**Introduction**

**Prague** is the capital and largest city in the Czech Republic, the 14th largest city in the European Unionand the historical capital of Bohemia. Situated on the Vltava river, Prague is home to about 1.3 million people, while its metropolitan area is estimated to have a population of 2.6 million. The city has a temperate oceanic climate, with relatively warm summers and chilly winters.

Prague is a political, cultural and economic centre of central Europe complete with a rich history. Founded during the Romanesque and flourishing by the Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque eras, Prague was the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia and the main residence of several Holy Roman Emperors, most notably of Charles IV (r. 1346–1378). It was an important city to the Habsburg Monarchy and its Austro-Hungarian Empire. The city played major roles in the Bohemian and Protestant Reformation, the Thirty Years' War and in 20th-century history as the capital of Czechoslovakia between the World Wars and the post-war Communist era.

Prague is home to a number of well-known cultural attractions, many of which survived the violence and destruction of 20th-century Europe. Main attractions include Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, Old Town Square with the Prague astronomical clock, the Jewish Quarter, Petřín hill and Vyšehrad. Since 1992, the extensive historic centre of Prague has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

The city has more than ten major museums, along with numerous theatres, galleries, cinemas and other historical exhibits. An extensive modern public transportation system connects the city. It is home to a wide range of public and private schools, including Charles University in Prague, the oldest university in Central Europe.

**History**

The region was settled as early as the Paleolithic age. Jewish chronicler David Solomon Ganz, citing Cyriacus Spangenberg, claimed that the city was founded as Boihaem in c. 1306 BC by an ancient king, Boyya.

Around the fifth and fourth century BC, a Celtic tribe appeared in the area, later establishing settlements including an oppidum in Závist, a present-day suburb of Prague, and naming the region of Bohemia, which means "home of the Boii people". In the last century BC, the Celts were slowly driven away by Germanic tribes (Marcomanni, Quadi, Lombards and possibly the Suebi), leading some to place the seat of the Marcomanni king, Maroboduus, in southern Prague in the suburb now called Závist. Around the area where present-day Prague stands, the 2nd century map drawn by Ptolemaios mentioned a Germanic city called *Casurgis*.

In the late 5th century AD, during the great Migration Period following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the Germanic tribes living in Bohemia moved westwards and, probably in the 6th century, the Slavic tribes (Venedi) settled the Central Bohemian Region. In the following three centuries, the Czech tribes built several fortified settlements in the area, most notably in the Šárka valley, Butovice and Levý Hradec.

The construction of what came to be known as Prague Castle began near the end of the 9th century, expanding a fortified settlement that had existed on the site since the year 800. The first masonry under Prague Castle dates from the year 885 at the latest. The other prominent Prague fort, the Přemyslid fort Vyšehrad, was founded in the 10th century, some 70 years later than Prague Castle. Prague Castle is dominated by the cathedral, which began construction in 1344, but wasn't completed until the 20th century.

The legendary origins of Prague attribute its foundation to the 8th-century Czech duchess and prophetess Libuše and her husband, Přemysl, founder of the Přemyslid dynasty. Legend says that Libuše came out on a rocky cliff high above the Vltava and prophesied: "I see a great city whose glory will touch the stars." She ordered a castle and a town called Praha to be built on the site.

The region became the seat of the dukes, and later kings of Bohemia. Under Holy Roman Emperor Otto II the area became a bishopric in 973. Until Prague was elevated to archbishopric in 1344, it was under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Mainz.

Prague was an important seat for trading where merchants from across Europe settled, including many Jews, as recalled in 965 by the Hispano-Jewish merchant and traveller Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub. The Old New Synagogue of 1270 still stands in the city. Prague was also once home to an important slave market.

At the site of the ford in the Vltava river, King Vladislaus I had the first bridge built in 1170, the Judith Bridge (Juditin most), named in honour of his wife Judith of Thuringia. This bridge was destroyed by a flood in 1342, but some of the original foundation stones of that bridge remain in the river. It was rebuilt and named the Charles Bridge.

In 1257, under King Ottokar II, Malá Strana ("Lesser Quarter") was founded in Prague on the site of an older village in what would become the Hradčany (Prague Castle) area. This was the district of the German people, who had the right to administer the law autonomously, pursuant to Magdeburg rights. The new district was on the bank opposite of the Staré Město ("Old Town"), which had borough status and was bordered by a line of walls and fortifications.