

Czech Republic National Day Special

National identity steeped in history

Oct. 28 is the date of Czechoslovak Independence Day and traces back to the declaration of the first independent Czechoslovak state, which emerged from the ashes of the end of World War I in 1918. Previous to this it had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and although Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in 1993 after its peaceful dissolution, the day remains one of celebration.

Two important locations for celebrations in the Czech capital of Prague are the National Monument and Prague Castle. Located on top of Vitkov Hill overlooking the city, the National Monument contains the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and is topped by a bronze statue of Jan Zizka, who defeated Holy Roman Empire forces as part of the Hussite Wars in 1420. The permanent exhibition inside the monument, titled “The Crossroads of Czech and Czechoslovak Statehood,” captures five milestones related to the Oct. 28 celebrations: the creation of Czechoslovakia, the 1938 Munich Agreement, the dissolution of the republic between 1939 and 1945 due to World War II, the communist coup

in 1948, the creation of the Czechoslovak Federation in 1968 and the fall of communism in 1989.

Prague Castle has been a focal point of the Czech identity for over a thousand years. Home of kings and presidents, the 70,000-square-meter castle complex features 10th-century Romanesque and 14th-century Gothic buildings among the churches, palaces, halls and towers. Possibly the most infamous event to take place at the castle was the 1618 Defenestration of Prague, which saw Catholic envoys thrown out of a third-floor window by the local Protestant lords. Despite the men surviving the fall, this is often regarded as the instigating event of the Thirty Years’ War. Today, the site of the defenestration is marked with a monument while an inscription on the Charles Bridge marks the furthest advance of the Swedish troops during the Battle of Prague, the denouement of the conflict.

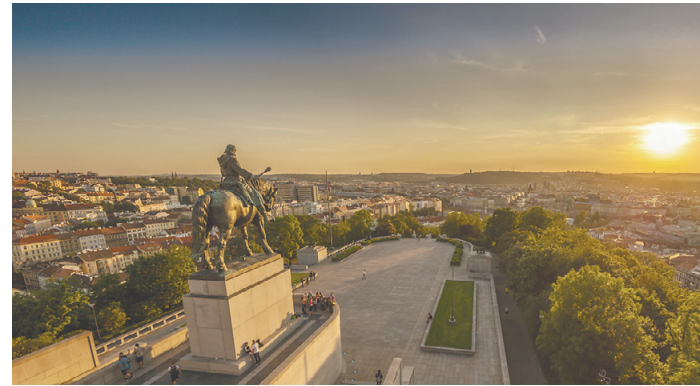
One of Prague’s more enigmatic sights is the Astronomical Clock, located at the southern side of the Old Town Hall Tower since 1410. As well as displaying the time, and a mechanized display of the Twelve



St. Vitus Cathedral is seen behind a statue of Dvorak. CZECH TOURISM

Apostles on the hour from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., this type of clock also tracks astronomical information such as the position of the sun, moon, constellations and major planets on special dials. Large crowds often fill the square outside the Old Town Hall to watch the centuries-old marvel.

Finished in 1402 after more than 40 years of construction, the Charles Bridge spans the Vltava River. Decorated by 30 statues of various saints, the pedestrian bridge has joined the city’s Old Town and Castle areas and survived conflict, floods and revolu-



tions — possibly due to the supposed combination of Bohemian sandstone and egg yolk creating an extra strong mortar. Crowds fill the bridge most of the time during the day, leading to the common recommendation to visit early in the morning, or later in the evening.

The city is also replete with statues and sculptures not just from medieval times, but also modern times, and notable examples include composer Dvorak, writer Franz Kafka, poet Karel Hynek Macha and political activist Jan Palach.

This content references excerpts from the official Prague tourism website. For more information, please visit <https://www.prague.eu/en>.

A statue of Jan Zizka overlooks Prague from the top of Vitkov Hill.

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



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