

Prague



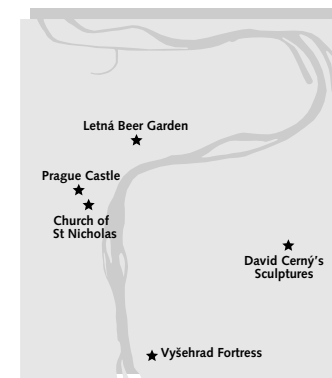
Magic, golden, mystical Prague, Queen of Music, City of a Thousand Spires, famed for Kafka, the Velvet Revolution, and the world's finest beers. The locals call her *matička Praha*, Little Mother Prague, the cradle of Czech culture and one of Europe's most fascinating cities. The tourist brochures go into overload when describing the Czech capital, but the city lives up to the hype – the city centre is a smorgasbord of stunning architecture, from Gothic, Renaissance and baroque to neoclassical, Art Nouveau and cubist. There's a maze of medieval lanes to explore, riverside parks for picnics, lively bars and beer gardens, jazz clubs, rock venues, museums and art galleries galore.

There's also no denying that the charm can occasionally be obscured by an overcrowding of tourists, congested traffic and tacky commercialism. So don't be angry with yourself if Prague leaves you a bit cold at first. Packed in among thousands of other visitors, trying like crazy to see the city in three days, worrying about getting ripped off; it's no wonder you think the city is overrated. Relax. It takes some time and searching to discover those magical moments when Prague reveals its full beauty – mist floating over the Charles bridge at dawn; the castle silhouetted against a stormy sky; finding yourself alone on the rain-washed cobblestones of a back-street alley, with piano music tumbling from an upstairs window.

Prague is an unmissable stop on any visit to the Czech and Slovak Republics. Beware, though – it is a city that gets under your skin, and many people stay longer than they intended. As Kafka once wrote, 'this little mother has claws'.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wandering through the grounds of **Prague castle** (p87) in the early morning, before the crowds arrive
- Admiring the overblown magnificence of the **church of St Nicholas** (p94) in Malá Strana
- Enjoying a peaceful picnic on the battlements of historic **Vyšehrad fortress** (p110)
- Seeing as many as possible of **David Černý's** (p121) endlessly amusing public sculptures
- Sitting with a cold beer in **Letná beer garden** (p136) after a long day of pounding the cobblestones



■ POPULATION: 1,184,000

HISTORY

Crossing the Charles bridge may be the quintessential Prague experience for today's visitors, but crossing the river was also the reason for the city's existence – it grew up next to a shallow spot in the Vltava river, a ford where people and animals could wade across (the spot now occupied by the Charles bridge).

Guarded by fortified hilltops on either bank – now Prague castle and Vyšehrad – the settlement developed into a busy trading centre and later a royal seat. But the growing town really came of age in the 14th century, when the Bohemian King Karel (Charles) IV became Holy Roman Emperor. Karel, still revered as the father of the Czech nation, made his home town capital of the empire, and funded a building boom that saw the creation of Charles University, the Charles bridge and St Vitus cathedral. Adding the New Town to the freshly Gothicised city saw Prague become one of the biggest cities in Europe.

In the following century Prague was the focus of religious conflict that would eventually see the whole continent plunged into war. Radicalised by the sermons of proto-Protestant reformer Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake in 1415, the population rebelled against the Roman Catholic elite, and nobles tossed several Catholic councillors out of a window in the New town hall (p110) – an act that became known as the First Defenestration of Prague. A year later, in 1420, Hussite forces led by General Jan Žižka successfully defended the city against a Catholic crusade at the Battle of Vitkov (now Žižkov) Hill (p116).

The Catholic Hapsburg dynasty took power in 1526. Later that century Prague became the seat of the Hapsburg Empire and, under Emperor Rudolf II, a focal point for European art and science. But in 1618 religious squabbling began anew when representatives of the city's Protestant nobles threw two Hapsburg councillors out a window of Prague castle (Old Royal palace; p89) – the Second Defenestration of Prague – sparking Europe's Thirty Years' War. Prague's Protestants lost early on in the piece: in 1620 the Hapsburgs routed them at the Battle of White Mountain (Bílá hora), just west of the city, and they sat out the rest of the war they'd started until 1648, when Swedish troops seized Hradčany and Malá Strana.

Eventually, the Hapsburgs moved their imperial seat back to Vienna, reducing Prague to a provincial town. A devastating fire in 1689 led to a spate of rebuilding, mostly in the baroque style that symbolised the power and wealth of the resurgent Roman Catholic church, and in 1784 the four towns of Prague – Staré Město (Old Town), Nové Město (New Town), Malá Strana (Lesser Quarter) and Hradčany (Castle District) – officially became one city.

In the 19th century Prague became the centre of the so-called Czech National Revival as Czechs struggled to keep their native culture alive under the German-dominated Hapsburg Empire. The movement found its initial expression not in politics – political activity was forbidden by the Hapsburgs – but in Czech-language journalism, literature and drama. A distinctive architecture also took form; Prague landmarks of this period include the National theatre (p109) and the National museum (p107).

As WWI drew to a close Czechoslovakia declared its independence, with Allied support, on 28 October 1918. Prague became the capital, and the popular Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a writer and political philosopher, became the republic's first president. Several days after the announcement, the country's new government had to ask Prague's citizens to please stop partying and do a little work, or the fresh-minted country's economy would collapse. But their new-found independence was short-lived.

On 15 March 1939 Nazi Germany occupied all of Bohemia and Moravia, declaring the region a 'protectorate' with Prague as its capital. The city suffered little physical damage during the war; however, its people – particularly the Jewish community – suffered a great deal. The Nazi Governor of Czechoslovakia, Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich, was assassinated in Prague by British-trained Czech paratroopers in 1942; in a lather of revenge the Nazis executed hundreds of innocent Czech villagers (see the church of SS Cyril and Methodius, p110, and Lidice, p154) and a large number of Prague's intellectuals, pretty much wiping out the Czech resistance. But there were enough left in Prague to rise up against the Nazi occupiers – who were already militarily on the back foot – on 8 May 1945, driving them out one day before the Soviets marched in. Most of Prague was thus liberated by its own

residents before Soviet forces arrived the following day. Liberation Day is now celebrated on 8 May; under communism it was 9 May.

After the communist coup of February 1948, proclaimed from the balcony of the Kinský palace (p102), economic and social policies almost bankrupted the country and crushed all dissent, sending Prague into a slow decline. Many people were imprisoned. Hundreds were executed and thousands died in labour camps, often for little more than a belief in democracy.

In 1968, under the leadership of Alexander Dubček, the party introduced reforms to ease censorship and increase democratic freedoms; the resultant flowering of artistic and intellectual activity was known as the Prague Spring. The Soviet Union, unimpressed by the direction Czechoslovakia was taking, sent in the tanks (supported by Warsaw Pact troops) on the night of 20–21 August. Fifty-eight Praguerers died.

The extraordinary Velvet Revolution was set in motion on 17 November 1989, when marchers in Prague commemorating the execution of nine students by the Nazis 50 years earlier were beaten up by baton-wielding police. The communist government was brought down within a fortnight. On 1 January 1993, by agreement between the elected Czech and Slovak leaders, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and Prague became the capital of the new Czech Republic.

Prague was ideally positioned to take advantage of the change – with its gorgeous pristine architecture, delicious beer and Eastern bloc prices, Western tourists found the city irresistible. Tourist income, combined with relentlessly capitalist economic policies, made Prague one of the wealthiest cities in Eastern Europe within a few years. The combination of picturesque streets, skilled workers and cut-rate costs also made the city a top location for international filmmaking.

PRAGUE IN...

Two days

Walk across **Charles bridge** (p100) in the early-morning light and head up to the **castle** (p87) before the crowds arrive. Take a tram to Staré Město and have a traditional Czech lunch at **U Pinkasů** (p130), then look around the **Prague city museum** (p105). Enjoy an evening of classical music at Malá Strana's **church of St Nicholas** (p94), then have dinner and a drink at **Hergetova Cihelna** (p129). Start your second morning with a tour of the **Municipal house** (p103), then head over to Josefov for a day at the **Jewish museum** (p96). Taste the new Prague at hip restaurant **Hot** (p132), then wander through Staré Město's **Old Town square** (p96) after dark to one of the area's many bars.

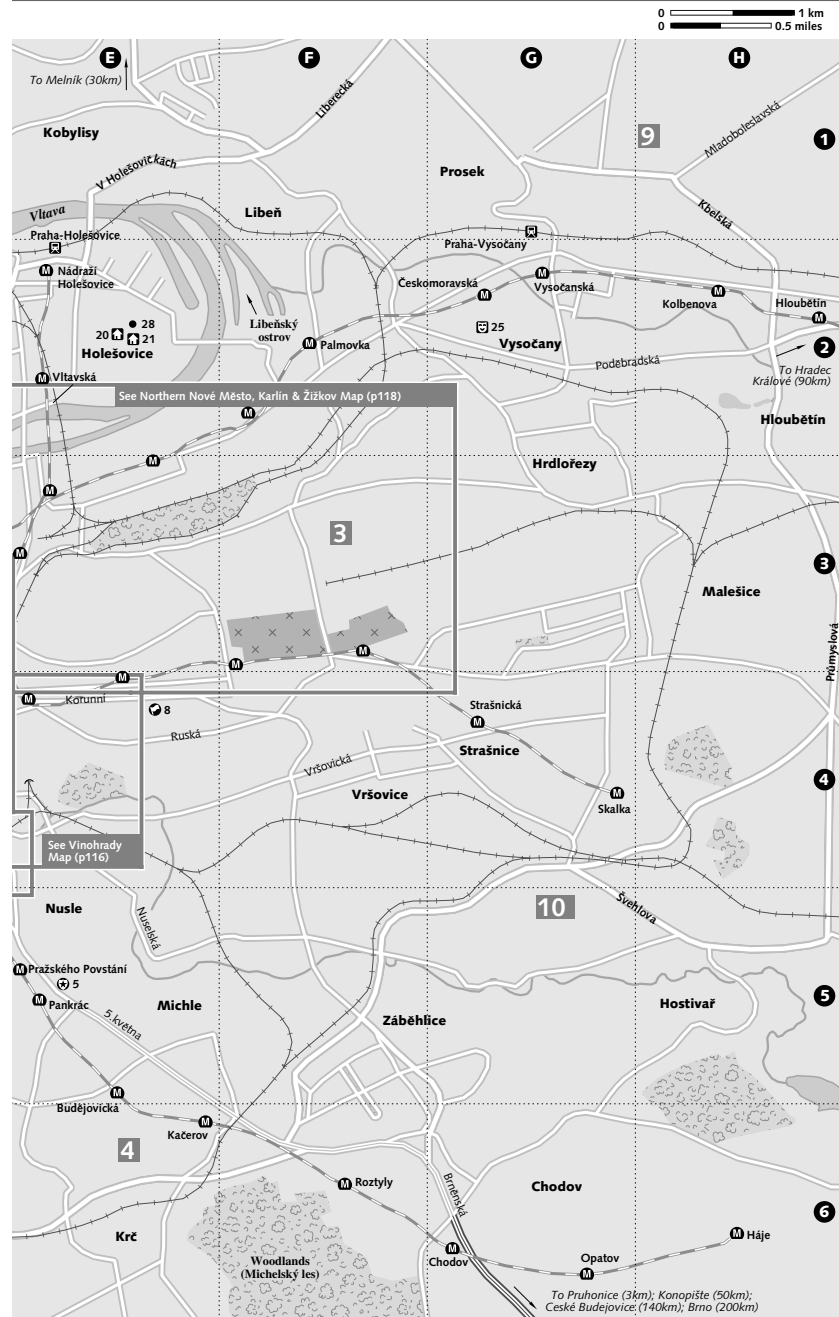
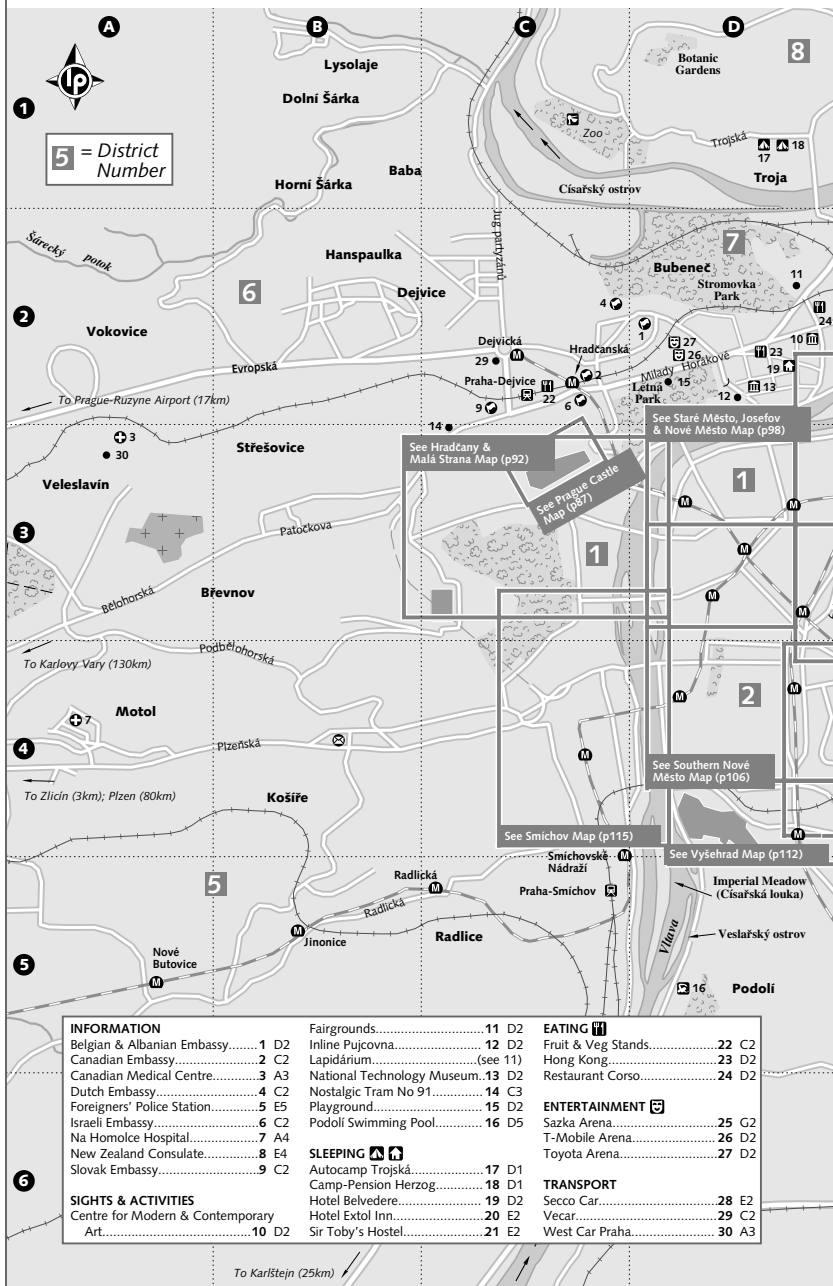
Four days

Follow the two-day itinerary above, then spend a relaxed day at **Vyšehrad** (p110). Head to the river and rent a **pedal boat** (p117) to watch the sun set, then treat yourself to a fancy dinner at **V Zátíší** (p131). On day four spend the morning seeing the **museum of Decorative Arts** (p97) and the exhibition of medieval Bohemian art at the **convent of St Agnes** (p104); after lunch take in the **museum of communism** (p107). Have dinner at **Kampa Park** (p130), with its awesome views of the river and Charles bridge.

One week

Spread the four-day itinerary over five days and give yourself time to sit around in some parks; **Kampa** (p95), **Wallenstein garden** (p94) and the **Palace gardens below Prague castle** (p94) all have their charms. On day six head out to Žižkov to see the **graves of Jan Palach and Franz Kafka** (p117), the **TV tower** (p117) and the tiny, uncrowded **Jewish cemetery** (p117) below it. Beer break! Stop off at Riegrovy Sady's **Park Café** (p136) for a sausage and cleansing pilsner, then hike up Žižkov Hill to see the **Jan Žižka statue** (p116). Spend the evening at **Futurum's** (p137) '80s and '90s party or hear some jazz at **Agharta Jazz Centrum** (p137). Grab some fried cheese and a beer in **Wenceslas square** (p107) on your way home. By day seven you should be exhausted! Take the funicular railway up to **Petřín** (p96). Revisit anything you really need to see again, and top it all off with a few shots of *slivovitz* (plum brandy) at **Palirna Igor Sevcík** (p135).

GREATER PRAGUE



In August 2002 the Vltava flooded, submerging Karlín, Kampa and other parts of the city beneath its muddy waters. The metro system was almost destroyed, Charles bridge was under threat of collapse and many galleries and museums lost substantial parts of their collections as cellar archives were inundated. A few years later, however, the city was back on its feet, protected by new flood defence barriers that can be erected in a matter of hours.

ORIENTATION

Central Prague nestles in a bend of the Vltava river, which separates Hradčany (the medieval castle district) and Malá Strana (Little Quarter) on the west bank from Staré Město (Old Town) and Nové Město (New Town) on the east.

Prague castle, visible from almost everywhere in the city, overlooks Malá Strana, while the twin Gothic spires of Týn church dominate the wide open space of Old Town square. The broad avenue of Wenceslas square stretches southeast from Staré Město towards the National museum and the main train station.

You can walk from the main train station, Praha-hlavní nádraží, to Old Town square in 10 to 15 minutes. From Praha-Holešovice, take the metro (10 minutes). There's a metro station at Florenc bus station too – take Line B (yellow) two stops west to Můstek for the city centre. For more information about getting around Prague see p143.

Maps

City maps are available at newsagents, bookshops and travel agencies. A detailed plan of the city centre and inner suburbs is *Kartografie Praha's Praha – plán města* (1:10,000). It includes public transport and parking information, an index, a metro map, plans of the castle and Charles bridge, and a brief description of the major historical sites.

Lonely Planet's plastic-coated *Prague* city map is handy and hard-wearing, and has sections covering central Prague, Prague castle, greater Prague, the Prague metro and the region around Prague, and an index of streets and sights.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Big Ben (Map p98; ☎ 224 826 565; Malá Štupartská 5, Staré Město; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun) Small but well-stocked English-language

bookshop. There are also English-language newspapers and magazines at the counter.

Globe (Map p106; ☎ 224 934 203; Pštrossova 6, Nové Město; ☎ 10am-midnight) The best selection of second-hand books in town, and a comfortable atmosphere in which to browse through them. There's a coffee shop out the back, a wide range of international newspapers for sale and internet access (see following).

Palác Knih Neo Luxor (Map p106; ☎ 221 111 336; Václavské nám 41; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) They're not kidding when they call this a palace of books. Head downstairs for a great selection of English-language novels and an internet café; maps and guidebooks are on the ground floor.

Shakespeare & Sons Vinohrady (Map p116; ☎ 271 740 839; Krymská 12; ☎ 10am-7pm) Malá Strana (Map p92; ☎ 257 531 894; U Lužického semináře 10; ☎ 11am-7pm) More than a second-hand bookshop, the Vinohrady outlet is a congenial literary hangout with a café that hosts poetry readings, author events and live jazz.

Emergency

All emergencies (☎ 112)

Ambulance (☎ 155)

Automobile Emergencies (☎ 1240)

Fire (☎ 150)

Municipal Police (☎ 156)

Police (☎ 158)

Internet Access

There are internet cafés everywhere in Prague. The following are particularly cheap or central, or have additional services.

Bohemia Bagel (www.bohemiabagel.cz; per min 1.50Kč; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-midnight Sat & Sun) Staré Město (Map p98; ☎ 224 812 560; Masná 2) Malá Strana (Map p92; ☎ 257 310 694; Újezd 18)

Globe (Map p106; ☎ 224 934 203; www.globebookstore.cz; Pštrossova 6, Nové Město; per min 1.50Kč; ☎ 10am-midnight) One of the first internet cafés in Prague. Laptop connections available, same price.

net k@fe (Map p118; Na poříčí 8; Nové Město; per min 1Kč; ☎ 9am-11pm) Cheapest in the city centre.

Pl@neta (Map p118; ☎ 267 311 182; www.planeta.cz, in Czech; Vinohradská 102, Vinohrady; per min 0.40-0.80Kč; ☎ 8am-11pm) Good luck finding cheaper internet access. Pl@neta also has computers loaded with Microsoft Office – if you need to work on your CV or use Outlook – or you can connect your own laptop.

Laundry

Laundryland (☎ 777 333 466 for delivery; www.laundryland.cz for pick-up locations; per load wash & dry approx 120Kč) Nové Město (Map p106; 1st fl, Černá růže shopping mall, off Na příkopě; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri,

PRAGUE CARD

The Prague Card is a combined public transport pass and admission card that is valid for one year (the transport ticket is valid only for three consecutive days, allowing unlimited travel on the metro, trams and buses). It provides free entry to more than a dozen city sights, including the Military museum, the Vyšehrad casemates, and discounted fees (from 10% to 50%) at a couple of dozen more, including Troja chateau, the TV tower and a range of guided walks. However, it does not include major attractions such as Prague castle, the church of St Nicholas in Malá Strana and the Jewish museum.

It costs 860Kč (or €30 if bought via the internet), and can be purchased from the EuroAgentur desk at Prague Airport, the **Prague Card Change Office** (Map p98; Vodičková 34, Nové Město) and online at www.praguecard.info.

9am-7pm Sat, 11am-7pm Sun, closed 1.15-2pm); Žižkov (Map p118; down steps beside Táboritká 3; ☎ 8am-10pm, closed 1.15-2pm); Vinohrady (Map p116; Londýnská 71; ☎ 8am-10pm, closed 1.15-2pm) The bar downstairs opens at 4pm.

Prague Cyber Laundromat (Map p116; ☎ 222 510 180; Korunní 14, Vinohrady; per load wash & dry approx 130Kč; ☎ 8am-8pm, until 9pm in summer) Internet café, graffiti wall and children's play area.

Left Luggage

There are left luggage services at the main train station (Hlavní nádraží; p142) and Florenc bus station (p141).

Media

The weekly English-language *Prague Post* (50Kč; www.praguepost.com) is fairly meagre reading, but its 'Night & Day' lift-out is an invaluable entertainment and dining resource.

The BBC World Service broadcasts in English and Czech on 101.1FM.

The city's best alternative music station is Radio 1 (91.9MHz FM), though good things are also being said about the newest kid on the block, commercial-free Radio Wave (100.7MHz FM).

Czech-language TV runs plenty of American sitcoms and films in the evening, but they're all dubbed: surrealists may get a kick out of watching *Friends* and *Baywatch* in Czech.

Medical Services

American Dental Associates (Map p118; ☎ 221 181 121; www.americandental.cz; 2nd fl Atrium, Stará Celnice Bldg, V celnici 4; Nové Město) Entirely English-speaking.
Canadian Medical Care (Map pp82-3; ☎ 235 360 133, after hrs 724 300 301; Velešlavská 1, Velešlavín; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 8am-8pm Tue & Thu) A pricey but professional private clinic with English-speaking

doctors; an initial consultation will cost from US\$50 to US\$200. It's near the seventh stop – Nádraží Velešlavín – on tram 20 or 26 from Dejvická metro.

Lékárna U sv Ludmily (Map p116; ☎ 222 513 396; Belgická 37, Vinohrady; ☎ 24hr) This pharmacy is right by náměstí Míru metro.

Na Homolce Hospital (Map pp82-3; ☎ 257 271 111; www.homolka.cz; 5th fl, Foreign Pavilion, Roentgenova 2, Motol) The best hospital in Prague, with English, French, German and Spanish spoken. Take bus 167 from Anděl metro station.

Policlinic at Národní (Poliklinika na Národní; Map p98; ☎ 222 075 120, 24hr emergencies 720 427 634; www.poliklinika.narodni.cz; Národní 9, Staré Město; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) A central clinic with English-, German-, French- and Russian-speaking staff. Expect to pay around 800Kč to 1200Kč for an initial consultation.

Money

Try to avoid the many private exchange booths (*směnárna*) in central Prague – they lure tourists in with attractive-looking exchange rates which turn out to be 'sell' rates (if you want to change foreign currency into Czech crowns, the 'buy' rate applies). There may also be an even worse rate for transactions under a certain amount, typically around €500. Check the small print carefully, and ask exactly how much you will get before parting with any money.

The main Czech banks – Komerční banka, Česká spořitelna, Československá obchodní banka (CSOB) and Živnostenská banka – are the best places to change cash. They charge 2% commission with a 50Kč minimum (but always check, as commissions can vary from branch to branch). They will also provide a cash advance on Visa or MasterCard without commission. Using your debit card in the city's ubiquitous ATMs will get you the best rate of all.

American Express (Map p106; ☎ 234 711 711; Wenceslas Sq 56, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-10pm daily)

Travelex (Map p106; ☎ 224 946 066; Národní třída 28, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2-6.30pm daily)

Post

The main **post office** (Map p106; ☎ 221 131 111; www.cpost.cz; Jindřišská 14, Nové Město; ☎ closed midnight-2am) is just off Wenceslas square. There's an information desk just inside the main hall to the left.

The main post office uses an automatic queuing system. Take a ticket from one of the machines in the entrance corridors – press button No 1 for stamps, letters and parcels, or No 4 for Express Mail Service (EMS), and take a ticket. Then watch the display boards in the main hall – when your ticket number appears (flashing), go to the desk number shown.

Most of the city's other post offices open from 8am to 6pm or 7pm Monday to Friday, and until noon Saturday.

Tourist Information

The **Prague Information Service** (Pražská Informační Služba, PIS; ☎ 124 44; www.prague-info.cz) Staré Město (Map p98; Old town hall, Staroměstské náměstí 5; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) main train station (Praha hlavní nádraží; Map p118; Wilsonova 2, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Malá Strana bridge tower (Map p92; Charles bridge; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) is a municipal agency that has Prague well covered, with good maps and detailed brochures (including accommodation, historical monuments and monthly entertainment), all free. All offices have Ticketpro's concert tickets and AVE's accommodation services.

Czech Tourism (Map p116; ☎ 221 580 111; www.czech-tourism.com; Vinohradská 46, Vinohrady; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4pm) Has information about sights, museums and festivals for the entire Czech Republic.

Travel Agencies

Cedok (Map p106; ☎ 221 447 242; www.cedok.cz; Na příkopě 18, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Tour operator and travel agency. Also does accommodation bookings, excursions, concert and theatre tickets, car rental and money exchange. There are several other branches around town and at the airport.

GTS International (Map p106; ☎ 222 211 204; www.gtsint.cz; Ve Smečkách 33, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Issues student cards, bus, train and air tickets.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Although Prague is considered as safe as any European capital, the huge influx of money to the city has spawned an epidemic of petty crime.

Where tourists are concerned, this mainly means pickpockets. The prime trouble spots requiring vigilance are Prague castle (especially during the changing of the guard), Charles bridge, Old Town square (in the crowd watching the Astronomical clock), the entrance to the Old Jewish cemetery, Wenceslas square, the main train station, in the metro (watch your backpack on the escalators) and on trams (notably on the crowded Nos 9, 22 and 23).

There's no need to be paranoid, but keep valuables well out of reach, and be alert in crowds and on public transport. A classic ruse involves someone asking directions and thrusting a map under your nose, or a woman with a baby hassling you for money – anything to distract your attention – while accomplices delve into your bags and pockets.

Don't hand over money or passports to anyone stopping you on the street and claiming to be a plain-clothes police officer – insist on going back to the police station.

Avoid the park in front of Prague's main train station after dark, and be aware that the area around the intersection of Wenceslas square and Na příkopě is effectively a red-light district at night. The city has developed a burgeoning sex industry, with strip clubs, brothels and street workers all in evidence.

If you hail a taxi on the street, it's almost inevitable they'll rip you off. Public transport here is excellent, even at 3am, but if you must catch a taxi, call one of the companies listed in Getting Around (p146) rather than flagging a cab.

If you have lost your passport, wallet, or other valuables, report the loss to the **Foreigners Police Station** (Map pp82-3; Sdružení 1, Pankrac; ☎ 7.30-11.30am & 12.15-3pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 8am-12.15pm & 1-5pm Wed).

If your passport, wallet or other valuables have been stolen, obtain a police report and crime number from the **State Police Station** (Map p92; Vlášská 3, Malá Strana; ☎ 24hrs); you will need this to make an insurance claim. Unless you speak Czech, forget about telephoning the police, as you will rarely get through to an English speaker. You can apply to your embassy for a replacement passport.

SIGHTS

For visitors from outside Europe, wandering through the ancient, winding streets of central Prague is enough of an experience to count as a sight in its own right.

Budget some time just to lose yourself in this medieval maze (let's face it, it'll happen to you whether you plan it or not) – if you spend all your time with your nose buried in a map, you'll miss some of the best spontaneous moments the city has to offer.

The most popular sights are in Staré Město (Old Town), Hradčany (the castle district) and Malá Strana (the Lesser Quarter). Nové Město (the New Town) is also packed with interesting things, including the city's best Art Nouveau architecture.

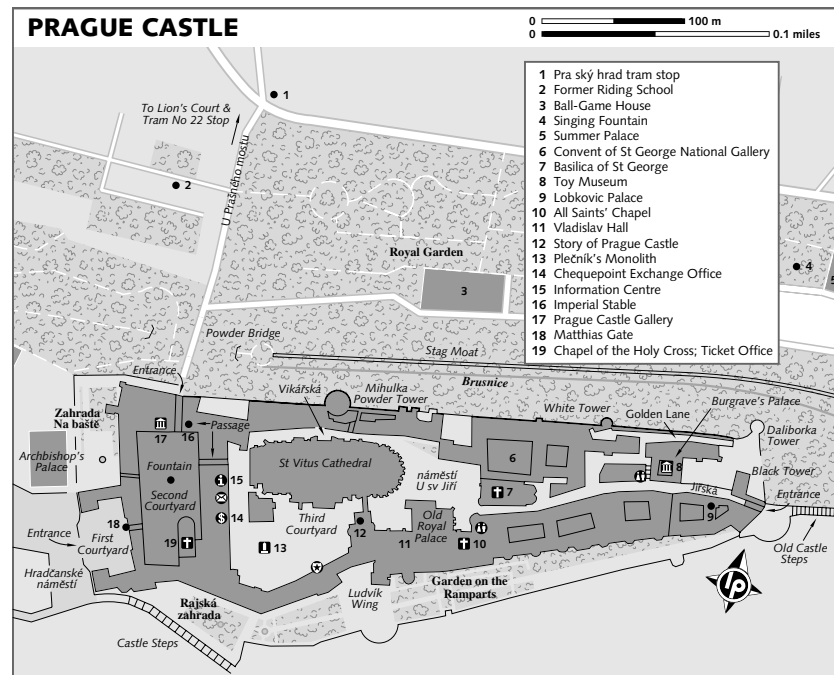
You should try to get beyond the city's centre for at least half a day; historic Vyšehrad, the birthplace of Prague, is worth a visit, while the inner suburbs of working-class Holešovice and Smíchov, genteel Vinohrady or grungy, youthful Žižkov will give you an insight into what regular Praguers get up to while the rest of us are watching the Astronomical clock.

Prague Castle

Prague castle (Map p87) – Pražský hrad, or just *hrad* to Czechs, and almost a small town in itself – is Prague's most popular attraction. According to *Guinness World Records*, it's the largest ancient castle in the world – 570m long, an average of 128m wide and covering a total area bigger than seven football fields.

Its history dates to the 9th century when Prince Bořivoj founded a fortified settlement here. It grew haphazardly as successive rulers made additions, creating an eclectic mix of architectural styles. The castle has always been the seat of Czech rulers and the official residence of the head of state, although the Czech Republic's first president, Václav Havel, chose to live in his own house on the outskirts of the city.

Prague castle has seen four major reconstructions, from that of Prince Soběslav in the 12th century to a classical face-lift under Empress Maria Theresa (r 1740-80). In the 1920s President Masaryk hired a Slovene architect, Jože Plečnik, to renovate the castle; his changes created some of the castle's most memorable features, and made the complex more tourist-friendly.



PRAGUE CASTLE TICKETS

Ticket A (adult/concession/family 350/175/520Kč) Includes St Vitus cathedral, Great tower, Old Royal palace, Story of Prague castle, basilica of St George, Powder tower, Golden lane and Daliborka.

Ticket B (adult/concession/family 220/110/330Kč) Includes St Vitus cathedral, Great tower, Old Royal palace, Golden lane and Daliborka.

Ticket C (adult/family 50/100Kč) Admission to Golden lane and Daliborka only.

