

PRAGUE TRAVEL GUIDE



Made by Dorling Kindersley
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1

PRAGUE

At the geographical heart of Europe, Prague's beautiful cityscape has been carved and sustained by a variety of emperors, artists and religious communities, from the Gothic exuberance of its castle and cathedral, to the dignity of the medieval Jewish Cemetery, and the 19th-century opulence of the "new" town. Under Communist rule, Prague was off the tourist map, but since 1989 the city has seen a surge of visitors eager to take in this spectacular city.



Getting to Prague

1 By Air

More than 40 international airlines fly to Prague's Ruzyně airport. The national carrier Czech Airlines (ČSA) is a member of the Sky Team alliance, whose members include Delta, Air France and Alitalia. Direct flights from London are about 1.5 hours; from New York, about 9 hours.

► ČSA: 239 007007 • www.csa.cz

2 Ruzyně Airport

Located 15 km (9 miles) northwest of the city centre, Ruzyně is Prague's only international airport. Until 1989, a cheery, red neon hammer-and-sickle greeted visitors landing here. There are all the modern facilities here now, though, including car rental offices, bureaux de change, shops and restaurants. Municipal buses serve the airport, as does a reputable private transport service, but their cars charge more than taxis do.

3 By Train

Prague is on major European rail routes; the Orient Express's London–Paris–Venice route passes through town. International trains to the Czech capital are comfortable, with couchette sleeping facilities, and fast excepting delays at the border, and a cheap alternative to flying if you have time.

4 By Coach

Coaches are your best bet for long journeys on a budget. But these buses are often crowded and uncomfortable. Two metros and several trams stop at Prague's main bus terminal Florenc.

5 By Car

If you're going to be driving in the Czech Republic for more than 30 days, you'll need an international driver's licence. If you bring your own car, you must carry a vehicle registration card and a red warning triangle, and display a national identification sticker. A major motor-way connects Prague to the Slovak capital of Bratislava; otherwise, it's all A and B roads.

6 Customs

Visitors from outside the EU can bring goods worth less than 175 euros (about K5,000) into the country without paying a duty. Two litres or less of wine, one litre of spirits and 200 cigarettes (or their equivalent in tobacco) can also be brought in duty-free.

7 Discount Deals

Travellers from London should check with Go, a low-cost airline with return tickets to Prague at very reasonable prices. If you can be flexible about when you travel, look for stand-by tickets from Airhitch.

► Airhitch: www.airhitch.org

► easyJet: www.easyjet.com

► SmartWings: www.smartwings.net

8 Visas and Passports

Most visitors may stay visa-free in the Czech Republic for up to 90 days, but it is always wise to confirm this with the Czech embassy in your own country or your travel agent for up-to-date visa requirements.

Czech immigration officials may request you to be carrying at least K1,100 per day for your visit (or have a valid credit card).

9 When to Go

While there's no bad time to visit, Prague, like most European capitals, is teeming with tourists during the summer months. Off-season rates for hotels are usually in effect from September to March; check when making your booking. Winter is cold but beautiful under snow.

10 Long Stays

If you choose to stay longer than 90 days, you'll need to apply for a long-term visa, valid for a year. For this, you'll need proof of employment, health insurance and housing as well as a clean criminal record. This visa can be renewed annually for eight years, after which you can apply for permanent residency.

2

TOP 10 ATTRACTIONS

Prague Castle



Crowned by the distinct spires of St Vitus's Cathedral, Prague Castle (Pražský Hrad) is the metaphorical and historical throne of the Czech lands. Prince Bořivoj built a wooden fortress here in the late 9th century, establishing the hilltop overlooking the river as the Přemyslid's dynastic seat. The castle later became the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Much of the castle was rebuilt in the 16th century, resulting in the glorious Renaissance edifice seen today. Today it is home to the President of the Czech Republic.

For more sights around Hrad•any (see Prague Castle and Hrad•any)

Top 10 Features

1 Old Royal Palace

While Prince Bořivoj made do with a wooden structure, subsequent residences were built on top of each other as the tastes of Bohemia's rulers changed (see Features of the Royal Palace). Halls are decorated with coats of arms.

2 Gardens on the Ramparts

Ferdinand I and his son Maximilian II gave the dour castle some greenery in the late 16th century, and the First Republic architect Josip Plešník created the lined paths, steps and grottoes that extend to Malá Strana.

3 Summer Gardens

Ferdinand I also created these "pleasure gardens" for his wife Anne. Italian in style, they included a maze, a zoo, and the Belvedere.

4 Battling Titans

These stone giants have dominated the First Courtyard since Empress Maria Theresa asked Ignatz Platzer to sculpt them in the 18th century.

5 St George's Convent

Princess Mlada established the first Czech convent here in the 10th century. The Romanesque building now houses artworks from the National Gallery.

6 St George's Basilica

Prince Vratislav built the basilica in AD 921. The chapel of St Wenceslas's grandmother, St Ludmila, is decorated with beautiful 16th-century paintings.

7 White Tower

The White Tower contains a torture chamber and, today, shops selling grisly souvenirs. The gangways from which archers once watched over the moat are lined with replicas of weapons.

8 Powder Tower

This was Rudolf II's top research facility, where alchemists sought the Philosopher's Stone. Oddly, the Czech name "mihulka" implies a place where lampreys are kept.

9 Golden Lane

The colourful hovels built into the castle wall were home to goldsmiths so they could avoid guild dues in town.

10 Daliborka

Dalibor, something of a Czech Robin Hood, was captured and became the first prisoner of the tower that now takes his name.

Features of the Royal Palace

1 Vladislav Hall

Benedict Ried created a mastery of Gothic design with his elaborate vaulting here. Since the First Republic, the country's presidents have been ceremoniously chosen here, but it has also been used for coronations and jousting tournaments.

2 Riders' Staircase

The low steps and vaulted ceiling of this stairway permitted mounted knights to make spectacular entrances to tournaments held in Vladislav Hall.

3 Louis Wing

Only 10 years and a few steps separate the southern wing from the main hall, but in the interim, Benedict Ried moved castle architecture from Gothic to Renaissance. Bohemian nobles met here in an administrative body when the king was away.

4 Bohemian Chancellery

The first battle of the Thirty Years' War was staged here. Protestant noblemen threw two Catholic governors and their secretary from the east window. Their fall was broken by a dung heap – or an intervening angel, depending on whom you ask.

5 Land Rolls

The coats of arms decorating the walls belong to clerks who kept tabs on property ownership and court decisions from 1614 to 1777. Until the reign of Maria Theresa, record books were not numbered, but identified by elaborate covers.



6 Diet

Bohemian nobles met here with the king in a prototype parliament. The king sat on the throne (the one seen today is a 19th-century replica), the archbishop sat to the king's

right, while the estates sat on his left. The portraits on the wall show, from the left, Maria Theresa, her husband Franz, Josef II, Leopold II and Franz I, who fought Napoleon at Austerlitz.

7 Chapel of All Saints

At the eastern end of Vladislav Hall, a doorway leads to a balcony above the Chapel of All Saints. Peter Parler modelled it on the Gothic Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. After fire destroyed it in 1541, it was redesigned in Baroque style. Of particular artistic note is Hans von Aachen's Triptych of the Angels.

8 Soběslav Residence

Prince Soběslav literally laid the foundations for Prague Castle, building the first stone palace here in the 11th century.

9 Gothic and Romanesque Cellars

These rooms became buried as a result of subsequent construction overhead. A replica of the crown jewels is on display; the real thing was kept here during World War II.

10 Busts from Peter Parler's Workshop

These impressive portraits were created in the late 14th century and include the grandfather-father-grandson set of John of Luxembourg, Charles IV and Wenceslas IV.

Top 10 Rulers of Prague

1 Wenceslas (birthdate unknown–935)

2 Otakar II (1233–78)

3 Charles IV (1316–78)

4 Wenceslas IV (1361–1419)

5 Rudolph II (1552–1612)

6 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937)

7 Edvard Beneš (1884–1948)

8 Klement Gottwald (1896–1953)

9 Alexander Dubček (1921–92)

10 Václav Havel (b.1936)

Prague Castle

Practical information

- Hrad•any, Prague 1
- Map C2
- 224 373368
- www.hrad.cz

Castle grounds:

- Open Apr–Oct: 5am–midnight daily, Nov–Mar: 6am–11pm daily

Royal Palace:

- Open Apr–Oct: 9am–5pm daily, Nov–Mar: 9am–4pm daily

St George's Convent:

- Open 10am–6pm Tue–Sun

St George's Basilica:

- Open Apr–Oct: 9am–5pm daily, Nov–Mar: 9am–4pm daily
- Adm K•220 (includes St Vitus's Cathedral, St George's Basilica, Powder Tower and Old Royal Palace)

Top tips

- The Castle Guard changes every day at noon, but the big show is on Sundays.
- At 10am each day a brass quartet serenades Malá Strana from a pavilion overlooking the Old Castle Steps.

