

THE PRAGUE SPRING FESTIVAL

with Clive Paget



Enjoy fine orchestral and chamber performances at the Prague Spring Festival and explore Czechia in depth, with performing arts writer and specialist Clive Paget

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy six performances at the Prague Spring Festival, including orchestral and chamber music
- Unpack your bags and get to know Prague's history, art and music in depth, with nine nights in central Prague
- Discover Czechia's Jewish past in Prague and Pilsen
- Marvel at Czechia's architecture, from Gothic and Art Nouveau in Prague to the UNESCO-listed town of Kutná Hora
- Explore Southern Bohemia, including World Heritage-listed Český Krumlov and the beautiful Hluboká Castle
- Get more from the experience by travelling with a specialist, performing arts writer, Clive Paget, Editor-at-large of *Limelight Magazine*

IN A NUTSHELL

DATES: 23 May – 05 Jun 2024

ITINERARY: Prague (9n),
České Budějovice (4n)

PRICE: \$11,750pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:
\$1,400 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS: Moderate: some late nights, walking tours

GROUP SIZE: max. 20 places



Limelight Arts Travel Pty Ltd
Level 1, 183 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000
(02) 8599 2401
www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au

LIMELIGHT
ARTS — TRAVEL

OVERVIEW

For over 70 years, Prague has hosted one of Europe's grandest classical music festivals, with three weeks of performances taking place in esteemed venues from Smetana Hall to the Rudolfinum. The Prague Spring Festival brings together some of Europe's finest ensembles, and from its outset – when Leonard Bernstein was invited to make his European debut – it has proved a staging ground for new generations of virtuoso musicians, conductors and composers.

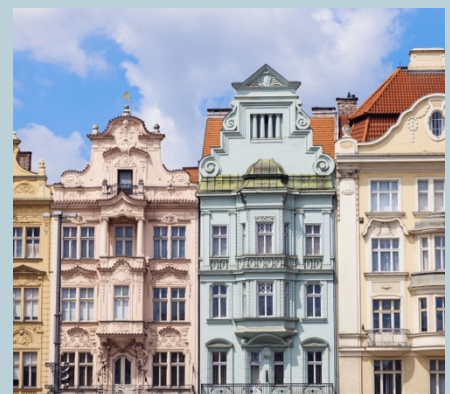
This tour, led by Clive Paget *Limelight* Magazine's Editor-at-Large, takes in the best of the Festival. Programmed across two weekends to ensure access to the best performances, it is accompanied by a carefully curated program of cultural activities. Visits to exceptional collections of European masterpieces are complemented by architectural walking tours and behind-the-scenes tours of venues at the heart of Prague's musical life.

In addition to the knowledge of your tour leader, the experience is rounded out with day trips to historic sites of great beauty, such as Pilsen and Kutná Hora, and by 4 nights in Southern Bohemia, where we explore the region's fascinating history, including visits to Český Krumlov and Hluboká Castle.

TOUR LEADER

Clive Paget is a leading arts writer and critic and is Editor-at-Large for *Limelight* Magazine in Australia. He also writes for *Musical America*, *Opera News*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *Gramophone*, *The Guardian*, and others on a wide range of topics.

Before moving to Sydney in 2008, Clive was Sir Nicholas Hytner's music theatre consultant at London's National Theatre, where he initiated many new projects. In 1997 he co-directed the world premiere of Stephen Sondheim's previously unperformed musical, *Saturday Night*, and was a founder of London's influential Bridewell Theatre.



Top to bottom: the façade of Prague's Rudolfinum; Český Krumlov; Pilsen's colourful facades; tour leader Clive Paget



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LIMELIGHT
ARTS — TRAVEL

DETAILED ITINERARY

THURSDAY 23 MAY – ARRIVAL (D)

We gather in the hotel lobby at 5.30pm for an orientation stroll, followed by welcome drinks and dinner in a local restaurant. First of nine nights in Prague.

FRIDAY 24 MAY – PRAGUE'S OLD TOWN, PERFORMANCE 1 (B, L)

Prague's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Old Town is among the most beautiful in Europe, and throughout it one finds well-preserved architecture from the late Middle Ages right down to the twentieth century. After a talk in the hotel, we take a guided historical and architectural **walking tour of the Old Town** and then enjoy a welcome lunch together. There is time at leisure in the afternoon before our first performance at the Prague Spring Festival this evening.

Performance details

Venue: National Theatre

Program: Bedrich Smetana, *The Secret*, on the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth

Performers: Ondrej Havelka (director) and Robert Jindra conducting the Prague National Theatre Orchestra

SATURDAY 25 MAY – PRAGUE'S OLD MASTERS, PERFORMANCE 2 (B)

As a former royal and imperial capital, Prague has amassed exceptional art collections from across the centuries. Today we explore two of Prague's key art museums, starting with a guided tour of **Schwarzenberg Palace**, home to part of the National Gallery's collection of Old Masters, including paintings by Bronzino, Dürer and Rembrandt. After the tour, there is time to explore the collections independently and for lunch. In the mid-afternoon, we take a guided tour of **Lobkowitz Palace**, which, in addition to masterpieces by Pieter Breugel, Velasquez and Canaletto, has an exceptional collection of musical manuscripts, historical scores and instruments. After our tour, we visit St Vitus Cathedral, before returning to the hotel to relax before our performance tonight.

