

Prague: city of history and beauty

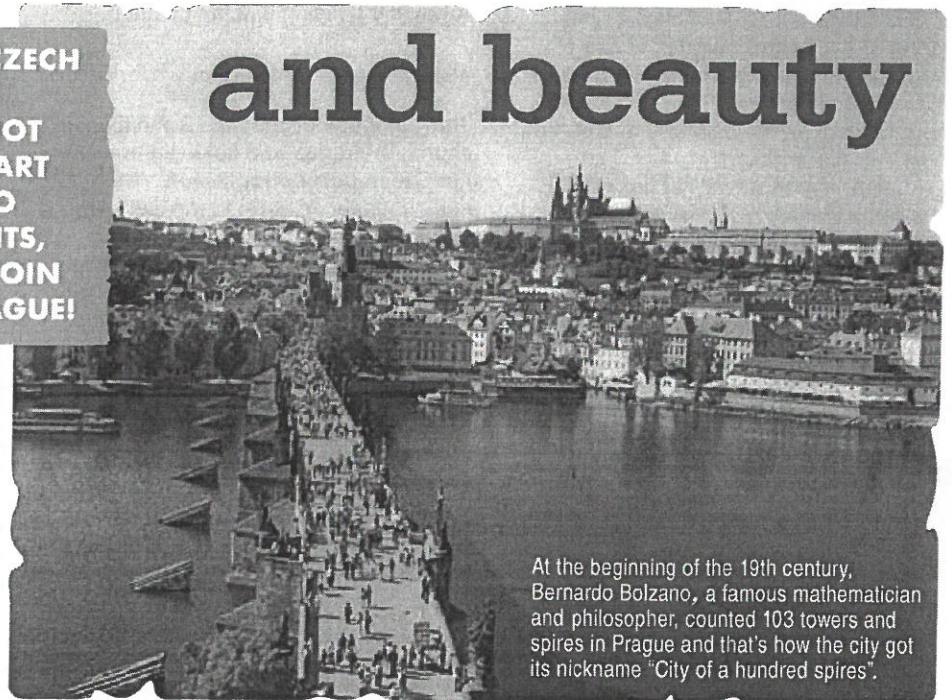
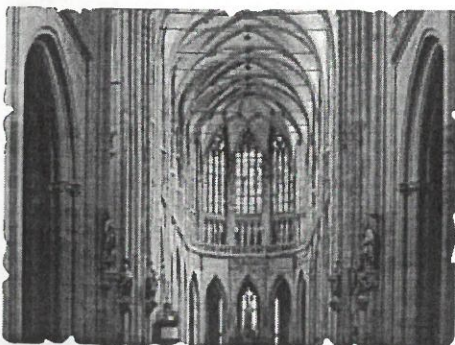
PRAGUE, THE CAPITAL OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HAS A POPULATION OF 1.2 MILLION PEOPLE. IT IS NOT ONLY THE GOVERNMENTAL HEART OF THE COUNTRY, BUT IT'S ALSO A CITY FULL OF CULTURAL EVENTS, ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY. JOIN US ON A JAUNT THROUGH PRAGUE!

Prague history

The city, established in the 9th century, was the seat of Czech **princes** and later kings of Bohemia and became the political heart of the Czech State. Charles IV (1316 – 1378), Bohemian King and Holy Roman Emperor, chose the city as the capital of his whole Empire. He founded Charles University, St. Vitus Cathedral, Charles Bridge and the New Town. Many of the most beautiful things we associate with Prague can be traced back to Charles IV.

Many important figures have passed through Prague, and many events have occurred in the city as well. Prague is connected with the Czech **religious reformer** Jan Hus and the Hussite movement. Prague was also where the Thirty Year's War began with the **uprising of the Czech Estates** in the early 17th century. The Czech **National Revival** in the 19th century restored once again Prague's prominence and the National Theatre was built to express this feeling of national pride for Czechs. The building itself was financed from money collected by the Czech people. In 1918, the city became the capital of the independent Czechoslovakia and after the peaceful **division of Czechoslovakia** in 1993, it became the capital of the Czech Republic.

