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Prague, Czech Republic

OVERVIEW

Introduction

Prague, Czech Republic, is a city of stunning physical beauty. The capitals of many other European nations were flattened or heavily damaged during World War II, but Prague survived intact. Thanks to Prague's role as a focal point of culture and commerce for nearly a millennium, it retains evidence of the many nationalities that have influenced and sometimes dominated its course in history. Gothic and baroque spires, art-nouveau facades and even cubist structures reflect a crucible of German, Italian, Flemish and Bohemian artistic movements. At one time the seat of the Holy Roman Empire and at another the citadel of the Hapsburgs, Prague sustains a reputation as a vital political, cultural and economic center.



This is especially true since the 1989 bloodless Velvet Revolution swept out communism. Tourists and foreign expatriates continue to descend on the City of a Hundred Spires, although those hoping to see evidence of its totalitarian past may be disappointed to find that Prague has very much become a cosmopolitan Western capital. Gone are the days of standing in line for bananas in Spartan, communist-style grocery stores; instead, expect to see people standing in line for the dressing room at the Swedish clothing-store chain H&M.

Prague's old-world appeal has been steadfastly preserved despite its fast-food restaurants, cash machines and ubiquitous cell phones. Thick river fogs, arched stone bridges, mysteriously lit alleyways and other charming scenes linger around almost every corner. If you slip away from the main tourist scene, you'll likely stumble upon a bakery offering freshly baked brown loaves from 200-year-old recipes, or a lively political debate in a Hapsburg-era *hospoda* (pub). For many, Prague carries on as it always has.

Must See or Do

Sights—The Charles Bridge; Old Town Square with its candy-colored buildings and spires; Prague Castle and its 1,000-year-old St. Vitus Cathedral; the cliff-top fortress of Vysehrad; Wenceslas Square, the commercial heart of New Town; the delightful cobblestoned streets of Mala Strana; the ancient synagogues and graveyard of the Jewish Quarter.

Museums—The old-masters exhibit at the baroque Sternberg Palace; the city's best collection of foreign and domestic modern art at Veltrzni Palace.

Memorable Meals—Venison with cranberry cream sauce and views at Bellevue; brunch on the terrace of Palffy Palac; chocolate soufflé at Restaurant Flambee.

Late Night—Jazz at the cozy AghaRTA Jazz Centrum; hanging with the beautiful people at Radost; the down-to-earth Chateau Rogue bar.

Walks—A romantic afternoon in Stromovka Park; a stroll on Petrin Hill; the walk from Obecni Dum to Prague Castle.

Especially for Kids—Boat rides on the Vltava River; the Prague Zoo; Seaworld; the Hall of Mirrors.

Geography

Prague is composed of 10 districts that stretch across seven hills, centered on the broad Vltava River (known as the Moldau in German). Each district's boundaries are printed on city maps, and Praguers will refer to them when giving directions.

The central district, Prague 1, includes the areas known as the Lesser Quarter (Mala Strana) on the west bank of the Vltava River, and the Old Town and New Town (Stare Mesto and Nove Mesto) on the east side of the river. These areas of Prague 1, along with portions of Prague 2, comprise what is often called the centrum, or city center. The centrum contains the main tourist attractions, most major businesses, many hotels and restaurants, and the banking district. The city now boasts several up-and-coming districts for residential life, business and, consequently, tourism, thanks to the top-flight bars, restaurants and shopping. These areas include Prague 3 (Zizkov), with its landmark television tower; Prague 5 (Andel), home to multiplexes and malls; and Prague 7, site of the lovely Letna Park.

Twelve bridges cross the Vltava River. Karluv Most, the oldest and most spectacular bridge, is known by visitors and natives alike as the Charles Bridge. It connects the Lesser Town's quaint streets with the Old and New towns and is for pedestrians only.

All addresses in this report include the district number in parentheses.

History

The first Slav settlements near Prague date back to the late sixth century, but it wasn't until about AD 880 that the ruling dukes built Prague Castle. During the following centuries, Prague became an important center for Christianity in the Czech state, and the monarchy began to take notice of the emerging town.

Shortly after coming to the throne in 1230, King Wenceslas I began fortifying an area in Stare Mesto (Old Town). His successor, King Otakar II, was responsible for fortifying what today is known as Nove Mesto (New Town). The two areas were not officially unified until 1287. The reign of Charles IV in the 14th century brought much construction to the city: Universities were established, the cathedral was erected, and work on the Charles Bridge began. The population also soared, making Prague the largest city in Central Europe.

Subsequent centuries brought busts and booms, conflicts and uprisings as the region came under the control of the Hapsburgs' Austrian empire for more than five centuries. One of Europe's first civic rebellions against Catholicism occurred early in the 15th century when priest Jan Hus delivered services in Czech instead of Latin and condemned the collection of payment for absolutions. He was burned at the stake in 1415, but his actions foreshadowed Martin Luther by two centuries.

It was not until the early 19th century that support for the National Czech Movement arose. After the 1918 armistice of World War I, Czechoslovakia became an independent republic under the modern Czech hero, former president Thomas G. Masaryk.

But all was not settled with the new country. The 1938 Munich Agreement ceded one-third of Czechoslovakia's territory to Germany, and Hitler invaded soon after. Following World War II and the murder of thousands of Czechs by the Nazis, the territory was returned and Czechs of German descent were expelled. Communists won the 1946 elections, and in 1948 the party established totalitarian rule and came increasingly under Soviet influence.

Emerging visions of democracy, known as Prague Spring, were crushed by a Soviet invasion in August 1968, and it wasn't until the late 1980s that communism was finally defeated. Vaclav Havel, a dissident, playwright and darling of Western politicians, became president in 1989. In 1993, the long-considered separation of Slovakia and the Czech Republic became official. After the peaceful split, Prague became the capital of the new Czech Republic. In 2003, Havel was replaced by his archrival, Vaclav Klaus. The country became a member of NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

Potpourri

Overlooking the river and Old Town, Letna Park once held a gargantuan marble statue of Stalin and a few of his hardworking Communists, measuring 164 ft/50 m tall and weighing in at 17,000 tons. It was unveiled on 1 May 1955. A few years later Stalin was denounced by Nikita Khrushchev, and the statue was destroyed with 800 kilograms of

explosives and 1,650 detonators. Today, the same spot features a metronome that ticks from west to east, as if looking at both the past and the future.

Prague is home to the largest ancient castle (construction began around 870) in the world and the second-largest stadium (construction started in 1926) in the world. The castle is still in use today, but the stadium is a decrepit pile of concrete, although it is used by Sparta Prague FC as a training center. It holds the equivalent of seven soccer pitches.

If you want to live like a local, you must drink the beer; it has been an institution in Prague since AD 900. In 2003, the annual beer consumption per person was 160 liters. During a relay in 2004, Czechs downed 2,662 half-liters of beer in less than 17 hours to earn the title of the fastest relay drinkers in the world. They chugged more than 156 beers per hour, or 2.6 mugs per minute.

The Czech Republic has more than 2,000 preserved castles and chateaus—more per square mile/kilometer than any other country in the world.

SEE & DO

Sightseeing

The center of Prague is basically one big landmark, monument and historic site after another, spread across three districts. Most of the city's attractions are found there. The best way to experience it all is by foot, and a lot of the old city is zoned for pedestrians only. Although disastrous floods damaged the city's foundations in the summer of 2002, the city has completed reparations. Visitors will find little or no evidence that a catastrophe ever occurred, although if you look down into Na Kampa on the Mala Strana (the Lesser Quarter) side of the bridge, you can see a marker on the building showing where the water level reached.

Begin your tour at Prague Castle, once the home of Bohemian royalty, which overlooks the city from the ancient quarter of Hradcany. Afterward, make your way down to the Mala Strana, where the winding cobblestoned streets are the city's best for strolling. Cross the 14th-century Charles Bridge. Continue to Old Town Square (Staromestske Namesti) and you'll find rows of well-preserved historic buildings, large sidewalk cafes and churches.

On the Old Town Square are the Kinsky Palace, where the beginning of the communist state was proclaimed, and the former city hall (*radnice*) with its tall tower and famous Astronomical Clock's *orloj* (moving figures) that delight the gathered crowds at the top of each hour. You'll also see the statue of the 15th-century reformer Jan Hus, the other St. Nicholas Church (the more-famous one is in the Lesser Quarter—this one contains a magnificent crystal chandelier) and the many-spired Church of Our Lady Before Tyn.

Of course it helps to know what you are looking at. Prague boasts seven dominant architectural styles, but the key styles for intrepid visitors are Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, baroque and art nouveau, whose most famous practitioner was the beloved Alfonse Mucha. The Romanesque style, an early medieval style closely associated with thick walls and arches, was the basis for the Convent of St. George on the grounds of Prague Castle. The Charles Bridge and Our Lady Before Tyn on Old Town Square display the characteristics of the Gothic movement. With its playful arcades and copper roof, Belvedere, Prague Castle's summer palace that sits next to the Royal Gardens, is an outstanding example of Italian Renaissance architecture.