Ticket D (adult/concession/family 50/25/100Kč) Admission to basilica of St George only.

Ticket E (adult/concession/family 50/25/100Kč) Admission to Powder tower only.

Ticket F (adult/concession/family 100/50/150Kč/v) Admission to convent of St George only.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Entry is free to the castle courtyards and gardens, and to the nave of St Vitus cathedral. There are six different tickets (valid for two days), which allow entry to various combinations of sights (see boxed text above); you can buy tickets at the **information centre** (Map p87; ☎ 224 373 368, 224 372 434; www.hrad.cz; 🕒 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) in the Third Courtyard (opposite the main entrance to St Vitus cathedral), or from ticket offices at the entrance to each of the main sights (St Vitus cathedral, Old Royal palace and basilica of St George).

From April to October the castle grounds are open from 5am to midnight, and the gardens from 10am to 6pm. The cathedral and other historic buildings accessible by ticket are open 9am to 5pm. From November to March the grounds open from 6am to 11pm, the historic buildings open from 9am to 4pm, and the gardens are closed.

One-hour guided tours are available in Czech (200Kč for up to five people, plus 40Kč per additional person), and in English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish (450Kč for up to five people, plus 90Kč per additional person) Tuesday to Sunday. Alternatively you can rent an audio-guide (cassette player and headphones) for two/three hours for 145/180Kč. Ask at the information centre.

Most approaches to the castle require some uphill walking. The usual ones are from the tram stop in Malostranské náměstí, up Nerudova and Ke Hradu to the main gate; and from Malostranská metro station, up the old castle steps – probably the least pleasant option, as the narrow stairs are often crowded. The easiest approach is to take tram 22 or 23, which you can board at Malostranská or Národní Třída metro stations, to the Pražský hrad stop (Map p87).

FIRST COURTYARD

The castle's main gate, **Matthias gate**, is flanked by huge, baroque statues of **battling Titans** (1767–70), which dwarf the castle guards who stand beneath them. After the fall of communism in 1989, then-president Václav Havel hired his old pal Theodor Pistek, the Czech costume designer on the film *Amadeus* (1984), to replace their communist-era khaki uniforms with the stylish pale-blue kit they now wear.

The **changing of the guard** takes place every hour on the hour, however the longest and most impressive display is at noon, when banners are exchanged while a brass band plays a fanfare from windows overlooking the courtyard.

SECOND COURTYARD

You pass through the Matthias gate into the Second Courtyard, centred on a baroque fountain and a 17th-century well with beautiful Renaissance lattice work. On the right, the **chapel of the Holy Cross** (kaple sv Kříže; 1763) was once the treasury of St Vitus cathedral; today it houses the castle's box office and souvenir shop.

The **Prague castle gallery** (adult/concession 100/50Kč; 🕒 10am-6pm) features 17th- and 18th-century European and Czech art. Opposite is the **Imperial stable** (Císařská konírna), which hosts temporary art exhibits. Past the gallery, the 1540 **Powder bridge** (Prašný most) crosses the **Stag moat** (Jelení příkop), where deer were raised for the royal table, and leads into the Royal garden.

ROYAL GARDEN

The Royal garden (Královská zahrada) started life as a Renaissance garden built by Ferdinand I in 1534. The most beautiful of the garden's buildings is the **Ball-Game house** (Míčovna; 1569), a masterpiece of Renaissance

sgraffito, and where the Hapsburgs once played a primitive version of badminton. To the east is the **Summer palace** (Letohrádek; 1538–60), or Belvedere, the most authentic Italian Renaissance building outside Italy, and to the west the **former riding school** (jízdárna; 1695). All three are used as venues for temporary exhibitions of modern art.

ST VITUS CATHEDRAL

As you pass through the passage on the eastern side of the Second Courtyard, the huge western façade of St Vitus cathedral (chrám sv Víta) soars directly above you. Occupying the site of a Romanesque rotunda built by Duke Václav in 929, it's the largest church in the country.

You enter the cathedral through the western door; everything between here and the crossing was built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Inside, the nave is flooded with colour from beautiful **stained-glass windows** created by eminent Czech artists of the early 20th century – note the one by Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha (third chapel on the northern side), depicting the lives of SS Cyril & Methodius (1909).

Just to the right of the south transept is the entrance to the 96m-tall **Great tower** (🕒 last entry 4.15pm Apr-Oct, closed during bad weather). You can climb the 297 slightly claustrophobic steps to the top for excellent views, and you also get a close look at the clockworks.

You'll need your castle admission ticket (A or B) to enter the eastern end of the cathedral, whose graceful late-Gothic vaulting dates from the 14th century. In the centre lies the ornate **Royal mausoleum** (1571–89) with its cold marble effigies of Ferdinand I, his wife Anna Jagellonská and son Maximilián II. At the far end is the spectacular, baroque silver **tomb of St John of Nepomuk**, its draped canopy supported by chubby, silver angels (the tomb contains two tons of silver in all).

The biggest and most beautiful of the cathedral's numerous side chapels is the **chapel of St Wenceslas**. Its walls are adorned with gilded panels containing polished slabs of semiprecious stones. Early 16th-century wall paintings depict scenes from the life of the Czechs' patron saint, while even older frescoes show scenes from the life of Christ. On the southern side of the chapel, a small door – locked with seven locks – hides a staircase leading to the Coronation Chamber above

the Zlatá brána, where the Czech **crown jewels** are kept.

Stairs lead down to the crypt, where you can see the remains of earlier churches that stood on the site of the cathedral, including an 11th-century Romanesque basilica. Beyond, you can crowd around the entrance to the **Royal crypt** to see the marble sarcophagi (dating only from the 1930s), which contain the remains of Czech rulers, including Charles IV, Wenceslas IV, George of Poděbrady (Jiří z Poděbrad) and Rudolf II.

THIRD COURTYARD

South of the cathedral is the Third Courtyard, which contains a granite **monolith** (1928) dedicated to the victims of WWI, designed by Jože Plečnik, and a copy of a 14th-century bronze **statue of St George** slaying the dragon; the original statue is in the convent of St George.

The southern doorway of the cathedral is known as the **Golden gate** (Zlatá brána), an elegant, triple-arched Gothic porch designed by Petr Parler. Above it is a **mosaic of the Last Judgment** (1370–71) – on the left, the godly rise from their tombs and are raised to heaven by angels; on the right, sinners are cast down to hell by demons. In the centre, Christ reigns in glory, with six Czech saints – Procopius, Sigismund, Vitus, Wenceslas, Ludmila and Adalbert – below. Beneath them, on either side of the central arch, Charles IV and his wife kneel in prayer.

The **Old Royal palace** (Starý Královský palác; admission incl in ticket A or B) is one of the oldest parts of the castle. At its heart is the Vladislav hall (Vladislavský sál), famous for its beautiful, late-Gothic vaulted roof – with its rough wooden floors and vast, rustic spaces it feels more medieval than anywhere else in the castle, and may make you want to slug from a tankard and gnaw on a hapless animal's roasted limb. It was used for banquets, councils and coronations and, during bad weather, jousting; hence the sloping Riders' Staircase leading in from the northern side. In one corner of the hall is the entrance to the **Ludvik wing** where, on 23 May 1618, Bohemian nobles threw two Catholic councillors from the window. They survived, as their fall was broken by the dung-filled moat, but this so-called Second Defenestration of Prague sparked off the Thirty Years' War.

Housed in the Gothic vaults beneath the Old Royal palace is an exhibition called the

Story of Prague castle (☎ 224 373 102; www.pribeh-hradu.cz; admission incl in ticket A, or adult/concession 140/50Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm), a huge and impressive collection of artefacts that is the most interesting exhibit in the entire castle. It traces 1000 years of the castle's history, from the building of the first wooden palisade to the present day, illustrated by large models of the castle at various stages in its development. Precious items on display include the helmet and chain mail worn by St Wenceslas, illuminated manuscripts and the Bohemian crown jewels. Anyone with a serious interest in Prague castle should visit here first, as orientation.

ST GEORGE SQUARE

St George square (náměstí U sv Jiří) is the plaza behind the cathedral, and the heart of Prague castle. The very plain-looking **convent of St George** (klášter sv Jiří; admission incl in ticket F) was Bohemia's first convent, established in 973 by Boleslav II. It's now a branch of the National gallery, with an excellent collection of Renaissance and baroque art.

The **basilica of St George** (bazilika sv Jiří; admission incl in ticket D or A) is the striking brick-red façade adjoining the convent, established in the 10th century. It's the best-preserved Romanesque structure in the Czech Republic, though most of what you see is from an 1887–1908 reconstruction. The Přemysl princes are buried here. On the left wall is a hole that enabled the nuns from the convent next door to communicate with the outside world.

POWDER TOWER

A passage to the north of St Vitus cathedral leads to the **Powder tower** (Mihulka; admission incl in ticket E), built at the end of the 15th century as part of the castle's defences. Later it became the workshop of the cannon- and bell-maker Tomáš Jaroš, who cast the bells for St Vitus cathedral. Alchemists employed by Rudolf II also worked here. Today the first floor houses a rather dull exhibition of 17th- and 18th-century weaponry.

GEORGE ST

Off George St (Jiřská), along the northern wall of the castle, is **Golden lane** (Zlatá ulička; admission incl in ticket A, B or C), also known as Goldsmiths' lane (Zlatnická ulička). Its tiny, colourful cottages were built in the 16th century for the sharpshooters of the castle guard, and later used by goldsmiths. In the 18th and 19th centuries

they were occupied by squatters, and later by artists like Kafka (who stayed at No 22 in 1916–17) and the Nobel-laureate poet Jaroslav Seifert. These days, the houses are souvenir shops and the street is crammed with tour groups trying to get into them.

At the western end of the lane is the **White tower** (Bílá věž), touted as a prison where failed Irish alchemist Edward Kelley was locked up by Rudolf II – in reality, Kelley's prison sentences, for killing someone in a duel, were served outside the capital. At the eastern end is the **Daliborka tower**, which got its name from the knight Dalibor of Kozojed, who played the violin when he was imprisoned here in 1498: Smetana based his opera *Dalibor* (1868) on the tale.

Just inside the eastern gate is the **Lobkowicz palace** (Lobkovický palác; adult/concession 20/10Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun). Built in the 1570s this aristocratic palace now houses a branch of the National museum, with a good collection on Czech history from prehistoric times until 1848. Exhibits include the sword of executioner Jan Mydlář (who lopped off the heads of 27 rebellious Protestant nobles in Old Town square in 1621) and some of the oldest marionettes in the Czech Republic, but to be honest this is a place for history buffs only.

Opposite Lobkowicz palace is the Burgrave's palace (Purkrabství) and its **toy museum** (adult/child 50/30Kč; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm), allegedly the world's second largest, with tons of Barbies and toys going back to Greek antiquity. Sadly, it's frustrating for kids as most displays are hands-off.

Hradčany

The lanes and stairways of Hradčany, which stretches west from the castle to Strahov monastery, are an ideal place to wander – most of this area around the west gate of Prague castle is residential, with just a few strips of shops, pubs and restaurants. Before it became a borough of Prague in 1598, Hradčany was almost levelled by Hussites and fire – in the 17th century palaces were built on the ruins.

HRADČANY SQUARE

Hradčany square (Hradčanské náměstí; Map p92), the square outside the western entrance to the castle, has kept its shape since the Middle Ages. At its centre is a **plague column** by Ferdinand Brokoff (1726), and at its south

edge stands the bronze figure of **Tomáš Masaryk**, the first president of Czechoslovakia.

On the north side of the square is the rococo **Archbishop's palace** (Arcibiskupský palác), bought and remodelled by Archbishop Antonín Bruse of Mohelnic in 1562, and the seat of archbishops ever since. Its wonderful interior is only open on the day before Good Friday; chances are you won't have time to wait around that long.

Opposite stands the Renaissance **Schwarzenberg palace** (Schwarzenberský palác), acquired by the powerful Schwarzenberg family in 1719, with a striking black-and-white sgraffito façade. Due to reopen in November 2007, it will house the National gallery's Old Masters collection.

Diagonally behind the Archbishop's palace is the 1707 baroque **Sternberg palace** (Šternberský palác), home to the **National gallery** (☎ 220 514 599; adult/child 150/70Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) and its splendid collection of 14th- to 18th-century European art. Fans of medieval altarpieces will be in heaven; there's also a number of Rubens, a Dürer, some Rembrandts and Breughels, and a large collection of Bohemian miniatures. It's worth a trip to the back of the first floor to see van Heemskerck's *The Tearful Bride*, who seems to have stepped right out of a drag-queen show.

LORETA SQUARE

From Hradčanské náměstí it's a short walk to Loreta square (Loretánské náměstí, Map p92), created early in the 18th century when the **Černín palace** (Černínský palác, Map p92) was built. This palace today houses the foreign ministry, but during the Nazi occupation it was SS Headquarters. In 1948 the foreign minister Jan Masaryk, son of the founding president of Czechoslovakia, fell to his death from one of the top-floor windows. Did he fall, or was he pushed?

The square's main attraction is the **Loreta** (Map p92; ☎ 224 510 789; Loretánské náměstí 7; adult/child 80/60Kč; ☎ 9am-12.15pm & 1-4.30pm), an extraordinary baroque place of pilgrimage founded by Benigna Kateřina Lobkowicz in 1626. The centrepiece of the Loreta is a replica of the Virgin's house, the **Santa casa**. Its interior has a naive charm, despite the opulence of its silver altar.

Across from it is the decidedly un-naive **church of the Nativity of Our Lord** (Map p92; kostel Narození Páně), built in 1737 by Kristof

Dientzenhofer. This church features two skeletons, of Spanish saints Felicissima and Marcia, dressed in nobles' clothing with wax masks over their skulls. The **chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows** (kaple Panny Marie Bolestné) features a crucified bearded lady, St Starosta. She was the daughter of a Portuguese king who promised her to the king of Sicily against her wishes. After a night of tearful prayers she awoke with a beard, the wedding was called off, and her loving father had her crucified. She was later made patron saint of the needy and godforsaken.

Loreta's most eye-popping attraction is the **treasury** (1st floor). It's been ransacked several times over the centuries, but some amazing items remain. Most over-the-top is the 90cm-tall **Prague sun** (Pražské slunce), made of solid silver and gold and studded with 6222 diamonds. Try not to get confused when you see the boxes asking for donations.

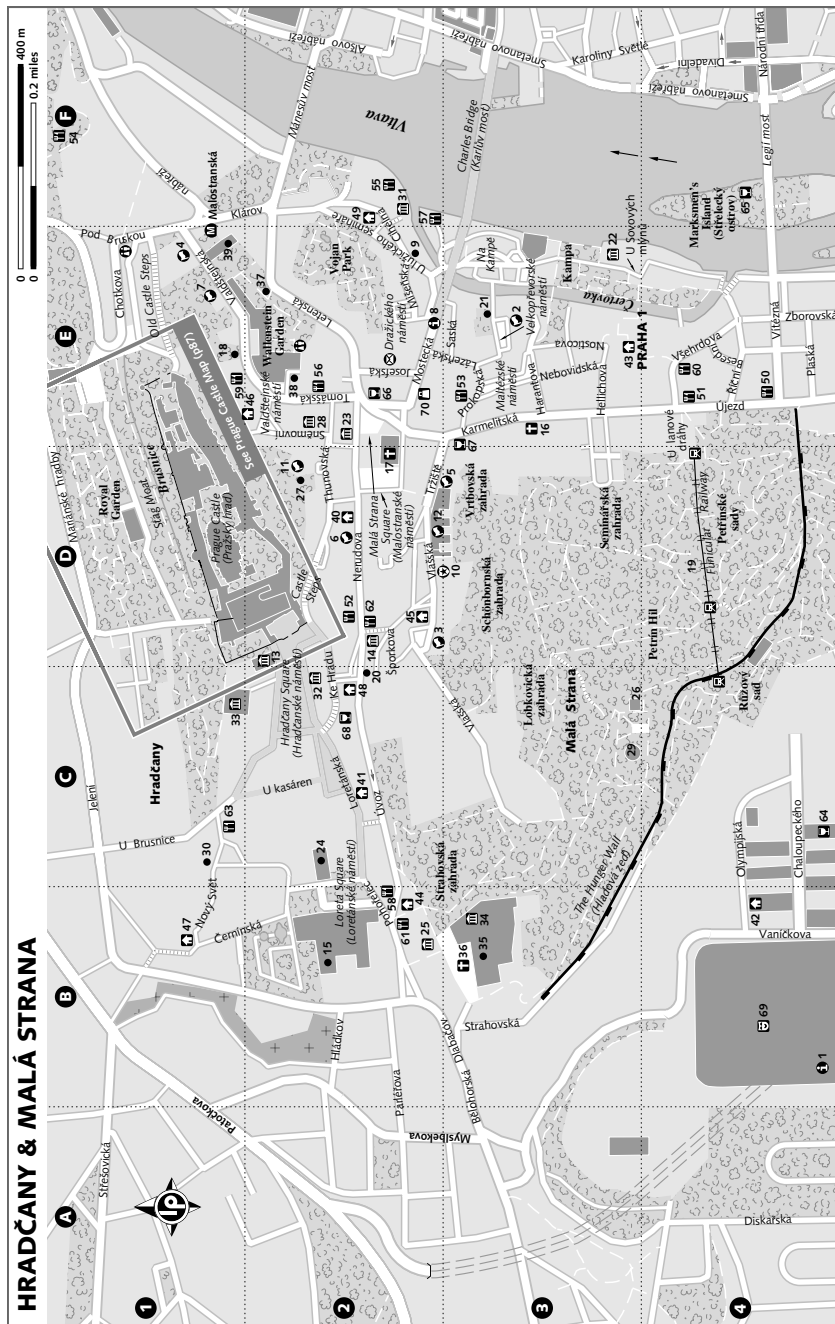
In addition, above the Loreta's entrance are 27 bells made in Amsterdam in the 17th century; they play *We Greet Thee a Thousand Times*.

STRAHOV MONASTERY

At the far end of Hradčany, Strahov monastery (Strahovský klášter; Map p92) is an enclosed oasis, a quiet escape from the castle-going crowds. Founded in 1140 by Vladislav II for the Premonstratensians. The present monastery buildings, completed in the 17th and 18th centuries, functioned until the communist government closed them down and imprisoned most of the monks, who returned in 1990; these days you can once again see robed figures striding across courtyards and slipping into cloisters.

The centrepiece of the courtyard is the stocky **church of the Assumption of Our Lady** (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie; Map p92), whose green domes you can see from everywhere else in Prague. Built in 1143, the church is filled with baroque gilt; Mozart allegedly played the organ here on one visit.

But what the tour groups come to see is the **Strahov library** (Strahovská knihovna; www.strahovmonastery.cz; adult/child 80/50Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm), the largest monastic library in the Czech Republic. The stunning interior of the two-storey-high **Philosophy hall** (Filozofický sál; 1780–97) was built to fit around carved and gilded, floor-to-ceiling walnut shelving that was rescued from another monastery in South



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Bohemia. The lobby outside the hall contains an 18th-century Cabinet of Curiosities, displaying the grotesquely shrivelled remains of sharks, skates, turtles and other sea creatures; these flayed and splayed corpses were prepared by sailors, who flogged them to credulous landlubbers as 'sea monsters'.

A corridor leads to the older but even more beautiful **Theology hall** (Teologický sál; 1679). On a stand outside the hall door is a facsimile of the library's most prized possession, the **Strahov Evangelary**, a 9th-century codex in a gem-studded 12th-century binding. A nearby bookcase houses the **Xyloteka** (1825), a set of book-like boxes, each one bound in the wood and bark of the tree it describes, with samples of leaves, roots, flowers and fruits inside.

In the connecting corridor, look out for the two long, brown, leathery things beside the model ship and narwhal tusk – if you ask, the prudish attendant will tell you they're preserved elephants' trunks, but they're actually whales' penises.

Tucked behind the library and largely ignored, the **Strahov gallery** (Strahovská obrazárna; adult/child 50/20Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun) con-

tains a fabulous collection of Bohemian Gothic, baroque, rococo and Romantic artworks. Some of the medieval works are extraordinary – don't miss the very modern-looking 14th-century Jihlava Crucifix.

The 'write your name on a grain of rice' movement may have undermined the respectability of miniature artists, but Siberian technician Anatoly Konyenko will restore your faith with his **Miniature museum** (muzeum Miniatur; Map p92; ☎ 233 352 371; www.muzeumminiatur.com; Strahovské Nádvoří 11; adult/child 50/30Kč; ☎ 10am-5pm). Konyenko used to manufacture tools for eye microsurgery, but these days he'd rather spend seven-and-a-half years crafting a pair of gold horseshoes for a flea. See those, plus the world's smallest book and strangely beautiful silhouettes of cars on the leg of a mosquito. Weird.

Malá Strana

Malá Strana (Little Quarter) lies between Prague castle and the Vltava river. Most tourists climb up to the castle along the Royal Way, on Mostecká and Nerudova streets, but the narrow side streets of this baroque district also have plenty of interest. Almost too picturesque

for its own good, Malá Strana is now much in demand as a film location.

Malá Strana started out as a market settlement in the 8th or 9th century, and was almost destroyed on two separate occasions: during battles between the Hussites and the Prague castle garrison in 1419, and then in the Great Fire of 1541. Following this massive devastation, Renaissance buildings and palaces replaced the destroyed houses, followed by the 17th- and 18th-century baroque churches and palaces that give Malá Strana much of its charm.

NERUDA STREET

Neruda Street (Nerudova Ulice, Map p92), part of the Royal Way, is an architectural delight. Most of its Renaissance façades have been 'baroquefied'; many still have their original shutter-like doors, and are adorned with emblems of some kind. No 47 is the **house of two suns** (dům U dvou slunců, Map p92), an early baroque building where the Czech poet Jan Neruda lived from 1845 to 1891, while No 12 is the **house of the three fiddles** (dům U tří houslíček, Map p92), which once belonged to a family of violin makers.

On the corner with Janský vršek is **Bretfeld palace** (Map p92), which Josef of Bretfeld made a centre for social gatherings starting in 1765; among his guests were Mozart and Casanova.

MALÁ STRANA SQUARE

Malá Strana square (Malostranské náměstí, Map p92) is really two squares, with the church of St Nicholas – Malá Strana's primary landmark – between them. It has been the hub of Malá Strana since the 10th century.

Malostranská beseda, at No 21, was once the **Old town hall**, where in 1575 the non-Catholic nobles wrote the 'Czech Confession' (České konfese), a pioneering demand for religious tolerance eventually passed into law by Rudolf II in 1609. In practice the demands were not fully met, and the nobles eventually got angry enough to fling two Hapsburg councillors out of a castle window (see Ludvík wing, p89).

In a city of butt-kicking churches, the **church of St Nicholas** (kostel sv Mikuláše; www.psalterium.cz; adult/concession 60/30Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Mar-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb) – not to be confused with the other church of St Nicholas on Old Town square – has to be the best of all; the huge green dome is a Prague landmark. Baroque star designer

Kristof Dientzenhofer pulled out all the stops on this one, and when he died his son Kilian picked up where he left off.

No matter how many baroque churches you've peered into over the last few days, this one will take your breath away. The ceiling fresco *Apotheosis of St Nicholas* (1770) by Johann Kracker – is the largest in Europe; clever trompe l'oeil technique makes the painting merge almost seamlessly with the architecture. Take the stairs up to the gallery for a closer look at the ceiling, and a balustrade scarred with the scratchings of bored 19th-century tourists and wannabe Franz Kafkas.

NORTHERN MALÁ STRANA

The castle steps (zámecké schody, Map p92) were originally the main route to the castle, and lead down into Thunovská street. Around the corner at Sněmovní is the **Parliament house** (Sněmovna, Map p92), the seat of the lower house of parliament. Historically it was also the seat of the national assembly, which on 14 November 1918 deposed the Hapsburgs from the Bohemian throne.

On Valdštejnské náměstí is the first of the monumental baroque structures built by Albrecht of Wallenstein, general of the Hapsburg armies in the 17th century. The **Wallenstein palace** (Valdštejnský palác, Map p92), built between 1623 and 1629, displaced 23 houses, a brickworks and three gardens. It's now occupied by the Senate of the Czech Republic.

Beside the palace is the huge, geometrically designed **Wallenstein garden** (Valdštejnská zahrada; Map p92 ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct). Its finest feature is the huge loggia decorated with scenes from the Trojan Wars, flanked to one side by a fake **stalactite grotto** full of hidden animals and grotesque faces. The **bronze statues** of Greek gods lining the avenue opposite the loggia are copies – the originals were carted away by marauding Swedes in 1648 and now stand outside the royal palace of Drottningholm near Stockholm. At the eastern end of the garden, the **Wallenstein riding school** (Valdštejnská jízdárna, Map p92) is home to changing exhibitions of modern art.

Across Valdštejnská street, the immaculately kept terraces of the **Palace gardens beneath Prague castle** (Palácové zahrady pod Pražským hradem; Map p92; ☎ 257 010 401; Valdštejnské nám 3; adult/child 79/49Kč; ☎ 10am-9pm Jun & Jul, 10am-8pm Aug, 10am-7pm May & Sep, 10am-6pm Apr & Oct) rise steeply up to the

castle. These beautiful terraced gardens on the steep southern slope of the castle hill date from the 17th and 18th centuries, when they were created for the owners of the adjoining palaces. They were restored in the 1990s and contain a Renaissance loggia with frescoes of Pompeii, espaliered vines, soft patches of lawn, fruit orchards, herb gardens, statuary and lots of steep stairs. There's another entrance/exit at the top, near the eastern end of the castle grounds.

HERGETOVA CÍHELNA

On the bank of the river lies the Hergetova Cihelna, a restored brickworks complex that now houses a restaurant (p129), café and a couple of museums. In the courtyard is one of David Černý's more controversial artworks, called **Piss** – an animated bronze sculpture of two men pissing in a puddle (whose irregular outline, you'll notice, is actually the map outline of the Czech Republic) and spelling out famous quotations from Czech literature with their pee (the sculpture is computer controlled).

Across the courtyard is the **Franz Kafka museum** (muzeum Franzy Kafky; Map p92; ☎ 257 535 507; www.kafkamuseum.cz; Hergetova Cihelna, Cihelná 2b; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), a much-hyped exhibition on the life and work of Prague's most famous literary son. It explores the intimate relationship between the writer and the city that shaped him through the use of original letters, photographs, quotations, period newspapers and publications, and video and sound installations.

The **Prague jewellery collection** (Pražský kabinet šperku; Map p92; ☎ 221 451 333; Cihelná 2b; adult/child 60/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), next door to the Franz Kafka museum, provides a showcase for some of the finest items of jewellery in the collection of the museum of Decorative Arts. There are exquisite Art Nouveau and Art Deco designs, as well as several pieces by Tiffany and Fabergé.

SOUTHERN MALÁ STRANA

The **church of Our Lady Victorious** (kostel Panny Marie Vítězné, Map p92) in Karmelitská, built in 1613, has on its central altar a 47cm-tall waxwork figure of the baby Jesus brought from Spain in 1628.

Known as the **Infant Jesus of Prague** (Pražské Jezulátko), the figure is said to have protected Prague from the plague and from the destruc-

tion of the Thirty Years' War. It is visited by a steady stream of pilgrims.

It was traditional to dress the figure in beautiful robes, and over the years various benefactors donated richly embroidered dresses. Today the Infant's wardrobe consists of more than 70 costumes donated from all over the world; at the back of the church is a **museum** (admission by donation; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat & 1-5pm Sun, closed 25 Dec & Easter Mon) displaying a selection of the frocks used to dress the Infant.

A short way south lies the French embassy, and opposite it is the **John Lennon Wall**. After his murder in 1980, Lennon became a pacifist hero for many young Czechs. An image of Lennon was painted on the wall (there is a niche that looks like a tombstone, along with political graffiti. Despite repeated coats of whitewash, the secret police never managed to keep it clean for long. Today it's home to lightweight graffiti of the 'Wendy & Michele wuz 'ere' variety, plus the odd incitement to give peace a chance. Graffiti is encouraged here. Why not bring some paint and lift the tone a bit?

A footbridge leads east from the Lennon Wall to **Kampa**, an 'island' created by the Čertovka (Devil's Stream), and the most peaceful and picturesque part of Malá Strana. In the 13th century the town's first mill, the Sovovský mlýn (now Kampa museum), was built on the island, and other mills followed. The southern part of Kampa is a park, ideal for summertime naps, Frisbee and picnics – local hippies love the place.

Housed in a renovated mill building, **Kampa museum** (muzeum Kampa; Map p92; ☎ 257 286 147; www.museumkampa.cz; U Sovovský mlýnů 2; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm) is devoted to 20th-century and contemporary art from Central Europe. The highlights are extensive collections of bronzes by cubist sculptor Otto Gutfreund, and paintings by František Kupka, a pioneer of abstract art.

Across Legii most, **Marksmen's island** (Střelecký ostrov) has a small sandy beach at its northern end. Lounge about with a beer from Letní bar (p136) or take a paddle in the Vltava if you dare.

PETŘÍN

One of the largest green spaces in Prague, 318m Petřín hill is great for cool, quiet walks and outstanding views of the city. Once upon a time there were also vineyards, and a quarry

from which most of Prague's Romanesque and Gothic buildings were assembled.

Petřín is easily accessible from Hradčany and Strahov, or you can ride the **funicular railway** (Map p92) from Újezd (at U lanové dráhy). It runs every 10 to 20 minutes from 9.15am to 8.45pm, for the same price as a tram ride (and you can use city transit tickets).

North of the summit terminus is the **Petřín tower** (Petřínská rozhledna; Map p92; adult/child 50/40Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm May, 10am-8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-7pm Apr & Sep, 10am-6pm Oct, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), a 60m Eiffel Tower lookalike built in 1891 for the Prague Exposition. Those who don't think climbing 299 steps is an act of lunacy will enjoy the best views of Prague and surrounds from the top. On the way to the tower you pass through the **Hunger wall** (Hladová zeď), built in the 1360s by the city's poor in return for food – another of Karel IV's bright ideas. Stations of the Cross – small markers depicting the stages of Jesus' journey from conviction to crucifixion – run along the wall, part of the way down to Malá Strana.

Below the tower is the **mirror maze** (bludiště; Map p92; adult/child 40/30Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm May, 10am-8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-7pm Apr & Sep, 10am-6pm Oct, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), also built for the 1891 Exposition and later moved here. It's a damn fine laugh.

Staré Město & Josefov

The Old Town – Staré Město in Czech – has been Prague's working heart ever since it was honoured with a town charter by Wenceslas I in 1231, and given the beginnings of a fortification. The town walls are long gone, but their line can still be traced along the streets Národní třída, Na příkopě and Revoluční, and the main gate – the Powder gate – still survives.

To ease the devastation of frequent flooding by the Vltava River, the level of the town was gradually raised, beginning in the 13th century, with new construction simply rising on top of older foundations (many of Staré Město's buildings have Gothic interiors and Romanesque cellars). A huge fire in 1689 contributed to an orgy of rebuilding during the Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 17th and 18th centuries, giving the formerly Gothic district a heavily baroque face.

At the centre of everything is Old Town square, one of Europe's biggest and most beautiful urban spaces. If the maze of nar-

row streets around the square can be said to have a 'main drag' it's the so-called Royal Way (Královská cesta), the ancient coronation route to Prague castle, running from the Powder gate along Celetná to Old Town square and Malé náměstí, then along Karlova and across Charles bridge.

JOSEFOV

The slice of Staré Město within Kaprova, Dlouhá and Kozí streets contains the remains of the once-thriving mini-town of Josefov, Prague's former Jewish ghetto: half a dozen old synagogues, the town hall, a ceremonial hall and the cluttered and picturesque Old Jewish cemetery. In an act of grotesque irony, the Nazis preserved these places as part of a planned 'museum of an extinct race'. Instead they have survived as a memorial to seven centuries of oppression.

As well as being a repository of ancient Jewish buildings, modern Josefov – particularly along Pařížská, Kozí and V kolkovně – is a neighbourhood of hip sidewalk cafés, international designer boutiques and drop-dead-cool cocktail bars. Paris Ave (Pařížská třída), built at the time the ghetto was cleared, is lined with courtly four- and five-storey Art Nouveau apartment blocks adorned with stained glass and sculptural flourishes – just off the strip, Maiselova 21 is particularly stunning.

JEWISH MUSEUM

The **Jewish museum** (Židovské muzeum; ☎ 222 317 191; www.jewishmuseum.cz; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun-Fri Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Sun-Fri Nov-Mar, closed on Jewish hols), as the area's attractions are collectively known, takes in: the cemetery, ceremonial hall, gallery Roberta Guttmanna, and Spanish, Maisel, Pinkas, Klaus and Old-New synagogues. The Old-New synagogue is still used for religious services; the others have been converted to exhibition halls holding what is probably the world's biggest collection of sacred Jewish artefacts, many of them saved from demolished Bohemian and Moravian synagogues.

