

PRAGUE

Gigi Griffis

10
LOCALS

**TELL YOU
WHERE TO GO,
WHAT TO EAT, &
HOW TO FIT IN**



Unconventional Travel Guides

PRAGUE

10 Locals Tell You Where to Go, What
to Eat, & How to Fit In



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is for people who want to see another side of Prague.

To stroll past the main attractions, but also find the hidden-away park with the best views of the castle. To discover that the most beautiful time to visit the Charles Bridge is early morning—before the tourist bustle begins. Or to see Prague from a unique perspective on a walking tour led by one of the city’s homeless (for details on this, see page 41).

In other words, this book is for people who want to get under the skin of another culture. Who want to rent apartments and live in local neighborhoods. Who want to eat in tiny restaurants without English menus. Who want to make friends with locals. Who want to deepen their experience of Prague.

Think of this as a supplement to your traditional guidebooks.

Use those for their handy place histories, lists of local hotels (if that’s your style), restaurant pricing charts, and basic language lessons. And then use this to go deeper—to figure out how to find the most authentic neighborhoods, the most delicious restaurants in the city center, and that hidden-away beer garden just outside the city.

Getting excited? Me too. (Just wait till you read some of these interviews!)

Now, a little orientation:

This book is split into 10 interviews with people who live all over Prague. Some were born and raised in the region. Others are expats who have fallen in love with their new city. And all of them love showing travelers the best their city has to offer.

Below each person’s name, you’ll see a short bio designed to help you understand his or her background. If you are passionate about food, look for someone whose short bio includes “foodie” or “chef.” If you’re a culture lover, look for a culture lover. If you live for music, check out our Czech Jazz Expert. And so on and so forth.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Many of the interviewees are also tour guides, artists, business owners, or bloggers. Watch for web addresses under their interviews if you'd like to learn more about their art, blogs, businesses, or tours.

Finally, a note on Czech grammar: Czech place names and street names follow a different capitalization rule than English. So don't be surprised when you see the first word of a proper noun capitalized while the second and third are not. You'll notice this throughout the book and likely on signs and maps once you get to Prague.

Now, then, into the book...

ON TRAVELING LIKE A LOCAL

Like many well-touristed European cities, Prague has two faces.

There's the face that most tourists see, full of busy shopping streets, crowded museums, and well-known monuments and attractions like Prague Castle, the Charles Bridge, and Old Town Square.

Many of these things are worth seeing and experiencing (and many of my interviewees will tell you so); they're world-famous for a reason.

BUT.

They aren't the whole story of Prague.

There's another face, another story—one that the locals live every day—full of friendly pubs where the beer is cheaper than water, magical early-morning walks where you seem to have the city to yourself, and nearby thermal spa towns that feel like fairytale villages.

For me, the goal of any travel is to experience this other side of a city, to slip into the culture, to try to understand it, to feel—even if I am only there for a few days—like I am truly living in that place, experiencing it like a local would.

I'm sure many of you feel the same.

Which is, of course, the whole point of this book.

In over 15 years of short-term international trips and two years of traveling full-time, mostly in Europe, I've come up with a routine that makes me feel more like a local. And the most important thing I've found is simply this: **the best way to live like a local is to ask locals.**

Which is why, for those of us who don't have a local friend to show us around, I've collected these interviews and written this book.

ON TRAVELING LIKE A LOCAL

Before you dive into the interviews, though, here are five more ways to experience Prague (or any city, really) in a fresh, authentic, local-centric way:

1. Travel slowly. Spend some real time in a place. The only way to see all of Prague's hidden corners is to spend some real time exploring the city.

2. Rent apartments, preferably in a neighborhood full of local people. (Not sure how to find the right neighborhood? I've asked locals to tell us in the interviews you'll find in this book. Not sure how to find apartments? My personal starting point is airbnb.com/c/ggriffis.)

3. Shop at fresh markets, small butcher shops, and neighborhood bakeries. This is where you'll find the best food (as opposed to the grocery store, though that can also be a welcome and wonderful adventure).

4. Make friends with people who live there. Ask people about their lives, their thoughts, and their cultures. Expats and locals are both incredibly fascinating and every conversation will teach you a lot.

5. Try to fit in. In Prague, this means greet the shopkeepers, wear comfortable shoes, drink beer, and keep your pace quick.

It is these principles and this type of travel that I've molded the questions in this book around. So, if you, too, want to slow down and experience Prague in a different way, these interviews are for you.

THE INTERVIEWS



Tony Emmerson

Teacher. Music Writer. Czech Jazz Expert.

About Tony

I was born in Derbyshire, England, but moved to London for university and stayed, addicted to big city life. We moved to Prague in 2006 when I got a job as Head of Science in an English-speaking Czech secondary school. As an unashamed former Cold Warrior with an interest in post-Communist Europe, as well as a love of Central European culture, it was an opportunity that I couldn't turn down.

Since moving here, I've become involved with the Czech jazz scene, with my words occasionally turning up in newspapers, CDs, and concert programs, as well as on various websites.

There's little that keeps me in contact with the UK apart from cricket and Radio 4; some habits of a lifetime are destined to remain just that. Gardening, fine dining, and watching ice hockey keep me out of trouble on a day-to-day basis.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

If you are interested in classical music or opera, the State Opera and the National Theatre are essential. It is here that you will see excellent performances at relatively modest prices that are genuine cultural events in the city, rather than just "take the cash and bang it out" recitals for the benefit of tourists.

For jazz, AghARTA and Reduta are both good clubs. At the latter, you can sit in the same seat that Bill Clinton occupied when he visited Prague in 1994 and played a duet with President Havel on saxophone. They are very much listening venues, rather than places to sit and talk with music in the background, so you can see a very high standard of performance.

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For something less music-centric, Old Town is beautiful; it truly deserves its reputation. Always look up because almost every building is a work of art. If you shuffle around with your nose in a guidebook or your smartphone, you'll miss the best bits. A walk by the river is also strongly recommended.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Jazz fans who visit regularly should focus on artists rather than venues in order to see some of the best performers in Europe doing their thing in intimate surroundings.

The leading pianist, Emil Viklický, performs around the world, but he also frequently plays in Prague clubs. He has collaborated with Bill Frisell, Bobby Wellins, Marcus Printup, George Mraz, and many others, receiving critical acclaim and a loyal following. His modern jazz interpretations of Moravian folk songs are as beautiful as they are skillful and seeing Emil play them in a small Prague club has to be the quintessential Prague jazz experience.

Luboš Andršt is the Czech Republic's very own guitar legend. Writer, arranger, front man, respected collaborator, he doesn't say much, but his fingers do the talking. He has two regular bands at the moment. Luboš Andršt Group is a jazz outfit, while the Luboš Andršt Blues Band is reminiscent of the 1960s British electric blues sound.

They call František Uhlíř "The Paganini of the Bass" and the title suits him well. He is another of the master class of Czech musicians who play internationally but still can be seen in Prague clubs. He wrings every drop of melody out of his instrument, innovating and improvising, making it sing like few others can. His own band, František Uhlíř Team, plays both his compositions and jazz standards with humor panache.

As for hidden gems outside the music scene, if you are looking for somewhere to have reasonably priced but sumptuously surrounded drinks, the Kavárna Lucerna, just off Wenceslas Square, is all 1920s glory and style.

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If you're up at the castle, U Černého Vola (located at *Loretánské náměstí 107/1*) is a must-visit pub. It's a local watering hole that tourists visit, rather than the other way around, so low-key and polite is the way to be if you don't want to stand out and be scowled at.

Where to Stay

Karlín was a pretty grim area until the 2002 floods, when it was rebuilt and is now a thriving and forward-looking district that gives a taste of non-tourist Prague without being too far from the center. The same goes for *Smíchov*; it is very authentically Prague.

"In a country full of pretty towns, Český Krumlov stands out as the fairest of them all."

