

DK EYEWITNESS

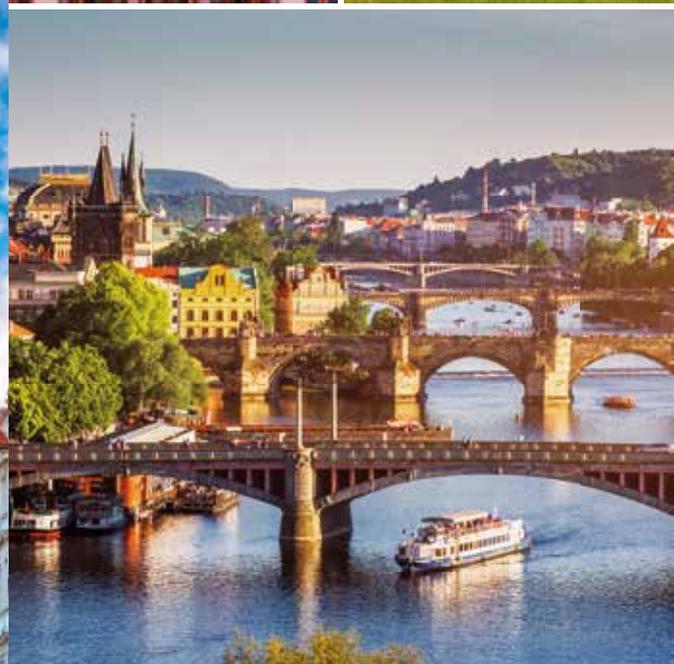
DK EYEWITNESS

INSPIRE / PLAN / DISCOVER / EXPERIENCE

PRAGUE

EYEWITNESS

PULL-OUT
MAP



PRAGUE

DK

Public Art

Some Prague locations are like open-air galleries, most notably Charles Bridge which has replicas of 30 exquisite sculptural works (p130). The city's parks and gardens are awash with period sculpture, as are its churches and public buildings. Check out the eerie Dripstone Wall in the Wallenstein Garden (p138) and Alfons Mucha's painted windows in St Vitus's Cathedral (p108). If you are feeling inspired, leave your own mark on the city's public art scene (with pencil, marker or chalk) at the ever-changing Lennon Wall (p142).



→
Sculptures adorn Charles Bridge, one of Prague's most memorable sights

DAVID ČERNÝ

Prague-born sculptor David Černý has gained international fame for provocative artworks like *Entropa*, a 3D map depicting EU countries as crudenational stereotypes (representing Romania as a Dracula theme park and France on strike). Some of his most unique creations can be found in his home city. Look for the statue of St Wenceslas astride an upside-down horse in the Lucerna Palace (p165), two figures urinating onto a map of the Czech Republic in front of the Kafka Museum (p144) and his giant babies crawling up the Žižkov TV Tower (p185).

PRAGUE FOR ART LOVERS

A rich history has bequeathed Prague a wealth of artistic treasures both home-grown and foreign. From Gothic sculpture and Baroque painting to interwar design and cutting-edge contemporary installations, Prague has an artistic style to satisfy every taste.



←
Metamorphosis sculpture by David Černý depicts the head of writer Franz Kafka

TOP 5 ART GALLERIES IN PRAGUE

Prague Castle Picture Gallery
Superb art works collected by Rudolph II.

Trade Fair Palace
Focuses on works from the 19th to the 21st centuries including Czech modern art.

Sternberg Palace
Exhibits European art up to the Baroque period.

St Agnes of Bohemia Convent
Houses fine examples of medieval art.

DOX
The leading gallery for contemporary art, located in Holešovice.



National Gallery

When it comes to art in Prague, the National Gallery is the best place to start. The collections owned by the state are spread out over several locations - the St Agnes of Bohemia Convent (p97), the Sternberg Palace (p119), the Trade Fair Palace (p184), the Schwarzenberg Palace (p120), the Kinský Palace (p74), the Salm Palace (*Hradčanské nám 2*) and Wallenstein Riding School (*Valdštejnská 3*).

