

Imagine there's no countries
 It isn't hard to do
 Nothing to kill or die for
 And no religion too
 Imagine all the people
 Living life in peace
 You may say I'm a dreamer
 But I'm not the only one
 I hope someday you'll join us
 And the world will be as one
 Imagine no possessions
 I wonder if you can
 No need for greed or hunger
 A brotherhood of man
 Imagine all the people
 Sharing all the world
 You may say I'm a dreamer
 But I'm not the only one
 I hope someday you'll join us
 And the world will live as one.

16. PRAGUE

(Note: It might be useful to use maps, pictures, slides, films or viewcards to make sure that students know the places connected with the topic.)

Prague is the capital of the Czech Republic and lies in the middle of Bohemia. It covers an area of nearly 500 sq kms and its population is about 1,200,000. Prague is divided into many boroughs. The historical centre is made up by the Old Town, Josefov, the Lesser Quarter, Hradčany, the New Town and Vyšehrad. Together they make a town preserve which is quite unique. On the other hand Prague is now surrounded by a ring of modern housing estates serving as residential quarters.

A legend connects the founding of Prague with Princess Libuše of the Premyslid dynasty who prophesied the future glory of Prague, which „would touch the stars”. The oldest settlements of this region dates back 25,000 years. In the latter half of the 10th century St. Vitus Rounda, the Prince's Palace and a convent with a church were built on Hradčany. Prague's other castle — Vyšehrad — was built in the 11th century and for some time it was the seat of Czech rulers.

Prague became the imperial residence of Charles IV (1346-1378). An archbishopric (1344), Charles University (1348), the New Town with the Horse Market (now Wenceslas Square) and the Cattle market (now Charles

Square) were founded. Charles IV promoted the construction of other important buildings such as St. Vitus Cathedral and the Charles Bridge. After John Huss's death, the movement against the church practice continued. In 1419 the defenestration of the councillors from the windows of the New Town Hall took place. In 1420 Jan Žižka defeated the first anti-Hussite crusade on Vítkov Hill. In 1618 the Czech estates rose up against the Hapsburgs and Friedrich of the Palatinate was elected king — these events also marked the beginning of the Thirty Year's War throughout Europe.

In 1918 Prague became the capital of Czechoslovakia. In 1939 Prague was occupied by German troops and in 1942 strongly persecuted after the assassination of the Nazi deputy protector Heydrich. In May 1945 the Prague Uprising against the fascists culminated. Barricades were built in the streets and people resisted the attacks until 9th May when Prague was liberated by the Russians. On August 21, 1968 Prague was occupied (as well as the rest of the country) by the Warsaw Pact troops in order to stop democratic reform in the country, which had been taking place since Spring. After 40 years of totalitarian depression, on November 17, 1989 „the Velvet Revolution” started in Prague on Národní Street and huge demonstrations of up to a quarter million people woke up the whole nation.

Prague is the seat of our President, the Czech government, all important state ministries and the Czech Parliament.

It is also an important industrial and business centre and transport crossroad. And it is the industrial centre for engineering, food industries, ready-made garment, chemical, polygraphic industries, tourism etc.

It is also a cultural centre of the republic and can offer many outstanding theatrical and musical performances (e.g. the Prague Spring International Music Festival in May-June each year). We find the best theatres, galleries and museums here, such as:

the National Museum at the top of Wenceslas Square, the National Gallery which is spread out in various Prague spots: Gothic art in St. George Church at the Prague Castle, world art and French paintings of 19th and 20th centuries in Sternberk Palace on the Prague Castle, Czech 19th century art in St. Agnes Monastery, sculpture collection in Zbraslav).

The National Theatre, built in late renaissance style from the public money collection of the people in the second half of the 19th century. Before its ceremonial opening in 1881 it was severely damaged by fire and was rebuilt within the next two years. The best artists of the 19th century decorated the theatre (M. Alš, F. Ženíšek, V. Hynais).

Other important places of culture include the Smetana Theatre, the Palace of Culture, the Magic Lantern, the Reduta, the Lucerna Hall, the Tyl Theatre, the

Vinohrady Theatre, the Semafor, the Viola, the Činoherní klub, Divadlo na zábradlí, Divadlo bez zábradlí, Divadlo za branou and many new clubs for young people and young art (Bunkr, Borát, Malostranská beseda, Rovy, Rock Café etc.).

