

# Czech Republic

For a country that's only been around since 1993, the Czech Republic does a fine job of showcasing a thrilling history. Castles and chateaux abound, illuminating the stories of powerful families and individuals whose influence was felt well beyond the nation's current borders. Unravel the history of Bohemia and Moravia and you're delving into the legacy of Europe itself.

Experience beautifully preserved Renaissance towns, but include a 21st-century spin by sharing a chilled Pilsner lager in street-side cafés with a forthright population confidently taking its place in a united Europe. And if the architectural splendour overwhelms, explore some of Europe's most idiosyncratic landscapes and spectacular forests, which are making a comeback after the industrial sabotage and neglect of the communist era.

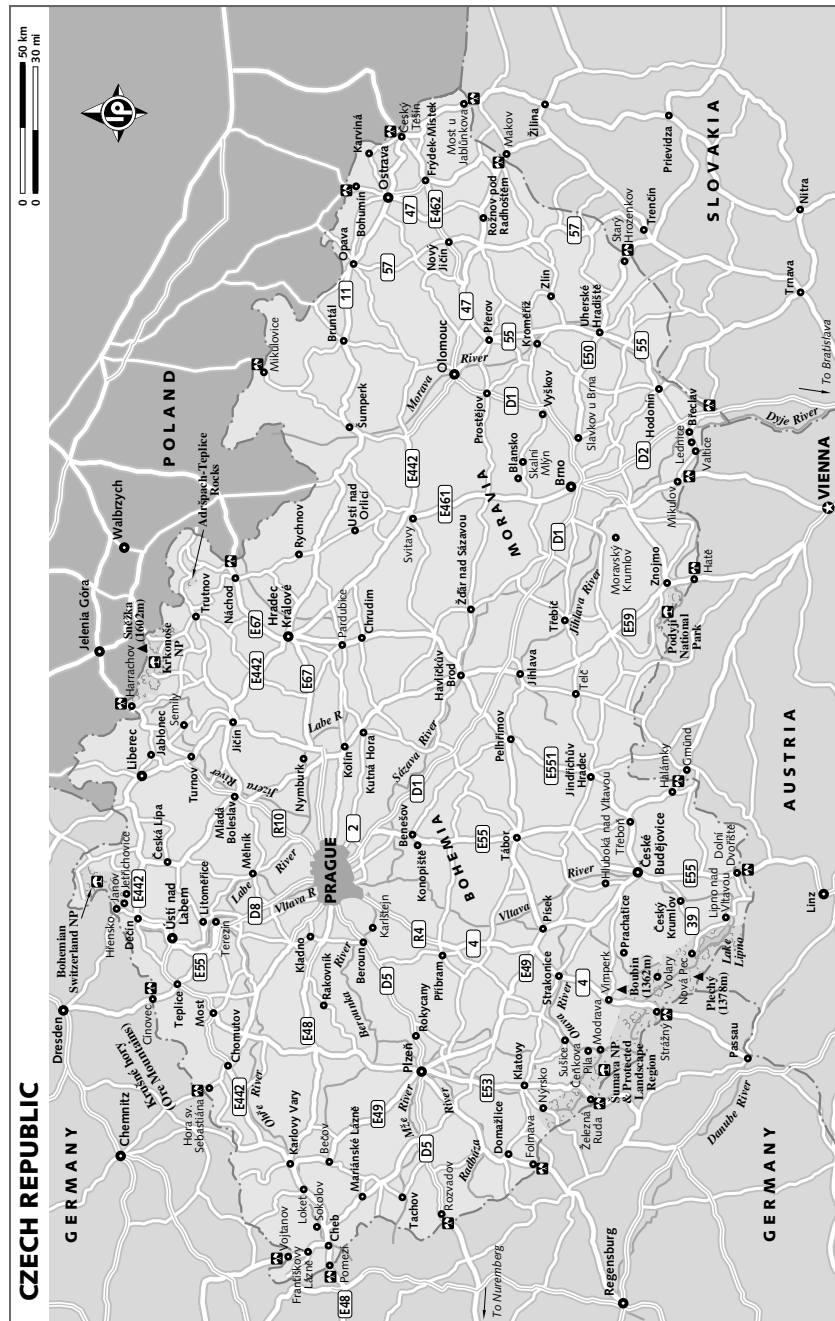
The impact of 1989's Velvet Revolution is most obvious in Prague, a stunning melange of high culture, architectural achievement and modern Europe, but spend time in the rest of the country as well. Take in the audacious cliff-top chateau and improbably arcing river at Český Krumlov, the discreetly confident Moravian university town of Olomouc, and the energetic blue-collar Bohemian beer towns of Plzeň and České Budějovice.

You'll soon discover that the Czech Republic is as much about the future as the past.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 78,864 sq km
- **Capital** Prague
- **Currency** Czech crown (Kč); A\$1 = 16.55Kč; €1 = 28.45Kč; A100 = 19.47Kč; NZ\$1 = 13.56Kč; UK£1 = 41.48Kč; US\$1 = 22.29Kč
- **Famous for** beer, ice hockey, Kafka, Dvořák
- **Official Language** Czech
- **Phrases** *Dobrý den/ahoj* (hello/informal), *na shledanou* (goodbye), *děkuji* (thank you), *promiňte* (excuse me)
- **Population** 10.2 million
- **Telephone codes** country code ☎ 420; international access code ☎ 00; there are no telephone codes in the Czech Republic
- **Visas** Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the USA can stay for up to 90 days without a visa (see p309)





## HIGHLIGHTS

- Tune out the tourist crowds in **Prague** (p256) and immerse yourself in the city's legacy of art, architecture and existential angst.
- Conduct your own taste test of two of the world's finest beers at **Plzeň** (p286) and **České Budějovice** (p289).
- Navigate through the spectacular rock formations and hidden river valleys of the **Bohemian Switzerland National Park** (p282).
- Keep the gorgeous old town square of **Olomouc** (p300) and its relaxed student ambience as your own special secret.

## ITINERARIES

- **One week** Give Prague its best chance to grab your heart – it's worth at least three days. Mix it up with day trips to Kutná Hora and Terezín, and then head south to Český Krumlov for a couple of days riverside R&R.
- **Two weeks** Begin by sampling the spa waters at Karlovy Vary, and then balance the ledger with beer tasting at Plzeň. Continue to Prague and discover it's actually worth at least five days. If you're not all walked out, divert northeast to hike through the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks. More relaxed souls should head south to Český Krumlov for riverside cafés and lazy meandering down the Vltava. Continue east to Telč's Renaissance grandeur and Brno's cosmopolitan galleries and museums. Squeeze in a day trip to the nearby Moravian Karst caves, and continue to underrated Olomouc to admire the Holy Trinity Column.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The Czech climate is temperate, with cool, humid winters, warm summers and distinct spring and autumn seasons. While summer has the best weather, July and August are very busy so it's better to visit in May, June or September. Winter has its charms, but Easter, Christmas and New Year are also busy. During the Prague Spring festival (in May), accommodation in Prague can be scarce.

Also see Climate Charts (p911).

## HISTORY

Czech history is the story of a people doing whatever they can to survive occupation, and

Czechs are more interested in the stories of their rebels and heretics than they are of the kings, emperors and dictators who oppressed them.

Sited in the middle of Europe, the Czechs have been invaded by the Habsburgs, the Nazis, the Soviets, and now by tour groups. Many see EU membership as just another occupation. The Czechs' location has meant none of their local upheavals has stayed local for long. Their rejection of Catholicism in 1418 resulted in the Hussite Wars. The 1618 revolt against Habsburg rule ignited the Thirty Years' War, and the German annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938 helped fuel WWII. The liberal reforms of 1968's Prague Spring led to tanks rolling in from across the Eastern Bloc, and the peaceful ousting of the government during 1989's Velvet Revolution is a model for freedom-seekers everywhere.

## Bohemian Beginnings

Ringed by hills, the ancient Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia have formed natural territories since earliest times. A Celtic tribe called the Boii gave Bohemia its name, while Moravia comes from the Morava River, a Germanic name meaning 'marsh water'.

Slavic tribes from the east settled these territories, and they united from 830 to 907 in the Great Moravian Empire. Christianity was adopted after the arrival in 863 of the Thessalonian missionaries Cyril and Methodius, who created the first Slavic (Cyrillic) alphabet.

### HOW MUCH?

- **Night in hostel** 400Kč
- **Double room in pension** 1000Kč
- **Spa Wafer** 5Kč
- **Shot of Becherovka** 45Kč
- **Postcard home** 11Kč

### LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol** 30Kč
- **Litre of bottled water** 35Kč
- **Half-litre of beer** 35Kč
- **Souvenir T-shirt** 300Kč
- **Street snack (sausage & mustard)** 15Kč

In the 9th century the first home-grown dynasty, the Přemysls, erected some huts on a hill in what was to become Prague. This dysfunctional clan gave the Czechs their first martyred saints – Ludmila, killed by her daughter-in-law in 874, and her grandson, the pious Prince Václav (or Good ‘King’ Wenceslas; r 921–29), murdered by his brother Boleslav the Cruel.

The rule of the Přemysls ended in 1306, and in 1310 John of Luxembourg came to the Bohemian throne through marriage, and annexed the kingdom to the German Empire. The reign of his son, Charles IV (1346–78), who became Holy Roman Emperor, saw the first of Bohemia’s two ‘Golden Ages’ – Charles founded Prague’s St Vitus Cathedral, built Charles Bridge, and established Charles University. The second was the reign of Rudolf II (1576–1612), who made Prague the capital of the Habsburg Empire and attracted artists, scholars and scientists to his court. Bohemia and Moravia remained under Habsburg dominion for almost four centuries.

### Under the Habsburg Thumb

In 1415 the Protestant religious reformer Jan Hus, rector of Charles University, was burnt at the stake for heresy. Hus led a movement that espoused letting the congregation taste the sacramental wine as well as the host (the Hussites’ symbol was the communion chalice). The religious and nationalist Hussite movement, which plunged Bohemia into civil war between 1419 and 1434 was inspired by his ideas.

When the Austrian – and Catholic – Habsburg dynasty ascended the Bohemian throne in 1526, the fury of the Counter-Reformation was unleashed on 23 May 1618 when a group of Protestants threw two Habsburg councillors from a Prague Castle window. The squabble escalated into the Catholic–Protestant Thirty Years’ War (1618–48), which devastated much of central Europe and shattered Bohemia’s economy.

The defeat of the Protestant uprising at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 marked the start of a long period of forced re-Catholicisation, Germanisation and oppression of Czech language and culture. The baroque architectural style, which flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries, was the outward symbol of Catholic victory over the Protestant heretics.

### National Reawakening

The Czechs began to rediscover their linguistic and cultural roots at the start of the 19th century, during the so-called *Národní obrození* (National Revival). Overt political activity was banned, so the revival was culturally based. Important figures of the time included historian Josef Palacký and composer Bedřich Smetana. A distinctive neo-Renaissance architecture emerged, exemplified by Prague’s National Theatre and National Museum.

The drive towards an independent Czech and Slovak state was realised after WWI, when the Habsburg Empire’s demise saw the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. The first president was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Three-quarters of the Austro–Hungarian empire’s industrial power was inherited by Czechoslovakia, as were three million Germans, mostly in the border areas of Bohemia (the *pohraničí*, known in German as the Sudetenland).

The Czechs’ elation was to be short-lived. Under the Munich Pact of September 1938, Britain and France accepted the annexation of the Sudetenland by Nazi Germany, and in March 1939 the Germans occupied the rest of the country (calling it the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia).

The rapid occupation ensured the country’s historic buildings suffered minimal damage, but most of the Czech intelligentsia and 80,000 Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. When Czech paratroopers assassinated the Nazi governor Reinhardt Heydrich in 1942, the entire town of Lidice was wiped out in revenge.

### Communist Coup

After the war, the Czechoslovak government expelled 2.5 million Sudeten Germans – including antifascists who had fought the Nazis – from the Czech borderlands and confiscated their property. During the forced marches from Czechoslovakia many were interned in concentration camps, and it is estimated that tens of thousands died. In 1997 Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus and German chancellor Helmut Kohl signed a declaration of mutual apology, but many Sudeten Germans are still campaigning for the restitution of lost land and houses.

In 1947 a power struggle began between the communist and democratic forces, and in early 1948 the Social Democrats withdrew

from the postwar coalition. The result was the Soviet-backed coup d’état of 25 February 1948, known as *Vítězný únor* (Victorious February). The new communist-led government established the dictatorship of the proletariat, and communist leader Klement Gottwald became the country’s president.

The industrial sector was nationalised and the government’s economic policies nearly bankrupted the country. The 1950s were repressive years and thousands of noncommunists fled the country. Many were imprisoned and hundreds were executed or died in labour camps for no more than believing in democracy or religion. A series of Stalinist purges were organised, and many, including top party members, were executed.

### Prague Spring & Velvet Revolution

In April 1968 the new first secretary of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubček, introduced liberalising reforms to create ‘socialism with a human face’ – known as the ‘Prague Spring’. Censorship ended, political prisoners were released and economic decentralisation began. Moscow was not happy, but Dubček refused to buckle. Soviet tanks entered Prague on 20 August 1968, and Czechoslovakia was subsequently occupied by 200,000 Soviet and Warsaw Pact soldiers.

Around 14,000 Communist Party functionaries were expelled, and 500,000 party members lost their jobs after the dictatorship was re-established. Dissidents were summarily imprisoned and educated professionals were made manual labourers.

The 1977 trial of the rock group The Plastic People of the Universe inspired the formation of the human-rights group Charter 77. (The communists saw the musicians as threatening the status quo, but others viewed the trial as an assault on human rights.) Charter 77’s group of Prague intellectuals, including the playwright/philosopher Václav Havel, continued their underground opposition throughout the 1980s.

By 1989 Gorbachev’s perestroika was sending shock waves through the region and the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November raised expectations of change in Czechoslovakia. On 17 November an official student march in Prague was smashed by police. Daily demonstrations followed, and the protests grew to a general strike on 27 November. Dissidents led by Havel formed the anti-Communist

Civic Forum and negotiated the resignation of the Communist government on 3 December.

A ‘Government of National Understanding’ was formed, with Havel elected president on 29 December. With no casualties, the days after 17 November became known as *Sameťová revoluce* (the ‘Velvet Revolution’).

### Velvet Divorce

Following the dissolution of the communists’ central authority, antagonisms between Slovakia and Prague re-emerged. The federal parliament tried to stabilise the situation by granting both the Czech and Slovak Republics full federal status within a Czech and Slovak Federated Republic (ČSFR), but failed to satisfy Slovak nationalists. The Civic Forum split into two factions: the centrist Civic Movement and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS).

Elections in June 1992 sealed Czechoslovakia’s fate. Václav Klaus’ ODS took 48 seats in the 150-seat federal parliament; while 24 went to the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), a left-leaning Slovak nationalist party led by Vladimír Mečiar.

In July, goaded by Mečiar’s rhetoric, the Slovak parliament declared sovereignty. The two leaders could not reach a compromise and splitting the country was seen as the best solution. On 1 January 1993 Czechoslovakia ceased to exist for the second time. Prague became capital of the new Czech Republic, and Havel was elected its first president.

Thanks to booming tourism and a solid industrial base, the Czech Republic started strongly. Unemployment was negligible, shops were full and, by 2003, Prague enjoyed Eastern Europe’s highest living standards. Capitalism also meant a lack of affordable housing, rising crime and a deteriorating health system.

In 2003, Václav Havel was replaced by former prime minister Klaus – it took three elections for Czechs to settle on a new president, and the uncharismatic and conservative Klaus is far from the popular leader Havel was. Further government instability followed inconclusive elections in June 2006 that left the Czech Republic’s lower house equally divided between the left and the right.

Left-leaning Social Democrat leader Jiri Paroubek finally resigned as Prime Minister in August 2006, and was replaced by right-leaning Civic Democrats leader Mirek

**MIND YOUR MANNERS**

It is customary to say *dobry den* (good day) when entering a shop, café or quiet bar, and *na shledanou* (goodbye) when leaving. If you are invited to a Czech home, bring fresh flowers and remember to remove your shoes when you enter the house.

Topolánek in an attempt to form a minority government. The country's next general election is planned for 2009, but at the time of writing an early election was looking far more likely due to the impasse in the Czech Republic's lower house.

The Czech Republic became a member of NATO in 1999, and joined the EU on 1 May 2004. With EU membership, greater numbers of younger Czechs are working and studying abroad, seizing opportunities their parents didn't have. The Czech Republic is scheduled to adopt the euro in 2010.

**PEOPLE**

The population of the Czech Republic is 10.2 million, and fairly homogeneous: 95% of the population are Czech and 3% are Slovak. Only 150,000 of the three million Sudeten Germans evicted after WWII remain, comprising about 1.5% of the current population. A significant Roma population (0.3%) is subject to hostility and racism, and suffers from poverty and unemployment.

**RELIGION**

Most Czechs are either atheist (39.8%) or nominally Roman Catholic (39.2%), but church attendance is low. There are small Protestant (4.6%) and Orthodox (3%) congregations, while the Jewish community (1% of the population in 1918) today numbers only a few thousand. Religious tolerance is accepted and the Catholic Church does not involve itself in politics.

**ARTS****Literature**

Franz Kafka was one of Bohemia's greatest writers, and his circle of German-speaking Jewish writers strongly influenced Prague's literary scene in the early 20th century.

After WWI Jaroslav Hašek devoted himself to lampooning the Habsburg empire and its minions; his folk masterpiece *The Good Sol-*

*dier Švejk* is a riotous story of a Czech soldier during WWI.

Bohumil Hrabal (1914–97), one of the finest Czech novelists of the 20th century, wrote *The Little Town Where Time Stood Still*, a gentle portrayal of the machinations of small-town life.

Milan Kundera (b 1929) is the most renowned Czech writer internationally, with his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* having been made into a film. His first work *The Joke* is a penetrating insight into the communist era's paranoia.

An interesting contemporary Czech writer is poet and rock-lyricist Jáchym Topol, whose stream-of-consciousness novel *Sister City Silver* is an exhilarating exploration of post-communist Prague.

**Cinema**

*Ceský Sen* (Czech Dream, 2004) is a recent feature documentary showing the hoax launch of a new Czech department store. With a fake marketing campaign, fake advertising and even a massive fake façade to the new hypermarket, *Ceský Sen* is a timely observation of the post-communist expectations of Czech society in the months leading to their entry into the EU.

**Music**

Bedřich Smetana (1824–84), the first great Czech composer and an icon of Czech pride, created a national style by incorporating folk songs and dances into his classical compositions. His best-known pieces are the operas *Prodaná Nevěsta* (The Bartered Bride) and *Dalibor a Libuše* (Dalibor and Libuše, named after the two main characters), and the symphonic-poem cycle *Má vlast* (My Homeland). Prague Spring (p307), the country's biggest festival, is dedicated to Smetana and begins with a parade from the composer's grave at Vyšehrad to the Smetana Hall, where *Má vlast* is then performed.

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) is perhaps everyone's favourite Czech composer. His most popular works include his symphony *From the New World* (composed in the USA while lecturing there for four years), his *Slavonic Dances* of 1878 and 1881, the operas *The Devil & Kate* and *Rusalka*, and his religious masterpiece *Stabat Mater*.

**Visual Arts**

Think Art Nouveau and you're probably thinking Alfons Mucha (1860–1939). Though

he lived mostly in Paris and is associated with the French Art Nouveau movement, Mucha's heart remained at home in Bohemia and much of his work visits and revisits themes of Slavic suffering, courage and cross-nation brotherhood. The most outstanding of his works is a series of 20 large, cinematic canvasses called the *Slav Epic*, which are presently in Moravský Krumlov (p300), and his interior decoration in the Municipal House in Prague (see p264), but his design and print work can be seen all over the Czech Republic.

David Černý (b 1967) is a controversial contemporary Czech sculptor. His work includes the statue of St Wenceslas riding an upside-down horse in Prague's pasáž Lucerna, and the giant babies crawling up the Žižkov TV tower in Prague. See www.davidcerny.cz.

**ENVIRONMENT**

The Czech Republic is a landlocked country bordered by Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Poland. The land is made up of two river basins: Bohemia in the west, drained by the Labe (Elbe) River flowing north into Germany; and Moravia in the east, drained by the Morava River flowing southeast into the Danube. Each basin is ringed by low, forest-clad hills, notably the Šumava range along the Bavarian–Austrian border in the southwest, the Krušné hory (Ore Mountains) along the northwestern border with Germany, and the Krkonoše mountains along the Polish border east of Liberec. The country's highest peak, Sněžka (1602m), is in the Krkonoše. In between these ranges are rolling plains mixed with forests and farm land. Forests – mainly spruce, oak and beech – still cover one-third of the country.

The South Bohemian landscape is characterised by a network of hundreds of linked fish ponds and artificial lakes. The biggest lake in the republic, the 4870-hectare Lake Lipno, is also in South Bohemia. East Bohemia is home to the striking 'rock towns' of the Adršpach-Tepliče Rocks (p295).

**National Parks**

Though numerous areas are set aside as national parks and protected landscape areas, the emphasis is on visitor use as well as species and landscape protection. National parks and protected areas make up approximately 15% of the Czech Republic, including the Bohemian Switzerland (p282)

and Šumava (p294) national parks, as well as the Adršpach-Tepliče Protected Landscape Area (p295).

**Environmental Issues**

The forests of northern Bohemia and Moravia have been devastated by acid rain created by the burning of poor-quality brown coal at factories and thermal power stations. The most affected region is the eastern Ore Mountains where most of the trees are dead. In recent years sulphur dioxide levels in Prague have declined, while carbon monoxide pollution from cars and trucks has increased. Industrial emissions have been cleaned up in recent years following the entry of the Czech Republic into the EU in 2004. Local industries are being forced to adopt stringent environmental codes which are further alleviating domestic pollution.

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**FOOD & DRINK**

On the surface, Czech food seems very similar to German or Polish food: lots of meat served with *knedlíky* (dumplings) and cabbage. The little differences make the food here special – eat a forkful of *svíčková* (roast beef served with a sour-cream sauce and spices) sopped up with fluffy *knedlíky* and you'll be wondering why you haven't heard more about this cuisine.

**Staples & Specialities**

Traditional Czech cuisine is strong on meat, *knedlíky* and gravy, and weak on fresh vegetables; the classic Bohemian dish is *knedlo-zelo-vepřo* – bread dumplings, sauerkraut and roast pork. Other tasty homegrown delicacies to look out for include *cesneková* (garlic soup), *svíčková na smetaně* (roast beef with sour cream sauce and cranberries) and *kapr na kmíně* (fried or baked carp with caraway seed). *Ovocné knedlíky* (fruit dumplings), with whole fruit, are served as a dessert with cottage cheese or crushed poppy seeds and melted butter.

The Czech Republic is a beer-drinker's paradise – where else could you get a 500mL glass of top-quality Pilsner for less than a dollar? One of the first words of Czech you'll

### TOP FIVE BEERS

Czech beer is not just about Pilsner Urquell and Budvar. Watch out for these interesting brews:

- Černá Hora (Black Mountain) Brewery's honey-flavoured Kvasar lager.
- Bernard's special *cerne pivo* (dark beer), which uses five different malts.
- The wheat beer with lemon at Pivnice Pegas in Brno.
- The champagne beer at Pivovarský Dům in Prague.
- Zlatý Bažant (Golden Pheasant) lager from Slovakia.

learn is *pivo* (beer). The Czechs serve their draught beer with a high head of foam.

Bohemian *pivo* is probably the best in the world – the most famous brands are Budvar (see p289) and Pilsner Urquell (p286). The South Moravian vineyards (p304) produce reasonable *bílé víno* (white wines).

Special alcoholic treats include Becherovka (see p282) and *slivovice* (plum brandy). *Grog* is rum with hot water and sugar. *Limonáda* often refers to any soft drink, not just lemonade.

### Where to Eat & Drink

A *bufet* or *samoobsluha* is a self-service, cafeteria-style place with *chlebičky* (open sandwiches), salads, *klobásy* (spicy sausages), *špekáčky* (mild pork sausages), *párky* (frankfurters), *guláš* (goulash) and of course *knedlíky*. Some of these places are tucked to the side of *potraviny* (food shops). A *bageteria* serves made-to-order sandwiches and baguettes.

A *pivnice* is a pub without food, while a *hospoda* or *hostinec* is a pub or beer hall that serves basic meals. A *vinárna* (wine bar) may have anything from snacks to a full-blown menu. The occasional *kavárna* (café) has a full menu but most only serve snacks and desserts. A *restaurace* is any restaurant.

Restaurants start serving as early as 11am and carry on till midnight; some take a break between lunch and dinner. Main dishes may stop being served well before the advertised closing time, with only snacks and drinks after that.

### Vegetarians & Vegans

In Prague and other main cities there is a growing range of vegetarian restaurants, but options in the smaller towns remain more limited. Vegans will find life very difficult. There are a few standard *bezmasá jídla* (meatless dishes) served by most restaurants: the most common are *smažený sýr* (fried cheese) and vegetables cooked with cheese sauce. The pizza joints that you'll find in almost every town make for a good standby option.

### Habits & Customs

Most beer halls have a system of marking everything you eat or drink on a small piece of paper that is left on your table, then totted up when you pay (say *zaplatím, prosím* – I'd like to pay, please). Waiters in all Czech restaurants, including the expensive ones, often whisk away empty plates from under your nose before you manage to swallow the last of your *knedlíky*.

In a pub, always ask if a chair is free before sitting down (*Je tu volno?*). The standard toast involves clinking together first the tops, then the bottoms of glasses, then touching the glass to the table; most people say *Na zdraví* (To health).

## PRAGUE

pop 1.19 million

It's the perfect irony of Prague. You are lured there by the past, but compelled to linger by the present and the future. Fill your days with its artistic and architectural heritage – from Gothic and Renaissance to Art Nouveau and Cubist – but after dark move your focus to the here and now in the form of lively bars, cutting-edge galleries and innovative jazz clubs. And if the frantic energy of post-communist Prague and its army of tourists wears thin, that's OK. Just drink a glass of the country's legendary premium Bohemian lager, relax and be reassured that quiet moments still exist in one of Europe's most exciting cities: a private dawn on Charles Bridge; a chilled beer in Letná as you gaze upon the surreal cityscape of Staré Město; or getting reassuringly lost in the intimate streets of Malá Strana. You'll then be ready to dive once more into this thrilling collage of past and future.

### ORIENTATION

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

Prague Castle, visible from almost everywhere in the city, overlooks Malá Strana, while the twin Gothic spires of Týn Church dominate the wide open space of Staroměstské nám (Old Town Square). The broad avenue of Václavské nám (Wenceslas Square) stretches southeast from Staré Město towards the National Museum and the main train station.

You can walk from Praha-hlavní nádraží (Prague's main train station) to Staroměstské nám in 10 minutes. From Praha-Holešovice, take the metro (also 10 minutes) to Staroměstské nám. There's a metro station at Florenc bus station too; take Line B (yellow) two stops west to Můstek for the city centre.

### Maps

Lonely Planet's plastic-coated *Prague City Map* is convenient and detailed. Other good maps include Marco Polo's *Praha – centrum* (1:5,000) and SHOCart's *GeoClub Praha – plán města* (1:15,000). PIS offers a free *Welcome to the Czech Republic* pamphlet with a map of the city centre.

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**Anagram** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 895 737; www.anagram.cz; Týn 4, Staré Město; ☹ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) An excellent range of history and culture books.

**Big Ben Bookshop** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 826 565; www.bigbenbookshop.com; Malá Štupartská 5, Staré Město; ☹ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) Prague's biggest range of English-language books, magazines and newspapers.

**Globe** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 934 203; www.globebookstore.cz; Pštrossova 6, Nové Město; ☹ 10am-midnight) Has new and secondhand books in English and German, a good range of magazines and Prague's biggest gay and lesbian interest section.

**Kiwi** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 948 455; Jungmannova 23, Nové Město; ☹ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) A specialist travel bookshop with a huge range of maps and guidebooks.

**Neo Luxor** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 111 364; Václavské nám 41, Nové Město; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm

Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) Books and magazines in English, German and French and internet access (1Kč per minute).

### Emergencies

If your passport, wallet or other valuables have been stolen, obtain a police report and crime number from the **State Police Station** (Map pp266-7; Vlašská 3, Malá Strana; ☎ 24hr). You will need this to make an insurance claim. Unless you speak Czech, forget about telephoning the police, as you will rarely get through to an English speaker.

### Internet Access

An increasing number of hotels, bars, fast-food restaurants and internet cafés in Prague provide wi-fi hotspots where you can use your own laptop.

**Bohemia Bagel** (per min 1.50Kč) Malá Strana (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 310 694; Újezd 16; ☹ 7am-midnight); Staré Město (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 812 560; Masná 2; ☹ 7am-midnight). Also provides low-cost international phone calls.

**Globe** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 934 203; www.globebookstore.cz; Pštrossova 6, Nové Město; per min 1.50Kč, no minimum; ☹ 10am-midnight) Also has ethernet sockets where you can connect your own laptop (same price; cables provided, 50Kč deposit).

**Mobilarium** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 967 327; Rathova Pasaž, Na příkopě 23, Nové Město; per min 1.50Kč; ☹ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun)

**Planeta** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 267 311 182; Vinohradská 102, Vinohrady; per min 0.40-0.80Kč; ☹ 8am-11pm) Cheap rates before 10am and after 8pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 11pm Saturday and Sunday.

**Praha Bike** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 732 388 880; Dlouhá 24; Staré Město; per min 1Kč; ☹ 9am-7pm Mar-Nov, noon-6pm Oct-Feb) Wi-fi at same cost.

### Internet Resources

**Dopravní podnik** (www.dp-praha.cz) Information about public transport in Prague.

**Prague Information Service** (www.prague-info.cz) Official tourist office site.

**Prague Post** (www.praguepost.cz) Keep up-to-date with news, events and visitor information with this English-language website.