A variety of architecture can be seen all over the city from the Gothic St. Vitus Cathedral to the **Art Nouveau Municipal House** and even modern designs like the Dancing House.



At the beginning of the 19th century, Bernardo Bolzano, a famous mathematician and philosopher, counted 103 towers and spires in Prague and that's how the city got its nickname "City of a hundred spires".

Prague districts

The old centre of Prague consists of five historical districts. Old Town, New Town and Josefov (the former Jewish Town) are situated on the right **bank** of the Vltava. The Lesser Quarter and Hradčany (the Castle District) are on the left bank.

The Old Town

Charles Bridge **ranks among** the greatest monuments in Prague. Its construction began on 9th July 1357 at 5.31 a.m. According to astrologists at the time, it was the best date and time for **laying the foundation stone**. While the bridge was being built, the builders added eggs to the **mortar** to make a strong substance to hold the bridge together. People from all over the country gave eggs to help the cause. Legend has it that one village didn't quite understand the concept and sent the eggs to Prague **hard-boiled!**

Charles Bridge is 516 meters long and 10 meters wide. It is an open-air gallery of unique Baroque statues. In about the middle of the bridge stands the statue of St. John of Nepomuk. He lived in the 14th century and held the position of **General Vicar**. He was also

Before the St. Vitus Cathedral was built, there was a rotunda founded by Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia. Charles IV ordered the building of the gothic cathedral, and it took almost 600 years to complete – it was finished only in the 20th century.

the **confessor** of the Queen of Bohemia¹ and refused to **give away** any of the Queen's secrets. John angered the King when he confirmed the **appointment** of the new **Abbot** of Kladrubby **Monastery against the King's will**. For this, John **was tortured to death** and his dead body was thrown into the Vltava River. Later, he **was proclaimed saint**, and today he is **venerated** by many believers.

The Old Town Square is another significant historical spot. It used to be the most important market place in Prague and the scene of many historical events. Its main monument is the Old Town Hall with its world-famous astronomical clock. There are also two famous churches on the Old Town Square: the Gothic Týn Church and the Baroque St. Nicholas Church.

The **Estates Theatre** is near the Old Town Square. The world premiere of Mozart's opera Don Giovanni took place there in 1787. Mozart visited Prague a few times. He stayed mainly at Bertramka in Smíchov as a guest of Czech **composer** F. X. Dušek and his wife Josefine. The house has now been converted into a Mozart museum where it is possible to see the composer's personal **belongings**, letters, music **manuscripts** and old musical instruments.

The Lesser Quarter

Near Charles bridge lies Kampa Island, separated from the Lesser Quarter by

a small canal called Čertovka. In the past there used to be many **mills** on Kampa and two big wooden **mill wheels** are still preserved today.

The Church of St. Nicholas, at the center of the Lesser Quarter, is one of the most outstanding examples of Czech Baroque architecture. The 1,500 square meter **fresco** on the ceiling is one of the largest in the world.

Another important part of the Lesser Quarter is Nerudova Street with its characteristic **house-signs**. The three **fiddles** sign has been preserved on one of the houses, signifying the three generations of **violin** makers who used to live and work there. The famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven is believed to have once played a violin made in this



Legend has it that if you touch the statue of St. John of Nepomuk on Charles Bridge and make a wish, it will come true.

workshop. The most important house is probably No. 233, also known as At The Two Suns. This is where the well-known Czech writer Jan Neruda used to live. Today the building is a famous pub.

The Castle District

The Cathedral of St. Vitus is the biggest church in Prague and holds the treasury of the Czech **coronation jewels**. There are many interesting parts to the cathedral: It has the oldest **reticulated vault** in Europe and the southern Golden Gate has an amazing **mosaic** decoration. St. Wenceslas **Chapel** was built to protect the **relics** of the most important Czech saint and national patron – St. Wenceslas. Its walls are decorated with frescoes and Czech **semi-precious stones**.

Another well-known place in the Castle District is the Loreta. The most fascinating part is its Treasure Chamber with a diamond **monstrance** decorated with 6,222 diamonds.

