



Theme Tour: Bohemia - Moravia - Slovakia

“Prague Spring”



Day 1 - PRAGUE (UNESCO)

Arrival to Prague. Accommodation. Dinner at hotel or elegant restaurant.

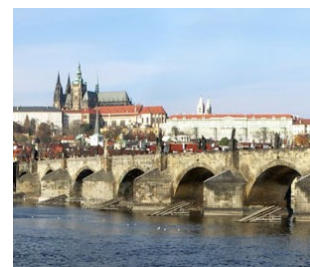
Day 2 - PRAGUE

After breakfast, departure to **Pražský hrad** (Prague Castle), which has by now more than a 1000 year tradition. Czech rulers made it their official seat of power. Near the beautiful Královská zahrada (Royal Garden), we come to the castle courtyard and further on to the monumental gothic **Katedrála Sv. Víta** (Cathedral of St. Vitus), the most significant church in Bohemia. Situated next to it is the Royal Palace, where we can admire the majestic **Vladislavský sál** (Vladislav Hall) and **Česká kancelář** (Czech Chancellery): here an event in 1618 made a mark in world history when angry Czechs defenestrated imperial governors. Our next stop is **Zlatá ulička** (Golden Lane) where in the small houses craftsmen lived for 400 years. Break for a small refreshment.

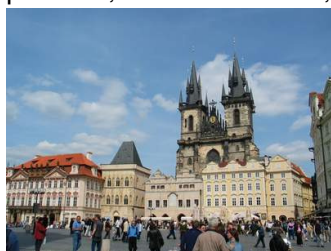


In the “lively artery” between the Old Town and Lesser Town stands **Karlův most** (Charles Bridge). Emperor Charles IV had this stone bridge be built by his own court architect Petr Parler. The bridge is the main part of the “Royal Route” on which medieval monarchs followed towards their coronation. From Charles Bridge we have a beautiful view of Prague’s palaces and other dominant buildings of Prague.

On Křižovnické náměstí located behind Charles Bridge is the seat of the Order of the Knights of the Cross with a Red Star (founded in 1233 by St. Agnes of Bohemia as a hospice brotherhood). The knights were given the duty of guarding Charles Bridge and were highly respected in the city. Their kostel sv. Františka (St. Francis Seraphicus Church) with its beautifully adorned cupola was built in the second half of the 17th century by Mathey and D. Canevalle. Church tour.



We continue further to **Klementinum** (Clementinum) (university library), a former Jesuit Academy and site of the Prague Anti-Reformation movement, and come to Staroměstské náměstí (Old Town Square). This most beautiful square lies geographically in the center of Prague. Here we can admire beautiful



palaces, Hus Monument, Týnský chrám (Tyn Church) and most of all **Staroměstská radnice** (Old Town Hall) with an astronomical clock dating from 1410. Rooms in the town hall are used today only for ceremonial occasions conducted by the mayor of Prague. The northern section of the Town Hall was ruined in February 1945. A tour through the representative halls, chapel, and niches with statues of the apostles.

Return to hotel and a break. Departure to hotel on Malá Strana, to the former kostel **Sv.Vavřince** (St. Lawrence Church)—today the seat of the international music festival Prague Spring. The original Romanesque church was rebuilt in Gothic style in the time the reign of Emperor Josef II was dissolved.



In the concert hall of the church we will attend a lecture on the theme:

Czechoslovakia – The Year 1968 (“Prague Spring”) – Political Evolution in the Years 1968 – 1989 – The Division of Czechoslovakia

Lector Prof. Dr. Jan Rychlík, DrSc

Expert, docent of Charles University, and director of the Institute of Modern Czech, Slovakian, and Czechoslovakian history. On May 1, 2003, he was given the title of professor by the president of Czech Republic on May 1, 2003.

We shall be greeted afterwards by the director of the **Prague Spring Music Festival, Mr. Roman Bělor**. This greeting, accompanied with a glass of champagne, forms a bridge between the political “Prague Spring” and the musical and festive Prague Spring. The Prague Spring Music Festival is the highlight of musical life in Bohemia and already since 1946 has ceremoniously opened on May 12, the anniversary of composer Bedřich Smetana’s death.



A small **chamber concert** will follow (exclusively for our guests). Czech and Slovakian composers are featured.