Photo by Giannis Pitarokilis on Flickr.



Day Trips

In a country full of pretty towns, Český Krumlov stands out as the fairest of them all, remaining remarkably unspoiled despite being on the UNESCO hit-list of places to stand around in the streets looking confused and taking photographs.

The spa town of Karlovy Vary is also worth a visit, especially if you are here during the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. Whether drinking the water is actually beneficial is up for debate, but it tastes bad enough to be healthy. You can also go walking in the nearby forests.

If mountains are your thing, the resort town of Špindlerův Mlýn is good year-round; you can walk in the summer months and ski in the winter.

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What to Eat

For typical Czech food, I recommend *svíčková* (beef in a creamy sauce traditionally served with dumplings). It has a unique taste and is, perhaps, the signature dish of authentic Czech cuisine.

There are also some superb soups easily available, with two of the most interesting and flavorful being garlic soup and *kulajda*, which is a dill soup with potatoes, mushrooms, and vinegar.

Obviously, the country is known for beer and over the last few years the number of smaller brewers and outlets willing to serve their products has remained healthily high. Pilsner Urquell is perfectly drinkable, but it is not the jewel in the crown of Czech beers, whatever the marketing men say. Look out for Bernard, Svijany, and Kocour.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

Over the last few years, the food scene has exploded. People are now interested in buying from local producers and eating fresh and interesting food. New restaurants are springing up all the time, seemingly on a weekly basis, so it would be useless to make any lasting recommendations; checking Twitter or searching for blogs will give you up-to-date views from Prague residents.

Of the established places, Bellevue (at *Smetanovo nábřeží 329/18*) is one of the finest restaurants I've ever visited, although its sister restaurant, Mlýnec (at *Novotného lávka 199/9*), not only serves great food, but also offers spectacular views of Charles Bridge. Both of these restaurants specialize in adapting traditional Czech cooking in a modern and interesting way.

If you want something simpler, the signature steak and chips at Café de Paris (at *Maltézské náměstí 537/4*) are hard to beat.

How to Fit In

I hate generalizing about the Czechs (I certainly don't fit in with many perceptions of the British), but a couple things do stand out. People

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tend to be quiet and reserved when going about their daily life, riding the metro, queuing in a shop, etc., so booming foreign voices full of amazing insights from those who have just landed are out of place and intrusive. This is doubly so if the booming voices are booming about beer and girls; both are undoubtedly pleasing to the senses, but it is hideously demeaning to bring a nation's culture down to the basest of instincts.

Comments about how some things are better "back home" will go down as well as they would in your home town if a Czech was saying it, although it is amazing how often they are heard.

Finally, never assume that people will speak English, but also never assume that they don't understand it. If you wouldn't say it publicly in an English-speaking country, then don't say it here. Many Czechs have an open and international mindset and going about your business with basic politeness is all that is usually asked of the visitor. Learning a few simple Czech phrases, even just please and thank you, is also appreciated.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Definitely by the river. It goes through the heart of the city and, looking up, there are spectacular views of the castle area.

If you want a decent snap of Charles Bridge without an army of tourists cluttering it up, just after dawn is the time to do it. It is also wonderfully atmospheric up at the castle at that time of day, when you can be alone with just the buildings and the sound of your own footsteps for company.

Why Visit Prague?

It has the vibrancy and cultural life of a capital city, but on a smaller scale than New York or London. It is very pretty; that is a reoccurring theme when people talk about Prague, but it is true. Its 20th-century history is also very important—a history of foreign control, state oppression, and ultimately liberation and independence. Those

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pictures of tanks in the street will look different when you've walked those streets yourself.

Prague Inspirations

I'm of the age that I remember it being in the half of Europe that the other half traded off and stopped caring about. The price of liberty for some was the loss of liberty for others. Being here now is a reminder that things can change, that oppression can be overcome, and, while the model of liberal European democracy is not without its flaws, it is something we are lucky to have because the alternatives are bloody awful.

Find Tony at twitter.com/tonyemerson and praguejazz.blogspot.co.uk.

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Janice Woodard

English Teacher. Walker. Mother of Three.

About Janice

I am originally from California, but I've lived in Prague for almost 20 years. I am in my late 50s with two adult sons and a 13-year-old daughter. I teach English to adults and coach the girls' tennis teams at the International School of Prague. In my free time, I play tennis, travel, and enjoy this spectacular city.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

When I have visitors who don't have a lot of time, I take them on this walk:

We start at *Mustek* metro stop with dinner at U Provaznice—a typical Czech place with large portions and good prices at *Provaznická 3*.

From there, we walk to Old Town Square, then across Charles Bridge to *Malá Strana* (the lesser town), past the peeing statues near the Hergetova Cihelna restaurant, past the little swan beach with its great view of Charles Bridge, and then to the *Malostranská* metro station. This walk provides an excellent overview of Prague.

When there's more time, I recommend that people tour the Prague Castle area. Be sure to visit the cathedral and the charming little *Zlatá ulička* (Golden Street). The *Josefov* area, which includes the Jewish cemetery, museums, and synagogues, is also interesting. Wander around *Malá Strana*, which is very picturesque and historical.

Another worthwhile trip is the quick metro ride out to the *Vysehrad* historical fort, Prague's first seat of power; you can walk through the old fortress area, the church, and the cemetery (many notables are buried there), then down the steep stairs to the river, feeding the swans as you walk back to the center of town.

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Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

I think *Vysehrad*, as described above, is a bit of a hidden gem.

After that visit, walk up Petrin Hill and climb the “little Eiffel Tower” for a spectacular view of Prague.

Then visit Letna Park and the beer gardens for another great view. And rent a paddleboat near Charles Bridge for a little exercise and a refreshing view of the sights.

Where to Stay

Staromesta (Old Town) or *Malá Strana* (little/lesser town).

Day Trips

I'd say the top four are Karlštejn Castle, Český Krumlov, Kutná Hora (with its cathedral and nearby “bone church”), and the classic spa town of Karlovy Vary (the old Karlsbad).

What to Eat

Start with roast duck with two kinds of cabbage and three kinds of dumplings. Next, try *svíčková* (beef sirloin with a special vegetable-based sauce served with cranberry sauce and dumplings), which is probably the most classic Czech dish. Beef *goulash* served with bread dumplings is also a favorite.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

My favorites are U Provaznice (as mentioned above) for Czech food in a central location, Hergetova Cihelna (at *Cihelná 2b*) for international food at decent prices with great view of Charles Bridge, and Grosseto Marina (at *Alšovo nábřeží*, right on the river) for good Italian food, okay prices, and great view.

How to Fit In

Some nationalities (Americans? Italians? Brits on stag weekends?) are known for being way too loud. Also, when you enter a shop or restaurant, be sure to immediately say *dobry den* (good day) to the staff; not to do so is considered rude.

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How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Try to find a local pub out of the central tourist area. Or attend a live sports match (ice hockey, soccer, tennis) and chat with the local fans.

Best Places to Take a Photo

It's hard *not* to be in the perfect place for a photo. Prague is absolutely breathtaking throughout the center or from view areas like Petrin Hill, Swan Beach, or Letna Park.

Why Visit Prague?

It's stunningly picturesque and storybook charming. When you walk across Charles Bridge on a warm summer evening and pause to soak up the atmosphere and the incredible beauty...well, it still takes my breath away, even after 20 years here.

“Walk across Charles Bridge on a warm summer evening & pause to soak up the atmosphere.”

Photo by Pedro Szekely on Flickr.



Final Notes & Other Tips

If you're traveling with children, the zoo in Prague's seventh district is very enjoyable. Another great kid-friendly option is the Mirror Maze near the little Eiffel Tower on Petrin Hill.

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Max Bahnson

Beer Writer + Expert. Guidebook Author. Linguist.

