FREE GUIDE TO PRAGUE BY REAL PRAGUE GUIDES AKA 100 SPIRES CITY TOURS

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WELCOME TO PRAGUE!

You have arrived in one of the coolest cities in the world, and your Prague adventures are about to begin! Where do you start?

Historically, Prague used to be divided into 5 original towns: Old Town, New Town, Lesser Town, Jewish Quarter, and Prague Castle with the Castle District. Despite the fact that all of these districts were united into one glorious city of Prague by 1850, you will find that they have very different ambiance. That is why we will separate our Free Guide to Prague into sections named after these original towns.

This is not the most comprehensive guide to Prague, but it is for free :)

By the way, if you are hungry for more information, check out our YouTube channel, Real Prague Guides. We are nerds when it comes to Czech history, but we love to make people laugh and show you some interesting places in Prague and the Czech Republic.

Our YouTube Channel: <u>https://www.youtube.com/c/RealPragueGuides</u>

Tours We Do: <u>https://www.tours-prague.eu</u>



PRAGUE CASTLE



We have to start in a place where Czech history began...

You might have heard it already, but according to the Guinness Book of Records, **Prague Castle is the biggest ancient castle complex in the world**. It was founded in 880's, and since then it has been a seat of Czech kings, emperors, and presidents. Nowadays, Prague Castle is opened to the public, and you do not have to be Czech royalty to go inside of the St. Vitus Cathedral or the Old Royal Palace. There is just one problem with this castle...it's too damn big! How do you even start exploring its enormous 7 hectares territory? It's easy! Keep on reading and watch our video for more instructions and useful advice.

Prague Castle Guide: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPW671HIn5g

PRAGUE CASTLE FOR FREE

If you are on a budget, you can easily see the most important sights of Prague Castle without paying any admission fees because the whole Prague Castle complex is FREE TO VISIT. Yay!

What you can see for free:

- **4 courtyards** of the Prague Castle you will be surrounded with architecture: romanesque, gothic, baroque, classicist, you name it!
- **St Vitus Cathedral** you can even go inside and admire the interiors of this outstanding medieval structure.
- **Gardens** of the Prague Castle- these beautiful gardens have great view points. Be aware that they are only opened from April 1st to October 31st.
- **Golden Lane** opens for free after the exhibitions of the castle close, but you won't be able to go inside of the buildings there, just the shops!
- **Big Change of Guards** at 12:00 happens every day at the 1st courtyard of the Prague Castle, and we see it on our Free Walking Tour of the Prague Castle and Castle District.



PRAGUE CASTLE WITH A TICKET

If you are a history buff or an art lover, you can get a ticket to the Prague Castle interiors. It costs 250 crowns, and you can get it in the Prague Castle ticket office. Here is what the ticket covers:

- St Vitus Cathedral all of it! All 20+ chapels and its treasures will be open for you.
- Old Royal Palace this is where Czech Royal families used to live.
- St. George's Basilica one of the oldest churches in Prague.
- Golden Lane go inside of its tiny houses, torture rooms, and the alchemists' chamber.

Local Tip: If you do not want to be stuck for 3 hours with an audioguide in the castle interiors, you can do a tour with one of us, real Prague guides! On our Complete Prague Castle tour we explore the interiors of this complex. I promise, we are funnier than the audioguide!



ST VITUS CATHEDRAL



The Cathedral of St. Vitus, St. Wenceslas and St. Adalbert is a #1 church to visit in Prague.

St. Vitus Cathedral always catches your eye when you cross the river. Its biggest tower, almost 100 meters tall, hides the largest bell in the Czech Republic called Sigismund.

This cathedral took a VERY long time to build! **Charles IV** laid its foundation stone in **1344**, but the construction was put on pause due to the Hussite War that broke out in 1419. At first, Czechs hoped that one of the kings would finish the cathedral later, as only a half of it was complete - the main tower, the Golden Gate with the mosaic of the Last Judgement, and the east side with the ambulatory. Contrary to their expectations, the construction lingered well into the 19th century. Finally, Czechs started to collect money from donations, and managed to reconstruct and complete St. Vitus Cathedral on the millennium since the death of their main patron, St. Wenceslas, in **1929**.

Local Tip: Visit St. Vitus Cathedral after lunch when most school trips and big tourists groups are gone from the castle!