Fans of the neoclassical period will enjoy the Estates Theatre—it somewhat resembles a wedding cake. The impressive Municipal House (Obecni Dum) is a great example of an art-nouveau building. Prague has received many awards for its post-1989 architecture. The Dancing Building, designed to resemble the dancing silhouette of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, is a swaying glass edifice in New Town that epitomizes contemporary design in the capital city.

Prague has dozens of other sights, including the Bertramka Mozart Museum and many branches of the National Gallery.

If you have time, climb one of the city's many towers (most open their doors and spiraling stairways daily for a nominal fee). Good options include the Powder Tower next to the Municipal House and the towers of Charles Bridge. Magnificent views are one of Prague's specialties, so don't miss the funicular ride up Petrin Hill in Mala Strana. From there you get a panoramic vantage point, but you can just as easily survey the city's gems from Letna Park.

Greenery is another advantage, so try to take at least one stroll through the picturesque gardens during your stay, particularly at Vysehrad, the New Jewish Cemetery, or one of the many free gardens surrounding the castle.

Historic Sites

Charles Bridge

Broad Charles Bridge (listed as Karluv Most on most maps) was built in 1357 and was later lined with the figures of saints. The tourist-thronged bridge affords great views of the city and river. Visit in early morning or late evening to

avoid some of the crowds and the vendors and craftsmen peddling their wares on spring and summer days. Although a tram once crossed on it, the bridge is now solely pedestrian. The tower on the Old Town side of the bridge is highly decorated, but the one on the river side is unadorned because it faced heavy attack during the 30 Years War; the Swedes never made it past this point in their assault on Prague. Be sure to touch the statue of St. John Nepomuk for good luck.

Old Town Square

The heart of Prague and the traditional marketplace since medieval times. Brightly colored baroque, Gothic and Renaissance buildings surround the square. Its highlights include the Astronomical Clock, the Old Town Hall, the Church of Our Lady Before Tyn and the Church of St. Nicholas. The square buzzes with activity during the day and most of the night but is beautiful to visit in the early-morning hours. Enjoy a cup of coffee and soak in the atmosphere at any number of cafes that line the square (but be prepared for prices that reflect the atmosphere).

Prague Castle

The city's top tourist attraction is really more of a district (called Hradcany) than a building. Within the castle walls are Spanish Hall (paintings by Brueghel, Durer, Holbein, Leonardo da Vinci and Titian), St. Vitus Cathedral (brilliant stained-glass windows plus gargoyles), the Romanesque St. George's Basilica, Golden Lane (rows of tiny houses once occupied by craftsmen) and several small exhibitions. Guided walking tours are recommended. The buildings are open daily April-October 9 am-5 pm and November-March 9 am-4 pm. The grounds are open daily April-October 5 am-midnight, November-February 6 am-11 pm. You can walk through much of the castle without charge, though you need to pay to get into some areas. Tickets range 100 Kc-300 Kc adults, depending on how much you want to see. Tours cost 250 Kc-350 Kc. Hradcanske Namesti (1), Prague. Phone 224-373-368. <http://www.hrad.cz>.

Museums

Franz Kafka Museum

An excellent long-term exhibition, organized by the Catalan Institute of Contemporary Culture, that was shown in both Barcelona and in the Jewish Museum in New York before coming to rest in Prague. In addition to holding first editions of many of Kafka's works, the exhibition blends documents with visuals and 3-D installations, making it very accessible. Daily 10 am-6 pm. 120 Kc adults. Cihelna 2b (1), Prague. Phone 257-535-507. <http://www.kafkamuseum.cz>.

Jewish Museum

Prague's Jewish Quarter, or Josefov, was once a ghetto to which the city's Jewish community was confined until the 18th century. Unlike many major Jewish quarters in Europe, this one was not completely destroyed by the Nazis and has become a treasure trove of architectural, cultural and religious lore. The museum complex encompasses the extraordinary Old Jewish Cemetery (famous for its tilting headstones piled upon each other), the Old-New Synagogue, Pinkas Synagogue, Klaus Synagogue, Spanish Synagogue and Maisel Synagogue. Its exhibits trace the history of Jews in Bohemia and Moravia and include drawings from the Terezin Concentration Camp and Ghetto. We recommend making advance reservations for a guide (for an extra 50 Kc). Open Sunday-Friday April-October 9 am-6 pm, November-March 9 am-4:30 pm. 480 Kc adult admission to all the sights. U Stare Skoly 1 (1), Prague. Phone 222-317-191 for reservations. <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz>.

National Museum

With its extravagant exterior, this museum is known more as a backdrop for major events in the city's history than for its exhibitions. Even if you don't visit an exhibition, it's worth the time to climb the front staircase for excellent views of Wenceslas Square. Daily May-September 10 am-6 pm, October-April 9 am-5 pm. Closed the first Tuesday of each month. 120 Kc adults. Free the first Monday of each month. Vaclavske Namesti 68 (1), Prague. Phone 224-497-111. <http://www.nm.cz>.

Parks & Gardens

Botanical Gardens

There are open-air and indoor gardens to explore, including vineyards, a Mediterranean collection, a small alpine house, Japanese gardens and the Fata Morgana tropical greenhouse. Open-air exhibitions open daily; Fata Morgana is open April 9 am-6 pm, May-September 9 am-7 pm, October 9 am-5 pm, November-March 9 am-4 pm. 120 Kc adults. Nadvorni 134 (7) (metro line C to Nadrazi Holesovice then take bus 112 to Botanicka Zahrada Troja), Prague. Phone 234-148-111. <http://www.botanicka.cz>.

Castle Gardens

These gardens were closed to the public for several years while the communists were in power. Britain's Prince Charles reopened the gardens after they were reconstructed in 2000. Visitors must pay a small fee for some of the gardens, which a guard will collect, but many of the gardens are free. Located in Prague 1. Daily March-October 10 am-6 pm.

Wallenstein Garden

No expense was spared for this large garden space almost hidden below the Wallenstein chateau. Its sculptured hedges

and fountains, bronze statues and a few peacocks serve as reminders of past grandeur. Features outdoor concerts in the summer. Daily April-October 10 am-6 pm. Free. Valdstejnsky Namesti 4 (1), Prague. Phone 224-373-368.

Zoos & Wildlife

Sea World (Morsky Svet)

Located in the Prague showgrounds at Vystaviste, this aquarium has more than 10,764 sq ft/1,000 sq m of exhibition space featuring tropical seas and coral reefs. Up-to-date technology creates a simulation of the moon's effect on high and low tides. Call in advance to arrange a guided tour. Open daily 10 am-7 pm. 240 Kc adults, 145 Kc children ages 4-15. Vystaviste (7), Prague. Phone 220-103-275. http://www.morsky-svet.cz/index_en.html.

Other Options

Bludiste (Hall of Mirrors)

Close to the Eiffel Tower replica at the top of Petrin Hill, the Hall of Mirrors is located in a miniature castle that imitates the fortifications at Vysehrad and, along with the tower, dates back to the world exhibition held there in 1891. It's not a particularly big mirror maze, but it's still enough to keep the kids entertained. January-March Saturday and Sunday 10 am-5 pm; April-October open daily 10 am-6 pm (till 10 pm May-August). 50 Kc adults, 40 Kc children ages 11-16, 10 Kc children age 10 and younger.

Recreation

There are many recreational options in Prague, from renting a rowboat on the Vltava River to golfing at the city's only public course. One warning about outdoor sports: Prague's air is notoriously polluted, especially during the winter months, and aerobic activity is difficult to maintain in the low-lying city center.

Golf

Golf Club Praha

Prague's 18-hole course sits on a hilltop and is quite a pleasant experience. There's a driving range for practice and warm-up. Daily 8 am-8 pm during summer months, till 6:30 pm the rest of the year. Greens fees run 450 Kc-700 Kc for nine holes, 800 Kc-1,200 Kc for 18 holes. Plzenska 401/2 (5), Prague. Phone 257-216-584 to reserve a tee time. <http://www.gcp.cz>.

Hiking & Walking

Divoka Sarka

Take Tram 26 from the city center to the last station (Divoka Sarka). There you'll find massive rocks, a forest that's great for walks, a swimming pool, refreshment stands and an outdoor restaurant.

Michelsky Les and Kunraticky Les

These two large forests make it hard to believe you're in the city. Wide trails, steep hills and a brook. Take Metro Line C south to Roztyly.

Spas and Health Clubs

World Class Fitness Center

Located right in the center of Prague, this is a great place to get in a workout. With more than 40 cardio machines, weights and a wide array of group classes, you'll never have to wait in line. It's ultraclean, and the equipment is modern. Wenceslas Square 22 (1), Prague. Phone 234-699-100. <http://www.worldclass.cz>.