Castle Guide

You can wander through much of the castle complex for free, but to see the interiors, you must buy a ticket at the tourist office in the third courtyard. One admission fee gains access to St Vitus, the Old Royal Palace, St George's convent and basilica and the Powder Tower. A separate fee admits you to Golden Lane.

St Vitus's Cathedral

This spectacular Gothic cathedral is an unmissable sight in Prague, not least because of its dominant position on Hradčany hill, looming over the Vltava and the rest of the city. Prince Wenceslas first built a rotunda here upon a pagan worship site and dedicated it to St Vitus (svatý Vít), a Roman saint. Matthew d'Arras began work on the grand cathedral in 1344 when Prague was named an archbishopric. He died shortly thereafter and Charles IV hired the Swabian wunderkind Peter Parléř to take over. With the intervention of the Hussite Wars, however, work stopped and, remarkably, construction was only finally completed in 1929.

More on Places of Worship in Prague

Top 10 Features

1 South Tower

Visitors can clearly see at exactly which point the Hussite civil wars put a stop to construction of this 96-m (315-ft) tower. By the time work resumed, architectural style had moved into the Renaissance, hence the incongruous rounded cap on a Gothic base.

2 Wenceslas Chapel

This chapel stands where Prince Wenceslas built the first St Vitus rotunda and contains the tomb of its namesake, Bohemia's patron saint. The frescoes of Christ's Passion on the lower wall are surrounded by 1,300 semi-precious stones. Vladislav II commissioned the upper frescoes of St Wenceslas's life, painted to celebrate his son Ludvik's coronation.

3 Crown Jewels

You would think there would be safer places for the crown and sceptre of Bohemia, but the coronation chamber above Wenceslas Chapel is said to be guarded by the spirit of the saint.

4 Royal Crypt

The greatest kings of Bohemia are buried in a single room beneath the cathedral, including Charles IV, Wenceslas IV and Rudolf II.

5 Royal Oratory

The royal family crossed a narrow bridge from the Royal Palace (see Old Royal Palace) to this private gallery to hear mass. The coats of arms represent all the countries that were ruled by Vladislav II.

6 St John of Nepomuk's Tomb

The silver for this 1,680-kg (3,700-lb) coffin came from the Bohemian mining town of Kutná Hora, symbolized by the statues of miners to the left of the tomb.

7 New Archbishop's Chapel

Alfons Mucha created the Art Nouveau window of the Slavic saints for the Archbishop's Chapel. Despite appearances, the glass is painted, not stained.



8 Sigismund

The 16-tonne bell of the Great Tower, affectionately known as Sigismund, is the nation's largest and dates from 1549. It takes four volunteers to ring the bell on important church holidays and events.

9 Golden Portal

This triple-arched arcade was the main entrance to the cathedral until the western end was completed in the 20th century.

10 High Altar

Bounded by St Vitus's Chapel and the marble sarcophagi of Ferdinand I and family, the high altar and chancel follow a strict Neo-Gothic philosophy.

St Vitus's Cathedral

Practical information

- Third Courtyard, Prague Castle
- Map C2
- 224 373368
- www.hrad.cz
- Open Apr–Oct: 9am– 5pm daily, Nov–Mar: 9am–4pm daily

Nave:

- Free

St Vitus's Cathedral, St George's Basilica, Powder Tower & Royal Palace:

- Adm K•220

Top tips

- Much of St Vitus's Cathedral can be appreciated for free. Seeing all that the cathedral and the castle have to offer can take a whole day.

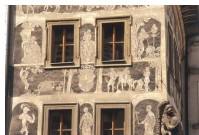
Peter Parlé•

After the death of Matthew d'Arras, Charles IV made Parlé• his chief architect. Parlé• undertook St Vitus's Cathedral, Charles Bridge and numerous other Gothic monuments which still stand in Prague. He trained the artisans and his talented sons and nephews continued his work after his death in 1399.

Old Town Square

As the heart and soul of the city, no visitor should, or is likely to miss the Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí). A marketplace was located here in the 11th century, but it was in 1338, when John of Luxembourg gave Prague's burghers permission to form a town council, that the Old Town Hall was built (see Old Town Hall Features) and the square came into its own. Today, it has a lively atmosphere, with café tables set out in front of painted façades, horses and carts waiting to ferry tourists around the city and street-sellers hawking their wares.

Top 10 Features



1 Dům u Minuty

The "House at the Minutes" probably takes its name from the notso-minute sgraffito images on its walls. The alchemical symbols adorning Staroměstské náměstí 2 date from 1611.

Franz Kafka lived in the black-and-white house as a boy (see Franz Kafka).

2 House at the Stone Bell

Formerly done up in Baroque style, workers discovered the Gothic façade of this house as late as 1980. On the southwestern corner is the bell which gives the house its name. The Municipal Gallery often hosts temporary exhibitions here.

3 Church of Our Lady Before Týn

This Gothic edifice began as a humble church serving residents in the mercantile town (týn) in the 14th century. Following architectural conventions of the time, the south tower is stouter than the north one.

4 Church of St Nicholas

Prague has two Baroque churches of St Nicholas, both built by Kilian Ignac Dientzenhoffer. The architect completed the one in Old Town two years before starting Malá Strana's (see St Nicholas's Church). Regular concerts here give visitors a chance to hear the church's organ.

5 Jan Hus Memorial

Hus was burned at the stake in 1415 for proposing radical Church reform. The inscription below the figure of Hus reads "Truth Will Prevail".

6 Marian Column

On Czechoslovakia's declaration of independence in 1918, this former column reminded jubilant mobs of Habsburg rule and they tore it down. A plan is afoot to rebuild it.

7 Ungelt

The courtyard behind Týn church was home to foreign merchants in the 14th century, but today it is home to smart boutiques and cafés.

8 Štorch House

An Art Nouveau equestrian painting of St Wenceslas is the focal point of the house at Staroměstské náměstí 18.

9 Golz-Kinský Palace

Once occupied by Communists, this former palace now houses the National Gallery's collection of prints and drawings and an up-market restaurant.



10 Malé náměstí

The ornate well in the centre of the "Small Square" doubles as a plague memorial. The elaborate murals of craftsmen on the façade of Rott House are the only decoration now left. Until the early 1990s, the building was a hardware store.

Old Town Hall Features

1 Astronomical Clock

During the day, on the hour, bells ring, cocks crow and 15th-century statues dance while the necks of tourists below stiffen.

2 Apostles

Marionette artist Vojtěch Sucharda sculpted the 12 wooden figures that turn out for the crowds on the astronomical clock – they replace the ones destroyed by German artillery in 1945. A brochure identifies which saint is which.

3 Art Gallery

On the Old Town Hall's ground floor is an exhibition space which features temporary shows.

4 Dukla Memorial

Behind a brass plaque identified by the year "1945" is a pot of soil from the Dukla battlefield. German artillery gunned down 84,000 Red Army soldiers in this Slovak pass in one of the most grievous military miscalculations of World War II.



5 White Mountain Memorial

Twenty-seven crosses are set in the pavement on the town hall's eastern side in memory of the Bohemian nobles who were executed for their role in the Thirty

Years' War (see Battle of White Mountain). After Protestant forces were defeated at the Battle of White Mountain, the men were hanged, beheaded or drawn and quartered here in a public ceremony.

6 Gothic Chapel

The small chapel adjoining the Mayors' Hall was consecrated in 1381 in honour of the saints Wenceslas, Vitus and Ludmila. Wenceslas IV's emblem and his wife Eufemia's initial adorn the entrance portal. In the nave is a scale model of the Marian column which stood on the Old Town Square until 1918 and may be rebuilt (see Marian Column).

7 Elevator

The elevator taking visitors up to the viewing gallery of the tower won an award for best design in 1999. Oddly enough, its space-age design works harmoniously within the stony surroundings. It also permits wheelchair access to the top of the tower – a rare consideration in Prague.

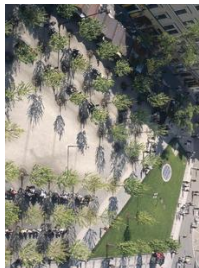


8 Viewing Gallery

The parapet under the Old Town Hall's roof affords visitors a unique view of the square and the Old Town below. Bring your pocket change: K•20 will buy you two minutes on a miniature telescope, with which you can admire the entire Prague Valley.

9 Gothic Cellars

The cellars of the Old Town Hall were once ground floor rooms. The town was subject to flooding, so more earth was added to keep burghers' feet dry. The spaces were used as granaries and debtors' prisons.



10 The Green

Retreating German artillery unloaded their guns on the Old Town Hall's north wing to avoid carrying the shells back to Berlin. After the war, the wing was torn down. Now the area is lined with stalls selling Czech handicrafts.

