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PRAGUE

“IN YOUR SPORRAN”

Version:	1
Guide published:	March 2005
Based on visits in:	June 1999, November 2001 & January 2004



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About this guide

This series of downloadable NATA Mini “In Your Sporran” Guides has been designed specifically to save the hassle of printing out reams of NATA web pages in order to make sure you don’t miss something whilst wondering the back streets of your chosen destination.

This guide has been compiled almost exclusively by me (Paul Allison), and is based entirely on personal experiences and opinions. Please do not prejudge anything on my say so – not only am I quite warped, but many places were only visited once, and therefore may have been having a particularly good or bad day.

This guide is not intended to replace more traditional sources of information, such as the excellent Lonely Planet guide books or the indispensable “In Your Pocket” guides available local in many Eastern European cities (as well as the downloadable versions from www.inyourpocket.com, which have inspired this very guide). Instead, the idea is to supplement these more detailed, better researched and more balanced guides with my own ramblings.

These guides originally came about as people were forever asking for pub tips and the like for places I’ve been to – I soon grew tired of typing out the same emails every few weeks and opted instead to keep the information on the web on the NATA Online site.

All opinions expressed in this guide are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Netley Abbey Tartan Army.

- For more information about NATA (the Netley Abbey Tartan Army), including photos and diary accounts of many trips abroad with Scotland, as well as much more travel information and guides), please visit www.netleyabbeytartanarmy.com
- For more information on me, please visit www.paulallison.co.uk



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Czech Republic Introduction

What was once an Eastern European paradise of stunningly beautiful women and stunningly cheap beer is rapidly moving towards full EU integration, and all the watering down of culture that entails, not to mention it's status as the "new Dublin" amongst stag parties. Nonetheless, if you accept the Czech Republic, and particularly Prague, for what it is now rather than what it once was, you should still have a great time.

The Czech people are very friendly, although can seem very weary of endless tourists in Prague city centre. One thing I cannot emphasise enough is a "little language goes a long way" – learn the words for "hello", "two beers please", "thank you" and "goodbye" and you will be treated much more warmly in many bars. Prague has become a real tourist trap, and went downhill considerably between my two visits (1999 and 2001), with a lot of touts and drug-dealers clogging up otherwise beautiful streets.

Though not as cheap as it once was, there are still plenty of bargains to be had in the food and drink arena. Again, we ate mostly in pubs, where fried cheese in breadcrumbs is a vegetarian life-saver (although not best for the arteries!) – Helen was still able to enjoy fillet steak and other such meaty morsels at a fraction of the price you'd pay at home. One safe and reliable way to get something to eat, besides the all-pervading pizzerias, is Irish Pubs: much as I shudder to recommend anyone should go to an Irish Pub (unless, of course, you're actually in Ireland – if you're in the Czech Republic, why not go to a CZECH pub?), at least you can trust the menu to provide you with some shreds of recognisable meals – invaluable for those days when your bowels are in tatters!

Although the infrastructure is improving, if you're planning on catching a train – turn up early! You may be expected to queue at several different windows before eventually getting hold of a ticket, and even then you'll need a degree of orienteering knowledge to get the right platform. Prague has a very efficient Metro, although the tram system relies on playing a kind of fruit machine to get a ticket – buy books from newsagents instead! Unfortunately, one area where underworld

corruption is still rife is with taxis – take extreme care not to be ripped off – try and avoid using them if you can.

