

# SYSTEMS FACTFILE

## No. 53 Brno, Czech Republic



A bustling city of magnificent architecture in an interesting setting, Brno also has a long-established tramway – the Czech Republic's first – intensive trolleybus operations and rolling stock displaying equal measures of variety.

WORDS AND PICTURES BY NEIL PULLING



Common reference to Brno as the Czech Republic's second city suggests a misleading 'also ran' status. Brno's diverse and distinctive identity includes manufacturing, the national judiciary, higher education, administration and its long-established international trade fair venue. It is capital of the South Moravian Region, set at the northern apex of a tall triangle formed with Vienna and Bratislava, each about 125km (78 miles) to the south. Prague is 200km (125 miles) to the north-west.

Except towards the flatter southern side, the site is edged by hills and there are prominent outcrops right in the centre. City population is around 370 000, with the agglomeration at 510 000; after recent decline, population is now expected to remain stable. Indicating the scale of regular passenger movement, the Brno city authority estimates the work-day city population as 550 000.

But for the southern end of the Modřice service (line 2), all of Brno's tramway falls within zones 100 and 101 of the Integrated Public Transport System of the South Moravian Region (IDS JMK).

Now part of the Dopravní podnik města Brna (DPMB) public transport network, trams came to Brno in 1869, the first within the boundaries of the modern Czech Republic. Horse and steam power were used, including for freight, with electrification beginning in 1900. This was under the Austro-Hungarian regime which lasted until Czechoslovak independence in 1918. Political and economic changes have influenced the network and several years were needed for recovery following both World Wars.

For many visitors the first experience of the tramway (colloquially *šalina*) begins immediately outside the principal station, Brno hlavní nádraží – however

Left: CKD Tatra K2 1077 on the modern infrastructure through Náměstí Svobody (Freedom Square) in the centre of Brno. All pictures taken 10-12 October 2011

THE FLEET

Brno's all-Czech fleet is remarkably varied. Reequipping in the 1960s bequeathed many CKD Tatra types and derivatives of which the single car T3 (114) and articulated K2 (79) are the most numerous. Rebuilding and unsatisfactory performance of some acquisitions contributed to creating small classes like four each of Tatra RT6N1 and the short VV6OLF trailers.

Low-floor access increased with the addition of Tatra-based Pragoimex vehicles, used singly, paired or in mixed formation with different types. Škoda's 2003 debut was for 17 part low-floor Anitra 03Ts. The latest all-new additions, with deliveries from 2007, are 29 Škoda 13T vehicles.

They are similar to Prague's *Elektra* 14T, but with Brno specifications like the front door being for passengers rather than for driver access.

These 30m long, 50% low-floor trams with a capacity of 270 all carry female names. Unpopular lateral seating was replaced for later deliveries and the final batch entered service in spring 2011. Standard fleet livery is red and white; all-over advertising is widespread amongst the types.

DPMB also operates a fleet of passenger boats on Brno Reservoir, a leisure and outdoor pursuits area, nearest tram stop is Přístaviště on the Bystrc line.



this unkempt and unlovely spot is not indicative of Brno as a whole. The tramstop's one island and two side platforms are generally crammed, and four tracks with junctions at both ends often have trams awaiting space. Most of the tramway lines pass through this area and it is probably the network's busiest point, but the crowding on DPMB services is not confined to here.

Used by line 4, the only track through the historic centre diverges uphill immediately from near the station. There is modern tram infrastructure through a rebuilt pedestrianised shopping street and Náměstí Svobody (Freedom Square) that is regarded as the city's heart. At the northern end is another tram junction and two closely-spaced and busy interchanges, neatly finished Česká platforms near the shops and Moravské náměstí spread around a main road intersection.

Trams are the mainstay of a network which also includes the country's largest trolleybus operation, a relative

newcomer in 1949 and now with 13 regular lines, some inter-urban. Both modes declined in favour of buses, but were revived by oil cost rises in the 1970s and latterly through environmental concerns.

From the 1980s, railway-like routes exemplified by those to Bystrc and Starý Lískovec were opened. These provided high capacity between the centre and outer areas where housing clusters were being developed, a process that continued after the collapse of Communism in 1989. This accounts for the current experience of leaving the city on street-running lines, entering reserved space through the suburbs and then near-countryside before entering a terminus surrounded by ranks of high-rise accommodation.