Top 10 Features of the Astronomical Clock

1 Solar clock

2 Lunar clock

3 Josef Mánes Calendar

4 Apostles

5 Angel and the Sciences

6 Vanity, Avarice, Death and Lust

7 Rooster

8 Hourly Shows

9 Master Hanuš

10 Dial

Old Town Square

Practical information

- Map M3

Old Town Hall:

- 224 482909
- Open Apr–Oct: 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; Nov–Mar: 10am–5pm Tue–Sun
- Adm K•60

Top tips

- The cheapest beer on the square, aside from that in plastic cups, is at U Mravence, U Radnice 20, north of the Old Town Hall.
- Resist the temptation to climb on the Jan Hus Monument. Doing so, or trampling the flowers will earn you a fine, as well as embarrassment.

Jan Hus

The rector of Prague (later Charles) University, Jan Hus was dedicated to fighting against corruption in the Church. He was declared a heretic by the Church, and was summoned to Germany where he was burned at the stake. Czech resentment turned into civil war, with Hussite rebels facing the power of Rome. But the Hussites split into moderate and radical factions, the former defeating the latter in 1434. Hus is still a national figure – 6th July, the day he was killed, is a public holiday.

The Loreto

At the heart of this sparkling 17th-century Baroque pilgrimage site is its claim to fame and most proud possession: a replica of the original Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy, believed to be the house where the Virgin Mary received the Incarnation. Construction of the grandiose church and the surrounding chapels coincided with the Counter Reformation, and one of Prague's first Baroque buildings was intended to lure Czechs back to the Catholic faith.

Top 10 Features



1 Loretánské náměstí
This square is said to have been a pagan burial ground. The stucco façade of the Loreto is dwarfed by the Fernin Palace opposite, home of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2 Santa Casa
The stucco reliefs on the outside of this replica of the Holy Family's house in Nazareth depict scenes from the Virgin Mary's life. Inside is the miracle-working statue of Our Lady of Loreto.

3 Belltower
The carillon was the gift of a Prague merchant whose daughter was healed by the intercession of the Lady of Loreto. An automated mechanism chimes a Marian hymn every hour.



4 Inner Courtyard
In the inner courtyard, visitors can admire two Baroque fountains. The north fountain features a sculpture of the Resurrection; the south, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

5 Arcade
Before and after visiting the Santa Casa, pilgrims passed through the arcade and prayed at its chapels of St Anne, St Francis Seraphim, the Holy Family, the Holy Rood, St Antony of Padua and Our Lady of Sorrows.

6 St Wilgifortis Altar
The Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows is dominated by the sight of a crucified, bearded woman. St Wilgifortis was a Portuguese maiden who prayed for a masculine appearance to preserve her chastity.

7 Church of the Nativity
Originally a small alcove behind the Santa Casa, the church was expanded into its present size in 1717. The Rococo organ stands opposite the altar, over a crypt to Loreto benefactors.

8 Altars of SS Felicissimus and Marcia
On either side of the altar in the Church of the Nativity are large reliquary displays containing the remains of these two Spanish saints.

9 Treasury
The Communists crafted this exhibit of sacred gold and silver items to show how peasants were brought to obedience with this "cheap promise of happiness beyond the grave."

10 Diamond Monstrance
The silver work by Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach is covered with 6,222 diamonds. The Virgin looks up at her son, represented by the host in the receptacle.

The Loreto

Practical information

- Loretánské náměstí 7
- Map A2
- 220 516740
- Open 9am–12:15pm, 1–4:30pm Tue–Sun
- Adm K*90

Top tips

- Just around the corner from the Loreto, at Kapušínská 2, is a monument to people tortured by the secret police at the former Interior Ministry building

Santa Casa

The Santa Casa was the Nazareth house in which the archangel Gabriel is believed to have announced to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive the Son of God. In the 13th century, the Greek Angeli family moved the house to Loreto, Italy. As the Marian cult spread, copies of the Loreto started emerging all over Europe – the Prague site is believed to be the truest representation of the original.

Old Jewish Cemetery

The crumbling image of the Old Jewish Cemetery is a moving memorial to Prague's once considerable Jewish community. As this was one of the few burial sites available to Prague's Jews, when the plot was full, graves built up in layers – estimates put the number at about 200,000, with the oldest head-stone dating from 1439. The final burial took place in 1787, but stroll through the enclosure and you'll get a sense of noble lives once lived.

Top 10 Features

- 1 Avigdor Kara's Grave**
The oldest grave is that of this poet and scholar, best known for his documentation of the pogrom of 1389, which he survived as a child.
- 2 Mordecai Maisel's Grave**
Mordecai Maisel (1528–1601) was ghetto mayor during the reign of Rudolf II, and funded the synagogue that bears his name (see Maisel Synagogue).
- 3 Rabbi Loew's Grave**
The burial site of one of Prague's major Jewish figures, Rabbi Jehuda Loew ben Bezalel (1520–1609), and creator of (see The Golem).
- 4 David Gans's Tombstone**
A pupil of Rabbi Loew, Gans (1541–1613) was the author of a seminal two-volume history of the Jewish people. He was also an accomplished astronomer during the time of Johannes Kepler. His headstone is marked with the Star of David, after his name and his faith.



- 5 Klausen Synagogue**
Mordechai Maisel also commissioned the building of the Klausen Synagogue on the cemetery's northern edge. It now houses exhibitions on Jewish festivals and traditions.
- 6 Rabbi Oppenheim's Grave**
Rabbi David Oppenheim was the first chief rabbi of Moravia, and later chief rabbi of Bohemia and finally of Prague, where he died in 1734.
- 7 Gothic Tombstones**
The eastern wall of the cemetery holds fragments of Gothic tombstones rescued in 1866 from another graveyard near Vladislavova street. Further graves at another site were uncovered in the 1990s.
- 8 Hendl Bashevi's Grave**
This elaborate tombstone marks the resting place of the so-called "Jewish Queen", Hendl Bashevi. Her

husband, mayor Jacob Bashevi, was knighted and permitted a coat of arms, seen on his wife's gravestone.

- 9 Zemach Graves**
Next to the Pinkas Synagogue) is a square gravestone where Mordechai Zemach (d. 1592) is buried with his son Bezalel (d. 1589). The name Zemach means "spring" in Hebrew.
- 10 Nephele Mound**
Stillborn children, miscarried babies and other infants who died under a year old were buried in the southeast corner of the cemetery.

Features in the Old-New Synagogue

- 1 Rabbi Loew's Chair**
Topped with a Star of David, the tall chair found by the eastern wall has been reserved for Prague's chief rabbis throughout the synagogue's history.
- 2 Jewish Standard**
Prague's Jewish community was permitted a banner in the 15th century as a symbol of its autonomy. The copy hanging above the Bimah replicates a 1716 original, featuring a Jewish hat within a six-pointed star and the legend "Shema Yisroel".
- 3 Nave**
Twelve narrow windows, evoking the 12 tribes of Israel, line the perimeter walls, which are unadorned, save for the abbreviation of Biblical verses. Two central pillars are modelled on the façade columns of the Temple of Jerusalem.
- 4 Ark**
Behind the curtain on the eastern wall are the Torah scrolls, which are kept in the holy ark. The tympanum features foliage and grape motifs, also found in nearby St Agnes's Convent, and date from the synagogue's construction in the late 13th century.
- 5 Entrance**
The Biblical inscription "Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind" admonished worshippers entering and leaving the synagogue.
- 6 Vaulting**
To avoid the sign of the cross, a fifth rib was added to the nave's vaulting, decorated with vine leaves and ivy.
- 7 Women's Windows**

Women were not permitted in the nave of the synagogue, but sat in the vestibule. Narrow openings in the wall allowed them to follow the services.

8 Bimah

A pulpit stands on this dais in the centre. From here the rabbi reads the Torah and performs wedding ceremonies.

9 Attic

Legend has it that Rabbi Loew stashed the remains of (see The Golem) under the synagogue's large saddle roof.

10 Josefov Town Hall

Adjacent to the synagogue is the Jewish Town Hall. The façade clock's hands run counter-clockwise – or clockwise, if you read Hebrew (see Jewish Town Hall).

Top 10 Jewish Leaders

1 Eliezer ben Elijah Ashkenazi (1513–86)

2 Judah Loew ben Bezalel (1525–1609)

3 Mordecai Maisel (1528–1601)

4 Mordecai ben Abraham Jaffe (1535–1612)

5 Ephraim Solomon ben Aaron of Lunshits (1550–1619)

6 Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655)

7 David ben Abraham Oppenheim (1664–1736)

8 Ezekiel ben Judah Landau (1713–93)

9 Solomon Judah Lieb Rapoport (1790–1867)

10 Efraim Karol Sidon (b. 1942)

Old Jewish Cemetery

Practical information

Old Jewish Cemetery:

- U Starého hřbitova
- Map K3
- 224 819456,
- www.jewishmuseum.cz
- Open Apr–Oct: 9am–6pm Sun–Fri; Nov– Mar: 9am– 4:30pm; Closed Jewish holidays
- Adm K•300 (includes entrance to various synagogues)

Old-New Synagogue:

- Pařížská
- Map K3
- Open 9am–6pm Mon–Thu & Sun, 9am–5pm Fri,
- Adm K•200

Top tips

- It is customary for men to wear a yarmulka (skull cap) in the synagogues. Look for them near the entrance, but return it when you leave.
- The Museum of Decorative Arts' east-facing windows offer an excellent crowd-free view of the cemetery (see Museum of Decorative Arts).