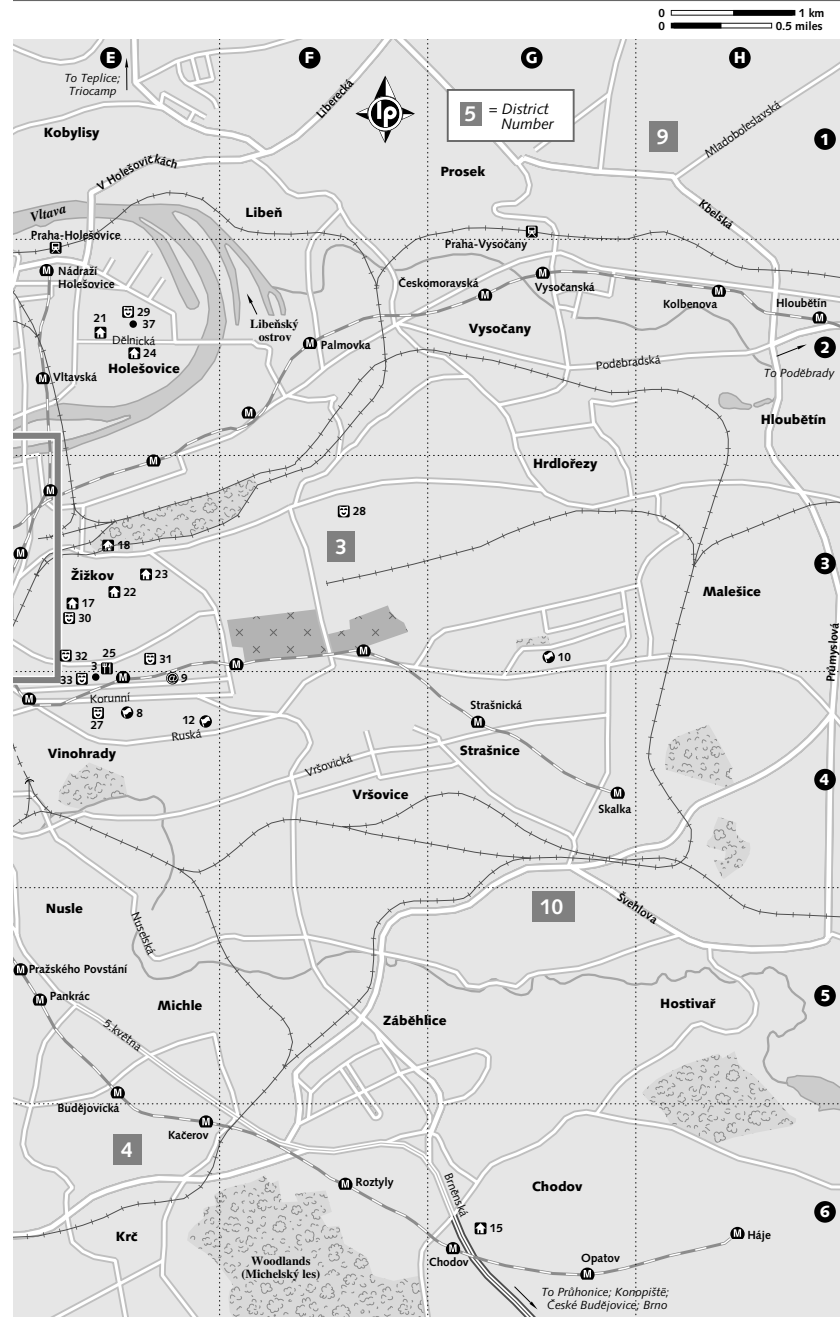
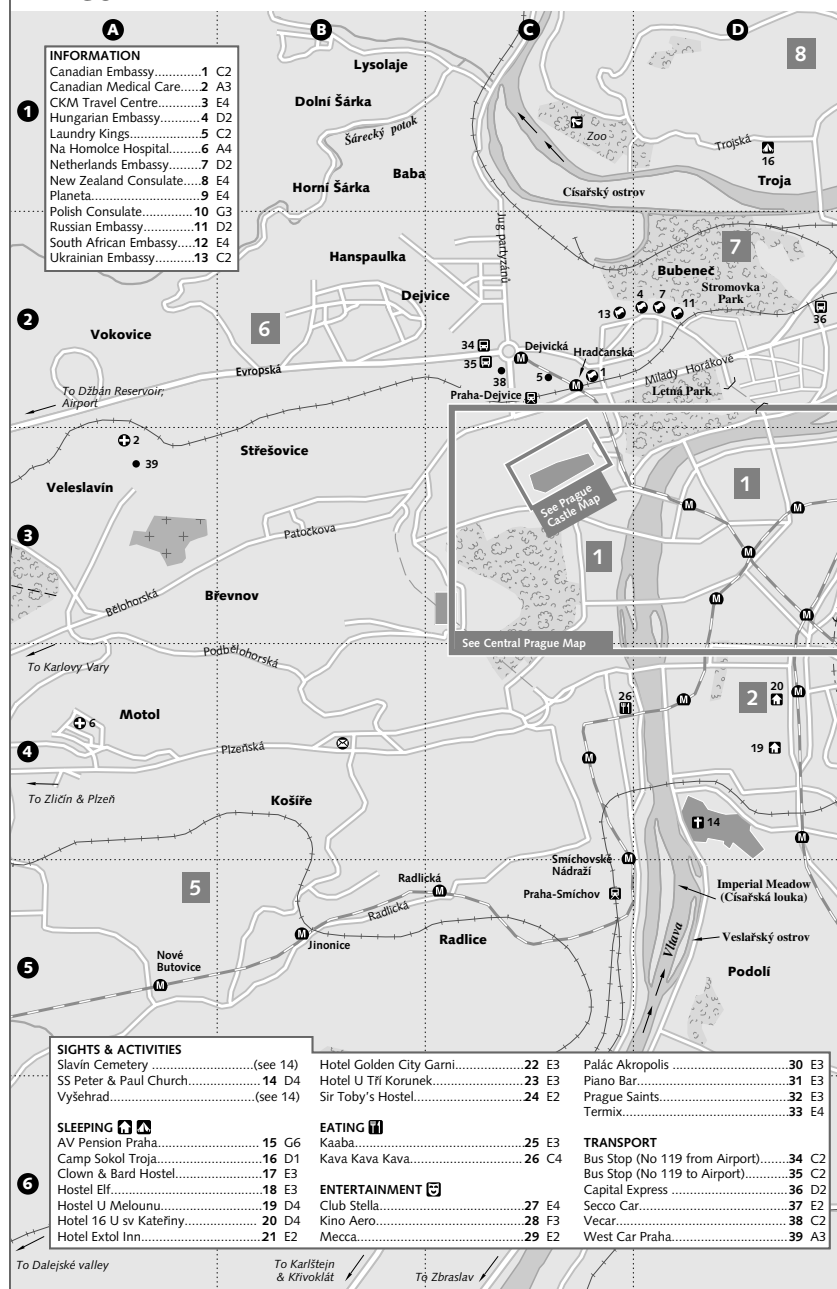
**Prague TV** (www.prague.tv) Highlights Prague's best events, arts and nightlife.

### Laundry

Most self-service laundrettes will charge around 160Kč to wash and dry a 6kg load of laundry.

**Laundry Kings** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 343 743; Dejvická 16, Dejvice; ☹ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat & Sun)

PRAGUE



## PRAGUE IN TWO DAYS

Beat the tourist hordes with an early-morning stroll across **Charles Bridge** (p263) and continue uphill to Hradčany and the eclectic **Strahov Library** (p263). Move on to grandiose **Prague Castle** (opposite) and then head down the hill to the compelling **Franz Kafka Museum** (p263).

On day two continue exploring Kafka's heritage in **Josefov** (p264), Prague's original Jewish quarter, and then visit the hilltop fortress at **Vyšehrad** (p265). Be sure to savour a glass or two of tasty Czech beer: try **U Zlatého Tygra** (p272) for tradition, or sample the innovative brews at **Pivovarský Dům** (p272). After dark check out the jazz vibe at the coolly sophisticated **Dinitz Café** (p271).

Expat-run place with a bulletin board, newspapers and internet (1.50Kč per minute).

**Laundryland** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 014 632; Na příkopě 12, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 11am-7pm Sun) On the 1st floor of Černá Růže shopping centre, above the Panská entrance.

**Prague Cyber Laundromat** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 510 180; Korunní 14, Vinohrady; ☎ 8am-8pm) Near Nám Míru metro station. Friendly place with internet café (1.50Kč per minute) and kids' play area.

## Left Luggage

**Florenc bus station** (per bag per day 25Kč; ☎ 5am-11pm) Halfway up the stairs on the left beyond the main ticket hall.

**Main train station** (per small/large bag per day 15/30Kč; ☎ 24hr) On Level 1. There are also lockers (60Kč coins).

## Medical Services

There are several 24-hour pharmacies in the centre of town, including **Praha lékárna** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 946 982; Palackého 5, Nové Město); for emergency service after hours, ring the bell.

**Canadian Medical Care** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 235 360 133, after hours 724 300 301; Velešlavinská 1, Velešlavín; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 8am-8pm Tue & Thu) Expat centre with English-speaking doctors, 24-hour medical aid, physiotherapist and pharmacy.

**Na Homolce Hospital** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 257 271 111, after hours 257 272 527; www.homolka.cz; 5th fl, Foreign Pavilion, Roentgenova 2, Motol) Prague's main casualty department.

**Polyclinic at Národní** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 075 120; 24hr emergencies 720 427 634; www.poliklinika.narodni.cz; Národní třída 9, Nové Město) With English-, French- and German-speaking staff.

## Money

The major banks – Komerční banka, Živnostenská banka, Česká spořitelna and ČSOB – are the best places for changing cash, but using a debit card in an ATM gives a better rate of exchange. Avoid *směnárna* (private exchange booths), which advertise misleading rates and have exorbitant charges.

**Amex** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 800 237; Václavské nám 56, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm)

**Česká spořitelna** (Map pp266-7; Václavské nám 16, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**ČSOB** (Map pp266-7; Na příkopě 14, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Komerční banka** (Map pp266-7; Václavské nám 42, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Travelex** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 105 276; Národní třída 28, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2-6.30pm)

**Živnostenská banka** (Map pp266-7; Na příkopě 20, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

## Post

To use the **main post office** (Map pp266-7; Jindřišská 14, Nové Město; ☎ 2am-midnight), collect a ticket from one of the automated machines just outside the main hall (press button No 1 for stamps and parcels; No 4 for EMS). Wait until your *listek číslo* (number) comes up on the electronic boards inside; these tell you which window to go to for *přepážka* (service).

You can pick up poste restante mail at window No 1 and buy phonecards at window No 28. Parcels weighing up to 2kg, as well as international and Express Mail Service (EMS) parcels, are sent from window Nos 7 to 10. (Note that these services close at noon on Saturday and all day on Sunday.)

## Telephone

There's a 24-hour telephone centre to the left of the right-hand entrance to the post office. Bohemia Bagel (p257) has phones for making low-cost international calls.

## Tourist Information

The **Prague Information Service** (Pražská infor mační služba, PIS; ☎ 12 444, in English & German 221 714 444; www.praque-info.cz) provides free tourist information with good maps and detailed brochures

(including accommodation and historical monuments).

There are three PIS offices:

**Main train station** (Praha hlavní nádraží; Map pp266-7; Wilsonova 2, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)

**Malá Strana Bridge Tower** (Map pp266-7; Charles Bridge; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct)

**Old Town Hall** (Map pp266-7; Staroměstské nám 5, Staré Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)

## Travel Agencies

**Cedok** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 197 699, 800 112 112; www.cedok.cz; Na příkopě 18, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) Tour operator and travel agency. Also books accommodation, concert and theatre tickets, rents cars and exchanges money.

**CKM Travel Centre** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 721 595; www.ckm.cz; Mánesova 77, Vinohrady; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4pm Fri) Books air and bus tickets, with discounts for those aged under 26. Sells youth cards.

**Eurolines-Sodeli CZ** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 239 318; Senovážné nám 6, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Agent for Eurolines buses.

**GTS International** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 211 204; www.gtsint.cz; Ve Smečkách 33, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat) Youth cards and air, bus and train tickets.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Prague's crime rate is low by Western standards, but beware of pickpockets who regularly work the crowds at the astronomical clock, Prague Castle and Charles Bridge, and on the central metro and tram lines, especially tourists getting on or off crowded trams 9 and 22.

Being ripped off by taxi drivers is another hazard. Most taxi drivers are honest, but a sizable minority who operate from tourist areas greatly overcharge their customers (even Czechs). Try not to take a taxi from Václavské nám, Národní třída and other tourist areas. It's better to phone for a taxi (see p277) or walk a couple of streets before hailing one.

The park outside the main train station is a hang-out for drunks and dodgy types and should be avoided late at night.

## Scams

We've had reports of bogus police approaching tourists and asking to see their money, claiming that they are looking for counterfeit

notes. They then run off with the cash. If in doubt, ask the 'policeman' to go with you to the nearest police station; a genuine cop will happily do so.

## SIGHTS

All the main sights are in the city centre, and are easily reached on foot; you can take in the castle, Charles Bridge and Staroměstské nám in a day.

## Prague Castle INFORMATION

Dominating Prague's skyline like a vast, beached battleship is **Prague Castle** (Pražský hrad; Map p262; ☎ 224 373 368; www.hrad.cz; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Mar; grounds 5am-midnight Apr-Oct, 6am-11pm Nov-Mar; ☎). The biggest castle complex in the world feels more like a small town than a castle. It is the seat of Czech power, both political and symbolic, housing the president's office and the ancient Bohemian crown jewels.

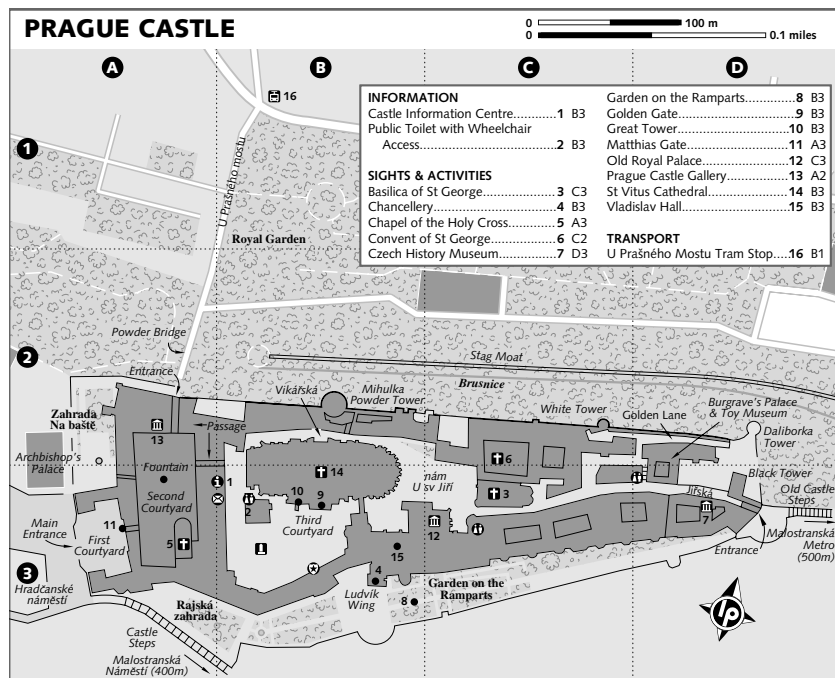
Among many ticket options, **Ticket B** (adult/child 220/110Kč) is the best value, giving access to St Vitus Cathedral (choir, crypt and tower), Old Royal Palace and Golden Lane. **Ticket A** (350/175Kč) includes all of these plus the Basilica of St George, Powder Tower and Story of Prague Castle exhibit. Buy tickets at the **Castle Information Centre** in the Third Courtyard and at the entrance to the main sights. Most areas are wheelchair accessible.

## SIGHTS

The main entrance is at the western end. The **changing of the guard**, with stylish uniforms created by Theodor Pistek (costume designer for the film *Amadeus*) takes place every hour, on the hour. At noon a band plays from the windows above.

The **Matthias Gate** leads to the second courtyard and the **Chapel of the Holy Cross** (concert tickets on sale here). On the north side is the **Prague Castle Gallery** (adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), with a collection of European baroque art.

The third courtyard is dominated by **St Vitus Cathedral**, a French Gothic structure begun in 1344 by Emperor Charles IV, but not completed until 1929. Colour from stained-glass windows created by early-20th-century Czech artists floods the interior, including one by Alfons Mucha (3rd chapel on the left as you enter the cathedral)



featuring SS Cyril and Methodius. In the apse is the massive **tomb of St John of Nepomuk** – two tonnes of baroque silver watched over by hovering cherubs.

The 14th-century chapel on the cathedral's southern side with the black imperial eagle on the door contains the **tomb of St Wenceslas**, the Czechs' patron saint and the Good King Wenceslas of Christmas carol fame. Wenceslas' zeal in spreading Christianity and his submission to the German King Henry I saw him murdered by his brother, Boleslav I. According to legend he was stabbed to death clinging to the Romanesque lion's-head handle that graces the chapel door. The smaller door on the far side, beside the windows, leads to the Bohemian crown jewels (not open to the public).

On the other side of the transept, climb the 287 steps of the **Great Tower** (☎ 9am-4.15pm Apr-Oct) for views over the city.

On the southern side of the cathedral's exterior is the **Golden Gate** (Zlatá brána) a triple-arched doorway topped by a 14th-century mosaic of the Last Judgment: to the left, the righteous are raised into heaven; to the right, sinners are cast into hell.

Opposite is the entrance to the **Old Royal Palace** with the elegantly vaulted **Vladislav Hall**, built between 1486 and 1502. Horsemen used to ride into the hall up the ramp at the far end for indoor jousts. Two Catholic councillors were thrown out the window of the adjacent **Chancery** by irate Protestant nobles on 23 May 1618. This infamous Second Defenestration of Prague ignited the Thirty Years' War.

Leaving the palace, the Romanesque **Basilica of St George** (1142) is in front of you, and in the nearby **Convent of St George** (adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is the National Gallery's collection of Czech art from the 16th to 18th centuries.

Beyond, the crowds surge into Golden Lane, a 16th-century tradesmen's quarter of tiny houses in the castle walls. It's a souvenir-laden tourist trap you can safely miss, though Kafka fans should note his sister's house at No 22, where he lived and wrote in 1916-17.

On the right, before the castle's exit, is the Lobkowitz Palace, housing the **Czech History Museum** (adult/child 40/20Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun). From the castle's eastern end, the Old Castle Steps lead to Malostranská metro station,

or turn sharp right to wander back through the lovely **Garden on the Ramparts** (admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct).

Forgoing an uphill hike, get to the castle by tram 22 or 23 from Národní třída on Staré Město's southern edge, Malostranské nám in Malá Strana, or Malostranská metro station to the U Prašného mostu stop. To wander through Hradčany first, stay on the tram until the Pohořelec stop.

## Hradčany

The lanes and stairways of Hradčany are perfect for wandering. The area extending west from Prague Castle is mainly residential, with a single strip of shops and restaurants (Loretánská and Pohořelec). Before it became a borough of Prague in 1598, Hradčany was almost levelled by Hussites and fire. The 17th-century palaces were built on the ruins.

The 18th-century Šternberg Palace outside the castle entrance houses the main branch of the **National Gallery** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 220 514 598; www.ngprague.cz; adult/child 150/70Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), the country's principal collection of 14th- to 18th-century European art.

A passage at Pohořelec 8 leads to the **Strahov Library** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 233 107 718; www.strahovskyclauster.cz; adult/child 80/50Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm), the country's largest monastic library, built in 1679. The Philosophy and Theological Halls feature gorgeous frescoed ceilings. The collection of natural curiosities in the connecting corridor includes books on tree growing bound in the bark of the trees they describe. The long, brown, leathery things beside the model ship are actually whales' penises, despite the prudish attendants claiming they're tanned elephants' trunks.

The exuberantly baroque **Sanctuary of Our Lady of Loreta** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 220 516 789; www.loreta.cz; Loretánské nám 7; adult/child 90/70Kč; ☎ 9.15am-12.15pm & 1-4.30pm) is a place of pilgrimage famed for its treasury of precious religious artefacts. The cloister houses a 17th-century replica of the Santa Casa from the Italian town of Loreta, said to be the house of Virgin Mary in Nazareth, miraculously transported to Italy by angels in the 13th century.

## Malá Strana

Head downhill from the castle to the beautifully baroque back streets of Malá Strana (Little Quarter), built in the 17th and 18th centuries by victorious Catholic clerics and

nobles on the foundations of their Protestant predecessors' Renaissance palaces. Today it's an upmarket neighbourhood with embassies and government offices.

Near the café-crowded main square of Malostranské nám is **St Nicholas Church** (Map pp266-7; www.psalterium.cz; admission 60/30Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Mar-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb), one of the city's greatest baroque buildings. If you visit only one church in Prague, this should be it. Take the stairs to the gallery to see the 17th-century *Passion Cycle* paintings and the doodlings of bored 1820s tourists.

To the east, along Tomášská, is the impressive **Wallenstein Palace** (Map pp266-7; Valdštejnský palác; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), built in 1630 and home to the Czech Republic's Senate. Albrecht von Wallenstein, a notorious general in the Thirty Years' War, started on the Protestant side but defected to the Catholics, and built this palace with his former comrades' expropriated wealth. In 1634 the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II learned that Wallenstein was about to switch sides again and had him assassinated. The ceiling fresco of the palace's baroque hall shows Wallenstein glorified as a chariot-driving warrior.

Enter the adjacent **Wallenstein Gardens** (Map pp266-7; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Apr-Oct) via the palace or from Letenská, a block to the east. These beautiful gardens boast a giant Renaissance loggia, a fake stalactite grotto full of hidden animals and grotesque faces, bronze (replica) sculptures by Adrian de Vries (the Swedish army looted the originals in 1648 and they're in Stockholm) and a pond full of giant carp.

Malá Strana is linked to Staré Město by the elegant **Charles Bridge** (Karlův most). Built in 1357, and graced by 30 18th-century statues, until 1841 it was the city's only bridge. Stroll leisurely across, but first climb the **Malá Strana bridge tower** (Map pp266-7; adult/child 50/30Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Nov) for a great view of bridge and city. In the middle of the bridge is a bronze statue (1683) of St John of Nepomuk, a priest thrown to his death from the bridge in 1393 for refusing to reveal the queen's confessions to King Wenceslas IV. Crammed with tourists, jewellery stalls, portrait artists and the odd busker, try and visit the bridge at dawn before the hordes arrive.

North of Charles Bridge is the modern **Franz Kafka Museum** (☎ 420 221 333; www.kafkamuseum.cz; Cihelná 2b; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), which



has 'come home' after time in Barcelona and New York. Kafka's diaries, letters and a wonderful collection of first editions provide a poignant balance to the T-shirt cliché the writer has become in tourist shops.

On a hot summer afternoon escape the tourist throngs on the funicular railway (20Kč tram ticket, every 10 to 20 minutes from 9.15am to 8.45pm) from Újezd to the rose gardens on **Petrín Hill**. From here climb up 299 steps to the top of the iron-framed **Petrín Tower** (Map pp266-7; adult/child 50/40Kč; ☎ 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), built in 1891 in imitation of the Eiffel Tower, for one of the best views of Prague. Behind the tower a staircase leads to picturesque lanes taking you back to Malostranské nám.

### Staré Město

On the Staré Město (Old Town) side of Charles Bridge narrow and crowded Karlova leads east towards **Staroměstské nám**, Prague's Old Town Square, dominated by the twin Gothic steeples of **Týn Church** (Map pp266-7; 1365), the baroque wedding cake of **St Nicholas Church** (Map pp266-7; 1730s), (not to be confused with the more famous St Nicholas Church in Malá Strana; p263) and the Old Town Hall's **clock tower** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 228 456; Staroměstské nám 12; adult/child 50/40Kč; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar). Climb to the top (or take the lift), and spy on the crowds below watching the **astronomical clock** (Map pp266-7; 1410), which springs to life every hour with its parade of apostles and a bell-ringing skeleton. In the square's centre is the **Jan Hus Monument**, erected in 1915 on the 500th anniversary of the religious reformer's execution.

The shopping street of Celetná leads east from the square to the gorgeous Art Nouveau **Municipal House** (Obecní dům; Map pp266-7; www.obecni-dum.cz; nám Republiky 5; guided tours 150Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), a cultural centre decorated by the early 20th-century's finest Czech artists. Included in the guided tour are the impressive Smetana Concert Hall and other beautifully decorated rooms.

South of the square is the neoclassical **Estates Theatre** (Stavovské divadlo; Map pp266-7; 1783), where Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was premiered on 29 October 1787 with the maestro himself conducting.

**Josefov**, the area north and northwest of Staroměstské nám, was once Prague's Jewish Quarter. It retains a fascinating variety of

monuments, which form the **Prague Jewish Museum** (☎ 222 317 191; www.jewishmuseum.cz; adult/child 300/200Kč; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun-Fri Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar). The museum's collection of artefacts exists because in 1942 the Nazis gathered objects from 153 Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia, planning a 'museum of an extinct race' after completing their extermination programme.

The oldest still-functioning synagogue in Europe, the early Gothic **Old-New Synagogue** (Map pp266-7; Červená 1; 200Kč), dates from 1270. Opposite is the Jewish town hall with its picturesque 16th-century clock tower. The 1694 **Klaus Synagogue** (Map pp266-7; U Starého hřbitova 1) houses an exhibition on Jewish customs and traditions. The **Pinkas Synagogue** (Map pp266-7; Široká 3) is now a holocaust memorial, its interior walls inscribed with the names of 77,297 Czech Jews, including Franz Kafka's three sisters.

The **Old Jewish Cemetery** (entered from the Pinkas Synagogue) is Josefův's most evocative corner. The oldest of its 12,000 graves date from 1439. Use of the cemetery ceased in 1787 as it was becoming so crowded that burials were up to 12 layers deep. Look at the cemetery through an opening in the wall north of the **Museum of Decorative Arts** (☎ 224 811 241; 17 listopadu 2; adult/concession 80/40Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm, closed Monday) or from outside the 1st-floor public toilets in the museum.

Tucked away in the northern part of Staré Město's narrow streets is one of Prague's oldest Gothic structures, the magnificent **Convent of St Agnes** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 879 111; www.ngprague.cz; U Milosrdných 17; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) housing the National Gallery's collection of Bohemian and Central European medieval art, dating from the 13th to the mid-16th centuries.

### Nové Město

Nové Město (New Town) is new only compared with Staré Město, being founded in 1348! The broad, sloping avenue of **Václavské nám** (Map pp266-7; Wenceslas Sq), lined with shops, banks and restaurants, is dominated by a **statue of St Wenceslas** on horseback. Wenceslas Sq has always been a focus for demonstrations and public gatherings. Beneath the statue is a shrine to the victims of communism, including students Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc, both of whom burned themselves alive in 1969 protesting against the Soviet invasion.

At the southeastern end of the square is the imposing, neo-Renaissance **National Museum** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 497 111; www.nm.cz; Václavské nám 68; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr, closed first Tuesday of every month). The ho-hum collections cover prehistory, mineralogy and stuffed animals (captions in Czech only), but the grand interior is worth seeing for the pantheon of Czech politicians, writers, composers, artists and scientists.

Fans of artist Alfons Mucha, renowned for his Art Nouveau posters of garlanded Slavic maidens, can admire his work at the **Mucha Museum** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 451 333; www.mucha.cz; Panská 7; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm), including an interesting video on his life and art. See also Moravský Krumlov (p310).

The **City of Prague Museum** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 227 490; www.muzeumprahy.cz; Na Poříčí 52; adult/child 80/30Kč; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), housed in a grand, neo-Renaissance building near Florenc metro station, charts Prague's evolution from pre-history to the 19th century, culminating in a huge scale model of Prague in 1826-37. Among the intriguing exhibits are the silk funeral cap and slippers worn by astronomer Tycho Brahe when he was interred in the Týn Church in 1601 (they were removed in 1901).

The **Museum of Communism** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 212 966; www.muzeumkomunismu.cz; Na Příkopě 10; adult/child 180/140Kč; ☎ 8am-9pm) is tucked ironically behind Prague's biggest McDonald's. The introductory rooms covering communism's origins are a tad wordy, but the exhibition is fascinating through its use of simple everyday objects to illuminate the restrictions of life under communism. The display ends poignantly detailing 1989's Velvet Revolution.

### Vyšehrad

To escape the tourist crowds, pack a picnic and take the metro to the ancient hilltop fortress **Vyšehrad** (Map pp258-9; www.praha-vysehrad.cz; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar), perched on a cliff top above the Vltava on Nové Město's southern edge. Dominated by the twin towers of **SS Peter & Paul Church** (Map pp258-9) and founded in the 11th century, Vyšehrad was rebuilt in neo-Gothic style between 1885 and 1903. Don't miss the Art Nouveau murals inside. The **Slavín Cemetery** (Map pp258-9), beside the church, contains the graves of many distinguished Czechs, in-

cluding the composers Smetana and Dvořák. The view from the citadel's southern battlements is superb.

### TOURS

**City Walks** (☎ 608 200 912; www.praguer.com; per person 300-450Kč) Guided walks ranging from 90 minutes to four hours. Tours include a Literary Pub Tour and Ghost Trail.

**Prague Venice** (☎ 603 819 947; www.prague-venice.cz; adult/child 270/135Kč; ☎ 10.30am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 8pm Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 10.30am-6pm Nov-Feb) Runs 45-minute cruises in small boats under the arches of Charles Bridge and along the Čertovka mill stream in Kampa. Jetties are at the Staré Město end of Charles Bridge, on the Čertovka stream in Malá Strana, and at the west end of Mánes Bridge, near Malostranská metro station.

**Prague Walks** (☎ 608 339 099; www.praguewalks.com; per person 300-390Kč) Small group walks ranging from Franz Kafka to micro-breweries to communism.

**Wittman Tours** (☎ 603 426 564; www.wittman-tours.com; per person from 500Kč) Specialises in tours of Jewish interest, including day trips to the Museum of the Ghetto (p280) at Terezín.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Prague Spring** (www.festival.cz) From 12 May to 3 June, classical music kicks off summer.

