

DRINKING

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DRINKING

Bars in Prague go in and out of fashion with alarming speed, and trend-spotters are forever flocking to the latest 'in' place only to desert it as soon as it becomes mainstream. The best areas to go looking for good drinking dens include Vinohrady, Žižkov, Smíchov, Holešovice and the area south of Národní třída in Nové Město.

Most pubs serve beer snacks; some of the most popular are *utopenci* (sliced sausage pickled in vinegar with onion), *topinky* (fried toast) and, of course, the famous *Pražská šunka* (Prague ham) with gherkin. Many of the places listed here also serve more substantial meals.

If you want to avoid bumping into stag parties, stay away from Wenceslas Square, Irish and English pubs in the city centre, and the sports bars on and around Ve Smečkách in the New Town.

SPECIALITIES

Beer

The Czech lands have been famous for centuries for producing some of the finest amber nectar in the world. The earliest historical mention of beer-making and hop-growing dates back to 1088 in the founding charter of Opatovice monastery in East Bohemia. Apparently the taste of beer was quite different in those days – by today's standards it would be considered undrinkable. It was not until 1842 that a smart group of Plzeň brewers pooled their experience, installed 'modern' technology and founded a single municipal brewery, with spectacular results. Their golden lager beer, labelled *Plzeňský Prazdroj* (*prazdroj* is old Czech for 'the original source') or Pilsner Urquell in German is now one of the world's best, and most imitated, beers.

Even in these times of encroaching coffee culture, *pivo* (beer) remains the lifeblood of Prague. Czechs drink more beer per capita than anywhere else in the world (around 157L per head per year, easily beating both Germany and Australia), and the local *hospoda* or *pivnice* (pub or small beer hall) remains the social hub of the neighbourhood. Many people drink at least one glass of beer every day – local nicknames for beer include *tekutý chleb* (liquid bread) and *živá voda* (life-giving water) – and it's still possible to see people stopping off for a small glass of beer on their way to work in the morning.

Most Czech beers are bottom-fermented lagers, naturally brewed using Moravian malt and hand-picked hops from Žatec in northwestern Bohemia. The whole brewing and fermentation process uses only natural ingredients – water, hops, yeast and barley. As in neighbouring Germany, strict regula-

PUB ETIQUETTE

There's an etiquette to be observed if you want to sample the atmosphere in a traditional *hospoda* (pub) without drawing disapproving stares and grumbles from the regulars. First off, don't barge in and start rearranging chairs and tables – if you want to share a table or take a spare seat, ask '*je tu volno?*' (is this free?) first. It's normal practice in crowded Czech pubs to share tables with strangers. Take a beer-mat from the rack and place it in front of you, and wait for the bar staff to come to you; waving for service is guaranteed to get you ignored.

You can order without saying a single thing – it's automatically assumed that you're here for the beer. When the waiter approaches, just raise your thumb for one beer, thumb and index finger for two, etc – providing you want a 0.5L glass of the pub's main draught ale. Even just a nod will do. The waiter will keep track of your order by marking a slip of paper that stays on your table; whatever you do, don't write on it or lose it (you'll have to pay a fine if you do). As soon as the level of beer in your glass falls to within an inch of the bottom, the eagle-eyed waiter will be on his/her way with another. But never, as people often do in Britain, pour the dregs of the old glass into the new – this is considered to be deeply uncivilised behaviour.

If you don't want any more beer brought to your table, place a beer-mat on top of your glass. When you want to pay up and go, get the waiter's attention and say '*zaplatím*' (I'll pay). He or she will tot up the marks on your slip of paper, and you pay there, at the table (try to have some smallish change; handing over a 2000Kč note will prompt a display of amateur dramatics). It's normal to leave a tip (see p179).

PITHY PIVO PROVERBS

According to an old Czech saying, *kde se pivo vaří, tam se dobře daří* ('where beer is brewed, life is good'; it's one of the few that rhymes in both Czech and English). And the beer-fuelled good life has spawned a whole range of lager-related epithets.

These include, 'A fine beer may be judged with only one sip, but it's safer to be thoroughly sure'; indeed, there are many who might rewrite that opening phrase as 'A fine beer may be judged with only one glass...'

Czechs are certainly not oblivious to the effect that beer-drinking has on their bodies – a beer belly is referred to in Czech as a *pivní mozol* (literally a 'beer callus'). But they rather seem to like the effect; one of their favourite sayings is '*pivo dělá hezká těla*' (beer makes beautiful bodies).

And finally, trust the Czechs to come up with a near-nonsensical proverb extolling the virtues of their national drink – *není pivo jako pivo* (there's no beer like beer!). That one's worthy of Homer Simpson, no less.

tions prevent the use of chemicals in the beer-making process.

There are two main varieties of beer – *světlé* (light) and *tmavý* or *černé* (dark). The *světlé* is a pale amber or golden lager-style beer with a crisp, refreshing, hoppy flavour. Dark beers are sweeter and more full-bodied, with a rich, malty or fruity flavour.

Draught beers are often labelled either *dvanáctka* (12°) or *desítka* (10°). This indicator of specific gravity is known as the Balling rating, and was invented by Czech scientist Karl Josef Balling in the 19th century. One degree Balling represents 1% by weight of malt-derived sugar in the brewing liquid before fermentation. However, not all the sugar turns to alcohol, so the Balling rating gives an indication of the 'body' as well as the likely alcohol content of the finished beer – 12° is richer in flavour, as well as being stronger in alcohol, than 10°, with a slight malty sweetness that cuts the bitterness of the hops.

In 1997 Czech law adopted a new system to indicate the alcohol-by-volume (ABV) content of beer, which recognises three categories – *výcepní pivo* (less than 4.5% ABV), *ležák* (4.5% to 5.5% ABV) and *special* (more than 5.5% ABV). However, tradition dies hard, and most breweries and pubs still use the *dvanáctka* and *desítka* labels.

Czechs like their beer served at cellar temperature (around 6°C to 10°C) with a tall, creamy head (known as *pěna*, meaning foam). Americans and Australians may find it a bit warm, but this improves the flavour. Most draught beer is sold in *půl-litr* (0.5L) glasses; if you prefer a small beer, ask for a *malé pivo* (0.3L). Some bars confuse the issue by using 0.4L glasses, while others offer a German-style 1L mug known as a *tuplák*.

The world-famous Pilsner Urquell and Budvar (Budweiser) beers are brewed in the provincial towns of Plzeň (West Bohemia)

and České Budějovice (South Bohemia) respectively, but Prague has its own native brews. The largest concern is Prague Breweries, which operates the Staropramen and Braník breweries in Prague, and the Ostravar brewery in Ostrava (Northern Moravia). Its brands include the traditional Staropramen lager and the newer Kelt stout and Velvet bitter, and account for around 13% of the domestic beer market.

Prague Breweries is now owned by the Belgian company InBev, the largest brewery group in the world, and Pilsner Urquell is a subsidiary of SABMiller. In fact, the Budweiser Budvar Brewery in České Budějovice, which is still partly owned by the state, is the only major brewery in the country that is still 100% Czech-owned.

The takeover of the Czech Republic's breweries by multinational companies has been accompanied by a resurgence of interest in traditional beer-making, which has seen a wave of microbreweries (beer halls that brew their own beer on the premises) springing up all over the country. There are several microbreweries in Prague – see the boxed text (p179) for details.

Wine

Czech beer is, of course, world famous, and beer-heads come to Prague from all over the world to worship at the mother lode of all lagers. What is less well known is that Czech wines have improved enormously in recent years, and are well worth getting to know.

Grapes have been grown in the Czech lands since the 14th century, when Charles IV imported vines from Burgundy; their descendants are still thriving on the slopes beneath [Mělník Chateau](#) (p233).

