



Czech Republic

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Best Places to Eat

- » U malé velryby (p292)
- » Pivovarský Klub (p292)
- » Literární Kavárna Řetězová (p293)
- » Laibon (p319)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Dahllia Inn
- » Residence u černé věž (p313)
- » Hotel Templ (p332)
- » Hotel Rous (p310)
- » Poet's Corner (p329)

Why Go?

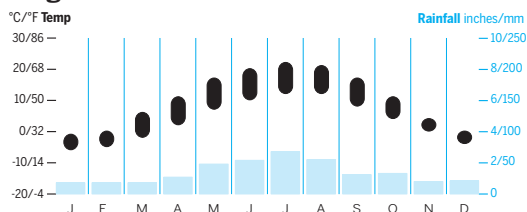
More than two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a host of European cities and countries have been touted as the 'new Prague' or the 'next Czech Republic'. The 'Where to next?' focus may have shifted to other destinations, but the original Prague and Czech Republic remain essential stops on any European journey.

Prague's inevitable transition from communist capital to modern metropolis is now complete, as centuries of history and glorious architecture compete with thoroughly 21st-century energy and impetus.

Elsewhere, castles and palaces abound – including the audacious cliff-top chateau at Český Krumlov – which illuminate the stories of powerful families and individuals whose influence was felt throughout Europe. Beautifully preserved Renaissance towns that withstood ravages of the communist era link the centuries, and idiosyncratic landscapes provide a stage for active adventures.

When to Go

Prague



May Prague comes alive with festivals from classical music and beer to fringe arts and Roma culture.

July Karlovy Vary shows off its artsy side at the sleepy spa town's annual film festival.

May & September Best time to visit, with fewer tourists and cheaper accommodation.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Crown (Kč)
- » **Language** Czech
- » **Money** ATMs all over; banks open Mon-Fri
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply; visas not required for most nationalities

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 78,864 sq km
- » **Capital** Prague
- » **Telephone country code** 420
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

| | | |
|-------------|-------|---------|
| Australia | A\$1 | 17.64Kč |
| Canada | C\$1 | 17.51Kč |
| euro | €1 | 24.41Kč |
| Japan | ¥100 | 21.86Kč |
| New Zealand | NZ\$1 | 13.26Kč |
| UK | UK£1 | 27.38Kč |
| USA | US\$1 | 16.82Kč |

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 1300Kč
- » **Two-course evening meal** 200Kč
- » **Museum entrance** 150Kč
- » **Beer** 40Kč
- » **Prague metro-tram ticket** 26Kč

Resources

- » **Czech Tourism** (www.czechtourism.com)
- » **Bus and train planning portal** (www.idos.cz)
- » **Prague Information Service** (www.praguewelcome.cz)

Connections

The Czech Republic is a convenient hub for exploring neighbouring countries. Prague is well connected to Berlin, Dresden, Nuremberg and Hamburg, and Plzeň is on the main train line from Nuremberg to Munich, via Prague. From Český Krumlov it's a short distance to Linz or Salzburg in Austria, with connections to Vienna and to Budapest in Hungary. For travel to Poland, Olomouc is a key transit point for trains to Warsaw and Kraków, and the eastern Czech city of Brno has regular bus and train services to Vienna and the Slovakian capital, Bratislava.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Experience Prague's exciting combination of its tumultuous past and energetic present. Top experiences include the grandeur of Prague Castle, Josefov's Jewish heritage, and getting pleasantly lost amidst the bewildering labyrinth of the Old Town. Take an essential day trip to Terezín, and then head south to Český Krumlov for a few days of riverside R&R.

Two Weeks

Begin in Prague before heading west for the spa scenes at Mariánské Lázně or Karlovy Vary. Balance the virtue and vice ledger with a few Bohemian brews in Plzeň before heading south for relaxation and rigour around Český Krumlov. Head east through České Budějovice en route to the Renaissance grandeur of Telč and Brno's cosmopolitan galleries and museums. Use the Moravian capital as a base for exploring the Moravian Karst caves and Mikulov's wine country, before continuing to under-rated Olomouc to admire the Holy Trinity Column. From Olomouc it's an easy trip back to Prague, or on to Poland.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Beer** Search out excellent *pivo* (beer) from smaller, local, microbreweries. Look for the hand-drawn blackboards outside pubs.
- » **Wine** Be surprised by the up-and-coming vintages from the Moravian wine region around Mikulov.
- » **Bramborák** Forget french fries – always order authentic Czech fried potato pancakes as a side dish.
- » **Klobása** These sausages are a boozy late-night option in Wenceslas Square.
- » **Kofola** Cola meets cough medicine: the uniquely Czech soft drink is worth sampling. You may even grow to like it.