Swimming

Aquapark Lagoon Letnany

You have to catch a metro and a bus from the city center to get to this Aquapark, but it's a great place for the kids with an impressive water slide, spa pool and kids' pool in addition to the 82-ft/25-m pool. Monday, Wednesday and Friday noon-10 pm. Tuesday and Thursday 4 pm-10 pm. Saturday and Sunday 9 am-10 pm. Adults 120 Kc, children 60 Kc for 90 minutes. Tupelova 665 (18) (take metro Nadrazi Holesovice to bus 156), Prague. Phone 234-699-100. <http://www.letnanylagoon.cz>.

Nightlife

Prague is magical at night. Golden lamps flicker along narrow streets, theatrical spotlights glow on castles and bridges, and the notes of saxophones, violins and pianos drift out across the city. The taverns of Prague, notably U Fleku, serve the much-loved dark beer of Bohemia that is often brewed on the premises. Live music is plentiful, especially jazz.

And for something a bit laid-back, stroll Charles Bridge at night. There are sure to be buskers there—some very talented—providing entertainment under the stars.

Most city center bars and taverns stay open until midnight or 1 am, but clubs often stay open until the wee hours (5-6 am).

Bars, Taverns & Pubs

La Bodeguita del Medio

A rather tacky, but very amusing, copy of the famous Hemingway bar in Havana right in the center of the Old Town. The walls are covered with graffiti, and the *mojitos* taste just as good as in Cuba. Great atmosphere, with lots of Latin music and dancing. Aficionados congregate upstairs, perhaps to smoke a Cohiba in the Cigar Lounge. Daily 10 am-2 am. Laprova 5 (1), Prague. Phone 224-813-922. <http://www.bodeguita.cz>.

U Vystreleneho Oka

A longtime Bohemian favorite, this tavern resists changing with the times. Pilsners flow, and bands play occasionally on the tiny stage. Comical artwork by contemporary Czech illustrator and painter Martin Velisek covers the walls. A free-spirit attitude prevails: It's not the place for yuppies or anyone who doesn't like smoky pubs. Monday-Saturday from 4:30 pm. U Bozich Bojovniku 3 (3), Prague. Phone 222-540-465.

Dance & Nightclubs

Chateau Rouge

A regular hangout for locals and expats who really want to party. A large bar on the ground floor opens up to a recently added cellar complete with a DJ spinning house and progressive music until the wee hours. Be prepared to dance and socialize as you never have before. Bar opens at noon Monday-Friday, 4 pm Saturday and Sunday. Downstairs club from 9 pm. Free entry. Jakubska 2 (1), Prague. Phone 222-316-328. <http://www.chateaurouge.cz>.

Karlovy Lazne

Popular with the young crowd, this club (said to be one of the largest in Central Europe) is something of a meat market, where transparent floors and short skirts make for a wicked combination. Four floors feature different styles of music. Locals and tourists flock to this spot on the weekends. Tuesday-Sunday from 9 pm. 50 Kc cover until 10 pm; 120 Kc cover after 10 pm. Novotneho Lavka (1), Prague. Phone 222-220-502. <http://www.karlovy lazne.cz>.

Le Clan

Popular after-hours club with some of the most beautiful women in Prague (the men are quite interesting as well). Lit by candles, with red drapes and Virgin Mary pictures on the walls, this is an eclectic pick. No sign, so ring at the door and look your very best. Open from 2 am until the next morning at 10 am, or longer. At its liveliest on Saturday and Sunday after 4 am. Balbinova 23 (1), Prague. Phone 6674-663. <http://www.leclan.cz>.

Live Music

Palac Akropolis

Its rather small back bar can be a fantastic, intimate musical experience, with an international crowd and DJs spinning electronica or dub/reggae. But the larger concert hall is one of the city's prime performance spaces. It features talented bands that play rock and excellent world music. Monday-Friday from 7 pm, Saturday and Sunday from 4 pm. 100 Kc-250 Kc cover. Kubelikova 27 (3), Prague. Phone 296-330-911. <http://www.palacakropolis.cz>.

U Maleho Glena

This tiny cellar space in Mala Strana offers a respectable program of live jazz (jam sessions on Sunday), blues (Monday and Wednesday), Afro-Cuban (Tuesday) and funk. Catering to expats and locals, the experience can be quite intimate on the right night. Popular with American guests. Nightly from 9. 100 Kc cover, on average. Karmelitska 23 (1), Prague. Phone 257-531-717. <http://www.malyglen.cz>.

Performing Arts

Prague features all the performing arts. Both classical and jazz offerings are on hand to delight music lovers. In fact, many performances take place in palaces and churches around the city. Prague's more traditional venues are among the finer and most affordable you'll encounter in Europe. The Estates Theatre, with arguably the most beautiful exterior in the city, is where Mozart premiered *Don Giovanni*. The Rudolfinum, a late-19th-century gem, and Smetana Hall, a grand venue in the Municipal House, are also magnificent.

Theatergoers will enjoy the satire and insights of Czech drama. Plays are occasionally performed in English or with simultaneous translation via headset. Black-light theater (music, mime and movement) is hugely popular in Prague. You will also find folklore productions and marionette theaters throughout the city.

Tickets for performing-arts events are relatively inexpensive, and they go fast—you'll often see long lines of people outside venues waiting to snatch up any available tickets. It's a good idea to purchase tickets through a broker—despite a slight mark-up on the price.

Dance

National Ballet

Prague's main dance company performs year-round at the National Theatre, the Estates Theatre and the State Opera. Purchase tickets at the company's office. Narodni Trida 2 (1), Prague. Phone 224-901-111 (box office). <http://www.narodni-divadlo.cz>.

Music

Czech Philharmonic

This world-renowned orchestra makes its home at the Rudolfinum. Concerts are held year-round and feature classical, Romantic and Czech pieces. Tickets may be reserved up to a month in advance at the Rudolfinum box office. Alsovo Nabrezi 12 (1), Prague. Phone 227-059-227. <http://www.czechphilharmonic.cz>.

Opera

The main venues are the State Opera and the National Theatre, which both showcase national companies, as well as the Estates Theatre. State Opera, Wilsonova 4 (1), phone 2-2422-7266. National Theatre, Narodni 2 (1), phone 2-2490-1448.

Theater

Magic Lantern

In the modern glass building next to the National Theatre, Magic Lantern creates amazing multimedia shows that combine dance, film, mime and theater. Nove Scena, Narodni Trida 4 (1), Prague. Phone 224-931-482. <http://www.laterna.cz>.

Ticket Brokers

Ticketpro

Handles tickets for events of all types: concerts, dance, theater, sports and more. Maintains outlets across the city. Daily 9 am-10 pm. Prague Tourist Center, Rytirska 12 (1), Prague. Phone 296-333-333. <http://www.ticketpro.cz>.

Venues

Estates Theatre

The Stavoske divadlo is worth a visit just to see its breathtaking interior. This is the Nostiz Theatre built in the 1780s where Mozart himself conducted his *Marriage of Figaro* and the world premiere of his *Don Giovanni*, both in 1787. The theater was rebuilt several times but still has its original wooden interiors and original decorations. *Warning:* Avoid ticket vendors in Mozart costumes who may approach you in the street—they sell overpriced and sometimes fake tickets. Ovocni trh 6 (1), Prague. Phone 224-902-322. <http://www.narodni-divadlo.cz>.

Spectator Sports

Hockey is the primary sport to watch in Prague. Local teams are excellent, the competition is furious, and the fans are often a bit out of control. Soccer is lower key than in most other European countries. The main rivalry for both sports in Prague is between Sparta and Slavia, but if you want to go to a soccer game where there is some atmosphere, then look no farther than Bohemians 1905, who tend to get bigger and more fanatical crowds even though they are in a lower division.

The Czech Business Weekly publishes listings and details of upcoming sports events.

Shopping

It's nearly impossible to think that this country was an empty-shelved shopper's nightmare not too long ago. These days, upscale shops cater to foreign visitors, department stores offer something for everyone, and glass and porcelain vendors won't let you escape their attention. Be sure to take home a piece or two of the famous Bohemian crystal from Moser or from one of the many quality crystal shops. Other souvenir ideas include elaborate marionettes, Bata shoes from the signature store on Wenceslas Square and costume jewelry from Royal Bijou. The city also seems to be emerging from the plague of kitsch souvenir shops, which are still plentiful but are at least interspersed with individual boutiques, galleries and specialty shops.

Shopping Hours: Traditionally Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon or 1 pm, although the center of Prague has largely moved to 9 am-8 pm daily.