About Max

I'm from Buenos Aires, Argentina and moved to the Czech Republic in 2002. I live with my family in a village a few kilometers northwest of Prague and work as a freelance translator, beer writer, and language teacher. When I'm not working, I like spending time with my family, reading, and going to the pub (of course).

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

Walk. Follow your feet and visit some of the old-school pubs. There are a number of them in the center that cater mostly to locals, but where travelers are also welcome.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Zlý Časy (address: Čestmírova 390/5) and Kulový Blesk (address: Sokolská 13) are my two favorite pubs. The former is in Nusle—a few minutes by tram from the center—and the latter is around the corner from the *I.P. Pavlová* metro station, right outside the city center. They have a neighborhood pub vibe, but with a wide selection of beers from Czech breweries large and small (traditionally, pubs here stock only one or two brands, so the variety at these places is something special).

První Pivní Tramvaj, at *Na Chodovci 1a*, is another gem.

The neighborhoods of Prague are full of pubs, cafes, bars, and restaurants. Finding them is just a matter of wandering around and walking into a place that looks inviting from the outside (outside the city center you won't find tourist traps—or hardly any). It is something I love doing whenever I can.

Where to Stay

Žižkov, Vinohrady, Vršovice, and Bubeneč/Dejvice are perhaps my favorite neighborhoods. All are just outside the center, walking

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distance (if you like walking), and well connected by public transport. And each has its own character and plenty of nice places to go for a drink.

Day Trips

If you prefer towns, Pilsen or Hrádec Králove are really nice, easily reachable, and almost free of tourists. Mělník is also a nice place.

For those who love nature, much of the northwest of Prague, right outside the city, is covered in forests. One nice trip in that direction would be to take the train to Roztoky, then walk up Tiché Údolí (literally "silent valley"). If you do it during the week, you'll probably be alone there. Walk to the village of Únětice, get a quick bite to eat at U Lasiku, and then go to the other end of the village to eat and drink at the local brewery. There are also a number of castles and palaces very near the city that do not attract as many foreign tourists as Karlštejn and Konopiště, but are still worth a visit.

What to Eat

Beer snacks are something nobody should miss. Start with *nákladný hermelín* (brie-like cheese pickled in oil, onions, and spices), *utopenec* (pickled sausage), smoked meats, and *tatarský biftek* (steak tartare, which is traditionally served unmixed and with fried rye bread that you rub with garlic).

Soups are a staple and can be very good, too.

For hungrier people, you'll find *goulash* (a type of beef stew) everywhere, but you also shouldn't miss *vepřo-knedlo-zelo* (roasted pork, dumplings, and braised cabbage) and *svíčková na smetaně* (roasted beef in cream sauce made with root vegetables that were part of the roast and the marinade of the beef).

I think my favorite of all is roasted duck with cabbage and dumplings; you can't go wrong with that.

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(And I could go on and on... game meats, fruit dumplings, etc.)

All of it, of course, should be washed down with beer. My favorites are from Únětický Pivovar, Kout na Šumavě, and Břevnovský Klášterní Pivovar, among others. That said, it's not so much about the brands; as the Czechs say, "*pivo vaří sládek, ale dělá ho hospodský*" (beer is brewed by the brewer, but it's made by the pub owner). It's all about how well the beer is kept and served, including the taps. There are otherwise mediocre beers that can be elevated to new levels when in good hands and great beers that can be ruined by people who don't give them the respect they deserve.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

I think we would have to divide the bars into three categories: old school, new school, and brewpubs.

Old school favorites include U Černého Vola (at *Loretánské náměstí 107/1*), Klášterní Pivnice Šumavan (at *Ovenecká 15*), and Pivnice Ferdinand (at *Bulharská 734/28*).

For new school greats, try Zlý Časy (at *Čestmírova 390/5*), Kulovy Blesk (which also has great food) at *Sokolská 13*, and Bar Na Palmě (at *Na žertvách 877/32*).

My brewpub picks include Pivovar U Bulovky (at *Bulovka 373/17*), Pivovar U Tří Růží (at *Husova 232/10*), and Únětický Pivovar (at *Rýznerova 19-Únětice*), though that's not a brewpub proper.

For restaurants, I like U Slovanské Lipy (at *Koněvova 288/1*), Nota Bene (at *Mikovcova 4*), and Klášterní Šenk (at *Markétská 1/28*). All of them, besides great food and very good value, have very good beers.

How to Fit In

Greet people when you come into shops or meet on the street. *Dobrý den* means good day; I promise, the basics of the language aren't that hard.

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When you take photos with a flash, it annoys the hell out of everyone in the pub. It's better to skip the photos; your memories of the moment will be better than any Instagram.

Also, don't move tables or chairs without asking.

Another thing that I know bothers some pub owners are tourists that order a small beer or a bottle of mineral water and sit there for hours without ordering anything else. I can understand why people do that. You're tired and want to take a break to rest your feet, check out your photos, and write a postcard. Fair enough. But I can also see why owners don't like it, especially if the place is busy. Cafés are better if you want to sit and laze; most places won't mind if you sit there for an hour and only order a cup of tea.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Going to neighborhood pubs, bars, or cafés that attract a younger crowd is a good way to start, mainly because younger people are more likely to speak English.

“Going to neighborhood pubs that attract a younger crowd is a good way to meet locals.”

Photo by Blondin Rikard on Flickr.



I speak Czech fluently and often start to talk to people at pubs, and have made a few good friends that way, but that wouldn't have happened if I didn't speak the language.

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Best Places to Take a Photo

Prague is full of beautiful places and buildings with amazing details—and not only in the center. But if I had to choose one, I'd go wander the hills that surround the city center.

Why Visit Prague?

The atmosphere. It's impossible to describe with words, but if you go to the Old Town or *Malá Strana* very early in the morning, before the tour groups descend with their umbrellas, you'll know what I mean.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Don't forget that the Czech Republic is a lot more than just Prague, Karlový Vary, and Krumlov. It's a really gorgeous country with loads to offer, especially if you are a bit adventurous. Widen your itinerary and you won't be disappointed.

Find Max at pivni-filosof.com.

THE INTERVIEWS



Mirka Charlotte Kostelkova

Foodie. Hiker. Prague Manager at Eating Prague Tours.

About Mirka

My name is Mirka and I was born here in Prague. I traveled for 11 years, living mainly in Paris, Uganda, Madagascar, and Hong Kong. Now, I am back in Prague working as Prague Operations Manager for Eating Prague Tours—a Czech food tour company dedicated to giving people a taste of local life and a unique culinary experience through Prague’s cuisine and culture in a non-touristy way.

We work closely with our parent company, Eating Europe Food Tours, and our sister companies in Rome, London, and Amsterdam.

I love traveling and food (from cooking it to discovering and trying new restaurants to tasting new dishes from different parts of the world) and I think these two things go really nicely together.

When not eating or traveling, you can probably find me hiking and relaxing in a peaceful natural setting in one of the hidden Prague gardens or the Czech countryside.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

The Old Town Square is located at the center of Prague’s medieval Old Town. Both tourists and locals meet up in this gorgeous open area after walking through the small and winding cobblestone streets of the city. It can get pretty crowded, but that’s only because it’s so beautiful and worth seeing.

In the square, you’ll find the Old Town Hall, built in 1338 and paid for by the duty levied on wine consumption. The famous Astronomical Clock is also here. Every hour, just before the hour, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., the skeleton on the right opens the clock doors by pulling on a string, while looking at the hourglass in his other hand. Then, the

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central windows open and the 12 apostles march across the clock. A cock crows to mark the end of the procession. The clock tower also features a calendar painted by famous Czech painter, Josef Manes.

Charles Bridge—originally known as Stone Bridge—is a historic bridge that crosses the famous Vltava River. Until 1841, it was the only way across the river, connecting Prague Castle to the Old Town and the surrounding areas. It is adorned with 30 statues of saints and lined with beautiful old-fashioned lanterns.