Grave Symbols

As a rule, a Hebrew tombstone (matzevah) contains the deceased's name, date of death and eulogy. In addition to these basics, the grave-markers in the Old Jewish Cemetery often included symbolic images indicating the deceased's lineage. Names are often symbolized by animals, according to Biblical precedent or Hebrew or Germanic translations – David Gans's tombstone features a goose (gans in German). Some professions are also represented: scissors may appear on a tailor's tombstone, for example.

National Gallery

Surrounded by the decorative Art Nouveau buildings of Holešovice, the austere Veletržní Palace is a daring work of art in itself. It was the first official Functionalist building in Europe, and even Le Corbusier was impressed by the eight-storey edifice when he visited Prague in 1928. After years as a trade fair complex, plans to turn the building into the home of the National Gallery's modern art collection were launched in 1979. Alongside prominent Czech contributions to modern art is a rich array of international masters from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

For details of other National Gallery sites in Prague (see Museums and Galleries)

Top 10 Paintings

1 House in Aix-en-Provence

The National Gallery's impressive collection of French art was begun in 1923, when Czech president Tomáš Masaryk helped found a small collection. This bright landscape by Paul Cézanne was one of those original 25 pieces.

2 Bonjour, Monsieur Gauguin

Paul Gauguin's simple, flat self-portrait was originally painted as a decoration for the lower panel of a dining-room door for a house in Brittany. The much-admired 19th-century French artist made this enlarged copy in 1889.

3 Rider Jaguar Attacking a Horseman

Delacroix often visited zoos to study predatory animals whose movement inspired him. This small canvas from 1853 is a fine example of such research, and is striking for its interaction of colour and motion.

4 Green Wheat

Van Gogh's encounter with Impressionism was a decisive moment. Charmed by the countryside of southern France, he began to create bright canvases such as this landscape.

5 St John the Baptist

Auguste Rodin's 1878 sculpture is a study of spiral motion, from the tension of the firmly anchored feet, to the rotating trunk, to the head turned away from the dominant gesture of the right hand.

6 Head of a Young Girl

Created in 1926, Henri Laurens' sculpture is a synthesis of Cubism and the Classical ideal of form and beauty. The National Gallery added Laurens' bronze to its collection in 1935.

7 At the Moulin Rouge

Toulouse-Lautrec thrived on depictions of Paris nightlife such as this oil tempura on cardboard. One of the dancing women is his muse, Jane Avril. Oscar Wilde is one of the figures in the background.

8 Myself, Self Portrait

With elements of modern civilization in the background Henri Rousseau's self portrait depicts the artist as a self-assured personality.

9 Self Portrait

One of 14 Picassos donated by former National Museum director Vincenc Kramář in 1960, the almond-shaped eyes and triangular nose testify to the influence of Iberian art and sculpture.

10 Anxiety

Otto Gutfreund paved the way for modern Czech sculpture. This bronze captures the apprehension of man in the early 20th century.

National Gallery

Practical information

- Dukelských hrdinů 47, Holešovice
- Map B5
- 224 301111
- www.ngprague.cz
- Open 10am–6pm Tue–Sun
- Dis. access
- Adm varies according to exhibitions

Top tips

- The café on the ground floor also doubles as an Internet café.
- The first floor houses short-term exhibits. Check the weekly galleries listings of the Prague Post for details (see The Prague Post).

Functionalism

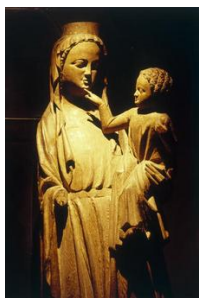
Plans for a trade fair complex began in 1924. A design competition selected the work of architects Oldřich Tyl and Josef Fuchs. Only the existing Veletržní Palace was completed; other planned buildings never materialized due to a lack of funding. Veletržní Palace opened in 1928 on the Republic's 10th anniversary. It was badly damaged by fire in 1974 and reopened to the public in 1995.

St Agnes's Convent



The 13th-century Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia (Klášter sv. Anežky) is an impressive Gothic building, closely tied to Czech statehood. Daughter of Přemysl Otakar I, Princess Agnes chose a spiritual life and founded a convent here in 1234 for the Poor Clares, an order of nuns associated with the Order of St Francis. But it was Agnes's diplomatic skills and work in establishing the convent which raised Bohemia in the eyes of Rome, as much as any courtly efforts to do the same. Restored in the 1960s to its original splendour, the convent is now used by the National Gallery to exhibit its collection of medieval and early Renaissance art.

Top 10 Works of Art



1 Strakonice Madonna

This larger-than-life, 700-year-old statue of the Virgin and Child is the Czech National Gallery's most prized possession. The gestures of the Madonna are strikingly rigid, and evoke the Classical French sculpture found in places such as Reims Cathedral.

2 Zbraslav Madonna

Bohemia's most celebrated Marian painting is evocative of Byzantine icons in its style. The ring on the Madonna's left-hand finger symbolizes the Church through the mystical marriage between Christ and the Virgin Mary. The work has been moved to St Agnes's Convent from a Cistercian monastery where the majority of the Přemyslid kings were laid to rest.



3 Vyšší Brod Altarpiece

The 14th-century cycle begins with the Annunciation, then proceeds through the Adoration of the Magi to Pentecost. The creator of these beautiful panels is unknown.

4 Works of Master Theodoricus

Parts of an altar set on loan from Karlštejn Castle, are St Luke, St Charlemagne, St Catherine, St Matthew, St Ambrose and St Gregory.



5 Třeboň Altarpiece

Only three of the five double-sided panels of the 14th-century Třeboň Altarpiece have survived to the present day.

6 Capuchin Cycle

The origin of these 14 panels is unknown. The Virgin Mary is flanked by St Peter on the left and Christ on the right.



7 Velhartice Altarpiece

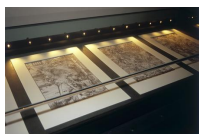
Originating in south Bohemia around 1500, this is a rare example of a completely preserved altar. Beneath the Madonna, cherubs hold the vera icon.

8 Martyrdom of St Florian

Albrecht Altdorfer created this painting as part of a multipanel altar featuring scenes from the legend of St Florian. Other pieces from the series are in Florence.

9 Puchner Altarpiece

St Agnes gave up a life at court to pursue a spiritual vocation. She is typically depicted nursing the sick on this 15th-century altarpiece.



10 Apocalypse Cycle
Although he's considered the foremost German Renaissance artist, Albrecht Dürer is probably best known for woodcuts such as this series of 15 from 1498, which retain a

strong Gothic flavour.

St Agnes's Convent

Practical information

- U milosrdných 17
- Map M1
- 224 810628
- www.ngprague.cz
- Open 10am–6pm Tue–Sun
- Dis. access
- Adm K•100

Top tips

- With the exception of short-term exhibitions, the ground floor of the convent building is empty, but frequent chamber music concerts give visitors the opportunity to appreciate the pure Gothic spaces.

St Agnes

St Agnes of Bohemia was a powerful figure in medieval politics. Pope Gregory IX granted special privileges to her convent and his successor Innocent IV sent priceless relics to be housed there. Agnes died in 1282, but her influence on Czech state-hood was felt centuries later when, in 1989, Pope John Paul II canonized her; five days later, the Velvet Revolution began.

Wenceslas Square

This former medieval horse market began to be redeveloped in the 19th century, fast becoming the commercial hub of Prague – in 1848 it was renamed Wenceslas Square, in honour of Bohemia's patron saint. The majority of the buildings seen today date from the early 20th century, and their beautiful Art Nouveau façades illustrate the embracing of this style by Czech architects of the time. Often the scene of historic events, the most recent was in 1989, when crowds gathered to celebrate the end of Communism (see Velvet Revolution).

Top 10 Sights

1 National Museum

Invading Warsaw Pact troops shelled the Neo-Renaissance building in 1968, assuming it was the Czechoslovak Parliament. The small entry fee is worth it, if only to see the museum's marble stairway and pantheon of Czech cultural figures (see National Museum).



2 St Wenceslas Statue

The Přemyslid prince sits astride a horse flanked by other Czech patrons in Josef Myslbek's 1912 sculpture. The area "under the tail" is a traditional meeting place.

3 Communist Memorial

In front of St Wenceslas is a memorial to the victims of Communism, such as two men who died in protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968.

4 Palác Lucerna

President Václav Havel's grandfather designed and built this immense building on the square's western flank. It is now home to an art gallery, cinema, cafés, shops and a ballroom.