Antique Stores

If you plan on buying antiques, do check carefully that you will be able to export them, particularly in the case of anything produced before 1920. **Antikvariat** Specializes in old books (almost all in Czech) and prints, including old maps, architecture and nature studies, Czech landscapes and miniatures of Prague scenes. The friendly, somewhat eccentric staff is eager to help. Monday-Friday 10 am-8 pm. Ujezd 13 (5), Prague.

Jan Hunek Starozitnosti

Especially noted for fine 18th- and 19th-century Czech crystal and glass, and Meissen porcelain. Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm. V Celnici 10 (1), Prague. Phone 221-033-490. <http://www.antik-hunek.com>.

Papilio

The wide assortment of antiques includes Bohemian crystal by Loetz and Steinsenau, secessionist furniture and paintings, art-nouveau silverware, and French glass by the likes of Galle, Daum and Legras. Daily 10 am-6 pm. Tyn 1 (1), Prague. Phone 224-895-454. <http://www.papilio.cz>.

Pod Kinskou Starozitnosti

This antiques shop is a welcome reminder of the beauty of furnishings from centuries past. It's stocked with elegant furniture, chandeliers, carpets and paintings. It evokes the atmosphere of an upscale Paris flea market, and the knowledgeable staff speaks English. Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 10 am-5 pm. Namesti Kinskych 7 (5), Prague. Phone 257-311-245. <http://www.antique-shop.cz>.

Bookstores

Shakespeare and Sons

The staff there will go out of its way to get you any book you crave. It is the newest kid on the block in terms of English-language bookstores, but it has a balanced and satisfying selection of fiction and nonfiction. Daily 11 am-7 pm. U Luzickeho seminaru (1), Prague. Phone 257-531-894. <http://www.shakes.cz>.

The Globe Bookstore

Something of a Prague institution, the Globe is a legendary hangout for expats. It has lots of English-language books (some used titles), a cafe with tasty food and Wi-Fi. Several chairs are scattered around for those who want to read. Live music every Friday and Saturday night. Daily 9:30 am-midnight. Pstrossova 6 (1), Prague. Phone 224-934-203. <http://www.globebookstore.cz>.

Department Stores

Kotva

One of Prague's first department stores, Kotva carries men's and women's fashions, sporting goods, music, home furnishings, perfumes and cosmetics. Be sure to check out the crystal selection. Monday-Friday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. Namesti Republiky 8 (1), Prague. Phone 224-801-111. <http://www.od-kotva.cz>.

Galleries

Jiri Svestka Gallery

This handsome space is used by celebrated artists—both Czech and foreign. It's considered one of the best places to purchase fine artwork (and the prices reflect that reputation). Tuesday-Friday noon-6 pm, Saturday 11 am-6 pm. Biskupsky dvur 6 (1), Prague. Phone 222-311-092. <http://www.jirisvestka.com>.

Prague City Gallery

As much museum as gallery, there are exhibits spread out over several sites, including: Golden Ring House, Tynska 6 (1), Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm, phone 224-827-526; Stone Bell House, Staromestske Namesti 13 (1), Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm, phone 224-827-526; and Old Town Hall, Staromestske Namesti 1 (1), 9 am-5 pm, phone 224-482-751. Gallery exhibitions are usually listed in *The Prague Post*. <http://www.citygalleryprague.cz>.

Markets

Havelska Market

Also called Old Town Market, it's a nice slice of daily Bohemian life—with the inevitable touch of tourism because of its central location. Stands are filled with fruits and vegetables, flowers, wooden toys and delightful ceramic pieces. Tiny cafes and restaurants abound. Daily 8 am-6 pm, though there are often fewer stalls on Sunday afternoon. On Havelska, between Mustek and Old Town Square (1), Prague.

Shopping Areas

You can find the American-style mall Novy Smichov at Andel metro station, and the massive new Palladium mall on the site of an old barracks on Namesti Republiky (<http://www.palladiumpraha.cz>). **Parizska Street** Leading from Old Town Square through the Jewish Quarter toward the Vltava River, Parizska's buildings are patterned after those in Paris. Boasting name-brand shops—Christian Dior, Pringle of Scotland, Francesa Lecca—it's the favorite shopping area for Prague's nouveau riche.

Specialty Stores

Artel

Karen Feldman has given traditional Bohemian crystal a fresh and elegant design. She works only with the best Czech craftspeople. Open daily 10 am-8 pm. Celetna 29 (1), Prague. Phone 224-815-085. <http://www.artelglass.com>.

Sklo Bohemia Svetla nad Sazavou

The best deals in crystal are found outside of Prague, but many tourists don't venture out of the big city. Therefore, this shop brings in goods from the small village of the same name. You'll find quality Bohemian glass at reasonable prices. Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. Na Prikope 17 (1), Prague. Phone 224-210-574. <http://www.sklobohemia.cz>.

Trio

Excellent source for CDs by classical Czech composers, as well as for works by other composers. Knowledgeable staff. Music from the store flows out into Old Town Square. Monday-Friday 10 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-6 pm. U Radnice 5 (1), Prague. Phone 222-322-583.

Itinerary

Day Trips

To **Karlstejn**. This is a towering castle built by King Charles IV in 1348 to house coronation jewels and relics. Trains leave hourly from Prague's Smichov station (Smichovske Nadrazi) for the 40-minute trip to Karlstejn. The castle—overwhelmed with tourists in the summer—is a 20-minute walk up the ridge from the station. By car, follow signs to Plzen, get on Highway E50, take Exit 10 and follow the signs. Closed Monday. Hours vary by season so call ahead or check the Web site before you go. Phone 311-681-617. <http://www.hradkarlstejn.cz>.

To **Karlovy Vary**. This spa town makes a delightful day trip. The west Bohemian enclave reached its peak in the 1800s, when the aristocratic and famous trekked there to take advantage of the warm—and peculiar-tasting—water. Hotels and shops, colonnades, baths, pensions and sanatoriums from the 19th century line the lovely promenades. Stroll down to the opulent Grand Hotel Pupp at the southern edge of town. Karlovy Vary also hosts the Czech Republic's annual film festival. Buses leave from Prague's Florenc station almost hourly. If you're driving, follow signs from Prague's center to Highway E48 or Route 6. Karlovy Vary is about 80 mi/130 km west of Prague. <http://www.karlovyvary.cz>.

Local Tours

If you like to do things on the spur of the moment, be sure to stop by the area between Charles Bridge and Wenceslas Square. There are dozens of tour information booths—you can't miss them. Advertisements for walking tours are all over the tourist areas, especially below the Astronomical Clock in Old Town Square. Look for guides holding up signs or umbrellas at the top of every hour.

Prague is best seen on foot, although that can be quite exhausting. Because the traffic is so horrendous in the city, we don't recommend renting a car. A bus tour is ideal for those with limited time.

Historic Tram Tour

Dopravni podnik Prahy offers an hour-long ride on the Historic Tram 91, which travels through many of the historic areas in the city center, including Mala Strana, Wenceslas Square and Vystaviste. It runs hourly 1-8 pm on Saturday and Sunday April-October. Tickets are 25 Kc, and passengers can hop on or off at any time. Phone 222-623-777.

DINING

Dining Overview

Thanks to a growing number of tourists and immigrants, the restaurant scene in Prague is becoming more cosmopolitan. Until the early 1990s, visitors were hard-pressed to find anything but Czech cuisine, but these days, it's possible to dine on well-prepared dishes from around the globe. The city center offers many restaurants, but a majority of outlying neighborhoods now boast good ethnic and Continental restaurants. The Lesser Quarter (Mala Strana) offers

the best and most expensive variety by far, followed by Old Town (especially near Dlouha and Parizska streets). Cafe society also thrives in Prague. Intimate places to sit and chat over a creamy cappuccino or a cold drink are found throughout the city.

Czech cuisine can basically be summed up in three words: starch, grease and meat. It's tasty but can be somewhat limited in variety. The traditional Czech meal consists of roast pork, sauerkraut and *knedliky* (dumplings). Other specialties are goulash (often served with dumplings) and *svickova* (well-done roast beef in a cream gravy topped with cranberry sauce and a lemon slice). Expect soup, such as *cibulacka* (onion soup) or *cesnekova* (garlic soup), and heavy rye bread to accompany most meals. Fried cheese is a delicacy that few Czechs can resist. Each menu item is sold separately, so be sure to order your side items in addition to your entree. All the traditional dishes seem to taste better with Czech beer, which is famous worldwide—try Pilsner Urquell, Budvar, Radegast, Staropramen, Velkopopovicky Kozel or unpasteurized Bernard.

The main meal of the day is eaten at noon. In addition to a simple breakfast and evening meal, Czechs enjoy a snack (*svacina*) around 10 am. Most pub-style restaurants are open throughout the day 11 am-11 pm and will serve food at any time during these hours. Typically there is a daily lunchtime (*denni poledni*) menu with cheaper offerings from around noon to 3 pm. The availability of food late-night is increasing with some restaurants extending their hours to 1 am or later, particularly in the summer and on weekends.

