

PRAGUE

The city of Prague is situated on both banks of the river Vltava in the centre of Bohemia. With its 1.3 million inhabitants it is the biggest town in Czechia.

Since 1993 Prague has been the capital of the Czech Republic. It is the seat of our President, the Czech government and the Parliament. It is also the most important industrial, business and cultural centre and the transport crossroads in the country.

Prague is one of the most beautiful towns in the world with a lot of monuments of architecture. The oldest parts are Hradčany, Vyšehrad, the Old Town, the New Town, the Lesser Town and Josefov (the old Jewish town).

The best-known dominant of the city is the Prague Castle. This former seat of Czech princes and kings became later the official seat of the President. The tourists admire especially *St. Vitus Cathedral*. This Gothic church was founded by Charles IV but completed only in 1929. A lot of Czech kings and queens are buried in the crypt; the Czech coronation jewels are kept in the coronation chamber. Other famous sights in the Prague Castle are e.g. the *Old Royal Palace with the Vladislav Hall* and the *Golden Lane*. Not far away from the Prague castle the Petřín Hill with its famous Petřín Observation Tower is situated.

You can also walk from the Castle to the Lesser Town. It is a poetic quarter with beautiful old houses, palaces and gardens. An impressive jewel of Baroque architecture is St. Nicolas Church there. From there you can get to Charles Bridge over the river Vltava. The tourists don't admire only nice Baroque sculptures but they also enjoy the glorious skyline of the Prague Castle. Along the bridge you come to the Old Town whose centre is the Old Town Square. The best-known building in the square is the Old Town Hall with its *astronomical clock*.

The centre of the New Town and the whole city is Wenceslas Square. It is a 750 m long boulevard with department stores, shops, hotels, restaurants, cafés, theatres and cinemas. The statue of the Czech patron St. Wenceslas at the top of the square is a symbol of the free and independent republic. Near it you can see the building of the National Museum, the most important museum in this country.

In Prague there are a lot of other museums, galleries and theatres such as the National Theatre and the National Gallery. Charles University is the oldest university in Central and Eastern Europe. You can find many more universities and colleges in Prague.

Prague is also a town of sports. One of the best-known sports facilities is the O2 Arena situated in Prague-Libeň. It is a modern multifunctional building used also as a huge concert hall.

People interested in modern architecture admire especially the Dancing House built in the 1990s on a bank of the Vltava. It's named after two towers which remind of a dancing couple. There are offices, a congress centre; you can have a meal at a restaurant on the top floor. Among modern dominants of Prague is the Žižkov TV tower. It is more than 200 metres high, so you can enjoy nice views of the city. Ten huge babies by David Černý have been climbing up the columns since 2000.

QUESTIONS

1. Where is Prague situated? How many inhabitants does it have?
2. What do you know about Prague as the centre of the contemporary Czech state?
3. Name the oldest parts of Prague.
4. What is the best-known dominant of the city?
5. What do you know about the Lesser Town? What is the nicest Prague bridge? What is the centre of the Old Town?
6. Describe Wenceslas Square. Speak about the most important cultural institutions in Prague.
7. Give some examples of modern architecture in the city.
8. Have you ever been to Prague? What do you like best about Prague? Is there anything you dislike about it? Would you like to study/live there? Why (not)?