Performance details

Venue: Karolinum

Program: Maurice Ravel, *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; Pavel Haas, *Dechovy kvintet Op.10*,

Antonin Rejcha, Wind Quintet in D Minor Op.100 No.2

Performers: Alinde Quintet



SUNDAY 26 MAY – JEWISH PRAGUE, PERFORMANCE 3 (B)

The **Jewish community of Prague** is one of central Europe's oldest, having been documented in the tenth century. Despite regular changes in imperial policy across the centuries, leading to their intermittent expulsion, the Jews of Prague flourished, especially in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when almost a quarter of Prague's population was Jewish. This morning we explore these histories. In the mid afternoon, we make the short journey to **Strahov Monastery**, a centre of learning for centuries under the Premonstratensian order. We visit the library, with eighteenth-century painted ceilings and an impressive collection of books and manuscripts. Returning to the hotel, there is time to relax before our third festival performance.

Performance details

Venue: Smetana Hall

Program: works for the organ by Bach, Liszt, Brahms, Eben, Boellmann, Vasks

Performers: Iveta Apkalna (organ)

MONDAY 27 MAY – RUDOLFINUM & THE VELVET REVOLUTION, PERFORMANCE 4 (B, L)

Today we look at two very different sides of Prague's history. After a talk in the hotel, we have a **behind-the-scenes tour of the Rudolfinum**, home of the Czech Philharmonic. It was custom-designed as a centre for the arts in the nineteenth century, on the banks of the Vltava River. After a break for lunch, we have a guided visit of the **Museum of Communism**, where we gain insight into the 41-year rule of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia and the Velvet Revolution that ended it in 1989. The later afternoon and evening are at leisure.

Performance details

Venue: Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum

Program: Louise Farrenc, Overture No.2 in E flat major Op.24; Krystof Maratka, *Sanctuaries – In the Depths of Cave Paintings*, concerto for violin and orchestra (world premiere of a new work commissioned by the Prague Spring Festival and Radio France); Maurice Ravel, *Daphnis et Chloé*, Suite No.2 and *La Valse*

Performers: Mikko Franck (conductor) and Amaury Coeytaux (violin), with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France

TUESDAY 28 MAY – PILSEN (B, L)

Pilsen, about 90 minutes' drive south-west of Prague, is one of Bohemia's most fascinating cities. Today we explore the city, beginning with a **walking tour of Jewish Pilsen**, including the Old Synagogue – the second largest in Europe – and the apartment of Dr Josef and Štěpánka Vogl. The apartment was designed by Adolf Loos in the 1920s and was wonderfully restored to its original state in 2014, including replicas of the original furniture. We then have lunch at one of Pilsen's typical beer restaurants, where we have the opportunity to enjoy the renowned lager named after the town where it was first produced. Returning to Prague in the later afternoon, the evening is at leisure.



WEDNESDAY 29 MAY – ART NOUVEAU PRAGUE, PERFORMANCE 5 (B)

This morning, after a talk in the hotel, we explore Art Nouveau art and architecture in Prague, starting with a visit to **Municipal House**, whose elegant architecture and interior decoration is largely unspoilt to this day. We continue to **Smetana Hall**, the largest of the performance venues in the building. We then develop our theme at the **Alphonse Mucha Museum**, which has an excellent collection of the posters and prints the artist is best known for, along with his paintings and works across various other media. In the afternoon, we visit **Trade Fair Palace**, an excellent example of Czech functionalist architecture, for a guided tour of its collection of modern art. Returning to the hotel, there is time at leisure before this evening's performance.

Performance details

Venue: Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum

Program: Gershwin, *Cuban Overture*; Korngold, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major Op.35; Bernstein, Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Performers: Tomas Brauner (conductor), Carolin Widmann (violin) and the Prague Symphony Orchestra

THURSDAY 30 MAY – KUTNÁ HORA, PERFORMANCE 6 (B)

Today we visit **Kutná Hora**, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site for the excellent preservation of the city's Gothic and Renaissance architecture. While it is a relatively small town today, it was once a Bohemian economic powerhouse, due to the rich reserves of silver in the surrounding mountains. Evidence of this wealth is apparent in the magnificent churches of the city, including the five-nave Gothic **St Barbara's** and the **cathedral**. After a walking tour of the town, including visits to St Barbara and the **Italian Court** – the former mint – we break for lunch at leisure. On our return to Prague, we stop to visit one of Kutná Hora's most astounding sites: the **Sedlec Ossuary**, a chapel beneath a cemetery in which the earthly remains of the deceased have been artfully arranged. Returning to Prague, there is time to relax before tonight's performance.