Because so many of the good restaurants are quite small, they tend to fill up quickly. We recommend that you make reservations for dinner whenever possible. In a traditional Czech pub, don't be surprised if another party joins you at your table if seats are free. It is considered perfectly acceptable to sit and talk for hours, even after the table has been cleared, so if you want the check, be sure you ask for it.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost for one person for dinner, excluding drinks and tip: \$ = less than 350 Kc; \$\$ = 350 Kc-700 Kc; \$\$\$ = 701 Kc-1,200 Kc; \$\$\$\$ = more than 1,200 Kc.

Local & Regional

La Degustation Boheme Bourgeoise

Modernized traditional meals of Czech culinary art from the end of the 19th century, prepared by Oldrich Sahajdak using only freshest ingredients from Czech organic farms and small Czech producers. Sample such dishes as home-smoked beef tongue, shoulder of wild deer and pikeperch. Great selection of Moravian and Slovakian wines. Relaxed and perfect service in unpretentious surroundings. Open Monday-Saturday for dinner only. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$.

Most major credit cards. Hastalska 18 (1), Prague. Phone 222-311-234. <http://www.ladegustation.cz>.

U Modre Kachnicky

Duck is the specialty there, along with every other type of game you can imagine. Politicians and well-heeled businesspeople frequent this restaurant, not only for its fine food but also for its intimate atmosphere—there are numerous tiny rooms. The unobtrusive service can be a bit slow at times, but the food and fine wine are worth the wait. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$.

Most major credit cards. Nebovidska 6 (1), Prague. Phone 257-320-308. <http://www.umodrekachnicky.cz>.

V Zatisi

Internationally refined Czech cuisine with an emphasis on venison and lamb, plus some of the best South Moravian wines you will find in Prague. Try white Sauvignon Blanc and red Zweigeltrebe or a Rulandske modre (Pinot Noir) along with a mixed plate of Bohemian specialities. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$.

Most major credit cards. Betlemske namesti, Liliova 1 (1), Prague. Phone 222-221-155. <http://www.vzatisi.cz>.

Cuisines

Asian

Arzenal

A few steps away from the Old Town (Stare Mesto) metro stop is this fantastic Thai eatery. In front, you will find glassware designed by Boris Sipek who was also responsible for the detail throughout the restaurant. (Sipek was also appointed by Vaclav Havel to oversee restoration work on Prague Castle.) If you like the forks, there is a good chance that you can buy them and take them home. The menu includes five kinds of pad thai. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$.

Most major credit cards. Valentinska 11 (1), Prague. Phone 224-814-099. <http://www.arzenal.cz>.

Barock

This is among the most fashionable of the many Asian-fusion restaurants in town. Excellent sushi. People-watching is the main attraction there, as Czech celebrities enjoy the see-and-be-seen atmosphere. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$\$\$.

Most major credit cards. Parizska 24 (1), Prague. Phone 222-329-221. <http://www.barockrestaurant.cz>.

Maly Buddha

This smoke-free establishment serves light Vietnamese fare and tea. It's within walking distance of Prague Castle and

makes for a great change of pace from the loud, smoky pub experience. Tuesday-Sunday for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. Uvoz 46 (1), Prague. Phone 220-513-894. <http://www.malybuddha.cz>.

French

Le Terroir

One of Prague's most impressive wine lists, but the creative Czech-French cuisine is a treat as well. Try rabbit confit, turbot with roasted garlic or grilled red mullet. Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Vejvodova 1 (1), Prague. Phone 222-220-260. <http://www.leterroir.cz>.

Restaurant Flambee

This Old Town restaurant occupies a stone-vaulted, 14th-century cellar and ranks among Prague's most romantic dining spots. Live piano or medieval choral music fills the air, and the menu highlights the best of French and Czech cuisine. The place constantly wins awards and attracts celebrities when they're in town. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Betlemsky Palac, Husova 5 (1), Prague. Phone 224-248-512. <http://www.flambee.cz>.

Italian

Kogo

Straddling a busy courtyard, this restaurant offers quality pasta dishes, pizzas and seafood. There are now three Kogo restaurants in Prague, but this is the original. One side of the dining room is classically decorated, the other is more contemporary, and the courtyard is nice if the weather is good. The white-aproned waitstaff seems to be constantly running about, adding a nice home-style touch. Solid, reasonably priced wine list. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Havelska 27 (1), Prague. Phone 224-214-543. <http://www.kogo.cz>.

Pizzeria Rugantino

A cut above the many, many pizzerias in town, Rugantino is well-known for its child-friendly atmosphere. The menu features a variety of pizzas (with crispy crusts) and salads. Bread is baked on the premises daily. This place really hops on weekdays. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Dusni 4 (1), Prague. Phone 222-318-172. <http://www.rugantino.cz>.

Latin American

Ambiente Brasileiro

This traditional Churrasco Rodizio dining experience is not for the faint-hearted. A constant stream of grilled meat is brought to your table, so go with an appetite (it's all-you-can-eat). There is also an extensive salad bar that includes oysters and sushi. There is a second location at U Radnice 8 (1) (phone 224-234-474), but the Slovansky Dum restaurant has more space and a better salad bar. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Slovansky Dum, Na Prikope 22 (1), Prague. Phone 221-451-200. http://www.ambi.cz/ambi_brasiliero2_kontakt_eng.php.

Mediterranean

Dahab

This Mediterranean oasis in Prague's Old Town is the place to go when you just want to relax in true tea-room style. Eat hummus, couscous and falafel while sipping on one of the many teas and coffees offered there. And for those who fancy a water pipe, order a flavored tobacco. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Dlouha 33 (1), Prague. Phone 224-827-375. <http://www.dahab.cz>.

Vegetarian

Radost FX Cafe

A popular expat meeting place that serves large portions of hearty vegetarian fare, including a few Mexican and Italian specialties. The weekend brunch always attracts a crowd—try any of the breakfast burritos. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. Tip is always included in the bill. Belehradská 120 (2), Prague. Phone 224-254-776. <http://www.radostfx.cz>.

Cafes & Tearooms

Bohemia Bagel

Bagels are made right at the cafe's two locations and are served with cream cheeses and gourmet coffee. Sandwiches, cookies and brownies, too. You'll meet plenty of Americans but not many Czechs. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$. No credit cards. Masna 2 (1) (phone 224-812-560), and Lazenska 19 (1) (phone 257-218-192), Prague. <http://www.bohemiabagel.cz>.

Ebel Coffee House

Most foreigners turn their noses up at Czech coffee, so this spot may be a welcome surprise to visitors. Colombian, Arabic and Italian varieties are available at this trendy coffeehouse with four central locations. Tasty desserts,

sandwiches and quiches. Wi-Fi is available. Daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. \$. Most major credit cards. Tyn 2 (1), Prague. Phone 224-895-788. <http://www.ebelcoffee.cz>.

Continental Bellevue

This restaurant sets the city standard for elegance of atmosphere and quality of cuisine. The attentive staff also manages every detail. The daily Continental menu includes such dishes as veal, quail and duck topped with rich sauces, but it's the Sunday jazz brunch that really attracts the fans. The dining room affords a breathtaking view of Prague Castle perched above the Vltava. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Smetanovo Nabrezi 18 (1), Prague. Phone 222-221-438. <http://www.bellevuerestaurant.cz/en/bellevuerestaurant>.

Palffy Palac

Experience a culinary feast inside a genuine, turn-of-the-20th-century palace replete with chandeliers and period furnishings. The veal medallions and salmon steak are longtime favorites. During the warmer months, the terrace brunch is one of the best in town, with mimosas made from freshly squeezed juice, and omelettes and crepes made to order. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Valdstejska 14 (1), Prague. Phone 257-530-522. <http://www.palffy.cz>.

Late Night Hergetova Cihelna

The more casual and affordable sister of the famous Kampa Park specializes in modern European dishes, from specialty pizzas to poached lemon sole. As much a nightclub as a restaurant, this locale features weekend DJs and an upstairs bar with a billiard table. Summertime allows for marvelous views of the Charles Bridge from the terrace, and Sunday brunch features a kids' corner and babysitter. \$\$. Cihelna 2b, (1), Prague. Phone 257-535-534. <http://www.kampagroup.com>.

Ultramarin

Stylishly relaxed bar and restaurant with good-value daily specials on lunch and dinner menus. The varied menu features Thai fusion and lava-grilled steaks. You can get Wi-Fi from the hotel next door if you sit next to the wall on the right. Open until 4 am, there is a cocktail bar downstairs with live music on weekends, although it is the restaurant that makes this place tick. Daily for lunch and dinner (kitchen closes at 1:30 am). \$-\$\$. Ostrovni 32 (1), Prague. Phone 224-932-249. <http://www.ultramarin.cz>.