You have the choice of paying to see all of them (adult/child 500/340Kč) or splitting the museum in two – the Old-New synagogue alone (200/140Kč), and everything else (300/200Kč). All tickets include the gallery. You can buy tickets at Pinkas synagogue, the Spanish synagogue and the Ceremonial hall.

If you don't think you'll make it around all the locations, start with the cemetery, fol-

low it up with the excellent exhibition at the Maisel synagogue and then see the exhibition's continuation in the gorgeous Spanish synagogue.

Old-New Synagogue

Completed about 1270, the **Old-New synagogue** (Staronová synagoga; Map p98; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri) is one of Prague's earliest Gothic buildings and Europe's oldest 'working' synagogue – it hosts weekly Orthodox ceremonies. The oxymoronic name caught on because this is one of two synagogues built in the 13th century, at a time when Prague already had one old synagogue – of the two new ones, this one is slightly older. Around the central chamber are an entry hall, a winter prayer hall and the room from which women watch the men-only services (it's at the back, through the vents in the wall). The interior, with a pulpit surrounded by a 15th-century wrought-iron grille, looks much as it would have 500 years ago. The 17th-century scriptures on the walls were recovered from beneath a later 'restoration'. On the eastern wall is the Holy Ark that holds the Torah scrolls, hidden by a wall hanging. Rumour has it the steep roof hides the slumbering mythical golem, a giant Jewish superhero made of mud from the Vltava and brought to life by supernatural means.

Old Jewish Cemetery

Founded in the early 15th century, the Old Jewish cemetery (Starý židovský hřbitov, Map p98) is Europe's oldest surviving Jewish cemetery (it was closed in 1787). Some 12,000 toppling, faded stones lean up against one another, but beneath them are perhaps 100,000 graves, piled in layers. The oldest standing stone (now replaced by a replica) dates from 1439. The most prominent graves, marked by pairs of marble tablets with a 'roof' between them, are near the main gate. They include those of Mordechai Maisel and Rabbi Löw. You'll see pebbles and notes (prayers) balanced on many of the stones along the edges of the path – these are left as a mark of respect. There's also a Braille trail around the cemetery. Since the cemetery was closed, burials have taken place at the Jewish cemetery in Žižkov.

The ancient cemetery – you enter via the Pinkas synagogue – is certainly picturesque and can be quite eerie. However, this is also one of the most popular sights in Prague, and if you're hoping to have a moment of

quiet contemplation you'll probably be disappointed (try either of the Žižkov cemeteries for a more solitary experience).

Other Jewish Museum Sights

Opposite the Old-New synagogue is the elegant 16th-century **High synagogue** (Vysoká synagoga, Map p98) and the **Jewish town hall** (Židovská radnice, Map p98), both closed to the public.

By the cemetery exit, the **Klaus synagogue** (Klausová synagoga, Map p98), a 1694 baroque building, holds exhibits relating to Jewish ceremonies for birth, worship and holy days. In the **Ceremonial hall** (Obřadní síň, Map p98), built in 1906 on the other side of the cemetery exit, you'll see exhibits on Jewish rituals for illness and death – if you're particularly interested in the importance of the cemetery, you may choose to visit this exhibition first.

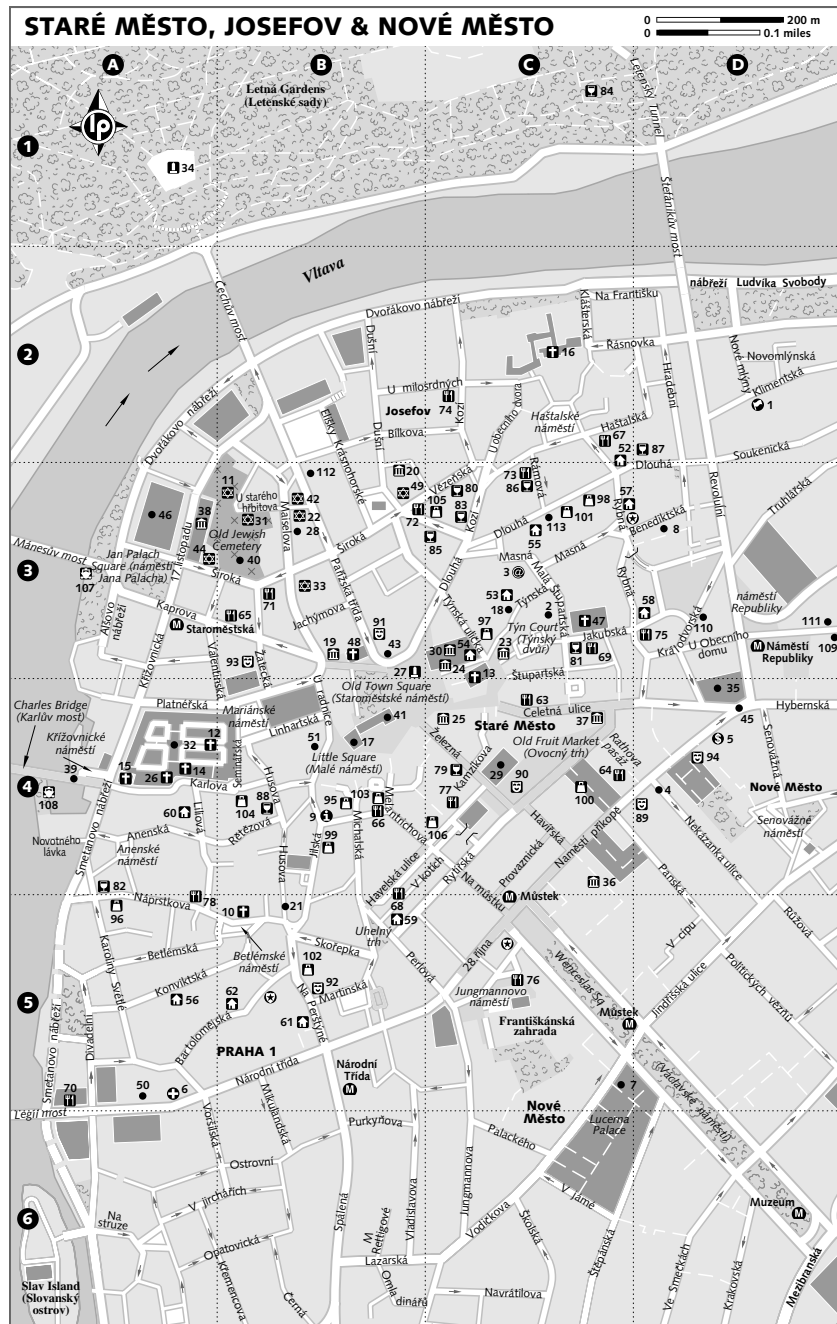
The handsome **Pinkas synagogue** (Pinkasova synagoga, Map p98) was built in 1535 and used for worship until 1941. After WWII it was converted into a moving memorial, with the names, birth dates and dates of disappearance of the 77,297 Bohemian and Moravian victims of the Nazis inscribed across wall after wall (at one point the communist regime removed them, but they've since been reinscribed). It also has a collection of paintings and drawings by children held in the Terezin concentration camp (p231) during WWII.

The neo-Gothic **Maisel synagogue** (Maiselova synagoga, Map p98) hosts the pre-1780 part of the museum's exhibit on the history of Jews in Bohemia and Moravia. The quantity and quality of artefacts is astounding, and the text accompanying them is excellent. The exhibition continues up to the present day (taking in the Nazi occupation) at the **Spanish synagogue** (Španělská synagoga, Map p98), though your eyes may be drawn away from the exhibits to the building's beautiful Moorish interior.

Gallery Roberta Guttmanna (Map p98; ☎ 224 819 456; U Staré Skoly 1; adult/child 30/15Kč; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun-Fri Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Sun-Fri Nov-Mar), behind the Spanish synagogue, hosts rotating exhibits of Jewish artists' work – the ticket price is included in your Jewish museum ticket, or you can visit individually.

MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ARTS

One of those museums where every little item is just begging to be stroked, the **museum of**



INFORMATION		Museum of Czech Cubism (House of the Black Madonna)..... 37 C4	U Zavoje..... 77 C4
Australian Consulate..... 1 D2	Big Ben..... 2 C3	Museum of Decorative Arts..... 38 A3	V Zátěši..... 78 A5
Bohemia Bagel..... 3 C3	Cedok (Main Office)..... 4 D4	Old Charles Bridge Tower..... 39 A4	DRINKING ☑
Komerční Banka..... 5 D4	Policlinic at Národní..... 6 A5	Old Jewish Cemetery..... 40 B3	Agharta Jazz Centrum..... 79 C4
Prague Information Service (PIS)..... (see 41)	Prague Information Service Organisation..... 8 D3	Old Town Hall..... 41 B4	Blatouch..... 80 C3
Slovak Tourist Board..... 9 B4		Old-New Synagogue..... 42 B3	Chateau L'Enfer Rouge..... 81 C3
		Oppelt Building..... 43 B3	Friends..... 82 A4
		Pinkas Synagogue..... 44 A3	Kozicka..... 83 C3
		Powder Gate..... 45 D4	Letná Beer Garden..... 84 C1
		Pragotur..... (see 41)	Ocean Drive..... 85 C3
		Prague City Gallery..... (see 23)	Palirna Igor Sevcik..... 86 C3
		Prague Spring Box Office..... (see 46)	Roxy..... 87 D2
		Rudolfinum..... 46 A3	U Zlatého Tygra..... 88 B4
		St James Church..... 47 C3	
		St Nicholas Church..... 48 B3	ENTERTAINMENT ☑
		Spanish Synagogue..... 49 B3	Bohemia Ticket International..... 89 D4
		Ceremonial Hall..... 10 B5	Estates Theatre..... 90 C4
		Viola Building..... 50 A5	Image Theatre..... 91 B3
		VJ Rott Building..... 51 B4	Kino Perštýn..... 92 B5
			Municipal House..... (see 35)
			National Marionette Theatre..... 93 B3
			Palace Cinemas..... 94 D4
			Rudolfinum..... (see 46)
		SLEEPING ☑	
		Church of St Clement..... 14 A4	Art Deco Galerie..... 95 B4
		Church of the Holy Saviour..... 15 A4	Balnys Spa..... 96 A5
		Convent of St Agnes..... 16 C2	Bric à Brac..... 97 C3
		Dům U Minuty..... 17 B4	Eduard Čapek..... 98 C3
		Estates Theatre..... (see 90)	Fun Explosive..... 99 B4
		Fitness Tyn..... 18 C3	Giga..... 100 C4
		Franz Kafka's Birthplace & Exhibition..... 19 B3	Granát Turnov..... 101 C3
		Gallery Roberta Guttmanna..... 20 B3	Hudy Sport..... 102 B5
		Hanging Around (David Černý sculpture)..... 21 B5	Kubista..... (see 37)
		High Synagogue..... 22 B3	Manufaktura..... 103 B4
		House at the Golden Ring..... 23 C3	Manufaktura..... 104 B4
		House at the Stone Bell..... 24 C3	Rott Crystal..... (see 51)
		House of the Unicorn..... 25 C4	TEG..... 105 C3
		Italian Chapel of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary..... 26 A4	Trio..... (see 19)
		Jan Hus Statue..... 27 B3	Tupeys Lidová Keramika..... 106 C4
		Jewish Town Hall..... 28 B3	
		Kafka's Home 1889-96..... (see 17)	TRANSPORT
		Karolinum..... 29 C4	Boat Rental..... 107 A3
		Kinský Palace..... 30 C3	Boat Rental..... 108 A4
		Klaus Synagogue..... 31 B3	CD Travel..... 109 D3
		Library Hall & Astronomical Tower..... 32 A4	City Bike..... 110 D3
		Maisel Synagogue..... 33 B3	Czech Airlines..... 111 B3
		Metronome..... 34 A1	Red Hot & Blues..... 112 B3
		Municipal House..... 35 D4	U Pinkasů..... 76 C5
		Museum of Communism..... 36 C4	

Decorative Arts (Umělecko-průmyslové muzeum; Map p98; ☎ 251 093 111; www.upm.cz, in Czech; 17. listopadu 2; permanent collection adult/child 80/40Kč, temporary exhibitions 80/40Kč, combined 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) arose as part of a European movement to encourage a return to the aesthetic values that had been sacrificed to the Industrial Revolution.

One of Prague's highlights, the museum's collections include jewellery, furniture, clocks, ceramics, glass, textiles and graphic arts. There are glass cases full of 1940s frocks, walls of Art Nouveau poster art, beautifully illuminated ancient religious texts, pocket

watches in the shape of leering skulls and the rococo grandfather of all grandfather clocks. Even the museum building, built in 1898, is gorgeous. The collection on display is only a fraction of what the museum owns; other bits appear now and then in temporary exhibitions.

The little gift shop here has some sublime pieces of ceramic, glass and jewellery design, and there's an excellent café too. If you want a peek into the Old Jewish cemetery without braving the crowds, head for the museum's toilets where the landing window provides a good view.

RUDOLFINUM

Presiding over Jan Palach square (náměstí Jana Palacha) is the Rudolfinum (Map p98), home of the Czech Philharmonic (see Entertainment, p138). This and the National theatre, both designed by the architects Josef Schulz and Josef Zitek, are considered Prague's finest neo-Renaissance buildings. Completed in 1884, the Rudolfinum served between the wars as the seat of the Czechoslovak parliament. Across the road, on the philosophy faculty building, where student martyr Jan Palach (p117) once studied, is a memorial sculpture incorporating his death mask.

CHARLES BRIDGE

Part of Karel IV's Gothic building frenzy, Charles bridge (Karlův most, Map p98) was constructed to replace the earlier Judith bridge (named after Vladislav I's queen), which had been irreparably damaged by ice. Designed by Peter Parler, it was completed in about 1400, though it was known simply as Kamenný most (Stone bridge) until the 19th century. Despite occasional flood damage, it withstood wheeled traffic for 600 years without a shudder – thanks, legend says, to eggs mixed into the mortar – until it was made pedestrian-only after WWII. During the floods of 2002, cranes stood watch over the bridge, pulling large pieces of detritus out of the water so the pillars would not be damaged.

Many of the statues were later additions, put up to promote their particular ecclesiastical orders. These days the most popular is that of the country's patron saint, John of Nepomuk, who was thrown off the bridge

by Wenceslas IV in 1393 for refusing to divulge the queen's confessions. It's said that if you rub the plaque at the statue's base, you'll one day return to Prague. Most of the statues are copies – the originals are preserved in Vyšehrad's casemates (p111) and the Lapidárium (p113).

Strolling across the bridge is everybody's favourite Prague pastime. If you come in the early morning you might have the place to yourself, but by 11am you might as well be in the front row of a Linkin Park concert for all the room you'll have to yourself. On a warm evening, even with the throng, it's a pretty romantic place.

In summer you can climb up into the old **bridge towers** (adult/child 40/30Kč, child under 10 free; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Nov) at either end for an even better view.

Gangs of pickpockets work the bridge day and night, so watch your valuables.

OLD TOWN SQUARE

The huge Old Town square (Staroměstské náměstí, also called Staromák for short, Map p98) has been Prague's principal public square since the 10th century, and was its main marketplace until the beginning of the 20th century. These days it's a seething mass of humanity, as tourists nudge one another for space in front of the Astronomical clock, peer bemusedly at maps or try to find a place to sit down for a minute without forking over half their budget. Regular Praguers also use the square as the site for art and sporting events, and on days when something's going on here you can't move for people. Despite all

this, it remains an awe-inspiring assemblage of architecture and history – late at night, in particular, it's incredibly atmospheric. Stand still for a moment, take a deep breath, and really look around you.

Ladislav Šaloun's brooding Art Nouveau sculpture of **Jan Hus** dominates the square. It was unveiled on 6 July 1915, the 500th anniversary of the death of Hus at the stake.

OLD TOWN HALL

Founded in 1338, Staré Město's ancient **town hall** (Staroměstská radnice; Map p98; adult/child 50/40Kč, separate ticket for tower; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct; 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Nov-Mar) looks like a row of private buildings with a tower at the end. And that's what it is – the skint medieval town council bought it from previous owners one house at a time whenever funds were available. You can visit selected rooms in the town hall, including the Gothic chapel and the clock's interior workings.

The sgraffito-covered building at the corner, called **dům U minuty**, was one of Franz Kafka's childhood homes. A Gothic chapel and a neo-Gothic north wing were destroyed by the retreating Nazis in 1945, on the day before the Soviet army marched into Prague. The chapel has been laboriously reconstructed.

A plaque on the tower's eastern face contains a roll-call of the 27 Czech Protestant nobles beheaded in 1621 after the Battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain); crosses on the ground mark the spot where the deed was done.

It's *de rigueur* to wait for the hourly show by the hall's slightly overrated **Astronomical clock** (see following) – you can't really see what's going on if you're standing at an angle, but to get a spot in front you'll need to arrive half an hour early. The 60m **tower** (admission 50Kč; ☎ same hrs as town hall) is the only one in Prague with a lift all the way to the top – perhaps more interesting than watching the clock is nipping up here to watch the people watching the clock.

ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK

The Old town hall tower was given a clock in 1410 by the master clockmaker Mikuláš of Kadaně; this was improved in 1490 by one Master Hanuš, producing the mechanical marvel, the Astronomical clock (Map p98) you see today. Legend has it that Hanuš was afterwards blinded so he could not duplicate

the work elsewhere, and in revenge crawled up into the clock and disabled it. (Documents from the time suggest that he carried on as clock master for years, unblinded, although the clock apparently didn't work properly until it was repaired in about 1570.)

Four figures beside the clock represent the deepest civic anxieties of 15th-century Praguers: Vanity (with a mirror), Greed (with his money bag; originally a Jewish moneylender, cosmetically altered after WWII), Death, and Pagan Invasion (represented by a Turk). The four figures below these are the Chronicler, Angel, Astronomer and Philosopher.

On the hour, Death rings a bell and inverts his hourglass, and the 12 Apostles parade past the windows above the clock, nodding to the crowd. On the left side are Paul (with a sword and a book), Thomas (lance), Jude (book), Simon (saw), Bartholomew (book) and Barnabas (parchment); on the right side are Peter (with a key), Matthew (axe), John (snake), Andrew (cross), Philip (cross) and James (mallet). At the end, a cock crows and the hour is rung.

On the upper face, the disc in the middle of the fixed part depicts the world known at the time – with Prague at the centre, of course. The gold sun traces a circle through the blue zone of day, the brown zone of dusk (Crepusculum in Latin) in the west (Occasus), the black disc of night, and dawn (Aurora) in the east (Ortus). From this the hours of sunrise and sunset can be read. The curved lines with black Arabic numerals are part of an astrological 'star clock'.

The sun-arm points to the hour (without any daylight-saving time adjustment) on the Roman-numeral ring; the top XII is noon and the bottom XII is midnight. The outer ring, with Gothic numerals, reads traditional 24-hour Bohemian time, counted from sunset; the number 24 is always opposite the sunset hour on the fixed (inner) face.

The moon, with its phases shown, also traces a path through the zones of day and night, riding on the offset moving ring. On the ring you can also read which houses of the zodiac the sun and moon are in. The hand with a little star at the end of it indicates sidereal (stellar) time.

The calendar-wheel beneath all this astronomical wizardry, with 12 seasonal scenes celebrating rural Bohemian life, is a duplicate of one painted in 1866 by the Czech Revivalist

MENDELSSOHN IS ON THE ROOF

The roof of the Rudolfinum – a complex of concert halls and offices built in the late 19th century – is decorated with statues of famous composers. It housed the German administration during WWII, when the Nazi authorities ordered that the statue of Felix Mendelssohn – who was Jewish – be removed.

In *Mendelssohn Is on the Roof*, a darkly comic novella about life in wartime Prague, the Jewish writer Jiří Weil weaves a wryly amusing story around this true-life event. The two Czech labourers given the task of removing the statue can't tell which of the two dozen or so figures is Mendelssohn – they all look the same, as far as they can tell. Their Czech boss, remembering his lectures in 'racial science', tells them that Jews have big noses. 'Whichever one has the biggest conk, that's the Jew.'

So the workmen single out the statue with the biggest nose – 'Look! That one over there with the beret. None of the others has a nose like his' – sling a noose around its neck, and start to haul it over. As their boss walks across to check on their progress, he gapes in horror as they start to topple the figure of the only composer on the roof that he does recognise – Richard Wagner.

Josef Mánes. You can have a close look at the beautiful original in the Prague city museum (p105). Most of the dates around the calendar-wheel are marked with the names of their associated saints; 6 July honours Jan Hus.

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH

The baroque wedding cake in the north-western corner of the square is **St Nicholas church** (kostel sv Mikuláše; Map p98; admission free; ☎ noon-4pm Mon, 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun), built in the 1730s by Kilian Dientzenhofer. This is now a Hussite church, though its Protestant inhabitants have held onto the gilt extravagances of the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

Franz Kafka was born just next door, though the building was later demolished. The building that replaced it is now a privately run and pretty dull **Franz Kafka exhibition** (Map p98; U Radnice 5; admission 40Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat).

KINSKÝ PALACE

Fronting the late-baroque **Kinský palace** (Goltz-Kinský palace or palác Kinských; Map p98; ☎ 224 301 003; 12 Staroměstské náměstí; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-5.30pm) is probably the city's finest rococo façade, completed in 1765 by the very productive Kilian Dientzenhofer. In 1948 Klement Gottwald proclaimed communist rule in Czechoslovakia from the building's balcony. These days it's a branch of the National gallery, showing temporary exhibitions.

HOUSE AT THE STONE BELL

The 14th-century Gothic **house at the stone bell** (dům u kamenného zvonu; Map p98; 13 Staroměstské náměstí; adult/child 90/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), named after the house sign at the corner of the building, houses two restored Gothic chapels. It is now a branch of the Prague city gallery, with changing modern-art exhibits.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY BEFORE TÝN

The spiky-topped church of Our Lady before Týn (kostel Panny Marie před Týnem, Map p98), or 'Týn church', is early Gothic, though it takes some imagination to visualise the original in its entirety because it's strangely hidden behind the contemporaneous four-storey Týn School. Inside it's smothered in heavy baroque, but you'll be lucky to get a decent look – the glassed-in vestibule at the church's entrance is always crammed full of visitors. The church actually looks best from

a distance – in our opinion, the best view is from Letná beer garden (p136).

The Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, one of Rudolf II's most illustrious 'consultants' (who died in 1601 of a burst bladder – he was too polite to leave the table during a royal function), is buried near the chancel.

TÝN COURT

The Týn church's name comes from the medieval courtyard that lies behind it, the Týn court (Týnský dvůr). Originally constructed to house visiting foreign merchants, this atmospheric cobbled square and the tiny lanes around it are now home to shops and restaurants.

Just outside the courtyard, in the restored Renaissance **house at the golden ring** (dům U zlatého prstenu; Map p98; ☎ 224 828 245; Týnská 6/630; adult/child 60/40Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), is another branch of the Prague city gallery, with a fine collection of 20th-century Czech art.

ST JAMES CHURCH

The long, tall Gothic **St James church** (kostel sv Jakuba; Map p98; Malá Štupartská), behind the Týnský dvůr, began life in the 14th century as a Minorite monastery church. It had a beautiful baroque face-lift in the early 18th century. Pride of place goes to the over-the-top tomb of Count Jan Vratislav of Mitrovic, an 18th-century lord chancellor of Bohemia, in the northern aisle.

Hanging to the left of the main door (on the inside, as you face the door) is a shrivelled human arm. In about 1400 a thief apparently tried to steal the jewels off the statue of the Virgin. Legend says the Virgin grabbed his wrist in such an iron grip that his arm had to be lopped off. (The truth may not be far behind: the church was a favourite of the guild of butchers, who may have administered their own justice.)

It's well worth a visit to enjoy St James' splendid pipe organ and famous acoustics – check the notice board outside.

KLEMENTINUM

To boost the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Bohemia, the Hapsburg emperor Ferdinand I invited the Jesuits to Prague in 1556. They selected one of the city's choicest pieces of real estate and in 1587 set to work on the **church of the Holy Saviour** (kostel Nejsvětějšího Spasitele, Map p98), Prague's

flagship of the Counter-Reformation and the Jesuit's original church. The western façade faces Charles bridge, its sooty stone saints glaring down at the traffic jam of trams and tourists on Křižovnické náměstí.

After gradually buying up most of the adjacent neighbourhood, the Jesuits started building their college, the Klementinum, in 1653. By the time of its completion a century later it was the largest building in the city after Prague castle. When the Jesuits fell out with the pope in 1773, it became part of Charles University.

The Klementinum is a vast complex of beautiful baroque and rococo halls, now occupied by the Czech National Library. Most of it is closed to the public, but you can visit the baroque **library hall & astronomical tower** (Map p98; ☎ 221 663 111; adult/child 100/30Kč; ☎ 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) on a guided tour. Gates on Křižovnická, Karlova and Seminářská allow free access to the Klementinum's courtyards, which offer a less crowded alternative to Karlova if you're walking to or from Charles bridge.

A popular concert venue (programme and tickets are available at most ticket agencies) is the Klementinum's **chapel of Mirrors** (Zrcadlová kapele, Map p98). Dating from the 1720s, the interior is an ornate confection of gilded stucco, marbled columns, fancy frescoes and ceiling mirrors – think baroque on steroids.

There are two other interesting churches. The **church of St Clement** (kostel sv Klementa; Map p98; ☎ services 8.30am & 10am Sun), lavishly redecorated in the baroque style from 1711 to 1715 to plans by Kilian Dientzenhofer, is now a Greek Catholic chapel. Conservatively dressed visitors are welcome to attend the services. And then there's the elliptical **Italian chapel of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary** (Vlašská kapele Nanebevzetí Panny Marie, Map p98), built in 1600 for the Italian artisans who worked on the Klementinum (it's still technically the property of the Italian government).

LITTLE SQUARE

Little square (Malé náměstí, Map p98) is surrounded by several fine, baroque and neo-Renaissance exteriors decorating some of Staré Město's oldest structures. Have a gander at the **VJ Rott building** (Map p98) at No 3, decorated with wall paintings by Mikuláš Aleš, and now housing four floors of crystal, garnet and jewellery shops. This square is a

good place to stand at five minutes to the hour, when you can watch panicked tourists sprint through on their way to catch the Astronomical clock show.

CELETNÁ STREET

Pedestrianised Celetná, leading from the Powder gate to Old Town square, is an open-air museum of pastel-painted baroque façades covering Gothic frames resting on Romanesque foundations, deliberately buried to raise Staré Město above the Vltava River's floods. But the most interesting building dates only from 1912 – Josef Gočár's delightful **house of the black Madonna**. Prague's first and finest example of cubist architecture still looks modern and dynamic, and now houses the **museum of Czech cubism** (muzeum Českého kubismu; ☎ 224 301 003; Ovocný trh 19; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), three floors of cubist paintings and sculpture, as well as furniture, ceramics and glassware in cubist designs.

The eastern end of Celetná is guarded by the gloomy 65m-tall **Powder gate** (Prašná brána; Map p98; adult/child 30/40Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Oct), begun in 1475 during the reign of King Vladislav II Jagiello but never finished. Used to store gunpowder in the 18th century, it was refurbished in the 19th century and the steeple and decorations were added. There are great views from the top, and there's an exhibit about Prague's medieval towers.

MUNICIPAL HOUSE

Don't even consider missing the **Municipal house** (Obecní dům; Map p98; ☎ 222 002 101; www.obecni-dum.cz; náměstí Republiky 5; guided tours 150Kč; ☎ bldg 7.30am-11pm, information centre 10am-6pm), Prague's most exuberant and sensual building, with an unrivalled Art Nouveau interior and a façade that looks like a Victorian Easter egg. Bring your smelling salts – the sheer relentlessness of the decoration may make you woozy.

The complex was built between 1906 and 1912 in an attempt to one-up German architectural developments. Thirty of the leading artists of the day worked together to make this the architectural climax of the Czech National Revival.

The mosaic above the entrance, *Homage to Prague*, is set between sculptures representing the oppression and rebirth of the Czech people. You pass beneath a wrought-iron and stained-glass canopy into an interior that is Art Nouveau down to the doorknobs.

To go upstairs, you have to join a guided tour, which is well worth the price. You'll see half a dozen over-the-top salons, including the incredible **Lord Mayor's hall**, done up entirely by Art Nouveau superstar Alfons Mucha, who didn't let a single fitting escape his attention. Also here is the **Smetana hall**, Prague's biggest concert hall, and a **gallery** (admission 100Kč) with temporary art exhibits.

Pivotal events that took place here include the proclamation of an independent Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918, and meetings between Civic Forum and the Jakeš regime in November 1989. The Prague Spring music festival always opens on 12 May, the anniversary of Smetana's death, with a procession from Vyšehrad to Municipal house, and a gala performance of his symphonic cycle *Má vlast* (My Country) in Smetana hall.

NA PŘÍKOPĚ

Na příkopě (p98) means 'on the moat'; with Národní třída, 28.října and Revoluční this street marks the moat (filled in at the end of the 18th century) that ran along the Old Town walls.

This was the haunt of Prague's German café society in the 19th century. Today it is the main upmarket shopping precinct (along with Národní), lined with banks, bookshops, tourist cafés and shopping malls.

Na příkopě continues southwest across the foot of Wenceslas square as 28.října (28 October; Czechoslovak Independence Day). Here Na můstku (On the Little bridge) runs northwest where a footbridge once crossed the moat – you can see an arch of it, on the left just past the ticket machines in the underground entrance to Můstek metro station.

KAROLINUM

Charles University – central Europe's oldest university, founded by Karel IV in 1348 – originally set up shop here at the Karolinum (Map p98) at Železná 9. With Protestantism and Czech nationalism on the rise, the reformist preacher Jan Hus became rector in 1402. On 18 January 1409, in an effort to increase his voting bloc in manoeuvrings to regain the crown of Holy Roman Emperor, Václav IV slashed the voting rights of the university's German students and lecturers. The 'Decree of Kutná Hora', as it was known, meant thousands of Germans left Bohemia in disgust, and the previously world-beating

university, known as the Karolinum, became considerably more parochial.

Charles University now has faculties all over Prague, and the original building is used only for some medical faculty offices, the University Club and occasional academic ceremonies. Its finest room is the high-ceilinged assembly hall upstairs.

Among pre-university Gothic traces is the **chapel of SS Cosmas & Damian**, with its extraordinary oriel protruding from the southern wall. Built around 1370, it was renovated in 1881 by Josef Mocker.

ESTATES THEATRE

Beside the Karolinum is the **Estates theatre** (Stavovské divadlo; Map p98; Železná 11), Prague's oldest theatre and finest neoclassical building. Opened in 1783 as the Nostitz theatre (after founder Count Anton von Nostitz-Rieneck), it was patronised by upper-class German Praguers. It was later named after the local nobility, the Estates. In summer it hosts performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which premiered here in 1787 with the maestro himself conducting.

CONVENT OF ST AGNES

In the northeast corner of Staré Město is the former **convent of St Agnes** (klášter sv Anežky; Map p98; ☎ 224 810 628; www.ngprague.cz; U milosrdných 17; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun), Prague's oldest surviving Gothic buildings. In 1234 the Franciscan Order of the Poor Clares was founded by the Přemysl king Václav I, who made his sister Anežka (Agnes) its first abbess; since 1989 she's been St Agnes.

The complex consists of the cloister, a sanctuary and a church in French Gothic style. In the **chapel of the Virgin Mary** (kaple Panny Marie) are the graves of St Agnes and Václav I's queen Cunegund. Alongside is the smaller **church of St Francis** (kostel sv Františka), where Václav I is buried in the chancel.

The first floor rooms now hold the National gallery's collection of **medieval Bohemian art**, a brilliantly curated exhibition of extraordinary, glowing works, including some of Master Theodoricus' paintings from Karlštejn castle (p148), the beautiful three-piece Třeboň altarpiece and the terrifically unglamorous work of the Master of Sorrows from Žebrák.

BETHLEHEM CHAPEL

The **Bethlehem chapel** (Betlémská kaple; Map p98; Betlémské náměstí 3; adult/child 40/20Kč; ☎ 9am–6.30pm

Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, to 5.30pm Nov–Mar) is one of Prague's most important churches, the true birthplace of the Hussite cause (though what you see is largely a reconstruction).