After the concert we will go by cable railway to Petřín to the panoramic restaurant **Nebozizek**. The cable railway dates back to 1891 and, with its 396 m length, was in its time the longest cable line in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. Today the line is 510 m long and its water propulsion substituted for an electric one. The Nebozizek restaurant is situated in the middle of former vineyards with a beautiful view over Prague. Dinner is accompanied by live piano music. On our way to the hotel, we will take a romantic circuitous ride through illuminated Prague

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Day 3 – PRAGUE – Brno – micro-regions – Bratislava

After breakfast, departure to Brno, a city founded on the confluence of the Svitava and Svratka Rivers. During the trip we can see, besides others, the Augustian Abbey where “father of genetics” Abbott Mendel worked since 1453. He conducted his experiments with the crossbreeding of plants in the abbey’s garden. The main feature of Mendel Square is Basilika Nanebevzetí Panny Marie (Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church) with a rare picture of the old Brno Madonna from the 14th century. Continuing, we shall see **Špilberk Castle**—former citadel that once contained the most fearful instruments of torture in the monarchy. **Špilberk** was also referred to as the “prison of the nations.” A short tour through the Moravian metropolis. In the center, at the place of the former seat of the Grand Duke of Moravia, we will visit the most important religious monument of the city—the gothic

chrám sv. Petra (Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul). Also of interest is the Zelný trh (Cabbage Market) with Parnass kašna (Parnas fountain), the Town Hall with its familiar “Brno’s Dragon,” and kostel sv.



Jakuba (Church of St. James). In Brno, in 1992, Vaclav Klaus and Vladimir Mečiar debated the division of Czechoslovakia in the **villa Tugendhat** (UNESCO). The functional villa is a masterpiece of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969). Van der Rohe worked with—for example, Bruno Paul, Peter Behrens, and Le Corbusier. Individual noon refreshment.

Departure to **Bratislava**. Shortly before the border, a brief visit into the micro-region of Nový Dvůr. It is comprised of 6 villages, whose aim is the development of the region of the Czech-Slovakian border. Its emphasis is the preservation of local folkloric traditions, vineyards, and tourist development.



At **Milotice Castle**, we are welcomed by the mayor of the city. The castle was formerly in the hands of the Sternberg family. Beautiful rooms in the castle represent the family’s relations towards the Habsburgs. The main (fresco) hall has the appearance of the Main Hall in the former Sternberg castle in Troja in Prague.



After a welcoming by the mayor and a little drink (wine from the local region) follows entertainment by a folk group and a taste of the local specialties in the region of **Sidleny**.

A short ride into the Slovakian village, **Kopčany**. This small village is known by its small St. Margaret's Church of Antioch with its single transept and whose roots go far back to the times of the Great Moravian Empire. This church is located only a few kilometers from the main seat of the Great Moravian Prince in Mikulčice. A beautiful building in Kopčany was once formerly a Baroque stud stable to which in 1736 the Austrian Emperor František Lotrinský transferred his horses. Special types of horses were bred here for the Spanish Court Riding-School in Vienna. After magnificent hunting events, the Emperor’s family and their guests held banquets in the representative hall of the stud stable. Another monument in the village is kostel sv. Štěpána Krále (Church of St. Stephen the King), rebuilt in the years 1862-1863.



Following a welcome from the mayor, folklore entertainment and a taste of Slivovic before our departure to the village of Gbely. Dinner held in a stylish hunting lodge (Poľovnícka reštaurácia).

Departure to Bratislava and accommodation in the elegant Marrol Hotel. Dinner in a very nice restaurant and the possibility for a short walk in the city.

Day 4 – Bratislava – Dėvín Castle

The capital of Slovakia, **Bratislava**, lies on the southern slopes of Carpathia and had always held a very strong strategic position: it was situated at the crossing of two main trade routes. Amber Road connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Baltic, and the Danube River made transport possible from Western Europe to the Black Sea. Dėvín Castle lies on a cliff above the confluence of the Danube and Morava Rivers, forever symbolizing Czech- Slovakian relations.

We shall take a walking tour of the city center. One of its major features is **Kostel sv. Martina** (St. Martin's Cathedral) with its 85 m high tower. During the years of 1563-1830 it was a coronation church of the Hungarian kings. **Michalská brána** (Michael's Gate) is the only preserved medieval gate in the city. Of interest is the building **Academia Istropolitana** (Academy Istropolitan)—the first Hungarian university founded in the year 1467. After we visit the elegant **Primaciální palác** (Primate's Palace) (1777-81), where high religious dignitaries spent their winters (today it holds a City Gallery). After the battle at Slavkov in Moravia in 1805, the "Bratislava Peace Treaty" was signed in the beautiful Hall of Mirrors.



Tour of the palace. Not far from the River Danube, we can tour **Slovenské národní divadlo** (Slovakian National Theatre)—built according to the plans of Viennese architects Feliner and Hellmer.



At the end of the morning, we will take a ride on the Danube together with a light lunch.

After the boat ride, we will visit **Děvín Castle**, which towers above the city and the Danube River. Slavs built the border fort here already in the 9th century. Here, Maria Theresa kept the Hungarian coronation jewels. Further along, we come to Bratislava's prestigious Palisady quarter and to the Slavín cemetery. Our last stop is **Děvín** (Theben), which lies on the confluence of the Rivers Morava and Danube. Both rivers form the border between Slovakia and Austria. Devín was most important in the 9th century as a border fort of the Great Moravian Empire against the Franks.



Day 5

Breakfast and departure.