The Charles Bridge is a favorite location for artists, who set up their canvases and expositions along the side of the bridge for locals and tourists to admire. Beware of the bridge in the middle of the day, though, as it is packed with tourists taking pictures from all angles.

Malá Strana (lesser town) is adjacent to the Prague Castle area and connected to the Old Town by the Charles Bridge. In the Middle Ages, German citizens were concentrated in this part of the city, which is home to a number of noble palaces.

Prague Castle is the ancient symbol of the Czech lands, ancient residence of Czech kings, current seat of the president, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, it is the largest coherent castle complex in the world, with an area of almost 70,000 square meters, including several beautiful gardens and an amazing cathedral. There's no need to buy tickets and visit the interior. Instead, spend some time wandering around outside the castle and in the narrow cobblestone streets of the *Hradčany* and *Nový Svět* (new world) neighborhood, with its hidden stairs and old lanterns (best at twilight or evening).

The Jewish Quarter was born in the 13th century when the Jews in Prague were forced to move out of their homes and into one restricted neighborhood; it later became known as Prague's Jewish Ghetto. It is said to be the best preserved one in all of Europe. Six synagogues exist, including the Old-New Synagogue, the Spanish Synagogue, and the Jubilee (Jerusalem) Synagogue, as well as the

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Jewish Town Hall and the Old Jewish Cemetery, considered the most noteworthy in Europe.

The Petrin Watchtower, found in the lovely Petrin Park, is sometimes referred to as “the little Eiffel Tower.” The tower offers a stunning view of Prague and a considerable portion of the Czech Republic. When visibility is good, you can spot the highest summit in the country (*Snezka*) from the top.

To access the tower, take the funicular (with a single adult ticket) or go by foot (for free) to the top of the park. On foot, this takes about 30 minutes and you should be careful in the winter months, as the paths get quite slippery. Once you get to the top of the park and the base of the tower, if you’re up for more walking, get a ticket (about \$2) and head up the 299 stairs to a view that is definitely worth the effort!

A few steps from the watchtower, there is a mirror maze with a “hall of laughter,” a room full of weirdly shaped mirrors that make you look strange and inspire a lot of giggles.

Prague also has numerous beautiful parks and gardens, most of which are free to visit. These include Wallenstein Gardens, Prague Castle Gardens, Petrin Park, Letna Park (which offers a beautiful view of the city and used to house the biggest statue of Stalin in Europe, which once stood on what is now a huge metronome visible from the city center), and Kampa (which is a very pretty island found in the Vltava River in central Prague’s *Malá Strana* area, with a great view of the Charles Bridge).

Kampa is separated from *Malá Strana* by a small artificial canal called The Devil’s Stream (stories say it was named after a sharp-tongued woman who lived in a local home called The Seven Devils).

Gardens are usually open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

The Lennon Wall is a colorful, gritty, historic symbol of freedom and rebellion against the communist regime in the 1980s. Don't miss the love locks and the water goblin sitting on the mill wheel along the way.

“The Lennon Wall is a colorful, gritty, historic symbol of freedom and rebellion.”

Photo by Erik Hagreis on Flickr.



Vysehrad is the second castle in Prague (or, really, not a castle, but the ramparts of a historical fort in a big park, a basilica, and an 11th-century rotunda, as well as a cemetery with the remains of many famous Czechs). Local legend holds that *Vysehrad* was the location of the first settlement that later became Prague.

On a beautiful day, grab a beer with the locals in the garden (e.g. *Riegrovy Sady* or *Letenské Sady* (*sady* is park in Czech) and stay for the views.

For a whirlwind tour from the *Vinohrady* neighborhood all the way up to the Prague castle, ride tram 22 (you can buy a ticket at the yellow ticket vending machines, which accept coins only).

Another wonderful thing to do is wander through the districts—*Karlín*, *Vinohrady*, *Letná*, or *Holešovice*) and get lost in the myriad of local cafés, parks, and shops. Or visit an outdoor farmer's market and sample all sorts of Czech goodies. You'll find them scattered throughout the city Monday - Saturday from April to October.

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Where to Stay

I recommend the center (Old/New Town, *Malá Strana*, or *Hradčany*, which is the Prague Castle area), *Letná*, *Holešovice*, *Vinohrady*, *Dejvice*, and *Florenc/Karlín*.

Day Trips

Charles IV's gothic castle, *Karlštejn*, is one of the most popular castles in the country and the closest one to Prague (40 minutes by train).

Kutná Hora (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) with its ossuary (also known as the bone church) and St. Barbara's Church (one of the most famous gothic churches in central Europe) is amazing.

Český Krumlov (another UNESCO World Heritage Site) is a beautiful and culturally rich city in South Bohemia dating back to the Middle Ages and featuring a 13th-century castle and castle theater on the banks of the Vltava River.

For outdoor enthusiasts, hiking among beautiful sandstone rock formations at České Švýcarsko (literally translated as "bohemian Switzerland"), Hřensko, and Pravčická Brána is a must. Don't miss the idyllic boat trip past the gorges.

Finally, there's Bezděz—the monumental, gothic knight's castle with sweeping views, a former monastery, and a romantic setting that used to attract the most famous country poets. There are great walks in the neighboring countryside (I'm particularly fond of Nedvězí, with its panoramic view).

What to Eat

Start with open-face sandwiches (this has been the cornerstone of Czech cuisine for 100 years). Try the traditional ones at Deli Jan Paukert (at *Narodni 981/17*) and the awesome modern version at the Bistro Sisters (at *Dlouha 39*).

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Then try the *Přeštice* pork sausage—an exceptionally tender and juicy pork from a local heritage breed and one of the finest smoked meats in Prague. Other fine smoked meats include an amazing Czech meatloaf and Prague ham, which can be tasted at the butcher shop Nase Maso at *Dlouha 39*.

Next, enjoy the traditional South Bohemian sauerkraut soup. My favorite one is in the Zvonice Restaurant (at *Jindřišská věž*). It's a unique setting in a perfectly preserved 600-year-old bell tower that looks down over the rooftops of Prague. The 10th oldest bell hangs between the two floors of the restaurant and views include Prague's 103 spires.

Arguably the most traditional of all the Czech dishes is *svickova* (braised beef sirloin in creamy sauce, cranberry compote, and Czech bread dumplings). The best in Prague can be tasted at Cafe Imperial (at *Na Poříčí 15*)—one of Prague's big historic Habsburg-era cafes, a national monument, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a hot spot for gorgeous ceiling mosaics and interior design (don't miss the golden swans in the bathroom). It's also famous for being the site of the "doughnut wars" (e.g. in the past, you could buy a plate of stale doughnuts and throw them at people). And the meat here is so tender that you barely need a knife to cut it.

Also traditional and popular are our duck dishes. I particularly recommend those served at U Modré Kachničky (with two locations at *Michalska 16* and *Nebovidska 6*), whose bourgeois saloon ambience brings the atmosphere of Prague's 1920s and 1930s back to life.

Hořické trubičky (rolled wafers filled with freshly made whipped cream and served with a glass of a European-style dark hot chocolate) are a fabulous Czech dessert and Napoleon's favorite treat. This dessert is so traditional that it's on the EU list of foods with protected geographical indication (PGI), which means that at least one of the stages of production, processing, or preparation has to take place in the indicated area (in this case: the town of Horice).

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The only place in Prague where you can get these rolls is the family-run Choco Café U Červené Židle, with two locations at *Liliová 250/4* and *Klimentska 2067/34* (keep in mind, though, that the second location is closed in the summer). The cafe serves 50 different flavors of European-style hot chocolate and is a former postcard museum with antique postcards (from the early 20th century) on the walls.

Another typical dessert is apple strudel. It's on the menu at most places, but recipes vary. My personal favorite is the strudel at Galerie Le Court (at *Hastalska 1*), with its quaint green hidden courtyard café. To get to the courtyard, pass the ancient mailboxes on your right and keep walking till you see tables and chairs.

