

Prague

Prague has earned many titles over the years and words such as magical, majestic and golden have been used in its description. It is often dubbed the city of one hundred spires and, indeed, Prague can be one hundred times different. The panoramic views of the city are adorned with beautiful palaces and decorative town houses in the historic areas of the Old, New and the Lesser Towns and the Hradčany quarter.

What makes Prague so unique?

Regardless of the many poetic descriptions bestowed upon Prague what really makes the city different is that it is a living textbook of European architectural styles. The city's thrilling repertoire includes Romanesque rotundas, Gothic towers and cathedrals, Renaissance town houses and palaces, Jewish synagogues, Baroque churches and monasteries and Cubist and Art Nouveau monuments. All of this and more can be found in the protected historic centre of Prague which comprises 866 hectares. The area was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992.

Prague in numbers

Area	496 km ²
Population	1 243 000 residents
Number of districts	10
River	The Vltava River flows through the city for 31 km
Average annual temperature	9 °C



Distance	350 km from Berlin, 330 from Vienna, 530 from Budapest
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Royal Way through Prague

If you are unfortunate enough to have only one day to explore Prague, then the best option is to set out on a stroll along the Royal Way. The pleasant walk through the city centre starts in front of **the Municipal House** which is the most spectacular and the most

expensive of Prague's Art Nouveau buildings. The Municipal House is used today as a popular gallery and concert hall.

From there you pass under the Powder Tower and after a few metres you are in for a surprise: you might well be familiar with Cubist paintings but perhaps not Cubist houses? One of the world's first examples of Cubist architecture is the House of the Black Madonna.



Carry on along Celetna Street, with its historic palaces, and after a few minutes you will reach the magical **Old Town Square**. It was here where dramatic tournaments were held in the medieval period, where 27 Czech noblemen were beheaded during the Thirty Years' War and where people listened to the announcement of the establishment of the first communist government in 1948. This is where history was written.

Today's visitors mostly come here to admire the Gothic Tyn Church and the **Old Town Hall with the famous astronomical clock**. There is a captivating procession of statues of the apostles when the astronomical clock strikes every hour which is well worth waiting for. Karlova Street will then take you to **Charles Bridge**. One of the symbols of Prague, the bridge has spanned the Vltava River since 1357. During the 18th century the leading sculptors of the time decorated the bridge with beautiful statues. Don't forget to stop by the statue of the Czech Saint John of Nepomuk and make a wish. It is said that if you place your hand on the brass cross so that all of your fingers are touching the stars your wish will come true. Enjoy the wonderful views of the

river and then walk to the Lesser Town.

In Nerudova Street you will notice the poetic house signs such as "By three fiddles" or "By two suns". At Hradcanske Square stop to watch the changing of guards before entering the first courtyard of the largest castle complex in the world – **The Prague Castle**. If you have time to spare make sure you visit the monumental **Gothic St Vitus Cathedral** or the Old Royal Palace which houses a fascinating exhibition entitled "The Story of Prague Castle."

Prague: at the crossroads of cultures

In the first half of the 19th Century Prague was a place of co-existence and the cross-fertilisation of three different cultures: Czech, German and Jewish. **Franz Kafka** as a Jewish-German-Czech writer is probably the most famous example of the connection of these cultures although at the time it was regarded as nothing unusual. The harmonious co-existence which lasted several centuries was shattered by the Second World War. Take a wander through the streets of the **old Jewish Town** and try to picture the ghetto which

dates back to medieval times. The Old-New Synagogue has a long history going back to the 13th Century and is one of the longest continually used synagogues in Europe. Considerably younger is the Spanish Synagogue, built in the Spanish Moorish style popular in the 19th Century. There are other synagogues (eg The Jubilee Synagogue – the only one decorated in the style of Viennese Art Nouveau) and Jewish cemeteries in Prague.

Romantic Prague

Prague, city of a hundred spires, is simply a paradise on earth for the romantic spirit in each and every one of the seasons. Why don't you come and experience some unforgettable moments in one of the most beautiful cities in the world too.

There is surely no place in Prague which oozes romance more so than Petřín. You can take a walk



on its slopes in the spring among the blossoming cherry trees or have a picnic with a wonderful view over the panorama of the city. Lovers have been meeting here by the statue of the romantic poet Karel Hynek Mácha for decades and legend has it that love confirmed here with a kiss lasts forever.

An island whose charm cannot be described, but must be experienced. This is Kampa in Prague, spreading out right under the Lesser Quarter end of Charles Bridge. Kampa is separated from the mainland by the Čertovka mill race, where you can see the contentedly clacking mill wheel to this very day. Right behind this you will find a small bridge, on the railings of which lovers hang padlocks as a sign of their eternal love. The walk under the facades of the multicoloured little houses here, past the picturesque corners and little squares, is one of the most beautiful in Prague. At sunset, you can also see lamp-lighters in many places, wearing period costumes and lighting up the lanterns of Prague, which are hundreds of years old.

Prague's cultural marathon

If you go to Prague with someone who enjoys visiting museums, galleries or attending concerts, you will be in for a real cultural marathon. You can choose from hundreds of galleries in the city. There is modern Czech and international art to admire at **Rudolfinum**, an extensive selection of Czech art ranging from the Romanesque period to contemporary work at

the National Gallery and a series of fascinating exhibitions at the City Gallery Prague. Renowned composers Dvorak, Janacek and Smetana earned Czech music true immortality and you can enjoy their works in their homeland. There are stunning music halls in Rudolfinum, at the **Municipal House, the Theatre of the Estates or The State Opera**. Theatre lovers will certainly not be overlooked in Prague and there

DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Holešovice. In the short period since it opened, DOX has built a reputation as a fresh, creative spot on the cultural map of the capital.

