

Destinations: Prague

Prague is known as “the city of 100 spires.”

[1] Here you can see a photo showing the cityscape of Prague. Prague is the capital and largest city in the Czech Republic. The city is one of the major economic and cultural hubs of Central Europe.

[2] **What are some of the countries that border the Czech Republic?** (*Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Poland.*) More than 1.3 million people live in the city of Prague.

[3] The city is known for its beautiful architecture and cultural sites. Many historic locations in Prague were untouched by the violence that spread across Europe in the 30s and 40s. Because of this, some sections of the city allow visitors to look into the past. On the screen, you can see the St. Vitus Cathedral, which was built around 1344. Prague is sometimes referred to as “the city of 100 spires” due to how common this feature is on many of the city’s buildings. **What is a spire?** (A tall, skinny, pointed structure on the top of a building.)

[4] Prague’s many historical sites make it a perfect spot for tourists. Each year, more than 8.5 million travelers visit the city to see beautiful buildings like the National Theatre, shown here.

[5] The city is also home to world-renowned museums and must-see modern architecture, such as The Dancing House, which was co-designed by American architect Frank Gehry. **Have you heard of Gehry? What do you know about him? What do you think of this building?**

[6] As the capital city of the Czech Republic, Prague is home to the country’s government. The President of the Czech Republic, Petr Pavel, lives in Prague Castle, shown here. Both houses of the Czech Parliament are also located in the city. **Do you know anything else about Prague? Why do you think it doesn’t receive the same attention as some other European cities?**

Prague served as the home to several Holy Roman Emperors

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[7] Historians say the first permanent settlements in the area that is now Prague were formed around 4,500 BCE. During Europe’s medieval period, Prague grew in both size and importance, becoming a major trading and cultural hub.

[8] In the 1300s, Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, established Prague as his capital. He

rebuilt much of the city, creating what is today called the New Town region.

[9] During the 20th century, Prague faced many political and social challenges. In 1919, Czechoslovakia was formed after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with Prague named the capital of this new country. The city was occupied by the Nazis during World War II and after the war, became part of the communist bloc. **What country controlled the communist bloc?** (*The Soviet Union.*)

[10] After the fall of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia became a democratic country, electing this man, writer, poet, and playwright Václav Havel. Havel was president in 1993 when Czechoslovakia was split into two countries: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

[11] One of Prague's most famous residents was the man shown here. **Does anyone recognize him?** (*Franz Kafka.*) Kafka was a novelist and short story writer known for his strange stories about alienation and anxiety. His most famous story "The Metamorphosis" tells the story of a man named Gregor who awakens one day to find himself transformed into a large bug.

[12] Today, Prague is home to a museum dedicated to Kafka's life and works. **Would you like to visit Prague? What would you want to see there?** END