**United Islands** (www.unitedislands.cz) World music in mid-June.

**Loveplanet** (www.loveplanet.cz) Outdoor rock festival in August.

**Prague Autumn** (www.pragueautumn.cz) Celebrates summer's end from 12 September to 1 October.

**Prague International Jazz Festival** (www.jazzfestival.praha.cz) Late October.

**Christmas Market** 1 to 24 December.

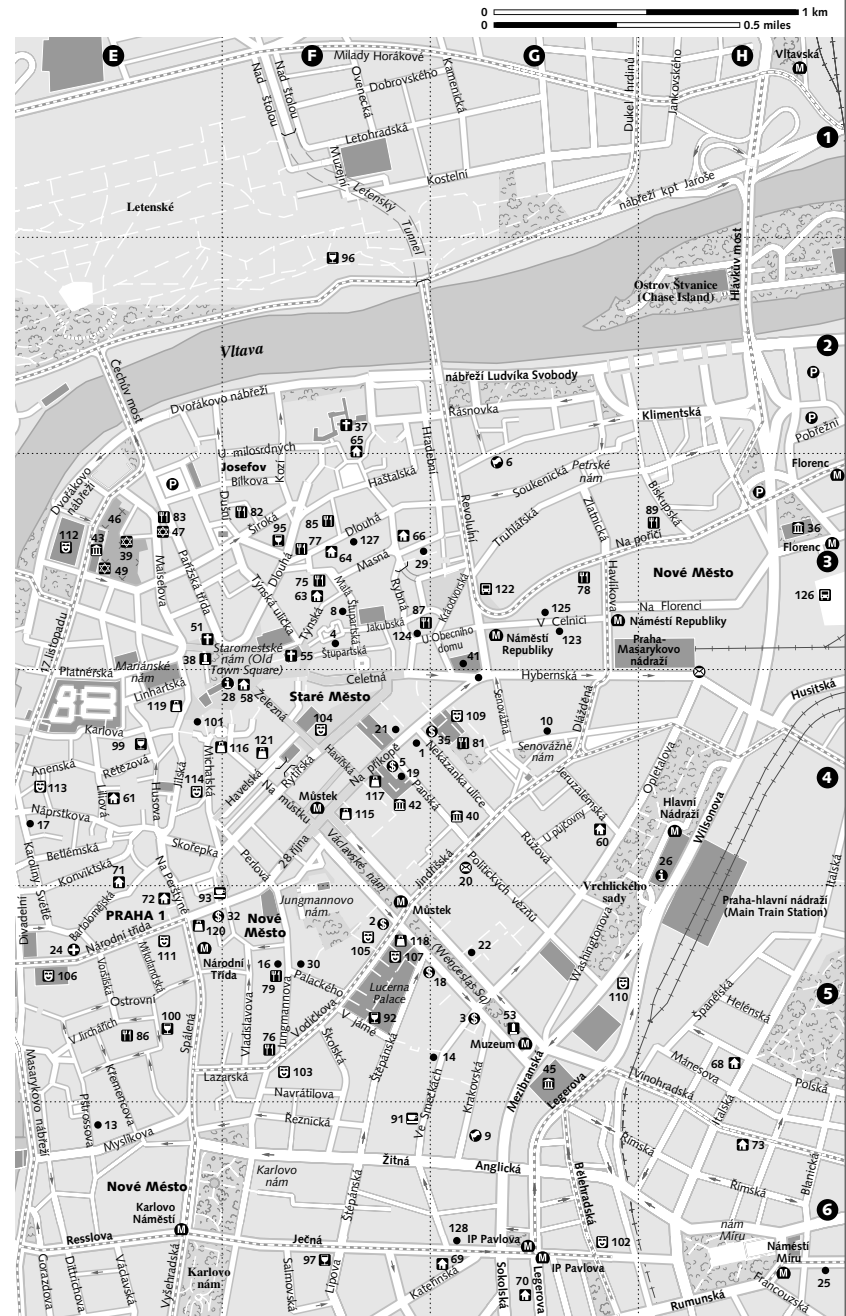
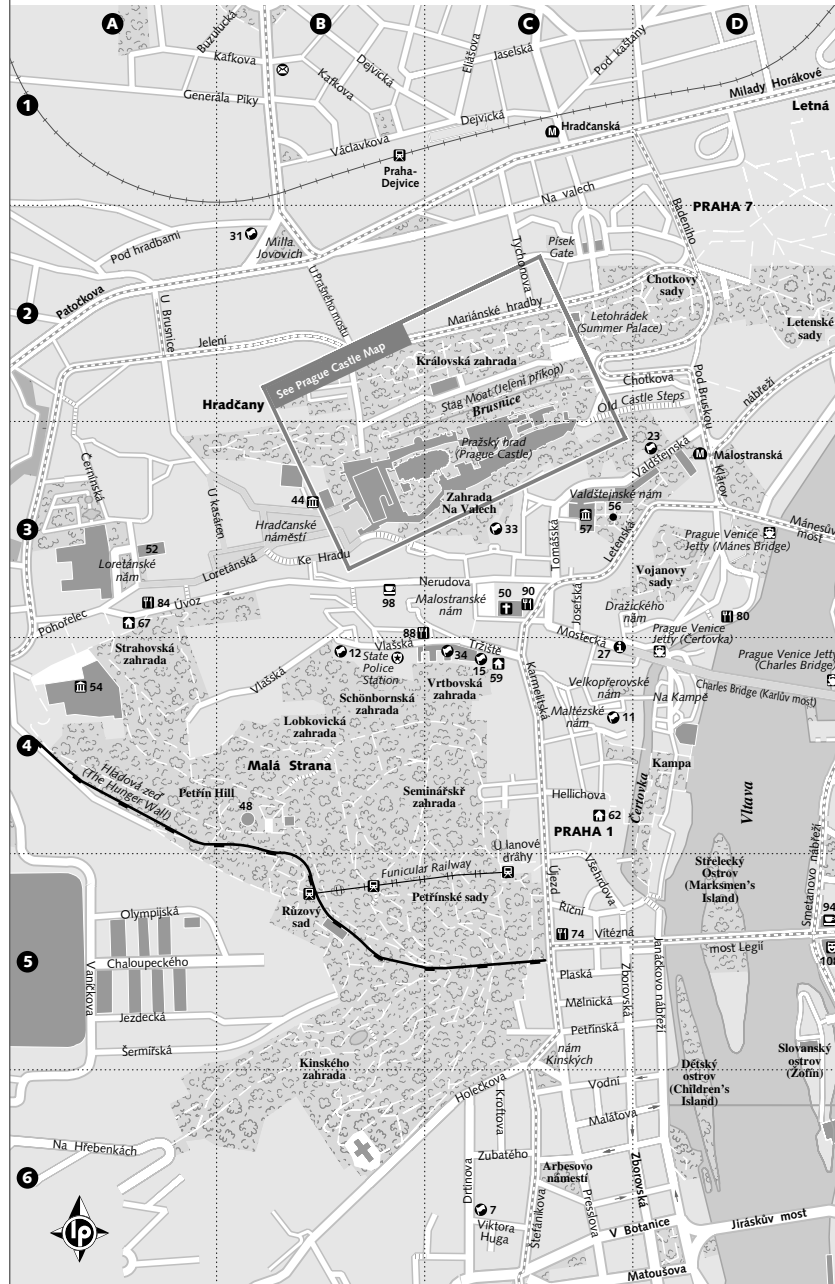
**New Year's Eve Pivo**-fuelled crowds in Staroměstské nám, and castle fireworks on 31 December.

### SLEEPING

If you're visiting at New Year, Christmas or Easter, or from May to September, book accommodation in advance. Prices quoted are for the high season, generally April to October. These rates can increase up to 15% on certain dates, notably at Christmas, New Year, Easter and weekends during the Prague Spring festival. Some hotels have slightly lower rates in July and August. High season rates normally decrease by 20% to 40% from November to March.

Consider an apartment for stays longer than a couple of nights. Many one- to

### CENTRAL PRAGUE



<b>INFORMATION</b>	National Gallery.....	44 B3	Siam Orchid.....	89 H3
Čedok.....	National Museum.....	45 G5	Square.....	90 C3
Česká Společnost.....	Old Jewish Cemetery.....	46 E3	<b>DRINKING ☑ ☑</b>	
Amex.....	Old Town Hall Clock Tower... (see 28)		Café Vesmíra.....	91 F6
Anagram.....	Old Town Hall.....	(see 28)	Jáma.....	92 F5
CSOB.....	Old-New Synagogue.....	47 E3	Káva.Káva.Káva.....	93 E5
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six-person apartments are available for even a single night, offering excellent value.

### Accommodation Agencies

**AVE** (☎ 251 551 011; www.avetravel.cz; Praha-hlavní nádraží, Nové Město; ☎ 6am-11pm) Offices at the airport, main train station and Praha-Holešovice train station. The main train

station branch specialises in last-minute accommodation.

**Hostel.cz** (☎ 415 658 580; www.hostel.cz) Website database of around 60 hostels, with a secure online booking system.

**Mary's Travel & Tourist Service** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 253 510; www.marys.cz; Italská 31, Vinohrady; ☎ 9am-9pm) Private rooms, hostels, pensions, apartments

and hotels in Prague and surrounding areas across all price ranges.

**Prague Apartments** (☎ 323 641 476; www.prague-apartments.com) Web-based service with a range of smartly furnished flats. Availability displayed online.

**Stop City** (Map pp266-7; 222 521 233; www.stopcity.com; Vinohradská 24, Vinohrady; ☎ 10am-9pm Apr-Oct, 10am-8pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) Apartments, private rooms and pensions in the city centre, Vinohrady and Žižkov areas.

### Budget

**Clown & Bard Hostel** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 716 453; www.downandbard.com; Bořivojova 102, Žižkov; dm 300-380Kč, d 1000Kč, apt 2400Kč; ☎ ☎) Just maybe Prague's most full-on hostel – party hard in the basement bar, and recharge at the all-you-can-eat breakfast any time until 1pm. The self-catering apartments offer slightly more seclusion.

**Hostel Elf** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 540 963; www.hostelelf.com; Husitská 11, Žižkov; dm 320-360Kč, s/d 1000/1200Kč; ☎) Have the best of both worlds at this hip hostel near Žižkov's pub district. Swap travellers' tales in the compact beer garden or grab some quiet time in the nooks and crannies.

**Hostel U Melounu** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 918 322; www.hostelumelounu.cz; Ke Karlovu 7, Vinohrady; dm/s/d 390/700/1000Kč; ☎ ☎) An attractive hostel in an historic building on a quiet street, U Melounu also features a sunny barbecue area, and shared kitchen and laundry facilities.

**Sir Toby's Hostel** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 283 870 635; www.sirtobys.com; Dělnická 24, Holešovice; dm 340-400Kč, s/d 1000/1350Kč; ☎ ☎ ☎) In an up-and-coming suburb a quick 10-minute tram ride from the city centre, Sir Toby's is in a refurbished apartment building on a quiet street. The staff are friendly and helpful, and there is a shared kitchen and lounge.

**Hostel Sokol** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 007 397; post@sokol-cos.cz; Tyršův dům, Nosticova 2, Malá Strana; dm 390Kč; ☎) Set in a converted riverside mansion you can't beat the location, but the dorms can get crowded (and hot) in summer; a worthwhile backup though.

**Hostel Týn** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 808 333; www.tyn.prague-hostels.cz; Týnská 19, Staré Město; dm/d/tr 400/1200/1350Kč; ☎) In a quiet lane metres from Old Town Square, you'll struggle to find better-value central accommodation. The 14 two-to-six bed rooms are very popular so book ahead.

**Camp Sokol Troja** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 542 908; www.camp-sokol-troja.cz; Trojská 171a, Troja; camp site per per-

son/car 125/90Kč; ☎ ☎) This riverside camping ground, with kitchen and laundry, is one of six in the suburb of Troja, 15 minutes north of the centre via tram 14 or 17.

### Midrange

**Hotel Extol Inn** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 220 876 541; www.extolinn.cz; Přístavní 2, Holešovice; s/d from 790/1350Kč; ☎ ☎ ☎) The reader-recommended rooms here are all excellent value. The cheapest rooms with shared bathrooms are no-frills but spick and span, while the three-star rooms with private bathroom include use of the sauna and spa. The city centre is just 10 minutes by tram.

**Miss Sophies** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 303 530; www.miss-sophies.com; Melounova 3; dm 440Kč, s/d from 1500/1700Kč, apt from 2100Kč) 'Boutique hostel' sums up this tasty spot in a converted apartment building on the southern edge of the New Town. Polished concrete blends with oak flooring and coolly neutral colours, and the basement lounge is all bricks and black leather.

**Pension Březina** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 188 888; www.brezina.cz; Legerova 39-41; s/d economy 1100/1300Kč, luxury 2000/2200Kč; ☎) A friendly pension in a converted Art Nouveau apartment block with a small garden. Ask for a quieter room at the back. The economy rooms are great value for budget travellers.

**Dasha** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 602 210 716; www.accommodation-dasha.cz; Jeruzalémská 10; s/d from €30/40, apt €50-110) A restored apartment building 200m from the main train station conceals a variety of private rooms and apartments that can accommodate up to 10 people. With kitchen facilities the apartments are a good choice for larger groups or families. Forward bookings by phone or on the website are essential.

**AV Pension Praha** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 272 951 726; www.pension-praha.cz; Malebná 75, Chodov; d with/without bath-room 2000/1500Kč; ☎ ☎) This garden villa with bright rooms and breakfast on the patio in the southeastern suburbs comes reader recommended. It's a five-minute walk east of Chodov metro station.

**Pension Unitas** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 211 020; www.unitas.cz; Bartolomějská 9; dm per person 350-510Kč, s/d 1280/1580Kč; ☎ ☎) This former convent has an interesting past – the rooms were once prison cells (ex-president Havel did time here). A generous breakfast is included and bathrooms are shared. Choose between cramped dorms or more spacious pension rooms.

**Hotel Golden City Garni** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 711 008; www.goldencity.cz; Táboritká 3, Žižkov; s/d/tr

1900/2700/2900Kč; (P) (X) (Q) Golden City is a converted 19th-century apartment block with crisp and clean IKEA-furnished rooms, grand buffet breakfasts and easy access to the city centre on tram 5, 9 or 26.

**Dům U Krále Jiřího** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 466 100; www.kinggeorge.cz; Liliiová 10; s/d 2250/3550Kč) 'King George's House' combines old-world *pension* charm with crisply modern rooms just metres from Old Town Square. The attic rooms (only accessible by steep stairs) are the most attractive with exposed wooden beams.

**Penzión U Medvídků** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 211 916; www.umedvidku.cz; Na Perštýně 7, Staré Město; s/d 2300/3500Kč) 'At the Little Bear' is a traditional pub and restaurant with several attractive rooms upstairs. Romantic types should choose an historic attic room with exposed wooden beams. Just mind your head after having a few in the micro-brewery downstairs.

**Hotel 16 U sv Kateřiny** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 920 636; www.hotel16.cz; Kateřinská 16, Nové Město; s/d incl breakfast from 2800/3500Kč; (P) (Q)) Near the Botanic Gardens and five minutes' walk from Karlovo nám metro station, you're more likely to wake to birdsong than honking cars at this family-run spot with a quiet garden and cosy bar.

**Hotel U Tří Korunek** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 781 112; www.3korunky.cz; Cimburkova 28, Žižkov; s/d from 2480/3380Kč) Rambling across three buildings in Žižkov, the 'Three Crowns' has 78 comfy and clean rooms. It's worth upgrading to a superior room with wooden floors and designer furniture (300Kč extra), and don't be put off by the down-at-heel-looking neighbourhood. It's safe and quiet and the city centre is just a few tram stops away.

**Hotel Antik** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 322 288; www.hotelantik.cz; Dlouhá 22; s/d 3590/3990Kč) The Antik shares a 15th-century building (no lift) with a delightfully jumbled antique shop. It's a great area for bars and restaurants, so ask for one of the more quiet back rooms with a balcony. Breakfast is served in a garden courtyard.

**Apostolic Residence** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 632 222; www.prague-residence.cz; Staroměstské nám 26; s/d 4600/5700Kč) Right on Old Town Square, this hotel positively reeks understated class with antique furniture and Oriental rugs. Yes, you are paying more for the supercentral location, but it's still good value compared with other more expensive hotels in the city.

## Top End

**Hotel Josef** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 700 111; www.hoteljosef.cz; Rybná 20, Staré Město; s/d from €149/173;

(P) (X) (Q) (R)) Sleekly modern in old-world Staré Město, this boutique hotel was designed by London-based Czech architect Eva Jiřičná. Descend the playful suspended staircase to surf the web in the lobby's wi-fi hotspot. Two rooms are wheelchair accessible.

**Hotel Casa Marcello** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 310 260; www.casa-marcello.cz; Rásovkova 783; d/ste/aprt from €130/185/215) Housed in two medieval buildings that were once part of the Convent of St Agnes, Casa Marcello is one of Prague's most intimate and romantic hotels. In a quiet but central area near the Old Town Sq, surprise your loved one with room 104 with its king-size bed and preserved medieval archway.

**Hotel Questenberk** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 220 407 600; www.questenberk.cz; Úvoz 5, Hradčany; s/d €160/200; (P) (X) (Q) (R)) Spacious and sunny rooms now fill Strahov Monastery's former hospital just minutes from the castle. Old and new blends seamlessly with antique pine furnishings and internet access amid the baroque splendour.

**Aria Hotel** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 225 334 111; www.aria hotel.net; Tržiště 9, Malá Strana; d from €250; (P) (X) (Q)) Choose your favourite composer or musician and stay in a themed room with a selection of their music. Not at all tacky – just pure five-star class with 21st-century touches like music databanks and flat-screen computers.

## EATING

Prague has restaurants offering all kinds of cuisines and price ranges. Take your pick from good-value Czech beer halls with no-nonsense pork-and-knedlíky fare, or enjoy a riverside view in a chic Italian restaurant with a high-flying clientele and prices. In between, there's everything from Afghani to Argentinean, and Thai to Tex-Mex.

Eating in Prague's tourist areas can be pricey, but considerably cheaper eats are available just a block or two away. Pubs offer both snacks and full meals, and there are stands in Václavské nám selling street snacks such as *párek* (hot dog) or *bramborák* (potato pancake).

Prague has an increasing number of vegetarian restaurants, and most restaurants feature at least one or two veggie options. Most restaurants are open from 11am to 11pm.

## Hradčany & Malá Strana

**Bohemia Bagel** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 310 694; Újezd 18, Malá Strana; mains 90-270Kč; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun) Expat heaven with bagel

sandwiches, soups and coffee. There's another Bohemia Bagel at Masná 2 in Staré Město – both are good spots for breakfast.

**Malý Buddha** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 220 513 894; Úvoz 46, Hradčany; mains 60-120Kč; ☎ noon-10.30pm Tue-Sun) Vietnamese-owned Malý ('Little') Buddha is an incense-infused haven atop Hradčany hill. If the castle's crowds wear you down, restore your chi with restorative wines, healing tea and crab spring rolls. Credit cards are not accepted.

**Hergetova Cihelna** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 535 534; Cihelná 2b, Malá Strana; mains 200-550Kč; ☎ 9am-2am) A restored *cihelná* (brickworks) is now a hip space with a riverside terrace looking back to Charles Bridge and Staré Město. Come for steak, seafood or pizza and linger for the sublime view – 'one more *pivo* prosím'.

Also check out the Moorish flavours (think baklava and spicy *merguez* sausages) at **Shaharazad** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 913 046; Vlašská 6, Malá Strana; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ noon-midnight), and the thoroughly modern **Square** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 532 109; Malostranské nám 5, Malá Strana; tapas 3 for 275Kč, 7 for 455Kč; ☎ 9am-12.30am) with interesting tapas like saffron *arancini* (rice balls).

## Staré Město

**Kolkovna** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 819 701; Kolkovně 8; meals 160-400Kč; ☎ 9am-midnight) This contemporary spin on the traditional Prague beer hall serves up classy versions of heritage Czech dishes like goulash and roast pork. And because it's owned by the Pilsner Urquell brewery, guess what beer accompanies most of the huge meals?

**Country Life** Nové Město (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 247 280; Jungmannova 1; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6pm Fri); Staré Město (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 213 366; Melantrichova 15; mains 75-150Kč; ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6pm Fri, 11am-8.30pm Sat & Sun) This all-vegan cafeteria offers inexpensive salads, sandwiches, pizzas, soy drinks, sunflower-seed burgers etc.

**Orange Moon** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 325 119; Rámová 5; mains 165-230Kč; ☎ 11.30am-11.30pm) The world's best beer (no doubt) combines with (probably) the world's best cuisines. Expats and locals are transported to Asia by authentic flavours of Thailand and India.

**Dahab** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 837 375; Dlouhá 33; mains 200-400Kč; ☎ noon-1am) Morocco meets the Middle East amid the softly lit ambience of this North African souk. Relax with a mint tea and a hookah (hubble-bubble pipe). If you've got the munchies there's everything from

baklava to *tagine* (meat and vegetable stew) with couscous.

**Red Hot & Blues** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 314 639; Jakubská 12; mains 180-480Kč; ☎ 8am-midnight) This jumping jive, jazz and jambalaya spot is a long way from 'N'awlins', but the eggplant creole and cajun shrimp have travelled well. There's live jazz night, and breakfast is available until 4pm at the weekend – just maybe the best way to resurrect yourself after a big night.

**Les Moules** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 315 022; Pavízká 19; mains 300-500Kč; ☎ 8.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun) Another modern update of a European drinking establishment, Les Moules is a traditional Belgian-style brasserie, dishing up comfort food like *moules* (mussels) with crispy (Belgian!) fries. The Leffe and Hoegaarden on tap prove that Belgian beer travels well – even to the home of Pilsner.

## Nové Město

**Pizzeria Kmotra** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 934 100; V Jirchářích 12; pizza 95-145Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) More than 30 varieties are on offer at this cellar pizzeria that gets really busy after 8pm. With over 50 additional toppings you can get really creative.

**Kaaba** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 254 021; Mánesova 20; snacks 50-80Kč; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Vinohrady's hipsters park themselves on 1950s-style furniture and recharge with snappy espressos, terrific teas and tasty snacks. After dark Belgian beers provide the entrée to nearby clubs.

**Siam Orchid** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 319 410; Na poříčí 21; mains 160-280Kč; ☎ 10am-10pm) The waiter may be from Cambodia, but that doesn't stop the Thai food in this tiny restaurant from being Prague's most authentic Asian cuisine. Try the fiery *laap kai* (spicy chicken salad).

**Café FX** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 254 776; Bělehradská 120, Vinohrady; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 11.30am-2am) Café FX is shabbily chic, draped in hippy-trippy chiffon, with Prague's best vegetarian flavours from Mexico, India and Thailand. Relax at weekend brunch and lose yourself in the eclectic CD store across the arcade.

**Dinitz Café** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 313 308; Na poříčí 14; mains 200-400Kč; ☎ 9am-3am) Art Deco heaven is this cool homage to 1920s café society. The kitchen delivers elegant Mediterranean-style meals until 2am, and live jazz is dished up every night from 9pm. Try and get a mezzanine table overlooking the stage.

**Kogo** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 451 259; Slovanský dům; Na příkopě 22; pizzas 150-250Kč, mains 200-450Kč;

☞ 9am-midnight) Prague's business community chooses from a diverse wine list to accompany Kogo's classy pizza, pasta, steak and seafood. There is another stylish branch at Havelská 27.

## DRINKING

Bohemian beer is probably the world's best. The most famous brands are Budvar, Plzeňský Prazdroj (Pilsner Urquell), and Prague's own Staropramen; and there's no shortage of opportunities to imbibe. An increasing number of independent micro-breweries also offer a more unique drinking experience.

Avoid the tourist areas, and you'll find local bars selling half-litres for 30Kč or less (compared with over 65Kč around Malostranské nám and Staroměstské nám). Traditional pubs open from 11am to 11pm. More stylish modern bars open from noon to 1am, and often stay open till 3am or 4am on Friday and Saturday.

If you want to avoid stag parties, stay away from the Irish and English pubs in the Old Town, and the sports bars on and around Ve Smečkách in the New Town.

## Cafés

Before the communist coup Prague had a thriving café scene, and since 1989 it has returned strongly. The summer streets are crammed with outdoor tables, and good-quality tea and coffee are widely available. Keep an eye out for funky teahouses with a diversely global range of brews.

**U zeleného čaje** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 530 027; Nerudova 19, Malá Strana; ☞ 11am-10pm; ☒) Linger at this tiny tea-haven on the way to the castle. There are only four tables so maybe grab a speciality tea to go for the final push up the hill.

**Café Vesmírna** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 212 363; Ve Smečkách 5, Nové Město; ☞ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 1-8pm Sat, closed Sun; ☒) The friendly Vesmírna provides training and opportunities for people with special needs. The wait staff are warm and professional, and the menu features healthy snacks like savoury crepes and a 'how do I choose?' selection of teas and coffees. It's a special place making a real difference.

**Káva.Káva.Káva** Nové Město (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 228 862; Národní třída 37; ☞ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun; Smichov ☎ 257 314 277; Lidická 42; ☞ 7am-10pm) Hidden away in the Platýž courtyard, this café offers huge smoothies and tasty nibbles like carrot cake and chocolate brownies. Access the internet (2Kč per minute or 15 minutes

free with a purchase) on their computers or hitch your laptop to their wi-fi hotspot.

**Kavárna Slávia** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 220 957; Národní třída 1, Nové Město; mains 130-260Kč; ☞ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun) Before or after the theatre savour the cherry wood and onyx Art Deco elegance of Prague's most famous old café.

## Pubs

**U Zlatého Tygra** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 221 111; Husova 17, Staré Město; ☞ 3-11pm) The 'Golden Tiger' is an authentic Prague pub where President Havel took President Clinton to show him a real Czech *pivnice*. You'll need to be there at opening time for any chance of a seat, but we're sure Václav and Bill had no problems.

**Jáma** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 222 383; V jámě 7, Nové Město; ☞ 11am-1am) Spot your favourite band on the posters covering the walls of this popular American-themed bar. Expats, tourists and locals come for the burgers'n'Budvar and free wi-fi internet.

**Velryba** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 912 484; Opatovická 24, Nové Město; ☞ 11am-midnight Sat-Thu, 11am-2am Fri) The 'Whale' is the café-bar that finally fulfils your expectations of 'Bohemian' with smoky and intense conversations between local students and a basement art gallery. Bring your own black polo-neck jumper.

**Kozicka** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 818 308; Kozí 1, Staré Město; ☞ noon-4am Mon-Fri, 6pm-4am Sat & Sun) The 'Little Goat' (look for the iron sculpture outside) rocks in standing-room-only fashion until well after midnight in a buzzing basement bar. Your need for midnight munchies will be answered by the late-night kitchen.

**Pivovarský Dům** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 216 666; cr Jecvná & Lipová, Nové Město; ☞ 11am-11.30pm) The 'Brewery House' micro-brewery conjures up interesting tipples from a refreshing wheat beer to coffee and banana flavoured styles – even a beer 'champagne' served in champagne flutes. If you're more of a traditionalist, the classic Czech lager is a hops-laden marvel.

**U Medvídků** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 216 666; cr Jecvná & Lipová, Nové Město; ☞ 11.30am-11pm, beer museum noon-10pm) A microbrewery with the emphasis on 'micro', 'At the Little Bear' specialises in X-Beer, an 11.8% 'knocks-your-socks-off' dark lager. You can't drink too many without falling over, so the usual range of Budvar beers is available to make your evening last longer than a couple of hours.

**Letenské sady** (Map pp266-7; Letna Gardens, Bubeneč) This outdoor garden bar provides sublime

views across the river to the Old Town and southwest to the castle. In summer it's packed with young Praguers enjoying cheap beer and grilled sausages. Sometimes the simple things in life are the best.

## ENTERTAINMENT

From clubbing to classical music, puppetry to performance art, there's no shortage of entertainment in Prague. The city has long been a centre of classical music and jazz, and is now also famed for its rock and postrock scenes. The scene changes quickly, and it's possible places listed here will have changed when you arrive. For current listings, see *Culture in Prague* (available from PIS offices; see p260), the 'Night & Day' section of the weekly *Prague Post* (www.praguepost.cz), and the monthly free *Provokátor* magazine (www.provokator.org), from clubs, cafés, arthouse cinemas and backpacker hostels. For online listings see www.prague.tv.

For classical music, opera, ballet, theatre and some rock concerts – even the most 'sold-out' *vyprodáno* (events) – you can often find tickets on sale at the box office around 30 minutes before the performance starts. There are also many ticket agencies selling the same tickets at a high commission.

Although some expensive tickets are set aside for foreigners, non-Czechs normally pay the same price as Czechs at the box office. Tickets can cost as little as 50Kč for standing-room only to over 950Kč for the best seats; the average price is about 550Kč. Be wary of touts selling concert tickets in the street. They often offer good prices, but you may end up sitting on stacking chairs in a cramped hall listening to amateur musicians, rather than the grand concert hall that was implied.

## Ticket Agencies

**FOK Box Office** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 002 336; www.fok.cz; U obecního domu 2, Staré Město; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) For classical concert tickets.

**Ticketpro** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 333 333; www.ticketpro.cz; pasáž Lucerna, Štěpánská 61; Nové Město; ☞ 9am-12.30pm & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) Sells tickets for all kinds of events. Also has branches in PIS offices (see p260).

**Bohemia Ticket International** (☎ 224 227 832; www.ticketsbti.cz; Nové Město (Map pp266-7; Na příkopě 16, ☞ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun); Staré Město (Map pp266-7; Malé nám 13; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Sells tickets to all kinds of events.

**Ticketstream** (www.ticketstream.cz) An internet-based agency covering events in Prague and the Czech Republic.

## Classical Music & Performance Arts

Around Prague you'll see fliers advertising concerts and recitals for tourists. It's a good chance to relax in atmospheric old churches and stunning historic buildings, but unfortunately many performances are of mediocre quality. The programme changes weekly, and prices begin around 400Kč.

**Rudolfinum** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 227 059 352; www.rudolfinum.cz; nám Jana Palacha, Staré Město; ☞ box office 10am-12.30pm & 1.20-6pm Mon-Fri plus one hour before performances) One of Prague's main concert venues is the Dvořák Hall in the neo-Renaissance Rudolfinum, and home to the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Smetana Hall** (Municipal House; Obecní dům; Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 002 101; www.obecni-dum.cz; nám Republiky 5, Staré Město; ☞ box office 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) Another main concert venue is Smetana Hall in the Art Nouveau Municipal House. A highlight is the opening of the Prague Spring festival.

**Prague State Opera** (Státní opera Praha; Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 227 266; www.opera.cz; Legerova 75, Nové Město; ☞ box office 10am-5.30pm, 10am-noon & 1-5pm Sat & Sun) Opera, ballet and classical drama (in Czech) are performed at this neo-Renaissance theatre.

**National Theatre** (Národní divadlo; Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 901 377; www.narodni-divadlo.cz; Národní třída 2, Nové Město; ☞ box office 10am-6pm) Classical drama, opera and ballet are also performed at the National Theatre.

**Laterna Magika** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 931 482; www.laterna.cz; Nová Scéna, Národní třída 4, Nové Město; tickets from 680Kč; ☞ box office 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Beside the National Theatre is the modern Laterna Magika, a multimedia show combining dance, opera, music and film.

**Estates Theatre** (Stavovské divadlo; Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 902 322; Ovocný trh 1, Staré Město; ☞ box office 10am-6pm) Every night during summer (mid-July to the end of August) **Opera Mozart** (☎ 271 741 403; www.mozart-praha.cz) performs *Don Giovanni*. The opera premiered in the same theatre in 1787.

## Clubs & Live Music

**Mecca** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 283 870 522; www.mecca.cz; U Průhonu 3, Holešovice; admission 90-390Kč, free Wed & Thu; ☞ 10pm-6am Wed-Sat) Prague's most fashionable club attracts film stars, fashionistas and fab



types attracted by the classy restaurant (11am to 11pm) and the pumping dance floor action.

**Lucerna Music Bar** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 217 108; www.muiscbar.cz; Lucerna pasaž, Vodičkova 36, Nové Město; ☎ 8pm-4am) Lucerna features local bands and the occasional up-and-coming international act. Leave your musical snobbery in the cloak room at the popular '80s nights on Friday and Saturday with everything from The Human League to Soft Cell.

**Palác Akropolis** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 296 330 911; www.palacakropolis.cz; Kubelíkova 27, Žižkov; ☎ club 7pm-5am) Get lost in the labyrinth of theatre, live music, clubbing, drinking and eating that makes up Prague's coolest venue. Hip-hop, house, reggae and world music – anything goes. Even a few touring acts like the Strokes and the Flaming Lips.

**Club Radost FX** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 254 776; www.radostfx.cz; Bělehradská 120, Vinohrady; admission 100-250Kč; ☎ 10pm-6am) Prague's most stylish, self-assured club remains hip for its bohemian-boudoir décor and its popular Thursday hip-hop night FXBounce (www.fxbounce.com).

## Jazz

Prague has dozens of jazz clubs ranging from the traditional to the avant-garde.

**Reduta Jazz Club** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 912 246; www.redutajazzclub.cz; Národní třída 20, Nové Město; admission 300Kč; ☎ 9pm-3am) Founded in 1958 and one of the oldest clubs in Europe. Bill Clinton jammed here in 1994.

