

THE VILLA FROM THE OUTSIDE SIGHTSEEING TOURS

Welcome to Villa Tugendhat! Thank you for taking the time to visit the outside of the Villa. This text will guide you through the highlights of the tour. Of course, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask your guide. Please follow the instructions of your guide during the tour; photography is permitted.

01 CITY PANORAMA AND THE GARDEN

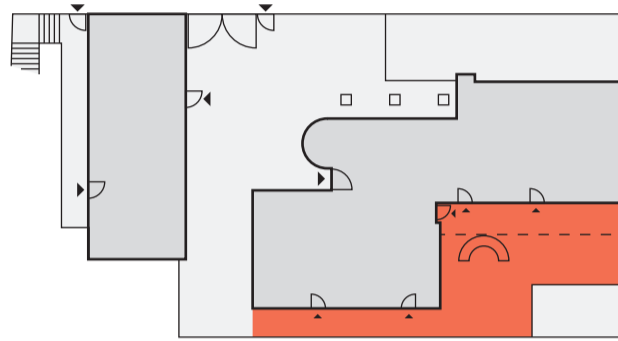
The history of Villa Tugendhat is closely linked to the urban development around Lužánky Park – the oldest publicly accessible urban park in the Czech Republic. On the site where the villa stands today, there were vineyards and orchards that were loosely connected to Lužánky Park around 1850. Just 10 years later, in 1860, the first Brno villa colony began to develop on this slope. At that time, the locality was nicknamed Belvedere, an Italian term meaning 'beautiful view'.

The first of the group of newly built homes were the villa of Karel Kaiser (1860) and the villa of Josef Arnold (1862). As part of further building development, in 1903–1904 the Brno manufacturer Moritz Fuhrmann had a villa built at 22 Drobného Street (Parkstrasse) according to the design of the Viennese architect Alexander Neumann. In 1913, this villa was bought by the industrialist Alfred Löw-Beer, who moved here with his family. Fifteen years later, his daughter Greta (1903–1970) was gifted a plot of land in the upper part of the Löw-Beer Villa garden as a wedding present on her marriage to Fritz Tugendhat (1895–1958), and they subsequently had their own family villa built there.

The newlywed Tugendhats chose the then world-famous German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

(1886–1969) as the architect of their family home. Mies first visited the plot in September 1928 and decided to situate the house at the top of the site to make the most of the view of the historic city centre and garden. The architect presented the first drafts of the house to the family for the first time in December 1928. The couple accepted the design, with only minor reservations, and moved into the house with their children in December 1930. The villa became an architectural icon at the time of its completion, not only because of its formal architectural purity, the use of noble materials, its setting in a natural context and the interconnection of spaces, but also because of its technical and structural design. Villa Tugendhat is still not only an iconic building in the context of Brno's modern construction, but also a ground-breaking work of architecture. The design was co-created by Lilly Reich (1885–1947) and Sergius Ruegenberg (1903–1996) and was carried out by the Brno construction firm of the brothers Moritz and Artur Eisler.

02 UPPER TERRACE



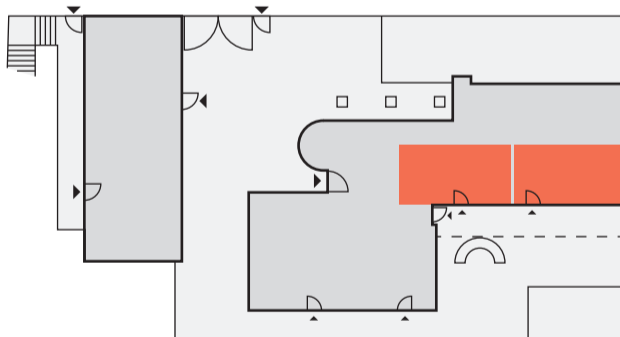
In the adjacent gardens, to the right of the view, you can see the roofs of the Arnold Villa. From 1909, Arnold Villa was owned by Cecilie Hože, Grete Tugendhat's aunt. The property is currently undergoing extensive renovation, which should be completed in 2024.