Seafood Kampa Park

This restaurant on Kampa Island is a fine-dining favorite among locals who can afford it, and it's frequented by celebrities. It offers exquisite views of the Vltava from its winter garden, and the menu features Scandinavian seafood, oysters, Iranian caviar and seasonal specialties. On weekdays, there's a reasonably priced lunch menu. Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Na Kampe 8b (1), Prague. Phone 257-532-685. <http://www.kampagroup.com>.

Rybi Trh

The stylish restaurant "Fish Market" has quickly become one of Prague's most popular dining spots to sample the excellent light fish and seafood dishes prepared by Martin Slezak, who perfected his art in a top-notch gourmet restaurant in the German Black Forest. Sample octopus carpaccio, risotto with grilled tuna or juicy baked pikeperch with thyme. The sea bass is delightful as well, and meat cravings are catered to with roasted duck legs or sirloin steaks. Leave room for the heavenly desserts. Excellent list of French wines. Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards. Tynsky dvur 5 (1), Prague. Phone 224-895-447. http://www.rybitrh.cz/index_en.htm.

SECURITY

Etiquette

Among the former Soviet-bloc countries, the Czech Republic has been one of the bright spots for business. Even though there are still issues that distinguish it from countries in western Europe or North America, visitors will find many familiar customs and a growing number of English speakers.

Appointments—Punctuality is the norm. Appointments should be made well in advance. Be aware that many Czechs are on vacation in July and August, so meetings can be difficult to arrange at that time.

Personal Introductions—Greet everyone with a firm handshake and direct eye contact. Unless you're familiar with Czech titles, use English titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) along with the person's last name until instructed to do otherwise. It's usually not necessary to have your business cards translated into Czech.

Invitations—When you are invited by a Czech to go somewhere, whether for a drink, a walk in the park or to a gallery, this means *you* have been invited, not your partner, friends or family. If you would like other people to join you, it is wise to check first that your host doesn't mind.

Negotiating—Small talk will precede business discussions, and your Czech acquaintances may ask many questions about you. Ask a lot about them in return. Negotiations tend to move at a fairly slow pace, as many people may be scrutinizing the details of the deal. Get legal advice regarding the intricacies of government regulation.

Business Entertaining—Business meals are less common in the Czech Republic than in North America and western Europe, but they are becoming more popular. Business is often discussed during such sessions, but let your Czech acquaintances be the first to broach the topic.

Body Language—Generally, personal space is respected, and there is little direct contact while speaking. However, on the streets and in shops, people have a tendency to bump into each other without acknowledging it, so don't get upset if you feel a soft shove. The Czech way to get someone's attention is to raise the index finger.

Gift Giving—Businesspeople do not expect to receive gifts, but there are no prohibitions against giving presents. Flowers, wine or candy are appropriate gifts to take if you're invited to a home.

Conversation—The topic of American politics is currently a matter of heated discussion throughout Europe—Prague is no different. Questions about the end of the Communist era should be handled carefully, as it's always possible that your business acquaintance was—or still is—a member of the Communist Party. After a few beers, however, most Czechs enjoy talking about life before 1989. Safer subjects include art and, especially, beer—the Czechs are considered the inventors of the pilsner style of beer and also make several other tasty varieties.

Personal Safety

In general, Prague is safer than most large cities in Europe. Precautions against pickpockets are necessary—you will even notice ads in metros reminding you to watch your belongings—so divide money among several places in your personal belongings. You certainly don't need to wear your backpack on your chest, but be mindful of open bags or accessible wallets, and if you're wearing a backpack, be sure to keep it locked.

Be particularly alert of the following areas: Charles Bridge; the Astronomical Clock in Old Town Square; between Wenceslas Square and Prague Castle; Trams 9 and 22; and the Mustek, Muzeum and Florenc metro stations. It's not uncommon for organized pickpocket gangs to work the metro or the trams, especially during peak hours. Be wary of groups of people who suddenly decide to get on the tram at the last minute from different doors. If there is any pushing to get on the transport, keep a hand on your wallet.

Also be wary of phony ticket inspectors trying to assess fines on Prague's crowded public-transportation system. All legitimate inspectors carry small oval badges with red logos that they must present before checking your ticket.

Exercise the same precautions you would when walking in any large city and be aware that many side streets are poorly lit. Though Petrin Hill is a lovely place to walk during the day, be careful alone there at night. In general, it's best to avoid any secluded area after dark. Prostitution is on the rise, and men will likely be approached when walking around in the evening—watch your wallet.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Tap water is considered safe in the Czech Republic, and some studies have even shown it to be better than bottled water.

Medical care is readily available in the city. To call an ambulance, dial 155. Unless you have travel insurance, most doctors and hospitals will require payment in cash before a consultation or procedure. If you need medical attention, Motol Hospital (Nemocnice Motol) is commonly dubbed the foreigners' hospital, as it houses all its departments under one roof and provides translation service and consultation on insurance coverage. Located at V Uvalu 84 (5). Phone 2-2443-3681. <http://www.fnmotol.cz/foreigners-department/html>.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

Prague is not a welcoming city for disabled travelers, but conditions are slowly changing. New buses and trams are wheelchair accessible, although this means knowing when such a vehicle will be coming along. The newer metro

stations are also wheelchair accessible; stations that have an elevator are marked on the metro map. Unfortunately, many of the still-inaccessible stations are the central stations where visitors will most likely want to be. Nearly all metro stations have escalators.

A lot of the city's older buildings can be difficult to access, as are the many cellar bars and restaurants.

Dos & Don'ts

Do try to be quiet on public transportation. You will find that most of the locals use their museum voices on the metros and trams.

Don't be offended when you are bumped. Czechs tend to bump shoulders without apologizing—it does seem rude from a western perspective, but it's the daily routine there.

Do say *dobry den* (hello) when entering a shop and *na shledanou* (goodbye) when leaving. It's not only polite, it's part of the culture.

Don't be offended when stared at. Again, that's just the way it is there.

Do be careful with large bills. Even though bank machines will distribute 1,000 Kc and 2,000 Kc notes, it doesn't mean that every shop will accept them. Restaurants and hotels generally have enough change to accept them, but taxi drivers and smaller shops generally do not.

HOTELS

Hotel Overview

As tourism has increased in Prague, so has the number of hotels. Those seeking a combination of convenience and the city's quaint romanticism should look for a property in the Old Town or Little Quarter. The more modern hotels for business travelers are farther afield, although a rash of new openings has made romantic and business hotels available throughout the city. Budget hotels are few and far between: Prices are high compared with what many travelers expect for eastern Europe.

Advance reservations are recommended, especially for spring and definitely around Easter and other holidays. Some hotels offer lower, off-season rates.

Hotel Listings



Admiral Botel

Horejsi nabrezi 15000

info@admiral-botel.cz <http://www.admiral-botel.cz>

87 Guest Rooms • Restaurant[s]

Nearby Points of Interest:

Phone: (420) -257-321-302

Fax: (420) -257-319-516

Toll Free: (420)



Hotel Ambassador - Zlata Husa

Vaclavske Namesti 5-7 11124

hotel@ambassador.cz <http://www.ambassador.cz>

162 Guest Rooms • 10 Meeting Rooms • Restaurant[s] • Pets Allowed

Location: Historical & commercial city centre, at famous Blvd Wenceslas Square

Nearby Points of Interest: Jewish Quater (Museum) - 1 km • Prague Castle (Historical Monument) - 3 km • National Theatre (Theatre) - 1 km

Phone: (420) -224-193-111

Fax: (420) -224-230-620

Toll Free: (420) 800-528-9000



andel's Hotel Prague

Stroupeznického St 21 15000

info@andelshotel.com <http://www.andelshotel.com>

239 Guest Rooms • 4 Meeting Rooms • Pets Allowed

Location: The Andel subway, bus and tram stations are within walking distance

Nearby Points of Interest: Bertramka (Mozart's museum) - 0.3 km • Lesser Town -nearby Church Our Lady Victorious (City part, church) - 2 km • Charles Bridge (Bridge) - 2 km

Phone: (420) -296-889-688
Fax: (420) -296-889-999
Toll Free: (420) 800-457-4000



Hotel Casa Marcello

Rasnovka 783 11000

booking@casa-marcello.cz <http://www.casa-marcello.cz>

32 Guest Rooms • 2 Meeting Rooms • Restaurant[s] • Pets Allowed

Location: 5 minutes from the Old Town Square

Nearby Points of Interest: St Agnes Monastery (Monument) - 1 blk • Old Town Square (Monument) - 3 blk • Municipal House (Monument) - 3 blk