The standard of Czech wine has soared since the fall of communism, as small producers

BREWERY TOURS

The Staropramen Brewery in the Prague suburb of Smíchov offers tours to visitors; there are also several other breweries within reach of the capital:

- **Budweiser Budvar Brewery** (☎ 387 705 341; www.budvar.cz; cnr Pražská & K Světlé, České Budějovice; tour 100Kč; 🕒 9am-4pm) Has one-hour tours for a minimum of eight persons; must be booked in advance. České Budějovice is 160km south of Prague.
- **Pilsner Urquell Brewery** (☎ 377 062 888; www.beerworld.cz; U Prazdroje 7, Plzeň; tour 150Kč; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun) Has one-hour guided tours (with beer tasting). Tours in English begin at 12.45pm, 2pm and 4.15pm daily; no advance booking needed. Plzeň is 80km west of Prague.
- **Staropramen Brewery** (Map p128; ☎ 257 191 402; www.staropramen.com; Nádražní 84, Smíchov; tour 100Kč; 🕒 9am-5pm) One-hour tours by appointment only; also has an excellent bar and restaurant, Na Verandách (p172).
- **Velké Popovice Brewery** (☎ 323 683 425; www.kozel.cz; Ringhofferova 1, Velké Popovice; tour 60Kč; 🕒 8am-6pm) Has 90-minute tours that can be booked for groups of 10 or more; individuals can tag along with larger groups. Velké Popovice is just 20km southeast of Prague.

have concentrated on the quality end of the market. The total area of land given over to viticulture increased from 12,000 hectares in 1989 to 19,300 hectares by 2006. The main wine-growing region in the country is South Moravia, which accounts for 96% of Czech vineyards, with the remaining 4% scattered across northern Bohemia.

Although Czech red wines – such as the South Moravian speciality, Svatovavřínecké (St Lawrence) – are mostly pretty average, Czech whites can be very good indeed. The varieties to look out for are Veltinské zelené (Grüner Veltlin), Rýnský ryzlink (riesling) and Müller-Thurgau. Tanzberg and Sonberk are both excellent winemakers.

Although not as popular as beer, *vino* (wine) is widely available in *vinárny* (wine bars), restaurants and pubs – but not in many beer halls. *Suché víno* is dry wine and *sladké* is sweet; a sign advertising *sudové víno* means that it is served straight from the barrel. If you want to sample a range of Czech wines, head for the **U Zavoje** (p161), **Bokovka** (p184) or **Monarch** (p183) wine bars, or go shopping at **Cellarius** (p157).

For about three weeks each year from the end of September to mid-October, you will see shops and street stalls selling *burčák*. This is ‘young wine’, freshly extracted grape juice in the early stages of fermentation. It is sweet and refreshing, more reminiscent of fruit juice than wine, but contains around 3% to 5% alcohol; beware – the stuff sneaks up on you.

Later in the year, as winter sets in and the weather gets colder, you’ll notice the *svařák* stalls appearing in the streets. Short for *svařené víno* (mulled wine), *svařák* is what you would expect – red wine heated and flavoured with sugar and spices.

Spirits

Probably the most distinctive of Czech *lihoviny* (spirits) is Becherovka. Produced in the West Bohemian spa town of Karlovy Vary, famous for its 12 sulphurous, thermal springs, the bitter, herbal liqueur is famously known as the ‘13th spring’ – a few shots will leave you feeling sprightlier than a week’s worth of spa treatment. It is often served as an apéritif, and is increasingly used as an ingredient in cocktails.

The fiery and potent *slivovice* (plum brandy) is said to have originated in Moravia, where the best brands still come from. The best commercially produced *slivovice* is R Jelínek from Vizovice. Other regional spirits include *meruňkovice* (apricot brandy) and juniper-flavoured *borovička*.

The deadliest locally produced spirit is Hills Liqueur absinthe from Jindřichův Hradec. While it’s banned in many countries, in part because of its high alcohol content, absinthe is legal in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, connoisseurs of absinthe consider Hills little better than highly alcoholic mouthwash.

Spirits are traditionally drunk neat and usually chilled. An exception is *grog*, a popular year-round hot drink: half rum, half hot water or tea, with a slice of lemon.

PRACTICALITIES

How Much?

Gone are the days of cheap beer. A combination of generally increasing tourist prices and a strong Czech crown have seen bar prices begin to approach those in Germany, France and even the UK.

The price of a half-litre of draught beer varies enormously, from around 25Kč to 35Kč in pubs catering mainly to local drinkers, to 90Kč and up at outdoor tables in tourist-thronged Old Town Square. Most city centre bars charge 50Kč to 80Kč.

Cocktails in the city centre range from 120Kč to 280Kč, depending on the quality of the ingredients and the fanciness of the surroundings, while good-quality Czech wine in a specialist wine bar will cost from 300Kč a bottle.

Tipping

It's customary to tip the staff in Prague pubs, bars and cafés. Normal practice is to round up the bill to the next 10Kč (or the next 20Kč if it's over 200Kč). Change is usually counted

out starting with the big notes, then on down to the smallest coins. If you say *děkuji* (thank you) during this process, the bartender will stop and assume that the rest is a tip.

PRAGUE CASTLE & HRADČANY

This is a fairly quiet district, with drinking venues limited to laid-back cafés and a couple of traditional pubs.

U ZAVĚŠENÝHO KAFE Map pp70-1 Bar

☎ 605 294 595; Úvoz 6, Hradčany; ☎ 11am-midnight; ☎ 12, 20, 22, 23

This is a superb little drinking den barely five minutes' walk from the castle. Head for

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

While big multinational brewing companies have been busy taking over traditional Czech breweries, a growing number of enthusiasts have been setting up microbreweries that stay true to the origins of Bohemian beer, serving tasty, unpasteurised brews in atmospheric brewery pubs. Here are six in the capital:

Klášteřní pivovar Strahov (Strahov Monastery Brewery; Map pp70-1; ☎ 233 353 155; Strahovské nádvoří 301, Hradčany; ☎ 10am-10pm; ☎ 22, 23) Dominated by two polished copper brewing kettles, this convivial little pub serves up two varieties of its St Norbert beer – *tmavý* (dark), a rich, tarry brew with a creamy head, and *polotmavý* (amber), a full-bodied, hoppy lager, both 59Kč per 0.4L.

Novoměstský pivovar (New Town Brewery; Map pp108-9; ☎ 224 232 448; Vodičkova 20, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-11.30pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-11.30pm Sat, noon-10pm Sun; ☎ 3, 9, 14, 24) Like U Fleků (below), the 'New Town Brewery' has largely been taken over by coach-party invasions, but it's considerably cheaper (38Kč for 0.5L, available in both light and dark varieties), and the food is not only edible but actually rather good. If you haven't booked, you'll be lucky to get a table.

Pivovar U Bulovky (Bulovka Brewery; Map pp58-9; ☎ 284 840 650; Bulovka 17, Libeň; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri, noon-midnight Sat; ☎ 10, 15, 24, 25) Opened in 2004, this is a genuine neighbourhood bar out in the suburbs, a homely wood-panelled room with quirky metalwork, much of it home-built by the owner. The delicious house *ležák* (lager; 29Kč for 0.5L) is a yeast beer, cloudy in appearance, and crisp, citrusy and refreshing in flavour. Well worth the tram trip, but don't expect the staff to speak English!

Pivovarský dům (Brewery House; Map pp108-9; ☎ 296 216 666; cnr Ječná & Lipová, Nové Město; ☎ 11am-11.30pm; ☎ 4, 6, 10, 16, 22, 23) While the tourists flock to U Fleků, locals gather here to sample the classic Czech lager (in light, dark and mixed varieties; 35Kč per 0.5L) that is produced on the premises, as well as wheat beer and a range of flavoured beers (including coffee, banana and cherry, 35Kč 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 (no smoking).

U Fleků (Map pp108-9; ☎ 224 934 019; Křemencová 11, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-11pm; ☎ Karlovo Náměstí) 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. Beware the waiter asking if you want to try a Becherovka (Czech liqueur) – it's not a great accompaniment to beer, and it'll add 80Kč to the bill.

