

Northern Ireland Travel Magazine

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PRAQUE



GUIDE



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DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF PRAGUE



Nestled in the heart of Europe, Prague is a city steeped in history, where the past and present coexist within the vast and beautiful architecture throughout the city.

Often referred to as the "City of a Hundred Spires," Prague's stunning skyline, dominated by Gothic churches and Baroque buildings, creates an atmosphere like no other, inviting visitors to explore its rich culture and ogle at its timeless beauty.

As you wander through Prague's old, cobblestone streets, you feel like you're stepping back in time. Whether you're an avid history buff, a lover of architecture, or simply seeking a charming European getaway, Prague promises a holiday filled with unique and unforgettable experiences.

A Journey through Time and Beauty



ABOUT PRAGUE

Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic, boasts a rich and varied history that spans over a thousand years. Known for its well-preserved medieval architecture, vibrant cultural scene, and significant historical landmarks, Prague is a city that has played a pivotal role in European history.

In the 16th century, Prague became part of the Habsburg Empire, leading to significant architectural and cultural development. During this time, the city's buildings began to reflect the influence of Renaissance and Baroque styles, as seen today around the city. Namely, and probably most famously, Prague Castle was erected during this time.

The 19th and 20th centuries brought dramatic changes to Prague. After World War I, Prague became the capital of the newly formed Czechoslovakia. The city endured significant hardships during this period, such as Nazi occupation during World War II and later the grip of Soviet influence during the Cold War.

Despite these challenges, Prague remained a beacon of resilience and cultural richness. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 marked a peaceful end to Communist rule, leading to the establishment of the Czech Republic in 1993, with Prague as its capital.

Prague is a testament to its resilience, blending its historical roots with a modern cosmopolitan style. Visitors can stroll through the charming streets of Old Town, marvel at the architectural wonders of Lesser Town, and enjoy the lively atmosphere of Wenceslas Square.

Most locations in Prague boast stunning buildings dating back hundreds of years. This is because Prague is one of the few European cities that weren't bombed during WWII, which means its remarkable architecture remains in place today.

The city's rich cultural scene is complemented by numerous museums, galleries, and theatres, making it a haven for art and history enthusiasts.



Timeless
History

WHERE TO STAY



Prague has brilliant accommodation for every budget. I booked my accommodation through Booking.com, which has many options in Prague. Like any destination, the location, time of year, and amenities within a hotel all play a role in the price you will pay for accommodation.

There are many 5* and luxury hotels in the city, which you can find through Booking.com or travel agents; these will typically range between £80 and £400 per night.

I found that Prague had cheaper options for 5* hotels than you would find elsewhere. I stayed at the '**Grandium Hotel**' in Prague, and I highly recommend it. It was a 5* hotel. However, it didn't break the bank. It is one of the cheaper luxury hotels in the city, with rooms starting at around £80 a night. It included breakfast, too, a lovely buffet with something to suit everybody. The location of this hotel was perfect as well. It is only a 3-minute walk to Wenceslas Square (where all the shops are) and about a 10-minute walk to Prague Old Town.

On the higher end of the 5* scale, the **Mandarin Oriental**, Prague, housed in a historic monastery, can cost around £380 per night.

If you are looking for a mid-range hotel in Prague, these can typically start at about £50 per night, depending on the location, amenities, and time of year.

Some recommendations include:

Hotel Cloister Inn: Comfortable rooms in Old Town, starting around £63 per night.

WHERE TO STAY



Pension Vetrník

Pension Vetrník: A family-run romantic hideaway, approximately £55 per night.

Czech Inn: A budget boutique with great amenities, about £47 per night.

While on my trip, I met many people who were backpacking, interrrailing, or just holidaying and chose to stay in hostels. They provide a budget-friendly option for travellers, with many located conveniently close to major attractions and public transport, making them an excellent choice for those looking to explore Prague without breaking the bank.

Hostels in Prague can range from around £7 to £25 a night for a bed in a dormitory room. You can find hostels on websites like '**booking.com**' and '**Hostelworld**'.

Some options include:

Hostel City Centre: Located centrally, this hostel offers dormitory beds starting around £12 per night. It includes amenities like free WiFi, free coffee and tea, and proximity to major attractions like Wenceslas Square and the National Museum.

