

Travel to the Czech Republic

by Ellen Sarbone

The gift of travel is always welcome. Whether it is a romantic getaway with a partner or significant other, a family vacation, or a solo jaunt to search out eligible singles, a change of scene will give you a whole new outlook.

For a real chance to put things in perspective, the Czech Republic is just the place to visit now. Besides the beauty of its architecture, you'll be amazed at what people have accomplished in only three years, since they threw off the forty-year mantle of communist domination. Go and see what determination and hard work can do, then come back and think about whether we as individuals can make a difference in our own country.

Prague, the golden city of 100 spires, sitting on the Vltava River, was notorious, among other things, for the difficulty in finding a room. Three years ago there were only 7,500 beds in the city. Now there are about 30,000, ranging from budget accommodations in

private homes to shiny edifices like the 788-room Atrium Hotel, the largest hotel in Europe, boasting nine restaurants, two indoor tennis courts, a modern conference center and pool/solarium fitness complex. Some lovely, newly renovated, centrally located boutique hotels just opened this year, like the Adria, Hotel Pariz, and Grand Hotel

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There is so much to see and do in Prague, and you're always making new discoveries as you stroll the little lanes around Old Town Square, the nooks and crannies around Prague Castle where Mozart wrote Don Giovanni, the preserved Jewish Quarter with its 12 layer, 20,000 gravestone cemetery. Prague is full of culture and it's hard to pick between the many offerings on any given day or evening. Choices include concerts in several beautiful Baroque halls, music festivals, opera, the unique Black Light theater, productions at the National Theater, ballet, the Puppet Theater, jazz clubs, beer pubs, and wine pubs, just to name a few. The restaurant Parnas, on the river Vltava across the

street from the National Theater, is in a lovingly restored former apartment house once occupied by the composer Smetana. Its marble floors and inlaid wood walls were memorable and the food was among the best we had.

The Czechs are very proud that the first K-Mart in Europe have opened in their country. As a result of this affiliation, K-Mart ~~was~~ ^{was} closely involved in the U.S. arrangements for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II when the American army under General Patton liberated Western Bohemia and the town of Pilsen on May 5, 1945.

While Prague has a lot to see, the rest of the Czech Republic also merits some time. A few days in South Bohemia in the picture-book renaissance town of Telc is a must, with a tour of the lakes and castles in the area. Moravia's medieval mining town of Kutna Hora is also worth a visit, together with some excellent wine cellars in the village of Velke Pavonice.

Some of the world's most famous spas are located in Western Bohemia. At Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), founded by King Charles V in the 14th century, you can stroll under the colonnade and watch people "taking the waters"; walking along and refilling their distinctive ceramic cups from the same springs where the rich and famous passed before them - kings (Prussia), princes (Leopold), empresses (Maria Theresa), writers (Goethe and Tolstoy), and composers (Beethoven, Chopin, Paganini), just to name a few. Marianske Lazne (Marienbad) also has one of the best golf courses in Europe.

For information, call your travel agent, Cedok Czech Tourism Information (800) 800-8891, or CSA Airlines (800) 223-2365.

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