

“Prague never lets you go”



Dr Charles Landau

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Charles Landau leads Exclusive History Tours. In the past has taken groups all around Europe including Berlin, Warsaw, Rome, Florence, St Petersburg and this year will be leading groups to Andalucia, Vienna and Budapest and at the beginning of November to Prague. All his tours are in conjunction with the experienced and professional Travelink groups@travelinkuk.com and eli@goldenlegacytours.com

Let me take you on a wondrous tour of a magical city

Jews first came to Prague in the tenth century and today the Jewish 'quarter' is at least a third of the area of the old town. Possibly the most famous extant synagogue in the world is the Altneuschul situated in the Josefov area. Its very name is covered in mystery and its later association with the Golem adds to its mystique. It is said that the Golem was created by the famed Maharal of Prague but in reality the fable of the Golem was created after his death. Whilst visiting the Jewish museum, which is an area and not a building, note the Hebrew clock on the Old Town Hall, visit the Pinkas Synagogue with its collection of pictures painted by children whilst in Terezin. Wander into the Klausen, Maisel and the Spanish Synagogues. Following long negotiations between Germany and the Jewish leaders, in 1942, the Central Jewish Museum was created. As a result, precious objects from the synagogues in the Czech Republic were saved and they are now on display at these four of the synagogues in Prague. The Jewish Museum in Prague has one of the most extensive collections of Jewish art, textiles and silver in the world; there are 40,000 exhibits and 100,000 books

This is the museum which Hitler allegedly wanted to call "the Museum of an Extinct Race"

Then wind your way through the cemetery to the most famous grave, that of Rabbi Loew (1520 -1609), the Maharal.

With a hot drink in hand walk to the statue of Franz Kafka. Consider his writings and his angst of Jewish identity. Then walk through the famous Old Town Square with its medieval astronomical clock. Opposite the Klementinum building, where one can catch an atmospheric evening concert of Smetana or Dvorak, is the 1910



Jerusalem Synagogue

Statue of Rabbi Loew, magnificently lit up and standing, together with its plinth, at 20 feet. As with so much to do with Rabbi Loew the statue by Ladislav Saloun is mysterious, with a young naked girl at the Rabbi's side, looking up to Rabbi Loew handing him a rose which contained the aroma of death. Death for Rabbi Loew was a metaphor for the death of Jewish Prague.

Not far from the King David kosher hotel is the Jubilee Synagogue

Also known as the Jerusalem Synagogue built in 1906 in honour of the silver Jubilee of Franz Joseph I of Austria. It is a magnificent Moorish style building with beautiful art nouveau decoration. Then slowly wander up the road, past the statue to Woodrow Wilson in front of the main railway station, into the station itself. There quietly perched on Platform I is a moving statue of children of the Czech kindertransport in honour of Sir Nicholas Winton who saved 669 children from the clutches of the Nazis. He was the 'British Schindler' and was awarded the Order of the White Lion by the Czech President in 2014. Whilst considering the Czech Republic and WWII it is worth visiting the site of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Operation Anthropoid in 1942. Then drive to the St Cyril and Methodius Cathedral and museum where after the assassination the brave last stand of Czech and Slovak patriots took place. Many will visit Theresienstadt Concentration Camp (Terezin) where tens of thousands died and at

least 150,000 were held prior to being sent to Treblinka or Auschwitz. The camp was part of "Operation Embellishment" to deceive Jews, visitors and the Red Cross.

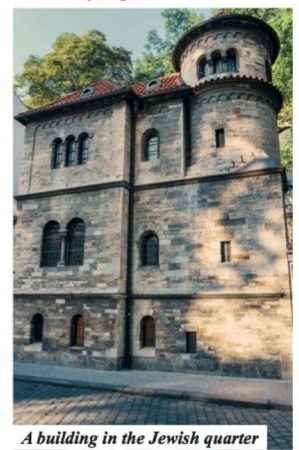
No visit to Prague would be complete without crossing the iconic Charles Bridge. Visit during the day and then at night. It is described as the most beautiful Gothic bridge in the world. Its foundation stone was laid on July 9th 1357 at 5.31am and a palindrome of that date is etched into a building as you enter from the Old Town Bridge Tower (135797531) The bridge crosses the Vltava River, spanning the areas of the Old Town and Prague Castle. Don't just walk across the bridge as so many tourists do, but note the 30 baroque statues on both sides of the bridge. All the statues are dedicated to saints such as St Augustine, St Wenceslas, and St Vincent Ferrer who was responsible for forced conversion of Jews especially in Spain.

From a Jewish perspective the most historically interesting sculpture on the bridge is the 'Crucifixion and Calvary Statue'. The statue has a long history and in 1696 a golden Hebrew text was added around the head of the statue reading 'Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem tzvakot' "Holy, Holy, Holy is The Lord of Hosts" from Isaiah 6:3

and part of the kedusha. Today this statue surrounded by Hebrew is 'sold' as a symbol of Prague's religious co-existence, however the history and legend are far more interesting and illuminating and are recorded on a brass plaque at the base of the statue.

Whilst leaning over the side of the bridge, viewing the other bridges, the undulating river and the beauty of Prague I play to my groups part of Smetana's The Moldau (German for Vltava). Its music is reminiscent of the tones of the Hatikva.

In the words of Franz Kafka "Prague never lets you go..."



A building in the Jewish quarter



The Jewish cemetery

"A city beyond compare"

Wrap up warm in the early winter and inhale the wonders of its buildings, bridges, art, museums, synagogues, cemeteries, Golem, clock and towers.

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