U Medvídků (At the Little Bear; Map pp88-9; ☎ 224 211 916; Na Perštýně 7, Staré Město; ☎ beer hall 11.30am-11pm, museum noon-10pm; ☎ Národní Třída) The most micro of Prague's microbreweries, with a capacity of only 250L, U Medvídků started producing its own beer only in 2005, though its beer hall has been around for many years. What it lacks in size, it makes up for in strength – the dark lager produced here, marketed as X-Ber, is the strongest in the country, with an alcohol content of 11.8% (as strong as many wines). Available in bottles only (48Kč for 0.33L), it's a malty, bitter-sweet brew with a powerful punch; handle with caution! There's also Budvar on tap at 33Kč for 0.5L.

the cosy, wood-panelled back room, quirkily decorated with weird art and mechanical curiosities by local artist Kuba Krejci (all for sale), and an ancient jukebox crammed with Beatles, Stones and Czech rock. Foaming Gamberinus is only 25Kč a half-litre, and the coffee (40Kč for a cappuccino) is damn fine too.

LOBKOWICZ PALACE CAFÉ

Map p62

Café

☎ 233 312 925; Jiřská 3, Prague Castle;
☎ 10am-6pm; ☎ 22, 23

This new café housed in the 16th-century Lobkowitz Palace is the best café in the castle complex by an imperial mile. Try to grab one of the tables on the balconies at the back – the view over Malá Strana is superb, as are the café's chocolate brownies, served with a splash of mango sauce and fresh strawberries. The coffee is good too, and service is fast and friendly.

PIVNICE U ČERNÉHO VOLA

Map p62

Pub

☎ 220 513 481; Loretánské náměstí 1, Hradčany;
☎ 10am-10pm; ☎ 22, 23

Many religious people make a pilgrimage to the Loreta, but just across the road is a shrine that pulls in pilgrims of a different kind – the 'Black Ox'. This surprisingly authentic and inexpensive beer hall is visited by real-ale aficionados for its authentic atmosphere and lip-smackingly delicious draught beer, Velkopopovický Kozel (26.50Kč for 0.5L), which is brewed in a small town southeast of Prague.

MALÁ STRANA

Malá Strana is the place to go for pavement table people-watching, with lots of cafés and bars spilling out onto the streets – especially on main square Malostranské náměstí and on Nerudova, which leads up to the castle. Places here range from cute tea houses and cafés to traditional cellar-pubs and funky bars.

KLUB ÚJEZD

Map pp76-7

Bar

☎ 257 316 537; Újezd 18; ☎ 2pm-4am; ☎ 6, 9, 12, 20, 22, 23

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 handmade furniture and fittings, original art and weird

wrought-iron sculptures. Clamber onto a two-tonne bar stool in the agreeably grungy street-level bar, and sip on a beer while you watch a thick rope of herbal-scented smoke uncoil across the ceiling beside the scaly, fire-breathing sea-monster that dangles over your head. Trippy.

ST NICHOLAS CAFÉ

Map pp76-7

Bar

☎ 257 530 205; Tržiště 7; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Fri, 4pm-1am Sat & Sun; ☎ 12, 20, 22, 23

Descend from the bustle of Malá Strana into this dark and atmospheric Gothic cellar, a favourite midday refuge in the heart of the tourist zone. Dimly lit alcoves, flickering candlelight and worn wooden tables make an appealing setting for a few quiet beers or a bottle of wine; later in the evening it gets busier and develops a cool, jazzy atmosphere, with live music on weekend nights.

KAFÍČKO

Map pp76-7

Café

☎ 724 151 795; Míšenská 10; ☎ 10am-10pm;
☎ 12, 20, 22, 23

This smoke-free, family-friendly little café, with its cream walls, bentwood chairs, fresh flowers and arty photographs, is an unexpected setting for some of Prague's finest tea and coffee. Choose from a wide range of quality roasted beans from all over the world, and have them freshly ground and made into espresso, cappuccino or latte (40Kč to 55Kč); the espresso is served, as it should be, with a glass of water.

U ZELENEHO ČAJE

Map pp76-7

Café

☎ 257 530 027; Nerudova 19; ☎ 11am-10pm;
☎ 12, 20, 22, 23

'At the Green Tea' is a charming little old-world tea house on the way up to the castle. The menu offers around a hundred different kinds of tea (45Kč to 80Kč a pot) from all over the world, ranging from classic green and black teas from China and India to fruit-flavoured teas and herbal infusions, as well as tempting cakes and tasty sandwiches.

BLUE LIGHT

Map pp76-7

Cocktail Bar

☎ 257 533 126; Josefská 1; ☎ 6pm-3am; ☎ 12, 20, 22, 23

The Blue Light is an appropriately dark and atmospheric jazz cavern, as popular with locals as with tourists, where you can sip a *caipirinha* or cranberry colada as you cast an eye over the vintage jazz posters, records, old photographs and decades-worth of

GRAND CAFÉS

Prague's café society flourished from the late 19th century until the 1930s, when the city's coffee houses provided a meeting place for artists, writers, journalists, activists and political dissidents. Many fell into disrepair following WWII, but half a dozen or so have survived or been restored to their former glory.

Café Imperial (Map p106; ☎ 246 011 600; Na Poříčí 15, Nové Město; ☎ 7am-11pm; 🚶 Náměstí Republiky) First opened in 1914, and given a complete facelift in 2007, the Imperial is a tour de force of Art Nouveau tiling – the walls and ceiling are covered in original ceramic tiles, mosaics, sculptured panels and bas-reliefs, with period light fittings and bronzes scattered about. The coffee is good, there are cocktails in the evening, and the café menu offers all-day English and American breakfasts, as well as excellent eggs Benedict.

Café Savoy (Map pp76–7; ☎ 257 311 562; Vítězná 5, Malá Strana; ☎ 8am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 6, 9, 22, 23) Established in 1893 and restored in 2004, the Savoy fairly glows with *belle époque* splendour, its colourful, ornately decorated ceiling decked with crystal chandeliers (grab a table on the mezzanine for a closer view) and its waiting staff dressed in matching red waistcoats and ties. Great coffee and hot chocolate, and a decent wine list too.

Grand Café Orient (Map pp88–9; ☎ 224 224 240; Ovocný trh 19, Staré Město; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Náměstí Republiky) Prague's only Cubist café, the Orient was designed by Josef Gočár and is Cubist down to the smallest detail, including the lampshades and coat-hooks. It was restored and reopened in 2005, having been closed since 1920. Decent coffee and inexpensive cocktails.

Kavárna Lucerna (Map pp108–9; ☎ 224 215 495; Palác Lucerna, Štěpánská 61, Nové Město; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Sat, to 11pm Sun; 🚶 3, 9, 14, 24) The least touristy of the cafés listed here, the Lucerna is part of an Art Nouveau shopping arcade designed by the grandfather of ex-president Václav Havel. Filled with faux marble, ornamental metalwork and glittering crystal lanterns (*lucerna* is Czech for lantern), this 1920s gem has arched windows overlooking David Černý's famous *Horse* sculpture hanging beneath the glass-domed atrium.

Kavárna Obecní dům (Map pp88–9; ☎ 222 002 763; náměstí Republiky 5, Staré Město; ☎ 7.30am-11pm; 🚶 Náměstí Republiky) The spectacular café in Prague's opulent Municipal House (Obecní dům) offers the opportunity to sip your cappuccino amid an orgy of Art Nouveau splendour. Also worth a look is the neat little American Bar in the basement of the building, all polished wood, stained glass and gleaming copper.

