

## **Sightseeing Tour**

**PRAGUE** - the capital of the Czech Republic. Its population is of around 1,3 million people. It is the real gem among all the European cities.

On the left bank of the Vltava River there is perhaps the most important sight – The Prague Castle area – a former town called Hradcany. At Hradcany Strahov Library and Monastery can be visited, then Loretto – a pilgrimage place for Roman Catholics, St. Vitus Cathedral, the best example of the Gothic style in our country, The Old Royal Palace from the 15th century, Basilica of St. George - the only preserved Romanesque piece of architecture in the Castle, Golden Lane - a picturesque lane full of legends with a house no.22, where Franz Kafka stayed. The Lesser town of Prague follows – this is a part of the city built mainly in Baroque style, the most important are its wonderful palaces.

The Charles Bridge is the best-known stone bridge in the country (mainly for its statues). It makes the historical connection between the left and the right bank of the Vltava River and between the Lesser Quarter and the Old town of Prague. In the middle of the Old town there is the Old Town Square where the Town hall is with the famous Astronomical clock.

The New town of Prague has two main squares - the Wenceslas square, named after the patron Saint Wenceslas and the largest square in Europe – the Charles square, named after Emperor Charles IV. But you can find here many other sights as well.

The Jewish town of Prague is called Josefov and consists of the Old-New synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Europe which is still functioning dating back to the 1270, the Old Jewish cemetery, the Town hall and other synagogues which are museums now. The New Jewish cemetery is located in a different part of Prague. This is a place where Franz Kafka was buried.

## **Trips out of Prague**

**KONOPISTE** (four hours trip) direction southwest

A lovely hunting castle built at the end of the 13th century as a gothic fortress and rebuilt in the 19th century. The most interesting collection of historical weapons in Europe creates together with the oldest part of the castle and the living rooms and a chapel the first round to visit. The second round includes fascinating collections of hunting trophies and representative rooms of the castle. On the third floor of the castle visitors can see all the rooms of the Franz Ferdinand d'Este's family, which is the most interesting part of the castle. Museum of St George, Shooting Range and the Rose Garden can be visited individually. The castle can be easily reached within one hour either by taking a motorway or by driving through a lovely countryside, partly along the Vltava River and its dam. A nice lunch in a small local restaurant is recommended.

**KARLSTEJN** (four hours trip) direction west

The medieval fortress, which was founded in 1348 by the Emperor Charles IV. to house the coronation jewels and relics. One part of the visit includes interiors of the Emperor Palace (Knight Hall with Chapel of St. Nicolas, bedroom, Audience Chamber, etc.), Marianska Tower, Well Tower and former castle prison. Second part of the visit includes among others Marianska and Big Tower with its the most valuable interiors, Chapels of St. Mary and Catharina, picture gallery and the most fascinating part of the castle, the Chapel of the holy Cross. This castle can be little bit more complicated for those who do not prefer to climb up a hill as the whole area down the castle is pedestrian. On the other hand, a great adventure can be to take a carriage up the hill.

As for a whole day trip it is also possible to do a combination of Konopiste and Karlstejn Castles.

**MĚLNÍK** (four hours trip) direction northwest

The district town of Melnik lies at the confluence of the rivers Labe and Vltava. It used to be a royal town, which belonged to Bohemians queens. It has a long wine-growing tradition. The Melnik castle was built in the Renaissance style and has large wine cellars. Next to the church of St Peter and Paul there is a chanel house. The visit of the castle can also include the wine cellars where the visitors can taste the local wines. This is a very short trip, so in case of interest, for nature lovers, it can be combined with a drive round through a marvellous countryside - the protected region Kokorinsko. As for its location, the visit of the town Melnik can also be combined with the visit of Nelahozeves castle.

**NELAHOZEVES** (three – four hours trip) direction northwest

A Renaissance chateau, since 1997 a place of a unique painting collection - Art of Six Centuries presenting Lobkowitz collection which includes, beside the Spanish Renaissance portraits art of masters as L. Cranach senior and junior P. Brueghel st., P. Veronese, P. P. Rubens, D. Velázquez, Canaletto and others. Among other magnificent exhibits belong the musical instruments and manuscripts of W. A. Mozart, F. Vranicky and L. van Beethoven. In Nelahozeves is also located A. Dvorak's Museum.