In 1391, Reformist Praguers won permission to build a church where services could be held in Czech instead of Latin, and proceeded to construct the biggest chapel Bohemia had ever seen, able to hold 3000 worshippers. Architecturally it was a radical departure, with a simple square hall focused on the pulpit rather than the altar. Jan Hus preached here from 1402 to 1412, marking the emergence of the Reform movement from the sanctuary of the Karolinum (where he was rector).

In the 18th century the chapel was torn down. Remnants were discovered around 1920, and from 1948 to 1954 – because Husitism had official blessing as an ancient form of communism – the whole thing was painstakingly reconstructed in its original form, based on old drawings, descriptions, and traces of the original work. It's now a national cultural monument.

Only the southern wall of the chapel is brand new. You can still see some original parts in the eastern wall: the pulpit door, several windows and the door to the preacher's quarters. These quarters, including the rooms used by Hus and others, are also original; they are now used for exhibits. The wall paintings are modern and are based on old Hussite tracts. The interior well predates the chapel.

The chapel has an English text available at the door. Every year on the night of 5 July, the eve of Hus' burning at the stake in 1415, a commemorative celebration is held here, with speeches and bell ringing.

Nové Město

Although it's called New Town, this crescent-shaped district to the east and south of Staré Město was only new when it was founded by Charles IV in 1348. It extends eastwards from Revoluční and Na příkopě to Wilsonova and the main railway line, and south from Národní třída to Vyšehrad.

Most of Nové Město's outer fortifications were demolished in 1875 – a section of wall still survives in the south, facing Vyšehrad – but the original street plan of the area has been essentially preserved, with three large market squares that once provided the district's commercial focus – Senovážné náměstí (Hay Market), Wenceslas square (Václavské náměstí;

originally called Koňský trh, or Horse Market) and Karlovo náměstí (Charles square; originally called Dobytčí trh, or Cattle Market).

Though originally medieval, most of the surviving buildings in this area are from the 19th and early 20th centuries, many of them among the city's finest. Many blocks are honeycombed with pedestrian-only passages and lined with shops, cafés and theatres.

PRAGUE CITY MUSEUM

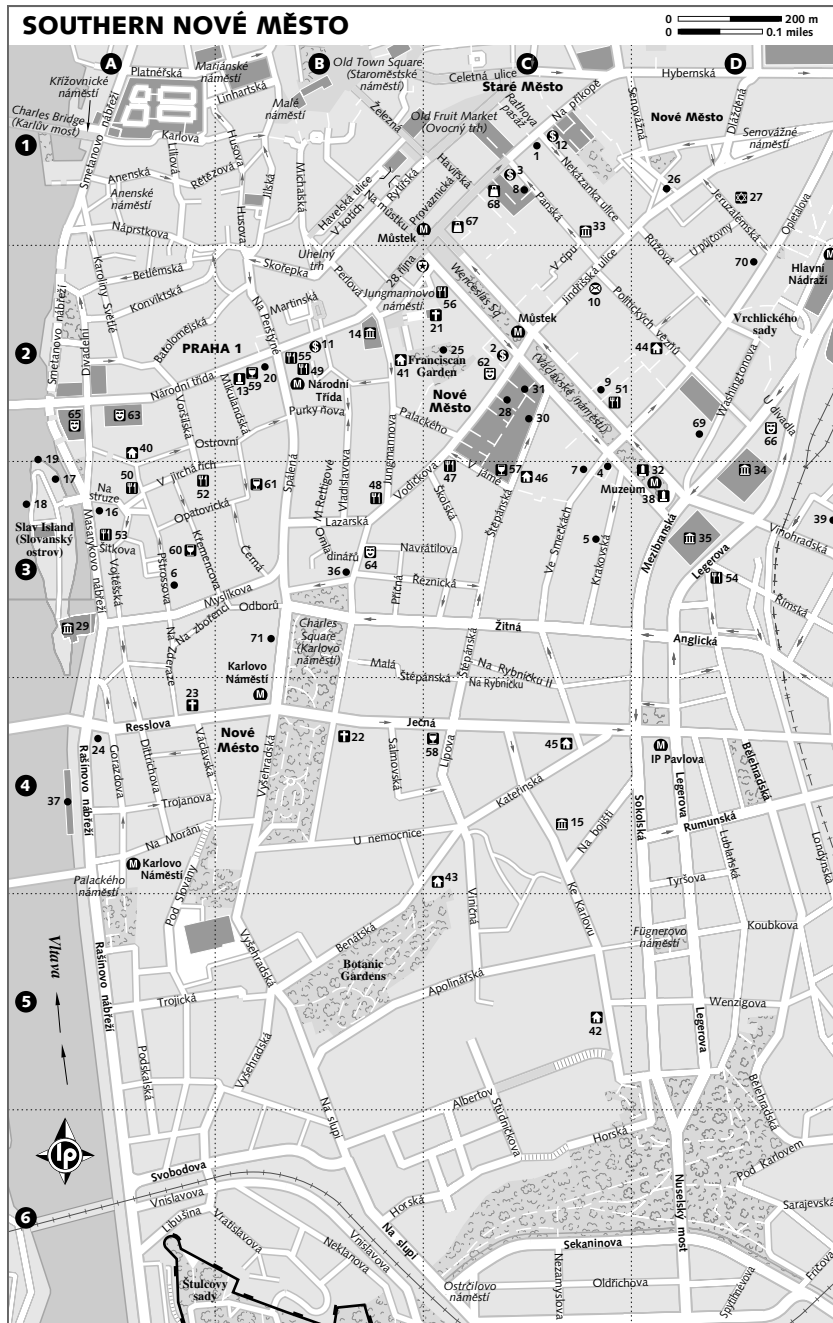
Tucked in a bit of wasteland near the Florenc metro station, the excellent **Prague city museum** (muzeum hlavního města Prahy; Map p118; ☎ 224 816 773; www.muzeumprahy.cz; Na poříčí 52; adult/child 80/30Kč; 1st Thu of each month 1Kč; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun, to 8pm 1st Thu of each month) displays the rich pickings of Prague's florid pre-19th century history. Brutal Hussite 'beating weapons' (what good Protestant doesn't need one?), elaborate ancient door furniture and some choice medieval and Renaissance carvings are excellent appetisers for the main attraction, Antonín Langweil's incredible scale model of Prague c 1830: the poor hobbyist (who died without the recognition he so richly deserved) even included teeny tiny frescoes and broken windows. Don't miss the ceilings of the museum's upstairs galleries (one gallery hosts rotating contemporary exhibitions).

AROUND JINDŘIŠSKÁ ULICE

Squarely at the end of Jindřišská is the **Jindřišská tower** (Jindřišská věž, Map p106), a former watchtower or bell tower built in the 15th century. Now renovated and re-opened as a tourist attraction, it's complete with exhibition space, shop, café and restaurant, and a lookout gallery on the 10th floor.

Around the corner is the 1906 **Jubilee synagogue** (Jubilejní synagoga; Map p106; Jeruzalémská 7; admission 30Kč; ☎ 1–5pm Sun–Fri, closed Jewish holidays), or the Great (Velká) synagogue. Note the names of donors on the colourful, stained-glass windows, and the grand organ above the entrance.

The **Mucha museum** (Map p106; ☎ 221 451 333; www.mucha.cz; Panská 7; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am–6pm) features the sensuous Art Nouveau works of Alfons Mucha, as well as sketches, photographs and other memorabilia. Because the exhibit focuses on his prints without much consideration of his work in object design, it gets a bit samey. There's also an interesting video on his life (available in English or Czech) and a substantial gift shop.



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NATIONAL MUSEUM

Taxidermophiles rejoice! The **National museum** (Map p106; ☎ 224 497 111; www.nm.cz; Václavské náměstí 68; adult/child 100/50Kč, free 1st Mon of month; 🕒 10am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Apr, closed 1st Tue of month) scoffs at multimedia and modern theories of materials' interpretation. The museum does the classics - rocks, dead animals, bones - and does them well. Among the more interesting of the exhibits (very few have English labels, but a multilanguage audio tour is available for 200Kč) is a large collection of stuffed ant-eaters, pangolins and aardvarks, the corpse of an extinct thylacine, a cross-section of a domestic cat and - for those who don't care for roadkill - a display of Czech printed works.

Looming above Wenceslas square, the neo-Renaissance building was designed in the 1880s by Josef Schulz as an architectural symbol of the Czech National Revival. The interior of the museum is quite overwhelming, with its grand stairwell and pantheon gallery. The upstairs murals feature a boys' own interpretation of Czech legends and history by František Ženíšek and Václav Brožík, and pink-bottomed cherubs by Vojtěch Hynais.

MUSEUM OF COMMUNISM

It would be difficult to think of a more ironic site for the **museum of communism** (Map p106; ☎ 224 212 966; www.muzeumkomunismu.cz; Na příkopě 10; admission 180Kč; 🕒 9am-9pm) - in an 18th-century aristocrat's palace, stuck between a casino on one side and a McDonald's burger restaurant on the other. It devotes itself to presenting the corruption, empty shops, oppression, fear and double-speak of life in socialist Czechoslovakia. It's a bit one-sided, and more than a little text-heavy, but definitely worth a visit. Make sure to watch the video about protests leading up to the Velvet Revolution: you'll never think of it as a pushover again.

WENCESLAS SQUARE

A horse market in medieval times, Wenceslas square (Václavské náměstí, also called Václavák, Map p106) got its present name during the nationalist upheavals of the mid-19th century, and since then it's been the favourite spot for anyone trying to make their mark on Czech history. A giant Mass was held in the square during the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, and in 1918 the creation of the new Czechoslovak Republic was celebrated here.

ON THE KAFKA TRAIL

Prague seemingly can't get enough of its favourite literary son, and luckily for tourist operators, the itinerant Kafka lived in a multitude of different houses and worked in buildings all over the city. Get a feeling for what it was like being Franz by wandering around some of the spots he favoured in 1913, the year he turned 30.

In that year, Franz was living with his mother and father and his youngest sister, Ottla, aged 21, in a top floor flat in the **Oppelt building** (Map p98) at the northern end of Old Town square, across Pařížská from St Nicholas church. All three of Franz's sisters died in the ghettos or camps in WWII. Franz's domineering father was a wholesale haberdasher with a store on the ground floor of the **Kinský palace** (p102).

Since 1908 Franz had been working at the Workers Accident Insurance for the Kingdom of Bohemia at Na poříčí 7, Nové Město; the cream building now houses a hotel, the Mercure. It's rumoured that while working at this job, Franz came up with the bright idea that on sites where workers might get hit on the head, they should wear hard hats.

At this time he wrote in his diary, 'From 8 until 2 or 2.30 office, until 3 or 3.30 dinner, after that sleep in bed...until 7.30, then 10 minutes exercise, naked, with open window, then an hour taking a walk...then evening meal with the family...then at 10.30 sit down to write and remain there as long as strength, desire, and happiness permit until 1, 2, 3 o'clock, once even until 6 in the morning'.

The writing at this time would have included letters to Felice Bauer, the first of five women he fell in love with, wrote copious letters to, and never married. His *Meditations*, a collection of some early short stories, had just been published, and he was working on *Amerika*.

When he wasn't writing, Franz wasn't above a little idle fun. In his diary he wrote, 'Went to the cinema. Wept. Matchless entertainment': the cinema would probably have been in the **Estates theatre** (p104).

On Tuesday evenings the radical chic of Prague met at the salon of Berta Fanta at her apartment on the first floor at the **house of the Unicorn** (Map p98; Staroměstské náměstí 17). There is now a plaque on the wall, commemorating Einstein playing his violin at these salon meetings. Franz and his friend and biographer Max Brod also went to fortnightly meetings at **Cafe Louvre** (Map p106; Národní Třída 20, Nové Město) to debate philosophy and to read from their work. At the **Cafe Savoy** (Map p115; Vítězná 5, Malá Strana) Franz met and became friends with the Yiddish theatre troupe actor, Isaac Lowy, sparking a hitherto dormant interest in his own Jewishness.

In this café society Franz revealed himself, to Brod at least, as 'one of the most amusing of men' who 'liked a good hearty laugh, and knew how to make his friends laugh too'. Whether Franz, a vegetarian who drank no alcohol, became addicted to coffee is not known.

Fancy a full Kafka pilgrimage? See Marilyn Bender's paper, 'Franz Kafka's Prague: a literary walking tour' (www.nysoclib.org/travels/kafka.html), and visit the new Franz Kafka museum (p95).

Following the 17 November 1989 beating of students on Národní třída, thousands gathered here in anger, night after night. A week later, in a stunning mirror-image of Klement Gottwald's 1948 proclamation of communist rule from the balcony of the Kinský palace in the Old Town square, Alexander Dubček and Václav Havel stepped onto the balcony of the **Melantrich building** to a thunderous and tearful ovation, and proclaimed the end of communism in Czechoslovakia.

At the top of the square is Josef Myslbek's muscular equestrian **St Wenceslas statue** (sv Václav, Map p106), the 10th-century pacifist Duke of Bohemia. Flanked by other patron saints of Bohemia he has been plastered over

with posters and bunting at every single one of the square's historical moments. If you've got a date with a Prager, chances are they'll want to meet you under the horse's tail.

The square has become a monument to consumerism, a gaudy gallery of cafés, shops, moneychangers, cabbies and pricey hotels. If you like Times Square or Leicester Square, this is your kind of place.

LUCERNA PASSAGE

The most elegant and convoluted of Nové Město's many arcades, or *pasáže*, Lucerna passage (Map p106) runs beneath the Lucerna palace between Štěpánská and Vodičkova streets. The arcade was designed by Václav

THE MISSING DICTATOR

If you stand on Old Town square (Map p98) and look north along the arrow-straight avenue of Pařížská you will see, on a huge terrace at the far side of Bohemia bridge (Čechův most), a giant metronome. If the monumental setting seems out of scale that's because the terrace was designed to accommodate the world's biggest statue of Stalin. Unveiled in 1955 – two years after Stalin's death – the 30m-high, 14,000-tonne colossus showed Uncle Joe at the head of two lines of communist heroes, Czech on one side, Soviet on the other. Cynical Praguers used to constant food shortages quickly nicknamed it '*fronta na maso*' ('the meat queue').

The monument was dynamited in 1962, in deference to Khrushchev's attempt to airbrush Stalin out of history. The demolition crew were instructed: 'It must go quickly, there mustn't be much of a bang, and it should be seen by as few people as possible'. The museum of communism (p107) has a superb photo of the monument – and of its destruction.

Havel, the ex-president's grandfather, so it's no surprise Havel chose to walk through this *pasáž* on his way to proclaim the end of communism. The Lucerna complex includes theatres, a cinema, shops, a rock-music club and cafés. In the marbled atrium hangs artist David Černý's sculpture *Horse*, a wryly amusing counterpart to the equestrian statue of St Wenceslas (opposite) in Wenceslas square.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS

If you haven't had enough medieval architecture in Staré Město, head for the Gothic church of Our Lady of the Snows (kostel Panny Marie Sněžné, Map p106) at the bottom end of Wenceslas square. Karel IV began its construction in the 14th century, but only the chancel was ever completed, which is why it looks taller than it is long. Karel had intended it to be the grandest church in Prague – the nave is higher than that of St Vitus and the altar, an extravagance of black and gold, is the city's tallest. It was a Hussite stronghold, echoing to the sermons of Jan Želivský – these days it has a strict 'no talking' rule.

While you're here, rest your feet in the **Franciscan garden** (Františkanská zahrada; Map p106; ☞ 7am-10pm Apr-Sep, 7am-8pm Oct, 8am-7pm Nov-Mar), formerly part of a monastery and now a peaceful, rigorously groomed park where office workers scoff a quick sandwich and read the paper.

ALONG NÁRODNÍ TŘÍDA

Národní třída (National Ave) is central Prague's 'high street', a row of midrange shops and grand government buildings whose staleness is somewhat obscured by rushing traffic.

At Národní 40, fronting Jungmannovo náměstí, is an imitation Venetian palace known as the **Adria palace** (Map p106); you'll

have seen a lot of heavily decorated buildings in Prague, but this one takes the cake. Beneath it is the Adria theatre, original home of Laterna Magika and meeting place of Civic Forum in the heady days of the Velvet Revolution.

Along the street, inside the arcade near No 16, is a bronze **17.11.89 memorial** (Map p106) on the wall with a cluster of hands making the peace sign and the date '17.11.89', in memory of the students clubbed in the street by police on that date.

Across the road at No 7 is the fine Art Nouveau façade (by architect Osvald Polívka) of the **Viola building** (Map p98), former home of the Prague Insurance Company, with the huge letters 'PRAHA' around five circular windows.

On the southern side at No 4, looking like it has been built out of old TV screens, is **Nová scéna** (Map p106), the 1983 'New National theatre' building, home of Laterna Magika (see Theatre p139). Finally, facing the Vltava across Smetanovo nábřeží is the **National theatre** (Národní divadlo; Map p106), the neo-Renaissance flagship of the Czech National Revival, funded entirely by private donations. Architect Josef Zítěk's masterpiece burned down within weeks of its 1881 opening, but, incredibly, was funded again and restored in less than two years. You have to attend a performance to get inside.

Across from the theatre is the **Kavárna Slavia** (Map p98) café, once the haunt of theatre and literary types but now largely living on its past glory. The river views are still just as lovely, though.

MASARYK EMBANKMENT

Masaryk Embankment (Masarykovo nábřeží) sports a series of stunning **Art Nouveau buildings**

(Map p106). At No 32 is the duck-egg green Goethe Institut (the German Cultural Institute), once the East German embassy, while No 26 is a beautiful apartment building with owls perched in the decorative foliage that twines around the door, and dogs peeking from the balconies on the 5th floor.

Opposite this is **Slav island** (Slovanský ostrov), a sleepy sandbank with river views and gardens, named after Slav conventions held here since 1848. Around the northern tip of the island there are three little boat-hire places. In the middle of the island is a 19th-century meeting hall, and at the southern end is **Šítkovská věž**, a 15th-century water tower (once part of a mill) with an 18th-century onion-dome roof, and a children's playground featuring arcane playthings seemingly sourced from Soviet-era torture manuals.

Beneath the tower is the **Mánes gallery** (Map p106; ☎ 224 931 410; Masarykovo nábřeží; adult/child 40/20Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), established in the 1920s by a group of artists headed by painter Josef Mánes as an alternative to the Czech Academy of Arts; it's still a great place to find out what's happening right now in Czech art. The building itself, designed by Oskar Novotný, is considered a masterpiece of Functional architecture.

CHARLES SQUARE

At over seven hectares, Charles square (Karlovo náměstí) is Prague's biggest square – actually it's more of a park. Presiding over it is the baroque 1678 **church of St Ignatius of Loyola** (kostel sv Ignáce, Map p106), designed by Carlo Lurago for the Jesuits. Inside see the 'Mary in a rock garden', diorama-style Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The square's historical focus is the **New town hall** (Novoměstská radnice, Map p106) at the northern end, built when the 'New Town' was new. From its windows several of Sigismund's Catholic councillors were flung to their deaths in 1419 by followers of the Hussite preacher Jan Želivský. 'Defenestration' (the act of throwing someone out of a window) got its meaning, Czechs got a new political tactic, and the Hussite Wars were off to a flying start. The **tower** (admission 30Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) was added 35 years later.

CHURCH OF SS CYRIL & METHODIUS

In 1942 seven Czech paratroopers who were involved in the assassination of Reichspro-

tektor Reinhardt Heydrich hid in the crypt of the **church of SS Cyril & Methodius** (kostel sv Cyril a Metoděj; Map p106; ☎ 224 920 686; Resslova 9; adult/child 50/20Kč; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Apr) for three weeks after the killing, until their hiding place was betrayed by the Czech traitor Karel Čurda. The Germans besieged the church, first attempting to smoke out the paratroopers and then flooding the church using fire hoses. Three paratroopers were killed in the ensuing fight; the other four took their own lives rather than surrender. The crypt now houses a moving memorial, where you can still see bullet marks and shrapnel scars on the walls – on the Resslova side of the church the narrow gap in the wall of the crypt is still pitted with bullet marks – and signs of the paratroopers' last desperate efforts to dig an escape tunnel to the sewer under the street.

DANCING BUILDING

If you've taken a boat on the river you've no doubt wondered what's up with that entirely modern, curvy building with the ball on its head. Emerging from between its Art Nouveau neighbours, the joyfully daring **Dancing building** (Tančící dům; Map p106; Rašínovo nábřeží 80) was designed by Czech Vlado Milunč and American Frank Gehry, who originally called it the 'Fred and Ginger building'. Completed in 1996, it's an excellent addition to the ageing skyline.

DVOŘÁK MUSEUM

One of the city's finest baroque houses is the Vila Amerika, a 1720, French-style summerhouse, again designed by Kilian Dientzenhofer, and now home to the **Antonín Dvořák museum** (muzeum Antonína Dvořáka; Map p106; ☎ 224 918 013; Ke Karlovu 20; adult/child 50/25Kč; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, from 9.30am Oct-Mar). If you have more than a passing interest in the composer, you might enjoy browsing the exhibits while listening to his work. It's a great place to buy a Dvořák CD, as the staff at the store give excellent advice.

Vyšehrad

Vyšehrad (High Castle, Map p112) is regarded as Prague's mythical birthplace. According to legend the wise chieftain Krok built a castle here in the 7th century. Libuše, the cleverest of his three daughters, prophesied that a great city would rise here. Taking as her king

a ploughman named Přemysl, she founded the city of Prague and the Přemysl dynasty.

Archaeologists know that various early Slavic tribes set up camp at Vyšehrad, a crag above the Vltava River south of the Nusle Valley. Vyšehrad may in fact have been permanently settled as early as the 9th century, and Boleslav II (r 972-99) may have lived here for a time. There was a fortified town by the mid-11th century. Vratislav II (r 1061-92) moved his court here from Hradčany, beefing up the walls and adding a castle, the basilica of St Lawrence, church of SS Peter & Paul and the rotunda of St Martin. His successors stayed until 1140, when Vladislav II returned to Hradčany.

Vyšehrad then faded until Charles IV, aware of its symbolic importance, repaired the walls and joined them to those of his new town, Nové Město. He built a small palace, and decreed that the coronations of Bohemian kings should begin with a procession from here to Hradčany.

Nearly everything on the hilltop was wiped out during the Hussite Wars. The hill remained a ruin – except for a township of artisans and traders – until after the Thirty Years' War, when Leopold I reformed it.

The Czech National Revival generated new interest in Vyšehrad as a symbol of Czech history. Painters painted it, poets sang about the old days. Smetana set his opera *Libuše* here. Many fortifications were dismantled in 1866 and the parish graveyard was converted into a national memorial cemetery.

Vyšehrad retains a place in Czech hearts and is a popular destination for weekend family outings. Since the 1920s the old fortress has been a quiet park, with splendid panoramas of the Vltava Valley. Take along a picnic and find a quiet spot among the trees, or on the battlements with a view over the river.

VYŠEHRAD CITADEL

Most visitors enter Vyšehrad through the **Tábora gate** (Táborská brána, Map p112), where they find a sign with extensive rules about ways in which they may and may not use the grass. Inside are the scant remnants of the Gothic Peak gate (Špička brána) – a fragment of arch that is now part of the **information centre** (Map p112; ☎ 241 410 348; www.praha-vysehrad.cz; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm), and all that remains of Charles IV's 14th-century fortifications. Beyond that lies the grand, 17th-century **Leopold**

gate (Leopoldova brána), the most elegant of the fortress gates.

Vratislav II's little **rotunda of St Martin** (rotunda sv Martina) is Prague's oldest surviving building. In the 18th century it was used as a powder magazine. The door and frescoes date from a renovation made about 1880.

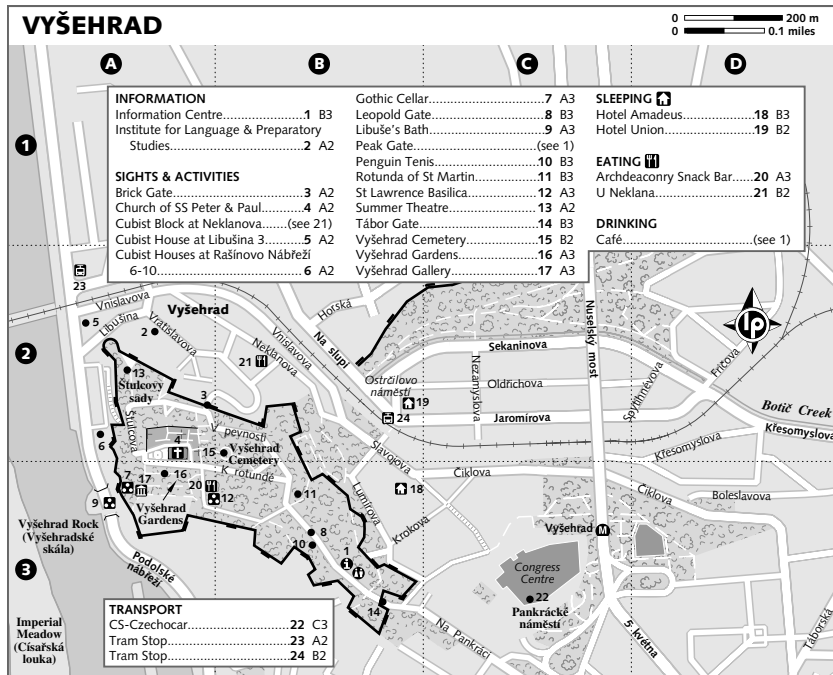
If you enjoy making pilgrimages to the graves of your heroes, then the **Vyšehrad cemetery** (Vyšehradský hřbitov; Map p112; ☎ 8am-5pm Nov-Feb, 8am-6pm Mar-Apr & Oct, 8am-7pm May-Sep) is your one-stop Czech shop. Composers Smetana and Dvořák, writers Karel Čapek, Jan Neruda and Božena Němcová, painter Alfons Mucha and sculptors Josef Myslbek and Bohumil Kafka are all here. A directory of big names is at the entrance. In between the stars, the graves of the lesser known are a real showcase of headstone design. The Prague Spring music festival (p122) kicks off every 12 May, the anniversary of Smetana's death, with a procession from his grave to the Municipal house.

Vratislav II's **church of SS Peter & Paul** (kostel sv Petra a Pavla; Map p112; adult/child 20/10Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon, Wed & Sat, 9am-noon Fri, 11am-noon & 1-5pm Sun, closed Tue & Thu) has been built and rebuilt over the centuries, culminating in a neo-Gothic makeover by Josef Mocker in the 1880s. The towers were added in 1903; the beautiful Art Nouveau frescoes inside – very unusual in this baroque-obsessed city – were painted in the 1920s, largely by František and Marie Urban. Each chapel has an English label explaining its story and artist.

Beside the church are the **Vyšehrad gardens** (Vyšehradské sady, Map p112), with four statues by Josef Myslbek, based on Czech legends of mythological Vyšehrad. Libuše and Přemysl are in the northwestern corner; in the southeast are Sárka and Ctirad. From May to August, open-air concerts are held here at 2.30pm on Sunday, with anything from jazz to oompah and chamber music.

Within the Vyšehrad's ramparts there are many vaulted **casemates**. At the 1842 **Brick gate** (Cihelná brána), 30Kč will buy you a guided tour through several of these chambers, now used as a historical exhibit and for storing four of Charles bridge's original baroque statues (other originals are at the Lapidarium, p113).

If you want to see the ruined foundations of the 11th-century Romanesque **St Lawrence basilica** (bazilika sv Vavřince; Map p112; admission 10Kč; ☎ 11am-6pm), ask for the key in the snack bar by the Old



Archdeaconry. In front of the southwestern bastion are the foundations of a small **palace** built by Charles IV, and its restored **Gothic cellar** (Gotický sklep; Map p112; adult/child 30/20Kč; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) that houses an exhibition dedicated to the history of Vyšehrad. It is packed with archaeological finds and religious relics associated with life on the fortress from 3800 BC until the present day.

Perched on the bastion is the **Vyšehrad gallery** (galérie Vyšehrad; Map p112; ☎ 241 410 348; www.praha-vysehrad.cz; admission 10Kč; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun), which holds temporary exhibitions and often sells the artworks at very reasonable prices. Below the bastion are some ruined guard towers poetically named **Libuše's Bath** (Map p112).

In the northwest corner is an open-air **summer theatre** (Letní scéna; Map p112; admission 35Kč; ☎ 5pm Thu) where you can catch a concert or cultural show.

There are a few spots to eat around the complex, though a picnic lunch is definitely a good option. You can grab a sausage with bread or a marinated cheese and a beer at the Archdeaconry snack bar.

The simplest way to get to Vyšehrad is by metro. Exit Vyšehrad metro station on the Hajčbofund side, towards the Congress Centre – you'll see brown tourist signs directing you to 'Vyšehrad', where you enter through the Tabor gate. There's more climbing if you walk up from tram 7, 18 or 24 on Na slupi (from Karlovo nám metro), through the Brick gate. A quicker, steeper route is up the long stairs from tram 3, 7, 16 or 17 on the riverside drive – the stairs come out by the Vyšehrad cemetery.

CUBIST ARCHITECTURE

If you've taken the trouble to come out to Vyšehrad, don't miss a clutch of Prague's famous cubist buildings in the streets north of the Brick gate. Cubist architecture, with its eye-catching use of elementary geometric forms, is more or less unique to the Czech Republic, particularly Prague.

One dramatic villa, designed by Josef Chochol, the dean of Czech cubist architects, is at **Rašínovo nábřeží 6-10** (Map p112), just before the street tunnels beneath Vyšehrad rock. Others by Chochol are a very well-preserved

freestanding house at **Libušina 3** (Map p112) and the clean lines of an apartment block at **Neklanova 30** – look for the Ú Neklana restaurant (p132). All date from around 1913.

Holešovice

With its wide, leafy streets, grimy buildings and an air of just going about its daily business, Holešovice (Map pp82-3) is a real contrast to central Prague. Up-and-coming in the late 1990s, Holešovice apparently called a halt to development before the malls and multiplexes started moving in – consequently, you'll find a few good modern restaurants, bars and cafés, plenty of old *hospodas* (pubs) and an easily accessible atmosphere of 'so this is what Prague is really like'.

This patch of the city in the Vltava's 'big bend' sprang from two old settlements – the former hamlet of Holešovice and the fishing village of Bubny. Both remained small until industry arrived in the mid-19th century. When the Hlávčův bridge was built in 1868, linking the area to Nové Město, the population swelled. A horse-drawn tram, a river port and the exhibition grounds of Výstaviště followed, and the area became a part of Prague in 1884.

VÝSTAVIŠTĚ

This vast exhibition area of these **fairgrounds** (Map pp82-3) are home to the popular **St Matthew Fair** (Matějská pouť), held annually in February and March when it's full of rides, candy-floss, and half of Prague having fun. Some of the buildings went up in 1891 for the Jubilee Exposition, including the Prague Pavilion (Pavilón hlavního města Prahy), which houses the Lapidárium and the palace of Industry (Průmyslový palác).

It's a popular weekend destination, a great spot for a sausage, a beer and some *dechovka* (Bohemian brass-band music). The whole complex is closed on Monday during the day. **Křížík fountain** (Křížíkova fontána; ☎ 220 103 280; www.krizikovafontana.cz; admission 200Kč; ☎ 8, 9, 10 & 11pm Mar-Oct) performs computer-controlled acts of water gymnastics to music – expect treats like the soundtrack from *Jurassic Park* or *Pearl Harbor*, or you might get a bit of Smetana or Dvořák (the *Prague Post* has weekly details of the programme).

While the gullible saps are marvelling at the replica statues on the Charles bridge, you could be at the **Lapidárium** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 233 375

636; adult/child 20/10Kč; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) checking out the real thing. This is a repository of some 400 sculptures from the 11th to the 19th centuries, removed from Prague's streets and buildings to save them from demolition or pollution.

Get to the Fairgrounds on tram 12, 15 or 17 from nádraží Holešovice metro station and get off at the Výstaviště stop.

STROMOVKA PARK

West of the Fairgrounds, this is Prague's largest park. In the Middle Ages it was a royal hunting preserve, and is referred to as Royal Deer Park (Královská oboza). Rudolf II had rare trees planted and several lakes dug (fed from the Vltava by a still-functioning canal). You can get here across the Vltava via Císařský ostrov.

CENTRE FOR MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART

The National gallery's massive **Centre for Modern & Contemporary Art** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 824 301 003; Dukelských hrdinů 47; adult/child from 100/50Kč for any 1 fl to 250/120Kč for all 4 fls; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has seemingly collected every work of modern Czech art, plus a fair swathe of other big names from the rest of Europe. If you don't have the time or money to see the full collection (it would take a whole day to see it properly), you can choose to do the gallery a floor at a time. Highlights include Czech cubists, Art Nouveau, Mánes' portraits and Mařák's landscapes, social realism and Karel Pauzer's grotesque *Dog Family*. Your ticket lasts a whole day, and you can go in and out as much as you want. Take tram 12, 15 or 17 west from Nádraží Holešovice metro station, two stops to Veletržní.

NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM

For hands-on fun, visit the **National technology museum** (Národní technické muzeum; Map pp82-3; ☎ 220 399 111; Kostelní 42; adult/child 70/30Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). The giant main hall is full of old trains, planes and automobiles, including 1920s and '30s Škodas. There are also some great old motorbikes and bicycles. You can take a tour down a mineshaft, or learn about photography, astronomy or timepieces. From the Vltavská metro station, take tram 1 or 25 three stops to Letenské náměstí and walk down Nad štolou and Muzejní streets.

LETNÁ

Letná is a vast park between Hradčany and Holešovice, where Přemysl Otakar II held his coronation celebrations in 1261. Today it's given over to playgrounds, tennis courts, meandering paths packed with inline skaters, and an outdoor **beer garden** (p136) with postcard-perfect views of the city and the Vltava bridges.

The present layout dates from the early 1950s when a 30m, 14,000-tonne statue of Stalin, the biggest monument in the Eastern bloc, was erected by the Czechoslovak Communist Party, only to be blown up in 1962 when Kruschev took over (see *The Missing Dictator*, p109). Today, in its place, stands a peculiar giant **metronome** – if you stand in Old Town square facing up Pařížská you can see it ticking out time against the sky. The terraced area around the metronome is a wonderland of rail slides and 50/50s, adored by local skateboarders.

Letná used to be the site of May Day military parades, similar to those in Moscow. In late 1989, some 750,000 people demonstrated here in support of what became known as the Velvet Revolution. In 1990 Pope John Paul II gave an open-air Mass here to more than one million people, most of whom were probably looking for the beer garden.

Smíchov

In Smíchov, Prague changes before your very eyes with the speed of time-lapse photography. Ten years ago tourists might have crossed over to this dirty, rough neighbourhood to get a taste of the real Prague; these days 'real' equals shopping malls, multiplexes, trendy bars and construction, construction, construction. Tourist attractions are few and far between, which means the beautiful, grubby baroque and Art Nouveau buildings are uncluttered with souvenir stores. The swarming, shopping masses clot around Anděl metro station; the northern end of Smíchov is a happening enclave of sushi restaurants and modern theatre. Head to the southern end to get the old-school version; the rail yards, old pubs and Staropramen brewery (just follow your nose) still have the air of 1838 Smíchov, when the suburb became Prague's industrial quarter.

MOZART MUSEUM AT BERTRAMKA

You'll need more than a passing interest in Wolfgang Amadeus to get the most out of this **museum** (Map p115; ☎ 257 317 465; www.bertramka

.cz; Mozartova 169; adult/child 110/30Kč, concerts 390-450Kč; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar), where they're keen to remind you that Prague liked Mozart before anyone else. Mozart finished *Don Giovanni* while staying here. The museum has a couple of instruments the master may once have played, and lots of information about local musicians with whom Mozart was involved. Regular concerts are held in the salon, and in the garden (April to October only). Take tram 4, 6, 9, 12 or 14 from the Anděl metro station.

Vinohrady

The suburb of Vinohrady lies southeast of the National museum and main train station. The name refers to vineyards that grew here centuries ago; even as recently as 200 years ago there was little urbanisation. Now the tree-lined streets are peppered with little cafés and bars, and the buildings have all had a good scrubbing and a fresh coat of paint – it's one of the prettiest of Prague's inner suburbs. There's not a lot to see here, but walking the Parisian-style streets from náměstí Míru to Havlíčkovy sady is a very pleasant way to spend a few hours.

PEACE SQUARE

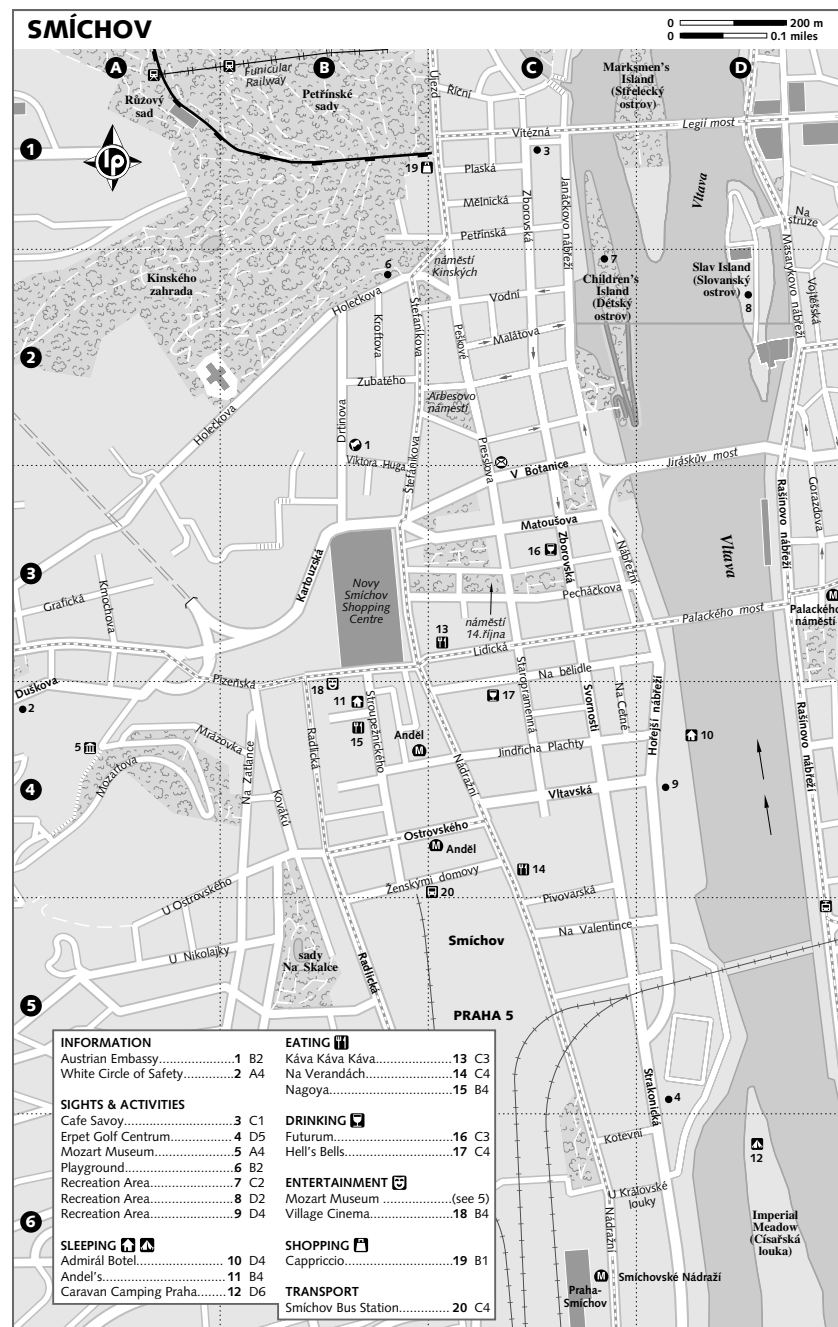
Vinohrady's physical and commercial heart is Peace square (náměstí Míru, Map p116), dominated by the brick, neo-Gothic **St Ludmilla church** (kostel sv Ludmily) – the church steps are a popular meeting spot. Right behind it at No 9 is the neo-Renaissance **National house** (Národní dům), with exhibitions and concert halls. On the northern side of the square is the 1909 **Vinohrady theatre** (divadlo na Vinohradech), a popular drama venue.

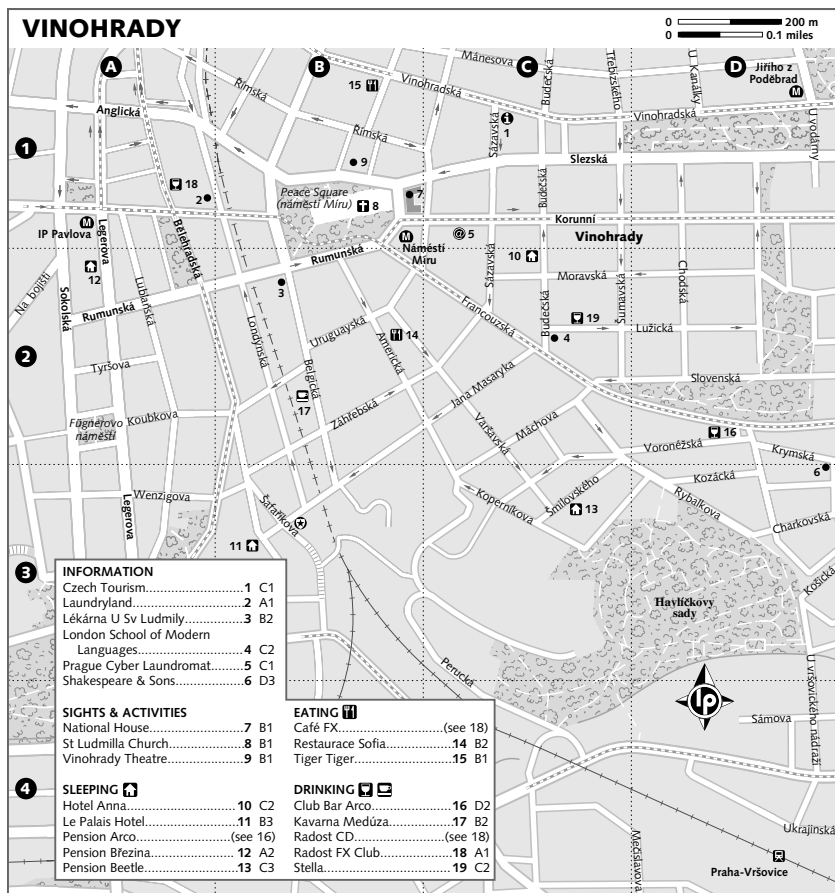
CHURCH OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF OUR LORD

With its perforated brickwork, stocky, looming clock tower and ultrasimple interior, this is probably Prague's most original church, its brawny charm reminiscent of a solid, rough factory worker downing his first beer of the afternoon. The **church** (kostel Nejsvětějšího Srdce Páně; Map p118; náměstí Jiřího z Poděbrad) was built in 1932 by Slovenian Josef Plečnik (who made the eyebrow-raising modern additions to Prague castle).

Žižkov

Named after the Hussite hero and formidable military commander Jan Žižka, who whipped Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund and his





army on a hill here in 1420, Žižkov was always been a rough-and-ready neighbourhood, working-class and full of revolutionary fizz well before 1948. One of the first protests of the Velvet Revolution took place here, in Škroupovo nám. Žižkov, east of the centre, has some very un-baroque sights, loads of pubs and clubs, and a great deal of grungy panache.

ŽIŽKOV HILL

The famous battle of 1420 took place on this long mound – known then as Vitkov – separating Žižkov and Karlín districts. These days the area feels more like a monument to the communist era, with its blocky, grandiose buildings and statuary.

From Florenc or the main train station, walk along Husitská; after the first railway bridge, climb to the left up U památníku. To your right you'll see the **Army museum** (Armádní muzeum; Map p118; ☎ 220 204 924; U památníku 2; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun); its exhibits on the history of the army and the resistance movement in WWII are in Czech only, but excellent temporary exhibits have English texts. There is also a fascinating exhibition on the 1942 assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, with pride of place going to the Mercedes in which Heydrich was travelling when the attack took place.

At the top of the hill is Bohumil Kafka's 1941 **Jan Žižka monument**. The statue of a fearless, bandaged Žižka wielding his battle flag

from atop a vein-popping horse must have given Kafka some terrifying nightmares during its design.

Behind Žižka, the over-the-top **National memorial** (Národní památník, Map p118) was completed around 1930 as a memorial to the Czechoslovak 'unknown soldier', but later hijacked as a mausoleum for communist leader Klement Gottwald (the embalming didn't take, and when old Klement started rotting the memorial was closed and he was buried elsewhere). The outside of the memorial is covered in bas-reliefs glorifying the worker and soldier, but you can only visit the inside on the first Saturday of the month at 2pm: call **Prague Information Service** (☎ 222 781 676) to find out more.

TV TOWER

Prague's tallest landmark (and depending on your tastes, either its ugliest or its most futuristic) is the 216m-tall **TV tower** (Televizní věž; Map p118; ☎ 267 005 778; www.tower.cz, in Czech; Mahlerovy sady 1; adult/child 150/30Kč; ☎ 10am-11pm), erected between 1985 and 1992. It's worth getting up close to this '80s vision of the future for a good look at the faces of David Černý's bizarre sculptural installation (giant babies), *Miminka*. While the outside of the tower is one of the city's highlights, the inside is a wash-out. Views through the grubby windows are bigger but not necessarily better than those from St Vitus cathedral or Petřín tower.

The foundations of the TV tower were excavated in an old **Jewish cemetery** (admission 20Kč; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue & Thu), which operated between the closing of Josefov, at a time of plague outbreak, and the opening of the cemetery near Želivského metro, in 1890. It's estimated that 40,000 people have been crowded into this tiny yard.

OLŠANY CEMETERY & JAN PALACH'S GRAVE

A world away from the insanity of Old Town square, the inhabitants of the **Olšany cemetery** (Olšanské hřbitovy; Map p118; ☎ 267 310 652; Vinohradská 2807; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Mar-Apr & Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Feb) rest in some serious peace. This cool, green graveyard overgrown with ivy is Prague's main burial place, founded in 1680 during a plague epidemic.

To find Jan Palach's grave, the student who set himself on fire in January 1969 in protest at the Soviet invasion, enter the main gate and

turn right – it's about 50m along on the left of the path. For nearly 20 years Palach's body was moved around by the government to stop his grave becoming a protest site. It's worth visiting the museum of communism (p107) first to find out more about him.

JEWISH CEMETERY & FRANZ KAFKA'S GRAVE

Franz Kafka is buried in this **cemetery** (Židovské hřbitovy; Map p118; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Thu & 9am-2pm Fri Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Sun-Thu & 9am-2pm Fri Nov-Mar, closed on Jewish hols), which opened around 1890 when the previous Jewish cemetery – now at the foot of the TV tower – was closed. To find Kafka's grave, follow the main avenue east (signposted), turn right at row 21, then left at the wall; it's at the end of the 'block'. Fans make a pilgrimage on 3 June, the anniversary of his death.

The entrance is beside Želivského metro station; men should cover their heads (yarmulkes are available at the gate). Last admission is 30 minutes before closing.

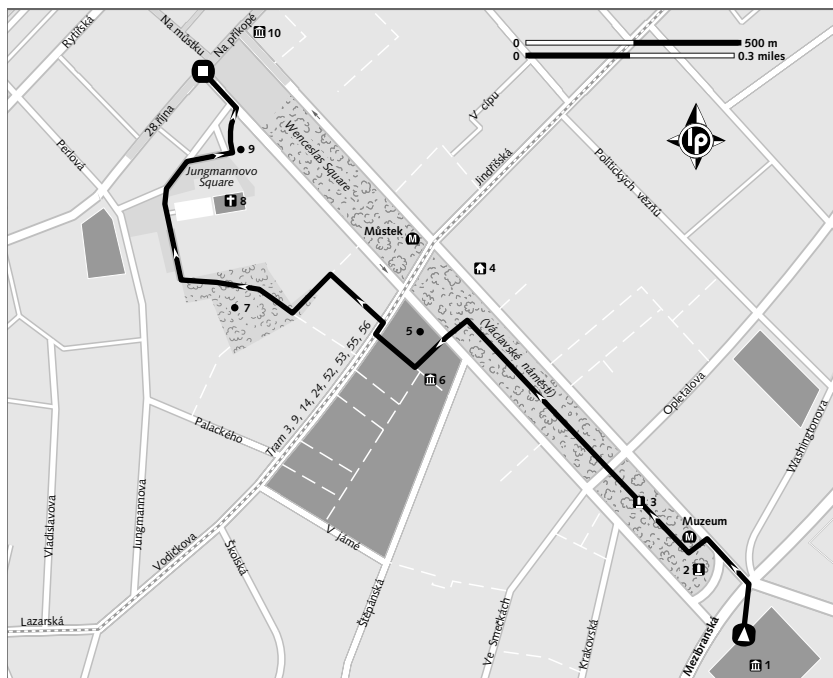
ACTIVITIES

Prague has lots of free **recreation areas**. The one on Children's Island (Dětský ostrov; Map p115), just south of Most Legii (access is from Janáčkovovo nábřeží), has a playground, skate park, soccer pitch, concrete table-tennis tables and a strange combination boules/tenpin bowling game. It's open from 9am to 8pm daily from April to October and 10am to 6pm the rest of the year. The one in Smíchov (Map p115; Hořejší nábřeží) has a skate park, a basketball hoop, a small soccer pitch and a good kids' playground.

The city has about 180km of signposted **cycle routes**, about 60km of which are traffic-free (see <http://doprava.praha-mesto.cz> for an interactive map, in Czech only), and the popularity of cycling is steadily increasing. Stromovka Park and Troja are good places for pedalling. See p143 for details of bike hire places.

Inline skaters and **skateboarders** should head to Letná (Map pp82-3). The paths here are a very popular after-work in-line skating area. You can rent inline skates from **Inline Půjčovna** (Inline Skate Rental; Map pp82-3; ☎ 739 046 040; Nad štolou 1, Holešovice; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun); they speak a bit of English.

You can rent a **rowing boat** (from 60Kč per hour per person) or **pedal boat** (80Kč) from



Cross the busy traffic artery of Mezibranáská to Prague's famous equestrian **statue of St Wenceslas** (2; p108), the 10th-century 'Good King Wenceslas' of Christmas carol fame. Below the statue is a modest **memorial** (3) to those who died for their resistance to communism.

Wander down the middle of the square, admiring the grand buildings on either side. The finest is the 1906 **Grand Hotel Evropa** (4) at No 25, about halfway down on the right, which is Art Nouveau inside and out; have a peep at the French restaurant at the rear of the ground floor, and at the 2nd-floor atrium. Across the street at No 36 is the **Melantrich building** (5), from whose balcony the death of Czech communism was pronounced by Alexander Dubček and Václav Havel on 24 November 1989 (it now houses a Marks & Spencer store).

Turn left into Pasáz Rokoko, a shopping arcade directly across the street from the Grand Hotel Evropa. It leads to the central atrium of the **Lucerna palace** (6; p108), dominated by David Černý's *Horse*, an ironic twist on the St Wenceslas statue in the square outside (it helps to know that the first prime minister of the Czech Republic was also a Václav).

Turn right beneath the dead horse (you'll see when you get here), and follow the passage to Vodičkova. Bear right across the street and enter the Světozor arcade. Up ahead you'll see a stained-glass window dating from the late 1940s – it's actually an advertisement for Tesla Radio, an old Czech electronics company.

At the far end of the Světozor arcade, turn left into the **Franciscan garden** (7; p109), a hidden oasis of peace and greenery. Make your way to the far northern corner of the garden, diagonally opposite to where you came in, and you'll find an exit to Jungmannovo square. Go past the arch leading to the **church of Our Lady of the Snows** (8; p109) and turn right.

Keep to the right of the Lancême shop, and you will come to what must be the only **cubist lamppost** (9) in the entire world, dating from 1915. Turn left here and then duck right through the short Lindt arcade which returns you to Wenceslas square.

PRAGUE FOR CHILDREN

Prague probably isn't the most exciting destination for kids – baroque architecture, castles without armour or crossbows, churches, and

museums of Jewish history don't generally get the youngsters all fired up. However, there are a few sights around town that kids might enjoy. **Petrín** (p95) has a mirror maze that has the kids cracking up, a playground and a replica Eiffel Tower. The **National technology museum** (p113) has plenty of hands-on entertainment, while the **National museum** (p107) is good for those who like stuffed animals and skeletons. There's a **big toy museum** (p90) and the very medieval **Old Royal palace** (p89) at the castle.

Prague has lots of good **playgrounds** – there are several on islands in the Vltava, one in the Kinský gardens in Malá Strana, a huge one in Letná, one beneath the Charles bridge on Kampa island in Malá Strana and one near the river in Smíchov. Many kids enjoy renting a boat (p117) on the river. If your kids have skateboards or inline skates with them, take them to Letná (p114). **Minor theatre** (p139) hosts traditional marionette shows for kids.

If you'd rather leave the kids behind while you hit the town, most top-end and many midrange hotels have baby-sitting services – call ahead to see whether yours does. Alternatively, **Prague Information Service** (Pražská Informační Služba, PIS; ☎ 124 44; www.prague-info.cz) usually has a list of baby-sitting (*hlídání dětí*) agencies; rates are generally around 120Kč per hour. **Prague Family** (☎ 224 224 044; www.praguefamily.cz) is an agency that can provide English-speaking baby-sitters.

QUIRKY PRAGUE

Sculptor David Černý, a big success in the USA, has made a huge effort to make Prague a more interesting, less precious place. Many of his efforts have been thwarted – the giant statue of a naked, masturbating man intended for the roof of the National theatre was somehow never approved – while others, like his *Pink Tank* (p122), a revolutionary nose-thumbing piece, have been removed, but several of his works are on public display.

The TV tower (p117) in Žižkov crawls with the giant babies of *Miminka*; the Lucerna Passage (p108) is home to *Horse*, his interpretation of Wenceslas square's equestrian statue; while his *Hanging Around* (Map p98) caused complaints to the police after it was installed on the roof of a house in Husova street, Staré Město. There's also *Piss*, in the courtyard of Hergetova Cihelna (p95), and *Quo Vadis* (Map p92), his famous sculpture

of a Trabant car on legs in the garden of the German Embassy (go past the embassy, left through a playground, and along the lane at the back of the building). You can find out more, including plans for the future, at www.davidcerny.cz.

TOURS

Thanks to its excellent public transport system, Prague is very easy to get around, and if you already know a bit about the city a tour is probably a waste of time and money – a ride on tram 22 from Peace square (p114) in Vinohrady to the castle provides a good sightseeing trip for only 20Kč, and without the annoying commentary.

George's Guided Walks (☎ 607 820 158; www.praguemaster.com; per 2 persons 1500Kč, per additional person 300Kč) Lots of travellers have recommended George, whose intimate, personalised tours include a four-hour History Walk (if you have been to Prague before, he'll take you off the beaten track), a two-hour Iron Curtain Walk, and a five-hour pub crawl, including dinner in a Czech pub. George will meet you at your hotel, or anywhere else that's convenient.

Martin Tour (Map p106; ☎ 224 212 473; www.martin.tour.cz; Štěpánská 61, Nové Město) Bus tours with head-phone commentary (which means you can't ask questions) of Prague sights (two hours 350Kč), river cruises, trips to Terezín, Karlovy Vary, Karlštejn, Konopiště, Kutná Hora, Český Krumlov and Dresden. Some tours involve walking; commentary tends to gloss over the interesting details. Pick-up Staroměstské nám.

Nostalgic Tram 91 (Map pp82-3; ☎ 233 343 349; www.dpp.cz; Public Transport museum; Patočková 4, Střešovice; adult/child 25/10Kč; ☎ departs hourly noon-6pm Sat, Sun & hols Apr–mid-Nov) Vintage tram cars dating from 1908 to 1924 trundle back and forth along a special sightseeing route, starting at the Public Transport museum and stopping at Prague castle, Malostranské náměstí, National theatre, Wenceslas square, náměstí Republiky and Štefánikův most, terminating at Výstaviště. You can get on and off at any stop, and buy tickets on board; ordinary public transport tickets and passes cannot be used on this line.

Pragotur (Map p98; ☎ 236 002 562; guides.pis@volny.cz; Old town hall, Staroměstské nám, Staré Město) The Prague Tourist Board's guide service, provides tailor-made walking tours from 600Kč per person for three hours. Tours include architecture, history, Art Nouveau and Jewish culture.

Prague Passenger Shipping (Pražská paroplavební společnost, PPS; ☎ 224 930 017; www.paroplavba.cz; Rašínovo nábřeží 2, Nové Město) From April to October PPS runs cruise boats along the Vltava, departing from the central quay on Rašínovo nábřeží (Map p106). A one-hour

THE PINK TANK

Náměstí Kinských, at the northern edge of Smíchov (Map p115), was until 1989 known as náměstí Sovětských tankistů (Soviet tank crews square), named in memory of the Soviet soldiers who 'liberated' Prague on 9 May 1945. For many years a Soviet T-34 tank – allegedly the first to enter the city – squatted menacingly atop a pedestal here (in fact it was a later Soviet 'gift').

In 1991 artist David Černý decided that the tank was an inappropriate monument, considering that Czechoslovakia had hardly been 'liberated' by the Soviet regime, and painted it bright pink. The authorities had it painted green again, and charged Černý with a crime against the state. This infuriated many parliamentarians, 12 of whom re-painted the tank pink themselves. Their parliamentary immunity saved them from arrest and secured Černý's release.

After complaints from the Soviet Union the pink tank was removed. Its former setting is now occupied by a circular fountain surrounded by park benches; the vast granite slab in the centre is split by a jagged fracture, perhaps symbolic of a break with the past. The tank still exists, and is still pink – it's at the Military museum in Lešany, near Týnec nad Sázavou, 30km south of Prague. For more on Černý see Quirky Prague, p121.

jaunt goes from the National theatre to Vyšehrad, departing at 11am, 2pm, 4pm, 5pm and 6pm from April to September (170Kč); a 1¼-hour trip to Troja (near the zoo; 100/190Kč one way/return) departs at 8.30am on weekdays in May and June only, and at 9.30am, 12.30pm and 3.30pm daily May to August and at weekends and holidays September and October. At 9am on Saturday and Sunday from May to August, a boat goes 37km south (upstream) through wild, green landscape to the Słapy Dam at Třebenice (300Kč return), arriving back in the city at 6.30pm.

Praha Bike (Map p98; ☎ 732 388 880; www.prahabike.cz; Dlouhá 24, Staré Město; 2hr-tour 420Kč; ☎ 9am-7pm) Take a two-hour guided cycling tour through the city, or an easy evening pedal through the parks. Tours depart from the Praha Bike office at 2.30pm from mid-March to October, and also at 11.30am and 5.30pm from May to mid-September. Trips outside the city can also be arranged. Helmets and locks are provided, and bikes are also available for private rental (p143).

Silver Line through Golden Prague This self-guided walking tour designed by the Prague Information Service (PIS; p86) takes in 38 sights in Staré Město, Malá Strana, Hradčany and Nové Město. The comprehensive guide booklet is available at PIS.

Wittmann Tours (Map p118; ☎ 222 252 472; www.wittmann-tours.com; Mánesova 8, Vinohrady; adult/student 630/500Kč; ☎ tours begin 10.30am & 2pm Sun-Fri May-Oct, 10.30am Apr, Nov & Dec) This outfit's three-hour walking tour of Josefov starts from the square in front of the Hotel Inter-Continental on Pařížská. Wittmann also runs seven-hour day trips to North Bohemia's Terezín (p231) for adults/students costing 1150/1000Kč.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Throughout summer, Prague can barely move for festivals. Keep an eye on *Houser*, the *Prague Post* and posters to see what's

happening while you're in town. Updates on festivals can be found at www.prague-info.cz and www.prague.tv. Some regularly scheduled events include the following:

Open-Air Cinema Festival (☎ 266 712 746; www.strelak.cz, in Czech) From June till mid-September, films are shown outdoors on Marksmen's Island (Střelcký Ostrov) – screenings include English-language films, German and French art-house classics, recent releases and Czech favourites.

Prague Spring (Pražské Jaro; ☎ 227 059 234; www.festival.cz; Rudolfinum Box Office, náměstí Jana Palacha, Staré Město) Prague's biggest festival drawcard begins on 12 May with a procession from Smetana's grave at Vyšehrad to the Municipal house, and a performance of *Má vlast*. The festival of classical music continues until 2 June. The cheapest tickets are available from the box office, open from 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday from April to 12 May, and until 5pm during the festival. For a guaranteed seat, though, you will have to book by mid-March.

Vinobraní From 1 August, you'll see signs popping up around the city advertising *burčák*: it's slightly fermented grape juice, the first product of the wine harvest. Prague toasts *burčák* for a few days in late September at náměstí Míru in Vinohrady, traditionally a wine-growing area.

SLEEPING

There are hundreds of hotels in Prague, but the incredible demand for beds means this is one of Europe's more expensive places to stay. During high season it pays to book ahead; see p436.

Staré Město, Nové Město and Malá Strana – the tourist centres – have the greatest variety and charge the most. Vinohrady has a lot of midrange, smaller hotels, and is a very pleasant place to stay, within easy reach of the centre

and with lots of restaurants and bars. Žižkov has hostels and budget hotels, as well as a few midrange options, and is popular with younger travellers – it's a bit grungy, and has tons of bars and clubs. Holešovice and Vyšehrad are both good options for midrange hotels within easy reach of the centre, though there's less going on in these suburbs than in Vinohrady.

Camping is prohibited on public land and most campgrounds are on the outskirts of Prague – we've listed some of those that are in closer.

In summer, many schools and universities convert themselves to hostels – look for big, yellow 'Travellers Hostel' banners. We've generally only listed year-round hostels.

Touts swarm on the arrival platforms of the main and Holešovice train stations offering private rooms. Check the location and availability of transport: some are right out in the suburbs. Prices start around 500Kč per person

if you're sharing entrance and bathroom with the family. If you want to organise a private room ahead of time, some accommodation agencies handle them.

Apartments are an increasingly popular option. If you're staying more than a week, they can be very good value, particularly as you can cook meals at home. We've listed agencies that handle apartments.

Accommodation Agencies

Agencies are a good option for private rooms or apartments, or if you show up in high season and can't find a bed. If you're booking a hotel it's cheaper to do so direct.

Alfa Tourist Service (Map p118; ☎ 224 230 037; www.alfatourist.cz; Opletalova 38, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Accommodation in student hostels, pensions, hotels and private rooms.

Apartments.cz (Map p106; ☎ 224 990 900; www.apartments.cz; Ostrovní 7, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-5pm

GAY & LESBIAN PRAGUE

For a city where it seems like every third person is making out in public, Prague is notable for the lack of gay affection displayed on its streets. While there are no laws against homosexuality in the Czech Republic – the age of consent is 15, the same as for straights – public opinion seems to be lagging behind legislation.

Amigo magazine's website (www.amigo.cz/en) has English-language listings. Tourist services, accommodation, listings and a bulletin board can be found at www.praguegaycity.com. Gay Iniciativa (<http://gay.iniciativa.cz> in Czech) is a gay and lesbian support service. Probably the most comprehensive information source is Gay Guide Prague (www.gayguide.net/europe/czech/prague), with online forums, events, accommodation, tours, newsletters and support groups.

Gay-owned accommodation includes **Pension Arco** (p128) and **Studio Henri** (Map p118; ☎ 271 773 837; www.studiohenri.cz; Jeseniova 52, Žižkov; d from 3000Kč; ☎ ☎ ☎), a four-person apartment with a whirlpool.

Bars & Clubs

The gay scene in Prague changes fast – check out one of the listings services mentioned earlier before you head out.

Club Bar Arco (Map p116; ☎ 271 740 734; Voroněžská 24/172, Vinohrady; ☎ 8am-midnight) A quiet little spot in genteel Vinohrady, popular with older men. There's also accommodation (see Pension Arco above) and an internet café.

Friends (Map p98; ☎ 224 211 920; Bartolomějská 11; ☎ 8pm-6am) This welcoming music and video bar has excellent coffee and wine, and DJs after 10pm on Friday and Saturday.

Piano Bar (Map p118; ☎ 222 727 496; Milešovská 10, Žižkov; ☎ 5pm-midnight) A stalwart of the Prague gay scene, frequented mainly by locals, this is a homely little cellar bar cluttered with junk and bric-a-brac.

Stella (Map p116; ☎ 224 257 869; Lužická 10, Vinohrady; ☎ 8pm-5am) Probably the most popular gay bar in town, Stella is intimate and candlelit. You have to ring the doorbell to get in.

Termix (Map p118; ☎ 222 710 462; www.club-termix.cz; Třebízského 4a, Vinohrady; admission free; ☎ 8pm-5am Wed-Sun) One of Prague's most popular gay and lesbian dance clubs, with a young crowd that contains as many tourists as locals. The smallish dance floor fills up fast during Thursday's techno party, when you'll probably have to queue to get in.

Mon-Fri) Long-established specialist in holiday apartments near the city centre.

AVE (☎ 251 551 011; www.avetravel.cz) Walk-in booking offices at the main train station, Holešovice train station and the airport; efficient and helpful, with hostel, *pension* and hotel rooms and a few private rooms. The branch at the main train station specialises in finding last-minute accommodation.

