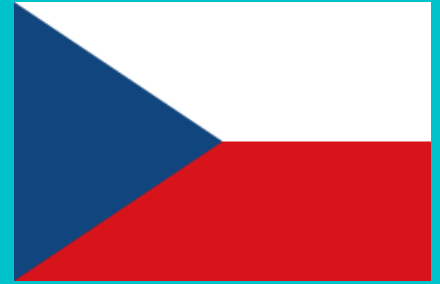




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TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

December 2022
Prague, Czechia



Christmas Markets and Castles

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Czechia used to be called the Czech Republic but in 2016 was changed to this official short name. The country used to be Czechoslovakia having declared its independence from Austria Hungary in 1918. In 1992 Czechia and Slovakia split into two countries. Vaclav Havel was first president of Czechoslovakia after the Communists were overthrown, and then became the first president of the Czech Republic. In the "Velvet Divorce" between them and Slovakia (due to the customs ports built on the borders) the separation between the countries was relatively peaceful. The 1990s was pretty tumultuous politically in the country hidden by its entrance into the EU and NATO. It has a score of 91/100 by Freedom House meaning free, but has issues with corruption and influence of business in politics. The EIU ranks it as a flawed democracy with poor scoring in functioning of government.

Prague, Czechia



Some quick tips for Prague :

- It gets cold in November/December so make sure to pack appropriately
- You can generally walk everywhere in the city, and it is great way to see more places
- The castle is on a big hill so be prepared for a hike

FOOD

POTATO PANCAKE



I was in Prague during Christmas time (when I recommend to go it was magical), and they have a giant market in the main square with lots of street food. We tried the potato pancake and hot wine which was so so good. The hot wine really warms you up, and the potato pancake is warm and season perfectly. They also put either apple sauce or cabbage on top as well if that is up to your speed.

CHIMNEY CAKE



Prague is famous for its chimney cakes, and you can find them all over the city in different varieties. They normally eat just the bread part with powdered sugar on the side, but I needed to have ice cream inside and chocolate sauce. I probably had three of these in Prague and they were all so so good. Once the ice cream melts into the cake it is so delicious and a must try if you are in Prague.

LANGOS



A traditional dish in Prague as well as in surrounding countries in Europe is Langos. Each country does it a little differently, and in Prague they put cheese and ketchup on their Langos. I love this because I love ketchup, but basically it is like a warm break with garlic oil and then cheese on top. It is kinda like a pizza, but more like a flatbread. Either way it is absolutely delicious and super filling, highly recommend trying it!

Prague, Czechia

EXPERIENCES

Most of the attractions to see in Prague are easy to get to and relatively cheap to visit indie locations. In the Prague Castle and the Jewish Quarter they offer multi entrance tickets where you can book entrances into multiple sights rather than individually saving a lot of money. Walking through the city with the snow falling truly was super magical.

JEWISH QUARTER

We bought a ticket to visit multiple synagogues in the Jewish quarter, here expect to see many kosher restaurants and Jewish artifacts everywhere. The following locations are all within the Jewish Quarter:

The Pinkas was established in 1479, and is the second oldest synagogue in all of Prague. After the holocaust, it was turned into a memorial, and in here are the names of over 80,000 citizens of Czechia whom were murdered during the holocaust. Seeing the names on the wall is really moving, and sheds light to the massive number of Jewish Europeans who were murdered during this time. The synagogue is located at the entrance to the Jewish cemetery in Prague as well.

PINKAS SYNAGOGUE



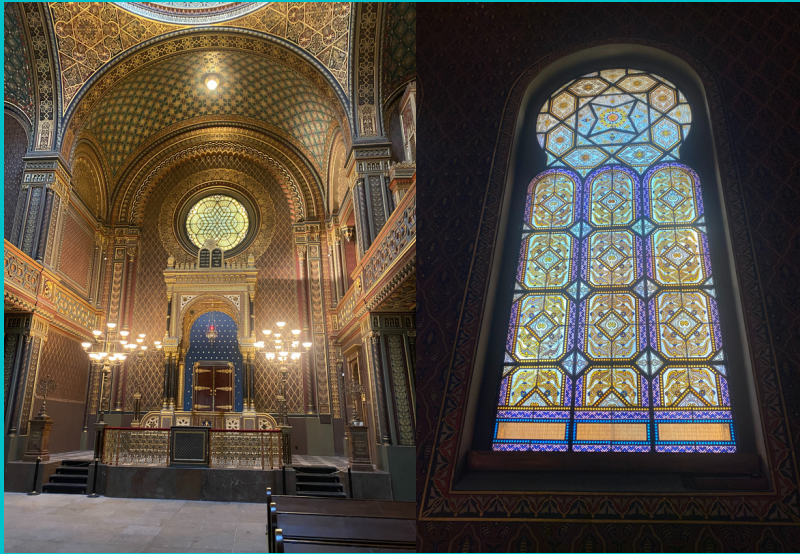
OLD JEWISH CEMETERY



Located right next to the Pinkas Synagogue is the old Jewish Cemetery where over 100,000 people are expected to be buried within here. There are over 12,000 tombstones here, but there was not enough space to fit a growing Jewish population in the city. They sometimes would pile up to 10 bodies in one space in order to fit people into the cemetery. Jewish cemeteries are an important part of Judaism leading many Jews in Prague wanting to be buried here. The oldest tombstone of Avidgor Karo is estimated to be buried here in 1439.