Other places of interest

Vyšehrad

Vyšehrad Castle is situated on a rock **overlooking** the Vltava River. Legend has it that Czech Princess Libuše **prophesied** the glory of Prague from here. Vyšehrad has an important place in Czech history and the Czech national cemetery was founded here. Writer Karel Čapek, **sculptor** J. V. Myslbek, composers A. Dvořák and B. Smetana, poet J. Neruda and artist M. Aleš are all buried here.

Petřín Hill

Prague's skyline is defined by Petřín Hill. There is a 60-meter tall viewing tower on the hill, which was built in 1891. It was modelled on the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Apart from the tower, there's a **mirror labyrinth** and the Prague Municipal **Observatory**.



The house At the Black Madonna in Celetná Street in Prague 1, built in 1912 and designed by the architect Josef Gočár, represents a unique example of cubist architecture in Prague.

Cultural life

Prague's cultural events offer something for everyone. The National Gallery houses a collection of modern art, various dance performances can be seen at the National Theatre and classical concerts by Mozart, Dvořák, Smetana and other famous composers can be heard at the Rudolfinum and the Municipal House. Modern dramatic productions include many theatre plays as well as the special **black light performances** in The Laterna Magica.

Both Czechs and visitors alike **cannot fail to be charmed** by the beauty and magic of this old-new city on the Vltava.

**Hana Gavranová (CR),
Jacy Meyer (USA)**

Note:

1 She was Žofie Bavorská, the wife of Wenceslas IV.

→ Vocabulary

jaunt [dʒɔ:nt] - procházka

prince [prɪns] - kníže

can be traced back to [treɪst] - se dají vysledovat k

religious reformer [rɪ'lɪdʒəs rɪ'fɔ:mə] - náboženský reformátor

with the uprising of the Czech Estates [ʌp'raɪzɪŋ ɪ'stɜ:ts] - povstáním českých stavů

National Revival ['næʃ(ə)n(ə)l rɪ'vaɪv(ə)l] - národní obrození

division [dɪ'vɪʒ(ə)n] - rozdělení

Art Nouveau [ɑ:t nu:'vəʊ] - secese, secesní

Municipal House [mju'nɪsɪp(ə)l] - Obecní dům

bank [bæŋk] - břeh

ranks among [ræŋks ə'mʌŋ] - patří mezi

for laying the foundation stone ['leɪŋ faʊn'deɪʃ(ə)n] - pro položení základního kamene

mortar ['mɔ:tə] - malta

hard-boiled - uvářená natvrdo

General Vicar ['dʒɛn(ə)r(ə)l 'vɪkə] - generální vikář

confessor [kən'fesə] - zpovědník

to give away - prozradit, vyzradit

appointment [ə'pɔɪntm(ə)nt] - jmenování

abbot ['æbət] - opat

monastery ['mɒnəst(ə)rɪ] - klášter

against the King's will - proti králově vůli

was tortured to death ['tɔ:tʃəd] - umučen k smrti

to proclaim saint [prə'kleɪm seɪnt] - prohlásit za svatého

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to venerate ['venəreɪt] - uctívat

Estates Theatre - Stavovské divadlo

composer [kəm'pəʊzə] - skladatel

belongings [brɪ'lɒŋɪŋz] - věci

manuscript ['mænuskrɪpt] - rukopis

mill - mlýn

mill wheel - mlýnské kolo

fresco ['freskəʊ] - freska

house-sign - domovní znamení

fiddle, violin ['fɪd(ə)l vaɪə'lɪn] - housle

workshop ['wɜ:kʃɒp] - dílna

coronation jewels [kɔrə'neɪʃ(ə)n 'dʒu:əlz] - korunovační klenoty

reticulated vault [rɪ'tɪkjələɪtɪd vo:lt] - síťová klenba

mosaic [məʊ'zeɪnk] - mozaika, mozaikový

chapel ['tʃæp(ə)l] - kaple

relics ['reliks] - ostatky

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semi-precious stones [semi'preʃəs] - polodrahokamy

monstrance ['mɒnstr(ə)ns] - monstrance (ozdobná schránka na hostie)