Hostel Downtown: This popular option is known for its vibrant atmosphere and communal activities, such as Prague walks and Czech beer tastings. Prices start at about £17 per night for a dorm bed. It includes free WiFi, linens, and lockers.

Prague Old Town Hostel: Situated in the heart of Prague, this hostel offers dorm beds for approximately £14 per night. It features a shared lounge, a 24-hour front desk, and a shared kitchen.



DINING/LOCAL CUISINE

There are many places to choose from when dining in Prague. Its food scene combines old and new, offering something for every palate and budget. Whether indulging in hearty traditional meals or exploring their many worldly restaurants, you'll find that Prague's culinary offerings are as rich and varied as its history.

Traditional Czech Cuisine

U Medvídků: One of the oldest breweries in Prague, this restaurant offers traditional Czech dishes like *svíčková* (marinated beef sirloin) and *guláš* (goulash) alongside their house-brewed beer.

Lokál: A popular chain serving classic Czech dishes such as *smažený sýr* (fried cheese) and *vepřo knedlo zelo* (pork with dumplings and sauerkraut). Lokál emphasizes fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Café Louvre: This café offers a mix of Czech and international dishes. It's a great spot for trying traditional Czech pastries and desserts, like *trdelník* (chimney cake).

Modern and International Cuisine

La Degustation Bohême Bourgeoise: A Michelin-starred restaurant that offers a modern take on Czech cuisine with an emphasis on tasting menus that highlight local, seasonal ingredients.

Sasazu: For a taste of Asian fusion, Sasazu offers a mix of Thai, Vietnamese, and Japanese flavours. It's known for its vibrant atmosphere and creative dishes.

Ristorante Italiano Buschetto: A beautiful, airy, relaxing Italian restaurant that serves traditional Italian meals, desserts, and alcoholic/non-alcoholic drinks. Perfect for a date night or a meal with friends and family, which doesn't break the bank.

Casual and Budget-Friendly Options

Manifesto Market: A vibrant food market offering various international street food options. It's a great place to sample different cuisines in a lively setting.

Sad Man's Tongue Bar & Bistro: Known for its American-style burgers and laid-back atmosphere, this bistro is a favourite amongst locals and tourists alike.

Cafés and Pastries

Café Savoy: Famous for its elegant interior and delicious pastries, including the traditional *větrník* (caramel cream puff) and *štrúdl* (apple strudel).

Café Imperial: Housed in an Art Deco building, this café offers a luxurious setting to enjoy traditional Czech desserts and international dishes.

If music be the food.....



Transport

Luckily for you, it's easier than ever to visit this beautiful city from Northern Ireland; it was announced earlier this year that from the 2nd of November (2024), flights will fly directly from Belfast to Prague twice a week, so no more stopovers! You can also fly direct from Dublin airport.

The price of these flights will vary depending on the time of year and when you're booking them. I recommend checking 'Skyscanner' to find the best price.

Alternatively, you can book a package holiday through a travel agent, or a package holiday website such as 'Lastminute.com'.

While you're there

I booked a private transfer from the airport in Prague to my hotel, which I found to be very easy and stress-free. I added this transfer when booking my holiday with 'Lastminute.com', which is very simple to do.

Most package holiday providers will offer a transfer service at an extra charge; this usually is not too expensive and guarantees a quick transfer to your hotel.

Alternatively, you can book a taxi or use Uber when you arrive at the airport in Prague. We used Uber on a few occasions while in the city; it was really straightforward and felt a lot safer than other forms of transport might feel, due to the fact you can follow where you're going on the Uber map on your phone.

Taxis are readily available but can be expensive compared to public transport. Reputable taxi companies include **AAA Radiotaxi and ProfiTaxi.**

Transport.....



Public Transport

Prague boasts a highly efficient and comprehensive public transportation system, making it easy for visitors to navigate the city. Here's an overview of the transport options available:

Metro: Prague's metro system is the backbone of the city's public transport network. Line A (Green): Runs from the northwest to the southeast, covering major tourist areas such as the Old Town and Wenceslas Square.

The metro operates from 5:00 am to midnight, with trains arriving every 2-3 minutes during peak times and every 5-10 minutes during off-peak hours.

Trams: Prague's extensive tram network is a convenient way to see the city, particularly its scenic and historic areas. There are day trams (operating from 4:30 am to midnight) and night trams (running from midnight to 4:30 am). Popular tram lines for tourists include:

Tram 22: This route passes many of the city's major sights, including Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, and the National Theatre.