Alcohol

Sustained alcohol intake is the name of the game here – as well some top notch beers, expect to get your chops round some glasses of pretty vile liqueurs as well:

- **Pilsner Urquell** – a fine beer from the home of pilsner (Plzen). Far better on draught than the bottled version, which often tastes like you're trying to drink it through a beer mat. My everyday favourite when in Prague.
- **Staropramen** – another great beer (which Helen prefers hands down over Urquell), this time brewed in Prague (in Smichov – another working class area slightly more gritty and less colourful than Zizkov).
- **Budvar** - aka "real Budweiser" - nice, but not as great as everyone seems to think.
- **Radegast** – very popular locally (a Czech football fan insisted on replacing my Staropramen with a glass of this stuff!), and very nice, if a little on the acidic side. Best drunk in the Radegast Beer Hall.
- **Branik** – rare, but worth searching out. Comes in light and dark varieties – both can be sampled at the Branik pub somewhere in Nove Mesto (it was snowing!) and at Eden.
- **Becherova** – nicer than it sounds, this Drambuie-esque liqueur is often pressure-sold (at vastly over-the-odds prices) by the waiters in U Fleku. Sample it in a local bar if you get the chance – goes exceptionally well with Coke for some reason!
- **Slivovice** – the quintessential plum brandy enjoyed all over Eastern Europe – still popular here.
- **Bohemian Champagne** – not recommended. A Teplice speciality (see below).
- **Absinthe** – now you're talking. Well, you won't be for long. Some say this stuff is great, some say nothing at all – personally, I cannot stand the stuff, and would put it on a par with 4* Lead Replacement Petrol for a smooth and satisfying drink. Hardcore local drinkers have been known to water it down... with Smirnoff blue label vodka!



Central Prague – Area by Area

Prague is a pretty big city, in that there are areas outside the centre well worth seeing, so I've broken them down as follows:

Stare Mesto and Josefov

This is the oldest quarter, and is at the apex of the bend in the Vltava River. When in town for the Scotland match in June 1999, it seemed that the whole city revolved around the Old Town Square – the fact of the matter is that not much, apart from touristy stuff, goes on here. The buildings are very pretty – particularly the Gotham City-style twin spired church – and there is a famous clock (although, were it not for the crowds of tourists, you could easily walk straight past it), but not somewhere to spend all your days here. Josefov is the old Jewish quarter, and actually formed the ghetto during Nazi occupation.

Eating/Drinking – this area is tourist central, so expect to pay through the nose for it. There are plenty of decent places worth searching out, and the following places may be worth a look:

- **Radegast Beer Hall** - an authentic down-to-earth beer hall serving Radegast and cheap food. It's to the south-east of the Old Town Square [Update: this was closed in Jan 2005, but may reopen].
- **Molly Malones** - My favourite of the Irish pubs in Prague, far better than the tourist haunt of Caffreys on the square. To get to Molly's, take the north-east exit from the Old Town square (i.e. top right on a map), bear left past the Czech FA HQ and then cross over and bear right. Easier than it sounds, and some very nice Rarebit (cheese and mustard on french bread) awaits.
- **O'Che's** - Possibly the only Cuban-Irish theme bar in the world. Not too bad, but a stag party favourite.

Mala Strana

This is the "little quarter" directly below the castle, and best accessed via the Charles Bridge. Quaint narrow streets and some great hotels (we can recommend The Blue Key) in a peaceful area, yet easily accessible for the city centre. There are two bars well worth searching out here:

- **U Kllice** - a tiny (as in 3 tables) wine bar in a small lane off Karmelitska. Head over the Charles Bridge and turn right down a narrow street after about 50 yards (opposite Maleho Glena).



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Although wine is the tippie of choice, there is good beer on offer, and very friendly clientele (we were bought a Chivas Regal in here by a Slavia fan impressed by my kilt!).

- **Beer Hall** (next to Blue Key Hotel) - Can't remember the name, I'm afraid, but this large subterranean beer hall is still well worth a visit. Find it in Misenska.

Nove Mesto

The "New Town" is still pretty old. It stretches from the top end of Wenscelas Square downwards for quite a way, and contains the usual city centre shops. A great football shop is at Myslikova, just around the corner from U Fleku, a German style beer hall that brews it's own dark beer.

- **U Fleku** - a very touristy beer hall on Kremencova that brews it's own dark beer (which is very nice). Often packed out with German coach parties, it's still well worth a visit. Give the over-priced Becherova liqueur a miss and try it a local bar instead!
- **Branik Beer Hall** - Somewhere in Nove Mesto (no idea where - we just stumbled across it!) - very nice beer in both light and dark varieties, and seemed popular with lunching office workers.

