

Nikola Tesla Statue – Zagreb, Croatia



The Nikola Tesla Statue in Zagreb is an important monument that brings together science, art, and urban history in the Croatian capital. Depicting the world-renowned inventor Nikola Tesla, this bronze statue was created by Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. Rather than portraying Tesla as a dramatic, action-filled hero, the work presents him as a calm, contemplative figure. This approach is one of the features that sets the statue apart from other public monuments in Zagreb.

The story behind the statue is about more than an artist creating a successful portrait. Tesla and Meštrović were two notable figures who knew one another and admired each other's work. For this reason, the monument in Zagreb also commemorates the friendship and mutual respect between the scientist and the sculptor. The statue's history gains another layer from its move from its original location to its familiar city-center location.

Is there really a Nikola Tesla statue in Zagreb?

Yes, there is a statue depicting Nikola Tesla in Zagreb. Created by Ivan Meštrović, it is a bronze monument located in central Zagreb, near the beginning of Teslina Street, at the intersection of Masarykova and Preradovićeve streets. The city's tourism resources list the statue among Meštrović's works that can be seen in Zagreb.

Two different years are often confused in accounts of the statue's history. The Nikola Tesla Statue was created between 1955 and 1956. The year 2006 marks the date it was moved to its current location in the city center. In other words, the monument was not made in 2006; the bronze statue had already been completed and was moved to its new site that year.

Zagreb is also home to other cultural sites and monuments associated with Tesla. When planning a

visit, it is therefore worth distinguishing Meštrović's statue in the city center from the exhibitions and memorial displays at the Nikola Tesla Technical Museum. The work discussed here is the bronze statue depicting Tesla seated, which has been a familiar feature of the city center since 2006.

Sculptor Ivan Meštrović

Ivan Meštrović is one of the best-known sculptors to have emerged from Croatia. Born in Vrpolje in 1883, he studied, worked, and exhibited his art in Europe and the United States. Meštrović's work, which explores the human figure, historical figures, and ideas in a variety of ways, also holds an important place in Zagreb's public art heritage.

Meštrović's art is not limited to depicting a person's outward appearance. Through figures' posture, facial expressions, and body language, he sought to convey their character or state of mind. The Nikola Tesla statue reflects a similar approach. Rather than showing Tesla working in a laboratory or presenting one of his inventions, the viewer sees a man absorbed in his own thoughts.

Meštrović's acquaintance with Tesla gives the work even greater significance. The two met in New York in 1924. Meštrović expressed his wish to meet Tesla, while Tesla spoke of his interest in the artist's work and his desire to meet him. They continued corresponding in the years that followed. This personal connection makes the Nikola Tesla Statue in Zagreb more than a portrait created as an ordinary commission.

The story behind the creation of Nikola Tesla's portrait

In 1939, Nikola Tesla sent Ivan Meštrović a telegram asking him to create a bust of him. Meštrović accepted the request and did not ask for payment. He explained that his commitments in Europe prevented him from travelling to the United States at the time. He suggested that Tesla come to Split or send him photographs. However, Tesla was 83 years old and not in a condition to undertake a long journey.

When Tesla died in 1943, the artist had not had the opportunity to sculpt him from life. Meštrović nevertheless wanted to fulfil his promise. He worked on the statue using his memories of having known Tesla, along with photographs. As a result, the monument seen in Zagreb today also carries the artist's own memories of Tesla.

Meštrović's large-scale statue of Tesla was completed between 1955 and 1956. Around the same time, the artist's statue depicting the scientist Ruđer Bošković was also associated with the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb. The initial placement of the Tesla statue on the institute's grounds brought the two scientists and the two works of art together in the same setting.

The statue's appearance and artistic features

The Nikola Tesla monument in Zagreb depicts Tesla seated. The scientist's head is tilted slightly forward and supported by his left hand. The relaxed position of his legs and the calm appearance of his body give the figure a thoughtful, unassuming quality. Rather than drawing the viewer's attention to action, this seated pose focuses it on Tesla's inner world and intellectual intensity.

Meštrović does not surround Tesla with obvious objects representing electricity, energy, or his inventions. The human figure itself is the work's central focus. Tesla's contemplative pose evokes the patience and concentration behind scientific work. The statue therefore portrays the scientist not only through his achievements, but also through the act of thinking.

The bronze surface and sculptural volume allow the work to be viewed from different angles. From the front, the figure's overall posture stands out. From the sides, the forward tilt of the head and the position of the arm become more pronounced. Walking around the statue makes it easier to appreciate how the artist shaped the figure in three dimensions.

Since the statue stands in an open urban space, the experience differs from viewing a work inside a museum gallery. Tesla's figure is part of the surrounding streets, buildings, and everyday city life. This public setting allows the monument to reach not only those interested in art history, but also residents and visitors walking through central Zagreb.

The current location of the Nikola Tesla Statue

The Nikola Tesla Statue's city-center address is at the intersection of Masarykova and Preradovićeve streets. It is located near the beginning of Teslina Street. The City of Zagreb's urban planning documents also list the Tesla monument in this area, in connection with Masarykova 2 and the intersecting streets.

A new debate about the statue's future location emerged in early 2026. The Ruđer Bošković Institute submitted a request to the City of Zagreb to have the monument moved back to the institute's grounds. News reports published in January 2026 said that no final decision had been made at that time. Visitors planning to see the statue may therefore wish to check its current location closer to their travel date.

This uncertainty does not change the fact that the statue is in Zagreb, but the address where visitors can see it may change over time. For those planning a walk through the city center, the monument's familiar location near Masarykova and Preradovićeve streets is a useful starting point. If a new decision is made to relocate it, local announcements and up-to-date city maps should be consulted.

How to get to the Nikola Tesla Statue in Zagreb

Because the statue is in central Zagreb, it is easy to include in a walking route. Once you reach the intersection of Masarykova and Preradovićeve streets, you can see the monument in a small area near the beginning of Teslina Street. It is possible to walk there from the squares and pedestrian streets in the city center. Before your visit, searching for “Nikola Tesla statue Zagreb” or “Spomenik Nikoli Tesli” in a map app can help you find the location.

Rather than simply passing the statue, walking around it offers the opportunity to see the figure’s pose from different angles. When taking photographs, be mindful of pedestrians and avoid blocking walkways. Viewing the monument alongside the nearby streets and squares helps reveal how closely public art is woven into everyday life in central Zagreb.

Why is the Nikola Tesla Statue worth seeing?

One of the things that makes the Nikola Tesla Statue in Zagreb special is the true story of friendship between the scientist and the sculptor. Tesla’s request for Meštrović to create his portrait, and the artist’s fulfilment of that wish after Tesla’s death, give the work a personal significance. Behind the monument is not only a decision to commemorate Tesla, but also the mutual respect that grew between two creative minds.

Another important feature is the way the statue portrays Tesla differently from conventional heroic depictions. The seated, thoughtful, and composed figure recalls the intellectual effort behind scientific achievements. Meštrović’s understated approach invites visitors to focus less on Tesla’s inventions and more on his act of thinking.

A third defining feature is the monument’s relationship with urban life. The statue is not confined to a private museum collection; it stands in a public space in central Zagreb. This makes it a cultural landmark visitors can encounter while exploring the city. For those walking through the center, a brief stop is enough to reflect on Tesla’s life and Meštrović’s art.

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