Kavárna Evropa (Map pp108–9; ☎ 224 228 117; Václavské náměstí 25, Nové Město; ☎ 9.30am-11pm; 🚶 Můstek) The Grand Hotel Evropa sports the most atmospheric café on Wenceslas Square, a fading museum of over-the-top Art Nouveau. Sadly, it has long since become a tourist trap, with second-rate cakes and coffee and rip-off prices, but it's still well worth a quick look inside.

Kavárna Slavia (Map pp88–9; ☎ 224 220 957; Národní třída 1, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun; 🚶 Národní Třída) The Slavia is the most famous of Prague's old cafés, a cherrywood-and-onyx shrine to Art Deco elegance, with polished limestone-topped tables and big windows overlooking the river. It has been a celebrated literary meeting place since the early 20th century – Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Kafka hung out here, and it was frequented by Václav Havel and other dissidents in the 1970s and '80s.

scratched graffiti that adorn the walls. The background jazz is recorded rather than live, but on a quality sound system that never overpower your conversation.

HOSTINEC U KOCOURA Map pp76–7 Pub

☎ 257 530 107; Nerudova 2; ☎ 11am-11pm; 🚶 12, 20, 22, 23

'The Tomcat' is a long-established traditional pub, still enjoying its reputation as a former favourite of ex-president Havel, and still managing to pull in a mostly Czech crowd despite being in the heart of tourist-ville (maybe it's the ever-present pall of cigarette smoke). It has relatively inexpensive beer for this part of town – 30Kč for 0.5L of draught Budvar, Pilsner Urquell or Bernard yeast beer.

STARÉ MĚSTO

The Old Town is tourist central, with crowded pubs and prices to match. But all you have to do is explore the maze of narrow back streets that radiate from Old Town Square to find hidden gems like Čili Bar, Duende and Literární Kavárna Řetězová.

DUENDE Map pp88–9 Bar

☎ 775 186 077; Karoliny Světlé 30; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 3pm-midnight Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun; 🚶 Národní Třída

Barely five minutes' walk from Charles Bridge but half a world away in atmosphere, this cute little bar is the opposite of touristy – a bohemian drinking den that pulls in an arty, mixed-age crowd of locals. Here you can

enjoy a drink while casting an eye over the fascinating photos and quirky art that cover the wall, or listen to live guitar or violin. As well as wines and cocktails, the bar serves the excellent Bernard beer for 29Kč per 0.5L.

FRIENDS Map pp88–9 Bar

☎ 226 211 920; Bartolomějská 11; 🕒 6pm–4am; 📍 Národní Třída

Friends is a welcoming gay music-and-video bar serving excellent coffee, cocktails and wine. It's a good spot to sit back with a drink and check out the crowd, or join in the party spirit on assorted theme nights, which range from Czech pop music and movies to cowboy parties (see www.friends-prague.cz for listings). DJs add their own spin from 10pm Wednesday to Saturday.

KOZIČKA Map pp88–9 Bar

☎ 224 818 308; Kozí 1; 🕒 noon–4am Mon–Fri, 6pm–4am Sat, 6pm–3am Sun; 📍 Staroměstská
The 'Little Goat' is a buzzing, red-brick basement bar decorated with cute steel goat sculptures, serving Krušovice on tap at 40Kč for 0.5L (though watch out – the bartenders will occasionally sling you a 1L *tuplák* 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.

CAFÉ CAFÉ Map pp88–9 Café

☎ 224 210 597; Rytířská 10; 🕒 10am–11pm; 📍 Můstek

Exposed brick and aluminium ducting meet burgundy drapes, sparkly chandeliers and hot pink woodwork in this deeply trendy café, host to many a fashion launch and designer event – Fashion TV plays on the plasma screens, and half the staff look like supermodels. They must be avoiding the big fat chocolate cakes and ice cream sundaes that plump out the menu, and sticking to the excellent espressos.

EBEL COFFEE HOUSE Map pp88–9 Café

☎ 224 895 788; Týn 2; 🕒 9am–10pm; 📍 Náměstí Republiky

If you can't face the watery instant coffee served up with your hotel breakfast, head to Ebel for a jolt of full-fat, 98-octane arabica. Munchies on offer include toasted bagels with herby cream cheese, quiches, carrot cake and chocolate brownies. Only a few minutes' walk from Old Town Square, this branch is in a top people-watching

spot in a corner of the Týn courtyard; there are several other branches across the city (including one on Rětežová).

KÁVA KÁVA KÁVA Map pp88–9 Café

☎ 224 228 862; Platýz pasáž, Národní třída 37; 🕒 7am–10pm Mon–Fri, 9am–10pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Národní Třída

Tucked away in the peaceful Platýz courtyard, this American-owned café has some of the best coffee in town – the *grande cappuccino* is big enough to bathe in – and a selection of bagels, croissants, chocolate brownies, carrot cake and other goodies. There's also internet access via desktop computers, and it's a wi-fi hotspot (you need to ask for the password). You can find a second branch in Smíchov (see p191).

LITERÁRNÍ KAVÁRNA ŘETĚZOVÁ Map pp88–9 Café

☎ 222 221 244; 🕒 noon–11pm Mon–Fri, 5–11pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Ř 17, 21

This is the kind of place where you can imagine yourself tapping out the Great Prague Novel on your laptop with a half-finished coffee on the table beside you. It's a plain, vaulted room with battered wooden furniture, a scatter of rugs on the floor, old black-and-white photos on the wall, and the sort of quiet, relaxed atmosphere where you can read a book without feeling self-conscious. If you fancy something stronger than coffee, try the fruity, full-flavoured Bernard *kvasicové* (yeast beer).

BAR & BOOKS Map pp88–9 Cocktail Bar

☎ 731 184 123; Týnská 19; 🕒 2pm–4am Mon–Fri, 6pm–4am Sat, to 3am Sun; 📍 Náměstí Republiky

The walls are indeed lined with books at this branch of the famous Manhattan cocktail bar, but the well-heeled clients are more likely to be reading the labels on the vast range of single malts, bourbons, brandies and vintage ports on offer, along with Cuban and Dominican cigars. The black-waistcoated staff are unerringly polite and efficient, and mix a mean martini, margarita or champagne cocktail.

BODEGUITA DEL MEDIO Map pp88–9 Cocktail Bar

☎ 224 813 922; Kaprova 5; 🕒 10am–2am; 📍 Staroměstská

The Prague incarnation of the Havana cocktail-bar and restaurant chain brings

a whiff of Hemingway to the Old Town streets, with chunky wooden tables, ceiling fans and cigars. And, of course, classic *mojito* cocktails. The food is excellent, the cappuccinos are froth-topped caffeine bombs, and the pavement tables catch the sun at lunchtime...perfecto.

ČILI BAR Map pp88-9 Cocktail Bar

☎ 777 945 848; **Kožná 8**; ☎ 5pm-2am; **M** Můstek
Hidden in the crook of a narrow Old Town alley but only a few paces from Old Town Square, this tiny cocktail bar could not be further removed in atmosphere from your typical Old Town drinking place. Cramped and smoky – there are Cuban cigars for sale – with a couple of battered leather armchairs competing for space with a handful of tables and the crowd at the bar, it's friendly, relaxed and lively. Don't miss the speciality of the house – a shot of rum mixed with finely chopped red chillis.

U ZLATÉHO TYGRA Map pp88-9 Pub

☎ 222 221 111; **Husova 17**; ☎ 3-11pm; **M** Staroměstská
The 'Golden Tiger' is one of the few old-town drinking holes that has hung on to its soul – and its low prices (29Kč 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 fellow president Bill Clinton in 1994 to show him a real Czech pub.

MONARCH VINNÝ SKLEP Map pp88-9 Wine Bar

☎ 224 239 602; **Na Perštýně 15**; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat; **M** Národní Třída
The Monarch wine cellar is one of the best places in town to get to know Czech wines. Despite its knowledgeable staff and vast selection of vintages, it manages to avoid any air of pretentiousness, and has a tempting menu of nibbles – cheeses, olives, prosciutto, salami and smoked duck – to accompany your wine, which is not as expensive as you might expect. A range of Moravian wines are available by the glass from only 39Kč.