to overlook ['əʊvəʊk] - shlížet na

to prophesy ['prɒfɪsaɪ] - předpovědět

sculptor ['skʌlptə] - sochař

Prague's skyline is defined by ['skɑɪlm dɪ'faɪnd] - pro pražské panorama je typický

mirror labyrinth ['mɪrə'læb(ə)rɪnθ] - zrcadlové bludiště

observatory [əb'zə:vət(ə)rɪ] - planetárium, observatoř

black-light performances - černé divadlo

cannot fail to be charmed [tʃɑ:md] - se nechávají okouzlit

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Prague: The Golden City

Art Nouveau style on Old Town Square



Prague has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Europe. With its fine architecture and many sights to see, it now rivals such cities as Paris, London, and Rome.

One of the most visited sites in Prague is Charles Bridge. Built in 1357, it is the oldest bridge in Prague. Some people make a wish when they place their hands on the cross near the statue of John Nepomuk. Maybe some of their wishes come true.

The Old Town Square is certainly a sight to see. The Týn Cathedral and Old Town Hall with its astronomical clock built in 1338, dominate the square which is at the center of the city. It's the place to go to feel the wonderful atmosphere of the city.

In the upper part of Wenceslas Square, one can see the statue of St. Wenceslas on his horse and the four saints of Bohemia (St. Prokop, St. Adalbert, St. Ludmila, and St. Agnes) by Josef Václav Myslbek. It was erected in 1912. It is a very popular meeting place for young and old. At the top of Wenceslas Square is the National Museum.

Designed in the late 19th century, it is host to some fascinating exhibitions.

Some people like to visit the Jewish Cemetery in the historic Old Town. Established in the mid-15th century it served as a burial site till 1787. In the past, Prague



had a sizable Jewish community, some of which are buried there. The irregularly shaped headstones give the visitor a lot to think about.

A visit to Prague would not be complete without a visit to the Lesser Town with many quaint cafés and Kampa, a small island with a fabulous park and a wonderful view of the Vltava River and National Theater.

Prague Castle is the official seat of the President of the Czech Republic, and is also the historical and political center of the city and country. One can visit Vladislav Hall, the Spanish Hall, and the Gothic St. Vitus' Cathedral, the spiritual symbol of the Czech state. It took nearly six centuries to build. Begun in 1344 by Mathias Arras and Petr Parléř upon the site of a 10th-century rotunda, the final phase of construction ended only in the period 1873 - 1929. The coronation jewels are deposited here, too.

Golden Lane near Prague Castle is a narrow street of houses built in the 16th century to house riflemen and craftsmen. Franz Kafka also lived in one of the houses.

Prague, the city of a thousand spires, is a true jewel in the crown of Europe. People come to Prague for the history, the architecture, the atmosphere, and beauty. Oh yes..., they also come for the best beer in the world!

James Branam (USA)

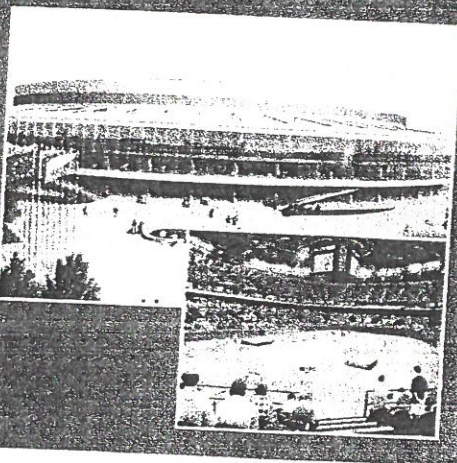
World Ice Hockey in Prague

Starting on April 24, 2004, the world's sports fans will be turning their attention toward Prague. The World Ice Hockey Championships are being held in Prague this year, in one of the most state-of-the-art sports arenas in the world: the Sazka Arena.

The Sazka Arena is the ideal venue for sporting events. The size of the athletic area can be hydraulically adjusted to different sizes and shapes. It can be changed from an ice hockey rink to a concert hall overnight. It has VIP floors and club seats, but most of all, it has some of the finest and most modern technology in the world.