While you're here, you should also try some basic *koláče*—round, sweet baked pastries with fillings like poppy seed, sweet cottage cheese, plum jam, etc.—or *buchty* (sweet buns with similar fillings).

Finally (and of course), you need to try our beer. We've got the largest beer consumption of any country in the world. We were also the first country to brew Pilsner and Budweiser, to have a beer-brewing textbook, and to build a beer museum. Beer is among the cheapest drinks on the menu in every bar and restaurant.

For a wide selection of beers, visit *Zlý Časy* (at *Čestmírova 390/5*) or *Restaurace Jáma* (at *Vjámě 1671/7*), with their six small beer testers.

Our Czech coke-like drink is called *Kofola* and can be found on tap in many places.

And unique and awesome dark beer ice cream is served in the best Czech meat restaurant: *Čestr* (at *Legerova 75/57*).

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

For beer, try *Zlý Časy* (address: *Čestmírova 390/5*)—a beer bar with 48 Czech and Moravian beers on tap, steaks, and outdoor seating (fully non-smoking).

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For wine (including a good Czech selection), go to Vinograf (at *Senovážné náměstí 23* and *Míšeňská 68/8*). Try a good Moravian wine recommended by the staff there. I also recommend Veltlin at *Křížkova 488/115* in the *Karlin* neighborhood.

For drinks with a view in the summertime, the quaint rooftop terrace at Sluneční Terasa T-Anker can't be beat. To get there, you'll need to go to the department store Kotva at *Náměstí republiky 656/8* and head to the 5th floor (use either the separate entrance and lift directly to the 5th floor or enter the department store and head on up). For reservations, call +420 722 445 474

For the best Czech meats, traditional dishes, dark beer ice cream, and wonderful stuffed dough buns (with poppy seed or rum-flavored mousse filling), go to Cěstr (at *Legerova 75/57*). For reservations, call +420 222 727 851.

Ranked among the five best burger joints in Europe (and the best in Prague), The Dish, at *Rimska 29* is best for its smoked chili mayonnaise and the homemade ice cream by Tři Kopečky. Avoid peak hours. For reservations, call +420 222 511 032.

Finally, if you're interested in something different, Sansho (at *Petrská 25*) features high quality Czech-Asian fusion food. For reservations (which are recommended), call + 420 222 317 425.

How to Fit In

When riding public transportation, always offer up your seat for an elderly person or a mother with children (that goes for pregnant women, as well). Many times, they'll decline the offer, but it's an important gesture in our culture.

Also, loud boisterous chatting may draw glances (possibly even sneers) when not at rowdy places. While we aren't necessarily a quiet culture (we really like to talk!), we will notice overpowering voices (and probably not like it much).

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Best Places to Take a Photo

The classic ones would be from Charles Bridge, Kampa Island, or the Prague Castle area.

A few other favorites of mine include: atop *Vyšehrad* fort, where you can walk along the old historic wall and capture 360-degree views of the city and beyond; Letna Park, where you can snap sweeping city shots while having a beer and sausage in the garden or strolling around the park's paths; and Lennon Wall, whose colorful graffiti makes everyone look cool against it.

"The classic photos would be Charles Bridge, Kampa Island, or Prague Castle."

Photo by charley1965 on Flickr.



Why Visit Prague?

Prague emanates magic and mystery and offers a mix of medieval and contemporary architecture, modern streets and old cobbled lanes, communist-era grey and colorful graffiti, strong local tradition and cosmopolitan influence. There is something special and real about Prague.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Prague has incredible layers and depth. It's willing to share; you've just got to let it. And once you do, as Franz Kafka said, "Prague doesn't let go. This little mother has claws."

Find Mirka at eatingpraguetours.com.

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Kristýna Černilová

Hotel Management Student. Beer Enthusiast. Wanderer.

About Kristýna

I am Kristýna and I am 22 years old. I was born in beautiful Prague and have lived there for 21 years. A year ago, I moved to Germany to see the world bit differently and to take inventory of what's important in my life. Since then, I've realized that my heart belongs to Prague.

I used to study chemistry in Prague, but then I went to Germany and started working hotel reception in Bavaria. I love it. So, I am going back home this September to study Tourism Management and work in a hotel.

When I have free time, I love traveling, playing tennis, or just hanging out with friends.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

You definitely have to see the Prague Castle, the St. Vitus Cathedral (which is just breathtaking), and the Golden Lane (11 historic houses in the castle complex). While visiting the castle, spend some time looking out over the city. From that vantage point, you'll understand why is Prague called "the city of a hundred spires."

After visiting the castle, walk down to Nerudova Street, pass through Malostranská Square, and continue onto the Charles Bridge. Charles Bridge is almost always overcrowded, but it is iconic. The wonderful view of the city and the castle is worth being a little crowded. And Charles Bridge in the evening? All I can say is wow.

After you cross Charles Bridge, you will come to the *Staroměstské náměstí* (old town square) with its typical, famous astronomical clock. Be there on time! There is a show featuring the 12 apostles every hour. You'll be amazed at how many centuries this still-working clock has weathered (it was installed in 1410).

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Other places you should visit include Pařížská Street (the most expensive street in Prague), *Rudolfinum* (the concert hall), the Old-New Synagogue, and *Národní divadlo* (the national theater).

If you want to go shopping at shops with more reasonable prices, go to Wenceslas Square. Wenceslas Square ends with the *Národní muzeum* (national museum). If you look carefully, you can still see the damaged parts of the museum from WWII.

Finally, definitely take a walk along the Moldau (Vltava) River, try the best beer in the world (Pilsner Urquell), and enjoy the full beauty of the city spread around you.

"Petřín Hill is the perfect place to say 'I love you.'"

Photo by Davis Staedtler on Flickr.



Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

I love walking on Kampa Island or just hanging out in the hidden streets near the Prague Castle. *Vyšehrad* (a 10th-century historical fort on the river) is also one of my favorites. And, for those who are in love, the Petřín Hill is a perfect place to say "I love you."

Where to Stay

The best places are, of course, in the center: the lesser town or the Old Town. The more hidden your hotel/apartment is, the more you will love it!

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Day Trips

The Czech Republic is a really small country with a lovely landscape. We do not have any high mountains or huge cities. But you will always find something interesting.

One of my favorite cities is Pilsen, where you'll find the best beer in the world (just an hour from Prague by car). Go to visit the brewery and taste the beer.

Another must-visit is the little city of Český Krumlov. It's a small city with hidden streets, a river, a castle, and an amazing moveable theater!

After that, try Telč (a small, pretty town with a center that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Holašovice (another World Heritage Site), Zámek Lednice (an ornate and beautiful castle), and Statní Zámek Hluboká (a fairytale castle).

What to Eat

For me, the most typical dish is *svíčková na smetaně* (beef sirloin in cream sauce with bread dumplings). Then, of course, *Vepřo-knedlo-zelo* (roast pork with dumplings and sauerkraut).

For sweets, try *trdelník* (a grilled pastry with sugar and walnuts on top). You will find them all over the city.

If you are in the Czech Republic, no matter where, you have to taste our beer. Try Pilsen Urguell, Kozel, and Staropramen to start (and keep going after that).

The other typical alcohol drink here is *Becherovka* (herbal bitters); drink it as a shot or mixed with tonic. It's just amazing!

And for those who do not or cannot drink alcohol, there is a nice lemonade called Kofola.

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Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

One of my personal favorites is The Pub Praha, at *Veleslavínova 3*, where you can get a really good meal and *you can make your own beer right at your table*. There are often beer drinking competitions between tables and cities. It's a fun place.

A second interesting place is the Výtopna, at *Václavské náměstí 802/56*, where a little train brings the beer right to your table. It is really great. For reservations, call +420 725 190 646.