**USP Jazz Lounge** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 603 551 680; www.jazzlounge.cz; Michalská 9, Staré Město; ☎ 9pm-3am) A less traditional venue with modern (and sometimes uncompromising) live jazz and a DJ session from midnight onwards.

## Theatre

**Black Theatre of Jiří Srnec** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 921 835; www.blacktheatresrnec.cz; Reduta Theatre, Národní 20, Nové Město; tickets 490Kč; ☎ box office 3-7pm Mon-Fri) See the uniquely Czech 'black light theatre' shows at various venues. The performances combine mime, ballet, animated film and puppetry. Jiří Srnec's Black Theatre is the original and the best.

**Theatre on the Balustrade** (Divadlo na zábradlí; Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 868 868; www.nazabradli.cz; Anenské nám 5, Staré Město; ☎ box office 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 2 hrs before show Sat & Sun) Plays by former president Václav Havel are often staged (in Czech, of course) here.

**Divadlo Minor** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 231 351; www.minor.cz; Vodičkova 6, Nové Město; ☎ box office 9am-

1.30pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) If the kids are all castled out, consider the puppets'n'pantomime shows at 9.30am and in the afternoon.

## Gay & Lesbian Prague

**Termix** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 710 462; www.club-termix.cz; Třebízského 4A, Vinohrady; ☎ 8pm-5am Wed-Sun) A friendly mixed gay-and-lesbian scene with an industrial/high-tech vibe. You'll need to queue for Thursday's popular techno party.

**Club Stella** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 257 869; Lužická 19, Vinohrady; ☎ 8pm-4pm Mon) A narrow and intimate bar (just wider than a bar stool) opens out into a candlelit lounge filled with armchairs and friendly locals. Ring the doorbell to get in.

**Piano Bar** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 727 496; Milešovská 10, Žižkov; ☎ 5pm-midnight or later) This cellar bar, cluttered with bric-a-brac and unpretentious locals, is a good spot for a quiet drink. The background beats usually consist of kitschy '70s and '80s Czech pop.

**Downtown Café Praha** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 724 111 276; Jungmannovo nám 21, Nové Město; ☎ 8.30am-midnight) A Prague institution since 1999, the Downtown Café reopened in April 2006 seemingly even more impossibly hip. Chill until late in the LookBetterNaked Lounge, and then ease into the following day with the all-day breakfast and free wi-fi.

**Prague Saints** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 250 326; www.praguesaints.cz; Polska 32) An excellent source of information on Prague's gay scene.

## Cinemas

Most films are screened in their original language with Czech subtitles (*české titulky*), but Hollywood blockbusters are often dubbed into Czech (*dabing*); look for the labels 'tit.' or 'dab.' on listings.

**Kino Aero** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 271 771 349; www.kinoaero.cz; Biskupcova 31, Žižkov) Prague's best-loved art-house cinema, with themed weeks and retrospectives; often with English subtitles.

**Kino Světozor** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 946 824; www.kinosvetozor.cz; Vodičkova 41, Nové Město) Your best bet for seeing Czech films with English subtitles, this place is under the same management as Kino Aero but is more central.

**Palace Cinemas** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 181 212; www.palacecinemas.cz; Slovanský dům, Na příkopě 22, Nové Město) Central Prague's main popcorn palace – a modern 10-screen multiplex showing first-run Hollywood films.

## SHOPPING

Prague's main shopping streets are in Nové Město – Václavské nám, Na příkopě, 28.října and Národní třída – and there are many tourist-oriented shops on Celetná, Staroměstské nám, Pařížská and Karlova in Staré Město. Prague's souvenir specialities include Bohemian crystal, ceramics, marionettes and garnet jewellery.

**Tesco Department Store** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 003 111; Národní třída 26, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) With four floors of clothes, electrical and household goods, plus Prague's best-stocked **supermarket** (☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat, 9am-7pm Sun).

## Crystal

**Moser** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 211 293; Na příkopě 12, Nové Město; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) Founded in 1857, Moser specialises in top-quality Bohemian crystal.

**Rott Crystal** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 229 529; Malé nám 3, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-8pm) Housed in a beautiful neo-Renaissance building, Rott is worth a look even if you're not buying.

## Handicrafts, Antiques & Ceramics

**Manufaktura** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 632 480; Melantrichova 17, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-7.30pm) Branches of Manufaktura around the city centre sell traditional Czech handicrafts, wooden toys and handmade cosmetics.

There are good antique and bric-a-brac shops along Týnská and Týnská ulička, near Staroměstské nám. For ceramics in traditional Moravian folk designs, see **Tupesylidová keramika** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 210 728; Havelská 21, Staré Město; ☎ 10am-6pm).

## Music

**Philharmonia** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 247 291; Pasáž Alfa, Václavské nám 28; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat) For music by Dvořák, Smetana or Janáček. Also stocks Czech folk music and Jewish music.

**Bontonland** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 473 080; Václavské nám 1, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) A megastore stocking music genres ranging from classical, jazz, folk, rock, metal, dance and Czech pop, Bontonland also sells DVDs and has an internet café and a Playstation arena.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

See also p309.

## Bus

The main terminal for international and domestic buses is **Florenc Bus Station** (ÚAN Florenc; Map pp266-7; ☎ 12 999; Křižíkova 4, Karlín), 600m north-east of the main train station (ÚAN is short for *Ústřední autobusové nádraží*, or 'central bus station'). Some regional buses depart from near metro stations Anděl, Dejvická, Černý Most, Nádraží Holešovice, Smíchovské Nádraží and Želivského. Find online bus timetables at www.idos.cz.

At Florenc get information at **window No 8** (☎ 6am-9pm), or use the touch-screen computer.

Short-haul tickets are sold on the bus. Long-distance domestic tickets are sold at the station from AMS windows 1 to 4 in the central hall or direct from Student Agency. Tickets can be purchased from 10 days to 30 minutes prior to departure.

More buses depart in the mornings. Buses, especially if full, sometimes leave a few minutes early, so be there at least 10 minutes before departure time. If you're not seated five minutes before departure, you may lose your reservation. Many services don't operate at weekends, so trains can often be a better option.

There are direct services from Florenc to Brno (150Kč, 2½ hours, hourly), České Budějovice (125Kč, 2¼ hours, four daily), Karlovy Vary (130Kč, 2¼ hours, eight daily), Litoměřice (61Kč, 1¼ hours, hourly) and Plzeň (80Kč, 1½ hours, hourly).

Most buses from Prague to České Budějovice (120Kč, 2½ hours, 16 daily) and Český Krumlov (140Kč, three hours, seven daily) depart from Ná Knížecí bus station, at Anděl metro's southern entrance, or from outside Roztyly metro station.

Bus companies include the following:

**Capital Express** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 220 870 368; www.capitalexpress.cz; 1.výstaviště 3, Holešovice; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, 8am-5pm Fri) Daily service between London and Prague via Plzeň.

**Eurolines-Bohemia Euroexpress International** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 218 680; www.bei.cz; ÚAN Praha Florenc Bus Station, Křižíkova 4-6, Karlín; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Buses to all over Europe.

**Eurolines-Sodeli** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 239 318; www.eurolines.cz; in Czech; Senovážné nám 6, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Links Prague with cities in Western and Central Europe. There is another Eurolines office in Florenc.

**Student Agency** Central Prague (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 999 666; Ječná 37; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri); Florenc (☎ 224

894 430; www.studentagency.cz; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Linking major Czech cities; services throughout Europe.

## Train

Prague's main train station is **Praha-hlavní nádraží** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 221 111 122; Wilsonova, Nové Město). International tickets, domestic and international couchettes and seat reservations are sold on level 2 at even-numbered windows from 10 to 24, to the right of the stairs leading up to level 3. Domestic tickets are sold at the odd-numbered windows from 1 to 23 to the left of the stairs. Note that Praha-hlavní nádraží is undergoing a major redevelopment between 2006 and 2009 and the station layout may alter.

There are three other major train stations in the city. Some international trains stop at Praha-Holešovice station on the northern side of the city, while some domestic services terminate at Praha-Masarykovo in Nové Město, or Praha-Smíchov south of Malá Strana. Study the timetables carefully to find out which station your train departs from or arrives at. Check train timetables online at www.idos.cz.

You can also buy train tickets and get timetable information from the **ČD Centrum** (☎ 6am-7.30pm) at the southern end of Level 2 in Praha-hlavní nádraží, and at the **České dráhy** (Czech Railways; Map pp266-7; ☎ 972 223 930; www.cd.cz; V Celnici 6, Nové Město; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) travel agency.

There are direct trains from Praha-hlavní nádraží to Brno (294Kč, three hours, eight daily), České Budějovice (204Kč, 2½ hours, hourly), Karlovy Vary (274Kč, four hours, three daily), Kutná Hora (98Kč, 55 minutes, seven daily) and Plzeň (140Kč, 1½ hours, eight daily). There are also daily departures to Brno, Bratislava and Vienna from Praha-Holešovice.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Prague's Ruzyně airport is 17km west of the city centre. To get into town, buy a ticket from the public transport (Dopravní podnik; DPP) desk in arrivals and take bus 119 (20Kč, 20 minutes, every 15 minutes) to the end of the line (Dejvická), then continue by metro into the city centre (another 10 minutes; no new ticket needed). Note that you'll also need a half-fare (10Kč) ticket for your backpack or suitcase (if it's larger than 25cm x 45cm x 70cm).

Alternatively, take a **Cedaz minibus** (☎ 220 114 296; www.cedaz.cz) from outside arrivals; buy your ticket from the driver (90Kč, 20 minutes,

every 30 minutes 5.30am to 9.30pm). There are city stops at Dejvická metro and at **Czech Airlines** (Map pp266-7; V Celnici 5) near nám Republiky. You can also get a Cedaz minibus to your hotel or any other address (480Kč for one to four people; 960Kč for five to eight). Phone to book a pick-up for the return trip.

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

## Bicycle Rental

**City Bike** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 776 180 284; www.citybike-prague.com; Královodvorská 5, Staré Město; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep) Two-hour tours cost from 480Kč, departing at 11am, 2pm and 5pm. Rental includes helmet and padlock.

**Praha Bike** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 732 388 880; www.praha-bike.cz; Dlouhá 24, Staré Město; 4/8hr 360/500Kč; ☎ 9am-7pm 15 Mar-15 Nov) Good, new bikes with lock, helmet and map, plus free luggage storage, student discounts and group tours.

## Car & Motorcycle

Driving in Prague is no fun. Challenges include trams, lunatic drivers and pedestrians, one-way streets and police looking for a little handout. Try not to arrive or leave on a Friday or Sunday afternoon or evening, when most of Prague seems to head to and from their weekend houses.

Central Prague has many pedestrian-only streets, marked with Pěší Zoná (Pedestrian Zone) signs, where only service vehicles and taxis are allowed; parking can be a nightmare. Meter time limits range from two to six hours at around 40Kč per hour. Parking in one-way streets is normally only allowed on the right-hand side. Traffic inspectors are strict, and you could be clamped or towed. There are several car parks at the edges of Staré Město, and Park-and-Ride car parks around the outer city (most are marked on city maps), close to metro stations.

## Public Transport

All public transport is operated by **Dopravní podnik hl. m. Prahy** (DPP; ☎ 296 191 817; www.dpp.cz), which has **information desks** (☎ 7am-10pm) at Ruzyně airport and in four metro stations – **Muzeum** (☎ 7am to 9pm), **Můstek** (☎ 7am to 6pm), **Anděl** (☎ 7am to 6pm) and **Nádraží Holešovice**

(☎ 7am to 6pm) – where you can get tickets, directions, a multilingual system map, a map of *Noční provoz* (night services) and a detailed English-language guide to the whole system.

Buy a ticket before boarding a bus, tram or metro. Tickets are sold from machines at metro stations and major tram stops, at newsstands, Trafiky snack shops, PNS and other tobacco kiosks, hotels, all metro station ticket offices and DPP information offices.

A *jízdenka* (transfer ticket) is valid on tram, metro, bus and the Petřín funicular and costs 20Kč (half-price for six- to 15-year-olds); large suitcases and backpacks (anything larger than 25cm x 45cm x 70cm) also need a 10Kč ticket. Kids under six ride free. Validate (punch) your ticket by sticking it in the little yellow machine in the metro station lobby or on the bus or tram the first time you board; this stamps the time and date on it. Once validated, tickets remain valid for 75 minutes from the time of stamping, if validated between 5am and 8pm on weekdays, and for 90 minutes at other times. Within this period, you can make unlimited transfers between all types of public transport (you don't need to punch the ticket again).

There's also a short-hop 14/7Kč adult/concession ticket, valid for 15 minutes on buses and trams, or for up to five metro stations. No transfers are allowed with these, and they're not valid on the Petřín funicular nor on night trams (51 to 58) or night buses (501 to 512). Being caught without a valid ticket entails a 400Kč on-the-spot fine (50Kč for not having a luggage ticket). The inspectors travel incognito, but will show a badge when they ask for your ticket. A few may demand a higher fine from foreigners and pocket the difference, so insist on a *doklad* (receipt) before paying.

You can also buy tickets valid for 24 hours (80Kč) and three/seven/15 days (200/250/280Kč). Again, these must be validated on first use only; if a ticket is stamped twice, it becomes invalid.

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

wards the *výstup* (exit) or to a *přestup* (transfer to another line).

The metro operates from 5am to midnight daily. There are three lines: Line A runs from the northwestern side of the city at Dejvická to the east at Skalka; line B runs from the southwest at Zličín to the northeast at Černý Most; and line C runs from the north at Nádraží Holešovice to the southeast at Háje. Line A intersects line C at Muzeum, line B intersects line C at Florenc and line A intersects line B at Můstek.

After the metro closes, night trams (51 to 58) and buses (501 to 512) rumble across the city about every 40 minutes. If you're planning a late evening, check if one of these services passes near where you're staying.

## Taxi

Prague taxi drivers are notorious for overcharging tourists – try to avoid getting a taxi in tourist areas such as Václavské nám. To avoid being ripped off, phone a reliable company such as **AAA** (☎ 14014) or **ProfiTaxi** (☎ 844 700 800). If you feel you're being overcharged ask for an *účet* (bill). The Prague City Council has a website detailing legitimate fares (<http://panda.hyperlink.cz/taxitext/etaxiweb.htm>), and has increased the maximum fine for overcharging to one million Kč.

## AROUND PRAGUE

The following places can easily be visited on day trips using public transport.

### Karlštejn

Fairy-tale **Karlštejn Castle** (☎ 274 008 154; www.hradkarlstejn.cz; Karlštejn; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug; 9am-5pm May, Jun & Sep; 9am-4pm Apr & Oct; 9am-3pm Nov-Mar) perches above the Berounka River, 30km southwest of Prague. Erected by the Emperor Charles IV in the mid-14th century, it crowns a ridge above the village, a 20-minute walk from the train station.

The castle's highlight is the **Chapel of the Holy Rood**, where the Bohemian crown jewels were kept until 1420, with walls covered in 14th-century painted panels and precious stones. The 45-minute guided tours (in English) on Route I cost 200/120Kč for adult/child tickets. Route II, which includes the chapel (June to October only), are 300/150Kč adult/child per person and must be prebooked. Trains from Praha-hlavní nádraží station to Beroun stop at Karlštejn (46Kč, 45 minutes, hourly).

## Konopiště

The assassination in 1914 of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand d'Este, sparked off WWI. For the last 20 years of his life he avoided the intrigues of the Vienna court, hiding away southeast of Prague in what became his country retreat, **Konopiště Château** (☎ 274 008 154; www.zamek-konopiste.cz; Benešov; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug; 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep; 9am-3pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct; 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov)

Three guided tours are available. **Tour III** (adult/child 300/200Kč) is the most interesting, visiting the archduke's private apartments, unchanged since the state took over the chateau in 1921. **Tour II** (in English adult/child 180/100Kč) takes in the **Great Armoury**, one of Europe's most impressive collections.

The castle is a testament to the archduke's twin obsessions: hunting and St George. Having renovated the massive Gothic and Renaissance building in the 1890s, and installed all the latest technology (electricity, central heating, flush toilets, showers and a lift), Franz Ferdinand decorated his home with his hunting trophies. His game books record that he shot around 300,000 creatures during his lifetime, from foxes and deer to elephants and tigers. About 100,000 of them adorn the walls, marked with when and where it was killed. The **Trophy Corridor** and antler-clad **Chamois Room** (both on Tour III) are truly bizarre sights.

The archduke's collection of St George related art and artefacts relating is also impressive, with 3750 items, many of which are displayed in the **Muzeum sv Jíří** (adult/child 25/10Kč) at the front of the castle. From June to September weekend concerts are held in the castle's grounds.

There are frequent direct trains from Prague's hlavní nádraží to Benešov u Prahy (64Kč, 1½ hours, hourly). Buses depart from Florenc and Roztyly metro station to Benešov on a regular basis (37Kč, 1¼ hours)

Konopiště is 2.5km west of Benešov. Local bus 2 (9Kč, six minutes, hourly) runs from a stop on Dukelská, 400m north of the train station (turn left out of the station, then first right on Tyršova and first left) to the castle car park. Otherwise it's a 30-minute walk. Turn left out of the train station, go left across the bridge over the railway, and follow Konopištská street west for 2km.

## Kutná Hora

In the 14th century Kutná Hora rivalled Prague as Bohemia's most important town, growing wealthy on the silver ore that laced the rocks beneath it. The silver *groschen* that were minted here at that time represented the hard currency of Central Europe. The good times ended when the silver ran out. Mining ceased in 1726, leaving the medieval townscape largely unaltered. It's an attractive place with several fascinating and unusual historical attractions, and was added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 1996.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Kutná Hora hlavní nádraží (the main train station) is 3km northeast of the old town centre. The bus station is more conveniently located on the northeastern edge of the old town.

The easiest way to visit Kutná Hora on a day trip is to arrive on a morning train from Prague, then make the 10-minute walk from Kutná Hora hlavní nádraží to Sedlec Ossuary. From there it's another 2km walk or a five-minute bus ride into town.

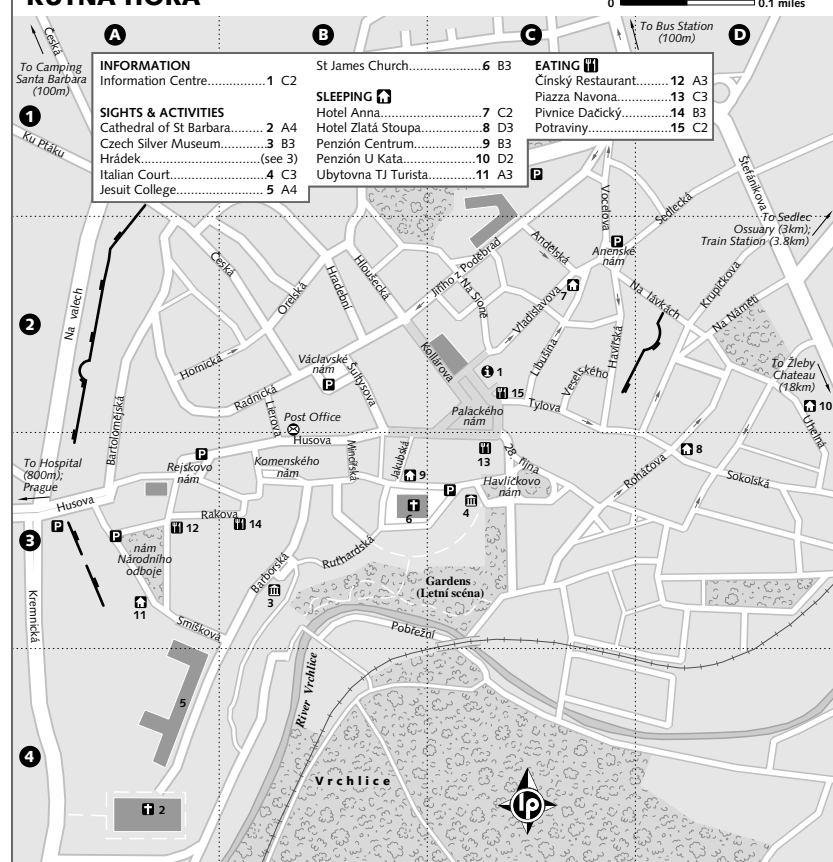
The helpful **information centre** (☎ 327 512 378; http://infocentrum.kh.cz; Palackého nám 377; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Apr-Oct; 9am-5pm Sat & Sun, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) books accommodation, provides internet access (1Kč per minute), and rents bicycles (220Kč per day).

### SIGHTS

Walk 10-minutes south from Kutná Hora hlavní nádraží to the remarkable **Sedlec Ossuary** (Kostnice; ☎ 327 561 143; adult/child 45/30Kč; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 1-5pm Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Mar). When the Schwarzenberg family purchased Sedlec monastery in 1870 they allowed a local wood-carver to get creative with the bones of 40,000 people, which had lingered in the crypt for centuries. Garlands of skulls and femurs are strung from the vaulted ceiling like macabre Christmas decorations. The central chandelier contains at least one of each bone in the human body. Four giant pyramids of stacked bones squat in the corner chapels, and crosses of bone adorn the altar. There's even a Schwarzenberg coat of arms made from bones.

From Sedlec it's another 2km walk (or five-minute bus ride) to central Kutná Hora. **Palackého nám**, the town's main square is unremarkable, but the interesting old town lies to its south.

## KUTNÁ HORA



From the western end of the square a narrow lane called Jakubská leads to **St James Church** (1330), east of which lies the **Italian Court** (Vlašský dvůr; ☎ 327 512 873; Havlíčkovo nám 552; adult/child 80/50Kč; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mar & Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb), the former Royal Mint; Florentine craftsmen began stamping silver coins here in 1300. It now houses a mint museum, and a 15th-century **Audience Hall** with two impressive 19th-century murals depicting the election of Vladislav Jagiello as king of Bohemia in 1471 and the Decree of Kutná Hora being proclaimed by Wenceslas IV and Jan Hus in 1409.

From the southern side of St James Church a cobbled lane, Ruthardská, leads to the **Hrádek** (Little Castle), a 15th-century palace housing

the **Czech Silver Museum** (České Muzeum Stříbra; ☎ 327 512 159; www.cms-kh.cz; adult/child 60/30Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm May, Jun & Sep, 9am-5pm Apr & Oct, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov, closed Mon year-round). The exhibits celebrate the mines that made Kutná Hora wealthy, including a huge wooden device used to extricate 1000kg of rock from the 200m-deep shafts. Don a miner's helmet and lamp to join a 45-minute **tour** (adult/child 110/70Kč) through 500m of medieval mine shafts beneath the town.

Beyond the Hrádek is a 17th-century former **Jesuit college**, with a front terrace featuring 13 baroque sculptures of saints, inspired by those on Prague's Charles Bridge. The second one along of a woman holding a chalice with a stone tower at her side, is



St Barbara, the patron saint of miners and Kutná Hora.

At the far end of the terrace is Kutná Hora's greatest monument, the Gothic **Cathedral of St Barbara** (☎ 327 512 115; adult/child 30/15Kč; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-11.30am & 1-4pm Apr & Oct, 10am-11.30am & 2-3.30pm Nov-Mar). Rivalling Prague's St Vitus in magnificence, its soaring nave culminates in elegant, six-petalled ribbed vaulting. The ambulatory chapels preserve original 15th-century frescoes, some showing miners at work. Walk around the outside of the church too; the terrace at the eastern end enjoys fine views.

### SLEEPING

**Camping Santa Barbara** (☎ 327 512 051; santabarbara.com/worldonline.cz; camp site per person 100Kč; ☎ Apr-Oct; Ⓟ) The nearest camping ground is 800m northwest of the town centre off Česká, near the cemetery.

**Ubytovna TJ Turista** (☎ 327 514 961; nám Národního odboje 56; dm 160Kč; ☎ reception 5-6pm; Ⓟ) Book ahead at this popular, centrally located hostel.

**Penzión U Kata** (☎ 327 515 096; www.ukata.cz; Uhelná 596; s/d 450/600Kč; Ⓟ) You won't lose your head over the rates at this great value family hotel called 'The Executioner'.

**Penzión Centrum** (☎ 327 514 218; www.centrum-penzion.com; Jakubská 57; d incl breakfast 1000Kč; Ⓟ) A quiet, central location with snug rooms – what more could you want? How about pancakes and coffee in the courtyard?

**Hotel Anna** (☎ 327 516 315; www.sweb.cz/hotel.anna; Vladislavova 372; s/d 730/1150Kč; Ⓟ) The Anna has modern rooms with shower and TV, and a 16th-century cellar restaurant.

**Hotel Zlatá Stoupa** (☎ 327 511 540; http://web.telecom.cz/zlatastoupa; Tylova 426; s/d incl breakfast 1220/1950Kč; Ⓟ) Treat yourself with an intriguing combination of mahogany period furniture and full-size bottles of wine in the minibar.

### EATING & DRINKING

**Piazza Navona** (☎ 327 512 588; Palackého nám 90; mains 100-140Kč; ☎ 9am-midnight May-Sep, 9am-8pm Oct-Apr) Have authentic pizza by an authentic Italian on Kutná Hora's main square. Finish with gelati in summer and hot chocolate in winter.

**Čínský Restaurant** (☎ 327 514 151; nám Národního odboje 48; mains 80-220Kč; ☎ closed Mon) The food is Chinese but the stately building is pure Czech. With dishes like rabbit *gung-po*, the menu is still making its mind up. Try the duck with mushrooms.

**Pivnice Dačický** (☎ 327 512 248; Rakova 8; mains 80-2200Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) Try Kutná Hora's dark

beer at this traditional beer hall. Rustle up three drinking buddies and order the Gamekeepers Reserve, a huge platter that demands at least a second beer.

There's a **potraviny** (grocery; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-11.30am Sat) on the eastern side of the main square.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are direct trains from Prague's hlavní nádraží to Kutná Hora hlavní nádraží (98Kč, 55 minutes, seven daily).

Buses to Kutná Hora from Prague (64Kč, 1¼ hours, hourly) depart Florenc bus station; services are less frequent at weekends.

## BOHEMIA

The ancient land of Bohemia makes up the western two-thirds of the Czech Republic. The modern term 'bohemian' comes to us via the French, who thought that Roma came from Bohemia; the word *bohémien* was later applied to people living an unconventional lifestyle. The term gained currency in the wake of Puccini's opera *La Bohème* about a community of poverty-stricken artists in Paris.

### TEREZÍN

The massive ramparts of the fortress at Terezín (Theresienstadt in German) were built by the Habsburgs in the 18th century to repel the Prussian army, but the place is better known as a notorious WWII prison and concentration camp. Around 150,000 men, women and children, mostly Jews, passed through en route to the extermination camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau: 35,000 of them died here of hunger, disease or suicide; only 4000 survived. From 1945 to 1948 the fortress served as an internment camp for the Sudeten Germans who were expelled from Czechoslovakia after the war.

The **Terezín Memorial** (☎ 416 782 576; www.pamatnik-terezin.cz) consists of two main parts – the Museum of the Ghetto in the Main Fortress, and the Lesser Fortress, a 10-minute walk east across the Ohře River. Admission to one part costs 160/130Kč; a combined ticket for both (also including the Magdeburg Barracks) is 180/140Kč. At the ticket office, ask about the historical films in the museum's cinema.

The **Museum of the Ghetto** (Muzeum ghetta; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5.30pm Nov-Mar) records daily life in the camp during WWII through moving

displays of paintings, letters and personal possessions; the Nazi documents recording the departures of trains to 'the east' chillingly illustrate the banality of evil.

Around 32,000 prisoners, many of them Czech partisans, were incarcerated in the **Lesser Fortress** (Malá pevnost; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Oct, 8am-4.30pm Nov-Mar). Take the grimly fascinating self-guided tour through the prison barracks, workshops, morgues and mass graves, before arriving at the bleak execution grounds where more than 250 prisoners were shot.

At the **Magdeburg Barracks** (Magdeburská kasárna; nr Tyršova & Vodářská), the former base of the Jewish 'government', are exhibits on the rich cultural life – music, theatre, fine arts and literature – that flourished against this backdrop of fear. Most poignant are the magazines containing children's stories and illustrations.

Terezín is northwest of Prague and 3km south of Litoměřice; buses between Prague and Litoměřice stop at both the main square and the Lesser Fortress. There are frequent buses between Litoměřice bus station and Terezín (8Kč, 10 minutes, at least hourly).

### LITOMĚŘICE

pop 25,100

The cheerful town of Litoměřice offers relief from the horrors of nearby Terezín. Founded by German colonists in the 13th century, it prospered in the 18th century as a royal seat and bishopric. The old town centre has many picturesque buildings and churches, some designed by the locally born baroque architect Ottavio Broggio.

The old town lies across the road to the west of the train and bus stations, guarded by the remnants of the 14th-century town walls. Walk along Dlouhá to the central square, Mírové nám.

The **information centre** (☎ 416 732 440; www.litomerice.cz; Mírové nám 15/7; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-4pm Sun May-Sep; 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat Oct-Apr) in the town hall, books accommodation and run tours from April to October.

### Sights

The main square is lined with Gothic arcades and pastel façades, dominated by the tower of **All Saints Church**, the step-gabled **Old Town Hall** and the distinctive **House at the Chalice** (Dům U Kalicha), housing the present town hall – the green copper artichoke sprouting from

the roof is actually a chalice, the traditional symbol of the Hussite church. The delicate slice of baroque wedding cake at the square's elevated end is the **House of Ottavio Broggio**.

Along Michalská on the square's southwest corner you'll find another of Broggio's designs, the **North Bohemia Fine Arts Gallery** (☎ 416 732 382; Michalská 7; adult/child 32/18Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar) with the priceless Renaissance panels of the Litoměřice Altarpiece.

Turn left at the end of Michalská and follow Domská towards tree-lined Domské nám on Cathedral Hill, passing **St Wenceslas Church**, a baroque gem, along a side street to the right. At the top of the hill is the town's oldest church, **St Stephen Cathedral**, from the 11th century.

Follow the arch on the cathedral's left and descend a steep cobbled lane called Máchova. At the foot of the hill turn left then first right, up the zigzag steps to the **old town walls**. Follow the walls to the right as far as the next street, Jezuitská, then turn left back to the square.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Autocamp Slavoj** (☎ 416 734 481; kemp.litomerice@post.cz; per tent/bungalow 70/200Kč; ☎ May-Sep; Ⓟ) South of the train station, this pleasant camping ground is on an island called Střelecký ostrov (Marksmen Island).

**U Svatého Václava** (☎ 416 737 500; www.upfront.cz/penzion; Svatovavřavská 12; s/d incl breakfast 600/1000Kč) Beside St Wenceslas Church, this haven has well-equipped rooms, hearty cooked breakfasts, and owners whose English is better than they think.

**Pension Prislín** (☎ 416 735 833; www.pension.cz; Na Kocandě 12; s/d incl breakfast 700/1200Kč; Ⓟ) On a busy road near the train station, Pension Prislín conceals a quiet garden with river views.