The view of the historic city centre from the terrace is often described as the only one that is not significantly encroached upon by modern development. The only exception in this respect is the Hotel Continental (1964), which stands on the site of the birthplace of the important Brno architect, Adolf Loos.

The garden was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in collaboration with Brno-based garden architect, Grete Roder-Müller. It is dominated by a large grassy area, conceived in the spirit of the so-called emphasized emptiness (betonte Leere). The prominent solitary trees include the maples (on the left), the weeping willow on the semi-circular terrace below the stone garden stairway, and the sprawling plane tree and cranesbill below the willow, under which negotiations over the division of Czechoslovakia took place. The path network was laid out on the slope in the 19th century. The gardens of the two houses have always formed a territorial, though not architectural, unit.

There are several moments in the "communication" between the house and the garden on several levels. Each floor communicates with the garden in a different way. The view from the upper terrace (3rd floor) and from the windows of the rooms on the so-called bedroom floor offers a view of the Brno panorama – the connection between the villa and the city. When viewed from the main living area (2nd floor), views between the trees open onto the individual landmarks of the city, but the view from this space is directed mainly to the intimacy of the garden – the connection with the natural surroundings. When looking directly onto the garden itself (1st floor), we see a grassy meadow with trees and also plants on the facades, evoking the optical „disappearance“ of the building's mass into the greenery. The walls made of loose stones are planted with vegetation and form the optical base of the house when viewed from below.

03 THE CHILDREN'S ROOMS



The rooms you can see from the terrace were used as family bedrooms in the 1930's and all have direct access to the terrace. In keeping with contemporary ideas about healthy living, the terrace encouraged outdoor activities and served mainly as a playground for the children, enabling them to engage in physical activities. As evidenced by a series of photographs by Fritz Tugendhat, it was the so-called upper terrace of Villa Tugendhat that was particularly popular with the children, who spent much of their free time here in the summer months. His wife Greta recalled that the children had a tub of water and a sandbox on the terrace and often rode their toy cars there.

The pergola was grown over with greenery that created a pleasant shade, the railing of the arched bench was wrapped with climbing roses. The rooms nearest to where you are standing are the rooms of the so-called children's section, the division of which is evident mainly from their furnishings. The room, furnished with white lacquered furniture from the workshop of the Brno furniture company SBS, was used by the sons Ernst (*1930) and Herbert (1933–1980). The second room, dominated by exotic zebrano veneers and child-sized Mies' MR 10 chairs, was occupied by Hanna (1924–1991, Greta's daughter from her first marriage to Hans Weiss).

04 PARENTS' ROOMS



Returning back to Černopolní Street, we pass the bedrooms and bathroom used by the Tugendhats, and thus we refer to this as the parents' section. The first room, with a distinctive cherry-red Brno-type chair, a double bed and a smaller sofa, belonged to Greta Tugendhat. The Brno chair, as the name suggests, was designed by Mies van der Rohe specifically for the Villa Tugendhat project in Brno. Together with the Barcelona chair (1928), it is one of the most famous furniture designs that Mies realised in his career and is still very popular today.

The second room, dominated by a desk with two chairs, was occupied by Fritz Tugendhat. The original built-in wardrobes with rosewood veneer can still be seen in both rooms.

The Tugendhats were only able to enjoy their family villa for eight years, until 1938, when political developments and the rise of Nazism in Central Europe forced them to emigrate to Switzerland.

05 ENTRANCE AND THE TECHNICAL TERRACE

When approaching Villa Tugendhat from Černopolní Street, you will notice that the building is quite

inconspicuous. The entrance area is very clearly divided into several functional sectors. The lowered, so-called technical terrace, which is lower than the street level of the pavement, serves the technical facilities of the house and has openings for the coke drop and for air conditioning. The main entrance to the house is located in the lee behind a curved wall of milk glass.

