

## Prague

Prague is the **capital city** of the Czech Republic. It lies in the middle of Bohemia on both banks of the river **Vltava** which is the longest river in the Czech Republic.

It is one of the most beautiful towns in the world and its rich history makes it a popular tourist destination. It is a political, cultural, financial, administrative and social centre. The city has a temperate oceanic climate, with warm summers and chilly winters.

The number of inhabitants is **1.3 million**.

Prague is divided into ten administrative districts - Prague 1-10. Historical center includes the Lesser Town and Old Town.

Prague is also the site of some of the most important offices and institutions of the Czech Republic such as the President of the Czech Republic, the Government and both houses of Parliament, ministries and other national offices, Czech National Bank, Czech Television and other major broadcasters, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

### What other names are used to refer to Prague?

Prague is also called “**Prague of Hundred Spires**”, “**Golden Prague**” or “**The Mother of Cities**”.

Main attractions include the Prague Castle, the Charles Bridge, Old Town Square, the Jewish Quarter, the Lennon Wall or Petřín Hill. Since 1992, the historic centre of Prague has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

### Hradčany and Lesser Town (Malá Strana)

- **Prague Castle** was the seat of Czech kings in the past and nowadays it is the seat of the president.

In the area of Prague Castle, we can find **St. Vitus Cathedral** with **St. Wenceslas Chapel** where **crowning jewels** of Czech kings are housed and the **tombs** of Czech kings are situated underground. The attractive parts of the castle include the wonderful gardens, picture gallery, **St George Monastery**, **Summer Palace** with the **Singing Fountain**. **The Golden Lane** contains lovely little houses where there were the homes of the guards and craftsmen.

- The picturesque **Charles Bridge** (Karlův Most) was built by Charles IV. and is a famous historic bridge that crosses the Vltava river. Its construction started in 1357; it was the only means of crossing the river Vltava until 1841 and the most important connection between Prague Castle and the city's Old Town. The bridge is decorated by **30 statues and statuarys**, most of them of baroque-style.

During the day it is a very busy venue with painters, owners of kiosks and vendors alongside and numerous tourists crossing the bridge. We can buy typical Czech souvenirs there, such as Czech crystal, glass and porcelain, Czech beads and jewellery, puppets and marionettes, wooden toys, traditional handicrafts and gifts, Easter eggs, Czech spa wafers, Becherovka herbal liquor, Christmas decorations.

- **The Baroque Saint Nicholas Church.**
- **Church of Our Lady Victorious and Infant Jesus of Prague.**
- **Petřín Hill** with **Petřín Lookout Tower** and **Mirror Maze: Petřín Tower** - gives the best view of the whole city. It is the copy of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. There is a **mirror maze** on the top of the Petřín Hill.
- **The Franz Kafka Museum.**

### Old Town (Staré Město) and Josefov

- **Old Town Square** (Staroměstské náměstí) with the **Astronomical Clock** (Orloj) on **Old Town City Hall.**
- The **Gothic Church of Our Lady before Týn** (Kostel Matky Boží před Týnem) from the 14<sup>th</sup> century with 80m high towers
- The **Gothic Old New Synagogue** (Staronová Synagoga) of 1270.
- **Old Jewish Cemetery.**
- **Powder Tower** (Prašná brána) is the entrance tower for the **Old Town.**

### New Town (Nové město)

- **Wenceslas Square** is the heart of the city, an important shopping and cultural centre; it contains a huge number of department stores, shops, hotels, restaurants, bars, cafés, theatres, cinemas. **The National Museum** is located on the top of Wenceslas Square where we can find historical as well as biological collections. **St Wenceslas Monument** is also on the top of the square with the statue of St Wenceslas made by J. V. Myslbek. The bottom of the square leads into two major streets, **Národní Street** and **Na Příkopě Street** where pedestrian zone with many shopping possibilities starts.
- **The National Theatre**, a neo-Renaissance building with golden roof, alongside the banks of the Vltava River.
- **The Dancing House** (Fred and Ginger Building).
- **Charles Square**, the largest medieval square in Europe.
- **The Mucha Museum** with the Art Nouveau works of Alfons Mucha.

### Vinohrady and Žižkov

- Jan Žižka large bronze statue.
- **Žižkov Television Tower.**
- **New Jewish Cemetery** in Olšany.