5 Palác Koruna

Built in "Geometric Modernist" style in 1912, this "palace" became home to Turkish-style baths. Sadly, in 1997, it was taken over by a less romantic branch of Dunkin' Donuts.

6 Hotel Evropa

It's gone to seed over the years, but the Art Nouveau building at No. 25 preserves its original façade and some original decor.

7 Svobodné slovo Balcony

During the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel addressed pro-democracy demonstrators from the balcony of the Svobodné slovo newspaper building. When the deposed Alexander Dubček joined him, the crowds knew that Communism was over.

8 Franciscan Gardens

A stone's throw from the bustle of Wenceslas Square, these former monastery gardens provide much-needed peace from downtown.



9 Church of Our Lady of the Snows

Founded by Charles IV upon his coronation in 1347, this lovely church was to have been more than 100 m (330 ft) long, but it was never completed.

10 St Wenceslas

Hanging in the central passage of the Palác Lucerna is David Černý's take on the Czech patron saint. Vandals repeatedly remove the horse's tongue.

Wenceslas Square

Practical information

- Map N5

Top tips

- Enjoy the faded glory of the Hotel Evropa over a coffee in its charming café.
- Owing to the high volume of tourists, Wenceslas Square is home to many pick-pockets. Be especially wary at the square's north end.

Historic Demonstrations

Wenceslas Square saw its first demonstration in 1419 when Catholic reformer Jan Želivský led a procession to St Stephen's Church. On 28 October 1918 the area witnessed Czechoslovak independence. In 1969, Jan Palach set himself on fire here to protest against the Soviet occupation. It is still the scene of protests and victories today.

Petřín Hill

Covered with forests, orchards and strolling lovers, Petřín Hill creates a soft counterpoint to the spires of Hradčany on the Vltava's left bank. Rising more than 300 m (1,000 ft) above sea level, the area began life as a vineyard in the 15th century, but has been a public park since 1825. Early chronicles say it was the site of pagan rituals to the god Perun, and believers still practise ancient rites here on 1 May each year. Above all, however, it is the perfect escape when the city crowds become too much to bear.

More on Parks and Gardens in Prague

Top 10 Features

1 Observation Tower

Modelled after the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Petřín Hill's Eiffelovka stands only one-quarter as high as its inspiration, at 63.5 m (210 ft). It was created for the Jubilee Exposition of 1891. A climb of 299 stairs leads to the viewing platform.



a rock concert venue.

2 Strahov Stadium

It may be ugly, but Strahov Stadium is the largest arena of its kind in the world. It was built for Sokol, a physical culture organisation, and used for gymnastic rallies. Today it is

3 Strahov Monastery

Founded in 1140, Strahov houses the nation's oldest books in the National Literature Museum while still functioning as a monastery. The Theological Hall, with its frescoes and statue of St John, is a must-see.

4 Mirror Maze

After laughing at the distorting mirrors in the labyrinth, take in a bit of history with a diorama depicting the final battle of the Thirty Years' War on Charles Bridge.

5 Hunger Wall

The 14th-century wall was originally part of the city's southern fortifications. Charles IV is said to have ordered its construction as a public works project to feed the poor during a famine.



6 Karel Hynek Mácha Statue

Mácha is a national poet, best loved for his Romantic poem "May". On 1 May, young lovers lay flowers at his statue's feet.



7 Church of St Michael

No longer used for services, this lovely wooden church was moved to Prague when the Ukraine valley it stood in was flooded by a dammed river.

8 Rose Gardens

At the top of the hill, catch your breath in the extensive rose gardens. Outside the nearby observatory is a memorial to Czech airmen who served during World War II.

9 Church of St Lawrence

The Stations of the Cross, created between 1834 and 1838, lead to the onion-domed Church of St Lawrence. Built on a pagan shrine in the 10th century, it was rebuilt in Baroque style in the 18th century.

10 Funicular

If you want to save your breath, do as visitors have done since 1891 and take the funicular railway to the top of the hill and walk down. The cable car offers outstanding views of the castle to the north.



Petřín Hill

Practical information

- Map C4

Strahov Monastery:

- Open 9am–noon, 12:30–5pm daily
- Adm

Strahov Stadium:

- Closed to the public

Observation Tower:

- Open 10am–5pm daily
- Adm

Mirror Maze:

- Open Apr–Aug: 10am–7pm daily, Sep–Oct: 10am–6pm daily, Nov–Mar: 10am–5pm Sat–Sun
- Dis. access
- Adm

Church of St Michael:

- Closed to the public

Church of St Lawrence:

- Closed to the public

Funicular:

- Open 9am–11:20pm daily
- Adm

Top tips

- Nebozízek restaurant (Petřínské sady 411) offers spectacular views of Prague from its window seats.

Strahov Monastery Exhibits

Since its founding in the 12th century, Strahov Monastery has suffered fires, pillaging armies and totalitarian regimes. Josef II dissolved most local monasteries in 1783, but spared Strahov on the condition that the monks conduct research at their library. The majority of the research at the National Literature Museum today involves preserving the paper from being devoured by acidity. Other, older books are on display in the Theological and Philosophical Halls. Visitors can see ornate gospels and miniature Bibles here.

Getting Around Prague

1 Metro

Prague's underground transit system is fast, efficient and, with a little practice, easy to navigate. There are three lines, known as A, B and C; or more commonly, red, yellow and green. Validate your ticket, available from

vending machines at the stations' vestibules, at the ticket barriers. These passes are valid for all Prague public transport.

2 Tram

Prague trams make it easy to see much of the city while saving you shoe leather. The schedules can be a little tricky to read, however, and re-routings are frequent. Buy tickets in advance – they are available all over the city from newsagents, and from metro stations.

3 Buses

Buses serve outlying areas – they are banned from the centre because of pollution. As with trams, riders must validate their tickets by using the punching machines on the bus. For some stops, riders must notify the driver of their intention to get off by pressing a button near the door.

4 Taxis

Prague's taxis have received a lot of bad press (see Unscrupulous Taxi Drivers), but most firms are now reliable. Phone a central dispatcher in advance – your hotel will be able to give you a number – to be assured of safety and a fair price. If the car doesn't have a lighted sign with the word "taxi" written on it, don't get in. And make sure the meter's running. Generally, avoid taxis that line up outside the major tourist sights.

5 Driving

Prague's city centre was not designed for the volume of traffic it sees nowadays. The streets are narrow and winding and parking is very scarce. If you must drive, keep to the right, wear a seatbelt, and be aware that traffic violations are payable on the spot. Illegally parked cars are regularly clamped or towed away by vigilant traffic wardens.

6 On Foot

Walking is the only way to see much of the city. The centre is only about 4 km (2.5 miles) from end to end and many of the historic sights, such as Prague Castle and the Old Town Square are in pedestrianized zones. Make sure you wear comfortable, flat-soled shoes, watch your step on the cobblestones, and look out for trams that drive in the centre of the road in both directions.

7 River Boats

A river cruise along the Vltava can offer a relaxing and romantic afternoon of sightseeing that's easy on weary feet. Tour boats depart from ěchov and Palackého bridges. You can also rent rowing boats near Charles Bridge.

8 Horse and Carriage

Horse and carriages line Old Town Square and take tourists for short rides through the surrounding streets. This can make a pleasant (and romantic) after-dinner diversion. Surprisingly, the horses don't seem to mind the crowds and auto traffic.

9 Cycling

While Prague has numerous bicycle routes, cyclists do not have their own lanes on the streets and must share the road with cars, which can prove hazardous. The cobblestones can also be hard going. Some services

offer guided cycling tours of the city – check with the Prague Information Service.

10 Guided Tours While some guided tours are little more than a mob following a distant umbrella, many services offer personal insight to the city. Check with the Prague Information Service, or look for posters advertising pub crawls.

3

PLACES TO STAY

Apartment Lužická

This spacious, one-bedroom flat on a tree-lined Vinohrady street is tastefully appointed with simple furniture. The bright kitchen has all the utensils you need, a stocked refrigerator and a washing machine.

► **Lužická 14, Vinohrady • Map B6 • 251 512502 •**
info@pragueaccommodations.com • No air conditioning
 • KKK

Apartments Slezská

This booking agency offers three apartments at this address near metro and tram stops. Fully equipped kitchens, TVs and carpets help make guests comfortable.

► **Slezská 23, Vinohrady • Map B6 • 233 920118 •**
interacta@vol.cz • No air conditioning • K

Apartments Vlašská

Four romantic and newly renovated apartments on a palace-lined Malá Strana street, each with beautiful painted wooden beams, large windows, antique furniture and modern baths.

► **Vlašská 7–8 • Map B3 • 233 920118 • interacta@vol.cz**
 • Dis. access • No air conditioning • KKK

Biskupský dům

The Bishop's House actually occupies two buildings: one is the Prague bishop's former residence; the other was a butcher's in the 18th century. Between them are 45 rooms, all comfortable and tastefully furnished.