NOVÉ MĚSTO

Nové Město, particularly the area around Wenceslas Square, is a magnet for stag parties and groups of young lads on the piss – best avoided

if you're looking for a quiet drink. But there are plenty of good drinking holes, too. Check out the streets south of Národní třída near the river, where you'll find studenty cafés like Velryba and quirky wine bars like Bokovka.

JÁMA Map pp108-9 Bar

☎ 224 222 383; **V Jámě 7**; ☎ 11am-1am; **M** Muzeum

Jáma ('the Hollow'), southeast off Vodičkova, is a popular American expat bar with vaulted ceilings plastered with old rock gig posters ranging from Led Zep and REM to Kiss and Shania Twain. There's a leafy little beer garden out the back shaded by lime and walnut trees, smiling staff serving up Pilsner Urquell, Gambrinus and Velkopopovický Kozel on draught, and a menu that includes good burgers, steaks, ribs and chicken wings.

DOBŘÁ ČAJOVNA Map pp108-9 Café

☎ 224 231 480; **Václavské náměstí 14**; ☎ 10am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 3-9.30pm Sat & Sun; **M** Můstek

This tearoom, tucked up a passage off Wenceslas Square, is a little haven of incense burners, oriental rugs and comfy cushions hidden away from the heaving crowds on the nearby street. They take their tea seriously here, and you can choose from a wide range of Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Japanese and Turkish leaves. There are also cakes and vegetarian snacks such as hummus and pitta bread.

KÁVOVARNA Map pp108-9 Café

☎ 296 236 233; **Pasáž Lucerna, Svtěpánská 61**; ☎ 8am-midnight; **M** Můstek

One of the few decent cafés in the region of Wenceslas Square, this retro-styled place has bentwood chairs and curved wooden benches in the smoky, dimly lit front room (there's a nonsmoking room beyond the bar), with exhibitions of arty black-and-white photography on the walls. The coffee is good and reasonably priced, and there's an extensive menu of flavoured and iced coffees, hot chocolates, soda and granitas.

VELRYBA Map pp108-9 Café

☎ 224 912 484; **Opatovická 24**; ☎ 11am-midnight Sat-Thu, to 2am Fri; **M** Národní Třída
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 students, local office workers and foreign backpackers attracted by the low prices keep the place jumping.

BOKOVKA Map pp108–9 Wine Bar

☎ 721 262 503; Pštrosova 8; 🕒 4pm–1am Sun–Thu, 4pm–3am Fri & Sat; 🚶 Karlovo náměstí Owned by a syndicate of oenophiles who include film directors Jan Hřebejk and David Ondříček, this quaint little bar is named after the movie *Sideways* (*bokovka* in Czech), which was set in the California vineyards (the bar makes an appearance in Hřebejk's 2007 film *Medvídek*). The main attraction (other than the chance of being served drinks by a famous film director – they occasionally work behind the bar) is the extensive menu of top-notch Moravian wines – we can recommend the 2004 Tanzberg Rýnský Ryzlink (390Kč a bottle).

VINOHRADY & VRŠOVICE

It may lack some of Žižkov's authentic grit, but Vinohrady is a great area for bar- and café-hopping. Check out the streets surrounding Peace Square (náměstí Míru), particularly along Americká, as well as Mánesova and those around the big park, Riegrovy sady, which has either Prague's best or second-best open-air beer garden (depending on whom you ask or where you live). With its big-screen TV, it's a popular place to gather for international sporting matches, like the World Cup.

CLUB STELLA Map p121 Bar

☎ 224 257 869; Lužická 10, Vinohrady; 🕒 8pm–5am; 🚶 4, 22, 23

Club Stella is an intimate, candlelit café-bar that seems to be the first place everyone recommends when you ask about gay and lesbian bars in Prague. There's a long narrow bar where you can just squeeze onto a bar stool, an armchair-filled lounge that looks like somebody's living room, and a welcoming crowd of locals. Ring the doorbell to get in.

POPO CAFÉ PETL Map p121 Bar

☎ 777 944 672; Italská 18, Vinohrady; 🕒 10am–1am Mon–Fri, 4pm–1am Sat & Sun; 🚶 11 A popular student dive, usually packed to the rafters and hopelessly smoky, but loads of fun at the same time. Staropramen is on

tap. If that doesn't appeal, there's tons of cheap wine on offer and tables filled with drunken members of the opposite sex. It doesn't get any better.

ZVONAŘKÁ Map p121 Bar

☎ 224 251 990; Šafaříkova 1, Vinohrady; 🕒 11am–11pm Mon–Thu, noon–midnight Fri & Sat, to 11pm Sun; 🚶 IP Pavlova

Sitting at the far end of a quiet residential street where Vinohrady spills over into the Nusle valley, Zvonařka has a stylish, minimalist interior, but its biggest attraction is outdoors – a broad, tree-shaded terrace overhanging a steep hill, with expansive views across the valley to Vyšehrad, a great place for a beer on a summer evening.

RIEGROVY SADY Beer Garden

☎ 222 717 247; Riegrovy sady, Vinohrady; 🕒 noon–1am (summers only); 🚶 11 or 🚶 Jiřího z Poděbrad (plus walk)

There's a good-natured rivalry between this beer garden and the one across the river at Letná as to which one is best. The answer depends on where you live, and on summer nights the folks in Vinohrady can be counted on to come out and enforce their claim. Order drinks at the bar and carry them to one of dozens of picnic tables. The big-screen TV takes away from the atmosphere, but is a welcome addition during the Euro or World Cup football matches, when the tables are lined elbow to elbow. The easiest way to get here is from Polská, turn up Chopínova, and then enter the park across from Na Švíhance. The beer garden is 30m up the path.

BLATOUC Map p121 Café

☎ 222 328 643; Americká 17, Vinohrady; 🕒 10am–11pm; 🚶 Náměstí Míru

When the legendary student café Blatouch shut down a couple of years ago in the Old Town, it was viewed as just another casualty of progress. The good news is that Blatouch has reopened here in Vinohrady, with the same old sign out the front and the same mix of laid-back service and good-natured student clientele. Excellent coffee is served with light eats like salads and sandwiches to go along with the ultra-relaxed vibe. Just what the neighbourhood needed.

CAFÉ CELEBRITY Map p121

Café

☎ 222 511 343; Vinohradská 40, Vinohrady;
🕒 10am-11pm; 📍 Náměstí Míru

This gay-friendly café is part of the cluster of gay-friendly joints, including the Club Valentino, that are part of the old Radio Palác building on Vinohradská. There's nothing special here except a welcoming atmosphere, lots of good-natured people-watching, and decent coffee, beer and wine.

CAFFÉ KAABA Map p121

Café

☎ 222 254 021; Mánesova 20, Vinohrady;
🕒 8am-10pm; 📍 11

Caffé Kaaba is a stylish little architect-designed café-bar with retro furniture and pastel-coloured décor that comes straight out of the 1959 Ideal Homes Exhibition. It serves up excellent coffee (made with freshly ground imported beans), offers an extensive list of Czech and imported wines (the house wine is only 30Kč a glass), and also has an in-house news and tobacco counter.

DOBŘÁ TRAFIKA Map p121

Café

☎ 222 510 261; Korunní 42, Vinohrady; 🕒 7am-11pm; 📍 Náměstí Míru or 📍 10, 16

From the outside, you'd never know there was a cute little coffee shop tucked behind this tobacconist on busy Korunní. The tobacco shop is interesting in its own right – not just pipes, loose tobacco, cigars and cigarettes, but also excellent teas, sweets and gifts. It feels a bit like a step back in time. At the back there's a small room for drinking coffee and a larger garden for just hanging out. Popular with students.

