

PRAGUE

<L7>Basic Information

Documents Required: United States and EC citizens need only a valid passport for visits of less than three months.

American Consulate: 15 Trsiste; 2/ 536-641.

Currency: The unit of currency is the crown (kc).

Banks: Business hours are 10 A.M.Ð6 P.M. weekdays and 10 A.M.Ð2 P.M. Saturday, but private banks often open and close iregardless of their posted times.

Customs: There is a kc500 limit on items brought out of the country. It is illegal to export any pre-1945 art work from the Czech Republic.

Climate: Summer daytime temperatures in Prague average 73 degrees. During the winter, daytime temperatures average 20 degrees.

Tipping: Waiters and taxi drivers expect 10 percent.

Tourist Information: Prague Information Service has three offices: 1 Staromestske, 2/ 224-452; 20 Na prikope, 2/ 264-020; and Hradcanska metro station, 2/322-917.

Airports: Ruzyng Airport (2/ 387-814) is nine miles west of the city center. Take a taxi into Prague.

Getting Around: Transport tickets are valid on the metro, buses, trams and trolleybuses.

By metro: Three lines labeled A, B, and C serve the city. Metros do not run between midnight and 5 A.M.

By bus, tram, and trolleybus: Buses, which generally do not run in the city center, follow the same routes as trolleybuses. Trams follow similar routes and also access the city center. Night trams take over abbreviated routes at midnight when other services end.

By car: Renting a Skoda, a domestic car, is less than half the cost of an imported model. All major international car rental services have offices at the Ruzyng Airport.

Postal and Telephone Service: The main post office is at 14 Jindriská (off Wenceslas Square). To call the Czech Republic from the United States, dial 011-42, the city code (Prague is 2), and the local number.

Public Holidays: January 1, Easter Monday, May 1, Liberation from Nazi Occupation (May 8), July 5 (St. Cyril and St. Methodius), Martyrdom of Jan Hus (July 6), Independence Day (October 28), and December 24-26.

Electric Current: Plugs are the European standard, with two round prongs. The current is 220V.
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Time Line

Beginnings of the City

first century German tribes in Bohemia.
sixth century Immigration of Western Slavs, ancestors of Czechs and Slovaks.
873 Czechs occupy Prague's Castle Hill.

Middle Ages

921Ð935 Rule of "Good King" Václav Wenceslas.
973 Prague made a bishopric.
1172 First stone bridge is built spanning the Vltava.
1253Ð1278 Austria and Styria are annexed. Bohemia becomes central Europe's dominant power.
1333Ð1378 Bohemia reaches its political and cultural peak under Charles's rule.
1344 Prague made an archbishopric.
1348 Charles is elected Holy Roman Emperor as Charles IV.
1344 Ð1365 St. Vitus's Cathedral, the castle of Vysehrad, and Charles Bridge are built.
1380 Plague devastates Bohemia.

Habsburg Rule

1526 Ludvík, king of Bohemia and Hungary, is killed in battle against Turks. Ferdinand I, the Habsburg ruler of Austria, inherits his titles.
1618 Thirty Years War. Protestant properties are confiscated and turned over to Habsburg loyalists.
1627Ð1918 Vienna rules Bohemia and Moravia as Austrian provinces.
1780Ð1790 Joseph II, an Enlightened reformer, modernizes government, abolishes serfdom, and grants civic equality to Jews.
1787 Mozart's *Don Giovanni* performed in Prague.
1867 Austria grants Hungarian autonomy.

Czechoslovak Republic

1914Ð1918 Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Benes gain support for an independent nation, aided by Woodrow Wilson.
1918 Czechoslovak Republic is proclaimed, with Masaryk as President.
1918Ð1938 Ethnic issues dominate Czechoslovak politics.
1938 Germany annexes Sudetenland; President Benes flees.
1939Ð1945 Czechoslovakia falls to Germany and Hungary.

Cold War

1945 The Prague uprising on May 5 precedes the May 8 liberation by the Soviet army.
1945-46 Allies re-establish Czechoslovakia, with Benes as President.
1948-53 Communists seize power and oust Benes. Leader Klement Gottwald's regime of terror includes the assassination of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk (son of Tomás).