The system is mostly uni-directional, featuring large multi-tracked turning loops with segregated arrival and boarding platforms. High frequencies and use of track by several lines means that termini may hold many vehicles at



Top: T3 1575/1580 at Dunajská; food kiosks and housing near termini are typical of the Brno network.

Left: Vario LF2R.E 1098 passes Pisárky depot with a line 1 service, the system's longest.

Right: From the junction at Nové sady, four intensively used tracks continue to Brno's main railway station.



'Trams are the mainstay of a network which also includes the country's largest trolleybus operation, a relative newcomer in 1949 and now with 13 regular lines.'



Above: DPMB's network includes the country's biggest trolleybus operation: CKD T64S 1217 and Škoda 14Tr 3255 leave the central area.

Left: T3 1539 climbs towards Přístaviště stop near Brno Reservoir in the Bystrc district.

NETWORK FACTS

- **Opened:** 1869 (electrified 1900)
  - **Routes:** 13
  - **Track distance:** Approx. 70km (44 miles)
  - **Depots:** 2
  - **Approximate weekday hours:** 04.30-22.30
  - **Standard frequency:** 5-10 minutes
  - **Gauge:** 1435mm
  - **Power:** 600V dc
  - **Tram fleet:** Approx. 310
  - **Regional network:** Integrated Public Transport System South Moravian Region
  - **City operator:** Dopravní podnik města Brna (DPMB)
- INFORMATION**
- **Regional transport authority:** [www.idsjmk.cz](http://www.idsjmk.cz)
  - **City network:** [www.dpmb.cz](http://www.dpmb.cz)
  - **Civic and tourist information:** [www.brno.cz](http://www.brno.cz)



Above: Leaving Starý Lískovec terminus south-west of Brno, Škoda 13T 1906 joins the high speed line into the city.

Below: Between main road carriageways south from Brno, waiting at stations on the Modřická line can be a raucous experience.





Above: Škoda 13T 1811 overlooked by Brno's St. Peter and Paul cathedral at Nové sady.



Above: Including low-floor Pragoimex Vario LFR.E and VV6OLF trailer, three types in one formation leave Bystř, Ečerova.

one time. DPMB's diverse fleet provision also means that the range of trams waiting is likely to be wide.

An exception to this pattern is line 8 which uses bi-directional *KT8D5* trams to the eastern terminus of Líšeň, Mifkova, a 2004 addition that was a curtailment of a longer extension. Reorganisations brought greater segregation of maintenance functions for bus, trolleybus and tram. Two sites now handle trams, with the spacious Pisárky depot alongside revenue track west of the city centre. With the Technology Park (lines 12/13) extension in 2008, Medlánky (depot and main works) in the north

gained track access from both ends. Major projects like a metro and the successor north-south tram tunnel scheme now seem remote prospects.

DPMB's website has commendable coverage, with English and German sections and links to comprehensive interactive mapping (direct: <http://brno.planydopravy.cz>). Such helpfulness is not matched on the ground however, with portable maps either not produced or poorly distributed. Similarly, the lack of route diagrams at stops may deter would-be public transport users who are unfamiliar with the system. **TAUT**



From the final (2011) Škoda 13T batch, 1927 is seen at Jugoslávská, one of many stops close to a tramway junction.



Bi-directional *KT8D5R.N2* 1704 approaches the covered Jírova stop after the short run from line 8's eastern terminus.

## BRNO: ESSENTIAL FACTS

### How do I get there?

**By rail:** Brno is a principal stop on the core European route from Germany (about eight hours from Berlin) via Prague (three hours) to Budapest (four hours).

**By air:** Brno-Turany Airport has Ryanair flights from London Stansted and Wizzair from Luton. DPMB bus 76 departs runs on a half-hour

frequency to the terminus near the main station and costs CSK22 (EURO.85).

**Local travel:** Tickets from machines and kiosks: Non-transfer two-zone 60-minute at CZK22 (EURO.85); CZK30 (EUR1.15) from driver. More convenient one-day zones 100+101 tickets cost CZK80 (EUR3.10), the three-day counterpart is CZK200 (EUR7.80). Validation is required

immediately upon boarding. Fares change from January 2012

### What is there to see?

Skyline features and central viewpoints are hills topped by Petrov (St. Peter and Paul) Cathedral and Špilberk Castle. Modernist architecture highlights Tugendhat Villa (re-opening in 2012) and the trade fair site (Výstaviště tram stops).