KAVÁRNA MEDŮZA Map p121

Café

☎ 222 515 107; Belgická 17, Vinohrady; 🕒 10am-1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat & Sun; 📍 Náměstí Míru

The perfect Prague coffee house, Medůza is an oasis of old, worn furniture, dark wood 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. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, beer, wine and even non-alcoholic cocktails are all on the menu, along with pancakes, nachos and banana splits.

KAVÁRNA ZANZIBAR Map p121

Café

☎ 222 520 315; Americká 15, Vinohrady;
🕒 8am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun;
📍 Náměstí Míru

Zanzibar started out years ago as a *trafika*, a place to buy newspapers and tobacco products. Over the years it's evolved into a homey space that defies easy description. It's not quite a café (though coffee is probably the most popular beverage), not quite a bar (though there's beer on tap and a place to sit up front) and not quite a restaurant (though the food they serve is pretty good). Treat it as a great place to meet up for whatever mood you're in. The terrace out front is pleasant in nice weather.

NANOCAFÉ Map p121

Café

☎ 604 517 786; Kodaňská 22, Vršovice;
🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-10pm Sat & Sun;
📍 4, 22, 23

This tiny café on a leafy street in Vršovice is recommendable chiefly for its early opening hours (great if you're staying nearby and don't have access to morning coffee) and the fact that it serves hard-to-find Primátor *weizenbier*, a rare Czech wheat beer. It has a friendly, informal vibe and a couple of pavement tables for spending a warm summer evening.

OUT Map p121

Café

☎ 272 730 496; Korunní 104 (in the Korunní dvůr housing estate), Vinohrady; 🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Flora

It's good to know about this swanky café and chocolatier in the upscale Korunní dvůr housing estate in case you're staying in the area and need to scrounge a decent breakfast early in the morning, or just passing by and have a sudden chocolate craving. They take their cocoa seriously here – it's imported all the way from Venezuela and Trinidad. There are also decent lunches, with good homemade soups.

RYBA NA RUBY Map p121

Café

☎ 731 570 704; Mánesova 87, Vinohrady;
🕒 10am-11pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Náměstí Jiřího z Poděbrad

Ryba na Ruby is something different for upscale Vinohrady: an ecofriendly tea and gift shop on the ground floor with a laid-back bar-club downstairs. This is a great place to stock up on things like fair-trade teas and coffees, plus organic foodstuffs like nuts, spices, cocoa, jams and oils. The below-ground club is a relaxed space for a beer or a coffee.

SAHARA CAFÉ Map p121

Café

☎ 222 514 987; náměstí Míru 6, Vinohrady;

☎ 9am-11pm; 📍 Náměstí Míru

The beautifully minimalist Morocco-inspired interior sets a design standard that few places can match; unfortunately, the food doesn't live up to the décor. Still, if it's just a cup of coffee or a glass of wine you're after, you can hardly do flashier in this neighbourhood. The convenient location makes it a good meet-up spot for a drink before heading elsewhere.

CORNER BAR AND BISTRO

Map p121

Cocktail Bar

☎ 222 724 581; Mánesova 64, Vinohrady;

☎ 5pm-3am; 📍 11

This upmarket New York-style cocktail and cigar bar occupies a former rugby pub and couldn't be more different in terms of atmosphere. It's been given a bad rap for its cocktail prices, but the truth is they're not much higher here than elsewhere; an Apple Martini (Skyy vodka, apple pucker and lime juice) runs to 125Kč, about the same as in the city centre. There are some lighter food options like sandwiches, cheese platters and fondues. On Monday nights, women get a free cigar.

MON AMI Map p121

Pub

☎ 271 726 693; Kodaňská 47, Vršovice; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, 1-11pm Sat & Sun; 📍 4, 22, 23

This is actually a Balkan-themed restaurant that morphs into a standard pub in the evenings. The food is nothing to write home about; on the other hand, it can be fun on crowded evenings when everyone's in a reckless mood, and there might even be someone sitting around playing a guitar.

VINIČNÍ ALTÁN Map p121

Wine Bar

☎ 224 262 861; Havlíčkovy sady 1369, Vršovice;

☎ 11am-11pm; 📍 6, 7, 24 (stop Otakarova plus uphill walk), 4, 22, 23 (stop Jana Masaryka plus walk)

Prague's nicest open-air wine garden claims to be its oldest as well – apparently established by Emperor Charles IV himself. Enjoy a glass of locally made white or red on a refurbished wooden gazebo overlooking the vineyards and the Nusle valley. There's no easy way to get here; try cutting through Vinohrady, following Americká and then continuing through Havlíčkovy sady. There are minimal but decent food offerings, including salads and sausages.

ŽIŽKOV & KARLÍN

Žižkov is famous for having more pubs per head of population than any other city district in Europe, and – depending on your tastes – offers the most authentic or the most terrifying pub-crawling experience in Prague. Be prepared for smoke, sticky floors, wall-to-wall noise and some heroically drunk companions.

BUKOWSKI'S Map pp126-7

Cocktail Bar

☎ 222 212 676; Bořivojova 86; ☎ 6pm-2am;

📍 5, 9, 26

Like most of the drinking dens that are popular among Prague expats, Bukowski's – the city's latest barfly magnet – is more a cocktail dive than a cocktail bar. Named after hard-drinking American writer Charles Bukowski, it cultivates a dark and slightly debauched atmosphere – the décor is self-consciously 'interesting' (when you can see it through the smoke-befogged candlelight) – but it peddles quality cocktails and cigars, and has friendly bartenders and cool tunes.

PIVOVARSKÝ KLUB Map pp126-7

Pub

☎ 222 315 777; Křižíkova 17; ☎ 11am-11.30pm;

📍 Florenc

This bar is to beer what the Bodleian Library is to books – the wall-to-wall shelves are lined with myriad varieties of bottled beer from all over the world, and there are six guest beers on tap (the fresh and hoppy Štěpán *ležák* and the citrusy Primátor yeast beer are both excellent). Perch on a bar stool in the street-level no-smoking area or head downstairs to the snug, smoky cellar, and order some of the pub's excellent grub to soak up the beer (authentic *guláš* with bacon dumplings for only 85Kč).

U VYSTŘELENÉHO OKA Map pp126-7

Pub

☎ 226 278 714; U Božích Bojovníků 3; ☎ 4.30pm-1am Mon-Sat; 📍 133, 207

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 Hus-site hero atop the hill behind the pub (see National Monument, p125) – is a bohemian (with a small 'b') hostelry with a raucous Friday night atmosphere where the cheap Pilsner Urquell (29Kč for 0.5L) pulls in a typically heterogeneous Žižkov crowd. There's no need to worry about the language

barrier – everyone here speaks the international language of booze.

HOLEŠOVICE, BUBENEČ & DEJVICE

Working-class Holešovice has always had its share of old men's pubs, but only relatively recently has the neighbourhood exploded with nicer drinking options, including loads of new cafés. Most of the better places are clustered around Letenské náměstí in Bubeneč. Look particularly down the street Šmeralová. If you can't find something that suits your fancy, walk to the corner at Keramická and then on to Čechova. There are at least a dozen bars and watering holes around here, all offering pretty much the same mix of cheapish beer and tables filled with students and local residents knocking one back.

FRAKTAL Map pp132–3

Bar

☎ 777 794 094; Šmeralová 1, Bubeneč; ☎ 11am-midnight; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This subterranean space under a corner house near Letenské náměstí is easily the friendliest bar this side of the Vltava. This is especially true for English speakers, as Fraktal serves as a kind of unofficial expat watering hole. It serves the Pilsner Urquell family of beers, including popular 10° Gambrinus. There's also good Mexican-style nosh for spacing beers. The only drawback is the early closing time. Last orders are at 11.30pm, and every year they seem to bring it forward another 30 minutes.

