

Czech Republic National Day Special

Scenic buildings mark long history

The Czech Republic is a nation of 10.7 million in central Europe that has a long history at the heart of the continent's affairs. Oct. 28 commemorates their independence day and the creation of Czechoslovakia following World War I in 1918. The Czech Republic separated from Slovakia in 1993 and joined the European Union in 2004.

The capital and largest city, Prague, is renowned for many cultural attractions, which survived the destructive wars of the 20th century. Divided by the Vltava River and known as the City of 100 Spires and Mother Prague, the east side of the river has the Old Town Square with its Astronomical Clock, National Gallery, National Museum and the enigmatic Dancing House. Prague also has a long Jewish history. The Old New Synagogue is the heart of the Jewish Town and perhaps home of the legendary and mysterious golem. Nearby there is a monument to the holocaust victims in the Pinkas Synagogue.

Prague Castle, whose construction started in the ninth century, dominates the west bank of the river and is the largest ancient castle in the world. Today it is the

seat of the Czech president. Past residents include various kings of Bohemia, Holy Roman emperors, and astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler.

West Bohemia is home to the town of Plzen, the birthplace of Pilsener beer and the minimalist modernism architectural movement. The former can be sampled at the Pilsner Urquell Brewery, while the interior creations of famed architect Adolf Loos can be seen in three recently opened locations: the Kraus and Vogl apartments and the Brummel House. Plzen also has the Cathedral of St. Bartholomew with City Hall in the Square of the Republic, one of the largest main squares in Europe; the Brewery Museum, with 17 kilometers of underground passages, cellars and wells, 800 meters of which can be visited; and the Romanesque-Moorish style Great Synagogue, the largest in the republic.

The preserved medieval center of Cesky Krumlov, located inside a bend of the Vltava River, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Soaring over the town is the Cesky Krumlov Castle and Chateau, built between the 14th and 19th centuries, giv-



Cesky Krumlov Castle and Chateau rise above the town of Cesky Krumlov. CZECHTOURISM

ing the building both medieval and renaissance qualities. The tower gives a view of the town and surrounding countryside, while the "bear moat" and blacksmith's workshop are occupied by actual bears and blacksmiths, respectively.

Brno is a university town and the capital of South Moravia. Known as much for its nightlife and bars as it is for its history and architecture, highlights include the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage-listed Villa Tugendhat, the neo-Gothic Cathedral



Above: The Charles Bridge is a medieval stone structure that spans the Vltava River in Prague. Left: The Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul is a major landmark in Brno.

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of St. Peter and Paul, and the open-air Cabbage Market. A reminder of the Cold War is the 10-Z Shelter, first built during World War II and finished in 1959 as an atomic bomb shelter, with room for 500 people.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Czech Republic
on the Occasion
of
Their Independence Day



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