My third recommendation is a bar called Placebo, at *Mikovcova 581/12*, where you can stay till 5 a.m. and drink a good beer.

How to Fit In

Most visitors drink our beer really slowly and take small gulps. We find that crazy. Drink your beer like water.

The second thing is that most American guys do not take their caps off when they enter an establishment. In our culture, this is disrespectful. Please take off your caps.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Go to any pub and invite somebody to join you for a drink. He or she will pay the next "shout" and, later, can help you in getting to know the city.

Students are really open-minded people who would be pleased to be friends with you. Go to the pubs/restaurants after lunchtime, especially around *Dejvice* (a quarter in the sixth district) and you will be surprised how many friends you'll make!

Best Places to Take a Photo

The best photos are from Charles Bridge (both in daylight and the evening) and from the Petřín Tower, where you will find a view over all of Prague with its iconic spires.

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Why Visit Prague?

Prague is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and it is a walkable city with a long history, beautiful houses, interesting points of view, and really good gastronomy.

Prague Inspirations

Every time I go to the center, I need to stop for a while and take in the beauty. Another thing is that you will never get bored here. Even at midnight, you will meet hundreds of people. There are so many cultural opportunities. And if you feel like sneaking away from the crowds, it's easy to find quiet places to just have a beer and maybe chat with a local.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Do not be surprised that there are still people that are not able to speak English or any other language. They will try to help you anyway; just be patient.

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Alena Habltova

Traveler. Music-Lover. Hiker.

About Alena

I am originally from a very small village called Nesuchyně in the Central Bohemia Region. When I was very young, though, my family and I moved to Rudná—a small city close to Prague, but quite boring. Though we still spent our summers in Nesuchyně.

After I finished basic school (at age 15), I started secondary school in Prague and then went on to university here.

Now, I live in a shared flat in Prague's sixth district, *Dejvice*, studying Public and Social Policy at Charles University and working part-time for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the Department of Evaluations and Strategies of EU funds.

Most of my free time I spend volunteering. I am member of Red Cross Humanitarian Unit and Scout Movement.

When I am not volunteering, I love listening to music, discovering and learning something new, in-line skating, traveling, hiking, and just walking and being outdoors.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

Definitely visit the historic city center. Even if there are so many tourists, it's simply amazing.

I also love *Václavské náměstí* (Wenceslas Square), which is home to the National Museum and the statue of St. Wenceslas. It is an important place for Czech history.

Next, visit *Staroměstské náměstí* (our Old Town Square) with its famous astronomical clock, *Karlův most* (Charles Bridge), *Pražský hrad*

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(Prague Castle), and *Staré Město* (the small streets around the old town).

I also recommend a visit to the nearby parks (Petřín Hill, *Kampa*, *Vyšehrad*, or *Střelecký Ostrov*) with their nice views of the city.

These places are full of tourists all year long. So if you just want to enjoy the magic atmosphere of the city without the crowds, you should go later in the evening or early in the morning (before 9 a.m.). Late night city walks, especially on hot summer days, are something very special!

That early morning/late evening advice applies to the main tourist sights, as well as walking the city. Prague Castle is open from 5 a.m. till midnight in the summer season (April through October).

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Borrow some in-line skates and visit park *Ladronka* (or skate around the Vltava River in Bráník or Troja). Go for a walk to the *Prokopské údolí* (Prokop Valley) or *Divoká Šárka* nature reserve.

Where to Stay

Every district is unique. If you want a taste of local life, try to find something in the third district, *Žižkov*. Lots of locals live here, but there are also many hostels (and bars and clubs). That said, there can be some safety issues in this part of town.

The first and second districts are the most popular with tourists.

Day Trips

The most visited castle in the Czech Republic is *Karlštejn*, which is only about 40 minutes by train from Prague. For me, the forest around the castle is even more interesting than the castle itself. If you visit, make sure to take a walk in the forest.

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Near *Karlštejn*, you'll also find a former limestone quarry called Velká Amerika (big America) and the pretty village of Svatý Jan pod Skalou. This is an interesting spot to visit.

I also recommend the nearby city of Beroun, where is a really good semi-annual pottery market, and Liberec, a town in the South Bohemia Region where you can climb Ještěd Mountain (it's possible to make it to the top and back in one very long day).

If you love spas, visit Karlovy Vary in West Bohemia.

For something historical and incredibly unusual, head to the town of Kutná Hora and visit the Sedlec Ossuary (also known as the church of bones).

For nature-lovers, cyclists, hikers, etc., we also have some great nature preserves like Český Kras or Kokořínsko (famous for its rock mazes).

What to Eat

The most typical Czech side dish is *knedlíky* (potato or bread dumplings). The most typical main courses are *vepřo-knedlo-zelo* (roast pork dumplings and sauerkraut), *vepřové koleno* (pork knee), and *goulash* (meat stew).

For something more modern, try *schnitzel* (fried boneless meat) with potato salad.

One non-official traditional food suitable for vegetarians is *smažený sýr* (also known as *smažák*), which is fried cheese with French fries and tartar sauce.

If you go to the pub for a beer, you should also order the *nakládaný hermelín* (pickled cheese). *Hermelín* is the Czech version of *camembert*.

Utopenec (pickled sausage, with the literal translation "drowned man") is also perfect with a beer.

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In street markets (especially in the city center) you can find *trdlo* or *trdelník*—sweet grilled and spiced pieces of dough. The vendors bill it as our traditional Czech dessert, but I read that it is actually originally from Hungary. I love the smell, but, for me, the taste is a little dry.

As for what to drink...you guessed it: beer! It's typical, healthy, cheap, and goes well with the heavy Czech dishes. Expect beer to be the cheapest drink on the menu; it is even cheaper than water. (In some places you can get tap water for free, but not everywhere and if you ask for water and don't specify that you want it from the tap, the waiters will try to bring you bottled water first.)

The average price for a beer in the city center is 30 – 35 CZK (about \$1.50). For a stronger beer like Pilsner Urquell, expect to spend up to 40 CZK (just under \$2).

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

The first of my top three picks for a drink would be Café Potrvá (located at *Srbská 347/12* in the *Bubeneč* district). It's cozy café-bar with a nice garden in the summer and performances inside.

The second would be Café v Lese (at *Krymská 12* in the *Vršovice* district). It's a bar and club with a nice interior, an always-changing beer menu, and a very deserving owner (he runs the project "pianos in the streets," which literally places pianos around the city). It's also a great place to meet people. *Krymská Street* is a popular and lively place full of young people, hipsters, and the open-minded.

Finally, I love Palác Akropolis (at *Kubelíkova 1548/27* in the *Žižkov* district). It's a music club with live concerts almost every day. Concerts usually end at 10 p.m., but the bar is open into the morning. It's a small club with nice atmosphere.

As for food, one of my favorite spots is a soup bar called Plavecká Polévka (at *Plavecká 4* in the second district). The staff is incredibly nice and they offer four fresh soups each day. They're always amazing and I have trouble choosing between all the options.

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How to Fit In

Keep the noise level low, especially on public transport. Try to walk faster (or at least keep out of the way). And don't worry about being fashionable. We tend to dress more pragmatically than stylishly. Be sporty. Carry a reusable shopping bag instead of a purse. Our philosophy? Why buy two pairs of shoes if you can use the same pair for going to work and for hiking on the weekends?

Also, please don't say that Czech Republic is Eastern Europe; we are and consider ourselves to be part of Central Europe.

The young people here mostly speak English, but the older generation really doesn't. So don't expect that everyone will. And keep in mind that learning a little Czech will serve you well: when you speak English, you're immediately identified as a foreigner, assumed to have money, and more likely to be overcharged (it's sad, but true).

Also know that we are beer nation. We say that beer is our liquid bread. We always go out for a beer in the evening—and "one" rarely means just one.