LA BODEGA FLAMENCA

Map pp132–3

Bar

☎ 233 374 075; Šmeralová 5, Bubeneč; ☎ 4pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

La Bodega is an atmospheric, red-brick cellar, painted and plastered to look like an adobe shack. With the Latin music turned down low, the buzz of conversation and the flickering candlelight, the crowd seems a bit more reflective (well, at least compared to the crew at Fraktal next door). Most people come for the sangria or the beer, but there's also a nice selection of tapas on hand, including *tortilla español*, *chorizo al vino tinto* (chorizo sausage stewed in red wine) and *gambas pil-pil* (prawns in garlic and chilli). There's also live music and dance some nights.

LE TRAM Map pp132–3

Bar

☎ 233 370 359; Šmeralová 12, Bubeneč;

☎ 8pm-6am; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

Another decent choice on the same street as La Bodega and Fraktal (and open much later). Le Tram looks like it's been furnished from a Prague public transport closing-down sale. Filled with plastic seats, benches and other accoutrements salvaged from decommissioned trams, as well as other 1970s *objets trouvés*, this pleasantly scruffy French-owned bar pulls in an international crowd with cheap beer, lively conversation and cool tunes.

STROMOFFKA Map pp132–3

Bar

☎ 737 141 997; Kamenická 54, Holešovice;

☎ 5pm-2am Mon-Sat; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This popular student bar, with occasional DJs and dancing downstairs, draws a local, early 20-ish crowd, but is large enough to be welcoming to newcomers. It tends to get packed out late on Fridays and Saturdays, when the lower-level bar is three-deep in drink orders and sweaty bodies are pounding out the beat behind.

LETENSKÝ ZÁMEČEK

Map pp132–3

Beer Garden

☎ 233 378 208; Letenský sady 341, Bubeneč;

☎ 11am-11pm (summer only); ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

No accounting of watering holes in the Holešovice area would be complete without a nod towards the city's best beer garden, situated at the eastern end of Letná park. If it's beer you're after, you have two choices: one, known euphemistically as 'business class', is to pull up a chair at the grill-garden restaurant towards the left, where you can get a half-litre Pilsner Urquell for around 30Kč a glass, plus pretty good pizzas and burritos. The other option – 'coach' – is to line up at the beer window and get a 28Kč half-litre in a plastic cup and sit at the picnic tables along the ridge. Though it's open only in nice weather, it's the best game in town on a warm summer evening.

ALCHYMISTA Map pp132–3

Café

☎ 233 370 359; Jana Zajívce 7, Bubeneč;

☎ 8pm-6am; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This old-fashioned coffee house with an adjacent art gallery is an oasis in the culturally barren neighbourhood behind Sparta stadium. Freshly ground coffees, a serious selection of teas (no Lipton in a bag here),

BEER GARDENS

On a hot summer day, what could be finer than sitting outdoors with a chilled glass of Bohemia's finest beer, 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 are typically noon to midnight April to September; expect to pay around 25Kč to 30Kč for a half-litre for beer.

Letenský zámeček (Map pp132–3; Letenské sady, Bubeneč) A slew of rickety benches and tables spread along a dusty scarp beneath the trees at the eastern end of Letná Gardens 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. See p187.

Letní bar (Map pp76–7; 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.

Občerstvení U okénka (Map p116; Soběslavova, Vyšehrad) Not a proper beer garden as such, but a collection of outdoor tables with a view over Vyšehrad Gardens – a pleasant spot for a beer on a sunny day, with bottled Branik at only 16Kč for 0.5L.

Riegrový sady (Map p121; Riegrový sady, Vinohrady) Perched on top of precipitous Riegrový 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. See p184 for a full review.

Parukářka (Map pp126–7; Olšanská, Žižkov) Ramshackle wooden hut in park overlooking Žižkov, with plenty of outdoor tables and lots of sweet-smelling smoke wafting about in the evenings. Gambrinus on tap.

Petrínské terasy (Map pp76–7; Petřín, Malá Strana) Traditional country-style pub with large, outdoor wooden deck and a stunning view over the city. Pilsner Urquell on tap.

and freshly made cakes and strudels draw a mostly neighbourhood crowd. In nice weather ask to take your coffee in the back garden.

ANTONIE Map pp132–3 Café
☎ 233 374 814; Šmeralova 15, Bubeneč; ☎ 11am–10pm; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This bright, cheerful café is a relatively new addition to this rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood between Letenské náměstí and Stromovka Park. The café is owned by an interior design company, and the polish shows, especially in the lovely open kitchen at the back. The menu includes a delicious selection of home-made cakes and light food items like soups and sandwiches. It's popular with mothers with babies making the trek to and from the park.

ARTESA Map pp132–3 Café
☎ 224 318 625; Dejvická 33, Dejvice; ☎ 8am–9am Mon–Fri, noon–7pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Dejvická or ☎ 2, 8, 20, 26

Retro is big these days, and this little coffee joint, just off Vítězné náměstí, easily evokes the futuristic 1950s and '60s with its modular chairs, pinkish walls and groovy, hanging cylinder lamps. Customers run the gamut from old ladies to supermodels – all there for the very good coffee as well as

cakes, sweets and rolls. The front room is nonsmoking; the back, smoking.

BIO OKO Map pp132–3 Café
☎ 233 312 148; Františka Křížka 15, Holešovice; ☎ 2–11pm; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

The café in the repertory cinema Bio Oko (p201) is a gem. It's classically retro as befits a cinema that regularly shows arty faves from the 1950s and '60s. Serving good espresso-based drinks as well as beer and cocktails, it's a nice choice for before or after the show.

ERHARTOVA CUKRÁRNA Café
Map pp132–3
☎ 233 312 148; Milady Horákové 56, Holešovice; ☎ 10am–7pm; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This stylish 1930s-era café and sweet shop in a refurbished functionalist building is adjacent to the local branch of the public library. It draws a mix of mothers with strollers, students and old folks, attracted mainly by the local varieties of biscuits, doughnuts and cinnamon rolls in the glass case, and ice cream in hot weather. Non-smoking throughout.

KABINET Map pp132–3 Café
☎ 233 326 668; Terronská 25, Dejvice; ☎ 11am–11pm Mon–Fri, 3–11pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Dejvická or ☎ 2, 8, 20, 26

A retro 1920s-style coffee house, slightly reminiscent of a cabaret, Kabinet is situated in a cool rondocubist building in a pleasantly residential part of Dejvice. Old cameras, posters and photographs emphasise the throwback feel. The name of the café, for Czechs, recalls early school days – a *kabinet* being a teacher's office – to add to the nostalgic feel. A perfect spot for a quiet conversation or for relaxing over a coffee and a good book.

KUMBAL Map pp132–3

Café

☎ 777 559 842; Heřmanová 12, Holešovice;
 ☎ 9am–8am; ☎ 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26
 Another stylish coffee bar in a 1930s Functionalist building that manages to be both hip and comfortable at the same time. There's good coffee and tea drinks, though not much on the menu aside from a few simple sandwiches and a daily soup (usually vegetarian). It's nonsmoking throughout, which attracts the stroller crowd in the afternoon and makes a pleasant place to linger (maybe that's why there's rarely a free table). Free wi-fi.

OUKY DOUKY Map pp132–3

Café

☎ 266 711 531; Janovského 14, Holešovice;
 ☎ 8am–11pm; ☎ 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26
 This was the original home of the Globe Bookstore & Café (née Coffeehouse) in the 1990s, and a kind of eclectic, San Francisco funkiness lingers. Today it houses a used bookstore with a worn-out selection of Czech-language books and an inviting café filled with students, housewives from the neighbourhood, a few bohemian types and a wandering expat or two. The light menu features mostly toasts, sandwiches and salads. Free wi-fi.