Prague's suburbs – Areas worth seeing

Zizkov

Now we're talking. Slightly run down, very eccentric and a reputation for a bohemian, left-wing ambience, Zizkov is one my favourite parts of the town, from the TV tower (with obligatory revolving restaurant) to the crumbling football ground with it's friendly, yet basic, bar... this is the one part of town that cares not a jot that you may be a tourist - a lively mix of workers, students and headcases abounds in all corners of this district.

There are plenty of budget accommodation options in this part of the city, and it's only a 20 minute walk (or 5 minute tram journey) past the Masarykovo station into the city centre proper. Where I would live if I moved to Prague.

- **U Vystreleneho Oka** (The Shot Out Eye) - One place you should definitely make your way out to is this eclectic pub – a quirky affair populated by a broad clientele.
- **FK Viktoria Zizkov** - a very cheap, very salt-of-the-earth bar behind one goal - see the Football Stadia section below.



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Smichov

A salty, down to earth area, similar to Zizkov with more grime and less colour. Nonetheless, you may find yourself billeted out here if staying in either of the “bo-tels” moored on the Vlatava. It’s not all bad, and there are several local bars dotted around, although when we went in they didn’t seem to be particularly women-friendly (nothing dodgy, just full of chain-smoking manual workers).

Holesovice

Mostly residential area north-west of the Centre, close to a mainline railway station and a big park, and easy walking distance to the Letna stadium and park. Holesovice may look grimy at times, but in reality is a fine area, with enough local restaurants and bars to keep you going, including a quirky, pennant filled Sparta beer hall. Where I would move to after I grew out of Zizkov!

- **Sparta Beer Hall** – Not it's "official" title, but this great local bar can be found halfway up Dukelskych. As well as a pennant-filled front bar, there is also a high-ceilinged beer hall out the back. We were plied with Becherova here by an enthusiastic Sparta fan who wanted to learn Scottish football songs!

Paul’s recommendations:

- #1 Bar – Pivovarsky Dum
- #1 Sight – View from the TV Tower
- #1 Thing to do – Football ground tour

Prague: must see sights

- **Old Town Square** - where it's at!
- **Astronomical Clock** (don't expect too much, mind!)
- **Wenceslas Square** (and the outside of National Museum)
- **Charles Bridge** (for the statues, not the touts and tourists!)
- **Prague Castle** (outside, at least - I've never been in!)
- **Petrin Tower** - up the big hill near the Castle (for the views)
- **TV Tower** - in Zizkov (again, for the views, and a cheeky wee beer at the top)



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Football Grounds in Prague

Being the sad groundspotters we are, we seem to be drawn to these grounds each time we visit. Prague is a happy hunting ground for football fans, as almost every stadium has it's own pub (that is invariably open!). Enjoy...

- The Letna (**Sparta Prague** & the national team) – in Holesovice. Get a Metro to Hradcanska and hop on a tram (or stroll down Milady Horakove for 10 minutes), or walk due north from the Old Town, climb the steps by the metronome and walk across the park (I'd recommend getting the tram there and walking back downhill). There is a bar (and a small club shop) on the right-hand near corner as you look at the ground from the park – it's quite a trendy, tidy affair and well worth a look.
- The Strahov (**Slavia Prague** & cup finals) – On top of Petrin Hill. Walk across the Charles Bridge and turn left – after around 400 yards you will come to a funicular stop on the right-hand side. Take this up the hill and head due left across the park at the top of the hill. The Strahov itself is a huge open space type stadium designed for Communist rallies, but immediately behind this is a decent-sized football ground currently used by Slavia Prague. The bar is at the far side away from the Strahov, and has a great collection of pennants and black-and-white photos. If you come out of the stadium complex and turn right (i.e. away from the City), after about 300 yards, and down a bleak-looking side-road, you'll come to FC Dragoun Brevnov's ground – an otherwise unremarkable non-league ground, save for the superb bar decorated with mannequins sporting Czech league team shirts. I was there during a training session, hence the bar was open, although I can't promise that you'll be so lucky.
- **Viktoria Zizkov** – One of my all-time favourite football bars can be found behind the goal here. It's not always open, but has been whenever I've been there, and on my last visit we had the cheapest beer of the trip. They may be a wee bit unaccustomed to foreign visitors, but they certainly make up for it with friendliness. Easiest way there to is jump on a tram, although you can easily combine this with a trip to the TV Tower or the Shot-Out Eye bar (we did both).



