

TOP 10 ATTRACTIONS



ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK

Its fascinating rituals celebrate the passing of time. See page 50.



WENCESLAS SQUARE

Dominated by the iconic statue of the saint. See page 63.



ST VITUS CATHEDRAL

Prepare to be dazzled by its awe-inspiring facade. See page 32.



STERNBERG PALACE

Houses a fine collection of European Masters. See page 29.



NATIONAL THEATRE

The home of the National Opera and Ballet.
See page 65.



LORETO

Fine frescoes adorn one of
Bohemia's most important
centres of pilgrimage. See
page 40.



JEWISH QUARTER

Monuments remember a
vanished community.
See page 55.



CHARLES BRIDGE

A Gothic masterpiece, lined with beautiful
sculptures, atmospheric at any time of day.
See page 47.



OUR LADY BEFORE TÝN

The church's Gothic spires soar into the
sky. See page 52.



OLD ROYAL PALACE

The spectacular dimensions
of Vladislav Hall seem out of
this world. See page 36.

A PERFECT DAY



9.00am

Breakfast

If you have skipped breakfast at your hotel grab some coffee and something to eat at the charming Cukrkávalimonáda café (Lázeňská 7) in the Lesser Quarter.

10.00am

St Nicholas

Just around the corner, on Malostranské Square, is the Church of St Nicholas, a Lesser Quarter landmark. This has one of the finest Baroque interiors in the city, glittering with gold leaf after renovation.



12 noon

Nový Svět and lunch

Close to Hradčany Square is the delightful street of Nový Svět ('New World'). In one of the beautiful old houses is the restaurant U Zlaté Hrušky ('The Golden Pear'), a good place to try classic Czech cuisine.

11.00am

Viewpoint

From Malostranské Square make your way up the steep street of Nerudova, lined with historic buildings, and climb up the steep ramp of Ke Hradu to Hradčany Square. From here there is a wonderful view across the city's domes and spires.

2.00pm

Castle tour

After lunch head back to Hradčany Square and enter the castle gate. Spend the afternoon visiting St Vitus Cathedral, peeping into the beautifully-decorated Wenceslas Chapel, and the historic rooms of the Old Palace and the splendid medieval Vladislav Hall.

IN PRAGUE



5.00pm

Charles Bridge

Walk along Tomašská back to Malostranské Square where Mostecká will take you down to the Charles Bridge. Enjoy the late afternoon views along the river and of the castle hill. Back in the Lesser Quarter you can have a pre-dinner drink with more riverside views at Hergetova Cihelná (Cihelná 2b).

4.00pm

Formal gardens

After visiting the palace continue on through the castle to the formal Baroque gardens that cascade down the hill below Prague Castle. These are a delightful way of returning to the Lesser Quarter and they will bring you out onto Valdštejnské Square.

7.00pm

Dinner options

When it comes to dinner there are a number of excellent options close by. The romantic Pálffy Palác (Valdštejnská 14) is lovely for a dinner for two, or if you are in search of good local dishes try either U Patrona (Dražického náměstí 4) or U Modré kachničky (Nebovidská 6).

9.30pm

On the town

Experience the magic of the Old Town at night by crossing the illuminated Charles Bridge and continuing along Karlova to the Old Town Square. Round off the evening with a cocktail – along Pařížská you will find the Cloud 9 (Pobřežní 1), Buggy's (Pařížská 10), Ocean Drive (V Kolkovně 7) and Tretter's (V Kolkovně 3).

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INTRODUCTION

Located in the heart of Europe – perhaps a little further north and west than most people think – Prague (*Praha* in Czech) is set on the banks of the Vltava River (a tributary of the Elbe). The site was chosen both for its strategic advantages and for its beauty, and the heart of the old city nestles in a bowl formed by rolling hills.

Some destinations still have the capacity to give even the most cynical tourist pause for thought, refusing to be reduced to a mere list of museums or galleries. Prague is one such. Never destroyed by war, the city's 1,000-year history is etched into its very fabric, its sublime beauty and unique character forged through its development as a major European Capital. It has been the capital of Bohemia for centuries. During the Middle Ages it rose to prominence as the capital of Charles IV (1316–78), the Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of much of Western Europe. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries the city was the seat of the Habsburg Court and it became the capital of the newly independent country of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The Communists took

'Five towns'

Prague used to be known as the 'five towns', after the five historic districts at its heart. These are: Hradčany (the Castle District), the Old Town (Staré Město), the Lesser Quarter (Malá Strana), the New Town (Nové Město) and Josefov (the Jewish Quarter).

over in 1948 and ruled from the city, but they were overthrown in the Prague-based 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989. And when the Czechs and Slovaks parted company in 1992, Prague became capital of the new Czech Republic.

Prague always was and still remains a city of contrasts. It is famous for its illustrious artistic past and

present – in painting, sculpture, music, literature, architecture and design – yet is equally renowned for its beer, hearty food and sometimes boisterous tourist scene. Prague is also a city of protest and revolution, asserting its own identity, from the 15th-century Hussites who fought against the hegemony of the Catholic Church, to the struggle against Communist domination in 1968 and, more successfully, 1989. Yet, this is also a city that has gleefully embraced consumerism, seen in the flash new shopping malls that have sprung up. But these are all part of Prague's attraction; there probably is just about something for everyone, especially if you look just a bit beyond the standard tourist circuit of the Castle and Old Town Square.

CITY OF ONE HUNDRED SPIRES

Prague's architectural tapestry spans almost every major European style, with fine examples of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Art Nouveau and Modernist interwoven across the city. The facades show the work of master painters and sculptors, and behind them have worked some of the most famous of European musicians, including Mozart, Dvořák and Smetana. Also part of the fabric are the threads of political and religious intrigue.



Old Town Square