The location of the arena is ideal. It is located in the northeastern part of the city, and can be reached easily by various forms of public transportation. After the Ice Hockey Championships it will be used in a number of ways, including international swimming competitions.

James Branam (USA)



to rival ['raiv(ə)l] - předstihnout, konkurovat
 to erect [i'rekt] - vztyčit (vybudovat)
 to design [di'zain] - navrhnout (zkonstruovat)
 Jewish Cemetery ['dʒu:ɪʃ 'semitri] - Židovský hřbitov
 sizable [saɪzəb(ə)l] - (poměrně) značný
 irregularly shaped headstones [i'regjuləli ʃeɪpt hedstəʊnz] - náhrobní kameny nepravidelných tvarů
 Lesser Town ['lesə taʊn] - Malá Strana
 quaint [kweɪnt] - malebný
 fabulous ['fæbjʊləs] - nádherný
 final phase ['faɪn(ə)l feɪz] - poslední etapa
 to house riflemen and craftsmen [haʊz 'kro:ftsmen] - aby poskytovala přístřeší hradním střelcům a řemeslníkům
 spire [spaɪə] - vysoká věž (nejčastěji kostela)
 will be turning their attention toward ['tɔ:nɪŋ ə'tenʃ(ə)n] - budou obracet pozornost k
 in one of the most state-of-the-art - v jedné z nejmodernějších

venue ['venju:] - místo
 to adjust [ə'dʒʌst] - nastavit

Prague's central position in Europe has made it a trading capital since the earliest times. By the 10th century it was thriving¹ under the Přemyslids.

During the Middle Ages, Prague was at the height of its importance under the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV who started so many buildings and institutions we can see today.

Then in the 16th century the Austrian Habsburgs took over. They ruled for almost 400 years. The most enlightened² of these emperors was Rudolf II, a great patron of art and science. After his death, in 1618, Prague declined³ especially during the Thirty Years War. Revival came in the 18th century when many Baroque buildings were constructed.

A great national revival⁴ came in the 19th century with buildings like the National Theatre, National Museum and Rudolfinum. But true independence only arrived in 1918 lasting until the German occupation of World War Two.

Then came 40 years of Communism ending only in 1989 with the "Velvet Revolution".

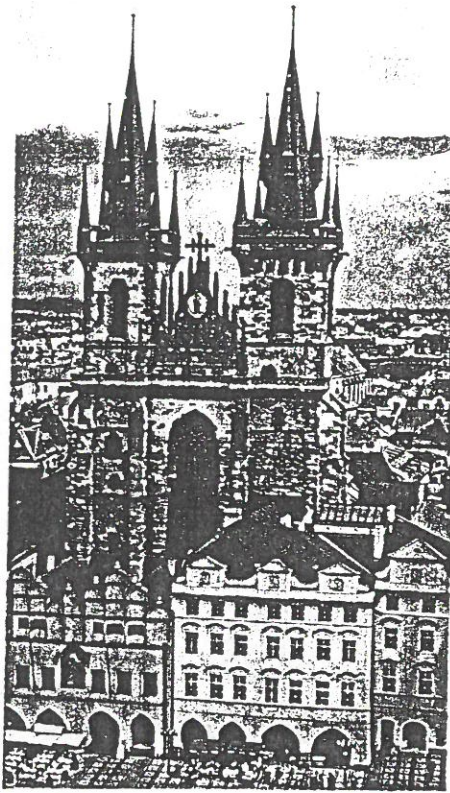
One of the main reasons why Prague is so popular is that it really does look so good. No other European capital has six hundred years of architecture untouched by natural disaster or war.

I've often visited Prague over the last three years but still there's so much of it I don't know. So, all I can say is: here are some of my favourite places around the city...

Most obvious is the Hradčany with Saint Vitus Cathedral and the castle complex. But the smaller buildings here are also beautiful: the Belvedere (Emperor Ferdinand I's summer palace) and its Royal Garden; the Sternberg Palace and its art gallery; the tiny houses of Golden Lane⁵.