Happy House Rentals (Map p106; ☎ 224 946 890; www.happyhouserentals.com; Jungmannova 30, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) One of Prague's friendliest, most helpful agencies, Happy House rents out apartments and rooms all over the city in all price ranges.

Maja Rentals (☎ 224 911 850; www.majarentals.com; ☎ 11am-8pm) Good value short- and long-term apartment rentals in the centre and suburbs. No office, call the phone number or use the website to make inquiries.

Mary's Travel & Tourist Service (Map p118; ☎ 222 253 510; www.marys.cz; Italska 31, Vinohrady; ☎ 9am-9pm) Friendly and efficient agency offering private rooms, hostels, *pensions*, apartments and hotels in all price ranges in Prague and surrounding area.

Stop City (Map p118; ☎ 222 521 233; www.stopcity.cz; Vinohradská 24, Vinohrady; ☎ 10am-9pm daily Apr-Oct, 10am-8pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) Specialising in apartments, private rooms and *pension* accommodation in the city centre, Vinohrady and Žižkov areas.

Hradčany & Malá Strana

BUDGET

Hostel ESTEC (Map p92; ☎ 257 210 410; estec@irc.cz; blok 2, Vaníčková 5, Strahov; s/d 360/720Kč; ☎ year-round) The best of several Strahov student dormitories offering traveller accommodation. ESTEC is a good deal cheaper than its neighbours. Take bus 143, 149 or 217 from Dejvická metro to Kolej Strahov.

Hostel Sokol (Map p92; ☎ 257 007 397; hostel@sokol-cs.cz; 3rd fl, Hellichova 1; dm 350Kč; ☎ year-round; ☎) Sokol is accessed via a courtyard from Všešrdova 42 (take the metro to Malostranská and then tram 12, 22 or 23 two stops south). While the location and price are choice, the dorms are ultrabasic and can be crowded.

MIDRANGE

Castle Steps (Map p92; ☎ 257 532 921; www.castlesteps.com; Nerudova 10; r €37-78, apt €62-168) The name applies to a range of suites and apartments spread across three buildings on Nerudova street and one a little further uphill on Úvoz. Management is laid-back, helpful, gay-friendly, and decidedly informal – don't expect porters and room service! (There are no lifts either.) The apartments sleep from two to eight, and

offer remarkable value in a great location; all have been beautifully renovated and are furnished with antiques and pot plants. The reception office is at Nerudova 10 (ring the buzzer on the street, and wait for someone to come down and meet you).

Hotel Sax (Map p92; ☎ 257 531 268; www.sax.cz; Jánův vršek 328/3; s/d 4100/4400Kč; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a quiet, atmospheric corner of Malá Strana, eclectically furnished Hotel Sax has huge baths, big flat-screen TVs, primary-coloured leather couches, striking abstract photography and some of the chintziest bedrooms in Prague. It's very reasonably priced for the area and has a great ambience.

TOP END

Romantik Hotel U Raka (Map p92; ☎ 220 511 100; www.romantikhotels.com; Černínská 10; s/d from €160/180; ☎ ☎ ☎) Totally secluded but within an easy walk of Strahov and the castle, this tiny six-room hotel in an 18th-century wooden house with its own walled garden is the epitome of privacy. The owners have managed to blend 18th-century atmosphere with entirely modern fittings – each room is unique. Be sure to book at least a few months in advance.

Hotel U Zlaté Studně (Map p92; ☎ 257 011 213; www.zlatastudna.cz; U Zlaté studně 4; d from €200, ste from €250; ☎) 'At the Golden Well' is one of Malá Strana's hidden secrets, tucked away at the end of a cobbled cul-de-sac – a Renaissance house that once belonged to Emperor Rudolf II, with an unbeatable location perched on the southern slope of the castle hill. The rooms are quiet and spacious, with polished wood floors, reproduction period furniture, and blue and white bathrooms with underfloor heating and whirlpool baths; many have views over the palace gardens below.

Hotel Questenberk (Map p92; ☎ 220 407 600; www.questenberk.cz; Úvoz 15/155; s/d €160/200; ☎ ☎ ☎) Once Strahov Monastery's hospital building, this hotel has lots of character and is on a quiet street close to the castle. The rooms are sunny and furnished with old-fashioned opulence, though the atmosphere is more modern than medieval. There's an internet connection in every room if you have your own laptop.

Other recommendations:

U Páva (Map p92; ☎ 257 533 360; www.romantic-hotels.cz; U lužického semináře 32; s/d from 5700/6200Kč; ☎ ☎ ☎) Gothic detailing and heavy, dark furniture throughout, some rooms have stained glass and magical views of the castle.

Hotel U krále Karla (Map p92; ☎ 257 532 869; www.romantic-hotels.cz; Úvoz 4; s/d from 5000/5500Kč; ☎ ☎) You can't get closer to the castle than this hotel, right at the base of the walls. Rooms are spacious and the atmosphere fairy-tale.

Domus Henrici (Map p92; ☎ 220 511 369; www.domus-henrici.cz; Loretánská 11; s/d from €155/170; ☎) Stylish rooms with polished wood floors, large bathrooms, comfy beds and fluffy bathrobes. Service is impeccable, and there's a sunny outdoor terrace with gorgeous views over the city.

Staré Město & Josefov

BUDGET

Hostel Týn (Map p98; ☎ 224 808 333; www.tyn.prague-hostels.cz; Týnská 19; dm 400Kč, s & d 1200Kč; ☎) This spic-and-span little hostel is the most central budget accommodation in Prague, a couple of minutes' walk from Old Town square. The rooms themselves are basic and unadorned and all have shared bathrooms, but they're spotlessly clean and comfortable.

Hostel Dlouhá (Map p98; ☎ 224 826 662; www.travellers.cz; Dlouhá 33; dm/s/d/tr 380/1120/1300/1500Kč; ☎ ☎) The only Travellers' Hostel that is open year-round (if you're visiting in summer, you can book one of four other centrally located hostels by calling Dlouhá). The main dorm is a bit dark and grim, but smaller dorms are bright and clean if a little cramped (each bed has its own reading lamp, a nice touch). There's also a bar with pizza and a jukebox.

Pension Unitas (Map p98; ☎ 224 211 020; www.unitas.cz; Bartolomějská 9; dm per person 350-510Kč, s/d 1280/1580Kč; ☎) Set in a former convent that was once used as a prison, the rooms here are quiet (but cramped), and have shared bathrooms. Václav Havel was held here for a day, and if it's available you can stay in the very cell (No P6). If all this seems a bit too grim, the larger '*pension*' rooms on the ground floor and first floor provide more comfort, with brightly painted walls, flowery curtains, pot plants and prints.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Antik (Map p98; ☎ 222 322 288; www.hotelantik.cz; Dlouhá 22; s/d 3590/3990Kč) As the name suggests, this place has an antique shop on the ground floor and various pieces scattered elsewhere throughout the building, which is right in the heart of the Old Town. The cosy rooms have been thoroughly modernised and are perfectly comfortable, though a little lacking in character – ask for one with a balcony overlooking the garden out back.

Pension U Medvídků (Map p98; ☎ 224 211 916; www.umedvidku.cz; Na Perštýně 7; s/d from 2300/3500Kč) Cosy and centrally located, 'At the Little Bear' is a traditional beer hall and *pension* on the southern edge of the Old Town, about 10 minutes' walk from Old Town square. Some of the first-floor rooms have Renaissance painted wooden ceilings, and a few are almost big enough to be called a suite – No 33 is the best in the house, spacious and atmospheric, with a big pine bed and huge exposed roof beams.

Hotel Cloister Inn (Map p98; ☎ 224 211 020; www.cloister-inn.com; Konviktská 14; s/d €122/130; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Cloister Inn's refurbished convent rooms were once part of the still-operational St Bartholomew church. While some architectural touches remain from the convent, they're a little overwhelmed by the hotel's resolutely modern décor and warm, brown and yellow colour scheme. The rooms are comfortable and spotlessly clean, with great power showers.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Černý Slon (Map p98; ☎ 222 321 521; www.hotelcerny.slon.cz; Týnská ulička 1; s/d 3200/3900Kč) Set in a lovely historic building barely 30 paces from Old Town square, with smallish but comfortable rooms, a Gothic-vaulted dining room and a tiny courtyard garden.

Hotel U Klenotníka (Map p98; ☎ 224 211 699; www.uklenotnika.cz; Rytičská 3; s/d 2500/3800Kč; ☎) This friendly central hotel has 10 plain-but-comfy rooms decorated with unique art and a stylish little restaurant adorned with surreal painted glass.

Pension U Lilie (Map p98; ☎ 222 220 432; www.pensionulilie.cz; Liliová 15; s/d 2000/3050Kč) This plain but pleasant *pension* is right in the heart of things.

Hotel Mejštrík (Map p98; ☎ 224 800 055; www.hotelmejsirik.cz; Jakubská 5; s/d €178/203; ☎ ☎) This small boutique hotel in a reasonably quiet back street has striking Art Deco furnishings and a garden, just around the corner from the Municipal house.

TOP END

Hotel Josef (Map p98; ☎ 221 700 111; www.hoteljosef.cz; Rybná 20; s/d from €149/173; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Josef is one of Prague's most stylish contemporary hotels. From the stark, white, minimalist lobby – with its glass spiral staircase – to the designer bedrooms, where lines are kept clean and simple with plenty of white and subtle neutral tones in the bed linen and furniture. The glass-walled en suites are especially attractive, boasting extra-large 'rainfall' showerheads and modish glass bowl basins.

Northern Nové Město BUDGET

Hostel Jednota (Map p118; ☎ 224 230 038; www.alfa.tourist.cz/ejednota.html; Opletalova 38; dm/s/d incl breakfast 385/650/940Kč) Don't be put off by the glum Soviet-style lobby: the rooms at Jednota are bright, airy, well laid-out for maximum privacy and thoroughly 21st century. There are cooking facilities and a bar, and the hostel is close to the main train station.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Harmony (Map p118; ☎ 222 319 807; www.hotel.harmony.cz; Na poříčí 31; s/d 2900/3900Kč; ☒) The rooms here are sparklingly clean, simple and comfortable and the staff business-like and friendly: it's good value for money, and only a short walk from the Old Town. Three-person suites go for 4200Kč.

TOP END

Hotel Yasmin (Map p118; ☎ 234 100 100; www.hotel-yasmin.cz; Politických vězňů 12; d from €260; ☒) This boutique hotel a block east of Wenceslas square is very cutting-edge. The public areas are covered in jasmine blossom motifs and decorated with birch twig arrangements and chrome balls. The spacious bedrooms have a neutral palette of white, beige and tan, the clean lines set off by plants, flowers or a curved edge here and there. The bathrooms are in black tile and chrome.

Southern Nové Město & Vyšehrad

BUDGET

Miss Sophie's (Map p106; ☎ 296 303 530; www.miss-sophies.com; Melounova 3; dm 440Kč, s/d from 1500/1700Kč, apt from 21,000Kč; ☒) This hostel in a converted apartment building on the southern edge of the New Town offers a touch of contemporary style, with oak-veneer floors and stark, minimalist décor. There is a very cool lounge in the basement, with red-brick vaults and black leather sofas, and reception (open 24 hours) is staffed by a young, multilingual crew who are always eager to help.

Hostel U Melounu (Map p106; ☎ 224 918 322; www.hostelumelounu.cz; Ke Karlovu 7; dm 390Kč, s/d from 700/1000Kč; ☒) One of the prettier hostels in town, U Melounu is in a historic building on a quiet back street, a short walk from Vinohrady's restaurants and bars, and there's the added attraction of a peaceful, sunny garden complete with barbecue. It's about a 10-minute walk south of IP Pavlova metro, or take bus 504 or 505 down Sokolská.

MIDRANGE

Hotel 16 U sv Kateriny (Map p106; ☎ 224 920 636; www.hotel16.cz; Kateřinská 16; s/d from 2800/3500Kč; ☒) Near the Botanic gardens and about 10 minutes' walk from Karlovo nám metro station, this friendly boutique hotel is quiet, clean and comfortable. The rooms vary in size and are simply but smartly furnished; the best ones are those at the back with views onto the peaceful terraced garden.

Hotel Amadeus (Map p112; ☎ 224 937 572; www.dhotels.cz; Slavojova 8; s/d/ste 3050/3250/4750Kč; ☒) This good-value hotel is located on a quiet street below the Vyšehrad citadel. Rooms in the front block are spacious and elegant, decorated in shades of pale yellow, dark blue and tan; those at the back are a little more cramped, but overlook a peaceful courtyard. The city centre is just 10 minutes away by tram.

Hotel Union (Map p112; ☎ 261 214 812; www.hotelunion.cz; Ostrčilovo náměstí 4; s/d from €98/120; ☒) The Union is a grand old hotel that dates from 1906; it is still family-run, and the staff take great pride in looking after their guests properly. Comfortably renovated, with a few period touches left intact, the bedrooms are plain but pleasant, and the double glazing helps to cut down on street noise; ask for one of the deluxe corner rooms, which are huge and have bay windows with a view of either Vyšehrad or the distant castle

TOP END

Radisson SAS Alcron Hotel (Map p106; ☎ 222 820 000; www.radissonsas.com; Stěpánská 40; d from €200; ☒) The five-star Radisson is the modern reincarnation of the 1930s Alcron Hotel, and has long been favoured by celebrities and diplomats. Much of the original Art Deco marble-and-glass fittings have been preserved, and the 211 rooms have been tastefully renovated with pleasant soft furnishings, retro prints and chic marble bathrooms.

Holešovice

BUDGET

Sir Toby's Hostel (Map pp82-3; ☎ 283 870 635; www.sirtobys.com; Dělnická 24, Holešovice; dm 340-400Kč, s/d 1000/1350Kč; ☒) Set in a quiet, nicely refurbished apartment building with spacious kitchen and common room, and run by friendly, cheerful staff, Sir Toby's is only 10 minutes north of the city centre by tram. The dorms have between four and eight

bunks, and there's a communal kitchen for self-caterers to do their thing, a lounge and a relaxing little garden where you can sit back and chat.

Hotel Extol Inn (Map pp82-3; ☎ 220 876 541; www.extolinn.cz; Přístavní 2, Holešovice; s/d from 790/1350Kč; ☒) The bright and modern Extol Inn provides budget accommodation within easy reach of the city centre. The cheapest rooms (on the upper floors) are basic, no-frills affairs with shared bathrooms; these are often occupied by large groups of school children, so if you value your peace and quiet it might be worth paying a bit extra for the more expensive three-star rooms (doubles from 2260Kč) which have private bathroom, TV, minibar and free use of the hotel sauna and spa.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Belvedere (Map pp82-3; ☎ 220 106 111; www.eurohotels.cz; Milady Horákové 19, Holešovice; s/d from €95/128; ☒) The Belvedere is an old communist-era hotel that has been completely refurbished, and now provides good-value accommodation within easy reach of the city centre. The standard rooms are nothing special, but they're comfortable and spotlessly clean. The 'executive' rooms (doubles €147) on the 2nd floor are much more spacious, with sound-proofed windows, smart crimson drapes and bedspreads, and huge, white, marble-lined bathrooms.

Smíchov

BUDGET

Caravan Camping Praha (Map p115; ☎ 257 317 555; www.caravancamping.cz; Císařská louka 162; per person 95Kč, plus per tent/car 90/90Kč; ☒) At the tip of quiet Císařská louka island, this narrow strip of grass has fine views across to Vyšehrad. The camp site has a restaurant (open in summer) and a shop. From Smíchovské nádraží metro and train station, take tram 12 two stops south to Lihovar, cross the freeway and walk down the sliproad by the petrol station – it's about a 10-minute walk.

MIDRANGE

Admirál Botel (Map p115; ☎ 257 321 302; www.admiral-botel.cz; Hořejší nábreží 57; s/d 2980/3130Kč, ste 5400Kč; ☒) This floating hotel – a permanently moored riverboat – has compact, well-designed cabins: simple, compact and functional rather than luxurious, with tiny en-suite shower

rooms; those facing the river have an attractive outlook, and you can feed the swans from your window.

TOP END

Andel's (Map p115; ☎ 296 889 688; www.andelshotel.com; Stroupežnického 21; s/d from €235/255; ☒) Nowhere sums up new Smíchov quite like Andel's. This sleek designer hotel, all stark contemporary-style in beige, black and red, has floor-to-ceiling windows, DVD and CD players, internet access, and modern abstract art in every room, while the bathrooms are a wonderland of polished chrome and frosted glass. Superior 'club rooms', come with pleasurable perks such as bathrobes and slippers, newspapers delivered to your room and free room-service breakfast.

Troja

Troja is out by the zoo, across the Vltava northwest of Holešovice; take bus 112 from Nádraží Holešovice metro station.

BUDGET

Autocamp Trojská (Map pp82-3; ☎ 283 850 487; www.autocamp-trojska.cz; Trojská 157; site per person 100Kč, plus per tent/car 150/90Kč; ☒) The most comfortable and secure of half a dozen camp sites in this quiet northern suburb, Trojská offers a garden bar and restaurant, a laundry and an on-site shop. Get off the bus at the Kazanka stop.

Camp-Pension Herzog (Map pp82-3; ☎ 283 850 472; www.campherzog.cz; Trojská 161; per person 80Kč, plus per tent 60-150Kč, per car 80Kč; ☒) Another of the Troja camp sites, Herzog is set in an orchard, and has cooking and washing facilities, a fridge and freezer, and free hot showers. Get off the bus at the Čechova škola stop.

Žižkov

BUDGET

Hostel Elf (Map p118; ☎ 222 540 963; www.hostelelf.com; Husitská 11; dm 320-360Kč, s/d 1000/1200Kč; ☒) Friendly, bright and cheerful, Hostel Elf has lots of nooks and crannies where you can spend some quiet time, as well as a convivial terrace bar and lounge room. Nine-bed dorms are comfortable and well laid-out. Some doubles have their own bathrooms, but even the shared bathrooms allow a lot of privacy.

Clown & Bard Hostel (Map p118; ☎ 222 716 453; www.clownandbard.com; Bořivojova 102; dm 300-380Kč, d 1000Kč, apt 2400Kč; ☒) You're guaranteed

a party in Clown & Bard's 36-bed dorm – if you want things quieter, pay a little more for the five- to seven-person rooms, or one of the six-person self-catering flats in the attic. The party crowd gravitates towards the thumping basement bar which stays open till midnight and features regular live acts and DJ nights.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Golden City (Map p118; ☎ 222 711 008; www.golden-city.cz; Táboritká 3; s/d/tr 1900/2700/2900Kč; 📍 📺 📺) The Golden City is a converted 19th-century apartment block with crisp, clean, no-frills rooms, good buffet breakfasts and friendly, helpful staff. The main train station is just two tram stops away, and Wenceslas square is four stops.

Hotel U Tří Korunek (Map p118; ☎ 222 781 112; www.3korunky.cz; Cimburkova 28; s/d from 2480/3380Kč; 📍) Spread across three buildings in a peaceful corner of Žižkov, the 'Three Crowns' has 78 comfortable, spotless rooms; most are spacious, with room for a table and a couple of armchairs, but it's worth shelling out for one of the 'superior' rooms (300Kč extra), which are rather more stylish, with wood veneer floors, designer furniture, flat-screen TVs and huge walk-in showers.

Vinohrady

BUDGET

Pension Arco (Map p116; ☎ 271 742 908; www.arco-guesthouse.cz; Voroněžská 21; d/apt from 1200/1900Kč; 📍) The Arco is a gay-owned *pension* and café-bar offering clean and comfortably furnished *pension* rooms, as well as several two- to four-person apartments in nearby buildings. The apartments are good value – bright and clean with laminate floors and Ikea furniture, and close to a tram line that will take you all the way to the castle. Vinohradý's restaurants, pubs and clubs are just a few blocks away.

Pension Beetle (Map p116; ☎ 222 515 093; www.beetle-tour.cz; Šmilovského 10; d from 1800Kč, ste from 3200Kč) The Beetle occupies a lovely 1910 apartment building in a leafy back street, far from the tourist throng. The cheaper rooms are plain but functional, while the larger rooms and 'suites' (like two-room apartments) are more stylishly decorated and furnished with antique and stripped-pine furniture, and are equipped with bedside lamps, minibar, table and chairs.

MIDRANGE

Pension Březina (Map p116; ☎ 296 188 888; www.brezina.cz; Legerova 41; s/d 2000/2200Kč; 📍 📺) Set in a converted apartment block that retains traces of its Art Nouveau heritage, this attractive *pension* boasts rooms that are spacious, comfortable and neatly laid out. Try to get a room at the back as the street out front can be noisy.

Hotel Anna (Map p116; ☎ 222 513 111; www.hotel-anna.cz; Budečská 17; s/d from €70/90, ste from €100) This late 19th-century building retains many of its Art Nouveau period features. The bedrooms are bright and cheerful, with floral bedspreads and arty black-and-white photos of Prague buildings on the walls. There are two small suites on the top floor, one of which has a great view towards the castle.

TOP END

Le Palais Hotel (Map p116; ☎ 234 634 111; www.palais-hotel.cz; U Zvonárky 1; s/d €335/370, ste from €680; 📍 📍 📍) Housed in a gorgeous belle époque building dating from the end of the 19th century, this luxury hotel has been beautifully restored, complete with original floor mosaics, period fireplaces, marble staircases, wrought-iron balustrades, frescoes, painted ceilings and delicate stucco-work. The bedrooms are decorated in warm shades of yellow, pink and ochre, while the various suites – some located in the corner tower, some with a south-facing balcony – make the most of the hotel's superb location perched on top of a bluff with views of Vyšehrad fortress.

EATING

Fifteen years ago, Prague's eateries offered little more than pork and dumplings and deep-fried cheese. These days, if you can imagine eating it, some entrepreneurial Prague is cooking it. Italian, French, Indian, Moroccan, Lebanese, Thai, Greek, Chinese and Icelandic are all on offer, as is the sort of fusion food filling plates in San Francisco, Sydney and London. Vegetarian food is widely available, though finding anything vegan is difficult.

However, don't let this kaleidoscope of cuisines blind you to the pleasures of good old-fashioned Czech grub. The city's many pubs dish up tasty traditional dishes, often at very low prices, and a lot of the more up-market restaurants offer gourmet versions of classic Bohemian dishes such as pork knuckle or roast duck.

Prices soar as you approach Old Town square and Malostranské náměstí, but it's only rarely that quality soars as well. You can still find plenty of good, reasonably priced food in side streets near even the biggest tourist centres. Restaurants are generally open by 10am or 11am, and close at 11pm or midnight.

Hradčany

BUDGET

Saté (Map p92; ☎ 220 514 552; Pohořelec 3; mains 80-125Kč; 📍 11am-10pm) Saté is one of Prague's longest-serving Asian restaurants, a no-frills place just five minutes' walk west of the castle serving inexpensive Indonesian and Malaysian dishes such as *nasi goreng* (fried rice with veggies, prawns and egg), beef *rendang* (coconut-based curry), Javanese beefsteak and a string of tasty vegetarian dishes.

Malý Buddha (Map p92; ☎ 220 513 894; Úvoz 46; mains 60-120Kč; 📍 noon-10.30pm Tue-Sun; 📍) Like stepping into a Saigon temple, Malý Buddha is all tinkling music, oriental knick-knacks and an atmosphere of enforced peace. The food is mostly Vietnamese influenced, with lots of vegetarian offerings and an interesting selection of 'healing' wines, though it doesn't mention which is recommended for cobblestone-inflicted blisters.

TOP END

U Zlaté Hrušky (Map p92; ☎ 220 514 778; Nový svět 3; mains 600-800Kč; 📍 11.30am-3pm & 6.30pm-midnight) 'At The Golden Pear' is a cosy, wood-pannelled gourmet's corner, serving beautifully prepared Czech fish, fowl and game dishes. It's frequented as much by locals as by tourists and visiting dignitaries (the Czech foreign ministry is just up the road). In summer you can opt for a table in its leafy *zahradní restaurace* (garden restaurant) across the street.

Malá Strana

BUDGET

Hostinec U Tří Zlatých Trojek (Map p92; ☎ 257 534 377; Tomášská 6; mains 100-160Kč; 📍 11am-midnight) Hidden among the overpriced tourist traps of Malá Strana is this traditional pub, serving good, solid, Prague pub grub at surprisingly low prices.

Restaurant Bar Bar (Map p92; ☎ 257 312 246; Všeňdova 17; mains 90-155Kč; 📍 noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) A cosy cellar bar decked with posters and works by local artists, Bar Bar serves up Slovak *halušky* (cheese dumplings

with bacon), giant salads and a zillion kinds of tasty crepes, ranging from savoury pancakes stuffed with smoked bacon, sauerkraut and cheese to sweet ones filled with ice cream, walnuts and maple syrup.

Bohemia Bagel (Map p92; ☎ 257 310 831; Újezd 18; snacks 90-270Kč; 📍 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-midnight Sat & Sun) A backpackers' favourite, Bohemia Bagel serves up bagels, sandwiches, soups, salads and all-you-can-drink soft drinks and coffee, as well as internet access. There's another branch (Map p98; Masná 2, Staré Město) that is also an internet café.

MIDRANGE

Cantina (Map p92; ☎ 257 317 173; Újezd 38; mains 120-300Kč; 📍 noon-midnight) This homely hacienda serves up the most authentic margaritas in Prague. The menu is as good as Tex-Mex gets in this town, with big portions of burrito, *chimichanga*, *quesadilla* and fajitas with both meat and vegetarian fillings.

Hergetova Cihelna (Map p92; ☎ 257 535 534; Cihelná 2b; mains 225-550Kč; 📍 9-2am) This converted brickworks enjoys one of Prague's hottest locations with a riverside terrace offering sweeping views of Charles bridge and the Old Town waterfront. The menu is as sweeping as the view – choose from tempura-fried tuna, chicken fajitas, Czech dishes, burgers and stirfries, washed down with a bottle of local wine (the Sonberg Rýnský Ryzlink is an excellent Moravian white).

El Centro (Map p92; ☎ 257 533 343; Maltézské náměstí 9; mains 150-375Kč, tapas 80-200Kč; 📍 noon-midnight) Bright colours, chunky wooden furniture and Spanish-speaking staff lend an authentic air to this classic tapas bar. Nibble on snackettes of chorizo, calamari and *gambas pil-pil* (prawns in garlic) over a bottle of Rioja, or splash out on a full meal of steak, grilled chicken or paella washed down with a jug of sangria.

Cowboys (Map p92; ☎ 296 826 107; Nerudova 40; mains 200-500Kč; 📍 noon-2am) This sophisticated steakhouse and cocktail bar inhabits a stylishly up-lit cavern of red-brick vaults with so-tacky-they're-cool cow-hide patterned banquettes and efficient staff sporting jeans, cowboy hats and smiles the size of Texas. The menu offers meltingly tender steaks and burgers, but also caters for vegetarians, and there's an outdoor terrace for those long, sunny, summer afternoons.

U Sedmi Švábů (Map p92; ☎ 257 531 455; Jánův vršek 14; mains 180-350Kč; 📍 11am-11pm) This rather silly –

the name means 'At the Seven Cockroaches' – but also rather charming medieval-themed restaurant serves meaty Czech platters (with a few vegetarian alternatives) in an authentic, electricity-free atmosphere – all the illumination is provided by candles. There's an all-you-can-eat-and-drink deal for 1555Kč.

TOP END

Kampa Park (Map p92; ☎ 257 532 685; Na Kampě 8a; mains 600-800Kč; ☎ 11.30-1am) Kampa Park was a pioneer of Prague's fine-dining scene, opened back in 1994. Since then it has attracted celebrity visitors like moths around a flame – Mick Jagger, Johnny Depp, Lauren Bacall, Robbie Williams, and Bill and Hilary Clinton have all over-tipped the staff here. The cuisine is as famous as the clientele, from the grilled octopus with roasted broccoli, raisins and capers, to the filet mignon with glazed sweetbread and *chanterelles*. There's a stylish dining room and roof terrace, but for a really romantic dinner, reserve a candlelit table on the cobble-stoned terrace, draped in fairy lights, right beside the river, with the lights of Charles bridge glittering on the water.

Josefov BUDGET

Pivnice U Milosrdných (Map p98; ☎ 222 327 673; Milosrdných & Kozi; mains 80-120Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat) Solidly typical Czech pub, always packed – particularly at lunchtime – with office workers and elderly locals, this *pivnice* serves all the Czech favourites, including a hearty goulash with bacon dumplings.

TOP END

Bodeguita del Medio (Map p98; ☎ 224 813 922; Kaprova 5; mains 300-550Kč; ☎ 10am-2am) This outpost of the famous Havana cocktail-bar-and-restaurant chain brings a whiff of Hemingway to the Old Town streets, with its chunky wooden tables, ceiling fans and cigars. The seafood is excellent, especially the zingy *gambas Punta Arenas* (prawns with chilli, lime and ginger), the cappuccinos are froth-topped caffeine bombs, and the pavement tables catch the sun at lunchtime...perfecto.

King Solomon (Map p98; ☎ 224 818 752; Široká 8; set menu 550Kč; ☎ noon-11pm Sun-Thu, noon-sundown Fri, closed Sat) The most kosher restaurant in town, King Solomon serves carefully prepared meals in a lovely glassed conservatory. While the restaurant is closed to walk-in traffic on

Shabbat, you can call ahead for meals at that time. A catering service can deliver kosher meals to your hotel.

Staré Město BUDGET

Beas Vegetarian Dhaba (Map p98; ☎ 603 035 727; Týnská 19; mains 80-100Kč; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Tucked away in a courtyard off Týnská, this friendly and informal little restaurant offers vegetarian curries (cooked by chefs from Northern India) served with rice, salad, chutneys and raita; an extra 20Kč gets you a drink and dessert. It's tasty, good value, and a great place to meet Czechs of an alternative bent.

Giallo Rossa (Map p98; ☎ 604 898 989; Jakubská 1; pizzas 70-130Kč; ☎ 10am-midnight) Half of Prague seems to be lining up at the takeaway counter here come lunchtime. Huge pizza slices go for 70Kč. If you'd rather sit down, there's a restaurant by the storefront; there's internet access upstairs.

Au Gourmand (Map p98; ☎ 222 329 060; Dlouhá 10; snacks 60-120Kč; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7pm Sat, 9am-7pm Sun) Au Gourmand is a French-style patisserie and café gaily decked out in colourful 19th-century tiles and wrought-iron furniture. It offers baguettes, pastries and a joyously bewildering array of cakes, and its caffè latte is among the best in town.

Country Life (Map p98; ☎ 224 213 336; Melantrichova 15; mains 75-150Kč; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-6pm Fri, 11am-6pm Sun) Prague's best health-food shop and vegetarian salad-and-sandwich bar has vegetarian pizza and goulash too. Food is sold by weight, and you should be able to fill up for under 80Kč. The original Old Town branch has sit-down service at the back, while the other branch (opposite), in Nové Město, is cafeteria style. Both get densely crowded at lunch time, so go early or get a takeaway.

U Pinkasů (Map p98; ☎ 221 111 150; Jungmannova nám 16, Nové Město; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) If you do some sort of complicated equation matching cost against quality, this has to be the best Czech food in Prague. You'll eat every scrap of dumpling on your plate, and wish you had one more to sop up that last bit of goulash. The roast pork and sauerkraut is excellent, and the service is friendly and professional. There's a small garden out the back, under the walls of the church of Our Lady of the Snows, and a basement pub that stays open until 4am.

MIDRANGE

Red, Hot & Blues (Map p98; ☎ 222 314 639; Jakubská 12; mains 180-480Kč; ☎ 9am-11pm) This long-established New Orleans-style restaurant pulls in the crowds with great nachos, burgers, burritos and shrimp creole, plus some wicked desserts. It also serves a range of Western breakfasts, including pancakes and maple syrup, and a full British fry-up; the 'Home Run Special' (bacon, eggs, hash browns, pancakes and toast) will soak up the heaviest hangover, and lay a firm foundation for further debauchery.

Ambiente Pasta Fresca (Map p98; ☎ 224 230 244; Celetná 11; mains 180-350Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) Slick styling and service with a smile complement an extensive menu at this busy Italian restaurant. Choose from dishes such as melt-in-the-mouth carpaccio of beef, piquant spaghetti aglio-olio with chilli and crisp pancetta, and rich creamy risotto with porcini, along with a wide range of Italian and Czech wines.

