptor Fustav Zoula and architect Josef Fanta. Its unveiling took place on May 29, 1910, and it was the first monument on the newly created green space.

1. KJiřina Šiklová Library

Address: Masarykovo nábřeží 2017/8

2. Hlahol

Address: Masarykovo nábřeží 248/16

3. Minerva

Address: Pštrossova 15

4. Women's Czech Production Society

Address: Resslova 5/1940

5. The Birthplace of Karolina Světlá

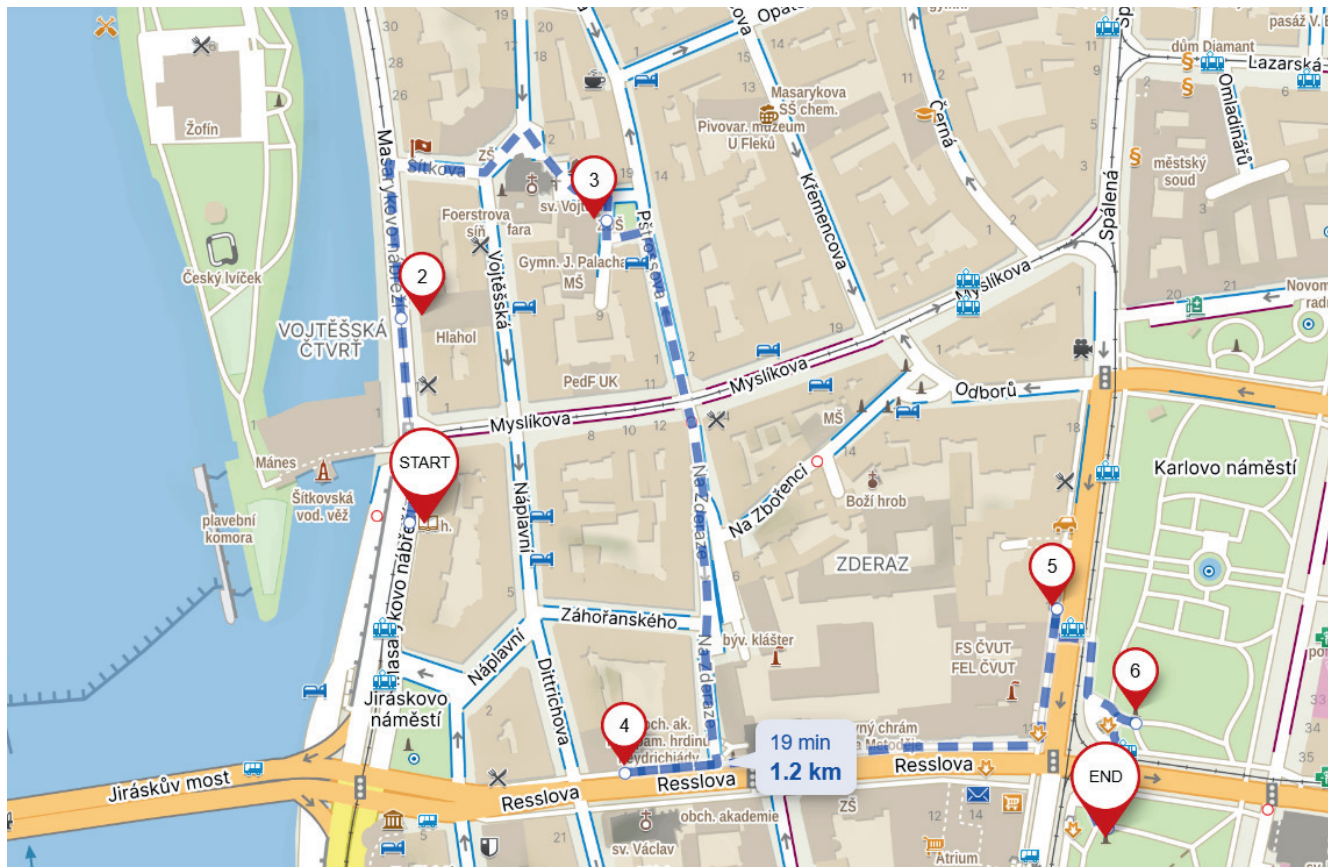
Address: Karlovo nám. 14 or 16

6. The Monument to Eliška Krásnohorská

Address: Karlovo náměstí, park, by the metro station

7. The Bust of Karolina Světlá

Address: Karlovo náměstí, park, by the metro station



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