**TEREZÍN** (four - five hours trip) direction northwest

The Emperor Joseph II built the former garrison town in 18th century. He built it as an ingenious system of military fortresses for the protection of the kingdom. In relatively recent past has Terezín once again entered the world's public consciousness as a tragic symbol of suffering of ten-thousands innocent people who died here during the Nazi occupation.....both in the Small Fortress, the former Gestapo prison, and the Large fortress, the former Jewish ghetto and concentration camp.

**KUTNA HORA** (five hours trip) direction east

Thanks to the prosperous silver mines Kutna Hora became, after Prague, the second most important town of the Bohemian kingdom in the middle Ages. The wealth and prosperity led to the rich architectural development of the town and gave rise to many beautiful churches - St. Barbara cathedral, to the palaces as Italian Court with Royal Mint, burgess houses - The Stone House and other gothic and Renaissance monuments. Kutna Hora was declared a world heritage and has been protected by UNESCO.

In a part of the town, called Sedlec, is situated a small church of All Saints with its, for all visitors well known, ossuary made from human bones.

**HLUBOKA** (eight hours trip) direction south

Without a doubt this is one of the most beautiful castles in Bohemia. Despite its medieval origin, the Tudor gothic is the main feature that emphasizes the charm and romanticism of this white fairy-tale castle surrounded by large English park. The bedroom and dressing room of princess Eleanor, the Hamilton's closet and the reading room are all decorated with paintings of European masters of the 16th - 18th centuries, beautiful chandeliers, late Renaissance window panes, and Delft china. The most precious pieces of furniture are situated in the Morning Drawing Room and complemented with painted Chinese vases from the 18th century. The portraits on the walls of the Morning Drawing Room, small dining room, smoking and reception rooms depict the most important members of the Schwarzenberg lineage. On the walls of the great dining room is exhibited the valuable collection of tapestries, woven in Brussels in the first half of the 17th century. The biggest hall is the library with a panel ceiling, transferred to Hluboká from the family castle of Schwarzenbergs. The armoury at Hluboká is of a very high standard. The Gothic Revival chapel is dominated by the late Gothic altar with carved folding wings.

As for its location and for those who prefer a really full day trip this castle can be combined with bellow mentioned town, Cesky Krumlov.

**CESKY KRUMLOV** (eight hours trip) direction south

A walk through the centre of this South Bohemian town is a wonderful experience. Gothic and Renaissance houses, a large Renaissance town hall on a sloping square, connected to narrow and winding streets, as well as dignified monasteries and churches, were preserved without disturbing reconstruction, and as a whole they represent a treasure of worldwide importance. The first UNESCO listed town in the Czech Republic.

The mighty Renaissance castle used to be the seat of the powerful Lords of the Rozumberks and the Schwarzenbergs. Valuable Renaissance and Baroque rooms and halls with many works of art and crafts of the last five centuries have been preserved. There is a splendid view into the castle garden on a large Baroque theatre with original furnishings and fixtures. There is also a summerhouse and a cascading water fountain in the surroundings.

Cesky Krumlov is not just a preserved town, it is a vibrant culture centre with summer festivals, museum of Egon Shiele, and others.

For both Hluboka and Cesky Krumlov we should not forget a short stop on the famous square of the local town Ceske Budejovice either to have a nice lunch or to taste the world known beer Budvar.

**KARLOVY VARY** (eight hours trip) – direction northwest

The therapeutic effect of Karlovy Vary springs has been utilized ever since the Middle Ages. The spa became a tryst of aristocracy in the 17th and 18th centuries. The town's most valuable architecture has its origin in this period as well, the Baroque Church of St. Mary Magdalene, built by K. I. Dientzenhofer in 1727 - 1736. Though, the spa's greatest upsurge occurred only in the 19th century when Karlovy Vary became world famous. The spa buildings, colonnades and pavilions were constructed in the mood of a sober Empirical and, later, Art Nouveau styles. The centre of the present spa bustle in Karlovy Vary is a modern pavilion with the main Karlovy Vary spring, Vřídlo that belches its curative water to a height of 17m, and the Mlýnská Colonnade. In addition to the curative waters you can also sample delicious local wafers and traditional Becher liqueur produced from herbs. Individual tours can also include bath treatment.