

The top 10 reasons to visit Prague

So what is it that attracts so many people to Prague? Here's a few informed guesses.

1. Prague is a 3D architecture textbook. Romanesque chapels and cellars, Gothic cathedrals, Baroque palaces and gardens, worldly Art Nouveau buildings, and unique Cubist architecture make it a place with no parallel in the world. You don't have to be an expert on individual artistic styles in order to appreciate the diversity of the city's architecture. The Rotunda of St. Martin, the Cathedral of Our Lady before Týn, the Wallenstein Palace and the Municipal House will be forever etched into your memory. Frank Gehry's Dancing Building has become an icon of modern architecture in Prague, as have new buildings in the Karlín neighbourhood and the new National Technical Library in Dejvice.

2. Musically Prague can satisfy both classical music listeners and as fans of rock, pop and every other genre. While you can get your fill of classical music in the Rudolfinum, the Municipal House, or one of the churches in Prague, no fan of dance music should miss a visit to Prague's renowned music clubs. Among the obligatory stopping points are the Roxy, Akropolis, Cross Club or the multimedia space MeetFactory. A popular tourist destination is the four-storey club Karlovy Lazně, where each floor is dedicated to a different musical genre. Every summer, Prague's islands and parks come alive with the multi-genre music festival United Islands.

3. Those in the know say the **best beer in Prague** (although this point is always argued hotly) is poured at Zlý časý in the Nusle district. Its twenty-four taps pour beers from small and medium-sized breweries both from the Czech Republic and abroad. Who can resist - you can enjoy a great selection of draught beers and pick up bottled delicacies from around the world. Of course, there are many places in Prague where you can get good beer, from classic pubs or in the ever more popular beer bars with more than a dozen beers from small and medium-sized breweries on tap. Also very popular is the Lokál chain of restaurants, where in addition to great Pilsner, you can enjoy traditional Czech cuisine. For sheer atmosphere, check out some classic pubs where seemingly time stands still, such as U Jelínků, with over a century of tradition. The pub U Pinkasů also has its place on the Prague beer map, as do an increasingly significant number of small breweries (Pivovarský dům, Břevnovský klášterní pivovar sv. Vojtěcha, Klášterní pivovar Strahov).

4. Few cities can claim to have such a picturesque river as **the Vltava**. In Prague alone, it's spanned by over thirty bridges and footbridges, its water gently laps the edges of ten islands, and each day dozens of steamers, rowboats and pedal boats glide through its waters. It's the soul of the city, and is perfectly complemented by the medieval Charles Bridge with its Baroque statues. And just as Charles Bridge is an inseparable part of the Prague Castle panorama, the silhouette of the railway bridge is linked with the view of Vyšehrad. The Vltava embankment is quite a popular part of Prague community life. Farmers' and flea markets are held here, and in the summer,

people stroll, dance, take part in sports, and organise exhibitions, while in the winter, one of the boats anchored here is turned into a sauna.

5. Prague also has celebrated **cafés** which people visit out of respect for the classical café tradition, the famous people who used to frequent them, or for their great coffee - but rarely all three. Forget the hustle and bustle of the city when you sit at Café Slavia; experience a nearly Parisian atmosphere at Café Louvre; and the Grand Café Orient will win you over with its exceptional Cubist interiors and furniture. Praguers like having breakfast in the posh Café Savoy or Café Imperial. On the rise are also modern cafés. Café Lounge will amaze you not only with its first-class cappuccino, but also its homemade cakes and desserts, all in the spirit of the noble First Republic. Kavárna Pražírna offers specialty coffee from small farms. They buy the beans themselves, test and roast them, and if you like, you can take a pack of fragrant fresh coffee back home with you. Also popular is Karlín's Můj šálek kávy (My Cup of Coffee), so it's better to book a place in advance. If you're thinking what else here might please your taste buds, try a dessert from the in-house bakery or even their great raspberry lemonade. Monolok Café is made for lovers of modern design. In addition to coffee specialities, they also serve breakfast, light lunches, and glasses of excellent wine in the evenings. When the weather is nice, you can even sit in the cosy, quiet courtyard.