Tram 17: Runs along the Vltava River and offers beautiful views of the city.

Tip - The trams run along the roads, be very careful to check for them before trying to cross the street, as they have no way of stopping fast enough if you step in front of them!



Tickets and Fares

Prague's public transport system uses an integrated ticketing system, meaning the same tickets can be used on the metro, trams, and buses. Tickets can be purchased at ticket machines, news-stands, and via a mobile app. Common ticket options include:

30-minute ticket: 30 CZK (approx. £1.10)

90-minute ticket: 40 CZK (approx. £1.50)

24-hour ticket: 120 CZK (approx. £4.35)

72-hour ticket: 330 CZK (approx. £11.85)

Passengers must validate their tickets in the yellow machines at the entrance to metro stations or on trams and buses.

Biking/Scooters: Prague is increasingly becoming bike and electric scooter friendly, with numerous bike rental shops and bike/scooter sharing services available. The city has several designated bike paths, particularly along the Vltava River.

Tip - Bikes and scooters are a brilliant way to get around the city quickly, just be mindful while riding on the cobbled roads and near tram lines, as wheels can get stuck in them. Also, be aware that you aren't allowed to use scooters on the pavement, if you are caught anywhere but the road or designated paths, you will be fined.

Walking: Many of Prague's major attractions are within walking distance of each other, particularly in and around the centre. Walking is a great way to explore the city's charming streets and hidden gems. I would recommend walking as much as possible if you're able, to allow you to really take in the beauty of your surroundings.

Prague Card: Consider purchasing a Prague Card, which includes unlimited travel on public transport as well as free or discounted entry to many attractions.

Accessibility: Most metro stations and newer trams are wheelchair accessible, but some older trams and stations may not be.



What is there to see and do?

Prague, with its rich history and vibrant culture, offers a plethora of attractions and activities for visitors. Before I went, I had heard from multiple people that you can't spend more than three days in Prague as there isn't much to do, I would beg to differ. I was there for 6 days and I was never stuck for options. Here are some must-see sights and things to do in the city:

See and Do



Historic Landmarks

Prague Castle: The largest ancient castle in the world, Prague Castle is a stunning complex that includes St. Vitus Cathedral, Old Royal Palace, and the picturesque Golden Lane. It offers breathtaking views of the city from its viewpoint on a hill.

Charles Bridge: This iconic stone bridge, adorned with 30 statues of saints, connects the Old Town with Lesser Town. It is a popular spot for a leisurely walk, offering picturesque views of the Vltava River and Prague's gorgeous dramatic skyline.

Old Town Square: Home to the famous Astronomical Clock, Old Town Square is a bustling area filled with historical buildings, cafes, restaurants, stunning gothic architecture and street performers, it's beautiful during the day, but even more breathtaking at night, with the gothic architecture illuminated against the night sky.

I feel it would be remiss of me not to mention where to go for one of the most beautiful views of the Old Town square. 'Hotel U Price Roof Terrace' is located amongst the many restaurants near the Astronomical Clock. You use the lift inside which takes you to the rooftop terrace of the hotel, where you can have food and drinks. My friend and I got some beautiful pictures overlooking Prague's skyline and had a cocktail (which was delicious). I would highly recommend this place if you are in the area!



See and Do

Museums and Gallerie

National Museum: Located at the top of Wenceslas Square, this museum showcases natural history, anthropology, archaeology, and art, making it a key cultural institution in Prague.

Museum of Communism: This museum provides a detailed look at the communist era in Czechoslovakia, featuring exhibits on daily life, politics, and propaganda.

Museum of Senses: This museum is fun for everybody. Full of optical illusions, it's the perfect place to go for a laugh and to get some interesting pics! I recommend you try lying on the bed of nails while you're there, it was a very interesting experience to say the least...

Museum of Torture and Torture Instruments: This museum isn't for everyone, there are some very gruesome descriptions and recreations of medieval torture devices, and to make it even more eerie, it's all underground. If you like that type of thing though, it is very interesting, I loved it!



See and Do



Parks and Gardens

Petrin Hill: Accessible by a cable railway, Petrin Hill offers expansive gardens, the Petrin Tower (a mini-Eiffel Tower), and the Mirror Maze. It's a peaceful retreat with stunning views over Prague.