► **Dražického náměstí 6 • Map D3 • 257 532320 •**
www.hotelbishopshouse.com • No air conditioning • KKKKK

Boathouse Hostel

Located 20 minutes south of the centre and run by strict rules, the Boathouse is not a party hostel. It does, however, offer numerous services, such as laundry, internet access and bicycle and boat rental. Three to nine beds to a room.

► **Lodnická 1 • 415 658580 • info@hostel.cz • No air conditioning • No credit cards • K**

Botel Admiral

Moored across the river from Palackého náměstí and the modern spires of Emmaus Monastery, the Admiral offers 84 tiny rooms. Travellers who prefer more space should book one of the four apartments. Laundry and dry-cleaning services.

► **Hořejší nábreží, Smíchov • Map A6 • 257 321302 •**
www.admiral-botel.cz • No air conditioning • KK

Botel Albatros



The Albatros fancies itself romantic; enjoying a drink on the deck, gazing at Prague Castle you'd be inclined to agree. Old Town Square is a 10-minute walk away. The cabins are small, as befits a boat, but cosy.

► **Nábřeží Ludvíka Svobody • 224 810547 •**
www.botelalbatros.cz • No air conditioning • KK

Botel Racek

Floating on the Vltava's right bank, near the local yacht club and the city's large swimming and diving arena, the Racek offers 70 rooms, a restaurant and a top-deck disco. Nearby trams will take you to the centre in 10 minutes.

► **Na Dvorecké louce, Podolí • 241 431628 •**
www.botelracek.cz • No air conditioning • KK

Casa Marcello

Casa Marcello's elegantly appointed rooms embrace their 12th-century character; wandering the hotel's many stairs and hallways, you'll think you're in an Escher print. There is a small fitness club and excellent restaurant on the premises.

► **Šásnovka 783 • Map N1 • 222 310260 •**
www.casa-marcello.cz • KKKKK

•elakovského sady

Overlooking the small green surrounding the National Museum, this bed-and-breakfast is just a three-minute walk to Wenceslas Square. The homey apartments and rooms are fully furnished down to the pots and pans.

► **•elakovského sady 8 • Map G5 • 257 210410 •**
interacta@vol.cz • No air conditioning • KK

Accommodation Tips

1 Off-season Prices

The peak tourist season runs roughly from April through to September with another pocket of high prices around New Year; check whether prices have been hiked up for a particular event before booking. Recently an accommodation company has started offering last-minute

prices for numerous hotels; you can check their availability at www.accomgroup.com.

2 Bargain Districts

Exploring accommodation options outside the city centre can save you a considerable amount on your hotel bills. The neighbourhoods of Žižkov, Karlín, Smíchov and Holešovice, for example, all have good connections to the centre (see Old Town Square) and an increasing number of good quality hotels.

3 Annonce

If you're staying a bit longer than the average tourist and want to save money on long-term accommodation, check the daily classified advertisement publication *Annonce*. Almost all the ads are in Czech, but if you can find someone to translate, you'll find extremely affordable rooms and apartments for rent, both on short- and long-term agreements. It is available from most newsagents.

4 Hotel Standards

If you recognize the name of your hotel (such as a chain hotel), you'll recognize the quality of the services and amenities; otherwise, be prepared for surprises. Not all hotel rooms have en suite bathrooms, for example, or plush bath towels. If such items are important to you, enquire before you book.

5 Things to Avoid

If you've failed to book a room in advance, go directly to a local travel agent or hotel. Do not accept accommodation from touts at the airport, train station or bus depot. Even if they're not out to rob you, you have no guarantee as to the quality of the rooms.

6 Parking

Smaller hotels may not have reserved parking spaces for guests. If so, ask the management about the safest places to park. Never leave valuables in your car and make sure you're parked in a legal space; being towed or clamped can ruin precious holiday time.

7 Pets

Prague is a very pet-friendly city – good news for animal-owners and bad news for allergy sufferers. When you book, check whether you can bring pets; if you fear the fur, ask for assurances that your room hasn't been doubling up as a kennel recently.

8 Security

Whatever the destination, it almost goes without saying that tourists should use common sense when it comes to travelling with valuables – if possible, leave anything you wouldn't want to lose at home. In the better hotels, keep items such as passports and jewellery in the hotel safe. Be aware that even the best hotels can be targets of streetside scams.

9 Short-term Apartment Rentals

If you're staying a week or longer, you may want to skip the hotels entirely and rent a small flat. The Prague Information Service, state travel agency *edok* and numerous other local agencies can help you find a short-term rental (see Sources of Information).

10 Finding a Flat

Many real estate companies offer sublets, long-term and month-to-month rentals. For a fee, usually the value of one month's rent, they can find you a home and help you with the necessary paperwork. If you want to go it on your own, check bulletin boards at The Globe Bookstore and Coffeehouse.

4

PLACES TO EAT

Alcron

Seafood is the speciality at the Radisson's new restaurant, but the chef is happy to prepare almost any dish. Just ask him as he makes the rounds of this minute Art Deco lounge. If the dining room is full, try La Rotonde across the foyer. After dinner, you can enjoy cocktails and live jazz in the Bebob bar.

► Štěpánská 40 • 222 820038 • Dis. access • KKKK

Alizée

A relative newcomer to the local dining scene, Alizée serves French dishes with a few Asian accents. Excellent wine list. The adjoining brasserie offers a more casual atmosphere.

► Široká 4 • Map L3 • 224 819668 • KKKK

Allegro

The Four Seasons' restaurant is the toast of the town even with other top restaurateurs. Expect highly attentive service and fine, authentic Italian cuisine by Milanese chef Vito Mollica.

► Velešlavínova 2a • Map K3 • 221 427000 • Dis. access • KKKK

Ambiente

Steaks, salads, ribs and other American dishes keep tables full – reservations a must. The menu changes regularly, but they'll never part with the chocolate fondue.

► Mánesova 59, Vinohrady • Map B6 • 222 727851 • KK

Bar Bar

The salads, waffles and crêpes served here make an excellent light lunch, but you'll have trouble finding a seat in the evening.

► Všešrdova 17 • Map C4

Bazaar Méditerranée

The marvellous views from the rooftop terrace outdo the culinary aspects of this chic dinner club. Italian and Mediterranean specialities, plus the occasional transvestite show.

► Nerudova 40 • Map C2 • 257 535050 • KKKK

Bellevue

A gorgeous view of the castle rising above Charles Bridge, and formal, Continental dining.

► Smetanovo nábeží 18 • Map J5 • 222 221443 • KKKK

Black Tower Café

Visitors can escape the crowds at this café hidden under the Black Tower at the castle's eastern end. Relax with coffee and strudel, or beer and sandwiches.

► Jiřská • Map C2

Blinis Bar

The Russian spirit of this eatery hits you like a shot of one their dizzying selection of vodkas. Sit down to blinis, borscht and other Eastern European soul food.

► Maiselova 16 • Map L3 • 224 812463 • KK

Bohemia Bagel



It's hard to believe now, but Prague had no bagels until American entrepreneurs opened this shop here in 1997, serving fresh-baked bagels, sandwiches and endless cups of coffee. Open late.

► Újezd 16 • Map C4

Alcohol Bar

A straightforward approach to cocktails, as the name suggests. The superior circulation system, which is a novelty in Prague, filters the ubiquitous cigarette smoke from the atmosphere. DJs play classic rock and Motown tracks and the kitchen serves small plates of snacks for the peckish until 3am.

► Dušňá 6 • Map L1 • 224 811744

Bar 23

The wooden door looks a bit suspect, but inside is a welcoming beer-and-a-shot neighbour-hood bar. A good place to practise the intricate rituals of absinthe drinking.

► Křemencova 23 • Map E5

Billiard centrum v Cípu

Close to 100 billiard, pool and snooker tables, plus four lanes of bowling and two table-tennis sets. Don't go on

Friday or Saturday without making a reservation first. The bar serves drinks, but no food.

➤ *V Cípů 1 • Map P5*

Boulder Bar

You would think drinking and rock climbing would be mutually exclusive activities, but you can do both at this bar and climbing gym. The student crowd is interested primarily in the alcohol.

➤ *V jám• 6 • Map F1*

Bugsy's

The kind of bar where you'll find well-heeled septugenarian gents with a girl on either arm. Somewhat circus-like, but the drinks are top notch. Sit at the bar for the best service. The under-dressed have been turned away, so look smart.

➤ *Pa•ižská 10 • Map L2 • 224 810287*

Café Belaria



This Kampa Island café serves good beer and coffee at a fraction of the price found on the other side of the block.

➤ *Hrozenová 6 • Map D3*

Café •ertovka

The stairway leading to this café's riverside patio is so narrow it needs its own traffic lights. They say President Václav Havel took Pink Floyd here for beer.

➤ *U lužického semináře • Map D2*

Eating and Drinking Tips

1 Vegetarian Tips

Meat- and dairy-free dining is no longer the problem it was a few years ago. Many new restaurants, such as Dahab, offer vegetarians a wide variety of tasty meatless meals, while older establishments are increasingly

sensitive to vegetarians' needs. That said, never assume your vegetables won't come smothered with cheese.