St Vitus Cathedral Explained: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjlAEkxRLVY</u>

HRADČANY



Castle district aka Hradčany was established by people who needed to live as close to the Czech king as possible. Servants, cooks, painters, aristocrats - all tried to squeeze onto the Hradčany hill and build their houses there. The rich had better chances of getting their spot under the sun, and today Hradčany boasts with baroque and renaissance palaces that are used by the Czech government nowadays. Here are the highlights of Hradčany district:

- Strahov Monastery this monastery stood independently on the very edge of Prague. Its name comes from an old Czech word "to guard" strážit. We recommend stopping for a beer at Strahov Monastery Brewery.
- Czernin Palace one of the biggest baroque palaces in Prague, currently a seat of Czech Ministry of Interior.
- Loreta this baroque pilgrimage place has one of the biggest treasuries in the Czech Republic. You can visit Loreta with a ticket, or just enjoy its famous carillon from the Loreta square.
- Hradčany Square this is one of the most famous squares in Prague. Check out its enormous Schwarzenberg palace, the statue of the first Czechoslovak president Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, and the Archbishop's Palace.

LESSER TOWN



Time to go downhill into a quaint Lesser Town, one of the most well preserved historical areas of Prague.

You might have figured it out already, but Lesser Town is called like that because it is smaller than other Prague quarters. This does not mean Lesser Town has less to offer, it is quite the opposite. In 16th century, this cozy neighbourhood had experienced a cultural rebirth when dozens of aristocratic families started to build their lavish residencies here. Lesser Town is also the greenest area in the historical centre of Prague and has a lot of bars, cafes and restaurants, which makes it perfect for a relaxed walk and a romantic dinner.

Local Tip: The best view of the picturesque Lesser Town is from the Prague Castle! Check out the view point at the Bastion of the castle or at Hradčany Square.

Hungry for some hidden gems of the Lesser Town? : <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u> <u>v=Xa9jMPDb_nM&t=511s</u>

WHAT TO SEE IN THE LESSER TOWN

- Wallenstein Gardens opened every day from April till October, this beautiful garden is hiding great views of Prague Castle, amazing architecture, beautiful statues, a grotto wall, peacocks, owls, and koi fish.
- Kampa Island a must-visit for all fans of contemporary art. Larger-than-life statues of babies, yellow penguins, and other quirky sculptures are hidden at Kampa Island as well as in the Kampa Museum.
- Petřín Hill Petřín park offers stunning views and calm atmosphere, as well as a very surprising construction a miniature Eiffel Tower of Prague. What is it doing in Prague? Well, Praguers saw the original tower in Paris, and felt like they should have their own. They could not build it so tall though, but the height of Petřín Hill kind of makes up for it!
- John Lennon Wall one of the most touching monuments to freedom of speech and human rights, this wall is never the same as it was yesterday. Millions of people who come to Prague leave their messages on it. Most of the writings are inspiring and meaningful, but you can see an odd swear word here and there.

Why you CAN'T spray paint on John Lennon Wall anymore : <u>https://</u> www.youtube.com/watch?v=roseHJ1hWKA



OLD TOWN



View from the Astronomical Clock Tower on the Old Town Square.

We made it to the heart of Prague. Old Town is what most people associate Prague with narrow streets, medieval towers, and busy market squares. Everyone who travels to the Czech capital hopes to see the **Astronomical Clock**, take photos on the **Old Town Square**, gaze at the towers of the Tyn Church, and wander through narrow alleys and passages. All of it is here, in the Old Town.

If you are tired of the touristy sights, check out our 30 Hidden Spots in Old Town video!: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aayJU4YNvss&t=33s</u>

We love Old Town, but it can be quite overwhelming first time you visit if you do not know where to go and what to look at. We will help you with this, but first we need to cross one very important bridge...

... CHARLES BRIDGE!



You thought we will not mention it, but how could we not?! **Charles Bridge** is the oldest bridge in Prague, it was founded in **1357** by the great Bohemian king and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. Charles will be the first one to greet you after you cross the Vltava river into the Old Town. His statue is standing on the side of the bridge and he has got a **perfect view** for himself there, do not miss out!

Charles Bridge has **31 statues**, which make the look of this historic sight even more iconic. Most of the statues are made of sandstone. You will notice that some of them are cleaner that the others, because some of them are copies, the originals are safely hidden in the archives of the National Museum.