Letná Park: Known for its beer gardens and panoramic views of the city, Letná Park is a great place for a relaxing stroll or a picnic.

Unique Experiences

Boat Trips on the Vltava River: Enjoy a different perspective of Prague from the water. Various boat tours are available, ranging from short trips to dinner cruises.

Beer Tours and Tastings: Prague is famous for its beer culture. Consider joining a beer tour to sample local brews and learn about the history of beer in the Czech Republic.

Smallest Alley: There is an alley/ walkway in Prague which is so small that there is a traffic light system to get through it, only one person can fit down it at a time, it only takes a minute, but is a fun little activity to do if you're in the area.

Tours of the underground tunnels: Prague has a huge underground tunnel system which you can tour, however, this system is in place for an interesting reason. You may notice that a lot of the buildings have their bathrooms underground or have shops in the basement. This is due to the fact that many years ago, Prague used to flood quite regularly, so, they built the city up a level, leaving what used to be the main streets and buildings as underground spaces now, with the new buildings that we see today built on top.



See and Do



Theatres and Concerts

National Theatre: This historic theatre offers a variety of performances, including opera, ballet, and drama.

Rudolfinum: Home to the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rudolfinum hosts classical music concerts in a grand setting.



Churches

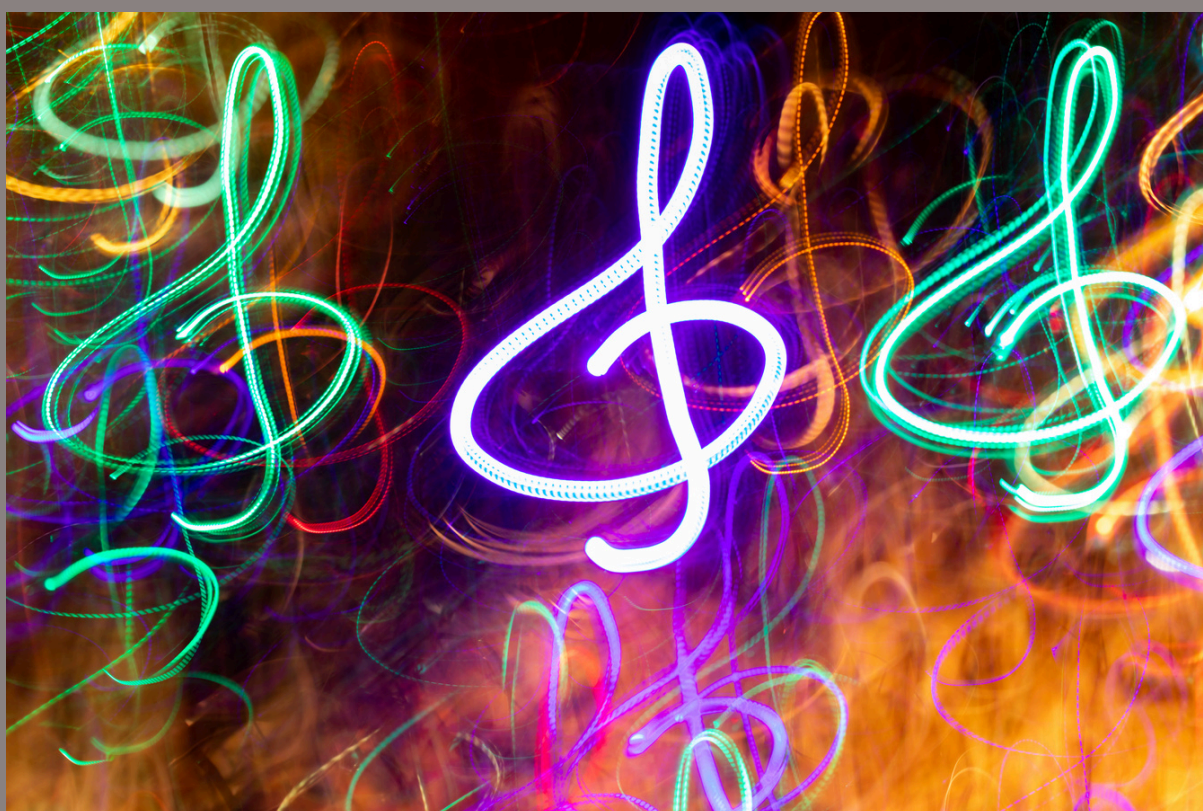
St Nicholas Church: This Church, like many church buildings in Prague, is magnificent. There is a small charge to get in, but it is so worth it, it took my breath away. Full of gold statues, paintings and ornaments, the attention to detail is unmatched.

