

The Best of Prague: Three-Day Itinerary



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Day 3 – Lesser Town (*Malá Strana*) and more of New Town

--Introduction to Prague and the Czech Republic

Dobrý den a vítáme vas! Hello and welcome! Prague is the capital and the largest city of the Czech Republic, with a population of approximately 1.4 million people. The city is rich with history, and is unique in Central Europe in that it escaped World War II relatively unscathed, so almost all the buildings are original. The Czech Republic itself is a relatively young country. The country was first established after the end of World War I, but was quickly occupied by the Nazis, and then by the Soviets, only gaining independence in 1989 as Czechoslovakia. In 1993, Czechoslovakia officially split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, in what is known as the Velvet Divorce, because the split was very amicable.

--How to use this Guide

I have divided the main sights of Prague into three days of sightseeing. I listed general time guidelines for each day, but many of the sights to see in Prague are outdoors with no ticket/admission requirements. Because of this, I suggest you read through the entire day's itinerary to see if there's somewhere you want to spend more time at than others. If there is a specific time that something happens (e.g. the changing of the guard at the castle), I have included that information as well. The itinerary also includes various places to eat for a good value, but one of the great things about Prague is that there are so many pubs and restaurants that you can't go wrong.

All directions are listed in dark red and italicized.

Important information (hours of operation and price) about attractions is in bold.

--Transportation Tips

Prague has a relatively easy to use public transportation system, consisting of the metro (underground/subway), trams and buses. There are two basic tickets:

32 CZK – 75 minutes of unlimited travel and transfers on the metro, trams or buses

24 CZK – 20 minutes on the tram or bus, OR 5 stops on the metro. No transfers.

There are also day passes available for 110 CZK, but if you're staying in the center, then it's probably not worth it. Prague is a very walk-able city, and often it isn't even possible to take public transportation (many of the streets in Old Town are too narrow for buses and don't have tram tracks). I have noted public transport connections where possible in the itinerary.

You can buy tickets from the yellow machines in all metro stations, and if you only have bills, almost all potraviny (convenience store) and tabaks sell tickets as well.

Tickets are not sold on trams and buses, so it's best to buy several tickets at one time. There are yellow validation boxes at the entrance to the metro and on the buses/trams. Tickets must be validated or else they are no good! Riding without a ticket is risky, as they do random spot-checks for tickets. If you don't have a validated ticket, you will be fined 700 CZK on the spot. If you don't have that much money with you, the officials will escort you to an ATM, so you can pay them.

Public transportation continues to run a reduced schedule at night, with only trams and buses. The last metro leaves at midnight Sunday-Thursday and at 1 am Friday and Saturday, so if you need to take the metro home at night, make sure to keep an eye on the time.

--Brief Czech Language Overview

Czech is a Slavic language, which puts it in the same language family as Polish, Russian and Slovak. Native English speakers will likely be shocked at what seems to be an utter lack of vowels in many words. In the city center of Prague, you shouldn't have any issues getting a menu in English or asking for directions in English. Most young people speak at least a little English, but the older generations learned either German or Russian at school, and are unlikely to speak English today. Czech people will appreciate any attempt at speaking their language, as they know it is difficult and not widely spoken, since there are only 10 million Czech people. Below are some useful words and phrases, with my own personal pronunciation tips, if you wish to attempt speaking some Czech.

| English | Czech | Pronunciation |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hello/Good day | Dobrý den. | Doh-bree den |
| Goodbye | Na shledanou | Nah skla-daa-no |
| Thanks | Díky | Dee-key |
| Please | Prosím | Pro-seem |
| Do you speak English? | Mluvíte anglicky? | Ma-loo-vee-tay on-glitz-key |
| I don't speak Czech. | Nemluvím český. | Nem-loo-veem chess-key |
| I don't understand. | Nerozumím. | Nay-rose-oo-h-meem |
| Check, please. | Učet, prosím. | oo-chet, pro-seem. |

--Restaurant/Pub tips

There is no lack of places to eat in Prague – there are literally pubs on almost every street. Vegetarians might have a difficult time finding any options that aren't fried cheese, as Czech cuisine relies heavily on meat.

Some things to keep in mind when dining out:

- If there's no sign at the door, seat yourself. Make sure the table isn't reserved – there will be a small sign or piece of paper on the table with the word “rezervace” and usually a time for when the table is reserved.

- The waiter or waitress will keep track of your bill on a small slip of paper on the table.
- Beer should always be put on a coaster.
- When you order a main dish, if there is no side dish listed, then you have to order it separately. The waiter will ask you if you'd like a side dish, but keep in mind that it is not included in the price of the main dish.
- When you're ready to pay the bill, you have to ask for it. Someone will come and tally the bill at the table.
- Tipping is not obligatory, but it is customary to round the bill up as a small tip. For example, if the bill were 383 CZK, I would round up to 400 CZK.

--Czech Currency

The Czech Republic, while a member of the EU, still uses Czech currency (CZK). It is called the Czech crown. Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 CZK, and bills come in denominations of 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000 CZK. It is difficult to break 2000 and 5000 crown bills, so try to avoid them if possible.

The best place to get money is from an ATM. However, if you have cash you would like to exchange, I recommend going to a bank. If you decide to use an exchange center, be mindful of the exchange rates: often, the rate posted looks great, but it is only if you are changing a large sum of currency. And remember, **never change money on the street.**