→
"Katharina Grosse: Wunderbild", a temporary exhibition at the Trade Fair Palace



Gallery Hopping

Prague's art scene doesn't begin and end with the National Gallery. The New Town Hall (p171), the Kampa Museum of Modern Art (p149), the Clam-Gallas Palace (p80), the Prague Castle Picture Gallery (p116), the Municipal House (p70), the Rudolfinum (p96) and countless other venues have permanent collections or host travelling shows.

↑ An exhibition space in the Prague Castle Picture Gallery with a display of paintings from Rudolph II's collection



Pedal boats near the Smetanovo nábřeží on the Vltava River ↑

Take to the Water

The Vltava River is not only the lifeblood of Prague, it's also a popular setting for family entertainment. You can hire novelty swan-shaped pedalos from Slovanský ostrov (www.slovanka.net), enjoy a cruise beneath Charles Bridge on a catamaran (www.prague-boats.cz) or take a leisurely steamboat cruise to Prague Zoo - with tickets including admission to the zoo (www.praguesteamboats.com). You can also hop on a historical paddle steamer to the wine-growing town of Mělník (www.praguesteamboats.com).



← Steamboat on the Vltava carrying visitors to Prague Zoo

PRAGUE'S PUPPET TRADITION

A top activity for children visiting Prague is to attend a performance at one of the city's puppet theatres. Although the shows are in Czech, kids don't seem to mind and may even pick up a few words. Some of the best theatres are the Marionette Kingdom (Říše loutek), Spejbl and Hurvínek Theatre and Minor Theatre - tickets are cheap, usually costing 100-200Kč. In 2016 Prague's puppetry tradition was added to UNESCO's prestigious list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

PRAGUE FOR FAMILIES

If you are heading to Prague with kids in tow, rest assured that the Czech capital has lots to keep young minds and hands occupied. From puppets to model trains, zoos to picnics in the sun, children are well catered for here. The city's river also offers plenty of opportunities for fun on the water including steamboats and pedal boats.

INSIDER TIP Picnics

Prague has many central green spaces where you can shake out the picnic blanket. The Vltava islands, Stromovka park and Petřín Hill are some of the popular spots.

Model Railways and Lego

One of the top attractions in Prague among families is the stupendous Railway Kingdom (p184) in the Smíchov district. This model railway recreates well-known locations across the Czech Republic. Kids can push buttons to activate various sections of the model. Lego is big in the Czech Republic - in fact the country is one of only four in the world where the little bricks are actually made. The exhibition at the Lego Museum (p78) includes almost every Lego set produced since the late 1980s. The upstairs room is dedicated to Star Wars.



→ Part of the superb model railway exhibit at the Railway Kingdom



↑ A Spitfire in the National Technical Museum

Planes, Trains, Automobiles and Trams

Prague has plenty of stuff that trundles on wheels to keep the little ones excited. The National Technical Museum (p182) is the obvious place to take kids fascinated with anything that moves - they can climb into old steam trains and admire vintage cars and motorbikes. On weekends, from April to November, enjoy a historic tram ride that departs from the Prague Transport Museum in Střešovice, or jump aboard tram 22 (year-round; p118) for a cheap, fun way to see Prague's main sights.



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The National Revival in Prague

The late 19th century was one of the most glorious periods in the history of Prague. Austrian rule relaxed slightly, allowing the Czech nation to rediscover its own history and culture. Banished to the countryside for 200 years, Czech was re-established as the official language. Civic pride was rekindled with the building of the capital's great showpieces, such as the National Theatre, which utilized the talents of Czech architects and artists. The Josefov and Nové Město areas underwent extensive redevelopment and, with the introduction of public transport, Prague grew beyond its medieval limits. World War I left the country untouched and with the collapse of the Austrian Empire in 1918, the Czechs and Slovaks joined together to form a new state – Czechoslovakia (Czechoslovak Republic).