**Hotel Salva Guarda** (☎ 416 732 506; www.salva-garda.cz; Mírové nám 12; s/d 990/1450Kč; Ⓟ) With interesting old maps in reception, it's a shame they keep the lights so low. The spotless rooms, however, are well-lit in this classy hotel that's housed in a *sgraffito* building built in 1566.

**Music Club Viva** (☎ 606 437 783; Mezibrani; mains 90-220Kč) Shared wooden tables ensures conversation flows as naturally as the drinks in this hip spot in the old town bastion. The posters feature everyone from Frank Sinatra to Bob Marley.

**Radniční sklípek** (☎ 416 731 142, Mírové nám 21; mains 80-170Kč) Keep your head down in this labyrinth of underground cellars. It should be

easy because you'll be tucking into great value grills accompanied by a good wine list.

**Pizzeria Sole** (☎ 416 737 150; Na Valech 56; pizza 75Kč) This no-frills Italian café has cheap pizzas and good-value soup, pasta and dessert combos.

**Pekárna Kodys & Hamele** (Novobranská 18) Head here for baked goodies.

### Getting There & Away

Direct buses from Prague to Litoměřice (61Kč, 1L hours, hourly) depart from station No 17 at Florenc bus station (final destination Ustí nad Labem).

## BOHEMIAN SWITZERLAND NATIONAL PARK

The main road and rail route between Prague and Dresden follows the fast-flowing Labe (Elbe) River, gouging a sinuous, steep-sided valley through a sandstone plateau on the border between the Czech Republic and Germany. The landscape of sandstone pinnacles, giddy gorges, dark forests and high meadows that stretches to the east of the river is the **Bohemian Switzerland National Park** (Národní park České Švýcarsko), named after two 19th-century Swiss artists, who liked the landscape so much they settled here.

A few hundred metres south of the German border, **Hřensko** is a cute village of pointy-gabled, half-timbered houses crammed into a narrow sandstone gorge where the Kamenice River flows into the Labe. It's overrun with German day-trippers at summer weekends, but a few minutes' walk upstream peaceful hiking trails begin.

A signposted 16km circular hike takes in the main sights; allow five to six hours. From the eastern end of Hřensko a trail leads via ledges, walkways and tunnels through the mossy chasms of the **Kamenice River Gorge**. There are two sections – **Edmundova Soutěska** (Edmund's Gorge; ☎ 9am–6pm May–Aug; Sat & Sun only Apr, Sep & Oct) and **Divoká Soutěska** (Savage Gorge; ☎ 9am–5pm May–Aug; Sat & Sun only Apr, Sep & Oct) – that have been dammed. Continue by punt, poled along by a ferryman through a canyon 5m wide and 50m to 150m deep. Each ferry trip costs adult/child 50/25Kč.

A kilometre beyond the end of the second boat trip, a blue-marked trail leads uphill to the hotel Mezni Louka. Across the road, a red-marked trail continues through the forest to the spectacular rock formation **Pravčická Brána** (www.pbrana.cz; adult/child 50/30Kč; ☎ 10am–

6pm Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun Nov–Mar), the largest natural arch in Europe. In a nook beneath the arch is the **Falcon's Nest**, a 19th-century chateau housing a national park museum and restaurant. From here the red trail descends westward back to Hřensko.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Pension Lugano** (☎ 412 554 146; fax 412 554 156; Hřensko; s/d incl breakfast 540/1080Kč; (P)) A cheerful place in the centre of Hřensko serving terrific breakfasts.

**Restaurace U Raka** (☎ 412 554 157; Hřensko 28; mains 100–220Kč; ☎ 10am–9.30pm) Near Pension Lugano is a pretty half-timbered cottage offering Czech specialities. Try the local *pstruh* (trout).

In hills, **Hotel Mezní Louka** (☎ 412 554 220; Mezní Louka 71; s/d 700/1050Kč; (P)) is a 19th-century hiking lodge with a decent restaurant (mains 90Kč to 170Kč). Across the road is **Camp Mezní Louka** (☎ 412 554 084; per tent/bungalow 60Kč/450Kč; (P)).

If you have your own transport, base yourself in the pretty villages of Janov and Jetřichovice. In Janov **Pension Pastis** (☎ 142 554 037; www.pastis.cz; Janov 22; s/d incl breakfast 550/1100Kč; (P)) has an excellent restaurant; in Jetřichovice try **Pension Drěvák** (☎ 412 555 015; www.cztour.cz/drevak; s/d incl breakfast 700/1050Kč (P)), which is housed in a pretty 19th-century wooden building.

### Getting There & Away

There are frequent local trains from Dresden to Schöna (€5.20, 1¼ hour, every half hour), on the German (west) bank of the river opposite Hřensko. From the station, a ferry crosses to Hřensko (€0.85 or 12Kč, three minutes) on demand.

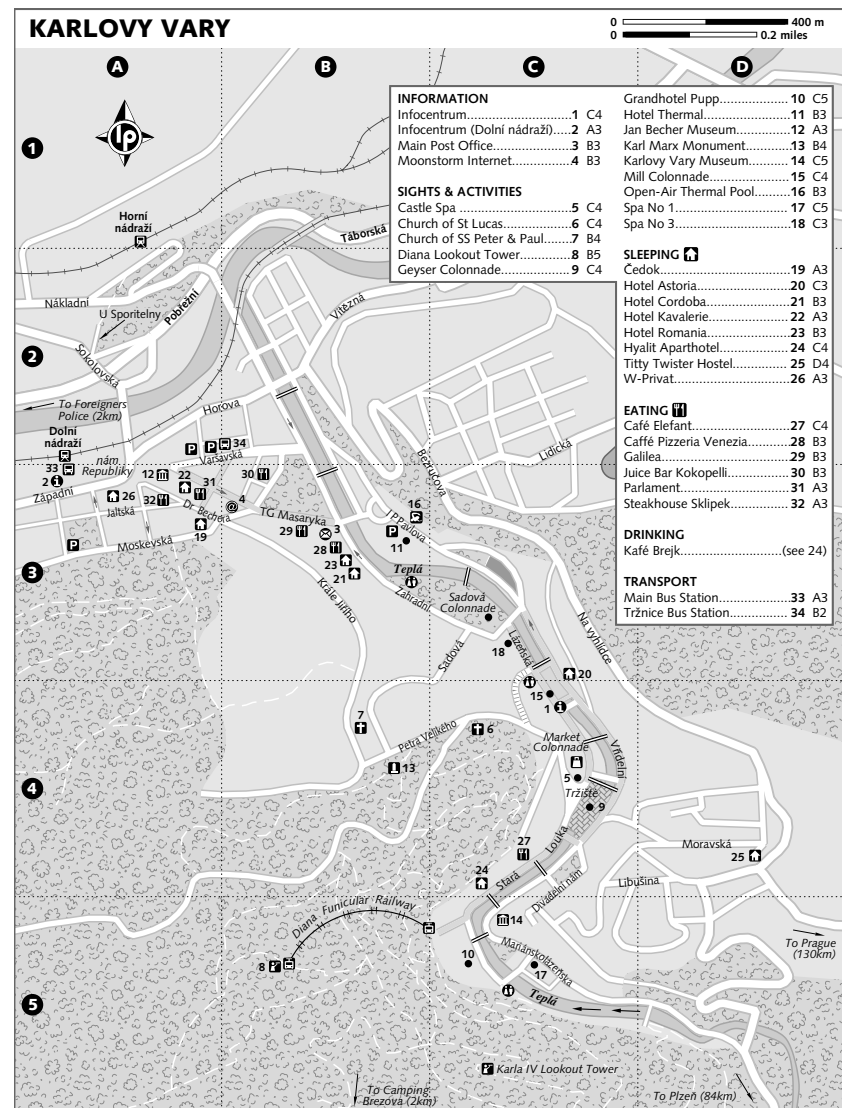
From Prague, take a bus (84Kč, 1¼ hours, five daily) to Děčín, then another to Hřensko (14Kč, 20 minutes, four daily). Alternatively, catch a Dresden-bound train and get off at Bad Schandau (184Kč, two hours, eight daily), then a local train back to Schöna (€1.80, 12 minutes, every half hour).

On weekdays there are three buses a day (year-round) between Hřensko and Mezni Louka (8Kč, 10 minutes), and two a day at weekends (July to September only).

## KARLOVY VARY

pop 60,000

If you've been hiding a designer dog or an ostentatious pair of sunglasses in your backpack, then Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad in German) is



your chance to give them both an airing. The fashionable town is the closest the Czech Republic has to a glam resort, but Karlovy Vary is definitely glam with a small 'g'. Well-heeled hypochondriacs from Germany, Austria and Russia make the pilgrimage and try to enjoy courses of lymphatic drainage and hydrocolonotherapy and other such cleansing wonders.

If Russian matrons walking canine 'bling-on-a-string' doesn't appeal, there's good hiking in the surrounding hills, or just have a drink at a riverside café. It will taste infinitely better than the sulphurous spa water everyone else is drinking.

According to legend, Emperor Charles IV discovered the hot springs accidentally in

1350 when one his hunting dogs fell into the waters (Karlovy Vary means 'Charles' Hot Springs). The spa's glory days lasted from the early 18th century until WWI, with royal guests including Tsar Peter the Great and Emperor Franz Josef I. Musical celebrities included Beethoven, Wagner, Chopin and Brahms. Even Tolstoy and Marx came along to foment their leftist doctrines while being slathered in mud and hosed down by a strapping Bohemian lass.

Now the celebrities are more B-list, attending the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in July, while wondering how their invitation to Cannes got lost in the mail.

### Orientation

Karlovy Vary has two train stations: Dolní nádraží (Lower Station), beside the main bus station, and Horní nádraží (Upper Station), across the Ohře River north of the city centre.

Trains from Prague arrive at Horní nádraží. To get into town, take bus 11, 12 or 13 from the stop across the road to the Tržnice station; 11 continues to Divadelní nám in the spa district. Alternatively, it's 10 minutes on foot: cross the road outside the station and go right, then first left on a footpath that leads downhill under the highway. At its foot, turn right on U Spořitelny, then left at the far end of the big building and head for the bridge over the river.

The Tržnice bus stop is three blocks east of Dolní nádraží, in the middle of the town's modern commercial district. Pedestrianised TG Masaryka leads east to the Teplá River; from here the old spa district stretches upstream for 2km along a steep-sided valley.

### Information

**Infocentrum** Dolní nádraží (☎ 353 232 838; www.karlovyvary.cz; Západní; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun); Lázeňská (☎ 353 224 097; Lázeňská 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) Stocks maps, books accommodation and gives transport advice.

**Main post office** (TG Masaryka 1; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat, 7am-noon Sun) Includes a telephone centre.

**Moonstorm Internet** (TG Masaryka 31; per 15 min 12Kč; ☎ 9am-9pm)

### Sights

At the heart of the old spa district is the neo-classical **Mill Colonnade** (Mlýnská Kolonáda),

where crowds stroll and bands play in the summer. There are several other elegant colonnades and imposing 19th-century spa buildings scattered along the Teplá River, though the 1970s concrete monstrosity of the **Hotel Thermal** spoils the effect slightly.

Pretend to be a spa patient by purchasing a *lázenské pohár* (spa cup) and a box of *oplátky* (spa wafers) and sampling the various hot springs (free); the Infocentrum has a leaflet describing them all. There are 12 springs in the 'drinking cure', ranging from the **Rock Spring** (Skalní Pramen), which dribbles a measly 1.3L per minute, to the robust **Geysir** (Vřídlo), which spurts 2000L per minute in a steaming, 14m-high jet. The latter is housed in the 1970s **Geysir Colonnade** (Vřídelní Kolonáda; admission free; ☎ 6am-7pm), which also sells spa cups and wafers.

The sulphurous spring waters carry a whiff of rotten eggs. Becherovka, a locally produced herbal liqueur, is famously known as the '13th spring' – a few shots will take away the taste of the spring waters, and leave you feeling sprightlier than a week's worth of hydrocolonotherapy.

If you want to take a look inside one of the old spa buildings without enduring the rigours of *proktologie* and *endoskopie*, nip into **Spa No 3** (Lázně III) just north of the Mill Colonnade – it has a café upstairs, a good reason to stick your nose in. The faded entrance hall offers a glimpse of white-tiled institutional corridors stretching off to either side, lined with the doors to sinister-sounding 'treatment rooms' and echoing to the flip-flopped footsteps of muscular, grim-faced nurses. Shiver.

The most splendid of the traditional spa buildings is the beautifully restored **Spa No 1** (Lázně I) at the south end of town, dating from 1895 and once housing Emperor Franz Josef's private baths. Across the river is the baroque **Grandhotel Pupp**, a former meeting place of European aristocrats.

North of the hotel, a narrow alley leads to the bottom station of the **Diana Funicular Railway** (single/return 36/60Kč; ☎ 9am-6pm), which climbs 166m to great views from the **Diana Lookout Tower** (admission free). It's a pleasant walk back down through the forest.

If you descend north from Diana towards the **Karl Marx Monument** and Petra Velikého (Peter the Great Street), visit the Russian Orthodox **Church of SS Peter & Paul** (kostel sv Petra a

Pavla; 1897), amid an enclave of elegant villas and spa hotels. Its five golden onion domes and colourful exterior were modelled on the Byzantine Church of the Holy Trinity in Ostankino near Moscow. It and the Anglican **Church of St Lucas** along the road are reminders of the town's once-thriving expat communities.

Rainy-day alternatives include the **Karlovy Vary Museum** (Nová Louka 23; adult/child 30/15Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Wed-Sun), which has displays on local history, and the **Jan Becher Museum** (☎ 353 170 156; TG Masaryka 57; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm), dedicated to the 18th-century inventor of the local liqueur.

### Activities

Although the surviving traditional *lázně* (spa) centres are basically medical institutions, many of the town's old spa and hotel buildings have been renovated as 'wellness' hotels catering for more hedonistic tastes, with saunas, cosmetic treatments, massages and aromatherapy. **Castle Spa** (Zámecké Lázně; ☎ 353 225 307; Zámečský vrch; basic admission €20; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm) is a modernised spa centre, complete with a subterranean thermal pool, and retains an atmospheric heritage ambience. Basic admission gets you one hour loafing about in the pool; a four-hour session (€70) adds a full-body massage and spa treatments such as hydro-massage and electro-aerosol inhalation.

If all you want is a quick paddle head for the **open-air thermal pool** (bazén; admission per hr 40Kč; ☎ 8am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-9.30pm Sun, closed every 3rd Mon) on the cliff above the Hotel Thermal. There's also a sauna (open 10am to 9.30pm) and a fitness club here.

### Festivals & Events

**Karlovy Vary International Film Festival** (www.kviff.com) Early July.

**International Student Film Festival** (www.freshfilmsfest.net) Late August.

**Karlovy Vary Folklore Festival** Early September.

**Jazzfest Karlovy Vary** Early September; international jazz festival.

**Dvořák Autumn** September; classical music festival.

### Sleeping

Accommodation is pricey, and can be tight during weekends and festivals; book ahead. Agencies **Čedok** (☎ 353 227 837; Dr Bechera 21; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) and **W-Privat** (☎ 353 227 768; nám Republiky 5; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm

Sat) can book private rooms from 400Kč per person. Infocentrum (opposite) can find hostel, *pension* and hotel rooms.

**Camping Březova** (☎ 353 222 665; www.brezovy-haj.cz; tent/bungalow per person 90/150Kč; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎ P) (P) Beside a quiet river valley, this camp site is 3km south of town. Catch a bus from Tržnice bus station to the village of Březova.

**Titty Twister Hostel** (☎ 353 239 071; www.hosteltt.cz; Moravská 44; per person from 390Kč) In a town where cheap sleeps aren't bubbling over, this hostel with a silly name rises to the top. Accommodation is in apartments with two, four or six beds; all with separate kitchens.

**Hotel Kavalerie** (☎ 353 229 613; www.kavalerie.cz; TG Masaryka 43; s/d incl breakfast from 950/1225Kč) Friendly staff abound in this cosy spot above a café, located near the bus and train stations, and away from the spa district's high restaurant prices.

**Hotel Romania** (☎ 353 222 822; www.romania.cz; Zahradní 49; s/d incl breakfast 1000/1750Kč; ☎) Don't be put off by the ugly Hotel Thermal dominating the views from this good-value, reader-recommended spot. Just squint a little, because the rooms are spacious and the English-speaking staff very helpful.

**Hotel Astoria** (☎ 353 335 111; www.astoria-spa.cz; Vřídelní 92; s/d incl breakfast from €40/80; ☎ P) A riverside location opposite the Mill Colonnade completes this classy spot offering a full range of treatments. A leafy lobby relaxes you as soon as you walk in.

**Hyalit Aparthotel** (☎ 353 229 638; www.hyalit.cz; Stará Luka 62; d from 1900Kč; ☎ P) With stylish décor and kitchens, these five apartments are recommended for self-caterers. Children under 15 stay free.

**Hotel Cordoba** (☎ 353 200 255; www.hotel-cordoba.com; Zahradní 37; d incl breakfast 1800Kč) A worthwhile backup.

### Eating & Drinking

**Caffe Pizzeria Venezia** (☎ 353 229 721; Zahradní 43; pizza 120Kč) After a strong espresso and tasty pizza, blur your eyes through your designer sunnies, and see if you can spot any gondoliers from this pretty-in-pink spot looking out on the Teplá River.

**Galilea** (☎ 353 221 183; TG Masaryka 3A, Pasáž Alfa; mains 130-180Kč) Try the creamy dips and Turkish bread at this authentic Middle Eastern spot. Downstairs grab a felafel kebab (65Kč) and relax by the river. Both the restaurant

and the kebab shop have good vegetarian options.

**Steakhouse Sklipek** (☎ 353 229 197; Zeyerova 1; steaks 180Kč) With red-checked tablecloths this place looks like a hangout for Tony Soprano and his mates. The huge steak meals are big enough to feed your entire mob too.

**Parlament** (☎ 353 586 155; Zeyerova 5; ☹ closed Sun) With outdoor tables on the edge of the bustling TG Masaryka pedestrian mall, this is a favoured drinking place for locals. And the food's pretty good too.

Also recommended:

**Café Elefant** (☎ 353 223 406; Stará Louka 30; coffee 45Kč) Classy old-school spot for coffee and cake.

**Juice Bar Kokopelli** (☎ 353 236 254; Bulharská 9; juice & smoothies 20-37Kč) For fruit smoothies that are probably healthier than sulphur-laden spa water.

**Kafé Brejk** (Stará Louka 62; coffee 35Kč, baguettes 50Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm) Trendy new-school spot for takeaway coffees and design-your-own baguettes.

## Getting There & Around

Direct buses to Prague (130Kč, 2¼ hours, eight daily) and Plzeň (76Kč, 1½ hours, hourly) depart from the main bus station beside Dolní nádraží train station.

There are direct (but slow) trains from Karlovy Vary to Prague (274Kč, four hours). Heading west from Karlovy Vary to Nuremberg, Germany (980Kč, three hours, two a day), and beyond, you'll have to change at Cheb (Eger in German). A slow but scenic alternative is a trundle north through the hills and forests to Leipzig (890Kč, 4½ hours, 10 daily); there are several routes, involving two or three changes of train – check the online timetables for these routes at [www.idos.cz](http://www.idos.cz) or [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de).

Local buses cost 10Kč; there are ticket machines at the main stops. Bus 11 runs hourly from Horní nádraží to Tržnice in the commercial district, and on to Divadelní nám. Bus 2 runs between Tržnice and Grandhotel Pupp (Spa No 1) every half hour or so from 6am to 11pm daily.

## LOKET

Wrapped snugly in a tight bend of the Ohre River, the village of Loket is a pretty little place that has attracted many famous visitors from nearby Karlovy Vary. A plaque on the façade of the Hostinec Bílý Kůň on the chocolate-box town square commemorates Goethe's seven visits. The forbidding **castle**

(☎ 352 684 104; adult/child with English guide 90/60Kč, with English text 80/45Kč; ☎ 9am-4.30pm May-Oct, 9am-3.30pm Nov-Apr), perched high above the river, houses a museum dedicated to locally produced porcelain, but the village's main attraction is just wandering around admiring the views.

Have lunch at **Pizzeria na Růžka** (☎ 606 433 282; cnr TG Masaryka & Kostelni; pizza 110Kč) with a sunny Mediterranean ambience and thin-crust wood-fired pizzas.

You can walk from Karlovy Vary to Loket along a 17km blue-marked trail, starting at the Diana lookout; allow three hours. Otherwise, buses from Karlovy Vary to Sokolov stop at Loket (21Kč, 30 minutes, hourly).

## PLZEŇ

pop 175,000

You'll never forget your first authentic Pilsner beer, and that's why brew aficionados from around the world flock to this city where lager was invented in 1842. Plzeň (Pilsen in German) is the home town of Pilsner Urquell (Plzeňský prazdroj), the world's first lager beer, which is now imitated all around the world. 'Urquell' (in German; *prazdroj* in Czech) means 'original source' or 'fountainhead', and the authentic hoppy marvel concocted by the town's brewery puts all pretenders firmly in the shade.

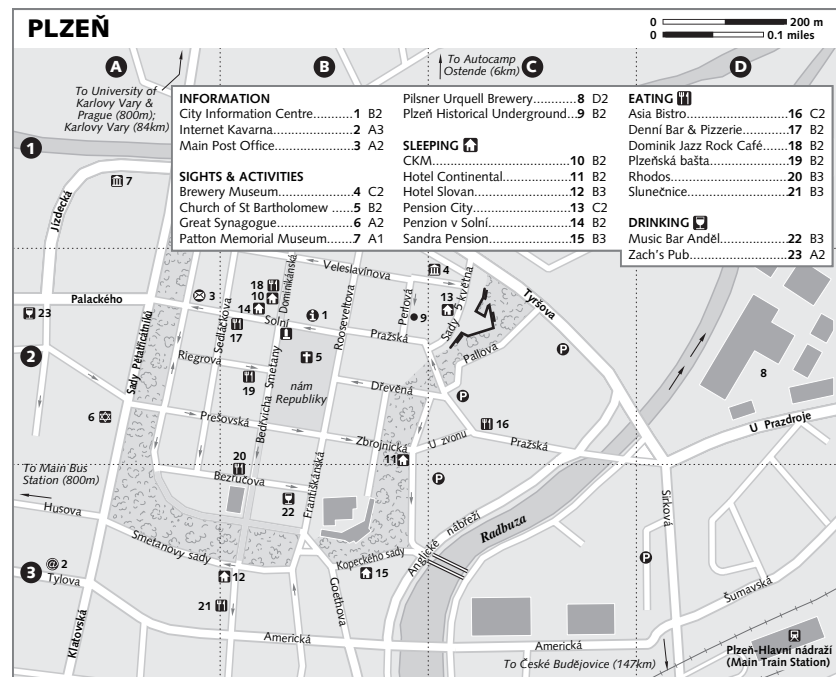
The capital of West Bohemia is a sprawling industrial city, but at its heart lays an attractive old town wrapped in a halo of tree-lined gardens. Plzeň's industrial heritage includes the massive Škoda Engineering Works. These armament factories were bombed heavily at the end of WWII and now make machinery and locomotives.

These days Plzeň is known as a university town, and the town's many pubs showcase its history as the original fountain of eternal golden froth.

## Orientation

The main bus station is west of the centre on Husova, opposite the Škoda Engineering Works. Plzeň-hlavní nádraží, the main train station, is on the eastern side of town, 10 minutes' walk from nám Republiky, the old town square. Tram 2 goes from the train station to the centre of town and on to the bus station.

There are left-luggage facilities at the **bus station** (per small/large bag 12Kč/25Kč; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-



Fri) and the **train station** (per small/large bag 12/25Kč; ☎ 24hr).

## Information

**City Information Centre** ([www.plzen-city.cz](http://www.plzen-city.cz)) nám Republiky (městské informační středisko; ☎ 378 035 330; nám Republiky 41; ☎ 9am-6pm); train station (☎ 972 524 313; ☎ 9am-5pm) Charges 1Kč per minute for internet access. **Internet Kavarna** (☎ 377 222 146; Tylova 6, 1st fl; per hr 40Kč; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, 8am-7.30pm Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun) **Main post office** (Solní 20; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun) Includes a telephone centre.

## Sights

In summer people congregate at the outdoor beer bar in nám Republiky, the broad and sunny old town square, beneath the glowering, Gothic **Church of St Bartholomew** (adult/child 20/10Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sat Apr-Sep, 10am-6pm Wed-Fri Oct-Dec). Inside the soaring 13th-century structure there's a Gothic **Madonna** (1390) on the high altar and fine stained-glass windows. On the exterior, around the back, is an iron grille – touch the angel and make a wish. Climb the 102m church **tower** (adult/child 30/10Kč; ☎ 10am-

6pm weather dependent), the highest in Bohemia, for great views.

The **Brewery Museum** (☎ 377 235 574; [www.prazdroj.cz](http://www.prazdroj.cz); Veleslavínova 6; adult/child 80/50Kč, with text 120/60Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Dec, 10am-5pm Jan-Mar) is a block east of the square in an authentic medieval malt house. Enjoy a tasty unfiltered beer in the museum's pub.

In previous centuries beer was brewed, stored and served in the tunnels beneath the old town. The earliest were dug in the 14th century and the latest date from the 19th century; some 500m of passages are now open, and you can take a 30-minute guided tour at the **Plzeň Historical Underground** (☎ 377 225 214; Perlová 4; adult/child 45/25Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep, Wed-Sun Apr-Jun, Oct & Nov). The temperature is a constant 10°C, so take a jacket.

The **Great Synagogue** (☎ 377 223 346; Sady Pětaticíků 11; adult/child 45/30Kč; ☎ 11am-6pm Sun-Fri Apr-Sep, 11am-5pm Sun-Fri Jun, 11am-4pm Sun-Fri Oct, closed Nov-Mar), west of the old town, is the third largest in the world – only those in Jerusalem and Budapest are bigger. It was built in the Moorish style in 1892 by the 2000 Jews who lived here then. English tours cost 50Kč extra.

North of the Great Synagogue is the **Patton Memorial Pilsen** (☎ 377 320 414; Podřežní 10; adult/child 45/25Kč; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), with an interesting display on the liberation of Plzeň in 1945 by the American army under General George Patton.

Beer fans should make the pilgrimage east across the river to the famous **Pilsner Urquell Brewery** (☎ 377 062 888; www.beer.world.cz; tour adult/concession 120/50Kč; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun). One-hour guided tours (with beer tasting) in English or German begin at 12.30pm and 2pm daily; no advance booking needed.

## Sleeping

**CKM** (☎ 377 236 393; info@ckmplzen.cz; Dominikánská 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) This travel agency can find you a room in a student hostel in summer (from 225Kč per person).

**Autocamp Ostende** (☎ 377 520 194; www.cbox.cz/atc-ostende; tent/bungalow per person 80/200Kč; ☎ May-Sep; P) On Velký Bolevecký rybník, a lake about 6km north of the city centre, and accessible by bus 20 from near the train station.

**University of Karlovy Vary & Prague** (☎ 377 259 381; www.webpark.cz/bolevecká; Bolevecká 34; s/d 250/500Kč; P) The university has student rooms. Take tram 4 two stops north from the Great Synagogue. There is a similar operation at Bolevecká 30. Phone ahead.

**Penzion v Solní** (☎ 377 236 652; www.volny.cz/pension-solni; Solní 8; s/d 600/1020Kč) The best deal in town is this friendly spot sandwiched between a butchery and a clothes shop. With only three rooms, it's essential to book ahead.

**Sandra Pension** (☎ 377 325 358; sandra.101@seznam.cz; Kopecského sady 15; s/d incl breakfast 990/1260Kč; P) This pension has three clean rooms above a friendly park-side restaurant with off-street parking. The staff speak good English.

**Pension City** (☎ 377 326 069; fax 377 222 976; Sady 5 května 52; s/d incl breakfast 1000/1390Kč; P) On a quiet street near the river, the City is popular with both local and overseas guests. The English-speaking staff are a good source of information.

**Hotel Slovan** (☎ 377 227 256; http://hotelslovan.pilsen.cz; Smetanovy sady 1; s/d 1450/2100Kč; s/d with shared bathroom 530/810Kč; P) Centrally located opposite a park, the Slovan's old-world glamour is now faded but the rooms are functional, and it's just a matter of time before it is redeveloped to luxury status. Stay there while you can still afford it.

**Hotel Continental** (☎ 377 235 292; www.hotelcontinental.cz; Zbrojnická 8; s/d 1580/2150Kč; s/d with shared bathroom 860/1460Kč) The Art Deco Continental has survived an Allied bomb in WWII and stays from Gerard Depardieu and John Malkovich. The prices include breakfast and there are also flasher rooms from 2450 to 4500Kč

## Eating & Drinking

**Denní Bar & Pizzeria** (☎ 377 237 965; Solní 9; pizza 75Kč; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat-Sun) Come for the interesting photographs of old Plzeň, and stay for the tasty pizza and pasta in this lively restaurant just off the main square.

**Dominik Jazz Rock Café** (☎ 377 323 226; Dominikánská 3; mains 100Kč; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1am Fri, 3pm-midnight Sat, 3pm-10pm Sun) Get lost in the nooks and crannies of this vast student hangout. There's cool beats all day everyday, and good-value salads and sandwiches at lunchtime. After dark is enjoyably raucous.

**Rhodos** (☎ 736 677 344; Bezručova 20; mains 130Kč) Has Greek fare in leafy surroundings. The 'assemble yourself' gyros with pita bread are good value. Finish with a naughty slice of sweet baklava.

Enjoy Plzeň's lively pub culture at **Zach's Pub** (☎ 377 223 176; Palackého nám 2; ☎ 1-9pm Mon-Thu, 1pm-2am Fri, 5pm-2am Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun), with live music, tasty food and a suitably student atmosphere, and **Plzeňská bašta** (☎ 377 237 262; Riegrova 5) with wooden beams making it a quaint and rustic spot for your first (and maybe your best) Pilsner Urquell.

By day **Music Bar Anděl** (☎ 377 323 226; Bezručova 7) is a coolly hip café, but after dark it's a rocking live venue featuring the best of touring Czech bands.

Also recommended:

**Asia Bistro** (Pražská 31; mains 70Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) Tasty Vietnamese fare including good spring rolls.

**Slunečnice** (Jungmanova 10; baguettes 50Kč;

☎ 7.30am-6pm) For fresh sandwiches on the go.

## Getting There & Away

All international trains travelling from Munich and Nuremberg to Prague stop at Plzeň. There are fast trains that run from Plzeň to Prague (140Kč, 1½ hours, eight daily) and České Budějovice (162Kč, two hours, five daily).

If you're heading for Karlovy Vary, take a bus (76Kč, 1¾ hours, five daily). There are also express buses to Prague (80Kč, 1½ hours, hourly).

## ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE

pop 100,000

After Plzeň, conduct the ultimate Bohemian beer taste test at České Budějovice (Budweis in German), the home of Budweiser Budvar lager. The regional capital of South Bohemia is also a picturesque medieval city. Arcing from the town square are 18th-century arcades leading to bars that get raffishly rowdy on weekends – all fuelled by the town's prized export of course.