Local Tip: The statue of St. John of Nepomuk, the only bronze statue on the Charles Bridge (you will recognise it because of its distinct green colour caused by oxidisation), attracts a lot of tourists who touch it and make wishes there. This has to do with a legend of this saint, and the belief that he will fulfil your wish within 1 year and 1 day. You can start thinking on what to wish there now! :)

All Statues on the Charles Bridge Explained: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u> <u>v=bw6qhhyPjCk</u>

Brief History of the Charles Bridge: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u> <u>v=zMQVPr8GLV0&t=297s</u>

OLD TOWN SQUARE

If you have not been to the Old Town Square, you have not been to Prague. Yes, it is very touristy. Yes, everyone goes there, but there is a reason for that. Old Tow Square is where Prague's history was written. Major historical events, for example the Czech National Uprising, happened on this square. Nowadays, Christmas and Easter markets take place here every year, as well as various concerts, flash mobs, and festivals.

WHAT TO SEE ON THE OLD TOWN SQUARE?

• Astronomical Clock. You have expected to find this one on the list, haven't you? Prague's Astronomical Clock is one of the oldest ones in the world. This clock was installed in 1410, and was made by a genius clockmaker Mikuláš of Kadaň. Despite its old age, the clock is still working, and you can read 4 different systems of time there, as well as the positions of celestial objects, and even horoscope!

To find out how to read this clock, join our Free Walking Tour or watch our video on Real Prague Guides YouTube channel: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u> <u>v=wpVN4mx8O0A</u>

Local Tip: Astronomical Clock has a show every hour sharp from 9 AM till 11 PM. Be there at least 10 min. before the show starts, otherwise you will have to elbow your way through the crowd to see the figurines doing their performance.



- Statue of Jan Hus. Have you heard of Martin Luther? Well, Jan Hus was one of his biggest inspirations. This Czech religious reformer has caused quite a controversy in his time. Eventually, the Catholic Church decided that he was too dangerous and burnt him at stake.
- Marian Column. It was erected to symbolise the victory in the 30 Years War, but it became to be associated with the Habsburg oppression. After almost 300 years of Imperial rule, Czechoslovakia finally was pronounced independent, and the column, as a symbol of dark past, was torn down. Nowadays, the column is back, it was erected again in 2020.



- The Church of Our Lady Before Tyn. It's impossible to overlook this church because it is the tallest building on the Old Town Square. Inside, you can find a tomb of the famous Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe.
- **St. Nicholas Church.** This impressive Baroque structure has one of the coolest crystal chandeliers I have ever seen. Do not miss out on that!

JEWISH QUARTER



Prague's Jewish Quarter has miraculously survived through persecutions, pogroms, and even the WWII. Today, all historical sights in the former ghetto are part of the Jewish Museum of Prague.

Where Vltava river curves to the north of the Old Town, you can find one of the most preserved former Jewish ghettos in Europe. Jewish people had already lived in Prague for centuries, when in 13th century all of them were relocated to a tiny neighbourhood separated by wall and gates from the rest of Prague. Jewish people were not allowed to leave the ghetto without a permission, and even if they did acquire it, they had to wear special clothes to stand out from the crowd. These are one of the examples how Jewish people were mistreated, but unfortunately the list of these injustices is much longer. Eventually, the inhabitants of the Jewish Quarter were allowed to leave and move to other parts of Prague. The former ghetto was completely reconstructed, only few historical sights were left standing. Nowadays, these synagogues, Ceremonial Hall, and the Old Jewish Cemetery are part of the Prague Jewish Museum, and you need a ticket if you wish to visit the interiors.

Local Tip: Bear in mind that all exhibitions of the Jewish Museum are closed on Saturdays due to Shabbat.

WHAT TO SEE IN PRAGUE JEWISH QUARTER



- Old-New Synagogue. This is the oldest still functioning synagogue in Europe, which makes it a must-see on your trip to Prague. The Old-New Synagogue is also a place where a legendary Golem, who was created by a Prague Rabbi Loew, is sleeping. It is, of course, a legend, yet no-one is allowed to visit the attic of the synagogue...Sounds like something is still hidden there!
- Old Jewish Cemetery. This cemetery has got to be one of the most unique burial grounds that you will ever see in your life. Due to lack of space in the ghetto and Jewish traditions that do not permit reburials, the cemetery had only one way to acquire more space for the graves to go up! The bodies had to be piled up in several layers with the tombstones put on the top. Where else in the world could you visit a place like that?

Local Tip: Walk past the north cemetery wall to have a sneak-peak through a small window.

• Statue of Franz Kafka. This mysterious gentleman is the most famous writer that was born in Prague. Franz Kafka's books, such as Metamorphosis (rather depressing), the Trial (extremely depressing), and the Castle (you've guessed it, depressing) are known worldwide. You can find him sitting on the shoulders of an empty suit at the statue erected next to the Spanish Synagogue. Come by to say "hi" to this Prague celebrity.