Many of the Churches in Prague are not used for religious purposes anymore, this is because the majority of people who live in the city are atheist, or of no fixed religion, instead these beautiful buildings are used for concerts, ceremonies, or just open for public viewing. Old Town and Lesser Town have some amazing church buildings which you can explore, some for free and some at a small cost, I recommend seeing at least one while you're there.



See and Do

Nightlife



Nightlife in Prague is vibrant to say the least. With somewhere to suit any evening plan, cocktail bars, nightclubs, pubs, the list goes on. I suggest wandering around, or searching Google Maps, or social media to find the best places to visit, there are so many hidden gems. Here are some of my recommendations:

Rocky O'Reilly's Irish pub: Of course, I had to try this place as soon as I saw it online. It did not disappoint, it has two rooms, one normally hosting karaoke, and one with a live singer. The atmosphere was so lively, and the staff were lovely, they did table service, so no running up and down to the bar which was perfect! Everybody was up dancing by the end of the night, or doing group karaoke, it was fantastic.

Duplex: This is a nightclub in the centre of Wenceslas Square with a rooftop terrace. It has different genres of music on different floors and is open until 4 am, there are many raving reviews about this place online and on social media so, if you like clubbing, you will love it here.

Karlovy Lázně: One of the largest and most famous nightclubs in Central Europe, Karlovy Lázně features five floors, each with a different music style. It's located near Charles Bridge and is known for its lively dance floors and eclectic crowd.

Hemingway Bar: Known for its sophisticated cocktails and extensive rum collection, Hemingway Bar offers a classy yet cozy atmosphere. It's a popular spot for cocktail enthusiasts.

BeerGeek Bar: This bar boasts an impressive selection of craft beers, with 32 taps featuring local and international brews. It's a must-visit for beer lovers.



Final Thoughts

In order to get a better feel of the city, I went on a guided tour with a wonderful tour guide called Vladimira Turkova. She specializes in organizing guided tours and walks that focus on Prague's history, historical architecture, artistic styles and Prague's artists. She collected me from my hotel and gave me a brilliant walking tour of New Town and Old Town Prague. She was able to answer all my questions and was a lovely person to chat to. Our tour lasted about 1.5 hours and was very informative and really interesting.

I'd highly recommend doing a tour, if possible, on your first few days of visiting Prague, as it really made me appreciate the architecture and historical charm of the city, as well as helping me get my bearings and deciding where I want to revisit on the remainder of my trip.

I visited Prague with my friend, and we both agreed it was a very pleasant place to be. Like any major city, pickpocketing can be an issue, so ensure to keep a close eye on your belongings, however, other than that, I felt very safe in the city day and night, even if I was by myself. I would recommend Prague for solo travellers or groups, there is plenty to keep you entertained.

I fell in love with the city so much, that I am considering moving there for a few months to explore it further, the slow moving, and relaxing atmosphere reminded me of Italy in a way, and with so much to see and experience there, I know I'd be very content.

You'll find yourself captivated by the city's unique blend of history, culture, and modern vibrancy. The timeless beauty of its Gothic architecture, the rich history found along its cobbled streets, and the warm hospitality of its people. It exceeded my expectations massively; I'd even go as far as saying it's the perfect city break.





Some tips

Language: While many menus are available in English, learning a few basic Czech phrases can enhance your experience:

-Please: "Prosím"

-Thank you: "Děkuji" (pronounced "DYEh-koo-ye")

Reservations: It's advisable to make reservations for popular restaurants, especially during peak tourist seasons.

Tipping: A tip of 10% is customary in restaurants.

Currency: The local currency is the Czech Koruna (CZK). Credit cards are widely accepted, but it's useful to have some cash for smaller establishments.



Prices:

People told us beforehand that food and drink in Prague is very cheap, I would say it is similar pricing to Northern Ireland, perhaps slightly cheaper, but not noticeably, unless you're ordering beer, it is cheap! At around £1.86 for a pint, it costs less than water in most establishments.