

# FOUR SEASONS PRAGUE

*City of a Hundred Spires*



They say a child is a parent's calling card: those psychological facsimiles of ourselves who unwittingly reveal our ambitions toward and attitudes about the world. But as every parent bestrides the joy and pride of their young, the rest of the world remains unconvinced: Circumspect, if you will, of other children's schemes and sway upon the world.

Such was the case with me upon a recent non-stop flight from New York City to the Czech Republic. Despite the in-flight hospitality of Delta Airlines, the duration of the flight remains a fixed 8 hours. Movies, meals and impromptu munchies make the experience of jetting across the Atlantic, maneuvering further still into Eastern Europe, and descending into the bowels of another time zone rather manageable. But when I came face to face with 75 uniformed grammar school children at the airline's ticket counter, I immediately began to consider the cost benefit analysis of re-scheduling my flight. Nearly 85% of all people will experience the complex and unique challenge of parenting, and subsequently have tolerance with and compassion for the challenges that role creates. But those of us who remain are the harsher critics: looking for and generally finding those rather solid reasons to furrow our brow or curl our lip at the inevitable, attention-seeking antics of someone else's child. The moment, however, disappeared into the courtesy announcement that soon followed. "DL Flight #208 now boarding all first-class passengers." I wasn't flying first class, mind you, but the



**Front Page:** Arriving at the Four Seasons Prague via the Vltava River.

**Above Left:** A Premier Room with views of Prague Castle  
Above: The Lobby is filled with live Piano Music in the evenings and conjoins to the Allegro Bar with a wide range of Czech beers, Italian grappas and an interesting selection of Czech and Italian wines.

**Left:** Allegro Restaurant is the recipient of the only Michelin star in the Czech Republic and has the distinction of being named the best restaurant in the Czech Republic for 2006 – present by the discerning Zagat Survey.

**Next Page:** The magnificent Baroque architecture and museums of Prague are a mecca for the world's connoisseur of refined taste and culture.

moment of decision was upon me as I'd but an instant to either retreat from or turn into the twinkling promise of Prague. And with an iPodtouch loaded with 64 GB's worth of music and movies and a brand new pair of Bose QuietComfort 3 noise canceling headphones tucked neatly in my briefcase, I soldiered down the jetway and into the plight of an 8 hour Play Date!

Situated on the Vltava River in central Bohemia, Prague has been the political, cultural and economic center of the Czech state for more than 1,100 years, and her signature castle's are the ancient home to the King's of Czechoslovakia, 2 Roman Emperors, and the current Presidents of the Czech Republic. The city is also home to nearly 2 million people who dwell in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites, and whom graciously welcome over 4.1 million international visitors annually. This Alpha Center is an important node to the world's economic system and facilitates a trans-global system of trade, finance and tourism. But the most interesting aspect of her story, however, doesn't lie strictly within her borders, but rather expands to a culture that bleeds well beyond the country's now geographical limits and into a realm known as the Kingdom of Bohemia. From 1300, in fact, Bohemia was not only the most powerful state of the Holy Roman Empire but also enjoyed religious freedom from 1436-1620: claiming the distinction as the single most liberal country of both the medieval period and Christian world. It comes, therefore, as little surprise that the great artists, writers, musicians and actors that passed through the region during this quixotic period collectively went forth to comment on and shape the non-traditional attitudes of western Europe.

Such references to the city's noble past are nowhere more present than in the Four Seasons Hotel in Prague: which encompasses three historic structures from the Baroque, Neo-Classical and Neo-Renaissance periods and are united by a new modern building of pale cream colored stone. The interior decor is inspired by these various historical periods, and infuse the Hotel

with genuine Czech character that both honor and celebrate its illustrious past. At the Four Seasons in Prague one arrives by car, train, bridge or even boat which all lead directly to its doors. The 161 guest rooms include 20 suites and no two are exactly alike. We began our journey in a Premier Room: whose large windows open to uninterrupted views of the Charles Bridge, Mala Strana and Vltava River. The luxury marble bathrooms include a seamless shower, private water-closet and an unusually deep soaking tub. And the complimentary soaps and lotions and oils and salts, compliments of L'Occitane, will dare you not to rejuvenate before beginning your adventure.