The opposite part of the house (today's entrance to the box office) served as a section for the servants. A garage designed for two cars can still be seen here. The Tatra 75 from the collections of the National Technical Museum in Prague is currently on display here.

06 SERVICE WING / STAIRCASE

On the 2nd floor of the service wing there used to be rooms for a maid and a cook (today they house the Study and Documentation Centre and the building security). You will also notice the carpet beater area below the staircase and the door leading to the so-called air-insulating cavity, which separates the living areas of the house from the slope by means of a retaining wall. This is a long corridor running the entire length of the building, which prevents cold and damp from penetrating into the interior of the living areas of the house.

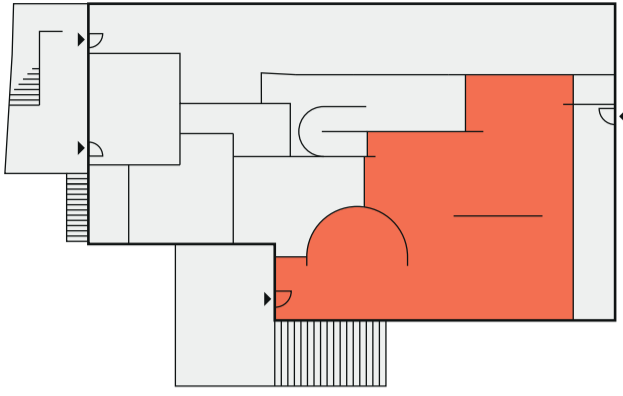
07 GARDEN TERRACE

The garden terrace, often used by the family for summer gatherings, is located above a large travertine staircase, which offers a truly generous entrance to the main living area of the house – the so-called glass room.

The travertine on the terrace was installed during the 2010–2012 restoration and was imported for the project from the town of Tivoli, near Rome in central Italy. The terrace is directly connected to the most important section of the villa – the main living room.

08

THE MAIN LIVING ROOM



The most iconic part of Villa Tugendhat is undoubtedly the main living space, which represents in many aspects a revolutionary moment in the history of world architecture. At first glance, the regular rhythm of the subtle steel support columns, which are covered with high-gloss chrome cladding in the interiors, catches the visitor's attention. This rhythm continues on the terrace, where the columns have a brass cover patinated in copper-coloured bronze. The supporting steel skeleton, which statically supports the entire structure, allowed the architect to remove the walls, thus visually connecting the interior to the exterior with large-format glass panes. Moreover, the glass barrier can be removed by lowering two windows below the floor (these are the windows in front of the dining area and the onyx wall). Variable connection and enclosure of the space was achieved by using several curtains made of shantung silk and white velvet. It was the feeling for materials, their colour and unusual use in the interior that was the domain of Berlin-based designer Lilly Reich, who worked closely with Mies on the interior design.

From our vantage point, we notice the dining area in the foreground, which is defined by a rounded partition veneered with Macassar ebony, surrounding a generous dining table. The original partition was

removed from the interior in 1940, and for some 70 years its fate was unknown. Thanks to the historian Miroslav Ambroz, it was discovered in 2011 in the canteen of the Faculty of Law of Masaryk University in Brno, where it was secondarily used as wall cladding. The link between Villa Tugendhat and the Faculty of Law is the German secret police, the Gestapo, which used the present-day Faculty of Law as their headquarters in the 1940's and placed the veneers from Villa Tugendhat in the officers' club. Thanks to the painstaking work of the restorers, this authentic element was returned to its place as part of the restoration process in 2012.

The round dining table is an exact replica of the original table, made according to the original design (it was installed in 2012). The table, veneered in black polished pear, can be used in three possible sizes (diameters). The table top rests on a steel leg with the same profile and cladding found on the supporting columns. The table can be made smaller or larger by adding or removing individual table segments.

In her memoirs, Greta Tugendhat states that up to 24 people could sit around the large table on Brno chairs (MR 50), which we see in tubular steel covered with white parchment here. The seating under the weeping willow in the garden corresponds axially with the dining area in the main living room.