Performance details

Venue: Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum

Program: "Glorious *Libuše*", a concert performance of the opera *Libuše* to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Bedrich Smetana

Performers: Jakub Hrusa (conductor), Adam Plachetka (Premysl of Stadice), Katerina Knezikova (Libuse), the Prague Philharmonic Choir and the Czech Philharmonic

FRIDAY 31 MAY – DAY AT LEISURE (B)

Today is free for independent sightseeing and shopping. Your tour leader and manager will be available to suggest activities that you may wish to undertake. Final night in Prague.



SATURDAY 01 JUNE – TO ČESKÉ BUDEJOVICE (B, L)

We leave Prague this morning, bound for České Budějovice, our base in Southern Bohemia. Our first stop on the way is to **Orlík nad Vltavou**, a castle wonderfully situated on a spur above the river. Our guided visit to the castle reveals much to us about how the Schwarzenberg dynasty lived, before the castle was seized by the Communist party. (It was the only property returned to the Schwarzenbergs after the end of communist rule.) After a light lunch in the castle bistro, we continue to **Tábor**, an almost perfectly preserved town that was founded by Hussites in 1420. After time to stroll and have coffee, we continue to České Budějovice. Overnight České Budějovice.

SUNDAY 02 JUNE – ČESKY KRUMLOV (B)

Český Krumlov is UNESCO World Heritage-listed for the excellent preservation of its historical architecture. The town we see today had grown up beneath the castle complex, which had once been protected by a moat filled with bears rather than water. We begin our visit with a **guided tour of the castle**, with its elegantly decorated interiors and its exceptionally well preserved (and functioning) **baroque theatre**. After time at leisure for lunch, we then take a walking tour of the town, including the **Egon Schiele centre** which preserves some of the artist's earliest work. Overnight České Budějovice.

MONDAY 03 JUNE – TREBON (B, L)

Today we continue exploring Southern Bohemia. We begin with a walking tour of **České Budějovice**, before venturing out to **Třeboň**, another well-preserved town from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Here we enjoy lunch and then visit the **J. K. Tyl Theatre**, which has the oldest painted theatre curtain in Czechia, as well as a still functioning marionette theatre. After our visit, we continue to the large lakes that were created in the seventeenth century as fishponds, which both fed the population and created a novel economy in the region. Strolling along the lakes, we arrive at the **tombs of the Schwarzenbergs**, housed within a neogothic funerary church. Returning to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight České Budějovice.

TUESDAY 04 JUNE – HLUBOKÁ CASTLE (B, L)

On the final full day of our tour, we visit **Hluboká Castle**, one of Czechia's most beautiful. There has been a castle on this site since at least the thirteenth century, but the one we see today was created by Adolf II von Schwarzenberg as a Romantic interpretation of Windsor Castle. Indeed, the castle today is one of the best-preserved monuments to Romanticism, with its interiors intact and extensive period gardens flourishing around it. After our **guided tour of the castle** and time to stroll the grounds, we enjoy a **farewell lunch**, before returning to České Budějovice. In the evening we gather for farewell drinks. Overnight České Budějovice.

WEDNESDAY 05 JUNE – DEPARTURE (B)

This morning, we conclude the tour with a coach transfer to Prague airport. We will arrive in time for flights departing in the mid-afternoon.



INCLUSIONS

- Best available tickets to 6 performances at the 2024 Prague Spring Festival
- 13 nights' accommodation in 4-star hotels
- All breakfasts, 6 lunches or dinners, plus welcome and farewell drinks
- Entry fees and tickets to sites as described in the itinerary
- All ground transport, guided tours and entrances, and tipping
- Pre-performance talks and Q&A's with writer and critic Clive Paget
- Services of an experienced tour manager throughout

HOTELS

Hotel Clarion Old Town 4*, Prague, 9 nights

<https://www.clarionhotelpragueoldtown.com/en/>

Grandhotel Zvon 4*, České Budějovice, 4 nights

<https://www.hotel-zvon.cz/en/grandhotel-zvon/home/>

Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.

BOOKING

Once the final Festival program is released in November 2023, we will send you the final itinerary with performance details.

You will have the option to retain your place, or to withdraw and receive a refund of your first deposit. Should you choose to retain your place, we will request a second deposit, due on 24 January 2024.

TOUR DETAILS

DATES

23 May – 05 June 2024

TOUR LEADER

Clive Paget

ITINERARY

Prague (9 nights), České Budějovice (4 nights)

PRICE

\$11,750pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,400 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS

Moderate: some late nights, walking tours

GROUP SIZE

Max. 20 places

DEPOSIT

(to hold a place on the tour)
\$1,000pp at the time of booking

SECOND DEPOSIT

(following release of the final program in November 2023)
\$2,500 due 24 January 2024

FINAL PAYMENT DUE

08 March 2024

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By booking on this tour you accept our terms and conditions, which can be found on our website:

<http://www.limelight-artstravel.com.au/terms-and-conditions-tours>