Orange Moon (Map p98; ☎ 222 325 119; Rámová 5; mains 165-230Kč; ☎ 11.30am-11.30pm) Buddhist statues, oriental carved-wood panels, paper lanterns and warm, sunny colours make for a welcoming combination at this popular Asian restaurant. The menu is mostly Thai, with authentically spicy *tom yum kai* (hot and sour chicken broth) laden with smouldering chillies, crispy *pow pyet* (spring rolls) and fragrant *kaeng phed kai* (chicken in red curry).

Kolkovna (Map p98; ☎ 224 819 701; V Kolkovně 8; mains 160-400Kč; ☎ 9am-midnight) Owned and operated by the Pilsner Urquell brewery, Kolkovna is a stylish, modern take on the traditional Prague beer hall, with décor by top Czech designers and posh (but hearty) versions of classic Czech dishes, such as goulash, roast duck and roast pork, including the Czech favourite pork and dumplings (the dish of the day is only 95Kč).

Dahab (Map p98; ☎ 224 827 375; Rybná 28; mains 200-400Kč; ☎ noon-1am) Dahab is a dimly lit North African *souq* scattered with oriental rugs and cushions where you can lounge on a divan and sip Moroccan mint tea to an oriental-jazz-ragga soundtrack. The menu ranges from baklava and other sweet snacks to more substantial couscous, *tajine* (meat and vegetable stew), lamb and chicken dishes, and there are teas from India, China and Turkey. Or you can just kick back with a hookah (hubble-bubble pipe); 175Kč gets you a chunk of perfumed baccy that'll last around 45 minutes.

TOP END

U Zavoje (Map p98; ☎ 226 006 120; Havelská 25; mains 350-500Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) This gourmet complex, set in a beautiful old passageway between Havelská and Kožná streets, includes a wine bar, restaurant, coffee house and deli, all dedicated to fine food and French and Czech wines. The menu concentrates on fresh seasonal produce, while the wine list makes a good starting point for learning about Moravian wines.

V Zátíši (Map p98; ☎ 222 221 155; Liliová 1; mains 500-800Kč; ☎ noon-3pm & 5.30-11pm) One of Prague's best restaurants, famed for the quality of its cuisine. There are two dining rooms, one classically decorated in shades of ochre, with wrought-iron chairs and lamp fittings, the other more modern. Of the dozen or so main courses on offer, four are seafood and three are vegetarian; there are also gourmet versions of traditional Czech dishes – the crispy roast duckling with red cabbage and herb dumplings is superb.

Nové Město BUDGET

The sausage stands lining the sides of Wenceslas square will rustle you up a hot dog or *smažený syr* (fried cheese) for 25Kč; wash it down with a shot of vodka or rum for 15Kč, or beer in a plastic cup for 20Kč (also useful for obliterating the memory of that mysterious chunk you found in your sausage).

Country Life (Map p106; ☎ 224 247 280; Jungmannova 1; mains 75-150Kč; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6pm Fri) Country Life is a cafeteria-style health-food restaurant with all-vegan food and buffet service. Load up your plate and pay by weight. That's right – you weigh in at the till. There are only four tables at this branch, which caters mainly to the takeaway trade, so if you want to increase your chances of getting a seat, head for the branch in Staré Město (opposite).

Pizzeria Kmotra (Map p106; ☎ 224 915 809; V jirchářích 12; pizzas 85-130Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) One of Prague's oldest and best pizzerias, 'The Godmother' can rustle up more than two dozen varieties, from Margherita to Marinara, cooked in a genuine, wood-fired pizza oven. Sit beside the bar upstairs, or head down to the basement where you can watch the chef slinging pizza dough in the open kitchen. It gets busy after 8pm, so try to snag a table before then.

Branický Sklípек (U Purkmistra; Map p106; ☎ 224 237 103; Vodčikova 2; mains 70-270Kč; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-11pm Sat & Sun) This is one of the few rough-and-ready, old-fashioned beer halls left in central Prague, serving meaty, good-value Czech dishes washed down with cheap beer. Menus and staff are Czech only, which puts off most tourists, but persevere – this is the real deal.

MIDRANGE

Albio (Map p118; ☎ 222 325 414; Truhlářská 18; mains 100-260Kč; ☎ 11am-10pm) This family-friendly wholefood restaurant is as bright and fresh as an Alpine morning, decked out in blonde wood and rustic timber. It sources all its food from local organic farmers and serves fish, vegetarian and vegan dishes, and there are organic wines and unpasteurised beer so you can work up a wholesome hangover.

Dinitz Café (Map p118; ☎ 222 313 308; Na poříčí 12; mains 200-400Kč; ☎ 9am-3am) This cool, Art Deco coffee house harks back to the sophisticated café society of the 1920s, with fine food and drink served from breakfast till 2am, and live music every night from 9pm. The menu focuses on fresh food, simply prepared – don't miss the city's finest fish and chips, fried in crisp beer-and-parsley batter with crunchy, golden fries and delicious herb aioli.

Siam Orchid (Map p118; ☎ 222 319 410; Na poříčí 21; mains 160-280Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm) This tiny restaurant, tucked away beside a Thai massage studio, offers some of the city's most authentic Thai cuisine. From the crisp, grease-free *po-pia thot* (spring rolls with pork and black mushrooms) and succulent *kai sa-te* (chicken satay) to the fiery *kaeng khiao wan kai* (chicken in green curry with basil), pretty much everything on the menu is a delight.

Taj Mahal (Map p106; ☎ 224 225 566; Škrétova 10; mains 200-300Kč; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Fri, 1-11pm Sat & Sun) The Taj Mahal is one of the city's best Indian restaurants, complete with live sitar-twanging in the evenings. There are separate smoking and nonsmoking dining rooms, and though the food is delicious, the atmosphere can occasionally be a little formal and restrained.

Dynamo (Map p106; ☎ 224 932 020; Pštrossova 29; mains 125-280Kč; ☎ 11.30am-midnight) Don't be put off by the funky font, spearmin-green décor or look-at-me light fittings – there's more to Dynamo than hipster flash. The cook here has some bright ideas, and throws together unusually fresh ingredients in all kinds of inter-

esting ways. The menu includes baked salmon wrapped in parma ham with honey-mustard sauce, the chicken Caesar salad is delicious and the staff are friendly and unpretentious. It's a great place for a girls' night out.

TOP END

Hof (Map p106; ☎ 222 247 240; Václavské náměstí 45; mains 360-650Kč; ☎ 7am-1am) Set in an old Art Deco space that has been stylishly transformed with the use of stainless steel, polished marble and leather, this place has a great location – half-way up Wenceslas square. And the food is top-notch – an inventive mix of Asian and European dishes (the honey and soy glazed salmon with wasabi mayonnaise is superb). If only the staff could stop checking themselves in the mirror long enough to take your order...

Suterén (Map p106; ☎ 224 933 657; Masarykovo nábřeží 26; mains 350-500Kč; ☎ 11.30am-midnight Mon-Sat) 'The Basement' is a beautiful cellar space, where modern detailing complements the old red-brick and wooden beams perfectly – cream linen chairs set at gleaming black tables with a single deep-pink rose in the middle of each one. The menu leans towards seafood, beef and game, and the signature dishes take their inspiration from cocktails – the 'salmon mojito', for example, has the fish marinated in rum and lime juice, served with tart lime jam and sweet rum and mint sauce.

Vyšehrad

U Neklana (Map p112; ☎ 224 916 057; Neklanova 30; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) U Neklana is a welcoming local pub nestled in the corner of one of Prague's coolest apartment buildings, a cubist classic dating from 1915. Decked out in the cheerful red colours of the Budvar brewery, it dishes up hearty Czech fare such as potato and mushroom soup served in a scooped-out loaf of rye bread (the menu is in English and German as well as Czech), and there's a hits-of-the-80s jukebox providing a suitably retro soundtrack.

Holešovice

MIDRANGE

Hong Kong (Map pp82-3; ☎ 233 376 209; Letenské náměstí 5; mains 150-300Kč; ☎ 10.30am-11pm) The impressively gaudy décor and mostly Cantonese menu smack of authenticity, with favourites such as dim sum, soy sauce duck and salt-and-pepper shrimp, and more adventurous

options such as 'cold sliced pork tongue with soy sauce', 'chicken with strange tastes' and 'chicken with five smells'.

Restaurant Corso (Map pp82-3; ☎ 220 806 541; Dukeských hrdinů 48; mains 125-350Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm) The Corso has 'interesting' décor – something like a cross between abstract Asian design and Art Deco on acid – but serves traditional Czech cuisine, steaks and pasta dishes, including delicious cream of onion soup and homemade apple strudel. The great-value three-course set lunch (300Kč) includes a beer and a Becherovka.

TOP END

Hanavský Pavilón (Map p92; ☎ 253 323 641; Letenská sady; mains 600-900Kč; ☎ 11am-1am, terrace till 11pm) Tuxedoed waiters glide between linen-topped tables at this overpriced but gorgeous restaurant. Originally built for the 1891 Prague Exposition, the pavilion still has some of the best views in town. It also has some hysterical dinner music – the resident Hammond organ maestro is a whiz.

Smíchov

BUDGET

Káva Káva Káva (Map p115; ☎ 257 314 277; Lidická 42; mains 70-120Kč; ☎ 7am-10pm) This popular internet café offers an extensive menu – you can snack on salads, sandwiches, quiches or nachos, or tuck into more substantial chicken gyros, Mexican chilli or home-made soup of the day. There's free wi-fi access too (provided you spend at least 50Kč).

MIDRANGE

Na Verandách (Map p115; ☎ 257 191 200; Nádražní 84; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) Bustling green-aproned waiters bearing trays of foaming Staropramen dodge among crowds of local drinkers, business people and tourists in this big, brassy, modern bar and restaurant. It's part of the Staropramen Brewery, so there's no shortage of quality beer (there are seven varieties on tap) to wash down the traditional Czech pub grub.

TOP END

Nagoya (Map p115; ☎ 251 511 724; Stroupežnického 21; mains 150-400Kč; ☎ 6-11pm Mon-Sat) Nagoya is one of the few truly authentic Japanese restaurants in Prague. It has crisp, minimalist décor with paper screens, globe lampshades and bamboo plants; most of the seating is at ordinary

tables, but there are also some low tables with tatami mats if you want to take off your shoes and get the genuine Japanese dining experience. The menu ticks all the usual boxes – sushi, sashimi, teriyaki, yakitori, tempura, miso soup – but also includes *sakana*, small savoury snacks a bit like Japanese tapas, great if you want to try a range of flavours.

Vinohrady

BUDGET

Restaurace Sofia (Map p116; ☎ 603 298 865; Americká 28; mains 60-180Kč; ☎ noon-11pm) If you're not going to make it to Bulgaria on this trip, don't fret: Restaurace Sofia whips up Bulgarian classics like buttered tripe, beef tongue fried in butter, mixed grill and *musaka* (Bulgarian for 'mous-saka'). If you like this sort of thing, you'll love it – if you don't, at least it will revive your enthusiasm for goulash.

MIDRANGE

Café FX (Map p116; ☎ 224 254 776; Bělehradská 120; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 11.30am-2am) FX offers some of the best food in Prague in its price range – and it's all veggie. This hippy-chic restaurant at the entrance to the nightclub Radost FX comes up with imaginative dishes ranging from spinach ravioli stuffed with hazelnut pesto and cheese, to sage and mushroom 'meatballs' with mashed potatoes and creamy mushroom sauce.

Ambiente (Map p118; ☎ 222 727 851; Mánesova 59; mains 200-400Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun) 'Ambiente' means atmosphere, and the warm yellow walls, bottle-green banquettes, bamboo and basketwork chairs and rich mahogany woodwork make for a relaxing one in this popular Vinohrady restaurant – a pioneer of Prague's new wave of welcoming, well-run, service-with-a-smile eateries. The American-themed menu offers a huge range of salads (including Caesar, goat's cheese, roast veggies, avocado), tasty pasta dishes, barbecue ribs, fajitas, steaks and chicken wings, and there are excellent house wines for around 90Kč a glass.

Tiger Tiger (Map p116; ☎ 222 512 048; Anny Letenské 5; mains 190-280Kč; ☎ 11.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 5-11pm Sat & Sun) Tiger Tiger has a dapper little dining room dressed in cheerful yellow with smart navy upholstery, a restrained and elegant setting for some of the city's best Thai cuisine. Authentic specialities include *tom yam kung* (hot and sour prawn soup), *som tam* (spicy

carrot salad) and *kaeng ped gai* (chicken in red curry sauce).

Wings Club (Map p118; ☎ 222 713 151; Lucemburská 11; mains 130-300Kč; 🕒 11.30am-11pm) Wings Club is half restaurant, half museum, filled with fascinating memorabilia of WWII Czech aviation ranging from photographs and uniforms to a gleaming, full-sized propeller mounted on one wall. The menu is solid, good-quality Czech pub grub, from smoked pork with sauerkraut and dumplings to pork kebabs marinated in mustard.

Žižkov

BUDGET

Akropolis Café-Restaurant (Map p118; ☎ 296 330 990; Kubelkova 27; mains 80-180Kč; 🕒 11.30-1am Mon-Sat) A Žižkov institution, this eccentric café sports a décor of marble panels, quirky metalwork light fittings and weird fishtank installations designed by local artist František Skála. The menu has a good selection of vegetarian dishes, from nachos to gnocchi, plus great garlic soup, searingly hot buffalo wings and steak tartare. Kids are welcome – you'll find toys and colouring books (though it can get a bit smoky).

MIDRANGE

Mailsi (Map p118; ☎ 060 346 6626; Lipanská 1; mains 160-425Kč; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11pm) Mailsi was Prague's first Pakistani restaurant, and is still one of the city's best for authentic curry cuisine. The outside is inconspicuous, and it's only the *qawwali* music that guides you into the attractively decorated green and terracotta dining room with its tropical fishtank. Service is courteous, the food delicious and prices modest for a specialty restaurant – though helpings are often small.

Self-Catering

There are corner stores (*potraviny*) and supermarkets everywhere. The five million people shopping in **Tesco** (Map p106; Národní třída 26; 🕒 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) all at the same time all seem to have left their manners at the door, but this supermarket has just about everything you'll need.

If you don't need to buy everything in one place, fruit and vegetable stores (*ovoce-zelelina*) have better and cheaper produce than the supermarkets, though the selection is smaller and the opening hours shorter. Delis (*lahůdky*) sell all kinds of cold meats and cheeses, as well as great little Czech open

sandwiches (*chlebičky*) with ham, egg or salami, which go for less than 20Kč each.

There aren't many open-air produce markets in the city. The biggest one near the centre is the **daily market** (Map p98; Havelská), south of Old Town square, but you have to wade through a lot of souvenirs to get to the food. There's also a daily market (Map p106) behind Tesco, and a selection of **fruit and veg stands** (Map pp82-3; Václavkova) in Dejvice, near Hradčanská metro.

Note that some perishable supermarket food items bear a date of manufacture (*datum výroby*) plus a 'consume-within...' (*spotřebujte do...*) period, whereas others, such as long-life milk, will have a stated minimum-shelf-life (*minimální trvanlivost*) date (after which freshness of the product is not guaranteed).

DRINKING

Once the preserve of traditional Czech *pivnice* (beer halls) and *kavárny* (cafés), Prague is now awash with stylish cocktail bars, arty pubs and pretty much any variation on the drinking theme you can think of. Traditional pubs are generally open from 11am to 11pm, while bars tend to be open noon to 1am during the week; they may stay open until 4am or 5am on weekends. Fancy cocktail bars are concentrated in the centre and Vinohrady; grungy student bars are out in Žižkov; traditional Czech pubs are everywhere.

Hradčany & Malá Strana

U Zavěšeného Kafe (The Hanging Coffee; Map p92; ☎ 605 294 595; Úvoz 6; 🕒 11am-midnight) This is a superb little drinking den barely five minutes' walk from the castle. Head for the cosy, wood-pannelled back room, quirkily decorated with weird art and mechanical curiosities (all for sale), and an ancient jukebox crammed with Beatles, Stones and Czech rock. Foaming Gambrinus is only 20Kč a half-litre, and the coffee is damn fine too.

Klub Újezd (Map p92; ☎ 257 316 537; Újezd 18; 🕒 2pm-4am) Klub Újezd is one of Prague's many 'alternative' bars, spread over three floors (DJs in the cellar, and a café upstairs) and filled with a fascinating collection of hand-made furniture and fittings, original art and weird wrought-iron sculptures.

Josefov

Ocean Drive (Map p98; ☎ 224 819 089; V Kolkovně 7; 🕒 7pm-2am) A 1930s American-style bar, with

FUNNY, I DON'T REMEMBER ORDERING THAT

Keep in mind that nothing comes for free in Prague's more touristy restaurants – if the waiter offers you fries with that, and you accept, you'll be charged for them. Bread, mayonnaise, mustard, vegetables...everything has a price tag. Many restaurants also have a cover charge (*couvert*) which every diner must pay regardless of what they eat and even if they eat nothing. It's not a scam, it's just the way things are done.

If the menu has no prices, ask for them. Don't be intimidated by the language barrier; know exactly what you're ordering. If something's not available and the waiter suggests an alternative, ask for the price. Immediately return anything you didn't order and don't want, such as bread, butter or side dishes; don't just leave them to one side or, chances are, they'll appear on your bill.

Art Deco imagery, lots of dark, polished wood, and a glittering array of glasses and liqueur bottles, Ocean Drive is typical of Prague's new wave of sophisticated cocktail bars. Have more than a couple of the expertly mixed cocktails and you may be wondering whether you got on the plane to Miami by accident.

Palírna Igor Sevcík (Map p98; ☎ 222 319 097; Rámová 3; 🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) If you're keen to try *slivovitz* (plum brandy), there's no better place to start than this funky café-cum-wine bar. A temple to the fiery spirit, it stocks more than a dozen varieties, as well as *jablkovice* (apple brandy), *hruškovice* (pear brandy), *meruňkovice* (apricot brandy) and a range of Moravian wines.

Staré Město

U Zlatého Tygra (At the Golden Tiger; Map p98; ☎ 222 221 111; Husova 17; 🕒 3-11pm) This is one of the few old-town drinking holes that has hung on to its soul – and its low prices (26Kč per 0.5L of Pilsner Urquell), considering its location. It was novelist Bohumil Hrabal's favourite hostelry – there are photos of him on the walls – and the place that Václav Havel took then fellow president Bill Clinton in 1994 to show him a real Czech pub.

Chateau L'Enfer Rouge (Map p98; ☎ 222 316 328; Jakubská 2; 🕒 noon-3am Mon-Thu, noon-4am Fri, 4pm-4am Sat & Sun) When this raucous place gets fired up you can barely hear yourself think, but who needs thinking anyway? Bar service is fast and friendly, there are all kinds of bizarre happenings going on outside the bathroom and it's often so crowded you'll be drinking on the pavement (if the bouncers let you). Embrace your inner lad and enjoy.

Blatouch (Map p98; ☎ 222 328 643; Vězeňská 4; 🕒 11am-1am Mon-Thu, 11am-3am Fri, 2pm-3am Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Blatouch is a pleasantly relaxed literary hangout, with a long, narrow bar lined

with antique bookcases and Edward Hopper prints, and a tiny garden courtyard at the back. It serves coffee, tea and snacks as well as alcoholic drinks – the perfect place to read the papers over an afternoon glass of wine.

Kozička (Map p98; ☎ 224 818 308; Kozí 1; 🕒 noon-4am Mon-Fri, 6pm-4am Sat, 6-3pm Sun) The 'Little Goat' is a buzzing, red-brick basement bar decorated with cute steel goat sculptures, serving Krušovice on tap at 35Kč for 0.5L (though watch out, the bar tenders will sling you a 1L glass if they think you're a tourist). It fills up later in the evening with a mostly Czech crowd, and is a very civilised setting for a late-night session.

Nové Město

Pivovarský Dům (Map p106; ☎ 296 216 666; Lípová 15) While the tourists flock to U Fleků (following), locals gather here to sample the classic Czech lager (in light, dark and mixed varieties; 33Kč per 0.5L) that is brewed on the premises, as well as wheat beer and a range of flavoured beers (including coffee, banana and cherry, 33Kč per 0.3L). The pub itself is a pleasant place to linger, decked out with polished copper vats and brewing implements and smelling faintly of malt and hops.

U Fleků (Map p106; ☎ 224 934 019; Křemencová 11; 🕒 9am-11pm) A festive warren of drinking and dining rooms, U Fleků is a Prague institution, though usually clogged with tour groups high on oompah music and the tavern's home-brewed, 13° black beer (59Kč for 0.4L), known as Flek. Purists grumble but go along anyway because the beer is good, though tourist prices have nudged out many locals.

Velryba (Map p98; ☎ 224 912 484; Opatovická 24) The 'Whale' is an arty café-bar – usually quiet enough to have a real conversation – with vegetarian-friendly snacks, a smoky back room and a basement art gallery. A clientele of Czech

BEER GARDENS

On a hot summer day, what could be finer than sitting outdoors with a chilled glass of Bohemia's finest, admiring a view over river or city. Many of Prague's pubs have small beer gardens or courtyards, but the following summer-only spots are truly out in the open air. Opening times are weather-dependent, but typically noon to midnight April to September; expect to pay around 25Kč a half-litre for beer.

Letná beer garden (Map pp82–3; Letná gardens, Bubeneč) This slew of rickety benches and tables spread along a dusty scarp beneath the trees at the eastern end of Letná Park enjoys one of the city's most stunning views, looking across the river to the spires of Staré Město, and southwest to Malá Strana. Gambrinus on tap.

Letní bar (Map p92; Střelecký ostrov, Malá Strana) Basically a shack serving Budvar in plastic cups, this is the place to pick up a beer before hitting the little 'beach' at the northern end of the island, or settling in for a starlit screening at the Open-Air Cinema Festival (p122).

Park Café (Map p118; Riegrovy sady, Vinohrady) Perched on top of precipitous Riegrovy Park, this bustling beer garden has awesome night-time views of the castle, a big screen showing sport and the opportunity to play table football and table hockey with half of Prague. Pilsner Urquell and Gambrinus.

students, local office workers and foreign backpackers attracted by the low prices keep the place jumping.

Jáma (Map p98; ☎ 224 222 383; V jámě 7) The Hollow is a popular American expat bar and restaurant, with a leafy little beer garden out back shaded by lime and walnut trees. The clientele is a mix of expats, tourists and young Praggers, and there's Pilsner Urquell, Gambrinus and Velkopopavický Kozel on draught. The food menu includes good burgers, steaks, ribs and chicken wings.

Vinohrady & Žižkov

Kavárna Medúza (Map p116; ☎ 222 515 107; Belgická 17; ☎ 10am–1am Mon–Fri, noon–1am Sat & Sun) The perfect Prague coffee house, Medúza is an oasis of old, worn furniture, dark wood, creaking armchairs and local artworks, with an antique sugar bowl on every table and an atmosphere that invites you to sink into a novel or indulge in a conversation on the nature of self.

Hapu (Map p118; ☎ 222 720 158; Orlická 8, Žižkov; ☎ 6pm–2am) Low-ceilinged, dimly lit and immensely cool, Hapu is almost in Vinohrady – geographically and socially on the opposite side of Žižkov from U Vystřeleného oka (following). It's a tiny, smoky cocktail lounge with shabby-chic décor and expert staff who really know how to mix a mean cocktail – not only that, but every drop of fruit juice is freshly squeezed.

U Vystřeleného Oka (Map p118; ☎ 226 278 714; U Božích bojovníků 3; ☎ 4.30pm–1am Mon–Sat) You've got to love a pub that has vinyl pads on the wall

above the gents' urinals to rest your forehead on. 'The Shot-Out Eye' (the name pays homage to the one-eyed Hussite hero atop the hill behind the pub) is a bohemian (with a small 'b') hostelry with a raucous beer garden whose cheap food and beer pulls in a typically heterogeneous Žižkov crowd, ranging from art students and writers to lost backpackers and tattooed bikers.

Clubs

Prague's club scene is nothing to rave about. With few exceptions, the city's dance clubs cater to crowds of partying teenagers and tourists weaned on MTV Europe – if you want to dance to anything other than '80s hits or happy house, you'll have to look long and hard. Prague's main strengths are its alternative music clubs, DJ bars and 'experimental' venues such as Palác Akropolis and the Roxy.

Refreshingly, dress codes don't seem to have reached Prague yet, and it's unlikely you'll be knocked back anywhere unless you're stark naked. Check www.prague.tv, www.techno.cz/party, www.badpoint.com or www.hip-hop.cz for up-to-date club listings.

Roxy (Map p98; ☎ 224 826 296; www.roxy.cz; Dlouhá 33, Staré Město; cover 100–250Kč Fri & Sat; ☎ 7pm–midnight Mon–Thu, 7pm–6am Fri & Sat) Set in the ramshackle shell of an Art Deco cinema, the Roxy nurtures the more independent and innovative end of Prague's club spectrum – this is the place to check out the Czech Republic's top DJs. On the first floor is NoD, an 'experimental space'

that stages drama, dance, performance art, cinema and live music.

Palác Akropolis (Map p118; ☎ 296 330 911; www.palacakropolis.cz; Kubelíkova 27, Žižkov; cover free–30Kč; ☎ club 7pm–5am) The Akropolis is a Prague institution, a labyrinthine, sticky-floored shrine to alternative music and drama. Its various performance spaces host a smorgasbord of musical and cultural events. DJs do their stuff in the Theatre Bar (Divadelní Bar) and Small Hall (Malá Scéna), spinning everything from house to hip hop, reggae to breakbeat.

Radost FX Club (Map p116; ☎ 224 254 776; www.radostfx.cz; Bělehradská 120, Vinohrady; cover 100–250Kč; ☎ 10pm–6am) Though not quite as hot as it once was, Prague's slickest, shiniest and most self-assured club is still capable of pulling in the crowds, especially for its Thursday hip hop night, FXbounce (www.fxbounce.com). The place has a chilled out, bohemian atmosphere, with Moroccan-boudoir-meets-Moulin-Rouge décor, and there's an excellent lounge-cum-vegetarian restaurant that keeps serving into the small hours.

Other recommendations:

Futurum (Map p115; ☎ 257 328 571; www.musicbar.cz; Zborovská 7, Smíchov; cover 100Kč; ☎ 9pm–3am) Regular Friday and Saturday night '80s and 90s Video Party', with local DJs blasting out everything from REM and Nirvana to Bon Jovi and Village People, complete with cringe-worthy videos. Occasional live bands.

Matrix Klub (Map p118; ☎ 608 333 198; www.matrixklub.cz; Koněvova 12, Žižkov; ☎ 8pm–4.30am Tue–Sat) DJs, parties and occasional live shows. Take bus 133 or 207 from Florenc metro, or night bus 504 from IP Pavlova metro.

Sedm Vílků (Map p118; ☎ 222 711 725; www.sedmvlku.cz; Vílkova 7, Žižkov; ☎ 5pm–3am Mon–Sat) A cool, art-studenty café-bar and club – down in the darkened cellar, DJs pump out techno, breakbeat, drum 'n' bass and ragga from 9pm on Friday and Saturday nights.

Jazz & Blues

Prague has a lot of places claiming to be jazz bars; like marionettes and tiny glass bottles, jazz has become a mainstay of the tourist industry. But most of what you'll hear is actually blues or very tame jazz. Most of the clubs listed have good jazz CD stores on the premises. Cover charges are around 200Kč unless otherwise stated. The *Prague Post* 'Night & Day' lift-out has listings of who's playing when.

Agharta Jazz Centrum (Map p98; ☎ 222 211 275; www.agharta.cz; Železná 16, Staré Město; ☎ 7pm–1am, music 9pm–midnight) A typical jazz cellar with red-brick

vaults and a cosy bar and café, this place also has a music shop (open 7pm to midnight), which sells CDs, T-shirts and coffee mugs. As well as hosting local musicians, the centre occasionally stages gigs by leading international artists.

U Malého Glenu (Map p92; ☎ 257 531 717; www.malyglen.cz; Karmelitská 23, Malá Strana; ☎ 10am–2am, music from 9.30pm Sun–Thu, from 10pm Fri & Sat) 'Little Glen's' is a lively American-owned bar and restaurant where hard-swinging local jazz or blues bands play in the stone-vaulted cellar every night. There are regular jam sessions where amateurs are welcome (as long as you're good!). It's a small venue, so get here early.

Reduta Jazz Club (Map p106; ☎ 224 933 487; www.redutajazzclub.cz; Národní třída 20, Nové Město; cover 300Kč; ☎ 9pm–3am) The Reduta is Prague's oldest jazz club, founded in 1958. It has an intimate setting, with smartly dressed patrons squeezing into tiered seats and lounges to soak up the big-band, swing and Dixieland atmosphere.

Dinitz Café (Map p118; ☎ 222 313 308; www.dinitz.cz; Na poříčí 12, Nové Město; admission free Sat–Thu, 150Kč Fri; ☎ 9am–3am, music 9pm–midnight) Dinitz is a relatively new bar and restaurant (see p132) that has swiftly gained a reputation for excellent live jazz, blues, Latin and funk, including a regular Tuesday night session by Prague blues legend Stan the Man.

Rock & Other Music

While Prague was once a thriving live-music scene, the influx of hotels and affluent apartment buyers into the centre of town has meant a tightening of noise restrictions and the death of many live venues. These days you often have to head out to the 'burbs for live music, or make do with cover bands and revival acts tailored for the tourist market.

Guru Music Club (Map p118; ☎ 222 783 463; www.gurudub.cz; in Czech; Rokycanova 29, Žižkov; cover charge 30Kč; ☎ 11am–5am) This independent club – a café-bar decked out in red brick and aging sofas – takes rock seriously, with hardcore, grunge, 'trashcore', 'pig beat' and open mikes almost every night of the week. DJs fill the gaps.

Malostranská beseda (Map p92; ☎ 257 532 092; Malostranské náměstí 21, Malá Strana; cover 50–120Kč; ☎ bar 5pm–1am, music from 8.30pm) Malá Strana's former town hall now houses a large café-bar that hosts anything from hard rock to bluegrass via jazz and folk, playing to a young and mostly Czech crowd. It packs out early, particularly on weekends.

Klub 007 Strahov (Map p92; ☎ 257 211 439; www.klub007strahov.cz; Block 7, Chaloupeckého 7, Strahov; cover 50-250Kč; 🕒 7pm-1am Sun-Thu, 7pm-2am Fri & Sat) One of several grungy student clubs in the basements of the big dormitory blocks in Strahov, the legendary 007 has been around since 1987 and is famed for its devotion to hardcore, punk, ska, ragga, jungle, ambient and other alternative sounds. On Saturday nights it hosts a regular hip-hop party.

Other recommendations:

Hells' Bells (Map p115; ☎ 257 320 436; www.hellsbells.cz; Na Bělidle 27/302, Smíchov; 🕒 3pm-3am Mon-Fri, 5pm-3am Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) Hells' Bells has live metal on the weekends and head-banging ambience during the week.

Rock Café (Map p106; ☎ 224 914 416; www.rockcafe.cz; Národní třída 20, Nové Město; 🕒 10am-2.30am Mon-Fri, 5pm-2.30am Sat, 5pm-1am Sun, music from 7.30pm) A stripped-down venue for DJs and live rock. Mainly features tribute bands.

ENTERTAINMENT

For reviews, an up-to-the-minute directory of venues and day-by-day listings, consult the 'Night & Day' section of the *Prague Post*. Look out for *Provokátor* (www.provokator.org), a free monthly magazine dedicated to art, music, culture and politics; the website has listings of upcoming cultural events. You can pick up the print magazine in clubs, cafés, art-house cinemas and backpacker hostels.

There are ticket consolidators on nearly every street corner in Staré and Nové Městos. They're convenient and they usually take credit cards, but you'll pay around 10% mark-up over buying direct from the venue. Ask if there are discounts for students, seniors or the disabled. **Bohemia Ticket International** (BTI; Map p98; ☎ 224 227 832; www.ticketsbti.cz; Na příkopě 16, Nové Město; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, to 3pm Sun) and **Ticketpro** (Map p106; ☎ 296 333 333; www.ticketpro.cz; pasáž Lucerna, Štěpánská 61, Nové Město; 🕒 9am-1pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) cover most venues and events – the addresses given here are head offices, but you can find outlets all over town or order on the web.

Cinema

There's been a multiplex building boom in Prague in recent years, and you'll have no problem finding a first-run Hollywood movie in English with Czech subtitles. The big operators have squeezed out a lot of the smaller cinemas,

so seeing art-house has become more difficult. Admission is from around 90Kč to 160Kč.