Today

1968 Prague Spring, a program of liberalization led by Alexander Dubcek, ends when the Soviet Union invades the city.
1989 Velvet Revolution. Ten days of peaceful protest led by playwright Vaclav Havel topples the communist government
1993 Separation of Czech Republic and Slovakia.

<L6>Hotels

Gran Hotel Bohemia \$\$\$

4 Královská
2/ 232-3417
Completely renovated, under Austrian management.

Pod Vezi \$\$\$

2 Mostecká
2/537-362
Baroque townhouses at the foot of the Charles Bridge.

Koruna \$\$

16 Opatovická
2/ 9-3933
Clean and simple, near the city's oldest beerhall.

Meteor \$\$

6 Hybernská
2/ 422-0664
An inn since 1307, with a wine tavern and garden courtyard.

Sax \$

3 Jitřnský vrsek
2/538-422
Updated 17th-century building near the American Embassy.

U Klenotníka \$

3 Rytířská
2/211-699
Central location in a former jeweler's building.

Restaurants

Opera Grill \$\$\$

35 Karoliny svtel 

2/ 6-5508

Intimate, with only 24 seats.

Zlat  Hrusky \$\$\$

3 Novy Svet

5/ 3-1133

Traditional Czech cuisine, including deer steaks.

Mecen se \$\$

10 Malostransk 

5/ 3-3881

Wine tavern serving the best steaks in Prague.

Red Hot and Blues \$\$

12 Jakubsk 

2/ 231-4639

Creole cooking in a 500 year-old stable; local jazz.

Radnice \$

2 Mal 

2/ 422-8136

Good food and better beer.

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<L1>Sites

Prague Castle

Prazshrad

Its spires, towers, and Baroque masonry dominate the skyline of Prague. The castle has been a royal residence, cathedral, cemetery for saints, and repository of art. Today, it houses the offices of the Czech president.

St. Vitus's Cathedral

The eastern half of the cathedral belongs to the original phase of building that was abandoned in 1419. Behind the Wenceslas Chapel rest the Crown Jewels of Bohemia.

St. George's Basilica

The oldest stone church in Bohemia (founded 921); the current building dates from 1142.

Charles Bridge

For nearly 500 years it was the only bridge on the Vltava, thus a critical point in central European trade, communication, and invasion routes. It is decorated with Baroque sculpture commissioned in 1683.

Jewish Quarter

This neighborhood is among the oldest survivors of Jewish culture in Europe. Surprisingly, it was the Nazis who turned the ghetto into a cultural monument; the German authorities wanted to preserve it as a scientific museum of the race they expected to annihilate.

Old Jewish Cemetery

For 600 years (until 1784), nearly all of the ghetto's dead were buried in this small space. The oldest tomb belongs to the poet Avigdor Caro, who died in 1439.

Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí)

Staré

The main square of Prague's Old Town has changed little since the late Middle Ages. Most of the houses on the east and south sides were built around 1230.

Tyn Church

Prague's 18-spired Gothic church was begun under Charles IV in 1365; the tower was built almost one hundred years later.

Vysehrad

Facing the city on the right bank of the Vltava, Vysehrad was once a fortress and is now a park commanding a sweeping view of the river and Prague.

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<L2>Museums and Culture

National Gallery Old Bohemian Collection

St. George's Convent

The first convent in Bohemia was established in 973 and now holds the premier collection of pre-19th-century Bohemian art.

National Gallery European Collection

Sternberg Palace

15 Hradcanské

Small in size, but with some of the great pieces of Western painting, including Dürer's *Feast of the Rosary*, Pieter Brueghel's *Haymaking*, and more than a dozen Picasso paintings.

Classical Music

Bertramka

2 Mozartova

5/ 4-3893

Mozart's former home now features chamber concerts.

Rudolfinum

1 Jana Palacha

2/ 489-3352

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performances.

State Opera House

4 Wilsonova

2/ 6-5353

Prague's primary theater for opera.

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<L5>Shopping

Shops are open 10 A.M.Ð6 P.M. weekdays and 10 A.M.Ð2 P.M. Saturday.

Art Galleries

The principal gallery of the Union of Artists is Mřnes, 2 Masarykovo.

Glass and Crystal

Cut glass and crystal have been a Bohemian art form since Venetian masters arrived here in the 14th century. Some of the best cut glass is at Moser, 12 Na příkope.

Flea Markets

The main flea market in the former slaughterhouse at Holesovice is held every Saturday.