➤ *Dahab: Dlouhá 33 • Map M2 • 224 827375 • KK*

2 Ordering

Except for the grander eateries, many Prague restaurants have yet to grasp multiple-course service. Emphasize that you want your appetizer (jako předkrm) before your main course. You will probably also have to order your side dish à la carte. Your steak will be well-done unless you plead otherwise.

3 Paying

Verify the restaurant takes credit cards before you order. Restaurants seldom accept travellers' cheques. Tell your waiter you'd like to pay with one word: zaplatím. You and your party may pay dohromady (all together) or zvlášť (separately).

4 Tipping

While tipping in Prague is approaching the international standard of 15 per cent, it is still common in pubs to simply round up the bill. If your beer and schnitzel cost K•82, for example, pay K•90. Rather than leaving the tip on the table, tell your waiter how much you want to give.

5 Making Reservations

Reserving a table is never a bad idea and can save you a great deal of hungry wandering come dinner time. In many restaurants, it's common for lone diners to join other tables. If you're alone and want to know if a seat is free, point at it and ask "Je tu volno?"

6 Smoking

Prague restaurants are seldom non-smoking. A local ordinance bans smoking at lunch time, but it is seldom, if ever, enforced. For a smoke-free meal, try the vegetarian restaurants Country Life and Little Buddha.

➤ *Country Life: Melantrichova 15 • Map L4 • 224 213366; • K • Jungmannova 1 • Map M6 • 257 044419 • K*

➤ *Little Buddha: Úvoz 46; • Map A3; • 220 513894; • K*

7 Late-Night Eating

Unless you're willing to hazard the sausage stands on Wenceslas Square, finding a bite late at night will prove challenging. The club Radost serves food until the early hours. Better hotels have late-night room service.



8 Breakfast

Your hotel will probably include a Continental breakfast with the price of your room. While Irish fry-ups can be found at bars such as the James Joyce and Caffrey's, American diner-style breakfasts are largely unheard of. Cafés increasingly serve hemenex – ham and eggs – but seldom open before 9am.

➤ *James Joyce: Liliová 10 • Map K5 • 224 248793 • K*

➤ *Caffrey's: Starom•stské nám•stí 10 • Map M3 • 224 828031 • K*

9 Brunch

If you're travelling on a budget but still want a taste of the good life, you can see how the other half eat without breaking the bank by doing brunch at one of the city's fine-dining establishments. Brunch buffets, complete with champagne and jazz, abound and seldom cost more than K•500.

10 Restaurant Classes

State-licensed eating establishments fall into one of three classes, with first class being the finest and three the plainest. The restaurant's class should be posted by the front door. These classifications are no indications of quality. A third-class pub may very well offer better food than a first-class restaurant at times.

5

SHOPPING

Alma Mahler Antique

What don't they sell? Alma Mahler Antique is a bazaar stocked with Persian rugs, jewellery, Meissen porcelain, crystal and nesting dolls. One of the largest antiques dealers in Prague.

► Valentinská 7 • Map K3

American Heating

Around the corner from the US Embassy is a shop specializing in restoration and sales of historical stoves. Great news if you want to export Malá Strana's coal-scented atmosphere home with you.

► Karmelitská 21 • Map C3

Antikvariát U Karlova mostu

This antiques shop specializes in books, manuscripts and prints that look like they could have been used by 17th-century astronomer Johannes Kepler when he lived next door. Collectors will want to have their credit cards handy.

► Karlova 2 • Map L4

Antique Kaprova

This serious collector's shop specializes in prints and small decorative items such as clocks and lamps. If you don't find what you're looking for, just ask and they'll point you in the right direction.

► Kaprova 12 • Map K3

Art Deco



Enter this shop filled with antique furnishings, vintage clothing and one-of-a-kind knickknacks and you'll feel you've stepped back into the First Republic. Outfit yourself in Jazz-Age style, right down to the spats and cigarette holder, or dress up your parlour with an Art Nouveau clock or cordial set.

► Michalská 21 • Map L5

Bakeshop Praha



Grab a bag of rugalach, brownies or other mouth-watering treats for on-the-go nourishment, or lunch on an egg-salad sandwich and coffee. Salads and quiches also to take away.

► Kozi 1 • Map M1

Blue



Forget the traditional image of dust-collecting glass bowls and stemware. Blue's bold and quirky designs will brighten your living room, dining room or bathroom like no old-fashioned glass can. Plus, the prices are low enough that you won't hesitate to use your purchases every day. You can also pick up the requisite T-shirts, picture books and other gifts here if you wish.

Candles Gallery

Buy a candle large enough to need its own seat on the plane or one of this store's smaller, natural-beeswax creations.

► Karlova 23 • Map L4

Centrum Historie

This gallery sells replicas of all sorts of 14th- to 17th-century items. You can even watch as they make them, while sipping a drink brought to you by a maid in Baroque costume.

► Nosticova 8 • Map D3

Shopping Tips

1 Credit Cards

The more expensive the item, the more likely it will be that you can pay for it with a credit card. Shops selling souvenirs are more likely to accept credit cards than those selling necessities. Cards accepted by an establishment will be indicated on the shop's front door.

2 VAT Refunds

Tourists are entitled to a refund of the value-added tax on purchases. Ask for a tax-free shopping cheque and tax-free envelope at the store. Complete the cheque and have it stamped at customs within 30 days. In Prague, visitors can collect their refund at several shops at Ruzyně airport (see Getting to Prague).

3 Baskets and Bags

If there are shopping carts or baskets at the front of the store, take one as you go in. It's common courtesy – shopkeepers will assume you're a shoplifter without one – and it helps regulate the number of shoppers in the often tiny stores. Bags for your purchases may cost extra.

4 Small Change

Prague tellers demonstrate a disturbing antipathy towards mathematics and always appreciate it if you have exact change, down to the last heller. Don't be surprised if the clerk fishes the correct coins out of your hand. Smaller shops may even refuse to accept banknotes larger than Kč1,000.

5 Specialist Shops

Large department stores such as Tesco and Carrefour have now introduced one-stop shopping, but there is still the tendency in Prague for shops to specialize to an amusing degree. A papírnictví sells everything made of paper, from notepads to sanitary napkins, while the only place you'll find an alarm clock is at a hodinářství.

6 Bargain Food

Whole loaves of fresh sourdough bread go for less than Kč10. But be warned – this bread is free of preservatives, so it starts to go off after a day. Shops selling grilované kuře (roast chicken) are dotted around the city. Order a quarter or half bird to eat there, or, if you are in self-catering accommodation, you can take a whole bird home for a great dinner.

7 Fresh Vegetables

Large supermarkets often trade in quality for quantity when it comes to produce. The best fruit and vegetables are found at various outdoor markets around Prague. In the city centre, try Havelská.



8 Antiques

Antiques dealers and junk merchants abound in the city centre. Going further afield will offer you an even better selection and prices. You may need a special permit to export antiques

from the Czech Republic; ask the dealer. If you're looking

for Soviet paraphernalia, be warned that anything you find these days is likely to be a replica.

9 Books

If you're looking for some reading material for the next leg of your journey, head to Anagram, Big Ben or The Globe bookstore (see The Globe Bookstore and Coffeehouse), but don't expect the latest titles. Or try Czech booksellers such as Kanzelsberger, where English-language classics go for a song.

➤ *Anagram: Týn 4 • Map M3*

➤ *Big Ben: Malá Štupartská 5 • Map M3*

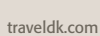
➤ *Kanzelsberger: Václavské náměstí 4 • Map N5*

10 Bootleg Goods

As with most major cities, the odds are very good that the Adidas trainers, Calvin Klein underwear or Umbro sportswear that you can buy on street stalls is not the real thing. Also be aware that many bazaars sell pirated CDs, videos and software, so the quality is likely to be dubious, if not downright unuseable.