## Orientation

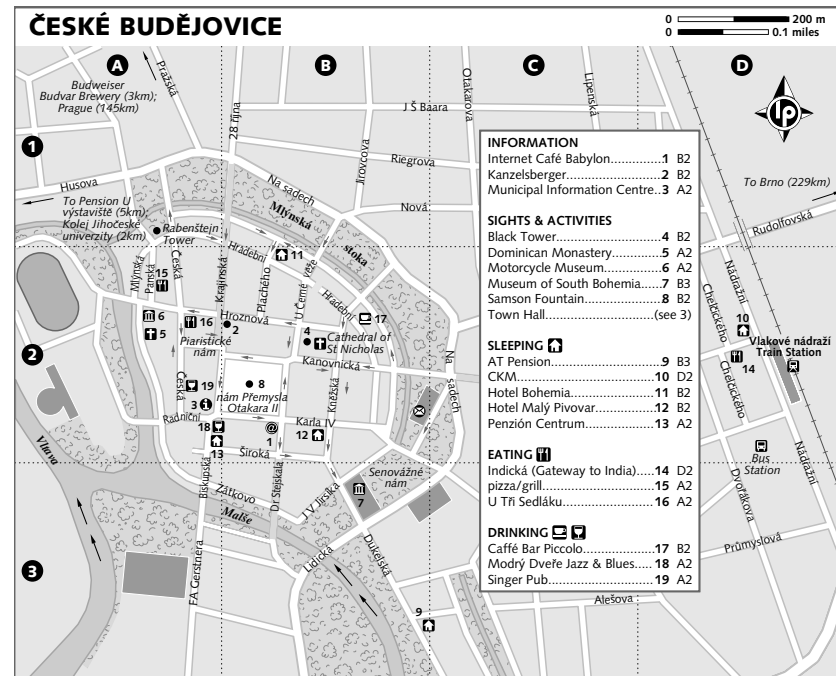
From the adjacent bus and train stations it's a 10-minute walk west down Lannova třída, then Kanovnická, to nám Přemysla Otakara II, the main square.

## Information

**Internet Café Babylon** (5th fl, nám Přemysla Otakara II 30; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun)

**Kanzelsberger** (☎ 386 352 584; Hroznová 17) Bookshop with English-language books upstairs.

**Left luggage** (per small/large bag 12/25Kč) bus station (☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat); train station (☎ 2.30am-11pm)





(Jihočeské muzeum; ☎ 387 929 328; adult/child 50/20Kč; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1-5.30pm Tue-Sun) has an extensive collection on history, books, coins, weapons and wildlife; it's southeast of the centre.

Just as beer from Pilsen (see p286) is called Pilsner, so beer from Budweis is called Budweiser. Indeed, the founders of US brewer Anheuser-Busch chose the brand name Budweiser in 1876 because it was synonymous with good beer. Since the late-19th century, both breweries have used the name, and a legal arm wrestle over the brand continues. There is no debate over which beer is superior: one taste of Budvar and you'll be converted.

The **Budweiser Budvar Brewery** (☎ 387 705 341; www.budweiser.cz; cnr Pražská & K Světě; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 9am-4pm) is 3km north of the main square. Group tours run every day and the 2pm tour (Monday to Friday only) is open to individual travellers; beer tasting costs 22Kč extra. Afterwards taste what all the fuss is about at the brewery's **beer hall** (☎ 10am to 10pm).

## Sleeping

The Municipal Information Centre and **CKM** (☎ 386 351 270; Lannova třída 63; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-3.30pm Fri) travel agency can arrange dorm accommodation from 150Kč per person. Small private *penions* are a better deal than hotels.

**Pension U výstaviště** (☎ 387 240 148; trpakdl@email.cz; U výstaviště 17; r per person 270Kč; ☎) The city's closest thing to a travellers' hostel. It's 30 minutes from the city centre on bus 1 from the bus station to the fifth stop (U parku); the *penion* is 100m up the street (Čajkovského) on the right.

**Kolejihočeské univerzity** (☎ 387 774 201; Studentská 13-19; d 440Kč; ☎) This student block, 2km west of the centre, offers beds from July to September

**AT Pension** (☎ 603 441 069; Dukelská 15; s/d 500/800Kč; ☎) Don't hold your breath for stunning (or even 20th-century) décor, but this convenient spot is mighty friendly with mighty big breakfasts (50Kč).

**Penzion Centrum** (☎ 387 311 801; www.penzioncentrum.cz; Biskupská 130/3; s/d incl breakfast 900/1200Kč) Huge rooms with queen-size beds and crisp white linen make this an excellent reader-recommended spot right near the main square.

**Hotel Bohemia** (☎ 386 354 500; www.hotel-bohemia.cz; Hradební 20; s/d incl breakfast 1490/1790Kč; ☎) Carved wooden doors open to a restful interior in two old burghers' houses down a quiet street. The restaurant comes recommended by the local tourist information office.

**Hotel Malý Pivovar** (☎ 386 360 471; www.malypivovar.cz; Karla IV 8-10; s/d incl breakfast 2300/3300Kč; ☎ ☎) With sports trophies and elegant leather sofas, the lobby is like a flash gentleman's club. However, the smartly elegant rooms will please both the men and the ladies, and it's a short stroll to the Budvarka beer hall downstairs (11am to 11pm).

## Eating & Drinking

**pizza/grill** (Panská 17; pizzas 100Kč; ☎ closed Sun) Just maybe where the phrase 'hole-in-the-wall' came from, **pizza/grill** fits a wood-fired oven, a vintage espresso machine and seating for five diners into a tiny space. Grab takeaway *pivo'n* pizza and dine al fresco.

**U Tri Sedláku** (☎ 387 222 303; Hroznová 488; mains 100-160Kč) Locals celebrate that nothing much has changed at U Tri Sedláku since opening in 1897. Tasty meat-filled dishes go with the Pilsner Urquell that's constantly being shuffled to busy tables.

**Indická** (Gateway of India; ☎ 386 359 355; 1st fl, Chelického 11; mains 100-150Kč; ☎ closed Sun) From Chennai to České comes respite for travellers wanting something different. Be sure to request spicy because the kitchen is used to dealing with timid Czech palates.

**Singer Pub** (Česká 55) With Czech and Irish beers, and the city's cheapest and strongest cocktails, don't be surprised if you get the urge to rustle up something on the Singer sewing machines on every table. If not, challenge the regulars to a game of *foosball* with a soundtrack of noisy rock.

**modrý dveře jazz & blues** (☎ 386 359 958; Biskupská 1; ☎ 10am-midnight) By day **modrý dveře** is a welcoming bar-café with vintage pics of Sinatra. At dusk the lights dim for regular jazz piano gigs on Wednesdays (from 7pm) and live blues and jazz on Thursdays (from 8pm). Tell them Frank sent you.

For bracing coffee and decadent hot chocolate head to **Caffé Bar Piccolo** (Ná Mlýnské stoce 9; coffee 35Kč, hot chocolate 40Kč; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat).

## Getting There & Away

There are fast trains from České Budějovice to Prague (204Kč, 2½ hours, hourly) and Plzeň (162Kč, two hours, five daily). Heading for Vienna (780Kč, four hours, two daily) you'll have to change at Gmünd, or take a direct train to Linz (410Kč, 2¼ hours, one daily) and change there.

## WORTH A TRIP

It's time to lose the black polo-neck jersey and discover the true meaning of bohemian. Perched on a precarious bluff, the old town of **Tábor** was (and still is) a formidable natural defence to invasion. Six centuries ago, the Hussite religious sect founded Tábor as a military bastion in defiance of Catholic Europe. Based on the biblical concept that 'nothing is mine and nothing is yours, because everyone owns the community equally', all Hussites participated in communal work, and possessions were allocated equally in the town's main square. This exceptional non-conformism gave the word 'bohemian' the connotations we associate with it today. The unconventional Taborites further enhanced the location's natural defences by constructing their town as a maze of narrow lanes and protruding houses; all designed to defeat an enemy attack. Religious structures dating from the 15th century line the town square, and it's possible to visit the 650m stretch of underground tunnels the Hussites used for refuge in times of war.

Now the town square is bordered by lively bars like **Kafe & Bar Havana** (☎ 381 253 383; Žižkovská 17; mains 60-200Kč). If you're staying overnight, **Penzion Alfa** (☎ 381 256 165; www.penzionalfa.zde.cz; Klokotská; s/d/tr 500/800/1200Kč) occupies a cosy corner just metres from the main square. Downtstairs you can get your Geronimojo back at the funky Native American-themed café. If that doesn't work there is a groovy hip massage place across the lane that's doing its best to keep the bohemian spirit alive in its original hometown.

The annual **Hussite Festival of Tábor** is held on the second weekend in September. Expect medieval merriment with lots of food, drink and colourfully dressed locals celebrating their Hussite heritage.

Travel to Tábor by bus, either from Prague (80Kč, 1½ hours, 15 daily) or České Budějovice (56Kč, one hour, 18 daily).

The bus to Brno (210Kč, 3½ to 4½ hours, four daily) travels via Telč. Twice a week there's a direct Eurolines bus to Linz (430Kč, 2½ hours) and Salzburg (750Kč, 4½ hours) in Austria.

## HLUBOKÁ NAD VLTAVOU

Hluboká nad Vltavou's neo-Gothic **chateau** (☎ 387 843 911; ☎ 9am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Jun, 9am-4.30pm Apr, Sep & Oct), was rebuilt by the Schwarzenberg family in 1841-71 with turrets and crenellations supposedly inspired by England's Windsor Castle; the palace's 144 rooms remained in use right up to WWII. There are two guided tours to choose from. Tour 1 (adult/child with an English-speaking guide 160/80Kč) takes in the main attractions, while Tour 2 (adult/child 150/80Kč) includes the chateau's kitchen. The surrounding park is open throughout the year. The **information centre** (☎ 387 966 164; Masarykova 35) can help with accommodation.

Hluboká is 10km north of České Budějovice by local bus (16Kč, 20 minutes, two hourly).

## ČESKÝ KRUMLOV

pop 14,600

Crowned by a spectacular castle, and centred on an elegant old-town square, Český Krumlov is a pocket-sized Prague. Renaissance and

Baroque buildings enclose the meandering arc of the Vltava river, housing riverside cafés and bars. Like Prague the town's no stranger to tourists. During summer Český Krumlov may feel like a Middle Europe theme park, but visit a few months either side of July and August and the narrow lanes and footbridges will be (slightly) more subdued and secluded. Winter is an enchanting time to visit with the castle blanketed in snow and pine smoke from chimneys wafting across the river.

The town's original Gothic fortress was rebuilt as an imposing Renaissance chateau in the 16th-century for the lords of Rožmberk, the richest landowners in Bohemia. Since the 18th century the town's appearance is largely unchanged, and careful renovation and restoration has replaced the architectural neglect of the communist era. In 1992 Český Krumlov was added to Unesco's World Heritage List.

## Orientation

The bus station is east of the town centre, but if you're arriving from České Budějovice get off at the Špičák bus stop (the first in the town centre, just after you pass beneath a road bridge). The train station is 1.5km north of the town centre; buses 1, 2 and 3 go from the station to the Špičák bus stop. From the bridge

## LOCAL VOICES

Oldřiška Baloušková's family has lived in Český Krumlov for six generations. Since returning to the town after living in San Francisco for 11 years, she's uniquely qualified to know why living in the town on the Vltava is better than living in the city on the bay.

- 'A feeling of *pohoda*, (peace of mind), permeates Český Krumlov.'
- 'There are no traffic jams – Krumlov is built for people, not for cars.'
- 'We've got a rich history, with buildings over 800 years old.'
- 'We get fog in winter, not in summer.'
- 'It's easier to survive a flood than an earthquake.'

over the main road beside the bus stop, Latrán leads south into town.

Don't take a car into the centre of the old town; use one of the car parks around the perimeter. The one on Chvalšinská, north of the old town, is the most convenient for the castle.

## Information

**Infocentrum** (☎ 380 704 622; www.ckrumlov.cz; nám Svornosti 1; ☎ 9am–8pm Jul–Aug; 9am–7pm Jun & Sep; 9am–6pm Apr, May & Oct; 9am–5pm Nov–Mar) Transport and accommodation information, books and maps, plus internet access (5Kč per five minutes).

**Shakespeare & Sons** (☎ 380 711 203; Soukenická 44; ☎ 11am–7pm) Good for interesting English-language paperbacks. Cult movies screen in a cinema downstairs, and co-owner Oldřiška Baloušková (☎ 737 920 901) conducts interesting walking tours.

**Unios Tourist Service** (☎ 380 725 110; tourist.servic@unios.cz; Zámek 57; ☎ 9am–6pm) Tourist information, accommodation booking and internet café with international calls.

## Sights

The old town, almost encircled by the arcing Vltava River, is watched over by **Český Krumlov Castle** (☎ 380 704 721; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun Jun–Aug, 9am–5pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct), and its ornately decorated fairytale **Round Tower** (35/20Kč). Three different guided tours are on offer: Tour I (adult/child 160/80Kč) takes in the lavish Renaissance and baroque apartments that the aristocratic Rožmberk and

Schwarzenberg families once called home; Tour II (adult/child 140/70Kč) concentrates on the Schwarzenbergs and visits the apartments used by the family in the 19th-century; and the Theatre Tour (adult/child 180/90Kč) explores the chateau's remarkable rococo theatre, complete with original stage machinery. Wandering through the courtyards and gardens is free.

The path beyond the fourth courtyard leads across the spectacular **Most ná Plášti** to the castle gardens. A ramp to the right leads to the **former riding school**, now a restaurant. The relief above the door shows cherubs offering the head and boots of a vanquished Turk – a reference to Adolf von Schwarzenberg, who conquered the Turkish fortress of Raab in the 16th-century. From here the Italian-style **Zámecká zahrada** (castle gardens) stretch away towards the **Bellarie summer pavilion**.

Across the river is nám Svornosti, the old town square, ringed by pleasant cafés and overlooked by the Gothic **town hall** and a baroque **plague column** (1716). Above the square is the striking Gothic **Church of St Vitus** (1439), and nearby is the **Regional Museum** (☎ 380 711 674; Horní 152; adult/child 50/25Kč; ☎ 10am–6pm Jul–Aug; 10am–5pm May–Jun & Sep; 9am–4pm Tue–Fri, 1–4pm Sat & Sun, Mar–Apr & Oct–Dec), with an interesting collection including an interactive model of the town as it was in 1800.

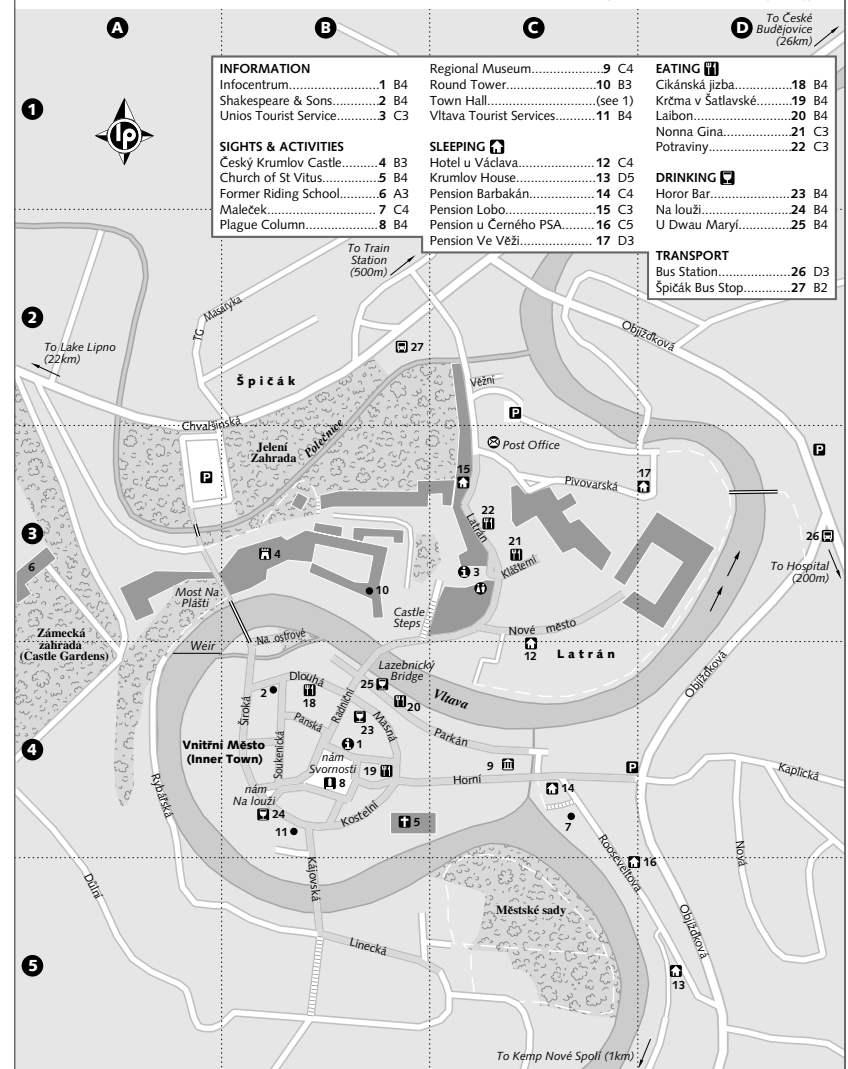
## Activities

The big attraction in summer is messing about on the river. Rent canoes, rafts and rubber rings from **Maleček** (☎ 380 712 508; www.malecek.cz; Rooseveltova 28; ☎ 9am–5pm), where a half-hour splash in a two-person canoe costs 350Kč, or **Vltava Tourist Services** (☎ 380 711 988; Kájovská 62; ☎ 9am–7pm), which also rents bikes (320Kč a day) and arranges horse riding (250Kč an hour). Maleček also has sedate river trips through Český Krumlov on giant wooden rafts seating up to 36 people (45 minutes; 280Kč).

## Festivals & Events

Infocentrum sells tickets to most festivals. **Five-Petalled Rose Festival** In mid-June; features two days of street performers, parades and medieval games (expect a small admission fee). **Chamber Music Festival** Late June to early July. **International Music Festival** (www.czechmusicfestival.com) August. **Jazz at Summer's End Festival** End of August.

## ČESKÝ KRUMLOV



## Sleeping

**Kemp Nové Spolí** (☎ 380 728 305; camp site per person 65Kč; ☎ Jun–Aug; [P]) Located on the east bank of the Vltava River about 2km south of town, the facilities here are basic but the location is idyllic. Take bus 3 from the train or bus station to the Spolí mat. šk. stop (eight a day on weekdays); it's a half-hour walk from the old town.

**Krumlov House** (☎ 380 711 935; www.krumlovhostel.com; Rooseveltova 68; dm/d 300/650Kč) Perched above the river, Krumlov House is friendly and comfortable, and has plenty of books, DVDs and local info to feed your inner backpacker. Lots of fun day trips are also on offer.

**Pension Lobo** (☎ 380 713 153; www.pensionlobo.cz; Latrán 73; d incl breakfast 1100Kč) Pension Lobo offers

more than just spotless and central rooms. It also has a convenient laundromat.

**Pension u Černého PSA** (☎ 380 712 366; www.pension-cerny-pes.cz; Rooseveltova 36; d incl breakfast 1200Kč; (P)) The name means 'Place of the Black Dog', and the black labrador in the photo outside just begs you to stay. Follow your heart and make the dog happy at this friendly spot with retro '70s furniture.

**Penzió Ve Věži** (☎ 380 711 742; www.ckrumlov.cz/pensionvevezi; Pivovarská 28; d incl breakfast 1200Kč; (P)) Spartan rooms, but where else can you sleep in a Gothic tower with a brewery across the road?

**Pension Barbakán** (☎ 380 717 017; www.barbakan.cz; Horní 26; d incl breakfast from 1700Kč; (P)) Originally the town's gunpowder arsenal, Barbakán now creates fireworks of its own with supercomfy rooms featuring bright and cosy wooden décor. A good restaurant is attached (mains 120Kč to 200Kč).

**Hotel u Václava** (☎ 380 715 094; www.uvavclava.cz; Nové Město 25; d 2500Kč; (P)) Four-poster beds create a romantic atmosphere that's perfect for that first (or second) honeymoon. Not recommended for single travellers, but you won't go wrong with a loved one.

## Eating & Drinking

**Laibon** (☎ 728 676 654; Parkán 105; mains 80-160Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) Candles and vaulted ceilings create a great boho ambience in the best vegetarian teahouse in Bohemia. Try the blueberry dumplings or the tasty couscous.

**Nonna Gina** (☎ 380 717 187; Klášteriní ul 52; pizza 110Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) Authentic Italian flavours from the authentic Italian Massaro family feature in this pizzeria down a quiet lane.

**Křma v Satlavské** (☎ 380 713 344; Horní 157; mains 100-150Kč; ☎ noon-midnight) Nirvana for meat-lovers – this medieval barbecue cellar serves sizzling platters in a funky labyrinth illuminated by candles and the flickering flames of open grills. Be sure to book ahead.

**Cikánská jizba** (☎ 380 717 585; Dlouhá 31; mains 100-200Kč; ☎ 3pm-midnight Mon-Sat) The Gypsy Room is the best spot in town to try the flavours of the Roma. At the weekend there is live Roma music.

**Na louži** (☎ 380 711 280; Kájovská 66; mains 120-180Kč; ☎ 11am-11pm) Nothing's changed in this wood-panelled *pivo* parlour for almost a century. Locals pack Na louži for tasty dark beer from the local Eggenberg brewery and huge meals.

**U Dwau Maryí** (☎ 380 717 228; Parkán 104; mains 80-175Kč; ☎ 11am-midnight) Dive into the authentic

medieval interior and emerge onto a sunny riverside terrace. Inside or outside, the food and drink go down very easily in this enjoyably raucous tavern.

**Horor Bar** (☎ 728 682 724; Masná 22; ☎ 6pm-late) Occasional live gigs surface in this kitschy labyrinth celebrating the (un)dead.

**Potraviný** (supermarket; Latrán 55) For good self-catering.

## Getting There & Away

There are direct buses from Prague to Český Krumlov (140Kč, three hours, six daily) via České Budějovice; some buses depart from Prague's Ná Knížecí bus station, near Anděl metro, others from Florenc.

Local buses (26Kč, 50 minutes, seven daily) and trains (46Kč, one hour, eight daily) run to České Budějovice, where you can change for onward travel to Brno, Plzeň or Austria.

## ŠUMAVA

The Šumava is a range of thickly forested hills stretching for 125km along the border with Austria and Germany; the highest summit is Plechý (1378m), west of Horní Planá. Before 1989 the range was divided by the Iron Curtain: a line of fences, watchtowers, armed guards and dog patrols between Western Europe and the communist East; many Czechs made a bid for freedom by creeping through the forests at night. Today the hills are popular for hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing.

The **Povydří trail** along the Vydra (Otter) River in the northern Šumava is one of the most popular walks in the park. It's an easy 7km hike along a deep, forested river valley between Čejkova Pila and Antýgl. Buses run between Sušice and Modrava, stopping at Čejkova Pila and Antýgl. Plenty of accommodation is available.

Around the peak of **Boubín** (1362m), the 46-hectare *prales* (virgin forest) is the only part of the Šumava forest that is largely untouched by human activity. The trailhead is 2km north-east of the zastávka Zatoň train stop (not Zatoň town train station) at Kaplice, where there is car parking as well as basic camping facilities. From here it's an easy 2.5km to Úpralesa Lake on a blue and green marked trail. Remain on the blue trail for a further 7.5km to reach the summit of Boubín. Return by following the trail southwest. The complete loop takes about five hours.

If you'd rather use wheels, the **Šumava Trail** is a week-long ride through dense forests and past mountain streams from Český Krumlov to Domažlice. Top Bicycle (p304) hires out bikes from April to October and also runs organised rides in summer.

If lying in the sun sounds more fun, head to **Lake Lipno**, a 30km-long reservoir south of Český Krumlov. Known as 'the Czech Riviera', it's lined with camping grounds, swimming areas and water-sports centres; there's even a yacht marina at Lipno nad Vltavou.

Infocentrum in Český Krumlov (see p292) has full details.

## Getting There & Away

Up to eight trains a day run from Český Budějovice and Český Krumlov to Volary (120Kč, three hours), calling at Horní Planá and Nová Pec on Lake Lipno. From May to September, buses cover a similar route (80Kč, two hours).

From Volary, trains continue north to Strakonice via Zatoň (28Kč, 30 minutes, four daily).

The Povydří trail is best approached from Sušice, which can be reached by direct bus from Prague (105Kč, 2½ hours, two daily). Another bus links Sušice with Čejkova Pila and Antýgl (44Kč, one hour, two or three daily).

## ADRŠPACH-TEPLICE ROCKS

The Czech Republic's most extraordinary scenery lies near the Polish border, in a protected landscape region known as the Adršpach-Tepliče Rocks (Adršpaško-Teplické skály). Thick layers of stratified sandstone have been eroded and fissured by water and frost to form giant towers and deep, narrow chasms. Discovered by mountaineers in the 19th century, the region is popular with rock climbers and hikers. Sandy trails lead through pine-scented forests, loud with the drumming of woodpeckers, and loop through the pinnacles, assisted occasionally by ladders and stairs.

There are two main formations – **Adršpach Rock Town** (Adršpašské skalní město) and **Tepliče Rock Town** (Teplické skalní město). They now comprise a single state nature reserve, about 15km east of Trutnov. At the entrance to each rock town there's a **ticket booth** (adult/child 50/20Kč; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Nov) where you can pick up a handy 1:25,000 trail map. Outside the official opening hours you can enter for free.

There's a small **information office** (☎ 491 586 012; www.skalyadrspach.cz; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) near Adršpach train station. In summer the trails are busy and you should book accommodation at least a week ahead; in winter (snow lingers to mid-April) you'll have this stunning landscape mostly to yourself, though some trails may be closed.

If you're pushed for time, walk the green loop trail (1½ hours), starting at Adršpach and progressing through deep mossy ravines and soaring rock towers to the **Great Look-out** (Velké panorama). Admire the view of pinnacles escalating above the pines, before threading through the **Mouse Hole** (Mýší díra), a vast vertical fissure barely a shoulder-width wide.

The blue loop trail (2½ hours), starting at Tepliče, passes a metal staircase leading strenuously to **Střmen**, a rock tower once occupied by an outlaw's timber castle, before continuing through the area's most spectacular pinnacles to the chilly ravine of **Siberia** (Sibiř). An excellent day hike (four to five hours), taking in the region's highlights, links the head of the Tepliče trail, beyond Sibiř, to Adršpach via the **Wolf Gorge** (Vlčí rokle). Return from Adršpach to Tepliče by walking along the road (one hour) or by train (10 minutes).

## Sleeping & Eating

In Tepliče nad Metují-Skály the **Hotel Orlik** (☎ 491 581 025; www.orlik.hotel-cz.com; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; (P)) is a good place to recharge and relax with a popular bar. Nearby **Pension Skály** (☎ 491 581 174; www.adrspach-skaly.cz; Střimenské Podhradí 132; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; (P) ☎) has cosy rooms for post-hike relaxation.

The modern **Penzion Adršpach** (☎ 491 586 102; www.adrspach-skaly.cz; s/d incl breakfast 500/1000Kč; (P)) in Adršpach overcomes a lack of old-world charm with comfortable rooms, an excellent restaurant and a friendly border collie.

In a quiet setting between Tepliče and Adršpach, the **Skalní Mlýn** (☎ 491 586 961; www.skalni-mlyn.cz; s/d incl breakfast 580/1060Kč; (P)) has rustic rooms and more friendly dogs in a restored river mill; it's best if you have your own transport.

## Getting There & Away

There are direct buses from Prague's Černý Most metro station to Trutnov (125Kč, 2¾ hours, hourly).



Single-car trains rattle along from Trutnov to Adršpach (40Kč, one hour) and Teplice nad Metují (46Kč, 1½ hours, eight daily).

Frequent trains run from Teplice nad Metují station to Týniště nad Orlicí (76Kč, 1½ hours, eight daily), where there is an early evening train to Wrocław in Poland (224Kč, 4¼ hours, one daily).

## MORAVIA

Away from the tourist commotion of Prague and Bohemia, Moravia provides a quietly authentic experience. Olomouc and Telč are two of the country's prettiest towns, and bustling Brno delivers Czech urban ambience, but without the tourists. Active travellers can explore the stunning landscapes of Moravian Karst region, and everyone can celebrate with a good vintage from the Moravian wine country.

### BRNO

pop 387,200

Brno, the Czech Republic's second-largest city and the capital of Moravia, might seem a tad buttoned-down after the buzz of Prague. Stay a while though, because that traditional Moravian reserve melts away in the old town's bars and restaurants, and a cosmopolitan array of galleries and museums lets you experience modern Czech life away from the touristy commotion of the capital.

### Orientation

The main train station is at the southern edge of the old town, with a major tram stop outside. Opposite the station is the beginning of Masarykova, which leads north to nám Svobody, the city's main square. The main bus station (Brno ÚAN Zvonarka) is 800m south of the train station, beyond Tesco department store. Go through the pedestrian tunnel under the train tracks, and follow the crowd through the Galerie Vankovka shopping centre. Brno's Tuřany airport is 7.5km southeast of the train station.

### Information

**Geokart** (☎ 542 216 561; Vachova 8) Maps and guidebooks.

**Internet Centrum** (Masarykova 22; per hr 40Kč; ☎ 8am-midnight) internet café.

**Knihkupectví Literární Kavárna** (☎ 542 217 954; nám Svobody 13; ☎ 10am-7pm) English-language

books with a good café upstairs. **Left luggage** train station (ground fl; per day 26Kč; ☎ closed 11pm-4am); bus station (per day 25Kč; ☎ 5.15am-10.15pm Mon-Fri, 6am-10.15pm Sat & Sun)

**Lékárna Koliště** (☎ 545 424 811; Koliště 47) A 24-hour pharmacy.

**Netbox** (☎ 542 210 174; Jezuitská 3; per hr 50Kč; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Sat, 2pm-1am Sun) internet café.

**Tourist information office** (Kulturní a Informační Centrum; KIC; ☎ 542 211 090; www.ticbrno.cz; Radnická 8; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep; 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun Nov-Mar) Sells maps and books accommodation.