## Other places

- **Vyšehrad Castle** is the oldest seat of Czech princes (legendary princess Libuše and the members of the Přemyslid Dynasty), there is **Vyšehrad cemetery** called **Slavín** where Czech famous people are buried and there are underground casemates. Visitors can see also Prague oldest Rotunda of St. Martin.
- **The Prague Metronome** at Letná Park is a giant, functional metronome that looms over the city.
- **Prague Zoo** in Troja is the seventh-best zoo in the world and shows animals in conditions that are very similar to their natural environment.
- **Industrial Palace, Křižík's Light Fountain, Luna Park Funfair** and **Sea World Aquarium** in Výstaviště compound in Holešovice.
- Letohrádek Hvězda (**Star Villa**) in Liboc, a villa in the shape of a six-pointed star surrounded by a game reserve.
- **Veletržní Palace (The Trade Fair Palace)** with large collection of Czech and international paintings and sculptures by artists such as Mucha, Picasso, Monet or Van Gogh.
- **Anděl** is a busy part of the city with modern architecture and a shopping mall.
- The Nusle Bridge.
- **Strahov Monastery** - an old abbey and monastic library.
- **Lesser Town (Malá Strana)** is the part of the historical centre. There are narrow, crooked streets, beautiful houses, palaces, gardens and numerous beer houses, wine cellars and pubs.

At Malá Strana, Staré Město, Žižkov or Nusle, there are hundreds of restaurants, bars and pubs, especially with good Czech beer. Prague also hosts the Czech Beer Festival; it is the biggest beer festival in the Czech Republic. At the festival, more than 70 brands of Czech beer can be tasted. Prague is the home of number of breweries.

- In the surroundings of Prague, we can find **Karlštejn Castle** which is a large Gothic castle founded by Charles IV. It was the seat of crowning jewels, holy relics and other royal treasures. It is one of the most famous and most frequently visited castles in the Czech Republic.

**Festivals** - There is wide range of festivals in Prague: in spring - people can take part in Prague International Marathon, the Prague Spring Festival, and Witches' Night; in summer - music festivals such as the hip United Islands of Prague and the Tanec Praha - modern dance performances; in autumn - symphonies, operas and balls; in winter - Christmas markets are enchanting.

**Mezi ploty** brings together professional, amateur and mentally or physically disadvantaged artists, dancers and musicians for two days of events and performances in the grounds of the city's main psychiatric hospital.

**Prague Spring** is local music festivals. The festival typically opens with *Má Vlast* (My Country), Smetana's patriotic cycle of symphonic poems, and concludes with Beethoven's Ninth.

**Dance Prague** is the biggest and longest-running dance event in Prague.

**United Islands of Prague** - concerts and beer stands take over the Vltava riverfront; performers include musicians local and global.

### **Shopping possibilities:**

In Prague, there are many different stores and shopping centres. So-called fast food is on every corner (McDonald, KFC, Burger King...). The most visited shopping centres include: Arkády Pankrác, Centrum Chodov, Palladium.

### **Theatres**

Branické, Na Fidlovačce, Na Jezerce, Kolowrat, Pod Palmovkou, Rococo, Semafor or Strašnické Theatre.

**The National Theatre** lies on the bank of the Vltava and is decorated by well-known artists (M. Aleš, F. Ženíšek, V. Hynais, J. V. Myslbek). It belongs to the most important Czech cultural institutions.

### **Means of Transport**

The public transport infrastructure consists of integrated transport system of **Prague Metro, Prague tram system, buses, the Petřín funicular to Petřín Hill and six ferries**. In Prague there are also three **cable cars** - on Petřín Hill, on the hill Mrázovka and the third at the zoo in Troja.

It is also possible to take the **taxi**. The city forms the hub of the Czech railway system, with services to all parts of the Czech Republic and abroad. The railway system links Prague with major European cities. Prague's main international railway station is Hlavní nádraží.

**Václav Havel Airport** is the biggest airport in the Czech Republic and one of the busiest in Central and Eastern Europe. Other airports in Prague include the city's original airport at the Kbely district, which is serviced by the Czech Air Force. The airport also houses the Prague Aviation Museum. The **Letňany airport** is mainly used for private and aero club aviation. Aero Vodochody aircraft factory's used for testing purposes, as well as for aero club aviation.

### **Education**

**Charles University**, founded in 1348, was the first university in Central Europe. **University of Economics** in Prague was awarded the second place among Business Schools in the Post-Communist European countries. Twelve universities and a number of colleges and schools are located in the city, including **public universities**: Charles University Czech Technical University (ČVUT), Institute of Chemical Technology (VŠCHT), University of Economics (VŠE), Czech University of Agriculture (ČZU); **public arts academies, private schools and many international institutions (e.g. British Council), science, research and hi-tech centres**. The region city of Prague is an important centre of research.

## Sport

Prague is the site of many sports events, national stadiums and teams.

- Sparta Prague (UEFA Champions League) - traditional Czech football club.
- Slavia Prague (UEFA Europa League) - traditional Czech football club, **O2 Arena** is its home.
- Dukla Prague, Bohemians 1905, Viktoria Žižkov - football clubs.
- HC Slavia Praha (Champions Hockey League), HC Sparta Praha (Czech Extra League) - ice hockey clubs.
- **Strahov Stadium** - the second-largest stadium in the world.
- Prague International Marathon, ECM Prague Open - Tennis Tournament,...