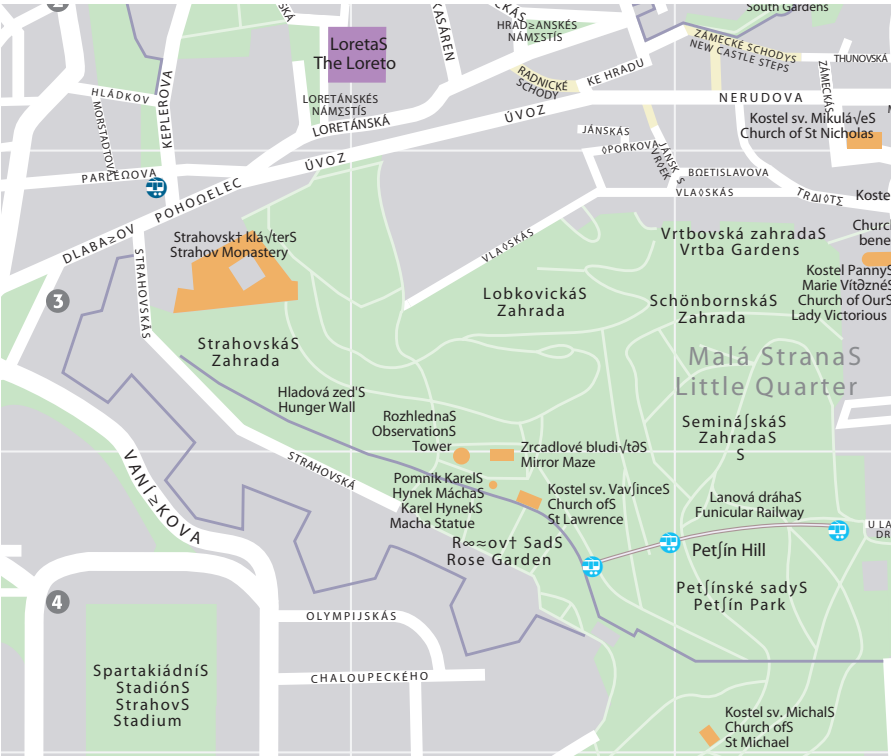






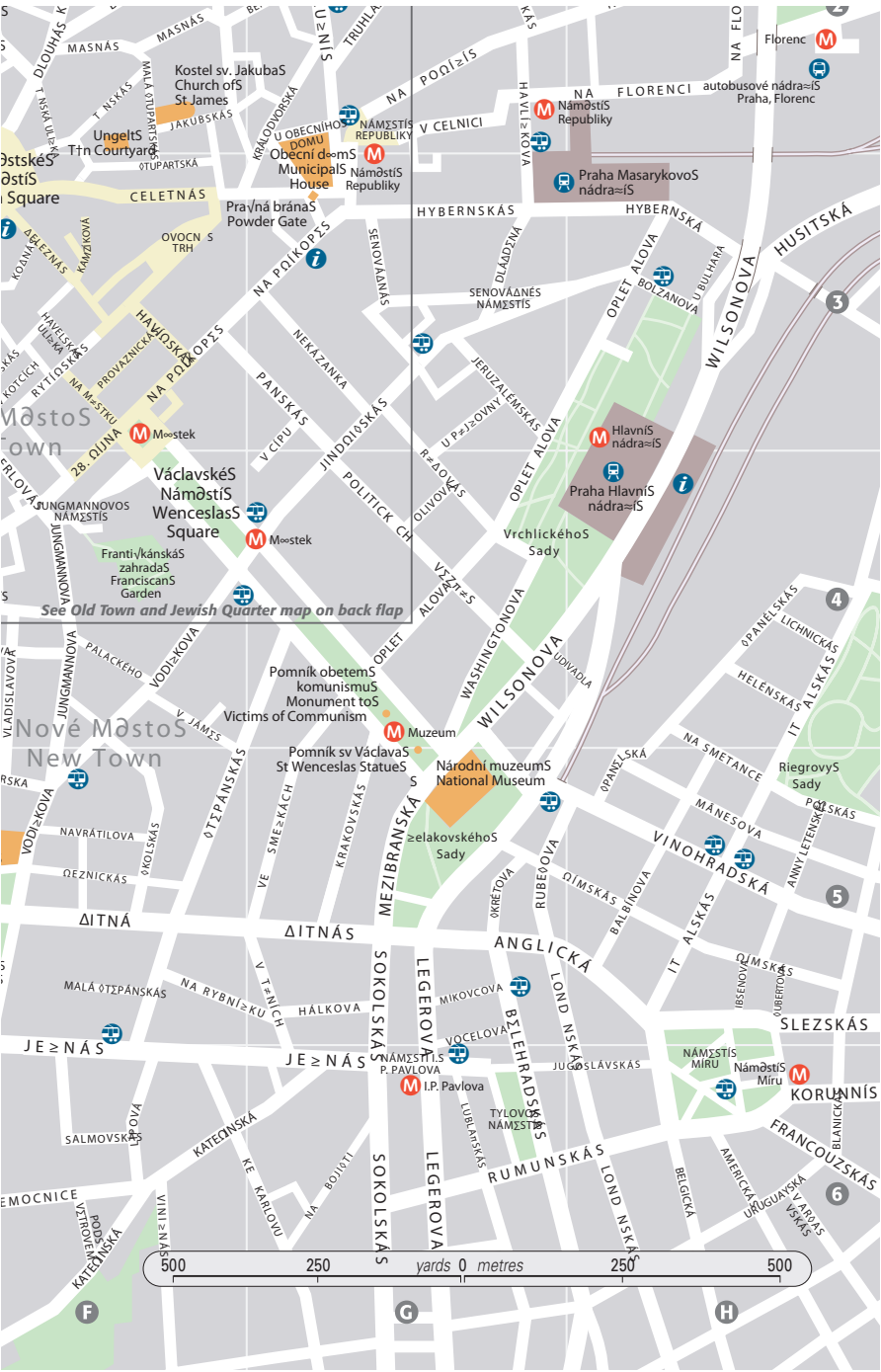




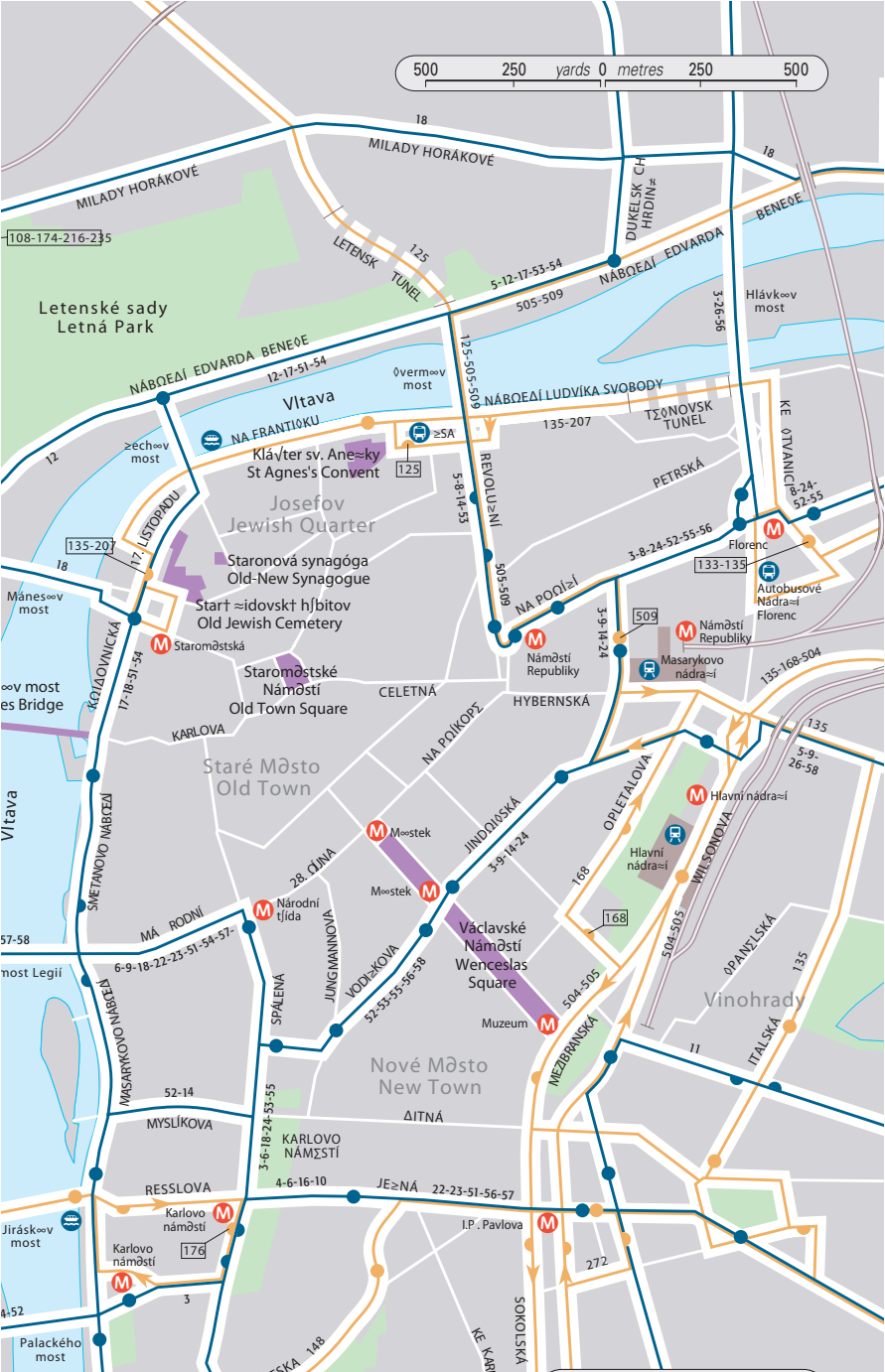




















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