PRVNÍ HOLEŠOVICKÁ KAVÁRNA

Map pp132–3

Café

☎ 283 871 327; Komunardů 30, Holešovice;
 ☎ 8pm–6am; ☎ 1, 3, 12, 14, 25
 This sterile, street-level coffee house is about as intellectual as it gets in the far eastern end of Holešovice. The name means 'First Holešovice Coffee house', but it isn't quite accurate. The old Globe Bookstore & Coffeehouse on Janovského (now Ouky Douky, *above*) was technically first, but this is a true survivor. Average coffee drinks, indifferent service and minimal food offerings don't seem to diminish the charm;

it's packed most afternoons and evenings. Excellent original art occasionally features on the walls.

TĚSNĚ VEDLE BURUNDI

Map pp132–3

Café

☎ 777 170 803; Sládkova 4, Bubeneč; ☎ 10am–10pm; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

A curious pub–coffee house hybrid that draws a mix of intellectuals, students, ageing rockers, and garden-variety neighbourhood drinkers. It has a vaguely old-school dissident whiff about the place, making it a more satisfying spot to linger than the swish bars in the city centre. Limited food options include a couple of salads and toasts.

ANDALUSKÝ PES Map pp132–3

Cocktail Bar

☎ 773 026 584; Korunovační 4, Bubeneč;
 ☎ 7pm–4am; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

'Le Chien Andalou' is an after-hours cocktail bar with retro flair. The inviting front room, sporting red-velvet bar stools and purple glitter walls, attracts a kind of Edward Hopper 'Nighthawks' crowd after Fraktal closes and the night-time crowd moves in. The back rooms have a more risqué feel, dark and crowded some nights, with faces recognisable only by the glow of their cigarettes. It tends to close early on quiet nights, so take the official opening hours with a grain of salt.

POSTEL Map pp132–3

Cocktail Bar

☎ 220 874 797; Veletržní 14, Holešovice; ☎ 5pm–2am Mon–Sat; ☎ 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26

The name means 'bed', and that's obviously the goal at this flash meat-market–cocktail bar not far from Strossmayerovo náměstí. Fans of the film *Cocktail* will delight at the bartenders' juggling skills. Others will marvel at the attractive clientele. All in all, not a bad place to while away a couple of hours before, well, bed.

AKÁDEMIE Map pp132–3

Pub

☎ 233 375 236; Šmeralová 5, Bubeneč; ☎ 4pm–4am; ☎ 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

This cavernous pub has several pool tables and dartboards to amuse in case you tire of sitting around chewing the fat (quite literally given the menu options). The game of choice here is eight ball; the tables are large and well maintained. Waiters bring your beers to the table, and everything is toted up – billiards included – at the end.

Late opening hours make this a good place to wrap up.

NA SLAMNÍKU Map pp132-3

Pub

☎ 233 322 594; Wolkerova 12, Bubeneč;
🕒 11am-11pm; 🗺 1, 8, 15, 25, 26 (plus walk)

A great traditional Czech pub and beer garden dating from the 19th century, Na Slamníku is tucked away in a small valley in Bubeneč in the neighbourhood just behind the sprawling Russian embassy. There are three separate spaces: on the left side is an old-school tavern with cheap and decent Czech dishes, the right side is more a raucous pub, and in summer you can eat and drink outside under the trees. It's hard to find, so bring a map or take a taxi.

NA STARÉ KOVÁRNĚ

Map pp132-3

Pub

☎ 233 371 099; Kamenická 17, Holešovice;
🕒 11am-1am; 🗺 1, 8, 15, 25, 26

The motorcycle hanging from the ceiling sets a rakish tone for one of the most popular Czech pubs in the neighbourhood. The food is at least two notches above standard *hospoda* fare – and has even garnered raves from local critics – but honestly no-one comes here for the food. It's a shot and a beer joint in the best sense of the term.

U SV ANTONÍČKA Map pp132-3

Pub

☎ 220 879 428; Podplukovníka Sochora 20, Holešovice; 🕒 11am-11pm; 🗺 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26

A relative rarity these days close to the centre: a fully unreconstructed Czech pub and all that that entails, including cantankerous locals, an occasional hygiene issue with the glassware, layers of smoke, and toilets that will have to be buried in a nuclear landfill someday. Yet it has a certain charm. If you're curious about how things used to be, or long for a drink far from the tour coaches, this is your place. Not for the faint-hearted.

SMÍCHOV

Smíchov continues to surprise. Every year brings at least one or two new bar and café openings. Most of the action is clustered near the Anděl metro station, anchored by the enormous Nový Smíchov shopping centre. The Staropramen brewery is located near here, but alas the funky bar inside the brewery

has been replaced by yet another branch of the cookie-cutter, Staropramen-owned Potrefená husa restaurant chain. The beer's still fresh, though, and brewed on-site.

BACK DOORS Map p138

Bar

☎ 257 315 827; Na Bělidle 30; 🕒 11am-1am;
📞 Anděl or 🗺 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 20

The owners say this funky cellar bar is inspired by similar spaces in New York and Amsterdam (though the subterranean Gothic cellar look could really only be Prague). It offers decent Czech DJs and a relaxed vibe most nights, though it can get stuffy on a crowded weekend night. If you're hungry, there's a full menu of well-done international dishes.

DOG'S BOLLOCKS

Map p138

Bar

☎ 775 736 030; Nádražní 82; 🕒 5pm-midnight
Mon, 5pm-3am Tue-Sat; 📞 Anděl

This run-of-the-mill bar and nightspot is just down from the Staropramen brewery, and is a decent choice if you're staying in the area and don't want to go too far for your fun. In spite of the English-friendly name, it draws mostly Czech students and young professionals. Open late.

JET SET Map p138

Cocktail Bar

☎ 257 327 251; Radlická 1c; 🕒 11am-2am;
📞 Anděl

Smíchov's trendiest cocktail bar is a strictly black-and-white affair, with a big bar area and a large dance floor for later in the evenings when it morphs from workaday restaurant to an after-work drink place to a late-night hotspot. It's worth it if you happen to be catching a movie at a nearby multiplex, but don't make a special trip. The food, including fresh salads and sandwiches with a Mediterranean touch, is very good.

LOKAL BLOK Map p138

Pub

☎ 251 511 490; náměstí 14.října 10; 🕒 noon-1am
Mon-Fri, 4pm-1am Sat & Sun; 📞 Anděl

The perfect Prague combination: a raucous pub and a state-of-the-art climbing wall (though presumably you're supposed to boulder before you drink and not vice versa). Most nights there's a lively crowd, fuelled by Pilsner Urquell on tap and some good Mexican eats, such as nachos and quesadillas. Highly recommended.

NA VERANDÁCH

Map p138

Pub

☎ 257 191 200; Nádražní 84; 🕒 11am-midnight
 Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, to 11pm Sun;
 🚶 Anděl

This combination pub and restaurant, managed by the Potrefená husa local restaurant chain, is inside the Staropramen Brewery, and while lots of people come here to eat, it's perfectly fine to come in just for a super-fresh beer (there are seven varieties on tap). The menu is the same at other branches of Potrefená husa. It's essentially high-tone fast food: ribs, burgers, chicken breasts and the lot. Sit on the veranda in the back in nice weather, or up front by the bar on a chilly night.

EMPORIO Map p138

Café

☎ 257 329 240; Plzeňská 8 (inside the Nový Smíchov shopping centre); 🕒 10am-9pm; 🚶 Anděl

The best of several cafés in the Nový Smíchov shopping centre is located on the second floor towards the front of the building. It serves up good espresso drinks as well as some light bites and cakes. The modern, upmarket look draws a glamour crowd taking a break from the apparently heavy demands of shopping.

KÁVA KÁVA KÁVA Map p138

Café

☎ 257 314 277; Lidická 42; mains 70-120Kč;
 🕒 7am-10pm; 🚶 Anděl

The Smíchov branch of the popular internet café in Staré Město (p180) is bigger and brighter than the original, with Etruscan orange walls, terracotta floor tiles and modern art. There's a more extensive menu too – you can snack on salads, sandwiches, quiche or nachos, or tuck into more substantial chicken gyros, Mexican chilli or home-made soup of the day.

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