If you want to sit down in a park or have picnic, never go to the park in front of *Praha hlavní nádraží*, the main train station. This area is also called Sharewood and is a dirty and dangerous place full of drug dealers and homeless people. Locals walk past this area as fast as possible and don't stop there. The same goes for the park behind *Národní muzeum* (the National Museum) and the park/square *Karlovo náměstí*.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

In summer, a good meeting point for (mostly young) people is *Náplavka* (the right river bank of the Vltava River near *Palackého náměstí*).

Personally, I also think the night trams are a great place for foreigners to meet locals. Quite often I start conversations with foreigners there.

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Czech people are a bit cold, but we get warmer after a few evening beers, so evenings tend to be the best time to make new friends.

And, of course, once you know one local, it's much easier to meet his or her friends.

Best Places to Take a Photo

I like the view of Prague Castle from the right riverbank (at *Smetanovo nábřeží*), from Prague Castle at the top of Petřín Hill, or on the walk from *Malostranské náměstí* to the castle.

It is also very nice is to rent a small paddleboat (on the Slovanský Ostrov island) and see the panorama of the city from the Vltava River.

A few other lovely spots include Letná Park, the walls of *Vyšehrad* (the old fort on the river), and the *Žižkovská Věž* (Žižkov Tower). Though, for that last one, you'll be viewing the city through glass panes.

"In summer, a good meeting point is Náplavka."

Photo by Peter Curbishley on Flickr.



Why Visit Prague?

Prague is one of the nicest cities I can imagine. You have to come and enjoy the atmosphere. Be with locals and try to live as they live. Then you can fall in love with the city.

I've been to many nice cities, but Prague is still my favorite. I am still amazed. Even just passing the city center or walking along the riverbank and seeing the panorama with Prague Castle, I am so happy that it is part of my everyday life.

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Prague Inspirations

I love that I am still discovering something new all the time. We have everything here in Prague.

The size of the city is good. It is busy and crowded, but still calm in comparison with other European capitals. It's the biggest Czech city and, at the same time, a city where you run into your friends without planning to.

We've also got very good public transportation here. The cost of living is still affordable. It's international city, but still Czech. And I feel safe here.

Final Notes & Other Tips

If you want to discover another side of Prague, it is possible to take a guided city tour led by a homeless guide. These are organized by an association called Pragulic (website: pragulic.cz).

Finally, a few tips about what locals don't do:

Locals don't go to Karlovy Lázně (the biggest music club in the city). Only foreigners, children, and drug dealers go there. The same goes for the clubs and bars in Wenceslas Square for the most part (except old-school Lucerna). Pub crawls are also something only for tourists.

Beer gardens (in *Letná* or in *Riegrový Sady/Riegráče*) are not so bad, but are also mainly for foreigners. Czechs would rather go to a classical pub for better beer.

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Alexandre P.

Entrepreneur. Foodie. Father.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

The most important must-sees are the castle, the bridges, the monuments, and the small areas of the city. This will keep you busy for at least three days. In Prague, you can write a dissertation on almost every historical street and a book on every monument.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

After all these years, my favorite thing to do is watch Prague waking up. Go very early to the center, open all your senses, and soon you will be transported to the past. Touristic things are pretty much covered in books, but it is rare that tourists do these kind of things.

Where to Stay

I would recommend the area of *Malá Strana*. This is the real Prague.

Day Trips

I'd pick Karlovy Vary (for its very famous thermals), Mariánské Lázně (also for its thermals), and Český Krumlov (an old and beautiful town).

What to Eat

The original food is rustic and heavy. It is good to try it with a classical beer, but Prague is not known for its food.

That said, the popular dishes to try are *svíčková* (spiced sirloin with veggies), *knedlík* (dumplings), *bramborák* (potato pancakes), and *parek* (sausages). Do not expect gastronomic food.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

For Czech food, try Kolkovna (at *V Kolkovně 8*), Stará Selnice (at *Celní 407/5*), and U Modré Kachničky (at *Nebovidská 460/6*).

For international food, try Kogo (at *Havelská 499/27*) and Rio's Vyšehrad (at *Štůlcova 102/2*).

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For bars, visit *Dlouha* street.

How to Fit In

Do not keep your shoes on when you enter a house. If you bring a gift to someone, make sure it is packaged nicely. Remember the name day of your friends and call them on that day. Name days are more important than birthdays here. And say hello, thank you, and goodbye in Czech.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Sit in the classical *hospoda* (bars), not the foreign ones. Play sports. Take the metro and trams.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Charles Bridge and the hilltops surrounding Prague.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Take your time; don't rush. Avoid tourist tours. Wake up early. Make sure you get lost in the small streets. Make an effort to meet the locals. And you will never forget Prague.

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Romain Puddu

Entrepreneur. Foodie. Walker.

About Romain

I'm French, but have lived most of my life abroad. Right now I'm living in Prague, studying and working. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with my eclectic, multi-cultural group of friends at local bars and other interesting places.

What to Do In Prague (The Basics)

Start by visiting the historical places and taking a walk around Prague. Specifically, visit Prague castle, then cross the famous Charles Bridge, then walk to the main square for a traditional Czech pastry.

While you're wandering around Prague, don't hesitate to explore the small streets; there are so many things to discover there. And don't forget to look up.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Go to the beer gardens in spring summer, or autumn. Visit the parks on the hills of Prague (you'll see lots of locals in Letna Park, *Vinohrady*, *Andel*, and *Petrin*) for nice views over the city.

Where to Stay

Stay in districts one, two, or five, right in the center of Prague. That's where you'll find the most to do and see.

Day Trips

Take the train or bus to Kutna Hora or Hradec Kralove. These are nice small towns with a very authentic Czech spirit.

What to Eat

Definitely try the Czech *goulash* (which is milder and meatier than the original Hungarian version) and, even more importantly, the Czech

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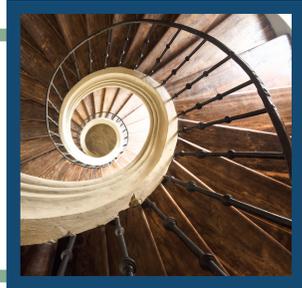
beer, which is the best in the world. Some of my personal favorites are Pilsner, Staropramen, Kozel, and Budweiser.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

For brunch, go to Cafe Louvre, located at *Národní 22*. For nice drinks and an excellent view of the clock tower, try Hotel U Prince at *Staroměstské náměstí 460/29*. And for dancing, I recommend the James Dean Bar and Restaurant at *V Kolkovně 922/1*.

"Take the train or bus to Kutna Hora. It has a very authentic Czech spirit."

Photo by zbdh12 on Flickr.



How to Fit In

Smile, be respectful, and approach the Czech people and culture with humility. Approach people and start a conversation.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

The best way to meet people is in bars. The Czech people don't really have people over, in my experience, but rather go out. So bars are the best way to meet new people and get the pulse Prague.

Best Places to Take a Photo

The best view is of the *Narodni divadlo* (Prague's big beautiful theater), taken from the Charles Bridge or the castle. I also love shots from Petrin Hill and from the castle.

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Why Visit Prague?

It's Europe, but with a really different atmosphere. We like to say that there's magic in the air here.

Prague Inspirations

What inspires me? The culture, the architecture, the easy way of living, and the calm (which is so unlike other capital cities).

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Brewsta
Food Blogger.

About Brewsta

I'm from Long Island, New York. But for the past 15 years, I have lived in Prague's *Vršovice* neighborhood. In my free time, I eat out—a lot. I love discovering new restaurants.

Other stuff I enjoy: live music, tennis, skiing, and travel.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

Everyone should tour Prague Castle and walk down from there to the Charles Bridge and then Old Town Square.

My other must-sees are the Slav Epic art pieces by Alfons Mucha in the *Veletřní Palace*, the library of the Strahov Monastery, and *Obecní dům* (the municipal house).