**Tourist police station** (☎ 974 626 100; Bartořová 1)

**Úrazová nemocnice** (☎ 545 538 111; Ponávka 6) Main hospital.

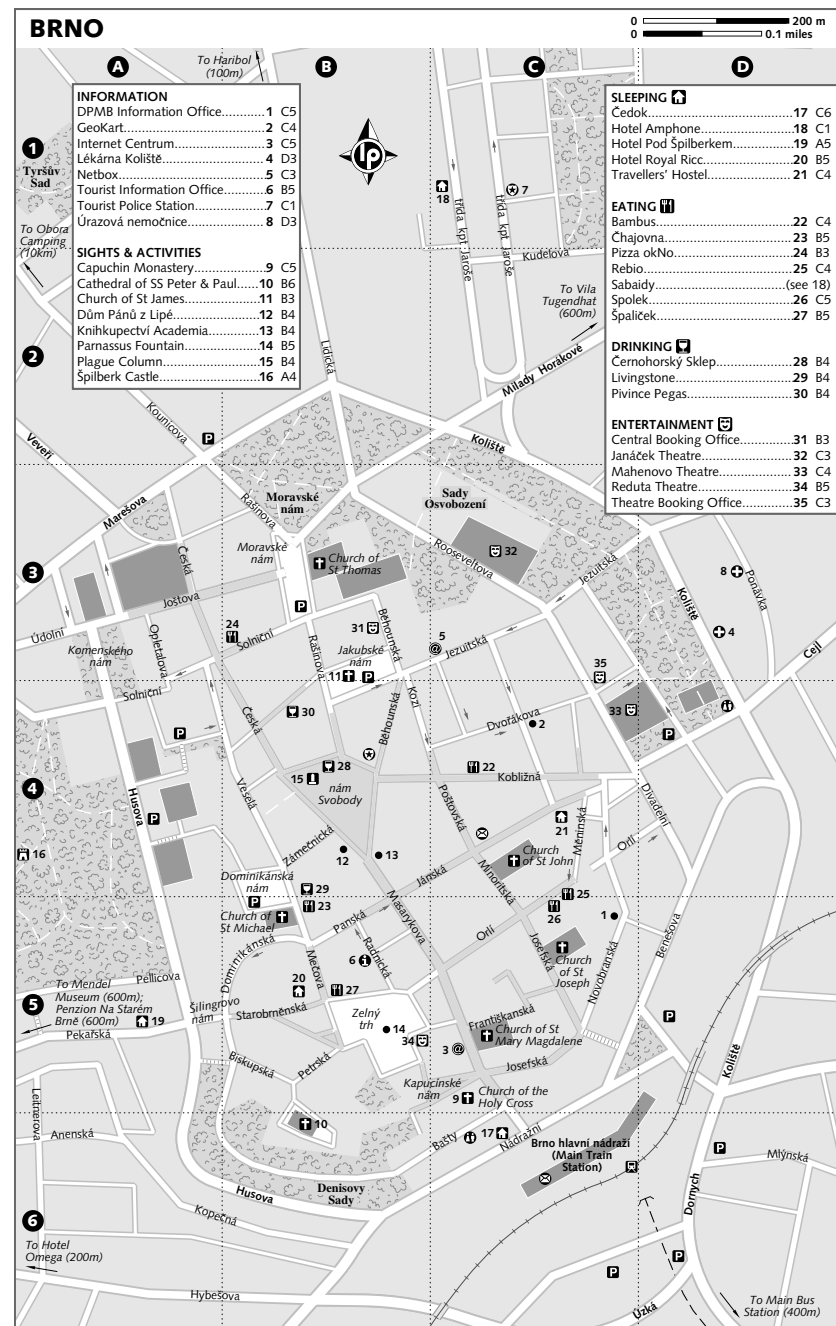
### Sights & Activities

Heading north on Masarykova from the train station, the second turn on the left leads to the gruesomely compelling **Capuchin Monastery** (☎ 542 213 232; Kapucinské nám 5; adult/child 40/20Kč; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-4.30pm Tue-Sat, 11-11.45am & 2-4.30pm Sun, closed Dec & Jan), with a dry, well-ventilated crypt allowing the natural mummification of dead bodies. On display are the desiccated corpses of 18th-century monks, abbots and local notables, from a nameless 12-year-old ministrant to chimney-sweeper Barnabas Orelli, still wearing his boots. In the glass-topped coffin in a separate room is Baron von Trenck – soldier, adventurer, gambler and womaniser, who bequeathed loads of cash to the monastery.

Opposite the monastery, the lane leads into the sloping square of **Zelný trh** (Cabbage Market), the heart of the old town, and where live carp were sold from the baroque **Parnassus Fountain** (1695) at Christmas. The fountain is a symbolic cave encrusted with allegorical figures. Hercules restrains three-headed Cerberus, watchdog of the underworld, and the three female figures represent the ancient empires of Babylon (crown), Persia (cornucopia) and Greece (quiver of arrows). The triumphant lady on top (arrogantly) symbolises Europe.

From the top of the Cabbage Market take Petrská to Petrov Hill, site of the gargantuan **Cathedral of SS Peter & Paul**. Climb the **tower** (adult/child 35/30Kč; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) for great views or descend into the **crypt** (adult/child 15/10Kč; ☎ as per tower).

**Nám Svobody**, the city's main square, is rather drab and mostly 19th century but there are a few older monuments. The **plague column** dates



from 1680, and the **Dům Pánů z Lipé** (House of the Lords of Lipá) at No 17 is a Renaissance palace (1589–96) with a 19th-century sgraffito façade and arcaded courtyard that has been converted into a boutique shopping centre.

North of nám Svobody is the **Church of St James** (1473), with a soaring nave in late-Gothic style. However the main point of interest is outside. Above the 1st-floor window on the south side of the tower at the west end of the church, is a tiny stone figure of a man baring his buttocks in the direction of the cathedral. Legend claims this is a disgruntled mason's parting shot to his rivals working on Petrov Hill.

Above the old town looms the sinister silhouette of **Špilberk Castle** (☎ 542 215 012; www.spilberk.cz; ☹ 9am–6pm May–Sep, 9am–5pm Oct–Apr, closed Mon Sep–Jun). Founded in the 13th century and converted into a citadel during the 17th century, opponents of the Hapsburgs were imprisoned here until 1855. Baron von Trenck died here in 1749.

In the late-18th century parts of the **casemates** – the brick tunnels within the fortifications – were converted into cells for political prisoners, a role that was revived during WWII when the Nazis incarcerated and executed Czech partisans here. The restored tunnels now house a forbidding **Museum of Prison Life** (adult/child 60/30Kč).

The castle's main building is home to the **Brno City Museum** (adult/child 100/50Kč), with exhibits on Renaissance art, city history and modern architecture. There is also an exquisite **Baroque Pharmacy** (adult/child 20/10Kč; ☹ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep), dating from the mid-18th century, and a **lookout tower** (adult/child 20/10Kč) with a superb view – you can pick out the white limestone crags of Mikulov (p305) on the southern horizon. A combined ticket (adult/child 120/60Kč) allows admission to the casemates, museum and tower.

Gregor Mendel (1822–84), the Augustinian monk whose studies of peas and bees at Brno's Abbey of St Thomas established the modern science of genetics, is commemorated in the excellent **Mendel Museum** (☎ 543 424 043; www.mendel-museum.org; Mendlovo nám 1; adult/child 80/40Kč; ☹ 10am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–4pm Wed–Sun Nov–Apr), housed in the Abbey itself, just west of town. Mendel's achievements are clearly explained, and in the garden are the brick foundations of Mendel's original greenhouse. Brno has many other museums and art galleries. Ask at the tourist information office.

Fans of modern architecture will love Brno's examples of cubist, functionalist and Internationalist styles. The finest is the functionalist **Vila Tugendhat** (☎ 545 212 118; www.tugendhat-villa.cz; Černopolní 45; adult/child 120/60Kč; ☹ 10am–6pm Wed–Sun), northeast of town, and designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1930. It's essential to book in advance.

## Festivals & Events

The biggest and noisiest event is August's **Moto Grand Prix** (www.motograndprix.com; admission from 700Kč), when the city packs out with petrol heads. The race circuit is off the D1 road to Prague, 10km west of Brno.

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Cedok** (☎ 542 321 267; Nádražní 10/12) Along with the tourist information office, they can help with accommodation in student dormitories during July and August.

**Travellers' Hostel** (☎ 542 213 573; www.travellers.cz; Jánská 22; dm incl breakfast 290Kč; ☹ Jul–Aug) Set in a grand old building in the heart of the old town, this place provides the most central cheap beds in the city.

**Obora Camping** (☎ 546 223 334; www.autocampobora.cz; tent per person 80Kč, dm 200Kč; ☹ May–Sep; P) This camping ground is at the Brněnská přehrada (Brno dam), northwest of the city centre. Take tram 1 from the main train station to the zoo and change to bus 103. Get off at the seventh stop.

## MIDRANGE

**Penzion Na Starém Brně** (☎ 543 247 872; www.pension-brno.com; Mendlovo nám 1a; s/d incl breakfast 850/1050Kč) An atmospheric Augustinian monastery conceals five compact rooms that come reader-recommended.

**Hotel Omega** (☎ 543 213 876; www.hotelomega.cz; Křídlovská 19b; s/d incl breakfast 890/1350Kč; P) In a quiet neighbourhood, a 1km walk from the centre, this tourist information favourite has spacious rooms decorated in cool pastels with modern pine furniture.

**Hotel Amphone** (☎ 545 428 310; www.amphone.cz; trída kpt Jaroše 29; s/d incl breakfast 990/1490Kč; P) On an elegant tree-lined street, the friendly Amphone has bright and airy rooms around a garden filled with birdsong.

**Hotel Pod Špilberkem** (☎ 543 235 003; www.hotelpodspilberkem.cz; Pekařská 10; s/d incl breakfast 1100/1450Kč; P) Tucked away underneath the castle

are quiet rooms clustered around a central courtyard.

## TOP END

**Hotel Royal Ricci** (☎ 542 219 262; www.romantichotels.cz; Starobrněnská 10; s/d incl breakfast 3500/3900Kč; ☹ ☹ ☹) An utterly captivating mix of traditional and modern, this intimate hotel with 29 rooms would be right at home in Paris or Venice.

## Eating

**Spolek** (☎ 542 213 002; Orli 22; mains 70–100Kč; ☹ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat) The service is unpretentious at this coolly bohemian (yes, we are in Moravia) haven with interesting salads and soups, and a diverse wine list.

**Sabaiddy** (☎ 545 428 310; trída kpt Jaroše 29; mains 100–220Kč; ☹ 5pm–11pm Mon–Fri) With décor incorporating Buddhist statues and a talented Laotian chef conjuring authentically spicy flavours, Sabaiddy delivers 'ommm...' and 'mmmm...'.

**Rebio** (☎ 542 211 110; Orli 16; mains 60–90Kč; ☹ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat) Who says vegetarian food can't taste great? Healthy risottos, veggie pies and tasty desserts stand out in this popular self-service spot.

**Špalíček** (☎ 542 215 526; Zelný trh 12; mains 140–300Kč; ☹ 11am–11pm) Brno's oldest (and just maybe its 'meatiest') restaurant sits on the edge of the Cabbage Market. Ignore the irony and dig into the huge Moravian meals.

Also recommended:

**Bambus** (Kobližná 13; mains from 70Kč) Tasty Asian snacks and light meals.

**Čajovna** (Dominikánské nám 6/7; tea 30Kč) Forty different types of tea and cruisy world music.

**Haribol** (Lužanecká 4; mains 70Kč; ☹ 11am–4pm Mon–Fri) Wholesome veggie feasts with Hare Krishna hospitality.

**Pizza okNo** (Solniční 8; pizza by the slice 15Kč) Hole-in-the-wall and eat-on-the-run pizza.

## Drinking

**Livingstone** (Dominikánské nám 5; ☹ until 1am) Think raucous Irish pub meets funky world discoverer and you're part-way there. There's an adventure travel agency on hand if you get inspired.

**Pivnice Pegas** (Jakubská 4) *Pivo* melts that old Moravian reserve as the locals become pleasantly noisy. Try the wheat beer with a slice of lemon.

**Černohorský Sklep** (nám Svobody 5; ☹ closed Sun) Try the Black Hill aperitif beer or the honey infused Kvasar brew at the Black Mountain Brewery's Brno outpost.

## Entertainment

Brno has an excellent theatre and classical music, and you're expected to put your glad rags on. You can find entertainment listings (mostly in Czech) in the free monthly *Metropolis*.

**Theatre Booking Office** (předprodej; ☎ 542 321 285; Dvořákova 11; ☹ 8am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Buy tickets for performances at the Reduta, Mahenovo and Janacek Theatres at this office behind the Mahenovo Theatre.

**Central Booking Office** (Centrální předprodej; ☎ 542 210 863; Běhounská 17; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–6pm Mon–Fri) Tickets to rock, folk and classical concerts at many venues.

**Janáček Theatre** (Janáčkovovo divadlo; Sady Osvobození) Opera and ballet are performed at the modern theatre, named after composer Leoš Janáček.

**Mahenovo Theatre** (Mahenovo divadlo; Dvořákovo 11) The neobaroque Mahenovo Theatre was designed by the Viennese theatrical architects Fellner and Hellmer, and presents classical drama in Czech and operettas.

**Reduta Theatre** (Reduta divadlo; Zelný trh 4) Newly restored, the Reduta has an emphasis on Mozart's work (he played there in 1767).

## Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses from Brno to Prague (130Kč, 2½ hours, hourly), Bratislava (110Kč, 2¼ hours, hourly) and Vienna (200Kč, 2½ hours, two daily). The departure point is either the bus station or near the railway station opposite the Grand Hotel. Check your ticket.

There are trains to Prague (160Kč, three hours) every two hours. Direct Eurocity trains from Brno to Vienna (575Kč, 1¼ hours, five daily) arrive at Vienna's Südbahnhof.

**ČSA** (www.csa.cz) has scheduled flights to Prague and **Ryan Air** (www.ryanair.com) flies daily from London.

## Getting Around

Buy public transport tickets from tram-stop vending machines, hotels, newsstands or at the **DPMB Information Office** (☎ 543 174 317; www.dpmb.cz; Novobranská 18; ☹ 6am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–3.30pm Sat). Tickets are valid for 40/60 minutes, cost 13/19Kč and allow unlimited transfers; 24-hour tickets are 50Kč. A 10-minute, no-transfer ticket is 8Kč.

You can order a cab from **City Taxis** (☎ 542 321 321).

## Around Brno

### SLAVKOV U BRNA

Slavkov u Brna is better known to history by its Austrian name – **Austerlitz**. On 2 December 1805 the Battle of the Three Emperors was fought over the rolling countryside between Brno and Slavkov, and Napoleon Bonaparte's Grande Armée defeated the combined forces of Emperor Franz I (Austria) and Tsar Alexander I (Russia). The battle was decided at **Pracký kopec**, a hill 12km west of Slavkov, now marked by the **Cairn of Peace** (Mohyla míru; adult/child 75/35Kč; ☎ 9am–6pm Jul–Aug, 9am–5pm May, Jun & Sep, 9am–5pm Tue–Sun Apr, 9am–3.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) with a museum detailing the horrors of the conflict, which claimed 20,000 lives. Re-enactments of the battle take place annually around December 2.

Pracký kopec is awkward to reach by public transport. Take a local train from Brno to Ponětovice (28Kč, 25 minutes, 10 daily), and walk 3.5km southeast through Prace.

### MORAVIAN KARST

The limestone plateau of the Moravian Karst (Moravský kras), 20km north of Brno, is a speleologist's delight, riddled with caves and canyons carved by the subterranean Punkva River. There's a car park at Skalní Mlýn, at the end of the public road from Blansko, with an information desk and ticket office. A **mini-train** (adult/child 50/40Kč return) travels along the 1.5km between the car park and the cave entrance. You should be able to walk there in 20 minutes.

The first part of the tour through the **Punkva Caves** (Punkevní jeskyně; ☎ 516 418 602; www.cavemk.cz; adult/child 100/50Kč; ☎ 8.20am–3.50pm Apr–Sep, 8.40am–2pm Mon–Fri, 8.40am–3.40pm Sat & Sun Oct; 8.40am–2pm Nov–Mar; ♿) involves an amazing 1km walk through caverns draped with stalactites and stalagmites before you emerge at the bottom of the Macocha Abyss. You then board a small, electric-powered boat to cruise along the underground river back to the entrance.

At weekends, and in July and August, tickets for cave tours can sell out up to a week in advance, so book ahead.

Beyond the Punkva Caves entrance a **cable car** (adult/child 60/50Kč return, combined tourist train and cable-car ticket 90/70Kč) whisks you to the upper rim of the spectacular **Macocha Abyss**, a 140m-deep sinkhole. If you're feeling energetic, hike to the top on the blue-marked trail (2km).

The comfortable **Hotel Skalní Mlýn** (☎ 516 418 113; www.smk.cz; s/d 980/1320Kč; ♿) and its res-

taurant (mains 70Kč to 180Kč) is beside the car park. Near the top of the Macocha Abyss is **Chata Macocha** (dm 260Kč), a hikers' hostel and restaurant (mains 80Kč); book through Hotel Skalní Mlýn.

From Brno there are frequent trains to Blansko (34Kč, 30 minutes, hourly). Buses depart from Blansko bus station (across the bridge from the train station) to Skalní Mlýn (12Kč, 15 minutes, five daily April to September). Check times at the Tourist Information Office in Brno before setting off. You can also hike an 8km trail from Blansko to Skalní Mlýn (two hours).

### MORAVSKÝ KRUMLOV

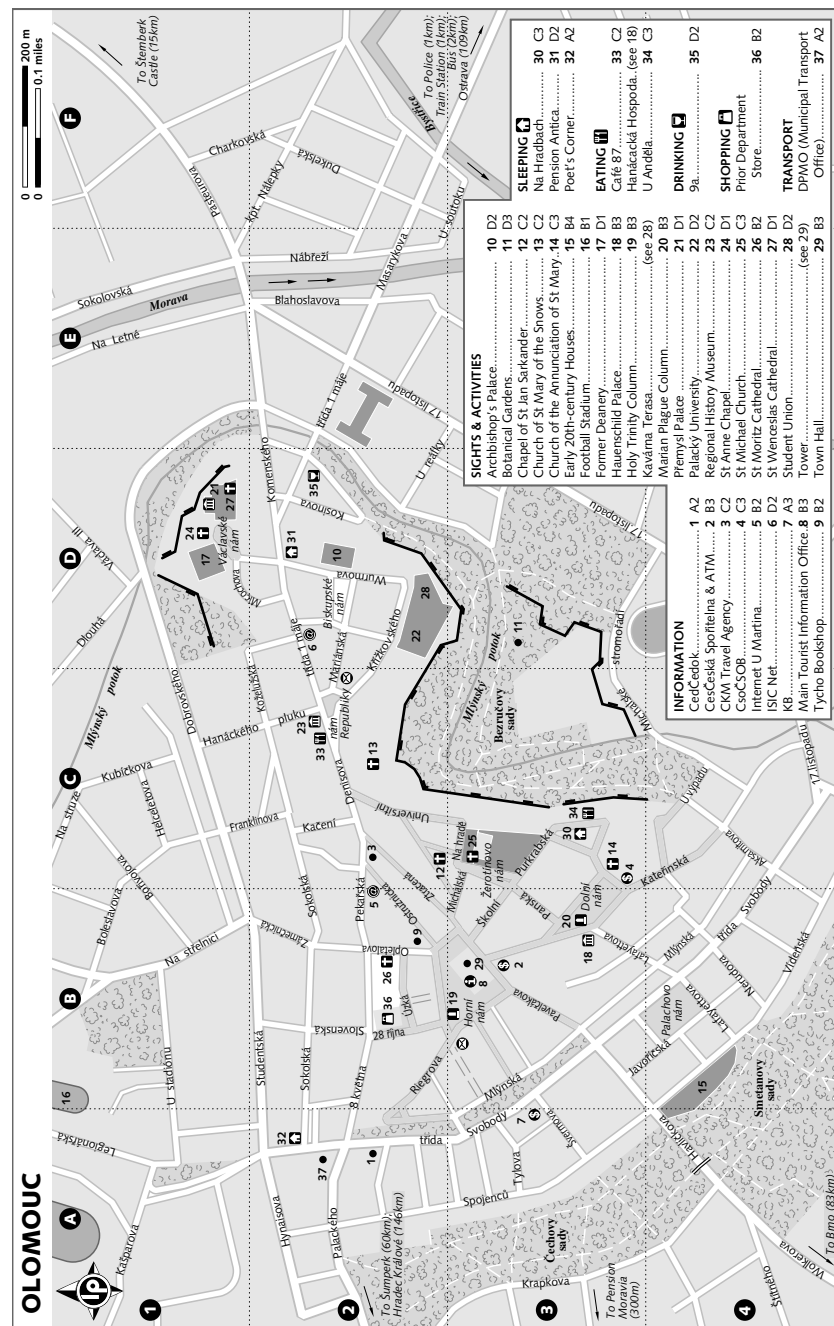
If you have been impressed by the works of Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha in Prague's Municipal House (p264) and Mucha Museum (p265), then you should visit this obscure town near Brno where his greatest achievement is on display (Mucha was born in the nearby village of Ivančice). The **Slav Epic** (Slovanská epopej; ☎ 515 322 789; adult/child 60/30Kč; ☎ 9am–noon & 1–4pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct), painted between 1919 and 1926, is housed in a slightly down-at-heel Renaissance chateau 300m off the main square, the only venue big enough to accommodate it. Twenty monumental and cinematic canvases – total area around 1000 sq metres – depict events from Slavic history and mythology. Though different from the Art Nouveau style of the artist's famous Paris posters, these canvases retain the same mythic, romanticised quality, full of wild-eyed priests, medieval pageantry and battlefield carnage, all rendered in symbolic shades. In the artist's own words, 'black is the colour of bondage, blue is the past, yellow the joyous present, orange the glorious future'.

Moravský Krumlov lies 40km southwest of Brno. There are frequent local trains from Brno's hlavní nádraží to Moravský Krumlov (46Kč, 50 minutes, 10 daily); it's a 2.5km walk west from the station to the chateau.

### OLOMOUC

pop 105,000

As countless tourists embrace the overt charms of Prague and Český Krumlov, Olomouc (pronounced 'Olla-moats'), exudes a subdued charm to emerge as the travellers' equivalent of a special restaurant that is your own little secret. An old town square rivalling Prague for scale and beauty combines with the youthful



vivacity of a modern student town amid the graceful campus of the country's second-oldest university. Some of Moravia's most impressive religious structures play host to a thrilling history, and the youthful population looks ahead with a quiet confidence. And with tourist numbers a mere trickle, Olomouc is one of the Czech Republic's best-value cities.

## Orientation

The main train station (hlavní nádraží) is 2km east of the old town, over the Morava river and its tributary the Bystřice (take tram 1, 2, 5 or 6 heading west). The bus station is 1km further east (take tram 4 or 5).

The old town comprises the two linked squares of Horní (Upper) and Dolní (Lower) nám. The Přemysl Palace is along Ostružnická and třída 1.májě.

## Information

**Internet U Martina** (Ostružnická 29; internet & Skype per min 1Kč; ☎ 9am-midnight) internet and international calls. **Main tourist information office** (Olomoucká informační služba; ☎ 585 513 385; www.olomouc-tourism.cz; Horní nám; ☎ 9am-7pm) Located in the town hall and sells maps and books accommodation.

## Sights & Activities

### HORNÍ NÁM & AROUND

The splendid, **town hall** in the middle of the square was built in 1378, though its present appearance and needle-like **tower** (věž; admission 15Kč; ☎ tours at 11am & 3pm Mar-Oct) date from 1607. Don't miss the **astronomical clock** on the north side, remodelled in communist style so that each hour is announced by ideologically pure workers instead of pious saints. The best display is at midday.

Across the square is the beautiful **Holy Trinity Column** (Sousoší Nejsvětější trojice). Built between 1716 and 1754, the baroque mélange of gold and grey is remarkably reminiscent of the Buddhist shrine of Borobudur in Indonesia. A delightful nun explains the meaning of the interior sculptures in a variety of languages. In 2000 the column became part of Unesco's World Heritage list. The square's surrounded by a jaw-dropping line-up of historic façades and has two of the city's six baroque fountains.

Down Opletalova is the immense and overwhelmingly Gothic **St Moritz Cathedral** (chrám sv Mořice), built methodically from 1412 to 1530. The cathedral's amazing island of peace is shattered every September with an Inter-

national Organ Festival (the cathedral's own organ is Moravia's mightiest).

### DOLNÍ NÁM

The 1661 **Church of the Annunciation of St Mary** (kostel Zvěstování Panny Marie) has a beautifully sober interior. In contrast is the opulent 16th-century Renaissance **Hauenschild Palace** (not open to the public), and the **Marian Plague Column** (Mariánský morový sloup).

Picturesque lanes thread northeast to the green-domed **St Michael Church** (kostel sv Michala), with a robust baroque interior, including a rare painting of a pregnant Virgin Mary. Draped around the entire block is an active Dominican seminary (Dominikánský klášter).

### NÁM REPUBLIKY & AROUND

The original Jesuit college complex, founded in 1573, stretched along Univerzitní and into nám Republiky, and includes the **Church of St Mary of the Snows** (kostel Panny Marie Sněžné), with an interior full of fine frescoes.

In a former convent across the road is the **Regional History Museum** (Vlastivědné muzeum; ☎ 585 515 111; www.vmo.cz; nám Republiky 5; adult/child 40/20Kč, free on Wed; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar) with historical, geographical and zoological displays.

### PŘEMYSL PALACE & ST WENCESLAS CATHEDRAL

The pocket-sized Václavské nám, to the northeast of the old town, has Olomouc's most venerable historic buildings.

Originally a Romanesque basilica first consecrated in 1131, **St Wenceslas Cathedral** (dóm sv Václava) was rebuilt several times before having thoroughly 'neo-Gothic' makeover in the 1880s.

The early 12th-century **Přemysl Palace** (Přemyslovský palác; adult/child 20/10Kč; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep), was originally built for Bishop Jindřich Zdík. An English text guides you through a cloister, with 15th- and 16th-century frescoes, to the archaeological centrepiece, the bishops' rooms with Romanesque walls and windows. The quarters were only rediscovered in 1867, and the artistry is unequalled elsewhere in the Czech Republic.

## Sleeping

The tourist information office can book private and hotel rooms.

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Pension Antica** (☎ 731 560 264; www.pension.antica.cz; Wurmova 1; apt 1600-2000Kč; ☎) If you're travelling by yourself then don't read this. But if you're looking for a romantic stay in a quietly romantic city then read on. With antique furniture, crisp white duvets and Oriental rugs covering polished wooden floors, there's every chance you won't be outside for long enough to enjoy the easy going Renaissance charm of Olomouc. But when you do slip the shackles of luxury, kick the night off in the snug café-bar downstairs before moving on to a cosy restaurant in the old town.

**Poet's Corner** (☎ 777 570 730; www.hostelolomouc.com; 3rd fl, Sokolská 1; dm/tw 300/800Kč) Aussie owner Greg is a wealth of local information at this friendly and well-run hostel. Bicycles can be hired for 100Kč per day.

**Pension Moravia** (☎ 585 416 403; www.pension-moravia.com; Dvořákova 37; s/d 500/800Kč; ☎) A 10-minute walk from the centre, this *pension* provides good value in a quiet residential street without the parking hassles of the old town. If arriving by public transport, catch bus 19 from the railway station to the Dvořákova stop.

**Na Hradbach** (☎ 585 233 243; nahradbach@quick.cz; Hrnčířská 3; s/d 600/800Kč) On a pretty street sits Olomouc's best-value *pension* with two good restaurants across the lane. Be sure to book ahead.

## Eating & Drinking

**Café 87** (Denisova 87; chocolate pie 30Kč, coffee 25 Kč; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) Locals flock to this funky café beside the Museum of Art for coffee and their famous chocolate pie. You be the judge – dark chocolate or white chocolate?

**Hanáčacká Hospoda** (☎ 582 237 186; Dolní nám 38; mains 70-100Kč) In the same building as the Hauenschild palace, the menu lists everything in the local Haná dialect. It's worth persevering though because the Moravian meals are robust, tasty and supreme value.

**U Anděla** (☎ 585 228 755; Hrnčířská 10; mains 130-395Kč) Have a wander round and look at the seriously intriguing memorabilia. Don't be too tardy because the service is prompt and the Moravian food very good.

**9a** (☎ 608 122 993; Nábřeží Přemyslovců 9; ☎) noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 3pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Wood and

bricks combine in a spot that's a cut above Olomouc's other grungier student bars. Try your hand(s) and feet on the climbing wall.

## Getting There & Away

From Brno, there are about 15 buses (60Kč, 1¼ hours) and five direct fast trains (120Kč, 1½ hours) a day. The best connection from Prague (294Kč, 3¼ hours) is by fast train from Praha hlavní nádraží.

## TELČ

### pop 6000

Telč is a quiet town, with a gorgeous old centre ringed by medieval fish ponds and unspoilt by modern buildings. It is also a good spot to unwind with an engrossing book and a glass of Moravian wine.

The bus and train stations are a few hundred metres apart on the eastern side of town. A 10-minute walk along Masarykova leads to nám Zachariáše z Hradce, the old town square.

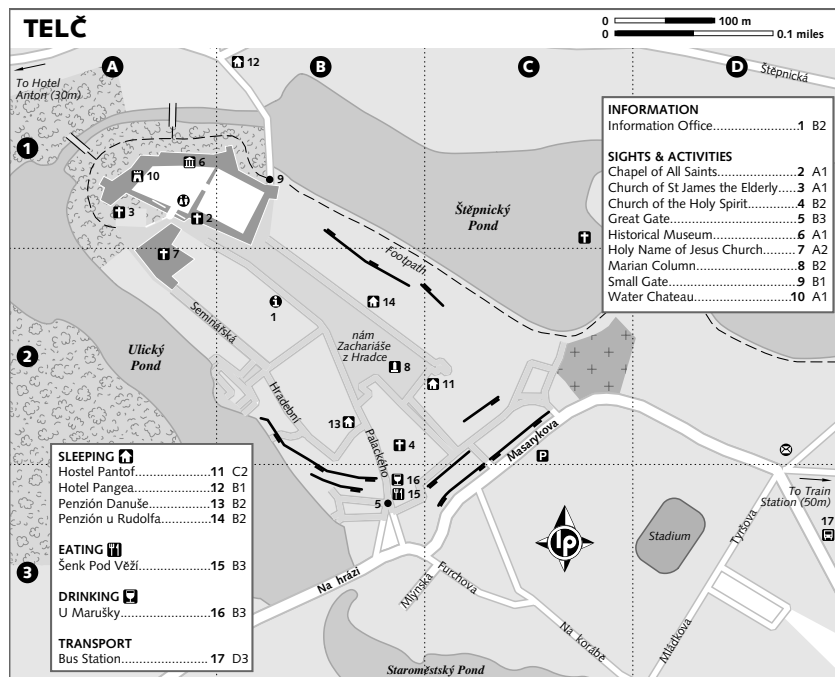
The **information office** (☎ 567 243 145; www.telc-etc.cz; nám Zachariáše z Hradce 10; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) is in the town hall; you can check email here (1Kč per minute).

## Sights

In a country full of picturesque old town squares, Telč's World Heritage-listed and cobblestoned **nám Zachariáše z Hradce** outshines the lot. In the evening, when the tour groups have gone, the Gothic arcades and elegant Renaissance façades are a magical setting.

At the square's northwestern end is the **Water Chateau** (☎ 567 243 821; tours in Czech adult/child 70/35Kč, in English adult/child 140/70Kč; ☎ 9am-11.45am & 1-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9am-4pm Apr, Sep & Oct), a jewel of Renaissance architecture. Tour 1 (adult/concession 80/40Kč, in English 160Kč, one hour) is through some of the country's loveliest Renaissance halls, while Tour 2 (adult/concession 70/35Kč, in English 140Kč, 45 minutes) visits the private apartments, inhabited by the aristocratic owners until 1945.