The Festivals of Prague

The **Bohemian Carnevale Festival** brings the ancient tradition of carnival back to Prague. Various music festivals take over for the rest of the year: Prague



is no need to worry about the language barrier. The unique black theatres combine film, dance and pantomime without the need for understanding Czech.

If galleries are your thing, it's well worth visiting the Veletržní Palace, which was one of Prague's first Functionalist buildings and houses collections of 20th and 21st century art. Meanwhile, the place to go for original works, provocative exhibitions and the blending of individual artistic fields is the

Spring, Prague Proms, Autumn Strings, and Easter and Christmas festivals... A relaxing atmosphere and great music take over Prague's islands during the United Islands Festival. Film enthusiasts love the independent cinemas such as Aero, Svetozor or Lucerna which regularly show fantastic films not screened at the multiplexes. Prague Food Festival regularly showcases gastronomic treats and the Czech Beer Festival celebrates exquisite Czech beer. One of the main sports events of the year in

Prague is the long-established Prague International Marathon.

Calendar of events in Prague

- **Carnevale Praha** – February 6 to 17, 2015
- **Sportisimo Prague Half Maraton** – March 29, 2015
- **World Ice Hockey Championship** – May 1 to 17, 2015
- **Prague Spring** – May 1 to June 3, 2015
- **Czech Beer Festival Prague** – May 7 to 23, 2015
- **United Islands Music Festival** – June 18 to 26, 2015

Modern Prague

To design a new building amidst the architectural treasures built over the centuries is not an easy task and that's why you will not find very many modern buildings in the historic centre of the city. The building boom was predominantly a little further out of the centre or at the outskirts of Prague where there are numerous new business and shopping centres. Striking modern buildings by **Jean Nouvel (Andel)** and **Frank Gehry (Dancing House)** represent bold statements by private investors rather than the local authority. A fine example of contemporary art is the work of Czech artist **David Cerny** who shocked many by his Entropa sculpture during the Czech presidency of the EU. His controversial works are popular among visitors: including babies climbing up the Zizkov TV tower, the hanging horse in the Lucerna passage or the bronze men peeing messages in a fountain the shape of the Czech Republic in the yard of Hergetovacihelna.

When is best to go to Prague?

Statistics show that most visitors come to Prague during the summer. The autumn, spring and winter are no less attractive seasons to visit the Czech capital, however, and it is certainly less busy. At Easter and Christmas, in particular, Prague takes on its festive face and the popular markets and cultural programmes in its many squares create a truly unique atmosphere.

Where to go shopping?

Shopping in Prague is easy and enjoyable. The area around Wenceslas Square and the nearby **Na Příkopě Street** is home to many of the world's leading fashion brands. **Parizská Street** is the place to be for those looking for luxurious boutiques and designer stores. The Prague Metro will take you to the numerous shopping malls which offer everything from clothes to furniture under one roof.

Should your heart desire an original gift then as well as Czech costume jewellery, crystal glass and wooden toys you should look out for Czech fashion and design. The Czech Fashion Centre in the city centre is home to the boutiques of the leading Czech fashion designers. Original designer pieces can be purchased in the following stores: Kubista, Futurista.





and Hergetova Cihelna (which also offers a breathtaking view of Charles Bridge and the Old Town). A glass of excellent beer or South Moravian wine is the perfect accompaniment to most meals. For beer, visit one of Prague's brewery pubs, where the "liquid bread" is brewed in brass tanks. Among the most highly recommended are the famous pub U Fleků, Pivovarský dům and the Staropramen brewery in the Smíchov district.

Where to eat?

Prague is unquestionably a cosmopolitan city. Alongside the diversity of its inhabitants and general metropolitan atmosphere, it boasts a broad range of restaurants offering delicacies of Czech and world cuisine. Discover the tastes and aromas of the city on the Vltava and enjoy unforgettable dining experiences at Prague's best restaurants. You can enjoy gastronomy of the very highest order at the Alcron and La Degustation Bohême Bourgeoise restaurants, which boast prestigious Michelin stars. Other places to give your taste buds a real treat include the unique Art Nouveau French Restaurant at the Municipal House, the restaurant Radisson Blu Hotel, Sansho and SaSaZu, whose fare is among the most popular in the city. If you're looking for an excellent spot for brunch, we recommend Villa Richter just below Prague Castle, La Rotonde or La Gare. Would you like to try typical Czech cuisine? If so, why not choose a restaurant marked with



the Czech Specials sign, which is a guarantee of excellent food in a pleasant environment. What particular Czech specialities should one try in Prague? Various sauces and meat and dumplings, baked poultry, freshwater fish and sweet cakes are typical of the local cuisine. Is your mouth starting to water? Then why not try some Czech specialities at restaurants such as Mlýnec, Malostranská beseda, Potrefená husa, V Zátíší

Prague from all angles

Where are the most famous pictures of Prague taken? Prague's bridges are best captured from the Letná Park. Discover the stunning views of the Old Town from Prague Castle or from the top of Prague's Eiffel Tower – the Petřín view tower. The Žižkov TV Tower offers an even better view and on a good day you will be able to see as far as 100 kilometres. There are more views to capture on your camera at Vyšehrad and original pictures of Prague can also be obtained during the visit to Prague's underground.