Phone: (420) -222-311-230
Fax: (420) -222-313-323
Toll Free: (420) 800-888-4747



Mandarin Oriental, Prague

Nebovidská 459/1 11800

moprg-reservations@mohg.com <http://www.mandarinoriental.com/prague>

99 Guest Rooms • Restaurant[s]

Location: Mala Strana

Nearby Points of Interest: Charles Bridge • Prague Castle • Wenceslas Square

Phone: (420) -233-088-888
Fax: (420) -233-088-668
Toll Free: (420) 800-526-6566



Maximilian Hotel

Hastalska 14 11000

reservations@maximilianhotel.com <http://www.maximilianhotel.com>

71 Guest Rooms • 1 Meeting Room • Restaurant[s] • Pets Allowed

Location: In the middle of the city centre, 5 min from tourist attractions

Nearby Points of Interest: Old Town Square (Historical monument) - .5 km • Charles Bridge (Historical bridge) - .8 km

Phone: (420) -225-303-111
Fax: (420) -221-700-999
Toll Free: (420)



Minotel The Charles Hotel

Josefska 1, Mala Strana 11000

thecharles@bon.cz <http://www.thecharleshotelprague.com>

31 Guest Rooms • Restaurant[s]

Nearby Points of Interest:

Phone: (420) -257-532-913
Fax: (420) -257-532-910
Toll Free: (420)



Moevenpick Hotel Prague

Mozartova 261/1 15000

hotel.prague@moevenpick.com <http://www.moevenpick-prague.com>

436 Guest Rooms • 13 Meeting Rooms • Restaurant[s] • Pets Allowed

Location: Near the Mozart Museum

Nearby Points of Interest: Mozart Museum (museum) - 100 blk • Historical centre, Old city (historical part) - 2 km • Petrin (Prague Eiffel tower) - 1 km

Phone: (420) -257-151-111

Fax: (420) -257-153-131

Toll Free: (420) 800-34-HOTEL



Hotel Palace Praha

Panska 12 11121

info@palacehotel.cz <http://www.palacehotel.cz>

124 Guest Rooms • 6 Meeting Rooms • Restaurant[s] • Pets Allowed

Location: Centrally located

Nearby Points of Interest: Old Town Square (Historical square) - .3 km • Charles Bridge (Bridge) - .5 km • Prague Castle (Castle) - 1.5 km

Phone: (420) -224-093-111

Fax: (420) -224-221-240

Toll Free: (420)



Hotel Pod Vezi

Mostecka 2 Mala Strana 11800

hotel@podvezi.com <http://www.podvezi.com>

12 Guest Rooms • 3 Meeting Rooms • Restaurant[s]

Nearby Points of Interest:

Phone: (420) -257-532-041

Fax: (420) -257-532-069

Toll Free: (420)

FACTS

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passport required of U.K., U.S. and Canadian citizens. Passport and visa required of Australians. Visitors are also required to show proof of sufficient funds for the duration of their stay. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 1,171,000.

Languages: Czech, Slovak. Many people also speak English and/or German.

Predominant Religions: Predominantly atheist. Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant).

Time Zone: 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Saturday in October.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 420, country code;

Money

Currency Exchange

Czech currency is made up of the koruna, or "crown" in English, and the heller. One crown equals 100 hellers, and only the 50-heller coins are still in circulation. The Czech Republic is working toward adopting the euro, but it is unlikely that this will occur before 2010.

Exchange rates vary throughout the city. By far the worst rates (with around 10% commission) are at the for-profit exchange booths in the city. If you must exchange cash, you'll find lower rates and commissions at commercial banks. However, for the lowest rates, use ATMs. Most banks have ATMs or exchange machines (usually in the foyer) that provide on-screen instructions in several languages.

Taxes

In Prague, the value-added tax (VAT) is applied to almost every item or service you'll encounter. It's always included in the price marked or quoted. The VAT is reimbursable when you leave the country. You must present the item, the receipt and a tax-refund form (available at the airport) to customs upon departure. Some stores may offer discounted prices if you forgo the receipt needed to apply for a VAT refund.

Tippling

In restaurants, round the bill up to the nearest 10 Kc (20 Kc if the bill totals more than about 200 Kc). A 10% tip is appropriate in fine-dining establishments. Tip the waiter by stating the total amount you wish him or her to keep (meal price plus tip) as you hand over the money. For example, if your bill is 200 Kc, say "220 koruny" and hand over the cash. In a taxi, if you feel the driver has quoted you an honest price at the end of your journey, round up to the next 10 Kc. In hotels, tip about 30 Kc per piece of luggage.

Weather

The best time to see Prague is in the spring or fall because you'll avoid the worst of the tourist crunch and will probably experience warm and sunny weather. Summer temperatures range 55-70 F/12-22 C, so wearing light layers of clothing may be your best strategy. And even though Prague is beautiful when it's covered in snow, the winters are dreary, not only because temperatures hover around 23 F/-5 C, but also because oppressive smog settles over the city.

What to Wear

Standard business dress for men consists of the typical suit and tie, although the jacket is often not necessary. For women, a skirt and blouse is perhaps the most common outfit, but more and more women wear dress slacks.

For casual wear, virtually anything in good taste goes. Shorts and T-shirts are fine for summer, as are jeans, slacks or skirts with sweaters in winter. It's always a good idea to carry an umbrella, and sturdy walking shoes are a must on the city's cobblestones and uneven pavement.

Communication

Telephone

Phone numbers have nine digits. In all Czech numbers, there is no longer a city code; it is simply a part of the numbers. All Prague fixed lines start with the number 2. Mobile numbers start with either 6 or 7. To make international phone calls, your best bet is to use a prepaid phone card. They're available at most *tabak* shops, the Globe Bookstore and Tesco. Dial 00 then the country code for the place you are calling.

Cell phones are ubiquitous and the coverage is never a problem unless you find yourself in one of Prague's many cellar bars or restaurants. There is also coverage in the metro stations, but not while your train is traveling through the tunnels.

For directory assistance, dial 1180 (Czech phone numbers) or 1181 (international phone numbers).

Internet Access

Internet stations have sprung up on almost every street corner in the center of Prague, but be wary when choosing a place to surf the Web. Prices vary widely. Look for a place that charges around 1 Kc per minute.

Wi-Fi hot spots are becoming more and more available. Restaurace Jama at V Jame 7 (1) provides free Wi-Fi (<http://www.jamapub.cz>), as do Kava Kava Kava, Narodni 37 (1); Cafe Cafe, Rytirska 10 (1); Tynska Bar and Books, Tynska 19 (1); and Dahab, Dlouha 33 (1). The Globe Bookstore offers Internet access as well.

Mail & Package Services

Hlavni Posta

At the main post office, you can mail letters and small packages, send and receive faxes, send telegrams, make phone

calls, and buy stamps, newspapers and public-transportation tickets. Be sure to obtain a number when you walk in. This will indicate your place in line. Daily 7 am-8 pm. Jindrisska 14 (1), Prague. Phone 221-131-111. <http://www.ceskaposta.cz>.

Newspapers & Magazines

The Prague Post (<http://www.praguepost.com>), an English-language newspaper published on Wednesday, covers news, business and other features. Its pull-out section, called "Night & Day," features cultural-event listings. You'll find the paper at most newsstands and in hotel lobbies in the city center. *The Czech Business Weekly* (<http://www.cbw.cz>) is a business journal with articles in English.

The *International Herald Tribune* is sold wherever *The Prague Post* is sold. *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* are also widely available.

There are also several free magazines that you can find in bars and restaurants. *Houser* (<http://www.houser.cz>), although only in Czech, is the default for cinema listings and other events, and *Think* (<http://www.think.cz>) carries most of the same information in English.

Transportation

The best way to get around Prague is by public transportation. The intricate system of metro (subway) lines, buses and trams is quite efficient. Traffic continues to build as cars—and visitors—increase in number. Parking in the city center can be difficult, but new parking garages are springing up to handle the overload. Often the most efficient and enjoyable way to see and get around Prague is on foot.

Air

Prague's International Airport (PRG), or Letiste Ruzyne, is on the northwest edge of the city, approximately 12 mi/20 km from the city center. Under normal traffic conditions, the ride from the airport to the city should take about 30 minutes. The addition of Terminal North 2 in 2006 makes the airport a bit more difficult to navigate, so pay attention to the arrival and departure terminals on your ticket. The new terminal serves flights to and from Schengen countries. Phone 220-113-314. <http://www.csl.cz>.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

White vans and minibuses with CEDAZ Praha AIRPORT written on them provide passengers with a reliable trip every half-hour from the airport to the city center 6 am-9 pm, as well as to any hotel in the city. Shuttles stop at the Dejvicka metro station and the central bus stop on V Celnici near Namesti Republiky. The ride costs 120 Kc. In addition, Cedaz will take you to any central hotel or private accommodation by van for 480 Kc. Phone 220-114-296. <http://www.cedaz.cz/about-transport-services.php>.

Other options:

City Bus 119 operates daily to the Dejvicka metro station. A bus ticket from automated orange ticket machines or the transport kiosk in Terminal North 1 costs 20 Kc. Rental car companies maintain branches at the airport, but rates are considerably higher there than those offered by their counterparts in the city center.

