20. PRAGUE

1.General information

Prague is the Capital of the Czech Republic. It is situated in central Bohemia on the Vltava River. It has about 1.200.000 inhabitants. It is the centre of government, economics and culture.

2. Monuments and places of interest

* **Wenceslas Square**: it is the real centre of the city. At the top is the National Museum and the statue of the Czech patron, St. Wenceslas, on his horse. The square is mostly crowded with tourists; there are lots of shops.
* **Old Town Square**: the dominants are Master Jan Hus Monument, St. Nicholas Church (a baroque church) and the Astronomical Clock which strikes every 60 minutes; tourists gather here to see the procession of the Apostles: their figures appear in two windows. The Clock shows phases of the Moon
* **Karlova Street**: a very narrow street, full of souvenir shops and mostly crowded with tourists. It leads from Old Town Square to Charles Bridge.
* **Charles Bridge**: It connects the Old Town and the Lesser Town. Prague has 15 bridges, but this one is the most famous. It was built by Charles IV. in the 14th century in the gothic style. Originally it was called Prague Bridge. It is said that the inhabitants of Prague added eggs during its construction. There are two towers: at the beginning and at the end of the bridge. They are also built in the gothic style. Later, baroque statues were added. You can see street artists on the bridge: musicians and painters.
* Then you come to **the Lesser Town** and you can continue to Neruda Street. Houses in this street have their signs: At the three fiddles, At the Golden Lion, At the Two Suns (where Neruda was born).
* Then you come to **Prague Castle**. It is the seat of the President. It is a block of palaces, churches and gardens. It has 3 courtyards. The gates are guarded by guards in uniforms (tourists like taking photos of them).

            – **St. Vitus Cathedral**: Charles IV. started its construction in the 14th century and it was completed in the 20th century. It is a huge gothic building with St. Wenceslas Chapel where for example Charles IV. and his four wives are buried.

            - **St. George Church** – built in romanesque style

            - **The Golden Lane** – a picturesque street with small houses – where alchymists, guards and craftsmen used to live. Franz Kafka lived in number 22 at the beginning of the 20th century.

            - **Royal Garden** with „**Belvedere**“ (summer residence of the Queen Ann) and „Singing Fountain“

Other places of interest:

        Petřín Tower – a view tower (it is a copy of the Eiffel Tower in Paris) and mirror maze - which is very funny: the mirrors misshape the picture of you so that you are very thin, very fat, very small etc.; Petřín is  traditionally a favourite meeting place of lovers (there is a statue of Karel Hynek Mácha)

        Zoo and Botanic Gardens in Troja

        Old Jewish Town, Old-New Synagogue and Jewish Cemetery

        Vyšehrad Castle with its cemetery of Czech artists and writers called "Slavín"

3. Shopping facilities

- in the town centre: mainly shops with souvenirs for tourists. They sell T-shirts with printed pictures of Prague, cups, jewels, scarves, marionettes

- in big shopping centres: Zličín, Letňany etc. – lots of fashion shops, fast food restaurants, sports shops and mostly a supermarket concentrated in one big shopping mall ; people sometimes spend there lots of time only „window shopping“

4. Living in Prague: advantages and disadvantages:

In the Capital, you have more possibilities to find a job and you will probably earn more money than in a small town. On the other hand, life in Prague is hasty, and the cost of living is higher there.

Living in the centre of Prague is expensive. Nowadays, lots of young families buy houses in „satellite towns“ near Prague, but they sometimes have problems: there are no schools, no shops, no public transport.

Prague is a cosmopolitan city, so you can meet people from all over the world.

5. Transport in Prague:

- *public transport*: you can use trams, city buses, the underground and funicular railway. The transport system covers both the city and its outskirts.

You can buy

        -a single ticket (only for one type of transportation: e.g. only for tram, only for the underground, and it is only for short rides)

        - a transfer ticket (you can change from tram to the underground, or to bus) – it is for long rides

        - or you can buy passes: a pass for one day, for more days, a month or even the whole year

- there are two big *railway stations*: The Masaryk Station and the Wilson Station (the main station) which is set in a beautiful Art Nouveau building

- there is an *airport* in Ruzyně

6. Culture in Prague

- The National Theatre: it was built in the 19th century. People collected money for it. Inside it was decorated by the best artists, for example Mikoláš Aleš. You can visit ballet performances, opera or drama.

- there are lots of other theatres: Tyl Theatre, Vinohrady, Lucerna Hall, the music theatre in Karlín (classical musicals are played there), Broadway (modern musicals)

- State Opera

- National Gallery – at the Prague Castle; it is spread out in more buildings

- National Museum – with mineral, archeological and zoological collections