



Bohemia

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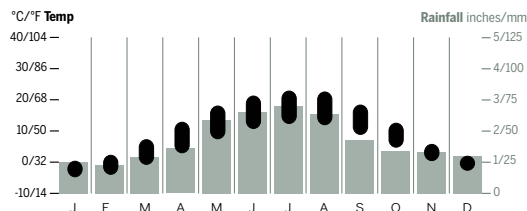
Why Go?

Beyond the serried apartment blocks of Prague's outer suburbs, the city gives way to the surprisingly green hinterland of Bohemia, a land of rolling hills, rich farmland and thick forests dotted with castles, chateaux and picturesque towns. Rural and rustic, yet mostly within two to three hours' drive of the capital, the Czech Republic's western province has for centuries provided an escape for generations of city-dwellers.

It's a region of surprising variety. Český Krumlov, with its riverside setting and Renaissance castle, is in a class by itself, but lesser-known towns such as Třeboň in the south and Loket in the west exude an unexpected charm. Big cities like České Budějovice and Plzeň offer great museums and restaurants, while the famed 19th-century spa towns of western Bohemia retain an old-world lustre.

When to Go

Terezín



Apr Spring brings blossoms to the trees, and castles and museums reopen.

Jun–Aug Plenty of warm, sunny days to enjoy city strolls and countryside walks.

Sep & Oct Regional cultural hubs like Plzeň or České Budějovice reawaken after a summer slumber.



TOP SIGHT KARLŠTEJN CASTLE

Rising above the village of Karlštejn, 30km southwest of Prague, Karlštejn Castle is rightly one of the top attractions in the Czech Republic. This fairy-tale medieval fortress is in such good shape that it wouldn't look out of place on Disney World's Main Street. Unfortunately, the crowds that throng its courtyards come in theme-park proportions too.

History

Perched high on a crag overlooking the Berounka River, Karlštejn was born of a grand pedigree, starting life in 1348 as a hideaway for the crown jewels and treasury of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. Run by an appointed burgrave, the castle was surrounded by a network of landowning knight-vassals, who came to the castle's aid whenever enemies moved against it.

Karlštejn again sheltered the Bohemian and the Holy Roman Empire crown jewels during the Hussite Wars of the early 15th century, but fell into disrepair as its defences became outmoded. Considerable restoration work in the late 19th century has returned the castle to its former glory – most notably by Josef Mocker, the king of Prague's neo-Gothic architecture.

Guided Tours

Admission to the castle is by guided tour only; there are three tours available in English. Tour 1 (adult/child 270/180Kč, 50 minutes) passes through the Knight's Hall, still daubed with the coats-of-arms and names of the

DON'T MISS

- ➔ Chapel of the Holy Cross
- ➔ Knight's Hall
- ➔ Charles IV's Bedchamber
- ➔ Audience Hall
- ➔ Jewel House
- ➔ The Great Tower views

PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ Hrad Karlštejn
- ➔ ☎ tour bookings 311 681 617
- ➔ www.hradkarlstejn.cz
- ➔ adult/child Tour 1 270/180Kč, Tour 2 330/230Kč, Tour 3 150/100Kč
- ➔ 🕒 9am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun May, Jun & Sep, to 5pm Apr, to 4.30pm Oct, to 4pm Mar, shorter hrs Sat & Sun only Dec-Feb