NEW TOWN



The largest of Prague's historical districts, New Town is a place to go if you are into modern architecture, shopping, and partying. All of that can be found at the Wenceslas Square.

Do not be fooled by its name, New Town is not actually new. It was founded in the 14th century, when Charles IV (you've heard about him before, haven't you?) decided that Prague, as a seat of the Holy Roman Emperor, should match in size to its importance. Very soon people from nearby villages were invited into this brand new New Town (sounds strange, but what can I do), and the king even gave out loans so they could build stone houses there. Since Charles IV meant business, he also established the Horse Market (now Wenceslas Square) and the Cattle Market (now Charles Square). The entrepreneurial spirit is the driving force of this neighbourhood till today.

30 Sights in New Town: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDNOA8zgBFk&t=480s</u>

WHAT TO SEE IN THE NEW TOWN

- Wenceslas Square. Despite the fact that this square used to have the Horse Market, you can find only one horse here today, and it is already taken by the St. Wenceslas. The equestrian statue of this Czech patron saint is standing in front of the National Museum, a Neo-Renaissance masterpiece that celebrates Czech nation. We have visited the National Museum in our video, and we highly recommend it for everyone who is interested in natural history.
- National Avenue. This street might be the most Czech place in Prague. Firstly, it has the National Theatre, which was built entirely on people's donations...twice! The first building burned down and they had to collect money again. Secondly, National Avenue is where protests during the Velvet Revolution were taking place an event from the recent history that Czechs are most proud of...besides that golden medal for hockey in 1998's Olympics.
- Dancing House. I had to include this strange building in the list, because it is the most famous modern building in Prague. Designed by Frank O'Gehry and Vlado Milunic, this house was inspired by a photograph of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. Do not miss out on its rooftop bar!
- Rotating Head of Franz Kafka. Just when you though we're done with statues dedicated to the author of Metamorphosis! Franz Kafka's head would spin if he saw this kinetic sculpture...



SCAMS, SCAMS, AND MORE SCAMS

- **Street food.** There are a few stalls that sell expensive meat and traditional food at big market squares. For the price of one Prague Ham you might as well visit a fine-dining restaurant.
- **Restaurants with seats outside** on the Old Town and Wenceslas squares. Not all of them are bad, but beware of those that bring you "complimentary" snacks, because those will cost you a fortune. Also, if a lager beer is more than 60 CZK...leave!
- Things that are not Czech. We talked about it in our Prague Royal Way video, but the area around the Old Town Square is a hot spot for bizarre shops and exhibitions. I am still wondering how are Chocolate Museum and Thai Massage relevant to Prague.
- Overpriced souvenirs. Most of them are not made in the Czech Republic, but somewhere really far away. Maybe, hight prices reflect the transportation costs? Anyway, here is a video about some authentic Czech souvenirs: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u>
 <u>v=bw2UO_s6818</u>
- **Taxis** from the street. If you are in the mood to argue with someone after they try to rip you off, get a cab from the street. If not, better get an Uber or Bolt!
- Generic looking ATMs. If an ATM has no name of a bank that you recognise (these are some legit Czech ones: KB, CSOB, UniCredit, Moneta, etc.), you will be charged an obnoxiously large commission + conversion rate. How? First, they will try to convince you to take out a lot of money by putting a ridiculously high amount as the first suggested option, and then the ATM will aggressively persuade you that you need to accept their conversion rate. So be a good boy or a girl, always choose your own amount of money to withdraw, and click "no conversion". Easy-peasy!
- Exchanging money with strangers. I cannot believe that I have to write this, but if a suspicious-looking person approaches you on the street and offers to change your euros into some weird looking "Czech money", you have to say no. I know...it is very tempting, but sometimes you have to lead a less adventurous life.
- Signing anything or taking anything from strangers. Another stranger-danger moment. There are people in Prague that will ask you to hold their selfie-sticks, balloons, owls (whoo?), and even children (happens rarely, but it does). Do NOT! I repeat, DO NOT take anything from strangers. Same goes for signing any papers. They might make it look like it's a petition, or a charity, but most likely they will just try to extort you.

WHERE TO EXCHANGE MONEY?

- EXCHANGE s.r.o. on Karpova 13 <u>https://g.page/exchange-praha?share</u>
- Exchange Směnárna on Panská 894 <u>https://goo.gl/maps/zYyQ6drpMpnxfd4M6</u>
- Praha Exchange on Jindřišská 12 <u>https://goo.gl/maps/uk9GPWXLvf7jDK9B8</u>
- Any reputable bank: Raiffeisenbank, CSOB, KB, UniCredit, Moneta, Česká spořitelna.