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- **Bohemians** – The kangaroos may have been relegated at the end of the 2002-03 season amidst scenes of rioting and pitch invasion, but the rather meccano-style ground is still worth a visit, even if just for a photo of the big green kangaroo badge. Unfortunately there is no stadium bar, however the bar on the corner of the main road should suffice, and is decorated with Bohemians' pictures (and has great fried cheese).
- **"Eden" (Slavia Prague)** – On the same main road as Bohemians, but slightly further out of town (allow 20 minutes if walking between the two), the wonderfully nick-named Eden was in a bit of a state when I was there, with weeds growing all over the terraces and the stand falling apart. Thankfully, this didn't stop them having the bar open, and again, it is well worth a visit (this bar actually gave us the inspiration to design our own pennants!). Out of the ground and over the road is a rotunda-style building that has a bar on the ground floor – this actually replaced the legendary "Eden" bar (the one in the stadium is a VIP bar), but by all accounts doesn't live up to it's predecessor. It did have Branik beer though, which is a good thing!

Prague: Pubs

Our most recent trip to Prague was in January 2004, and to be honest, consisted mostly of unwinding and relaxing via the medium of beer. This is basically a run-down of where we went (no less than 36 different places!), some of which are better than others – I've rated them all out of ten for beer and ambience. As always, this is purely subjective, but might help somebody, somewhere. As a result, this is a curious mix of diary and pub-guide – the advantage being that these pub-crawls have been tried and tested! It also saves me having to individually recommend places when people ask me! One important thing to bear in mind – due to the weather (very cold and snowy), we didn't make it to some of the more outlying areas (such as Smichov, Brevnov or Zizkov), where we know there are good, cheap pubs (see above for more details), so don't forget these areas if you're looking for a bit of local colour and a cheap beer off the beaten track.

Please note: some of these bars may have closed or changed beyond recognition – don't blame us!

Day One: Thursday 1st Jan – Mala Strana

We arrived at mid-afternoon on New Years Day, and as we were keen to avoid the massive crowds, and were staying in Mala Strana, we thought we'd keep it local. This was quite a frustrating evening – some places were closed, meaning the ones that were open were often too busy too accommodate us, and others were closing early as it was News Year's Day. Many pub-looking places in this area are in fact restaurants, looking to capitalise on the high numbers of tourists climbing the hill to the castle.

- **Malostrana Pivnice, Cihelna, Mala Strana**
If walking from Malostranska metro back towards the Charles Bridge, you'll see the writing on the wall for this place – take the left fork (Cihelna), and dive in. Very popular, and plenty of food was being served. We sat on high stools in a kind of corridor and enjoyed the excellent Pilsner Urquell.