In the more distant part of the main living area you will notice the seating in front of the onyx partition. In this section, we can see the following:

- A ruby red chaise longue/spring chair (MR 100);
- Three Tugendhat armchairs, with silver-grey fabric cover (MR 70);
- Three Barcelona armchairs and one Barcelona stool (MR 90) in emerald green leather;
- MR 150 table.

The Tugendhat Chair is another of Mies' furniture designs that were first presented at Villa Tugendhat. A replica of the Torso sculpture by German sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck is visible behind the seating area. Behind the statue, in the furthest space, there is a conservatory, which further reinforces the denial of the boundaries between the interior and exterior of the villa.

The structural and aesthetic uniqueness of the entire space is complemented by a number of timeless technical elements. For example, the AC system, which is used throughout the space to heat, filter or cool the air in the main living area. Equally timeless is the system that allows the large-format windows in the dining room and in front of the onyx partition to be completely recessed into the floor level. Along the windows we can also see the chrome central heating registers, which are designed to prevent moisture from precipitating on the glass. The vast majority of these elements have been preserved in their original state and are still functional today.

09

THE TECHNICAL FLOOR AND GARDEN

The lowest, the so-called technical floor of the building is reserved for rooms of a technical nature – among other things, we would find an air-conditioning machine room, a boiler room, a machine room for the electric retractable windows, a darkroom or a moth chamber for storing fur coats here. The rooms that were used for storage and drying laundry in the 1930's are now used as exhibition spaces and a visitor centre with a gift shop.

10

VILLA TUGENDHAT
1938 – PRESENT

During our last mention of the fate of the family and Villa Tugendhat we referred to how, in 1938, the Tugendhats emigrated to St. Gallen, Switzerland. In 1941 the family emigrated to South America, specifically to Caracas, Venezuela. During the war, daughters Ruth (*1942) and Marie Daniela (*1946) were born in exile. After World War II, the family returned to Europe, but the political situation at the time made it impossible to return to Czechoslovakia. Eventually they settled again in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Since 1938, Villa Tugendhat has experienced some of the darkest moments in its history. The villa was confiscated by the Gestapo as early as the beginning of October 1939 and threatened with either radical reconstruction or even demolition. Many of the original furnishings were lost at this time, including the Makassar partition wall defining the dining area. In 1942, the house became the property of the German Reich and the new tenant from June 1943 was Walter Messerschmidt, commercial director of the Klöckner-Flugmotoren armaments factory, who restored the villa to its function as a family home for the last time. During this period, the villa also underwent its first structural and layout modifications, when the main living area was divided into several rooms by partitions.

The villa suffered serious damage at the end of World War II during the liberation of Brno. During an American air raid in November 1944, a bomb landed in the garden area and its pressure wave shattered all the glazing of the house. The exception was one large window, which was lowered under the floor during the attack and thus saved from destruction. The arrival of the Soviet army in 1945 caused even more damage, which was documented not only by witnesses' testimonies, but also by a report on the condition of the house from the summer of 1945. According to these documents, the Soviet army made open fires or stabled their horses in the building.

From August 1945 to August 1950, Professor Karla Hladká ran a private dance school in the villa. The house subsequently became the property of the Czechoslovak state and a rehabilitation centre for children with spinal defects was established there, which became part of the nearby Children's Hospital in 1955 and was housed there until 1979.

In 1958, Fritz Tugendhat died in St. Gallen. The beginning of the 1960's was the moment when discussions began about the use of Villa Tugendhat, its conservation and restoration to its original state. The initiator of these discussions was the Brno architect František Kalivoda. His efforts culminated in the inscription of Villa Tugendhat on the list of cultural building monuments in 1963. In addition to Greta Tugendhat, Kalivoda also involved the Chicago studio of Mies and the garden architect Grete Roder Müller in the discussion. It was at Kalivoda's invitation that Greta Tugendhat came to Brno in 1969, she visited Villa

Tugendhat with her daughter Daniela and subsequently gave a lecture about the house in Czech at the Brno House of Arts. Promising reconstruction efforts came to an end in the 1970's with the so-called "normalisation" and the deaths of Mies van der Rohe (†1969), Greta Tugendhat (†1970) and František Kalivoda (†1971).