Local Tip: If you got a bad rate at the exchange place, you have a right to ask for your money back if you did not sign a receipt they gave you yet.

TRADITIONAL CZECH FOOD

You need to forget about your diet when you are traveling to the Czech Republic. Czech traditional food is everything our health-oriented world is trying to cut on: bread, meat, cheese, mayo, and beer. Take gulas, a beef stew served with bread dumplings, or fried cheese - pretty self-explanatory.

Let me point you to a certain video, filming which left me in a food coma...

6 Must-Try Traditional Czech Dishes: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?</u> <u>v=aVidArARqHY</u>

...we do give you a lot of **RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS** in the description of this video!

TRADITIONAL CZECH PASTRIES

Spoiler: it is not trdelnik...I know, shocking!

I have taken it upon myself to eat all Czech traditional pastries I could think of. Okay, maybe I did not need much convincing.

5 Best Czech Pastries: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoYgtCN8tko</u>

HOW TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT



Prague has a unified ticket system for all types of public transport: trams, metro, busses. The tickets differ based on the time they are valid for - 30 min., 90 min., 24 hours, 72 hours, etc. The cheapest ticket costs 30 crowns and it gives you 30 min. of using any type of public transport as long as your journey fits into a 30 min. time interval.

IMPORTANT: You have to validate your ticket before using metro or as soon as you get into a tram or bus by stamping it in the yellow machine. You only punch your ticket ONCE! The ticket control will be checking the time and date that was stamped on your ticket, and if you validated it multiple times they will give you a fine.

WHERE TO GET A PUBLIC TRANSPORT TICKET?

- Metro station. The machines there only accept coins or card, not bills!
- **On a tram.** Orange machines inside of trams only accept cards, and you DO NOT need to validate a ticket you got there.
- SMS. You can send an sms to 902 06 with text DPT+31(for 30 min), 42(for 90 min), 120 (for 24h), and 330 (for 72h).

For more information about public transport, check out our video! : <u>https://</u> www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLUkT5cKU3E

THINGS TO DO OUTSIDE OF PRAGUE



• Kutná Hora. This small town with the famous Bone Chapel is located 1 hour away by a direct train from Prague's Main Trains station. You will need at east 4 hours for your visit, but you could definitely stay for the whole day!

Kutná Hora Video: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJqtjM2aXnw</u>

• **Křivoklát Castle.** This castle is a little further away from Prague, and you might have to hop from one train to another, but it is worth the visit. Křivoklát still has the Medieval atmosphere, and it will be an enjoyable trip for kids and adults. Also, it is opened even in winter!

Křivoklát Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksoP0krkXTg

• Tábor. If I had to pick one small town to travel to, I would not hesitate and get my ticket to Tabor. We had so much fun visiting, it seemed that a day and a half was not enough. Tabor is a bit further away from Prague, so stay overnight if you can.

Tábor Adventure: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rgg9aAghEw</u>

• Č**eský Krumlov.** This town is simply out of a fairy tale! If you have researched where to go in the Czech Republic, Český Krumlov must have come out as #1 place, justifiably so! We needed 3 days to explore most of it, but you can stay there for a bit shorter. You could

also visit just for one day, but I have to warn you that you will spend 6 hours on the road to get there and back.

Český Krumlov Part 1: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlnzz796x4E</u>

Český Krumlov Part 2 : <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG2WFDcGZ_0</u>

• **Terezín.** This former concentration camp has an important story to tell. Unlike other concentration camps that were destroyed, Terezín was preserved because of its special purpose. Learn more about it in our video.

Terezín Video: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcvCzqAzZhE</u>

• Karlštejn Castle. This might be the best day-trip from Prague idea for you! Karlštejn will bring you straight to the Middle ages with better hygiene, lots of restaurants, and fun activities around the castle. It is under an hour away from Prague by train, and you will need a total of 3 hours to spend there, if you just want to see the castle. If you take a hike around Karlštejn, you can make it a whole day trip as well.

Karlštejn Video: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6LtW2Z9ozI</u>



A F T E R W O R D

Thank you for taking your time to read this Free Guide to Prague! I hope you found it useful, and now you know when to visit Prague Castle, what to look for on the Old Town Square, where to go in the Lesser Town and in the New Town. I pray to all Slavic gods that you will not be scammed, that you will eat only delicious Czech food and pastries, and you won't have any problem figuring out how to get a ticket for public transport.

See you guys on our Real Prague Guides channel or on our 100 Spires City Tours!

Yours,

Valery



...and shout out to Václav and Nico for helping me out!