Many world known personalities lived or spent some time in Prague, e.g. Mozart, Beethoven, Chateaubriand, Čajkovskij, Descartes, Paganini, Wagner, Grieg, Dostojevskij, Einstein, Kafka, Lenin, Liszt, Saroyan, Ginzburg. Many world famous personalities visited Prague, such as the Pope, George Bush, John Major, Margaret Thatcher, Prince Charles etc.

Prague is also an important centre for sports. There are many stadiums, parks (Lená, Stromovka, Kampa, Petřín) and swimming pools. Prague can also boast of the world's biggest stadium — Strahov.

The majority of Czech universities, colleges and student residences are in Prague.

The most visited tourist sights include: The Prague Castle — it was founded after 880 by the first Premyslid Prince Bořivoj. Its greatest period was during the reign of Charles IV. In 1344 the construction of the St. Vitus Cathedral started. During the reign of Rudolf II the Castle became a famous centre of arts and culture. Famous sights in the Prague Castle include: St. Vitus Cathedral, the Royal Palace with Vindislay Hall, Spanish Hall, the Golden Lane (a legend connects it with Rudolf II's alchemists).

The Prague Castle is surrounded by the Strahov Monastery and Petřín hill with its famous watchtower.

Old Town Square — portions of Old Town Hall were hit by bombs in May 1945. The Astronomical Clock strikes every 60 minutes and is controlled by a very complicated mechanism built in the Middle Ages. In the upper part of the horologe a procession of the Apostles can be seen every hour. The horologe is decorated by 12 outer medallions representing the course of village life, painted by famous Czech painter Josef Mánes. There are also 12 signs of the Zodiac. There also is the monument to Master John Huss on the square. Worthy of attention in the square is the gothic church of Our Lady Before Týn, a gothic tower house called At the Bell and the baroque St. Nicholas Church designed by K. I. Dientzenhofer.

Vyšehrad — formerly one of the Prague's towns and originally the castle of the Premyslid in the latter half of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century. Nowadays we can visit the National Cemetery here with the graves of outstanding personalities in the sphere of culture, science and politics. The original romanesque Church of Saints Peter and Paul now has a neo-gothic appearance.

The Charles Bridge — commissioned by Charles IV in 1357 and built by a famous Gothic architect Petr Parléř. On both ends of the bridge there are Gothic

Bridge Towers. It is the second oldest bridge in Central Europe. It is 520 m long and 10 m wide. In the 18th century the bridge began to be decorated by baroque statues by Matyáš Braun and Jan Brokoff. The bridge gradually became one of the lively centres of Prague life. During Summer it is always full of tourists, souvenir stalls and street artists.

The Powder Tower — a monument of the Czech late gothic period, stands at the end of Prague's new pedestrian zone called King's Road.

The Carolinum — the oldest building of Charles University founded on 4th April 1348 as the first institution of this kind in Central Europe.

The Clementinum — the second largest building in Prague (after the Prague Castle), was built at the end of the 17th century. Now it serves as the largest branch of the state library.

Wenceslas Square — the centre of the city. It is about 750 m long and 60 m wide. The statue of the Czech patron — St. Wenceslas — made by J. V. Myslbek is a symbol of a free and independent republic. People usually gather here in troublesome moments of Czech history.

The Vltava River (which inspired Smetana to compose his unforgettable music) flows through Prague and surrounds 7 islands. About 18 bridges stretch over the river.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn about Prague's geography and population?
2. Which are the oldest boroughs of Prague?
3. Which legend is connected with the founding of Prague?
4. What did you learn about Prague's history during the reign of Charles IV?
5. What do you know about Prague during the following centuries?
6. Very briefly describe the history of Prague during the 20th century.
7. What do you know about Prague as the centre of political, economic, educational and cultural life?
8. What did you learn about the National Museum, the National Gallery and the National Theatre?
9. Do you know any other places of culture in Prague?
10. Do you know any parks or sports areas in Prague?
11. Which famous personalities visited or lived in Prague?
12. Which are the most famous sights in Prague?
13. Give some basic facts about the Prague Castle and its surroundings.
14. What did you learn about the Old Town Square?
15. Tell us something about Vyšehrad.
16. What do you know about the Charles Bridge?