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 7/10



- **U Maleho Glena**, Karmelitska, Mala Strana
“The Little Glen” is easy to spot – just look for the Guinness sign on Karmelitska, just south off of Malastranske Namesti. The downstairs is used for evening jazz sessions, and the upstairs is reminiscent of an Irish pub. It’s okay, and cheaper than similar places in the Old Town, but not worth a lengthy visit (unless your into jazz).
Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 6/10
- **Un-named Restaurant**, Maltezske Namesti 15, Mala Strana
Whilst looking for a pub called U Malteze in Maltezske Namesti, we stumbled across this reasonable Czech restaurant. Not a bad choice, even if just for a coffee or a beer, but quite small.
Beer/Food: 6/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 6/10
- **U Zlateho Hada** (Wine Bar), Maltezske Namesti, Mala Strana
Just over the road from the restaurant above is a wee wine bar, with more seats underground. Very friendly, and popular with the locals, we stopped in for a couple of hot red wines.
Beer: 6/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 6/10
- **U Klicu**, Propkopska, Mala Strana
An old favourite from our 2001 trip, U Klicu (The Key) now finds itself next to a garish Spanish tapas bar, and was even smaller than we remembered (just 2 tables). Good Budvar on tap, as well as plenty of wine. Worth a visit.
Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 8/10
- **Baracnicka Rychta**, Trziste 33, Mala Strana/Hradcany
Packed out with locals and Italian tourists, we only stayed long enough for a beer and a plate of cheese. Okay, but nothing special on our visit. Highly rated elsewhere, mind.
Beer: 6/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 6/10
- **Jo's Bar**, Malastranske Namesti 7, Mala Strana
A well-known expat bar in the middle of Mala Strana square. Does exactly what it says on the tin. Not my cup of tea, but the only place open late on New Years Day.
Beer: 3/10 – Ambience: 5/10 – Total: 3/10

Day Two: Friday 2nd January – Nove Mesto Pub Crawl

Nove Mesto pretty much includes the top of Wencelsas Square downwards, although we were mostly around the Karlovo Namesti area (but we did start at Mustek and walked down Vojvodicka). We figured that it would be less full of tourists, and thought we’d hit the brew pubs before the weekend – this almost backfired due to Pivovarsky Dum’s popularity – get there early (it’s worth it!)

- **Branicka Pivnice**, Vodickova, Nove Mesto
Rough and ready stand-up joint next to a posher pub/restaurant, just a few steps from Wencelassas Square and Mustek metro, and offering some of the cheapest, nicest beer in the city centre. There are seats, but these seemed to be the preserve of the older generation picking at their utopenec (pickled sausage). Be prepared to stand with everyday Czech workers as they nip in and down pints in record time. Well worth a visit! Both 10-degree and 12-degree Branik are on tap, and both are great beers.
Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 9/10 – Total: 9/10
- **Novomestsky Pivovar**, Vodickova 20, Nove Mesto
Famous for food, and obviously priced at tourists, this place knocks out it’s own dark and light brews. The dark was a wee bit too sweet, and the light a little gassier than one would expect from a brew-pub. The food was pretty nice, but it was crowded at lunchtime – we were on the upstairs terrace.
Beer/Food: 7/10 – Ambience: 5/10 – Total: 6/10
- **U Fleku**, Kremencova 11, Nove Mesto
A Prague institution – and favourite destination of German coach parties. The dark house beer is very nice, and certainly more-ish, but they knock it out in short measures (0.4l), and try and ply you with highly-overpriced becherovka (don’t bother – have some over the road instead). Well worth a visit, but bear in mind that this place exists solely for the tourists these days.
Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 5/10 – Total: 7/10
- **Un-named Bar**, Opposite U Fleku, Kremencova, Nove Mesto
An everyday Czech pivnice, just over and right from U Fleku, provides an antidote to the touristy glitz of over the road. Nothing special, but not bad either.



Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 7/10

- **Unnamed Bar/Restaurant**, along Jecna, Nove Mesto
This attractive looking, but quiet, wee place is downstairs on the main road. Nothing overly special – palatable enough beer and food - which is just as well, as there's no hope of me remembering the name to direct you back to it!

Beer/Food: 6/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 6/10

- **Pivovarsky Dum**, Lipova 15 (entrance on Jecna), Nove Mesto
Looks like a furniture showroom from the street, but inside is a very flash, well-lit and ridiculously popular (i.e. fully booked from 7pm onwards – bear this in mind!) brew-pub. Great looking menu (but we'd just eaten), and fantastic unfiltered beer in light and dark, and chocolate, banana and vanilla flavours. Worth a few hours of any beer-drinker's time – just get there early!!!

Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 9/10

- **Unnamed Bar**, Jecna, Nove Mesto
Non-descript, local bar with a proliferation of fruit machines (and Shrek in Czech on the telly). These bars are ten-a-penny across the city, and this definitely wasn't one of the better ones.

Beer: 6/10 – Ambience: 3/10 – Total: 4/10

- **U Havrana** (The Raven), Halkova 6, Nove Mesto
Living up to it's reputation, and being impossibly smoky despite being near empty, this big bar with lots of seats is okay, but not worth a special trip. Has Kozel on tap, which was nice.

Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 7/10

- **Musketyr Wine Bar**, Mezibranska, Nove Mesto
One of Helen's favourite bars, this little cellar opposite the National Museum (just up the hill from Muzeum metro) is accessed through an innocuous looking door, that then leads down a stairway to the vaulted cellar below. A decent wine selection, including Czech wines is complimented by a decent looking food menu. Two types of Krusovice (the quintessential restaurant brew here) are on offer – I find the 12-degree version a little too sharp.

Beer/Wine: 6/10 – Ambience: 9/10 – Total: 8/10



Day Three: Sat 3rd Jan – Holesovice and Wenceslas Square

Holesovice is pretty much a standard inner-city suburb, with standard pubs. However, it was the first area we stayed in (back in 1999), so we thought we'd go back and see how it was getting on (and if the Sparta fans bar was still there). We got the metro to Vltavska, and walked around to Dukelskych Hridinu, which is pretty much the main drag.

- **Flamengo Pizzeria**, corner of Hermanova/Dukels. Holesovice
After an abortive search for Dante's (now closed down), we settled for this small, welcoming pizzeria. Nothing special, and serving bottled beer (we stuck to coke), the pizza was cheap and filling and little else.

Food: 4/10 – Ambience: 4/10 – Total: 4/10

- **Holesovice Pennant bar** (not it's real title), Dukelskych Hridinu
To be found on the corner of Veletzrni and Dukelskych Hridinu, this place has really smartened up it's act in the past 5 years. What was previously a bare front bar, bedecked in dozens of pennants, with a barn-like beer hall at the side, is now a smart, table-clothed pivnice. The front bar is still a mostly standing affair, and the pennants are now down to barely two-dozen (look out for the yellow NATA one on the left behind the bar). The scary-looking barman broke into a wide smile when I ordered in my broken Czech. Definitely worth a look-in if you're in the area. 12-degree Pilsner Urquell and dark Kozel on tap.

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 8/10

- **Unnamed Bar**, Hermanova, Holesovice
To be found one street up the hill from Dukelskych Hridinu, on the corner of Hermanova and Veverkova (near the Bellevue Hotel), this acceptable pub was popular with passers-by drinking schnapps in the front bar, and eating in the sit-down portion.

Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 6/10

- **Unnamed Sports Bar**, Milady Horakove, Holesovice
A strange one this – a sports bar diagonally opposite the Bellevue Hotel with it's own bookies (in a little shed) inside the door. There's a pool table out back, and plenty of bar stools, as well as a pleasant seating area at the front with the walls bedecked in old photos and match reports. All of this, plus friendly service and the interesting



Bernard beer on tap. Again, not necessarily worth a special trip, but if you're passing...

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 7/10

- **Unnamed Bar/Restaurant**, Strossmayerova Namesti, Holesovice
This place, which name again escapes me, has the dubious distinction of being our first ever bar in the Czech Republic. More of a restaurant (although perfectly happy to just serve you beer), it is blighted (in my opinion) by the curse of Czech restaurants – the acidic Krusovice beer on tap.

Beer: 6/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 6/10

- **Zlata Hvezda** (Sports Bar), Ve Smeckach 12, Nove Mesto
Back near Wenceslas Square, and down a side alley towards this popular Sports Bar. Various lived-in rooms come off the main corridor, but the biggest is at the back. Waitresses give prompt (although not always English-speaking) service, and provide cheap (and very drinkable) 10-degree Gambrinus, pricier Pilsner Urquell and pizzas to a beered-up stag party clientele. Lots of big screens (we watched 4 games at once), but not really my cup of tea (we were only there as Southampton were on) – if you do have to use a Sports Bar, this may be your best bet.