6. You can cool your **shopping** fever in a number of modern shopping malls (Palladium, Nový Smíchov, Chodov, Arkády Pankrác, and more) or on Pařížská Street, Prague's most exclusive shopping avenue, home to many of the world's top luxury brands. If you want to take something valuable home from Prague, then try an antique shop. Jewellery and precious stones are the specialty of Prague's Uhlíř Antiques, and paintings and china, you can choose at the antique shop on Karmelitská Street. Galerie Petr Brandl focuses on old master canvases, and it's worth checking out even if you don't plan on buying anything. You can buy current and retro Czech design at Modernista in the Vinohrady Pavilion or in the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art's design shop.

7. Prague's **historic gardens and parks** are truly some of Prague's greatest treasures. There are over two hundred - the oldest of them was founded in the Middle Ages, and more often than not, they offer breathtaking views of the city. The first Prague gardens were monastic gardens; private gardens, adjacent to palaces or expensive town houses, came later during the Renaissance. Each period introduced its own unique style, layout (which generally reflected contemporary philosophy) and understanding of space into garden design. Perhaps the most revolutionary changes in garden design came during the Baroque period, where the monumentality of the architecture was reflected in the external environment in the garden. Visiting the Palace Gardens below Prague Castle, the Petřín Hill gardens or Wallenstein Gardens are practically required of all visitors to Prague.

8. Prague has undergone centuries of diverse cultural, social and economic development, which is reflected in its architecture. Among the most interesting witnesses to this dramatic transformation are **technical monuments** commemorating changes in the everyday life of our ancestors in comparison with the present day. Prague is home to a number of interesting technical buildings and other structures. This journey back in time will take you to places such as the Prague underground spaces with its huge collector system; the New Town Water Tower; the

Nusle bridge; the Pacold kiln; Větrník, a former windmill; the Petřín funicular; the Křižík Fountain; and the exhibitions at the National Technical Museum. Also of interest is the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Bubeneč, which helped Prague become one of the most modern cities in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Tom Cruise filmed the last episode of the Mission: Impossible series here.

9. Prague offers countless activities for **families with children**. Take a steamship from the city centre to the Prague Zoo, rightly considered to be one of the most beautiful zoos in the world. Young visitors will surely love a tour of the Toy Museum, located directly in Prague Castle, which brings together historical toys from around the world as well as a large collection of Barbie dolls. Boys in particular will love the exhibits at the National Technical Museum at Letná. Steam locomotives and predecessors of today's automobiles, the first motorcycles and planes form a permanent exhibition complemented by a number of temporary exhibitions devoted to science and technology. The whole family can enjoy riding a historical tram or visiting the observation deck of the Žižkov TV tower. There will certainly be no complaints from your children if you take them to a pastry shop. Goodies from the Erhart Pastry Shop at Letná, the pastry shop U knoflíků (At the Buttons) on Újezd, or cakes made fresh daily in the legendary Myšák cake shop in Vodičkova Street will be a sweet reward even for you.

10. Prague's **views are breathtaking** 365 days a year. Although the Czech capital is nicknamed "the city of a hundred spires", in fact it is decorated with nearly a thousand towers and spires. You can admire the ancient heart of the city from the observation deck of the tower of Old Town Hall, and discover the charm of the Lesser Town roofs from the tower of St. Vitus Cathedral. Unforgettable views are also possible from the Petřín lookout tower, from Letná Park or from the ramparts of Vyšehrad. An unusual sight arises for those who climb Vítkov Hill, dominated by the majestic statue of military leader Jan Žižka. You'll get an unusual view of the illuminated panorama of Prague Castle from here, especially in the early evening.

Prague City Tourism