



[Frontpage](#) > [Current Information](#)

News, 7/23/2016

## The North Star shines over the South Bohemian heartland

One would not first believe that in Böhmerwald (Šumava mountain region), near the German border around twenty kilometres from where the river Vltava has its source, a Finnish cultural centre called Stella Polaris can be found. Stella Polaris, in co-operation with the people from the culturally active village Žihobce, is the project of Ari and Jaana Seppälä, a couple from Espoo, Finland, who fell in love with the Czech Republic and have been spending their summers in Žihobce for more than a decade. The empty ground floor of the village shop was transformed in 2014 into a gallery and exhibition space.



On the hot day of Saturday 9 July, the opening of the third season of Stella Polaris was held. Artist Maria Rosina Jaakkola's aquarelles under the theme "On journey" were on display. Minister-Counsellor Ari Tasanen presented the Embassy's greetings in Czech (attached). The same afternoon also included a vernissage in the village's second gallery, Netopýr (bat), and was followed by an enchanting concert in the spirit of klezmer music held in the spectacular village church by two artists from Nancy, France.

Professor Lenka Frouliková, a leading cultural figure in Žihobce, works as a lector of Czech language and culture at the University

of Nancy and speaks fluent French, so the French artists Manue Marchal, singer and clarinetist, and Olivier Lombard, guitarist, certainly felt at home. In addition to the church, there is also a big castle in the small village, with its own exhibitions, and the castle attic is home to Europe's most versatile bat community.

Stella Polaris has until now in its three seasons exhibited aquarelle works and, as a permanent exhibition, pictures representing the best sides of Finnish landscape and culture. When running Stella Polaris is based on volunteerism having no external funding and the Seppäläs do not permanently live in Žihobce, the possibilities of extending the operation are limited. During Finland's Centenary 2017 Stella Polaris could offer a space for a touring exhibition presenting more broadly Finland, its history, present day and culture. Even though Žihobce is off major highways and flows of mass

tourism, the North Star does shine beyond the village in its own area.



The landscape of hilly lush green forests and fields of Šumava rewards the ones who find their way to that part of Czechia, even though the Finnish eye would not mind if the scenery were to also include shining open lakes.

Text: Ari Tasanen



[Minister Counsellor Ari Tasanen's speech at Galleria Netopýr](#)



Artist Maria Rosina Jaakkola and professor Lenka Frouliková



Ari Tasanen, Maria Rosina Jaakkola, Jaana Seppälä and Ari Seppälä



Stella Polaris

© Embassy of Finland, Prague | [About this site](#) | [Contact information](#)