Beer/Food: 7/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 7/10

- **Jagr's Sports Bar**, Vaclavske Namesti 56, Nove Mesto
Part-owned by Jagomir Jagr, a Czech ice hockey star famous in the US, this sterile and flash bar is the complete antithesis to the one above. Occupying a prime position on Wenc Sq, it was devoid of all character (and customers) when we popped in on the Saturday evening. Bound to be popular with British stag parties in high season, we didn't think it warranted the extortionate prices.

Beer: 2/10 – Ambience: 2/10 – Total: 2/10

- **U Pinkasu**, Jungmannovo Namesti 16, Nove Mesto
Famous for being the first place in Prague to serve Pilsner Urquell on draught (there's a plaque downstairs on the way to the toilets), this place serves decent Czech food and beer at a reasonable price. It also gets ridiculously busy, but seemed to have a bit more space down the stairs and out the back.

Beer: 9/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 8/10



- **Lucerna Music Bar**, Vodickova 36, Nove Mesto
Another place we visited on our first night in Prague all of those years ago – Lucerna's 80's and 90's disco is legendary, and is great night out. Costing just £2 to get in, and 60p a beer, watch and join in as people of all ages get down to the strains of Duran Duran and Midnight Oil. Great entertainment, and apparently available on Fridays as well as Saturdays.

Beer: 7/10 – Ambience: 10/10 – Total: 9/10

Day Four: Sun 4th Jan – Stare Mesto

Not hungover as such (sleeping until 1pm helped!), we slowly made our way across town to TGI Fridays in Na Prikope for some familiar food. Sunday was a slow day, as we didn't want to kill ourselves with alcohol too quickly, although we did pick the pace up again in the evening. This was also our only day of culture, taking in both the Christmas Market stalls and the interesting Museum of Communism (behind McDonalds on Na Prikope).

- **TGI Fridays**, Na Prikope 27, Nove Mesto
Exactly the same the world over – wall-to-wall Americana, attentive smiling service, extensive cocktails and expensive steaks. Does exactly what it says on the tin.

Cocktails/Food: 7/10 – Ambience: 3/10 – Total: 5/10

- **Pivnice Radegast**, Templova 2, Stare Mesto
Down a dead-end street behind the Art Nouveua Obneci Dum, the run-down looking Radegast Beer Hall is a real find. Although there more tourists in this time than on previous occasions, this place is still authentically Czech, and serves the excellent Radegast on draught, as well as a decent menu. Worth seeking out, and handy for the Obneci Dum and the Old Town Square.

Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 9/10 – Total: 10/10

- **Corner Café** (again, not the real name!) opposite side of Tyn Church, Tynska, Stare Mesto
In the shadow of Tyn Church, this wee bar behind the Old Town square has a great selection of cocktails (I had the two involving Becherovka – well recommended) and an intimate atmosphere. Not the cheapest, but then it has a prime location.

Beer: 9/10 – Ambience: 9/10 – Total: 9/10



- **U Zlateho Tygra** (The Golden Tiger), Husova 17, Stare Mesto
The Golden Tiger is one of the most famous pubs in Prague, and as a result is shared between die-hard local regulars and hordes of guidebook-toting tourists (those that don't spin round when they walk into the spartan, smoky beer hall). This is well worth all the publicity (I just wish less tourists found it, mind!) – great beer, good food and great service, as well as a real buzz and even a selection of football pennants in the back room (on the way to the toilets). Difficult to find a table almost all of the time, speaking Czech will really work wonders and earn the respect of the otherwise grumpy locals. Apparently, the Pilsner Urquell is not kept in barrels, but in large tanks under the bar, and you can really taste the difference.

Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 10/10 – Total: 10/10

- **U Krale Jiriho** (King George), Lilova 10, Stare Mesto
Most tourists walk straight past this bar in favour of the James Joyce further down the passageway. It's small and narrow, and consequently can be uncomfortable if full (which doesn't take too much, admittedly!), but it's still preferable to a fake Irish pub!

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 8/10

Day Five: Monday 5th Jan – Hradcanska & Mala Strana

Monday was to be our touristy day – up the snowbound hill to the Castle for a proper look around, in the hope that most of the New Year crowds would be away home and back at work. Of course, it didn't work out that way...

- **Unnamed café bar**, Uvoz, Hradcany
After a long, arduous climb up the icy hill Nerudova towards the Castle, we carried on past the first steps and found this inviting café on the right hand side. A popular tourist stop-off point, but conveniently just off the main drag, with a tempting menu, this place is worth popping into for sustenance after climbing the hill. Interesting artwork on the walls, and an airy atmosphere.

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 7/10

- **Restaurant nad Uvozem**, Loretanska 15, Hradcany
A real tourist trap, this bar has a commanding view over the city (it's just possible to make out Charles Bridge), but suffers from the worst (and some of the most expensive) Pilsner Urquell in the city. It's halfway up a narrow staircase from Uvoz. The food is okay, but well



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overpriced. You are most definitely paying for the view here. If you must, then consider stopping at a coffee.

Beer/Food: 1/10 – Ambience: 3/10 – Total: 2/10

- **U Černého Vola**, Loretanske Namesti 1, Hradcany
“At the Black Ox” is a real gem of a pub. Like the Golden Tiger above, this place is in many a guidebook, and has a similar ambience – loud, busy and full of locals. No need to be intimidated – just find a free seat (we had to squeeze right into the back, but ended up staying for hours) and get stuck in. Failing that, there's plenty of stand-up room just inside the door. There's Velkopopvicky Kozel on draught (around 45p for 0.5l), and it's surprisingly cheap given its prime location by the Castle and opposite the Loretta. Decent food too, and friendly attentive service – well worth a lengthy stay. This is the sole reason we ended up missing the castle.

Beer: 10/10 – Ambience: 10/10 – Total: 10/10

- **Hospudka Na Schodech**, Radnicke Schody 5 (on the stairs between Nerudova and Loretanska), Hradcany
We popped in on the way back down the hill around 7pm – it was full of locals but not unwelcoming. Unfortunately, the draught beer was 12-degree Krusovice, so not my favourite. An okay place, but you're probably better off spending more time in U Cervelo Vola.

Beer: 6/10 – Ambience: 7/10 – Total: 7/10

- **U Krale Brabantsko**, Thunovska 15, Mala Strana
Just off the main drag up the Castle Hill (at the back of U Kocura, basically), this place knocks out decent Pilsner Urquell and food (we had the Beer Cheese). Worth walking around the corner for.

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 8/10 – Total: 8/10

- **Hopsoda U Kocura**, Nerudova 2, Mala Strana
Apparently this place used to be the place to be, however we found it pretty empty, and oppressively bright under the strip lighting. On the plus side, they do have a St Pauli pennant behind the bar, and do serve excellent Budvar. We were in quite late, but it's apparently a favourite with tourists making the long climb to the Castle.

Beer: 8/10 – Ambience: 6/10 – Total: 7/10



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Teplice

2-3 hours north of Prague by train (we had to change at Usti nad Lebum), Teplice is a large industrial city in the foreboding North Bohemia region. We couldn't find much in the way of anything, save for a pizzeria on the main drag, a strange bar that felt like someone's sitting room, and a beer-shop one street from the station.

Not high-up on many people's must-see lists, one thing Teplice must be commended on, as well as its decent football stadium, is the "Bohemian Champagne" on sale at the news kiosks for a bargain £1.50 a large bottle – fizzy vinegar never tasted so good!

TIP: If you come out of Usti nad Ledum station, head up and to the right – you'll find a small bar with plush velvet seats (we did!).

Was this guide useful? Please let me know:
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