True to the European tradition, the hotel's lobby is a destination of its own and simulates the Drawing Rooms of continental Europe. For this is the very heart of the hotel: a place for conversation, the exchange of ideas, and a place where introductions are made and friendships are created. In fact, we met the hotel's Public Relations Manager, Martina Vavrova, here who invited us to dine with her at the hotel's restaurant, Allegro. The recipient of the only Michelin star in the Czech Republic, Allegro also has the distinction of being named the best restaurant in the country from 2006 – present by the discerning Zagat Survey. The simple yet refined flavors of Italy combine to represent Mediterranean and Continental cuisine that oft crescendo into Bohemian specialties. Whether your dining casually on the terrace, more socially in the bar, or formally in the restaurant Executive Chef, Andrea Accordi, is committed to making your experience at Allegro a savory component of your experience in the Czech Republic.

The one constant running through the incomparable experience at the Four Seasons Hotel in Prague is the views. Nearly every guest room, meeting facility, or dining venue snaps a picture of the magnificent Prague Castle. In fact, it has been the official office space for nearly every governing power from the ancient Kings of Bohemia to the current President of the Czech



Republic. As the largest coherent castle complex in the world, its square-footage equals 87 White Houses or 6 Buckingham Palaces, and has been the seat of government to its original Monarchy from 870, the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages, Nazi Germany in 1938, and finally the U.S.S.R. who drew it behind the Iron Curtain in 1948. But when a peaceful student demonstration led to a resistance known as the Velvet Revolution, the people of Bohemia effectively took back their land in 1989. And with the Restitution Laws of 1991 that followed, exiled royals returned from the four quarters of the globe to reclaim their properties. In fact, after taking a tour through the castle we ducked into one of the many gift shops only to find a bona fide prince actually working the cash register! The Lobkowicz Palace, in fact, within the more comprehensive Prague Castle, has been returned to the exiled nobleman along with 9 of his other castles, 25,000 acres of forest and farmland, a priceless library, a trove of musical scores [one by Mozart, in fact] as well as vintage chat-

tels by Pieter Brueghel and Diego Velazquez. But reinventing his properties with commercial appeal has been the challenge. The newly formed Lobkowicz Event Management Company now sells castle tours, corporate retreats, and even provides the place for your birthday, wedding or board meeting. Even the Snack Bar does its part to sustain the project, and the newly vested Prince in his rightful ancestral home. After closing up shop we walked along side the Prince William and his wife, Sandra, down the Castle Hill and into the twinkling Baroque architecture of Prague. And I was struck, as I looked down upon the City of a

Hundred Spires that night, how the very key to this culture's longevity was embedded in the spectacular and indomitable spirit to endure. And as the cathedral bells began to chime through the city, I was reminded of the melody of those some 75 children with whom I arrived in this county and with whom I began this journey. For their whispering voices and polite conversation over our 8-hour journey was only broken upon our landing at the Prague International Airport with what I now, nearly a week later, recognize as the Czech National Anthem. "Where is my home?" their song began, of a nation that had been politically driven, captured and displaced a hundred times throughout history only to find its moral center in a multitude of races, a celebration of ethnicity, and a tradition of religious tolerance that now rings throughout the free world.

Home, I suspect, even after their flying nearly 4,000 miles to America and back, had been with them all the time. CHARLATAN



**Above:** The Premier Suite in the Main Building offers stunning views of the landmarks of Prague and may be booked with one, two, or even three bedrooms.

**Left:** The Premier Suite in the Classical Building also offers stunning views and includes formal Dining and Living areas who wish or need to privately entertain.

**Opposite Page:** Views of the Prague Castle abound from almost every window at the Four Seasons Prague.