Under the Nazis and Communists

Just 20 years after its foundation, the Czechoslovak Republic was caught up in the political maneuvering that preceded Nazi domination of Europe. Prague emerged from World War II almost unscathed, but in 1948 witnessed a Communist coup. During the Communist decades resistance was brutally suppressed. A brief thaw came in 1968 with the Prague Spring, ruthlessly put down by



↑ The Communist coup in 1948

Soviet tanks. The subsequent period of "normalization" led to the formation of the dissident movement and it was a ragtag band of writers, actors and intellectuals who spearheaded the 1989 "Velvet Revolution". After 10 days of mass protests the Communist government bowed to the population's indignation. Playwright Václav Havel was swept into power at Prague Castle and Communism was declared defunct. The country then embarked on the path to democracy, capitalism and EU membership.

Prague Today

The Velvet Revolution seems a distant memory in today's Prague with less democratic, populist leaders having seized power. Controversial President Zeman was re-elected in 2018 on an anti-immigration platform and former Prime Minister Babiš was once an agent of the Communist secret police. The centre-right Petr Fiala was elected prime minister in November 2021 and has since faced many political show-downs with left-leaning Zeman. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the Czech Republic hard and the country suffered one of the highest death rates in the world, but things are recovering thanks in no small part to tourism – Prague remains one of Europe's most visited cities.

- 1 The National Theatre's lavish auditorium. ↑
- 2 Hitler and his army parade in Prague.
- 3 Memorial to the victims of Communism.
- 4 Czechs celebrate joining the EU.

Did You Know?

Czechs proudly recall that not even a single window was broken during the revolt in 1989.

Timeline of events

1848

Uprising in Prague against Austrian rule

1918

Foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic with Tomáš Masaryk as first president

1939

Nazis invade Bohemia and Moravia and set up a protectorate



1945

Prague liberated by Red Army

1948

Communists seize power in coup

1968

Prague Spring reform movement crushed by invasion led by Soviet Union

1989

Velvet Revolution sweeps Communist government from power and playwright Václav Havel to Prague Castle as president



2004

The Czech Republic joins the EU



2013–18

Outspoken president Miloš Zeman leads populist anti-immigration campaign

2016

Czechia is internationally recognized as the official short name for the Czech Republic

Did You Know?

In 1968, the invading Soviets thought the museum was the Czech parliament and started firing at it.



The imposing Neo-Renaissance National Museum building ↑

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NATIONAL MUSEUM

NÁRODNÍ MUZEUM

📍K7 📍Václavské náměstí 68 📍Muzeum 🕒11, 13 🕒10am-6pm daily 🌐nm.cz

Rising majestically at the upper end of Wenceslas Square is the Neo-Renaissance building of the National Museum, a grand, purpose-built affair that even has its own metro station. The entrance fee is worth it, if only to see the grand marble stairway, the Pantheon, and the interior paintings by František Ženíšek, Václav Brožík and Vojtěch Hynais.

The stern edifice, until recently sporting its 1968 bullet holes, was built in the late 1880s to accommodate the growing collection of the National Museum, which was then spread across various locations. Alongside the National Theatre, it is one of the greatest symbols of the Czech National Revival – both buildings are the work of the same architect, Josef Schulz.

Gallery Guide

The museum has a central pillared hall with a glass-covered courtyard on either side. On the first floor is the Pantheon, with a hall for temporary exhibitions. The museum's longer-term exhibitions, on topics ranging from prehistory to evolution, are found on the second and third floors.

Since 2019, a long underground corridor has connected this original 19th-century museum building to a brand new one across the street. On the way, visitors are treated to a stunning multimedia show called Moments of History. In the new building is a fascinating exhibition on 20th-century history, as well as lecture halls, a children's zone, a souvenir-packed shop and a pleasant café.



↑ Statues of illustrious Czech scientists and cultural figures in the National Museum's Pantheon

Alongside the National Theatre, the National Museum is one of the greatest symbols of the Czech National Revival.



GREAT VIEW
Cupola
Panorama

Head upstairs to the viewing platform in the glass dome of the main building to soak in the fabulous and panoramic views of the city.



The richly decorated, pillared hall, with its impressive marble stairway