Taxi stands are located at the main exit of the arrival hall. A ride to the city center should cost around 450 Kc-500 Kc, but drivers are notorious for inflating fares. The reputable taxi companies, AAA Radio (phone 222-333-222) and Profitaxi (phone 261-314-151), go to the airport only after being summoned by phone. Because they keep a safe distance from the more aggressive cabs clustered at the terminal exit, they may be difficult to spot once they arrive to pick you up. Agree upon a specific site to wait for them.

Bus

Florenc, the main station for intercity buses, is located on Krizikova Street. It's also where metro lines C and B (red and yellow) intersect. Buses arrive at and depart from Florenc for cities across the Czech Republic, as well as for other major European cities. Ask at the information booth for times and prices. <http://www.csad.cz>.

Car

A car is not a necessity for exploring Prague, and having one might even be a magnet for trouble. Streets are narrow and poorly marked, theft is a major problem, and Czech drivers are ranked among the worst in Europe. Driving in the

city center can be particularly frustrating because of one-way streets and construction, especially during the summer months.

Parking meters in the city center are either in a green zone (30 Kc per hour, maximum six hours), orange zone (40 Kc per hour, maximum two hours) or blue zone (for residents and businesses only). No matter where you park, lock your car and do not leave valuables exposed that could attract a thief's attention.

Cars are driven on the right, and traffic signs directing cars to highways out of the city often list the names of the cities rather than route numbers. These give a general indication of the direction in which major roads lead. It's a good idea to have a map and to know the main cities that are along the way to your desired destination.

Keep in mind that trams always have the right-of-way.

Public Transportation

Prague's public transportation system, Mestska Hromodna Doprava (MHD), is an efficient network of buses, trams and metro lines. Single-trip tickets cost 18 Kc or 26 Kc, depending on how long the trip takes. Be sure to buy the 26 Kc ticket (valid for 75 minutes) if you plan to change metros or use a metro and a tram. (The 18 Kc tickets are only valid for 20 minutes on buses and trams without changing lines or for five stops on the metro, though changing metro lines is permitted.)

Purchase tickets from yellow machines mounted on walls at metro stations and at some tram stops, from the information booth at most metro stations, or from *trafika* and *tabak* shops. Multiday tourist passes are available, but don't forget to sign them in the appropriate spot. A day pass for unlimited travel (24 hours) costs 100 Kc. Grumpy ticket inspectors target tourists and will issue on-the-spot fines of 700 Kc to riders with no ticket or an unstamped ticket.

The metro system is probably the easiest for tourists to use. There are three color-coded lines, A (green), B (yellow) and C (red). Trains run at frequent intervals, beginning at about 5 am and ending around midnight. Large maps are posted in all metro stations but rarely at street level. You can also buy a map from station information booths or any *tabak* or *trafika* shop. Be sure to validate your ticket *before* you go down the stairs or escalator to the train platform: Insert the bottom end of your ticket *face up* into one of the yellow electronic boxes mounted on posts.

City buses run to most areas just outside of the city center, and trams crisscross nearly every corner of the city. Tourists might find them more difficult to use than the metro. If you're using a single-journey ticket, you must punch it by inserting it into any of the gold- or yellow-colored boxes mounted on poles inside the bus or tram. Trams run all night, but be aware that after midnight, the routes change and are consolidated. Tram stops post schedules and running times.

You can check all times and find the best links to your destination by visiting <http://www.dpp.cz>.

Note: All trams, buses and metro trains run on a reduced schedule in July and August.

Taxi

Dishonest taxi drivers are giving all of Prague's taxi drivers a poor reputation. Yet there are plenty of honest cabbies out there. Even though the city has taken steps to curb egregious practices and has standardized meter rates, untrustworthy drivers may still take long, out-of-the-way routes to a given destination or may devise other ingenious methods of overcharging foreigners. Cabbies have even been known to install devices on the meters that charge inflated rates when they flip a switch, which they only do to tourists who aren't familiar with the pricing.

We suggest calling a taxi through AAA Radio Taxi (phone 222-333-222; <http://www.aaataxi.cz>) or Profitaxi (phone 261-314-151; <http://www.profitaxi.cz>). These two companies are available 24 hours a day, have English-speaking operators, charge the cheapest rates and can be trusted. If a phone isn't handy, you can find cabs from AAA or Profitaxi—marked by logos with their company names—at stands throughout the city. You are not required to take the first taxi in line (although drivers won't be forthcoming with that information). You can also hail one of their taxis on the street.

You can ask your hotel to call one of these services, but they frequently object. Most hotels will only call their own services, and they charge a fortune. Restaurants and bars are more helpful. We recommend that you not jump into a street taxi. Instead, only use the services listed above and you won't be as likely to get ripped off.

Train

There are four train stations in Prague, but international reservations must be made and paid for at the main train station (Hlavni Nadrazi) on Wilsonova Street. Holesovice station (Nadrazi Holesovice—metro line C) on Arnostovska Street is also a terminal for international trains, such as those to and from Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, Budapest, Bucharest and Vienna. Reservations can also be made through Cedok, a tourist agency.

For More Information

Tourist Offices

Cedok

This large tourist agency offers information on sightseeing. International train, bus, plane and ship information and tickets are also available. Monday-Friday 9 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-2:30 pm. Na Prikope 18 (1), Prague. Phone 224-197-111. <http://www.cedok.cz>.

Czech Tourist Authority

The main office is located outside of the city center in Prague 2. CzechTourism Vinohradská 46, Prague. Phone 221-580-111. <http://www.czechtourism.cz>.

Prague Information Service

Located in the center of town. Na Prikope 20 on Old Town Hall, Old Town Square and at the main train station, Hlavni Nadrazi, Prague. Phone 12444 or 221-714-444. <http://www.pis.cz>.

EVENTS

Calendar

Prague's rich cultural tradition is showcased in the city's theaters, concert halls and palaces. Four theaters specialize in a locally popular art form called black-light theater—music, mime and movement combined—and at least three marionette theaters mount musical productions for both children and adults.

Information and tickets for theatrical, musical, opera and dance productions are available at box offices or from Prague's comprehensive ticket broker, Bohemia Ticket International. Phone 224-227-832 or 224-237-727. <http://www.ticketsbti.cz>.

For detailed information about upcoming events in the Prague area, contact Prague Information Service. Phone 12444 or 221-714-444. <http://www.pis.cz>. Alternatively, contact the Czech Tourism Authority. Phone 221-580-111. <http://www.czechtourism.com>.

To call any of the phone numbers listed in this calendar from outside the Czech Republic, you must first dial your country's international access code, then the Czech Republic's country code, 420, then Prague's city code, 2.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

April, 2010

Mid April—Marathon of European Film The festival boasts more than 50 EU-produced features and shorts screened at cinemas throughout the city. All features are shown in their original language with English subtitles. For information, call 2421-5538. <http://www.eurofilmfest.cz>.

1, 2 Apr—Febiofest Around 150,000 people attend this annual international film, television and video festival, which screens more than 100 works at cinemas throughout Prague. Focuses on high-quality contemporary student and amateur films. Also a smaller music festival and cultural festivals. For information, call 2110-1111. <http://www.febiofest.cz>. Concludes 2 Apr

5 Apr—Easter Monday Public holiday. This holiday has evolved into a lively celebration of spring with much partying. Painted eggs are exchanged.

15-18 Apr—Musica Sacra Praga This sacred-music festival pairs amateur choirs with professional Prague ensembles. Various churches throughout the city. For information, call 8482-6608. <http://www.choirs.cz>.

Throughout April—Performance The National Theatre is home to frequent ballet, theater, opera and other performances. Narodni Divadlo, Narodni Trida 2. For tickets and information, call 2490-1377 or 2490-1448. <http://www.narodni-divadlo.cz>. Continues through late June

Throughout April—Concert The Prague Philharmonia performs regularly in the Dvorak Hall of the Rudolfinum, Alsovo Nabrezi 12. For information and tickets, call 2423-2488 or 2422-9293. <http://www.pkf.cz>. Concludes late April

Throughout April—Concert The Prague Symphony Orchestra holds frequent concerts in Municipal House, Namesti Republiky 5. For information, call 2231-0784. For tickets, call 2200-2336, or Ticketpro at 296-328-888. <http://www.fok.cz>. Continues through mid June

Throughout April—Dance The National Theatre Ballet performs regularly at the historic Estates Theatre, Ovocny 1, and the National Theatre, Narodni Trida 2. For information and tickets, call 2490-1377 or 2490-1448. <http://www.narodni-divadlo.cz>. Continues through mid June

Throughout April—Opera Operas are performed frequently at the Prague State Opera, Legerova 75. For information, call 9611-7111. For tickets, call 2422-7266. <http://www.sop.cz>. Continues through mid June

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