South of this is the Malá Strana or Little Quarter. Here, I love walking on Petřín Hill (even if I can't pronounce the name very well) with its colourful gardens, wonderful views from the little Eiffel Tower (Rozhledna), and the Mirror Maze - built for the Great Exhibition of 1891. There are also Baroque churches like St Nicholas - though Baroque is my least favourite architectural style: it's too rich and ornate⁶ for my puritan English taste though many people love it.

Of course, the only way to cross the Vltava is by the Charles Bridge after climbing the Gothic Bridge Tower first (or the other tower on the Old Town side) for a view across. The bridge itself is qu-



◀ The Church of Our Lady before Týn, Old Town Square.



ite an experience with all its different statues plus the collection of tourist souvenir sellers.

Then there is the Old Town with the square being the main focal point. The Old Town Hall is the most appealing building with its astronomical clock built in the 15th century. The view from this tower is one of the best in Prague looking out over different corners of the square.

The square itself is usually lively with open-air cafés around the edge, market stalls in the middle, and crowds of people hanging around the Jan Hus statue group.

A quick walk from here leads to

Wenceslas Square in the New Town with its smart shops and the imposing National Museum with the statue of Wenceslas proudly standing outside. Here are many examples of the other architectural delights visitors enjoy seeing: Art Nouveau (something I like too). Examples of this include the Main Railway Station, the Hotels Central and Evropa, and the imposing Municipal House (contrasting with the nearby Gothic Powder Tower). The new Mucha Museum is also very popular now I imagine.

South of all this, and happily a little freer of tourists, is the Vyšehrad with the twin-towered Neo-Gothic Church of Saints Peter and Paul. Also there's the Slavín Cemetery with its graves of famous Czech artists and politicians like Antonín Dvořák and Jan Neruda.

Back to the north again just beyond the Old Town is Jozefov: the Jewish Quarter with its New Synagogue and nightmarish⁷ cemetery - fascinating for anyone who knows of Rabbi Low and the Golem legend.

Crossing the Vltava again to the north takes you first to Letná - another nice park and the National Technical Museum. And then up to the zoo and the very impressive Troja Palace, built in the late 17th century for Count Sternberg and now beautifully restored.

And so much more ... and so much of it wonderful.

In fact, the only criticism I have of Prague is that the Metro can be quite confusing, prices are often quite high, and there are just too many stupid tourists. Not like me - I work here.

text and slides: Greg Kerry

1prosperující; 2osvietenejším; 3upadla; 4znovuoživenie; 5Zlately uličky; 6bohato zdobený, okázalý; 7strašidelný - děsivý;



The church of Saint Nicholas seen from the Old Town Hall Tower.

PRAGUE

- the seat of the president, government and parliament and the political, cultural and economic centre of the country
- spreads out on the both banks of the Vltava river in the centre of Bohemia
- the whole city consists of 10 administrative districts
- the oldest parts are : The Old Town, The Lesser Town, The New Town. Josefov, Hradčany and V yšehrad
- important people : Charles IV., Rudolph II.(Tycho de Brahe, , Kepler), Franz Kafka etc.

Prague Castle / St. Vitus Cathedral , Vladislav Hall, Spanish Hall, Royal Summer Palace
Belvedere, Golden Lane /
Petřín Hill / Petřín Observation Tower , The Mirror Maze /
The Lesser Town / Kampa, St. Nicholas Church, Charles Bridge /
The Old Town Square / Kinský palace, Old Town Hall, John Huss Monument, The Týn
Church /
Paris Street
Jewish town / the Old – New Synagogue , the Jewish cemetery /
Powder Tower
Municipal House / Prague Spring Music Festival /
The National Theatre
Wenceslas Square / The National Museum, St. Wenceslas Memorial /
Vyšehrad / Slavín Cemetery /
Charles University
The Main Railway Station / Art Nouveau /
Barrandov
Ruzyně Airport

* places of interest, historical monuments, the residence of ..., was established by ..., the crown jewels, an astronomical clock with a circular calendar plaque, in the upper part of the square, dominates the square, at the top of the square , picturesque