Prague, Czechia

SPANISH SYNAGOGUE



The Spanish Synagogue was built in 1868, and gets its name from the Moorish design which is very similar to the Alhambra in Granada (checkout volume 12!). It is absolutely beautiful inside with intricate patterns on the wall, and a remarkable stain glass window. It is the newest of the synagogues within Prague's Jewish Quarter, and inside you can find more information on the Jewish museum of Prague as well as assimilation of various Jewish ethics groups within the city. It also has details about the Terezin ghetto during the holocaust. It also has information on Jews in Prague after 1945. Here you can learn that initially the Soviet Union (which Czechia was a satellite state) supported Israel in an attempt to bring Communism there.

Following the assassination of John Lennon in 1980, the Lennon wall has been a symbol of political freedom, western culture, and democracy within Prague. The wall has various quotes from poems and songs representing freedom. The wall was a source of conflict for Gustav Husak's Communist regime in the country in 1988 when young people in the city were in struggle against the government for increased freedom. These young people called themselves Lennonists and supported the freedom for the people of Czechia at the time from the controlling regime. Today the wall continues to change, and you can buy spray paint to contribute to the wall.

LENNON WALL



ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK



This medieval style clock is the oldest clock in the world that is still in operation. It was installed in 1410 which makes it the third old clock in the entire world. The clock was created by Mikulas of Kadan and Jan Sindal. It has multiple components including showing the positioning of the sun and the moon. The clock has been altered throughout history, and was partially damaged during a Nazi uprising in 1945. It was repaired and started working again in 1948. The clock has its 600 year anniversary in 2010 which including a light show for tourists on the clock. It had its last renovation done in 2018 where the electronic mechanism was replaced with the original mechanism that was taken out during the 20th century,

Prague, Czechia

CHURCH OF OUR LADY BEFORE TYN



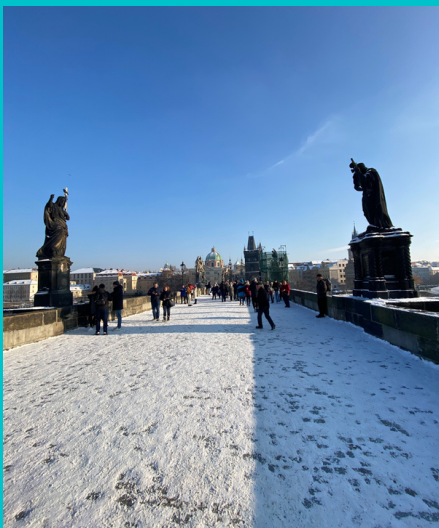
This gothic style church was constructed in the 14th century under the influence of Matthias of Arras and Peter Parler. The church has two giant spires on each side. The church was controlled by the Hussites for two centuries, and in the era of bringing back Catholicism within Czechia replaced many structures inside with structures of the Virgin Mary. The church is still being renovated within the interior with a focus and bringing back its historical structures and designs inside.

The tower/gate was constructed in 1475 and is one of the original 13 gates in Prague. Here separated the new city from the old city, and today the old city is one of the most famous historical landmarks within Prague. Rather than for defensive purposes, the main point of the tower is a beautiful welcoming point into the city. The foundation was placed by Vladislav II, and was given to him by the city council as a coronation gift. It is in gothic style, and was used in the 17th century to store gun powder which is where the name comes from. It was damaged in the battle of Prague but was fixed in 1876.

POWDER TOWER



CHARLES BRIDGE



Beginning construction in 1357 under King Charles IV, the bridge was finished in the early 15th century. It was originally called the stone bridge, but has been called the Charles Bridge since 1870. Until 1841 this was the only way to cross the Vltava river in Prague which was extremely important in connecting the Prague Castle with the Old Town. There are over 30 statues of Baroque style that go across the bridge as you walk. All of the current statues on the bridge are replicas for protective sake. This is one of the major tourists destinations in the city, so you can always expect to see the bridge crowded with tourists. Currently the bridge is undergoing a 20 year process of structural renovations which began in 2019.

Prague, Czechia

GOLDEN LANE



The street within the Prague Castle gets its name from the goldsmiths that lived on this street in the 17th century. In the 1950s the houses were all painted different colors adding a new vibe onto the street. Franz Kafka's sister had rented one of these houses in the 1900s and he lived there for a year while he wrote. There is a museum of medieval armory within the houses on this street where the fortification within the street is. Golden lane is connected to Dalilbor Tower which has a dungeon inside. There was a lot of torture items in the museums here which got a little graphic (just be prepared lol).

ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL

The most important church in all of Czechia is made in the gothic style and is home to the tombs of all of the Bohemian Kings and Holy Roman Emperors. Construction of the church began in November of 1344, and King John of Bohemia laid the foundation for the construction of the church. Frenchman Matthias of Arras was first tasked with designing the church. He died in 1352, and Peter Parler took over the design and construction phase of the church. After many years of construction, the church was finally finished in 1929 (geez that took a while) and is still active in its functions today.



DANCING HOUSE BUILDING



Designed in 1992 and completed in 1996 by Vlado Milunic and Frank Gehry the building was originally named Fred and Ginger after dancers Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers. The building is supposed to resemble two dancers together and the site of the house is where a house was destroyed in the US bombing of Prague in 1945. Milunic discussed the idea of building the house with his neighbor who eventually became the President after the Velvet revolution and commissioned him to build it. Today is an interesting building on the river of the city providing great views for tourists.

See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!