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

My first choice? The Letná Beer Garden in the summertime. It is very popular and has a view of the whole city.

There is also the UNESCO World Heritage Site, *Vrtbovská zahrada*, which is a garden with a view below Prague Castle.

Where to Stay

The *Vinohrady* neighborhood is mostly residential and one of the more upscale areas of Prague, with some nice parks and many great restaurants. It is also relatively close to the historical center.

Day Trips

Terezín (also known as Theresienstad) is the site of an 18th-century fortress that was turned into a concentration camp during World War II. It was also the prison where Gavrilo Princip—the assassin who

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killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's throne and sparked World War I—died in 1918. It is about an hour from Prague.

About three hours from Prague is Český Krumlov, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the most beautiful and picturesque towns in the country.

What to Eat

My top picks are *svíčková na smetaně* (beef in a sweet vegetable cream sauce with bread-like dumplings) and *koleno* (roasted pork knee, usually served with horseradish and mustard).

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

For bars, try Black Angel's Bar (at *Staroměstské náměstí 29*), Anonymous (at *Michalská 432/12*), Tretter's (at *V Kolkovně 3*), and Buggy's (at *Paiřížská 1068/10*). All are upscale cocktail bars near Old Town Square.

For beer, there are a few places with a very wide selection of Czech beers on tap, including Zlý Časy (at *Čestmírova 390/5*) and Prague Beer Museum Pub (at *Dlouhá 720/46*), which has 30 beers on draft.

For restaurants, start with La Bottega di Finestra (an Italian-style bistro at *Platnéřská 89/11*), Kofein (a family-owned place at *Nitrianska 9*), SaSaZu (an interesting Asian restaurant at *Bubenské nábřeží 306/13*), and Osteria da Clara (another Italian option at *Mexická 581/7*).

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Share a bench with some locals at Reigrovy Sady Beer Garden during the warm-weather months.

Best Places to Take a Photo

The footpath in Petřín Park just below the Strahov Monastery has a great view of Old Town. The hill in the park, *Reigrovy Sady*, near the popular beer garden, has a wonderful view of the whole city, including Prague Castle. And there is a spot in the Letna Park that has

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the best view of the river and the city's bridges (this view is often seen in television commercials about Prague).

Why Visit Prague?

Prague is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, but also one of the easiest to get around. The historic center is not so large and is easy to walk around. The public transportation system is excellent.

Find Brewsta at facebook.com/pages/czech-please/104727537335 and twitter.com/czechplease.

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Venkatesh Sadayappan

Golfer. Indian Cuisine Expert. Avid Traveler.

About Venkatesh

I was born and raised in Bangalore, India. And now I live in Prague and work at IBM as Security Systems Marketing Manager for Central and Eastern Europe.

I enjoy playing golf whenever possible, as well as traveling (for both work and pleasure). I've been to 46 countries and would like to cross into the 50s by the end of this year.

What To Do In Prague (The Basics)

If you only have a few days, I recommend the typical must-see places, including the Old Town Square (where you'll find the famed Astronomical Clock), Charles Bridge, and Prague Castle.

The easiest and the most prudent way to see Prague would be to join one of those free walking tours, which lasts 2 - 3 hours (and starts in front of the astronomical clock). You can find tours where the guide gets tipped/paid only if you like the tour—that way you pay what you think it is worth. These tours usually give you a quick history of Prague, Bohemia, and Czech Republic, covering recent communist times and Nazi occupation in particular, while guiding you around the Jewish Quarter.

For young travelers, don't miss the Prague Pub Crawl, something unique, fun, and special. For more info, visit pubcrawl.cz.

For even younger travelers, a visit to the Prague Zoo is a good choice—with their wide range of wild animals in a very beautiful setting. Prague Zoo is rated as one of the best in the world.

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Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

If you're into biking or even casual walking, *Kunratický Les* (a small forest within Prague city limits) is a lovely place. There is a mini zoo there with deer enclosures and a nice restaurant perfect for relaxing.

Another great choice is Petrin Hill (where you'll find Petrin Tower) just above Prague Castle. There is a funicular in service that will take you up this small hill for the most spectacular view of Prague. Spend some time strolling around the many parks on the hill.

Another place I recommend is the Strahov Monastic Brewery (located at *Strahovské nádvoří 301*) for good locally-brewed beer and panoramic views of the city right beside Prague Castle.

"For very young travelers, Prague Zoo is rated among the best in the world."



Where to Stay

Avoid the Old Town area, as it is too crowded with tourists and can be a bit expensive. Instead, consider *Malá Strana* (lesser town) or *Vinohradská*, which are on the either side of *Staré Město* (Old Town). *Malá Strana* is much better, because you are in the heart of the city, easy walking distance to Old Town and the Prague Castle.

Day Trips

Karlštejn Castle is fantastic, as are the setting and the history that go with it.

Karlovy Vary, a nearby spa town, is another beautiful place.

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Plzen is perfect if you want to pay homage to one of the world's most famous beers (Pilsner).

And, last, but not least, my favorite place outside Prague is Kutná Hora, an old silver mining town famous for its ossuary (bone chapel). This is one spooky place that you'll never forget. Definitely not for the faint hearted!

If you're into golf, there are loads of worthwhile golf courses in and around Prague. Some of the popular courses include Albatross, Ypsilon, Karlstejn, Karlovy Vary, Kanopiste, Mlada Boleslav, Stara Boleslav, and Podebrady.

What to Eat

The local favorites of *goulash* (a particular type of meat stew) and pork knee are definitely must-trys.

Where to Eat (Favorite Bars & Restaurants)

My favorite restaurant in Prague is V Zátiší (located at *Liliová 216/1*); it is fantastic—a must-visit restaurant for a nice fine-dining experience.

Being Indian, I also love authentic Indian restaurants like Lal Qila (at *Italská 786/30*) for north Indian cuisine and Keralam (at *Mozartova 942/10*) for south Indian cuisine. Not many know that there is vast difference in Indian food based on the state/province. Usually you'll find north Indian cuisines served mostly in Indian restaurants in Europe. But that is like serving pasta to someone from Poland or Germany and calling it European food. So, while in Prague, perhaps try both types of Indian cuisine.

How to Fit In

Locals, in general, are not very loud when they speak in public places, even in crowded metros or trams. They tend to get annoyed if people around them are speaking too loudly.

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Move briskly when getting on and off the trams. If you need to refer to your map or signboards for directions, step aside so that you don't block the locals.

Also, when you're in the supermarket, prepare your correct change before you get to the counter and briskly collect your items. Sales people at the desk are extremely quick and efficient and they do not expect any kind of delay on your end. If you slow the line down, be prepared to get some cold stares and murmurs in Czech.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

For expats, *internations.org* organizes regular get-togethers and parties where you can meet locals and expats.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Most Legii (Legion bridge), the bridge next to Charles Bridge, offers a spectacular view of the Prague Castle, Vltava River, and Charles Bridge. Also, the top of Petrin tower has a fantastic panoramic view of Prague.

Why Visit Prague?

Prague is a very beautiful city. It is one of the few European cities where the buildings were (overall) not impacted during WWII. Here, you get to see the original historical and medieval buildings, undamaged. Prague monuments are also well preserved.

Prague Inspirations

I'm inspired by morning jogs or lazy evening strolls on the banks of the Vltava River and the polite and enthusiastic locals.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Compared to Western Europe, the cost of living in Prague is inexpensive. Plan your trip in advance and stay for a longer visit than the average tourist; I know you'll love it here.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gigi Griffis is a world-traveling entrepreneur and writer with a special love for inspiring stories, new places, and living in the moment. In May 2012, she sold her stuff and took to the road with a growing business and a pint-sized pooch.

These days, she's living in the Swiss Alps, planning epic European adventures, and working on her next few books (watch for 100 Locals: Switzerland – coming soon!).

Love what you read here? Find more at gigigriffis.com.

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Love, Gigi

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