At the castle's entrance gaze into the **Chapel of All Saints**, where trumpeting angels stand guard over the tombs of Zacharias of Hradec, the castle's founder, and his wife. The local **historical museum** (adult/child 20/10Kč; ☎ 9am-11.45am & 1-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9am-4pm Apr, Sep & Oct), in the courtyard, has a scale model of Telč from 1895 showing just how little the townscape has changed.



## Sleeping & Eating

**Hostel Pantof** (☎ 776 887 466; [www.pantof.cz](http://www.pantof.cz); nám Zachariáše z Hradce 42; dm/d 300/800Kč; ☹ Jul-Aug; P) A relaxed atmosphere and rooms overlooking the square add up to one of the country's best hostels.

**Penzion u Rudolfa** (☎ 567 243 094; [www.volny.cz/libuse,javurkova](http://www.volny.cz/libuse,javurkova); nám Zachariáše z Hradce 58; s/d 300/600Kč) A pretty merchant's house on the main square conceals a friendly *pension* with shared kitchen facilities.

**Penzion Danuše** (☎ 567 213 945; [www.telc-etc.cz/cz/privat/danuše](http://www.telc-etc.cz/cz/privat/danuše); Hradební 25; s/d 450/900Kč, 4-bed apt 2000Kč; P) Discreet wrought-iron balconies and wooden window boxes provide a touch of class on this quiet corner just off the main square.

**Hotel Pangoa** (☎ 567 213 122; [www.pangoa.cz](http://www.pangoa.cz); Na Baště 450; s/d incl breakfast 1200/1600Kč; P ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹) Huge buffet breakfasts and loads of facilities make this slightly functional spot very good value. Rates drop by up to 30% outside July and August.

**Hotel Anton** (☎ 567 223 315; [www.hotel-anton.cz](http://www.hotel-anton.cz); Slavatovská 92; s/d incl breakfast 1350/1800Kč; P ☹) Designer furniture and private balconies com-

bine in Telč's best accommodation. This new hotel has been recommended by readers.

**Senk Pod Věží** (☎ 603 526 999; Palackého 116; mains 100-180Kč; ☹ 11am-3pm & 6-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) Sizzling grills, tasty pizza and occasional live music are the big drawcards at this cosy restaurant tucked under the tower.

**U Marušky** (☎ 605 870 854; Palackého) Telč's hipper younger citizens crowd this buzzy bar for cool jazz and tasty eats.

## Getting There & Away

There are five buses per day from Prague to Telč (120Kč, 2½ hours). Buses between České Budějovice and Brno also stop at Telč (90Kč, two hours, two daily).

## MORAVIAN WINE COUNTRY

If you're heading south from Brno to Vienna, the Moravian wine country lies en route. Bohemian beer is famous worldwide, but until recently the wines of South Moravia were little known internationally.

Czech wine has improved greatly since the fall of communism in 1989, with small producers concentrating on the high-quality end of

the market. Czech red wines, such as the local speciality Svatovavřínecké (St Lawrence), are mediocre, but local whites can be very good.

There are lots of *vinné sklepy* (wine cellars), *vinoteky* (wine shops) and *vinárny* (wine bars) to explore, as well as some spectacular chateaux. The Tourist Information Office in Brno (p296) sells maps and guides covering the wine country. The terrain of the wine country is relatively flat, so cycling is a nice and leisurely way to get around.

## Mikulov

The picturesque town of Mikulov lies at the heart of the Moravia's largest wine-growing region, which specialises in dry, fruity whites like Veltlínské Zelené, Vlašský Ryzlink and Müller-Thurgau.

The **tourist information office** (☎ 519 510 855; [www.mikulov.cz](http://www.mikulov.cz); Nám 30; ☹ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 8.30am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) is on the main square, beneath the impressive Renaissance **chateau** (☎ 519 510 255; adult/child 60/30Kč; ☹ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-4pm Apr & Oct), seat of the Dietrichstein and Liechtenstein families. Bicycles and cycle-touring information are available from **Top Bicycle** (☎ 519 513 745; [www.topbicycle.com](http://www.topbicycle.com); Nám 24/27).

There are plenty of buses from Brno to Mikulov (52Kč, one hour, 14 daily), and less frequent buses between Mikulov and Vienna (165Kč, two hours, two daily).

## Lednice & Valtice

A few kilometres east of Mikulov, the **Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape** consists of 200 sq km of woodland, streams, artificial lakes and tree-lined avenues dotted with baroque, neoclassical and neo-Gothic chateaux. Effectively Europe's biggest landscaped garden, it was created over several centuries by the dukes of Liechtenstein, and is now a Unesco World Heritage site.

The town's main attraction is the massive neo-Gothic pile of **Lednice Chateau** (☎ 519 340 128; ☹ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Sep, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun only Apr & Oct), the Liechtensteins' summer palace. Embellished with battlements, pointy pinnacles and dog-shaped gargoyles, it gazes across a vast, island-dotted artificial lake to a minaret-shaped folly. Tour 1 (adult/concession 80/40Kč, 45 minutes) takes you through a selection of the major rooms, while Tour 2 (adult/concession 100/50Kč, 45 minutes) concentrates on the Liechtenstein

apartments. Wander through the gardens for free.

The huge baroque chateau at Valtice houses the **National Wine Salon** (Národní salon vín; ☎ 519 352 072; [www.salonvin.cz](http://www.salonvin.cz); Zámek 1; ☹ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sat), where you can choose from various wine-tasting sessions costing from 99Kč to 399Kč per person (minimum five people). Next door is the **Zámecké vinoteka** (☹ 10am-6pm), a wine shop where you can get a free tasting before you buy.

There are five buses a day from Mikulov to Lednice (25Kč, 40 minutes), and one a day from Brno (65Kč, 1¼ hours).

# CZECH REPUBLIC DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation reviews in this chapter are listed in order of price, from cheapest to most expensive. In the Prague section, budget means less than 1200Kč for a double, midrange is 1200Kč to 4000Kč, and top end is more than 4000Kč.

You usually have to show your passport when checking in at accommodation in the Czech Republic; some places might insist on keeping it for the duration of your stay, but you can demand to get it back as soon as your details are registered. If they keep it, don't forget to ask for it before you leave!

There are several hundred camping grounds spread around the Czech Republic; most are open from May to September only and charge around 60Kč to 100Kč per person. Camping on public land is prohibited.

**Klub mladých cestovatelů** (KMC Young Travellers Club; Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 220 347; [www.kmc.cz](http://www.kmc.cz); Karolíny Světlé 30, Prague 1) is the HI affiliate in Prague, and can book hostel accommodation throughout the country. In July and August many student dormitories become temporary hostels, and some in Prague are also year-round backpacker hostels. Prague and Český Krumlov are the only places with a solid choice of backpacker-oriented hostels. Dorm beds costs around 400Kč in Prague and 300Kč to 350Kč elsewhere; it's best to book ahead. An HI-membership card is not usually needed, although it will often get you a reduced rate. An ISIC, ITIC, IYTC or Euro26 card may also get you a discount.

Another category of hostel accommodation is *turistické ubytovny* (tourist hostels), which provide very basic dormitory accommodation (175Kč to 300Kč); rooms can usually be booked through the local tourist information office or KMC branch. Look for signs advertising private rooms (*privát* or *Zimmer frei* – like B&Bs without the breakfast). Most tourist information offices can book them for you. Expect to pay from 300Kč to 500Kč per person outside Prague. Some have a three-night minimum-stay requirement.

*Pensions* (*penzióny*) are a step up: small, homely, often family-run, but offering rooms with private bathroom, often including breakfast. Rates range from 1000Kč to 1500Kč for a double room (1750Kč to 2500Kč in Prague).

Hotels in central Prague and Brno are expensive, but smaller towns are usually significantly cheaper. Two-star hotels offer reasonable comfort for 800Kč to 1000Kč for a double, or 1000Kč to 1400Kč with private bathroom (50% higher in Prague).

## ACTIVITIES

There is good hiking among the hills of the Šumava (p294) south of Český Krumlov, in the forests around Karlovy Vary (p282), in the Moravian Karst (p300) and in the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks (p295). Climbing is also excellent in the Moravian Karst and the Adršpach-Teplice Rocks. Canoeing and rafting are popular on the Vltava River around Český Krumlov (p291), and the whole country is ideal for cycling and cycle touring. Especially good for cycling are the Šumava region (p294) and the Moravian Wine Country (p304). A recent introduction are beer and wine tours. We do not recommend you combine these with cycling.

The following companies provide activities-based tours:

**Ave Bicycle Tours** (☎ 251 551 011; www.bicycle-tours.cz) Cycle touring specialists.

**E-Tours** (☎ 572 557 191; www.etours.cz) Nature, wildlife and photography tours.

**Greenways Travel Club** (☎ 519 512 603; www.gtc.cz) From cycling and walking to beer and wine, Czech glass and Czech music tours.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Outside Prague, almost everything closes on Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday. Most restaurants are open every day; most

museums, castles and chateaus are closed on Mondays year round.

**Banks** 8am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday

**Bars** 11am to midnight daily

**Post offices** 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 8am to noon Saturday.

**Restaurants** 11am to 11pm daily.

**Shops** 8.30am to 5pm or 6pm Monday to Friday, 8.30am-noon or 1pm Saturday

## COURSES

The **Institute for Language & Preparatory Studies** (Ústav jazykové a odborné přípravy; ☎ 224 990 411; www.ujop.cuni.cz) runs six-week Czech language courses for foreigners.

The **PCFE Film School** (☎ 257 534 013; www.prague-center.cz) runs four-week intensive film-making workshops in summer, covering screenwriting, directing, cinematography, editing and sound design.

The **International Partnership for Service, Learning & Leadership** (www.ipsl.org) provides longer-term (up to one year) opportunities for volunteering in the Czech Republic. Participants stay with local families and combine study with volunteer work. Opportunities for volunteering include teaching English to blind students and working with special-needs children.

## CUSTOMS

Customs officers can be strict about antiques and will confiscate goods that are questionable. There is no limit to the amount of Czech or foreign currency that can be taken into or out of the country, but amounts exceeding 500,000Kč must be declared.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Pickpocketing can be a problem in Prague's tourist zone, and there are occasional reports of robberies on overnight international trains. There is intense racism towards the local Roma population, which occasionally results in verbal abuse (and even assault) directed at darker-skinned visitors.

## DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Ramps for wheelchair users are becoming more common, but cobbled streets, steep hills and stairways often make getting around difficult. Public transport is a major problem as most buses, trains and trams don't have wheelchair access. Major tourist attractions such as Prague Castle do have wheelchair

access though – anything described as *bezbarierová* is 'barrier-free'.

**Prague Wheelchair Users Organisation** (Map pp266-7; Pražská organizace vozíčkářů; ☎ 224 827 210; www.pov.cz) in Czech; Benediktská 6, Staré Město) can organise a guide and transportation at about half the cost of a taxi, and has a CD-ROM guide to barrier-free Prague in Czech, English and German.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

**Australia** (☎ 02-6290 1386; www.mzv.cz/canberra; 8

Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley, Canberra ACT 2606)

**Canada** (☎ 613-562 3875; www.mzv.cz/ottawa; 251 Cooper St, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0G2)

**France** (☎ 01 40 65 13 00; www.mzv.cz/paris; 15 Ave Charles Floquet, 75007 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 030-22 63 80; www.mzv.cz/berlin; Wilhelmstrasse 44, 10117 Berlin)

**Ireland** (☎ 031-668 1135; www.mzv.cz/dublin; 57 Northumberland Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

**Netherlands** (☎ 070-313 0031; www.mzv.cz/hague; Paleisstraat 4, 2514 JA The Hague)

**New Zealand** (☎ 09-522 8736; auckland@honorary.mzv.cz; Level 3, BMW Mini Centre, 11-15 Great South Rd, Newmarket, Auckland) Postal address: PO Box 7488, Auckland.

**UK** (☎ 020-7243 1115; www.mzv.cz/london; 26 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QY)

**USA** (☎ 202-274 9100; www.mzv.cz/washington; 3900 Spring of Freedom St NW, Washington, DC 20008)

## Embassies & Consulates in the Czech Republic

Most embassies and consulates are open at least 9am to noon Monday to Friday.

**Australia** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 296 578 350; www.embassy.gov.au/cz.html; 6th fl, Klimentská 10, Nové Město) Honorary consulate for emergency assistance only; nearest Australian embassy is in Vienna.

**Austria** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 090 511; www.austria.cz) in German & Czech; Viktora Huga 10, Smíchov)

**Bulgaria** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 222 211 258; bulvelv@mbox.vol.cz; Krakovská 6, Nové Město)

**Canada** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 272 101 800; www.canada.cz; Muchova 6, Bubeneč)

**France** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 251 171 711; www.france.cz) in French & Czech; Velkopřevorské nám 2, Malá Strana)

**Germany** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 113 111; www.deutschland.cz) in German & Czech; Vlašská 19, Malá Strana)

**Hungary** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 324 454; huembprg@vol.cz; Českomalínská 20, Bubeneč)

**Ireland** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 530 061; pragueembassy@dfa.ie; Tržiště 13, Malá Strana)

**Netherlands** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 015 200; www.netherlandsembassy.cz; Gotthardská 6/27, Bubeneč)

**New Zealand** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 222 514 672; egermayer@nzconsul.cz; Dykova 19, Vinohrady) Honorary consulate providing emergency assistance only (eg stolen passport); the nearest NZ embassy is in Berlin.

**Poland** Consulate (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 228 722; konspol@mbox.vol.cz; Vůzlabině 14, Strašnice); Embassy (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 099 500; www.prague.polemb.net; Valdštejnská 8, Malá Strana) Go to the consular department for visas.

**Russia** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 374 100; embrus@tiscali.cz; Pod Kaštany 1, Bubeneč)

**Slovakia** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 233 113 051; www.slovakemb.cz; in Slovak; Pod Hradbami 1, Dejvice)

**South Africa** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 267 311 114; saprague@terminal.cz; Ruská 65, Vršovice)

**Ukraine** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 233 342 000; emb\_cz@mfa.gov.ua; Charlese de Gaulla 29, Bubeneč)

**UK** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 402 111; www.britain.cz; Thunovská 14, Malá Strana)

**USA** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 257 022 000; www.usembassy.cz; Tržiště 15, Malá Strana)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Festival of Sacred Music** (www.mhf-brno.cz) Easter; Brno.

**Prague Spring** (www.festival.cz) May; international music festival.

**United Islands** (www.unitedislands.cz) June; world music festival, Prague.

**Five-Petalled Rose Festival** June; medieval festival, Český Krumlov.

**Karlovy Vary International Film Festival** (www.kviff.com) July

**Český Krumlov International Music Festival** (www.auviev.cz) July to August

**Loveplanet** (www.loveplanet.cz) August; rock and hip-hop festival, Prague.

**Dvořák Autumn** September; classical-music festival, Karlovy Vary.

**Prague Autumn** (www.pragueautumn.cz) September; international music festival.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

**Prague Saints** (www.praguesaints.cz) is the most comprehensive online source for English-language information and has links to gay-friendly accommodation and bars. Homosexuality is legal in the Czech Republic (the age of consent is 15), but Czechs are not yet used to seeing public displays of affection; it's best to be discreet.

## HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Easter Monday** March/April

**Labour Day** 1 May  
**Liberation Day** 8 May  
**SS Cyril and Methodius Day** 5 July  
**Jan Hus Day** 6 July  
**Czech Statehood Day** 28 September  
**Republic Day** 28 October  
**Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day**  
 17 November  
**Christmas** 24 to 26 December

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Czech Tourism** (www.czechtourism.com) Official tourist information.

**Czech.cz** (www.czech.cz) Informative government site on travel and tourism, including visa requirements.

**IDOS** (www.idos.cz) Train and bus timetables.

**Mapy** (www.mapy.cz) Online maps.

**Prague Information Service** (www.prague-info.cz) Official tourist site for Prague.

**PragueTV** (www.praguetv.cz) Prague events and entertainment listings.

**Radio Prague** (www.radio.cz) Dedicated to Czech news, language and culture (in English, French, German, Spanish and Russian).

## MONEY

### Currency

The Czech crown (Koruna česká, or Kč), is divided into 100 hellers or *haléřů* (h). Banknotes come in denominations of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000Kč; coins are of 10, 20 and 50h and one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50Kč.

Keep small change handy for use in public toilets, telephones and tram-ticket machines, and try to keep some small denomination notes for shops, cafés and restaurants – changing the larger notes from ATMs can be a problem.

### Exchanging Money

There is no black market; anyone who offers to change money in the street is a thief.

There's a good network of *bankomaty* (ATMs). The main banks – Komerční banka, ČSOB and Živnostenská banka – are the best places to change cash and travellers cheques or get a cash advance on Visa or MasterCard. Amex and Thomas Cook/Travelex offices change their own cheques without commission. Credit cards are widely accepted in petrol stations, midrange and top-end hotels, restaurants and shops.

Beware of *směnárna* (private exchange of fics), especially in Prague – they advertise misleading rates, and often charge exorbitant commissions or 'handling fees'.

## Costs

Food, transport and admission fees are fairly cheap, but accommodation in Prague can be expensive. Staying in hostels and buying food in supermarkets, you can survive on US\$20 a day in summer. Staying in private rooms or *pensions*, eating at cheap restaurants and using public transport, count on US\$30 to US\$35 a day.

Get out of the capital and your costs will drop dramatically. Some businesses quote prices in euros; prices in this chapter conform to quotes of individual businesses.

## Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is optional, but increasingly expected in Prague. If there is no service charge you should certainly round up the bill to the next 10 or 20Kč (5% to 10% is normal in Prague). The same applies to tipping taxi drivers.

## POST

General delivery mail can be addressed to Poste Restante, Pošta 1, in most major cities. For Prague, the address is Poste Restante, Jindřišská 14, 11000 Praha 1, Czech Republic. International postcards cost 11Kč.

## TELEPHONE

All Czech phone numbers have nine digits – you have to dial all nine for any call, local or long distance. Make international calls at main post offices or directly from phone-card booths. The international access code is 00. The Czech Republic's country code is 420.

Payphones are widespread, some taking coins and some phonecards. Buy phonecards from post offices, hotels, newsstands and department stores for 150Kč or 1000Kč.

Mobile-phone coverage (GSM 900) is excellent. If you're from Europe, Australia

or New Zealand, your own mobile phone should be compatible. It's best to purchase a Czech SIM card from any mobile-phone shop for around 450Kč (including 300Kč of calling credit) and make local calls at local rates. In this case you can't use your existing mobile number.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Czech Tourism** (www.czechtourism.com) offices provide information about tourism, culture and business in the Czech Republic.

**Austria** (☎ 01-533 2193; info-at@czechtourism.com; Herrengasse 17, 1010 Vienna)

**Canada** (☎ 416-363 9928; info-ca@czechtourism.com; Czech Airlines Office, 401 Bay St, Suite 1510, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2Y4)

**France** (info-fr@czechtourism.com; Rue Bonaparte 18, 75006 Paris)

**Germany** (info-de@czechtourism.com; Friedrichstrasse 206, 10969 Berlin).

**Poland** (☎ 22-629 29 16; info-pl@czechtourism.com; Al Róż 16, 00-555 Warsaw)

**UK** (☎ information line 207-631-0427; info-uk@czechtourism.com) Office not open to callers.

**USA** (☎ 212-288 0830; info-usa@czechtourism.com; 1109 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10028)

## VISAS

Everyone requires a valid passport (or identity card for EU citizens) to enter the Czech Republic.

Citizens of EU and EEA countries do not need a visa for any type of visit. Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the USA can stay for up to 90 days without a visa; other nationalities do need a visa.

Visas are not available at border crossings or at Prague's Ruzyně airport; you'll be refused entry if you need one and arrive without one.

Note that although the Czech Republic is now part of the EU, the visas issued by the Czech Republic are national and not Schengen visas. When the Czech Republic joined the EU, the country did not become part of the Schengen area. Therefore valid Schengen visas cannot be used for entering the Czech Republic. Note that the reverse of this is also true; Czech visas cannot be used to enter other EU Member States.

Visa regulations change from time to time, so check www.czech.cz or one of the Czech embassy websites listed on p307.

# TRANSPORT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

The Czech Republic's main international airport is **Prague-Ruzyně** (☎ 220 113 314; www.csl.cz/en). The national carrier, **Czech Airlines** (ČSA; Map pp266-7; ☎ 239 007 007 www.csa.cz; V celnici 5, Nové Město), has direct flights to Prague from many European cities.

The main international airlines serving Prague:

**Aer Lingus** (EI; ☎ 224 815 373; www.aerlingus.ie)

**Aeroflot** (SU; ☎ 227 020 020; www.aeroflot.ru)

**Air France** (AF; ☎ 221 662 662; www.airfrance.com/cz)

**Alitalia** (AZ; ☎ 224 194 150; www.alitalia.com)

**Austrian Airlines** (OS; ☎ 227 231 231; www.aua.com)

**British Airways** (BA; ☎ 239 000 299; www.britishairways.com)

**Croatia Airlines** (OU; ☎ 222 222 235; www.croatiaairlines.hr)

**Czech Airlines** (OK; ☎ 239 007 007; www.csa.cz)

**EasyJet** (EZY; www.easyjet.com)

**El Al** (LY; ☎ 224 226 624; www.elal.co.il)

**FlyGlobespan** (B4; ☎ 220 113 171; www.flyglobespan.com)

**GermanWings** (4U; www.germanwings.com)

**JAT Airways** (JU; ☎ 224 942 654; www.jat.com)

**KLM** (KL; ☎ 233 090 933; www.klm.com)

**LOT** (LO; ☎ 222 317 524; www.lot.com)

**Lufthansa** (LH; ☎ 224 422 911; www.lufthansa.com)

**Malev** (MA; ☎ 220 113 090; www.malev.com)

**SAS** (SK; ☎ 220 116 031; www.sas.se)

**SkyEurope** (NE; ☎ 900 14 15 16; www.skyeurope.com)

**SmartWings** (OS; ☎ 900 166 565; www.smartwings.net)

**SN Brussels Airlines** (SN; ☎ 220 116 352; www.flysn.com)

**Turkish Airlines** (TK; ☎ 234 708 708; www.turkishairlines.com)

### Land

#### BUS

Prague's main international bus terminal is Florenc Bus Station, 600m north of the main train station. The peak season for bus travel is mid-June to the end of September, with daily buses to major European cities; outside this season, frequency falls to two or three a week.

The main international bus operators serving Prague:

**Eurolines-Bohemia Euroexpress International** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 218 680; www.bei.cz; ÚAN Praha

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 155
- EU-wide Emergency Hotline ☎ 112
- Fire ☎ 150
- Motoring Assistance (ÚAMK) ☎ 1230
- Municipal Police ☎ 156
- State Police ☎ 158



Florenc Bus Station, Křižíkova 4-6, Karlín; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Buses to destinations all over Europe.

**Eurolines-Sodeli** (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 239 318; www.eurolines.cz, in Czech; Senovážné nám 6, Nové Město; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) Links Prague with cities in Western and Central Europe. There is another Eurolines ticket office in Florenc bus station.

**Capital Express** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 220 870 368; www.capitalexpress.cz; I výstaviště 3, Holešovice; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, 8am-5pm Fri) Daily bus service between London and Prague via Plzeň.

**Student Agency** (www.studentagency.cz) Central Prague (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 999 666; Ječná 37; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri); Florenc bus station (Map pp266-7; ☎ 224 894 430; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Their big yellow buses link all major Czech cities and provide services to other cities in Western and Central Europe. Also have branches in major Czech cities.

Sample one-way fares from Prague include the following:

**Bratislava** 230Kč, 4½ hours

**Brno** 130Kč, 2½ hours

**Budapest** 1250Kč, 7¼ hours

**Frankfurt** 1250Kč, 8½ hours

**Salzburg** 930Kč, 7½ hours

**Vienna** 300Kč, five hours

**Warsaw** 820Kč, 10½ hours

**Wrocław** 690Kč, 4¾ hours

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Motorists can enter the country at any of the many border crossings marked on most road maps; see the map on p250 for all major 24-hour crossings.

You will need to buy a *nálepka* (motorway tax coupon) – on sale at border crossings, petrol stations and post offices – in order to use Czech motorways (100/200Kč for 10 days/one month).

## TRAIN

International trains arrive at Prague's main train station (Praha-hlavní nádraží, or Praha hl. n.), or the outlying Holešovice (Praha Hol.) and Smíchov (Praha Smv.) stations.

Prague and Brno lie on the main line from Berlin and Dresden to Bratislava and Budapest, and from Hamburg and Berlin to Vienna. Trains from Frankfurt and Munich pass through Nuremberg and Plzeň on the way to Prague. There are also daily express trains between Prague and Warsaw via Wrocław or Katowice.

Sample one-way fares to Prague include the following:

**Berlin** €44, five hours

**Bratislava** €18, 4¾ hours

**Frankfurt** €61, 7½ hours

**Kraków** €28, 8½ hours

**Salzburg** €37, eight hours

**Vienna** €29, 4½ hours

**Warsaw** €36, 9½ hours

You can buy tickets in advance from Czech Railways (České dráhy, or ČD) ticket offices and various travel agencies. Seat reservations are compulsory on international trains. International tickets are valid for two months with unlimited stopovers. Inter-Rail (Zone D) passes are valid in the Czech Republic, but Eurail passes are not.

## GETTING AROUND Bicycle

The Czech Republic offers good opportunities for cycle touring. Cyclists should be careful as minor roads are often narrow and potholed. In towns cobblestones and tram tracks can be a dangerous combination, especially after rain. Theft is a problem, especially in Prague and other large cities, so always lock up your bike.

It's fairly easy to transport your bike on Czech trains. First purchase your train ticket and then take it with your bicycle to the railway luggage office. There you fill out a card, which will be attached to your bike; on the card you should write your name, address, departure station and destination.

The cost of transporting a bicycle is 40Kč to 60Kč depending on the length of the journey. You can also transport bicycles on most buses if they are not too crowded and if the bus driver is willing.

## Bus

Within the Czech Republic buses are often faster, cheaper and more convenient than trains, though not as comfortable. Many bus routes have reduced frequency (or none) at weekends. Buses occasionally leave early, so get to the station at least 15 minutes before the official departure time.

Most services are operated by the national bus company **ČSAD** (☎ information line 900 144 444; www.csadbus.cz); you can check bus timetables online at www.idos.cz. Ticketing at main bus stations is computerised, so you can often book a seat ahead and be sure of a comfortable trip. Other stations are rarely

computerised and you must line up and pay the driver.

The footnotes on printed timetables may drive you crazy. Note the following: crossed hammers means the bus runs on *pracovní dny* (working days; ie Monday to Friday only); a Christian cross means it runs on Sundays and public holidays; and numbers in circles refer to particular days of the week (1 is Monday, 2 Tuesday etc). *Jede* means 'runs', *nejede* means 'doesn't run' and *jede denne* means 'runs daily'. *V* is 'on', *od* is 'from' and *do* is 'to' or 'until'.

Fares are very reasonable; expect to pay around 80Kč for a 100km trip. Prague to Brno costs 130Kč, with Prague to Karlovy Vary around the same.

## Car & Motorcycle DRIVING LICENCE

Foreign driving licences are valid for up to 90 days. Strictly speaking, licences that do not include photo identification need an International Driving Permit as well, although this rule is rarely enforced – ordinary UK licences without a photo are normally accepted without comment.

## FUEL

There are plenty of petrol stations, many open 24/7. Leaded petrol is available as *special* (91 octane) and *super* (96 octane), and unleaded as *natural* (95 octane) or *natural plus* (98 octane). The Czech for diesel is *nafta* or just *diesel*. *Autoplyn* (LPG gas) is available in every major town but at very few outlets. *Natural* costs around 30Kč per litre and *diesel* 25Kč.

## HIRE

The main international car-rental chains all have offices in Prague. Small local companies offer better prices, but are less likely to have fluent, English-speaking staff; it's often easier to book by email than by phone. Typical rates for a Škoda Felicia are around 800Kč a day including unlimited kilometres, collision-damage waiver and value-added tax (VAT). Reputable local companies include the following:

**Secco Car** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 220 802 361; www.secocar.cz; Přístavní 39, Holešovice)

**Vecar** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 224 314 361; www.vecar.cz; Svatovítská 7, Dejvice)

**West Car Praha** (Map pp258-9; ☎ 235 365 307; www.westcarpraha.cz, in Czech; Veleslavínská 17, Veleslavín)

## ROAD RULES

Road rules are the same as the rest of Europe. A vehicle must be equipped with a first-aid kit, a red-and-white warning triangle and a nationality sticker on the rear; the use of seat belts is compulsory. Drinking and driving is strictly forbidden – the legal blood alcohol level is zero. Police can hit you with on-the-spot fines of up to 2000Kč for speeding and other traffic offences (be sure to insist on a receipt).

Speed limits are 30km/h or 50km/h in built-up areas, 90km/h on open roads and 130km/h on motorways; motorbikes are limited to 80km/h. At level crossings over railway lines the speed limit is 30km/h. Beware of speed traps.

You need a motorway tax coupon (see opposite) to use the motorways; this is included with most rental cars.

Police often mount checkpoints, stopping vehicles for random checks. They are generally looking for locals driving without insurance or overloaded goods vehicles. If you are stopped, present your licence, passport and insurance or rental documents; as soon as the officer realises you're a tourist, you'll probably be waved on.

## Local Transport

City buses and trams operate from around 4.30am to midnight daily. Tickets must be purchased in advance – they're sold at bus and train stations, newsstands and vending machines – and must be validated in the time-stamping machines found on buses and trams and at the entrance to metro stations. Tickets are hard to find at night, on weekends and out in residential areas, so carry a good supply.

Taxis have meters – ensure they're switched on.

## Train

Czech Railways provides efficient train services to almost every part of the country. Fares are based on distance: one-way, 2nd-class fares cost around 64/120/224/424Kč for 50/100/200/400km. For travel within the Czech Republic only, the Czech Flexipass is available (from US\$78 to US\$138 for three to eight days travel in a 15-day period). The sales clerks at ticket counters rarely speak English, so write down your destination with the date and time you wish to travel.



Train categories include the following:

**EC** (EuroCity) Fast, comfortable international trains, stopping at main stations only, with 1st- and 2nd-class coaches; supplementary charge of 60Kč, reservations recommended.

**Ex** (express) As for IC (below), but no supplementary charge.

**IC** (InterCity) Long-distance and international trains with 1st- and 2nd-class coaches; supplement of 40Kč, reservations recommended.

**Os** (*osobní*) Slow trains using older rolling stock that stop in every one-horse town; 2nd-class only.

**R** (*rychlík*) The main domestic network of fast trains with 1st- and 2nd-class coaches and sleeper services; no sup-

plement except for sleepers; express and *rychlík* trains are usually marked in red on timetables.

**Sp** (*spěšný*) Slower and cheaper than *rychlík* trains; 2nd class only.

If you need to purchase a ticket or pay a supplement on the train, advise the conductor *before* they ask for your ticket or you'll have to pay a fine. Some Czech train conductors may try to intimidate foreigners by pretending there's something wrong with their ticket. Don't pay any 'fine', 'supplement' or 'reservation fee' unless you first get a *doklad* (written receipt).