Music

Czech classical recordings are of high quality; the CD's are sold at a fraction of Western prices in every souvenir shop and peddler's stand in Prague.

Toys

Czech craftsmen excel in original wooden toys, marionettes, and dolls. Try the small shops on Nerudova and Pohorelec.

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Children

Prague's towers, painted houses, and gargoyles are bound to thrill any child.

Astronomical Clock (Orloj)

Staromestskř nřmest'

Since 1490, the Orloj has drawn crowds for its hourly chimes and the wooden statuettes that enact a medieval morality play. The clock also shows the movement of the moon and sun through the 12 signs of the zodiac.

National Marionette Theater

1 Zatecká
2/ 32-3429

Puppet performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and other classics.

<L3>Night Spots

Fleku

11 Kremencova

The only joint brewery and tavern in Prague that serves its own beer, established in 1499.

Savoy

1 Vitezna

Carved-wood cafŽ (*kavřrna*) that features live jazz; light fare.

Agharta Jazz Center

5 Krakovská

A casual cafŽ.

Bunkr

2 Lodecká

Popular music in a former secret underground bunker.

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<L4>Excursions

CeskŽ Budejovice

87 miles south of Prague

Budvar (Budweiser) beer has been brewed here since 1531.

Karlovy Vary

80 miles west of Prague

Renowned for spas built around its hot springs. Goethe, Beethoven, Karl Marx, Czar Nicholas II, and King Edward VII were all visitors.

Karlstejn Castle

17 miles southwest of Prague

Charles IV built the castle to house the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire. The Great Tower has walls 18 feet thick.

Kutná Hora

42 miles east of Prague

Silver deposits found in the late 13th century brought the town fame. Ore ran out in the 16th century, though, and little has been built in Kutná Hora since. The town is filled with the monuments of its prosperous era.

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<L9>Sunshine Guide To Prague, Czech Republic

SEASONS: Prague has the standard, north-European, four-season year. Spring (mid-April through May) is a season of alternation of warm and wintry weather, with the new sprouts raising hopes. Summer (June through mid-September) brings long days and lush, exuberant growth. Autumn (mid-September through early November) features the slow cessation of plant growth and the first frosts. Winter (early November through the middle of April) holds sway with short cold days, freezing temperatures, and snow and ice. All growth is dormant until spring brings things to life once more.

SUNNIEST MONTHS: May through late September features sunshine on more than half of the daylight hours. This is when you can expect to get the sunniest weather of the year. In general, 42% of the year's daylight hours will be sunny--from a high of 54% in August, to a low of 16% in December.

WARMEST MONTHS: June, July, and August are characterized by mild to warm afternoons that very rarely get hot. The short nights are usually mild to cool, and drop to chilly every once in a while. The hottest temperature of the year will be around 92ø, and will probably occur during a July hot spell.

From late June through early August, many nights will be hot enough that you will sleep better with some sort of room-cooling.

COOLEST MONTHS: From the middle of November through the end of March, you can expect frosty mornings on more than half of the days. From December through February, you should be ready for afternoon temperatures to remain below freezing on one day in three. The coldest temperature of the year will be around 3ø, and will probably occur during a January Arctic outbreak.

Snowfalls are characteristic of Prague winters, but they don't stay on the ground for long in the city center. Only one winter day in four will have snow on the ground past noon. Nevertheless, the ground itself usually remains frozen, and the suburbs will be snow-covered more frequently.

DRIEST MONTHS: The autumn months (and to a lesser extent the spring ones) are generally drier than the rest of the year, but it's difficult to be any more specific than that. Year to year variations are significant. In the long run, some 40% of the year's days will get no measurable precipitation; that is, they will get less than a hundredth of an inch. September and October will have 63% such days, whereas June and July will get only 55%. This is not a very big difference, and in some years it isn't there at all.

A "dry day" in the table, however, is one with less than a tenth of an inch--a more useful measure. It takes at least that much to wet the ground under the trees.

THINGS TO KNOW: A significant portion of the summer rain comes as brief, intense thundershowers, usually in the afternoon and early evening. The rains and snows of the rest of the year tend to be lighter and much more persistent. They result from the same frontal systems that sweep across the rest of Europe. Since frontal storms can arrive at any time of the day or night, these precipitation events show no preference for any particular time of day or night.

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