The closest multiplexes to the centre are: **Cinema City** (Map p118; ☎ 255 742 021; www.cinemacity.cz, in Czech; Palác Flóra Shopping Centre, cnr Vinohradská & Jičínská, Žižkov)

Palace Cinemas (Map p98; ☎ 257 181 212; www.palacecinemas.cz; Slovanský dům, Na Příkopě 22, Nové Město)

Village Cinemas (Map p115; ☎ 251 115 111; www.villagecinemas.cz; Nový Smíchov Shopping Centre, Radlická 1E, Smíchov)

The city's many art-house cinemas include:

Kino Aero (Map p118; ☎ 271 771 349; www.kinoaero.cz; Biskupcova 31, Žižkov)

Kino Perštýn (Map p98; ☎ 221 668 559; Na Perštýně 6, Staré Město)

Kino Světozor (Map p106; ☎ 224 946 824; www.kino.svetozor.cz; Vodičková 41, Nové Město)

Classical Music, Opera & Ballet

There are around half a dozen concerts of one kind or another almost every day in summer. For information on current performances, ask at the Prague Information Service (PIS; p86), one of the ticket consolidators or check the 'Day & Night' section of the *Prague Post*.

The following are some major venues:

Mozart museum (Map p115; ☎ 257 316 753; www.bertramka.cz; Mozartova 169, Smíchov) Hosts afternoon and evening garden concerts of music by Mozart and other composers (see p114).

Municipal house (Obecní dům; Map p98; ☎ 222 002 101; www.obecni-dum.cz; náměstí Republiky 5, Staré Město) Classical concerts in the Smetana Hall, one of Prague's most stunning venues. The box office is open 10am to 6pm daily.

National theatre (Národní divadlo; Map p106; ☎ 224 913 437; Národní 2, Nové Město) Mainly opera, ballet and high-brow theatre. The box office is next door at Nová Scéna, and is open from 10am to 6pm. There is wheelchair access.

Rudolfínium (Map p98; ☎ 224 893 111; www.ceskafilharmonie.cz; Alšovo nábřeží 12, Staré Město) Home of the Czech Philharmonic. The box office is open from 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and for one hour before performances; there is wheelchair access.

Prague State opera house (Státní opera Praha; Map p106; ☎ 224 227 266; www.opera.cz; Legerova 75, Nové Město) Opera and ballet performances. The box office is on U Divadla, open from 10am to 5.30pm daily (closed from noon to 1pm Saturday and Sunday).

Estates theatre (Map p98; ☎ 224 215 001; Ovocný trh 1, Staré Město) Hosts *Don Giovanni* by **Opera Mozart** (☎ 271 741 403; www.mozart-praha.cz) at 8pm every night during summer: anyone who's been to a high-school production of *Godspell* will be familiar with the production values. Other opera and classical productions year-round.

Daily chamber concerts, solo performances and organ recitals in the city's various churches are good value at 350Kč to 500Kč. There are several cathedrals and churches frequently used as concert venues; full details are available from PIS (p86).

Sport

FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

SK Slavia Praha and AC Sparta Praha are leading teams in the national league. Matches are mostly played on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The season runs from August to December and March to June. Tickets cost from 50Kč to 250Kč and you can usually pick up a ticket at the stadium just before the game.

Slavia play at the **Evžena Rošického stadium** (Map p92; ☎ 257 213 290; Diskařská 100, Strahov) – take the 176 bus from Karlovo nám metro. Sparta's home ground is the **Toyota arena** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 220 57 03 23; Milady Horákové 98, Bubeneč), opposite Letná Park, and is very convenient to the beer garden for post-game drinks; take tram 1, 8, 25 or 26 one stop east from Hradčanská metro.

When the Czech Republic is playing international matches, a big screen is set up in Old Town square and the place is packed with yelling, flag-waving fans.

ICE HOCKEY

HC Sparta Praha and HC Slavia Praha are Prague's two big teams. The season runs from September to early April, and tickets cost 40Kč to 160Kč.

Sparta's home rink is the **T-Mobile arena** (Map pp82-3; Za elektrárnou 419, Výstaviště, Holešovice) next to the Výstaviště exhibition grounds; take tram 5, 12, 14, 15 or 17 to the Výstaviště stop. Slavia plays at the giant **Sazka arena** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 266 212 111; Ocelářská 2, Vysočany) next to the Českomoravská metro station.

Theatre

Prague has no shortage of theatre shows, though most serious drama is in Czech. English-

language theatre is dominated by black-light theatre, where live or animated actors in phosphorescent costumes do their thing on a stage lit by ultraviolet light.

Laterna Magika (Magic Lantern; Map p106; ☎ 224 931 482; www.laterna.cz; Nova Scéna, Národní třída 4, Nové Město; tickets 680Kč; 🕒 box office 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Prague's most famous theatre happening, an imaginative blend of live dance, opera, music and projected images, continues to pull in the crowds despite being founded in 1958. Even if it's 'sold out', you can often bag a leftover seat at the box office on the day before a performance, or a no-show seat half-an-hour before the show starts.

National marionette theatre (Národní divadlo marionet; Map p98; ☎ 224 819 322; www.mozart.cz; Puppet Kingdom, Žatecká 1; adult/child 490/390Kč; 🕒 box office 10am-8pm) It might sound silly, watching life-size marionettes perform Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, but it's one of the longest-running shows in town so they must be doing something right.

Other venues:

Estates theatre (Stavovské divadlo; Map p98; ☎ 224 215 001; Ovocný trh 1, Staré Město) Some plays include simultaneous translation on headphones.

Image theatre (Map p98; ☎ 222 314 448; Classic Club, Pařížská 4; tickets 400Kč; 🕒 box office 9am-8pm) Mime and black-light theatre.

Minor theatre (divadlo Minor; Map p106; ☎ 222 231 351; Vodičková 6, Nové Město; 🕒 box office 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) Children's puppet theatre has shows at 9.30am on most weekdays; wheelchair access.

SHOPPING

The city centre's single biggest – and most exhausting – retail zone is around Wenceslas square (Václavské náměstí), its pavements jammed with browsing visitors and locals making beelines for their favourite stores. You can find pretty much everything here, from high fashion and music megastores to run-of-the-mill department stores and gigantic book emporia. Many of the more interesting shops are hidden away in arcades and passages, such as the Lucerna Passage (p108).

The other main shopping drag intersects with the lower end of Wenceslas square, comprising Na příkopě, 28.října and Národní třída (Map p98). Most of the big stores and malls are concentrated on Na příkopě.

In Staré Město, the elegant avenue of Pařížská (Map p98) is lined with international

designer boutiques, including Dior, Boss, Armani and Louis Vuitton, while the winding lanes between the Old Town square and Charles bridge are thronged with tacky souvenir shops flaunting puppets, Russian dolls and 'Czech This Out' T-shirts.

In recent years many new shops have opened up outside the centre, notably in Vinohrady (Map p98), which is good for antiques and designer furniture, Smíchov (Map p98), dominated by the huge Nový Smíchov mall, and in the suburb of Zličín on the far western edge of the city, which has a vast shopping centre anchored around Tesco and Ikea.

Antiques & Bric-a-Brac

Art Deco galerie (Map p98; ☎ 224 223 076; Michalská 21, Staré Město; ☎ 2-7pm Mon-Fri) All kinds of gorgeousness, mostly Art Deco, fill this well-ordered and very reasonably priced store. A great selection of glassware, clocks, china, jewellery and dresses, with many things under 600Kč.

Bric á Brac (Map p98; ☎ 224 815 763; Týnská 7, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-6pm) An Aladdin's cave of old household items and trophies and toys and cigar boxes and typewriters and stringed instruments and... Despite the junky look of this place, the knick-knacks are surprisingly expensive.

Eduard Čapek (Map p98; Dlouhá 32, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) You may not need a door knob, rusty bed springs or a cracked teapot, but drop in anyway at the old hardware/homeware shop founded before WWI and doing a roaring trade ever since. Promotional badges from Czech companies start at 10Kč.

Ceramics, Glass & Crystal

Tupesý Lidová Keramika (Map p98; ☎ 224 210 728; Havelská 21, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-6pm) This place stocks a selection of charming ceramic household goods featuring naive floral designs from Southern Moravia.

Moser (Map p106; ☎ 224 211 293; Na příkopě 12, Nové Město; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) Prague's most prestigious glassmaker has been around since 1857. You may not be able to afford any of the gorgeous fripperies on display, but treat the place like a museum and visit anyway.

Balnys Spa (Map p98; ☎ 222 222 123; Náprstkovská 4, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) Modern glass featuring semiprecious stones that are quite unlike what you'll find at most souvenir shops

in town. This store also stocks original black-and-white photos and pen-and-ink drawings of Prague.

Kubista (Map p98; ☎ 224 236 378; Ovocný trh 19; ☎ 10am-6pm) Kubista specialises in limited-edition reproductions of distinctive cubist furniture and ceramics, and designs by masters of the form such as Josef Gočár and Pavel Janák. It also has a few original pieces for serious collectors with serious cash to spend.

Rott Crystal (Map p98; ☎ 224 229 529; Malé náměstí 3, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-8pm) Housed in a beautifully restored neo-Renaissance building – originally an ironmongers' – with 1890s wall paintings on the façade, Rott now has four floors of glassware, jewellery and ceramics, but it's best known for its stock of fine-quality Bohemian and imported crystal.

Clothing & Jewellery

Second Hand Land (Map p118; ☎ 241 711 995; Hyberská 5, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) When the kids have dirtied everything they own, when you absolutely must have a T-shirt featuring some form of Czech logo, or if you just feel like stocking up on frocks without spending three weeks' beer money, head to Second Hand Land.

Granát Turnov (Map p98; ☎ 222 315 612; Dlouhá 28-30, Staré Město) One of the biggest manufacturers and stockists of silver and gold garnet jewellery in Prague. The semiprecious Czech garnet – usually a dark red stone – is supposed to replace sadness with joy: its effectiveness probably depends on who's doing the buying.

TEG (Map p98; ☎ 222 327 358; V kolkovně 6, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) TEG (Timouret Group) is the design team created by Alexandra Pavalová and Ivana Šafránková, two of Prague's most respected fashion designers. This boutique showcases their quarterly collections, which feature a sharp, imaginative look that adds zest and sophistication to everyday, wearable clothes.

Helena Fejková gallery (Map p106; ☎ 224 211 514; 1st fl, Lucerna Passage, Štěpánská 61, Nové Město; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Kit yourself out in the latest Czech fashions at this chic boutique, which stocks contemporary men's and women's fashion and accessories by Prague designer Helena Fejková and other local designers.

Gifts & Souvenirs

Manufaktura Malá Strana (Map p92; ☎ 257 533 678; Motecká 17); Staré Město (Map p98; Melnatřichova 17); Staré

Město (Map p98; Karlova 26) There are Manufakturas all over town, mostly in Staré Město and Malá Strana. All feature quality traditional handcrafts – the bulk of their stock is wooden toys, but they also have ceramics, textiles, soaps, candles and knick-knacks.

Fun Explosive (Map p98; ☎ 224 236 369; Jilská 14, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-7pm) You'll have seen Fun Explosive's bright, cartoony T-shirts in stores all over town, but this is the mother lode. T-shirts, mugs, calendars, posters, original art and other assorted bits and bobs.

Music

If it's jazz you're after, most jazz clubs (p137) sell excellent selections of CDs, and knowledgeable staff can provide good advice.

Bontonland (Map p106; ☎ 224 473 080; Václavské náměstí, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) Prague's music megastore, in the basement of the Koruna palace, stocks classical, jazz, folk, soundtracks, rock, metal, Czech pop compilations and a limited selection of vinyl. Bontonland also has an internet and Playstation café, DVDs, books, T-shirts and tickets for shows.

Radost CD (Map p116; ☎ 224 252 741; Bělehradská 120, Vinohrady; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat, 1-7pm Sun) A great selection of hip-hop, dance, reggae, jazz, rock classics and independent artists – finally get a copy of that Kool Keith or White Stripes album that's come out since you've been on the road.

Trio (Map p98; ☎ 222 322 583; Franz Kafka nám 3, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) A great little shop specialising in classical CDs. It also has collections of Jewish music and Czech and Slovak folk.

Cappriccio (Map p115; ☎ 257 320 165; Újezd 15, Smíchov; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) Pick up the score for *Don Giovanni* or *From the New World* at this eclectic sheet music shop. Those who don't play an instrument might enjoy the books of country music favourites; after all, who wouldn't want to learn *Rhinestone Cowboy* in Czech?

Sporting Goods

Hudy Sport (Map p118; ☎ 224 813 010; Havličkova 11, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 1-4pm Sun) A huge outdoor shop with all the latest in fleece, Gore-tex, backpacks, rock-climbing gear, skis, stoves, shoes, sleeping bags and accessories. Six other Hudys are scattered around the city.

Giga (Map p98; Mýslbek Shopping Centre, Na příkopě, Nové Město; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm) Balls, boots, flip-flops, sports bras and no end of Nike and Puma street wear – Giga has three floors of sportswear and equipment.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Prague-Ruzyně Airport (☎ 220 113 314; www.csl.cz) is 17km west of the city centre. There are two international terminals – Terminal North 2 is for flights to/from Schengen Agreement countries (most EU nations, plus Switzerland, Iceland and Norway), and Terminal North 1 is for flights to/from non-Schengen countries (including the UK, Ireland and non-European destinations).

In both terminals the arrival hall and departure hall are next to each other, on the same level. The arrival halls have exchange counters, ATMs, accommodation and car-hire agencies, public-transport information desks, taxi services and 24-hour left-luggage counters. The departure halls have restaurants and bars, information offices, airline offices, an exchange counter and travel agencies. Once you're through security, there are shops, restaurants, bars and internet access (including wi-fi).

The national carrier, **Czech Airlines** (ČSA; Map p98; ☎ 239 007 007; www.csa.cz; V celnici 5, Nové Město), has several flights a day to Brno and Ostrava and numerous international connections. For more on getting to Prague from abroad, see p452.

Bus

INTERNATIONAL

Nearly all international buses leave from the **Florenc bus station** (ÚAN Praha Florenc; Map p118; ☎ 12 999; www.jizdnirady.cz; Křižíkova 4, Karlín), outside Florenc metro station. At least one of the four ticket windows (AMS) sells both domestic and international tickets; try ticket window No 5. Overall it is much simpler to book through a good travel agency; see p86.

DOMESTIC

All long-distance domestic buses and many regional services (such as those for excursions around Prague) depart from Florenc station (see International, earlier). Some regional buses depart from stands near metro stations Anděl, Dejvická, Černý Most, Hradčanská, Nádraží Holešovice, Radlická, Rožtyly, Smíchovské Nádraží, Zličín and Želivského.

Agencies don't book seats on domestic buses, but they can tell you which stand is best for a particular trip or whether you should take the train instead; you can get information at Florenc's **information desk** (☎ 900 144 444; ☎ 6am) or use the touch-screen computer; if you get no joy there, try the friendly Tourbus travel agency in a corridor off the main hall. You can find online bus timetables at www.jizdnirady.cz.

Long-distance domestic tickets are sold from AMS counters: Nos 11 to 13 at Florenc; short-haul tickets are sold on the bus. Since ticketing is computerised at most major bus stations, you can book ahead from 10 days to 30 minutes prior to your departure.

There are generally more departures in the morning. Buses, especially if full, sometimes leave a few minutes early, so be there about 10 minutes before departure time. Many services don't operate on weekends, so trains are a better bet then.

Florenc has a **left-luggage office** (úschovna zavazadel; ☎ 5am-11pm).

Car & Motorcycle

For information on car rental, documents, road rules and fuel, see p459.

Train

INTERNATIONAL

Most international trains arrive at the main station, Praha hlavní nádraží (Map p118), which is three blocks northeast of Wenceslas square. International trains between Berlin and Budapest often stop at Praha-Holešovice (metro nádraží Holešovice; Map pp82-3) on the northern side of the city.

At the main train station, you can get information on international train services at the ČD info centre at the south end of the main concourse, and from ticket windows Nos 2 to 8 (usually only one of these windows – look for a sign advertising information in English). Full printed timetables are displayed on level 3; timetable information is also available online at www.idos.cz.

You can buy international train tickets in advance from train stations, **ČD Travel** (Map p98; ☎ 972 233 930; V Celnici 6, Nové Město) and Čedok travel agencies.

DOMESTIC

Most domestic trains arrive at the main station, Praha hlavní nádraží, or at Masarykovo

nádraží, two blocks to the north. Other stations where you might end up include Praha-Holešovice (next to metro station Nádraží Holešovice) and Praha-Smíchov (adjacent to metro Smíchovské nádraží).

Domestic and Slovakian destinations served by fast/express train from the main station include:

Benešov (64Kč, 1¼hr, 49km)
 Brno (294Kč, 3½hr, 257km)
 České Budějovice (204Kč, 2½hr, 169km)
 Cheb via Plzeň (250Kč, 3½hr, 220km)
 Karlovy Vary (274Kč, 4hr, 236km)
 Košice (990Kč, 10hr, 700km)
 Mariánské Lázně (224Kč, 3hr, 190km)
 Plzeň (140Kč, 1¼hr, 114km)
 Tábor (130Kč, 1½hr, 103km)

Trains going to Bratislava (500Kč, 4¼ hours, 398km) may leave from either Hlavní nádraží or Praha Holešovice. For more on getting to Prague by train from across Europe, see Transport, p456.

At the main station, you can buy domestic tickets (*vnitrostátní jízdenky*) at the odd-numbered ticket windows (marked with an A) to the left of the departures board on the main concourse; for international advance reservations (*mezinárodní rezervace*) go to windows 2 to 8 (marked B), and for international tickets (*mezinárodní jízdenky*) go to windows 12 to 24 (marked C) to the right.

MAIN TRAIN STATION

On arriving at Praha hlavní nádraží, the underpass from the platforms leads you to level 3 of the four-level station complex; turn left here to find the AVE (p124) accommodation agency.

Continue down a short flight of stairs to level 2, the main concourse, where you'll find the helpful **PIS Tourist Information Booth** (☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) beside the metro entrance at the southern (left) end.

Ramps to either side of the ticket counters in the main concourse lead down to level 1, which has a **left-luggage office** (úschovna; 15Kč or 30Kč per bag per day; ☎ 24 hours) and luggage lockers (60Kč; they accept 5, 10 and 20Kč coins).

There are four metro station entrances in the concourse – the two nearer the stairs from level 3 lead to the northbound platform (direction Ladví), the two nearer the exits are southbound (direction Haje). Public transport tickets and information are available at the

DPP booths beside the southbound metro entrances. There are taxi ranks at either end of the concourse. To find the nearest tram stop (tram Nos 5, 9 and 26) exit the main concourse and turn right; the stop is at the far end of the park.

The big display board on the main concourse lists departures with columns marked *druh vlaku* (type of train – EC, IC etc), *číslo vlaku* (train number), *číslo stanice* (final destination), *směr* (via), *odjezd* (departure time) and *našt* (platform number). To make sure you're on the correct train, makes sure its number (displayed on a panel on the side of the coach) matches the train number of the service you want.

Try not to arrive in the middle of the night – the station closes from 12.40am to 3.40am, and the surrounding area is a magnet for pickpockets and drunks.

Note – Praha hlavní nádraží is set to undergo a major redevelopment between 2006 and 2009; during this period the layout of the station may be changed.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

To get into town, buy a ticket from the public transport (Dopravní podnik; DPP) desk in arrivals and take bus 119 (20Kč, 20 minutes, every 15 minutes) to the end of the line (Dejvická), then continue by metro into the city centre (another 10 minutes; no new ticket needed). Note that you'll also need a half-fare (10Kč) ticket for your backpack or suitcase (if it's larger than 25cm x 45cm x 70cm).

Alternatively, take a **Cedaz minibus** (☎ 220 114 296; www.cedaz.cz) from just outside arrivals – buy your ticket from the driver (90Kč, 20 minutes, every 30 minutes between 5.30am and 9.30pm). There are city stops near metro Dejvická and at the Czech Airlines office close to náměstí Republiky. You can also get a Cedaz minibus right to the door of your hotel or any other address (480Kč for one to four people, 960Kč for five to eight) – book and pay at the Cedaz desk in the arrivals hall.

Airport Cars (☎ 220 113 892) taxi service, whose prices are regulated by the airport administration, charges 650Kč (20% discount for the return trip) into the centre of Prague (a regular taxi fare from central Prague should be about 450Kč). Drivers usually speak some English and accept Visa credit cards.

Bicycle

Prague is not the best city for getting around by bike. Traffic is heavy, exhaust fumes can be choking, tram tracks can be dangerous and there are few dedicated bicycle lanes.

Bikes must be equipped with a bell, mudguards, a white reflector and white light up front, a red reflector and flashing red light at the rear, and reflectors on pedals – if not, you can be fined up to 1000Kč. Cyclists up to the age of 15 must wear helmets.

If you're aged at least 12 you can take your bicycle on the metro, but you must place it near the last door of the rear carriage, and only two bikes are allowed. Bikes are not permitted if the carriage is full, or if there's already a pram in the carriage.

Bicycle Hire

Praha Bike (Map p98; ☎ 732 388 880; www.praha-bike.cz; Dlouhá 24, Staré Město; 4hr 360Kč, 8hr 500Kč; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar–mid-Nov) Good, new bikes with lock, helmet and map, plus free luggage storage. Also offers student discounts and group bike tours; see p122.

City Bike (Map p98; ☎ 776 180 284; www.citybike-prague.com; Královská 5, Staré Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct) Rental includes helmet, padlock and map; two hours costs 280/340Kč for a cruiser/mountain bike.

Car & Motorcycle

Driving in Prague is no fun, especially in the narrow, winding streets of the city centre. Trying to find your way around – or to park legally – while coping with trams, buses, other drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, can make you wish you'd left the car at home.

Try not to arrive or leave on a Friday or Sunday afternoon or evening, when half the population seems to be heading to and from their weekend cottages.

Central Prague has many pedestrian-only streets. They are marked with 'Pěší zóna' (Pedestrian Zone) signs, and only service vehicles and taxis are allowed in these areas.

CAR RENTAL

The main international car-hire chains all have airport pick-up points as well as city centre offices. Rates per day/week begin at 1900/10,700Kč for a Škoda Fabia, including unlimited mileage, collision-damage waiver and value-added tax (VAT, or DPH in Czech). There's a 400Kč surcharge to pick up your vehicle from the airport, but delivery to hotels in central Prague is free.

Small local companies such as Secco, Vecar and West Car Praha offer much better rates, but are less likely to have fluent, English-speaking staff – it's often easier to book by email than by phone. Typical rates for a Škoda Fabia are around 800Kč a day, including unlimited mileage, collision-damage waiver and VAT.

A-Rent Car/Thrifty (Map p106; ☎ 224 233 265; www.arentcar.cz; Washingtonova 9, Nové Město)

Avis (Map p118; ☎ 221 851 225; www.avis.com; Klimentská 46, Nové Město)

CS-Czechocar (Map p112; ☎ 261 222 079; www.czechocar.cz; Congress Centre, 5.května 65, Vyšehrad)

Europcar (Map p98; ☎ 224 810 515; www.europcar.cz; Pařížská 28, Staré Město)

Hertz (Map p106; ☎ 225 345 000; www.hertz.cz; Karlovo náměstí 15, Nové Město)

Secco Car (Map pp82–3; ☎ 220 802 361; www.secco.cz; Přístavní 39, Holešovice)

Vecar (Map pp82–3; ☎ 224 314 361; www.vecar.cz; Svatovítská 7, Dejvice)

West Car Praha (Map pp82–3; ☎ 235 365 307; www.westcarpraha.cz, in Czech; Velešlavinská 17, Velešlavín)

EMERGENCIES

For emergency service, the Czech automobile and motorcycle club **ÚAMK** (Automoto-klub; ☎ 1230) has 'Yellow Angels' (*Žlutý anděl*) that provide 24-hour nationwide assistance.

Another outfit offering round-the-clock repair services nationwide is **Autoklub Bohemia Assistance** (ABA; Map p106; ☎ 26 14 91, 222 241 257; Opletalova 29, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-noon & 12.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri), which also has a Prague information centre.

PARKING

Meter time limits range from two to 24 hours at 30Kč to 40Kč per hour. Parking in one-way streets is normally only allowed on the right-hand side. Traffic inspectors are always keen to hand out fines, clamp wheels or tow away vehicles.

There are several car parks at the edges of Staré Město and around the outer city near metro stations. Most are marked on city maps.

Public Transport

Prague has an excellent integrated public transport system that combines metro, tram and bus. It's operated by **Dopravní podnik hlavního města Prahy** (DPP; ☎ 296 191 817; www.dpp.cz), which has information desks at Ruzyně

airport (7am to 10pm) and in four metro stations – Muzeum (7am to 9pm), Můstek, Anděl and Nádraží Holešovice (all 7am to 6pm) – where you can get tickets, directions, a multilingual transport system map, a map of night services (*noční provoz*) and a detailed English-language guide to the whole system.

On metro trains and newer trams and buses, an electronic display shows the route number and the name of the next stop, and a recorded voice announces each station or stop. As the train, tram or bus pulls away, the announcer says 'Příští stanice...' (The next station is...) or 'Příští zastávka...' (The next stop is...), perhaps noting that it's a *přestupní stanice* (transfer station). At metro stations, signs point you towards the *výstup* (exit) or to a *přestup* (transfer to another line).

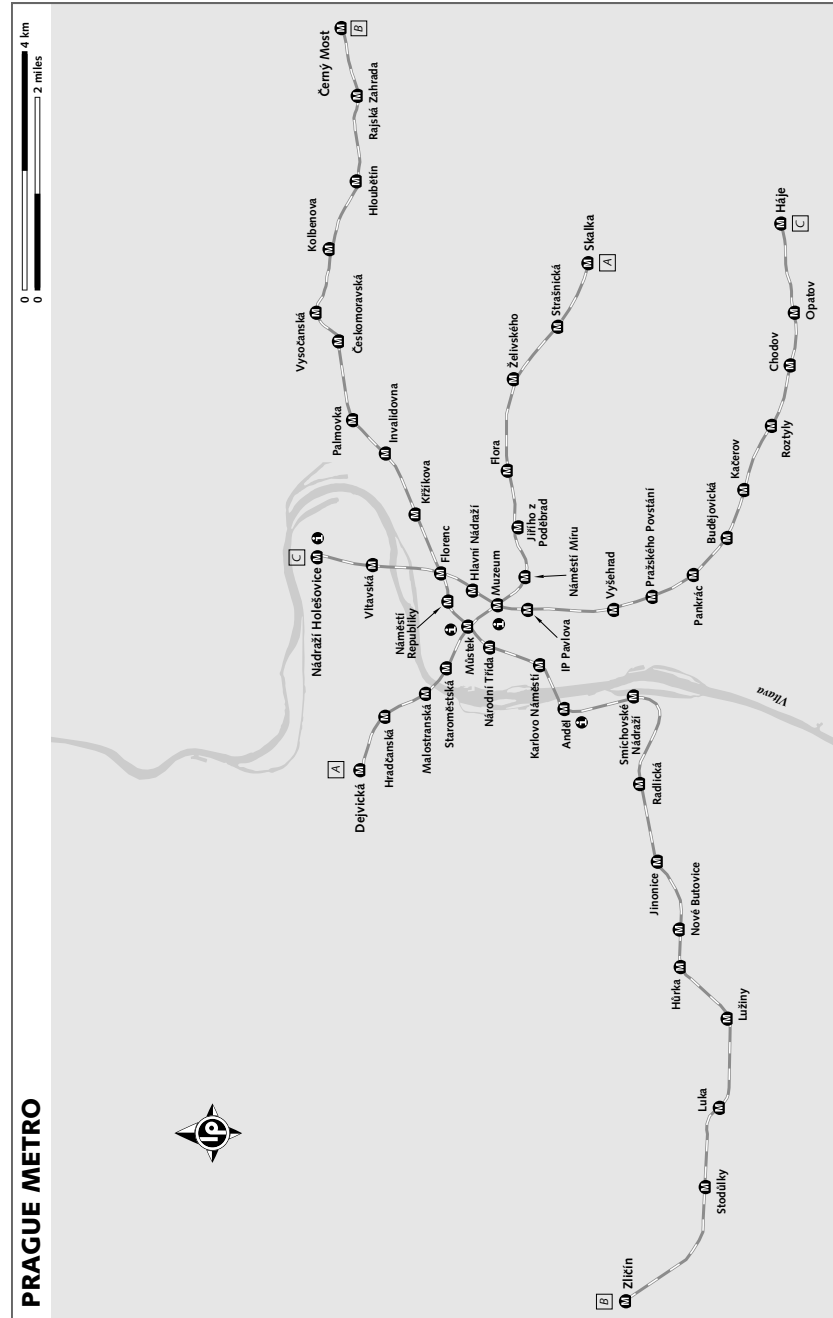
The metro operates from 5am to midnight. After the metro closes, night trams (Nos 51 to 58) and buses (Nos 501 to 512) still rumble across the city about every 40 minutes through the night. If you're planning a late evening, find out if one of these services passes near where you're staying.

TICKETS

You need to buy a ticket before you board a bus, tram or metro. Tickets are sold from machines at metro stations and major tram stops, at newsstands, Trafiky snack shops, PNS newspaper kiosks, hotels, PIS tourist information offices (p86), all metro station ticket offices and DPP information offices.

A transfer ticket (*jízdenka*) valid on tram, metro, bus and the Petřín funicular (p96) per adult/child aged six to 15 years costs 20/10Kč; kids under six ride free. You'll also need a 10Kč ticket for each large suitcase or backpack (larger than 25cm x 45cm x 70cm). Validate (punch) your ticket by sticking it in the little yellow machine in the metro station lobby or on the bus or tram the first time you board; this stamps the time and date on it. Once validated, transfer tickets remain valid for 75 minutes if stamped between 5am and 8pm on weekdays, and for 90 minutes at all other times. Within this time period you can make unlimited transfers between all types of public transport (you don't need to punch the ticket again).

There's also a short-hop ticket (adult/child 14/7Kč), valid for 20 minutes on buses and trams, or for up to five metro station. No transfers are allowed with these (except



between metro lines), and they're not valid on the Petřín funicular nor on night trams (Nos 51 to 58) or buses (Nos 501 to 512). Being caught without a valid ticket entails a 400Kč on-the-spot fine (50Kč for not having a luggage ticket). The plain-clothes inspectors travel incognito, but will show a red-and-gold metal badge when they ask for your ticket. A few may demand a higher fine from foreigners and pocket the difference, so insist on a receipt (*doklad*) before paying.

You can also buy tickets valid for 24 hours (80Kč) and three/seven/15 days (220/280/320Kč). Again, these must be validated on first use only; if a ticket is stamped twice, it becomes invalid. With these tickets, you don't need to pay an extra fare for your luggage.

Taxi

Prague City Council has finally cracked down on the city's notoriously dishonest taxi drivers by raising the maximum fine for overcharging to one million Czech crowns and providing a website detailing legitimate fares (<http://panda.hyperlink.cz/taxitext/etaxiweb.htm>). However, hailing a taxi on the street – at least in a tourist zone – still holds the risk of an inflated fare. The taxi stands around Wenceslas square, Národní třída, Na příkopě, Praha hlavní nádraží, Old Town square and Malostranské náměstí are the most notorious rip-off spots; even the locals are not safe.

You're much better off calling a radio-taxi than flagging one down, as they're better regulated and more responsible. From our experience the following companies have honest drivers (some of whom speak a little English) and offer 24-hour services.

AAA Radio Taxi (☎ 14 014)
Airport Cars (☎ 220 113 892)
Halo Taxi (☎ 244 114 411)
ProfiTaxi (☎ 844 700 800)

If you hail a taxi in the street, ask the approximate fare in advance and ask the driver to use the meter (*zapněte taximetr, prosím*). If it's 'broken', find someone else or establish a price before setting off. If you get the rare driver who willingly turns on the meter, they deserve a tip just for that (Czechs usually leave the change).

The official maximum rate for licensed cabs is 34Kč minimum plus 25Kč per kilometre, and 5Kč per minute while waiting. On this basis, any trip within the city centre – say, from Wenceslas square to Malá Strana – should cost around 110Kč to 170Kč. A trip to the suburbs should not exceed 300Kč, and to the airport 450Kč. Journeys outside Prague are not regulated.

Regulations state that official taxis must have a yellow roof light, the business name and taxi identification number on both front doors, and a list of fares inside. The meter must be at zero when you get in, and at the end of the journey the driver must give you a meter-printed receipt showing: company name, taxi identification number, date and times of the journey, end points, rates, the total, the driver's name and their signature. Get one before you pay, and make sure it has all these things in case you want to make a claim.

Complaints about overcharging should be directed to **City hall** (Pražské radnice; ☎ 236 002 269; www.prague-city.cz; Office 405, 4th fl, Platněrská 19, Staré Město; ☎ noon-5pm Mon, 8am-6pm Wed).