In 1980, the villa was transferred to the property of the City of Brno, which decided to restore it. The building, which was in a very poor technical condition at that time, was renovated with the intention of turning it into a representative building of the city, which would be used by important visitors. The former bedrooms of the family were thus adapted for accommodation purposes. It was not possible to open the building to the public. Since the completion of the renovation in 1985, Villa Tugendhat has also become a venue for political meetings. The most famous of these took place in 1992, when the then prime ministers Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar agreed in the garden on the division of Czechoslovakia. This fact was subsequently announced on 26 August 1992 at a press conference on the villa's entrance terrace.

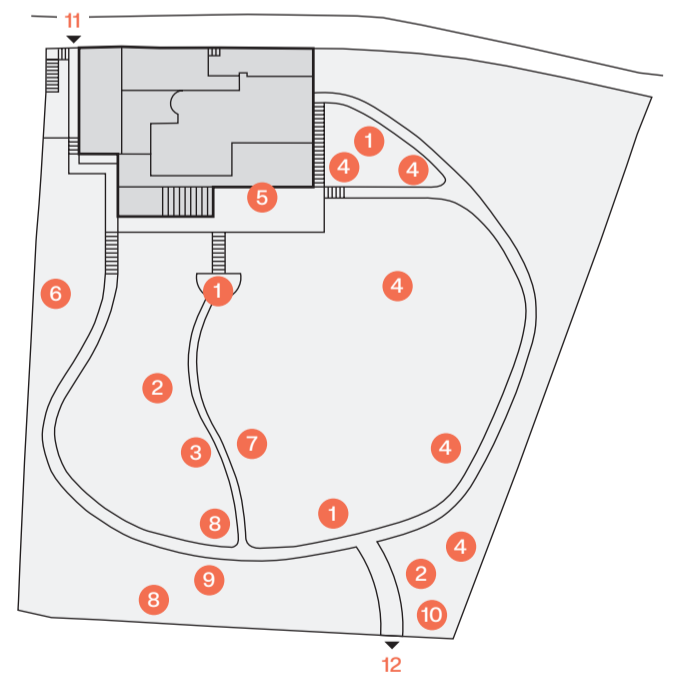
On 1 July 1994, the City of Brno entrusted the villa to the Brno City Museum, which opened the building to the public as an installed monument of modern architecture. The villa was first granted the status of a national cultural monument (1995) and then declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 16 December 2001.

With the growing importance and interest in the villa, there were also growing calls from foreign and domestic experts for the restoration of the villa, which eventually took place in 2010–2012. The villa was restored to its original 1930's appearance. Emphasis was placed on preserving as much of the authenticity of the building as possible, both the original materials and the technical equipment. The whole process culminated on 29 February 2012, when the villa was officially reopened to the public.

You can now finish your tour by visiting the exhibition space and the bookstore, or you can stroll through the garden of not only Villa Tugendhat but also the neighbouring Villa Löw-Beer (the barcode on your ticket also allows you to return to our garden).

At this moment, all that remains is to thank you for your attention and your visit and we hope that you will

return in the future to one of the other tours we offer, or to exhibitions, lectures, concerts or other events for the public.



Garden:	
1 weeping willow	7 ash
2 plane	8 oak
3 japanese pagoda tree	9 red horse-chestnut
4 norway maple	10 dogwood
5 silver lace vine	11 main entrance
6 poplar	12 Villa Löw-Beer

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#ARNOLDOVAVILA

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VILLA TUGENDHAT

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FINANČNÍ PODPORUJE MĚSTO BRNO
PRÍSPĚVKOVOU ORGANIZACI