



Connoisseur's Prague

Art, architecture & design, with privileged access

5–11 October 2026 (MM 194)

7 days

Speaker: Martina Hinks-Edwards

Explore both celebrated landmarks and hidden glories of this endlessly fascinating city.

Special arrangements are a major feature, including an exclusive, after-hours visit to the monumental Cathedral of St Vitus.

A unique and privileged picture of Prague in all its eras of splendour - from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

Led by expert guide and Prague native, Martina Hinks-Edwards.

The capital of Bohemia scarcely needs introduction: long regarded as the most beautiful city in Central Europe, it has an abundance to delight the cultural traveller. Yet behind many a façade lie halls, rooms and works of art of exceptional interest, rarely accessible to the average visitor.

This tour seeks out such places, offering privileged access to the hidden as well as the celebrated. Principal sights are not neglected, but time is taken to explore them in greater depth, and wherever possible, in quieter moments, when the crowds have subsided. The emphasis is on thoughtful discovery: unhurried and away from the routine paths.

Prague enjoys an unequalled density of great architecture, from Romanesque to modern. Yet it is the fabric of the city as a whole rather than individual masterpieces which makes it so special. The city has the advantage of a splendid site, a crescent of hills rising from one side of a majestic bend in the River Vltava with gently inclined terrain on the other bank. A carapace of red roofs, green domes and gilded spires spread across the slopes and levels, sheltering a network of marvellously unspoilt streets, alleys and magically picturesque squares.

The full sweep of Czech art and architecture is explored, beginning in the fourteenth century, when Kings of Bohemia also reigned as Holy Roman Emperors, and Prague became one of the largest cities in the western world. The Gothic cathedral at the heart of the hilltop Royal Castle is one of the many monuments to this golden age, and the exquisite panel paintings, now excellently displayed in the Convent of St Agnes, are among the chief glories of the city.



Prague, Charles Bridge, Lesser Town and Castle, lithograph c. 1860.

From the sixteenth century onwards, despite political subordination within the Habsburg Empire, Prague retained both its prosperity and its cultural vitality. It became home to some of the finest Renaissance buildings in Central Europe. In the eighteenth century, the city attracted patronage of some of the great aristocratic families of the Baroque age, who commissioned palaces and churches of considerable splendour.

In the nineteenth century, the spirit of national revival – culminating in the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 – fostered a ferment of creativity among artists, writers and composers. A bewildering variety of styles, inspired by earlier Bohemian traditions, led Art Nouveau into innovative directions, and pioneered radical and distinctly Czech expressions at the dawn of modernism.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly mid-morning from London Heathrow to Prague (British Airways). After settling into the hotel there is a special visit to the Obecní dům ('Municipal House') to see the glorious suite of assembly rooms created 1904–12, a unique and very Czech *mélange* of murals and ornament.

Day 2. A dense maze of dazzlingly picturesque streets and alleys converges on Old Town Square, surely the prettiest urban space in Europe, with beautiful, shimmering façades – medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Art Nouveau. Visit the Gothic Týn church, at the heart not only of Prague but also of Czech history. There follows the 13th-century Convent of St Agnes, where one of the world's greatest collections of medieval painting is brilliantly installed. In the afternoon, explore the indelible and fascinating history of the Jewish community in Prague. In the former ghetto, the Josefov, there remain six synagogues, a Jewish town hall and cemetery.

Day 3. Drive up to Prague Castle to visit to this extensive hilltop citadel, residence of Dukes and Kings of Bohemia from the 10th century. The Old Royal Palace rises from Romanesque through Gothic to Renaissance and its Vladislav stone hall has extraordinary vaulting. The Schwarzenberg Palace, where our visit is guided by a curator, has a fine collection of Old Masters. In the late afternoon there is a special, out-of-hours visit to the Cathedral of St Vitus, a pioneering monument of High Gothic, richly embellished with chapels, tombs, altarpieces and stained glass.

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Day 4. Begin with a walk to the 14th-century Charles Bridge, the greatest such structure in Europe, wonderfully adorned with sculptures, before crossing the Vltava river to the Lesser Town. Visit St Nicholas, one of the finest Baroque churches in Central Europe, and hear a short organ recital; Mozart played the organ here in 1787. After lunch walk through a sequence of delightful gardens on the south slope of Prague Castle and Wallenstein Palace, a rare example of a 1630s residence (now the Senate).

Day 5. Morning visit to the fortress of Vyšehrad, rising high above the river and enclosing a cemetery with the graves of many great Czechs. Then walk in and around Wenceslas Square, threading through a succession of arcades, taking in some outstanding turn-of-the-century architecture and decoration as well as some early modernist masterpieces. The afternoon is free for independent exploration.

Day 6. In the morning drive out to Prague's western suburb to visit Villa Müller, a 1930s masterpiece of Adolf Loos and one of the best houses of the era, excellently restored. Return to Prague Castle for the Royal Gardens where we see the delicately arcaded Belvedere, the finest Renaissance building in Prague. Continue to the Veletržní (Trade Fair) Palace of 1928 for a curator-led visit of this major modernist building that now houses national and international modern and contemporary art.

Day 7. Strahov Monastery has commanding views of Prague and two magnificent library halls, which by special arrangement we enter. Then walk down the hill, passing the formidable bulk of the Černín Palace. Return to London Heathrow, arriving in the afternoon.

A number of the visits are by special arrangement. It is possible the order of visits may vary from the description above.

Lecturer

Martina Hinks-Edwards studied English at Charles University, Prague. She began working for MRT while still studying, firstly as an interpreter for groups visiting the Czech Republic, and from 2004 as a tour leader with a wide breadth of knowledge of the country's cultural history. She has led tours throughout the Czech Republic and has a particular interest in 20th-century Czech history and architecture. The countless accolades she has received over the years from her clients, is a reflection of her energy and enthusiasm for the job.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private coach throughout; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 3 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Optional music: we hope to be able to offer tickets to a performance; programmes will be available in May 2026.

Accommodation. Hotel Maximilian, Prague (maximilianhotel.com): A small, recently renovated 4-star boutique hotel with a restaurant in a quiet yet central location near St Agnes Convent. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This is a busy tour, with quite a lot of walking, much of it on roughly paved, cobbled streets. It would not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking and stair-climbing.

Combine this tour with:

The Bach Journey, 28 September–4 October. We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.