

## A Farewell to Prague

The Czech language has more than a few anomalies, and the one that comes to mind is the word “Ahoj” which means both “hello” and “goodbye”, which leads my mind to the Marx Brothers movie “Animal Crackers” and the song “Hello I Must Be Going”...and again I’ve clearly digressed..

After a quick stop in Bratislava, I took a RegioJet bus to Prague. Not to give an unsolicited endorsement, but these RegioJet busses are great..they have the leg room and even movies in the headrest...but digress again I do

So the plan was for a prolonged stay in Prague; to once again walk it’s cobbled streets, capture it’s Art Nouveau facades and essentially “get lost” among my bohemian brethren. This only took about ten days.

For those with children “of a certain age” the fall means a return to school, and with my crew this means college. Having no children myself, I live vicariously thru the exploits of others, and the inevitable feeling that “these kids grow up so fast” as they head off to college. In a sense, this is what I felt returning to Prague.

In my travels and travails, I’ve made a concerted effort to “do this once” with few repeats. There’s that adage “Yolo – You Only Live Once”, which I guess holds true, but if done properly, there’s no need for a repeat, but perhaps I’m in the minority opinion there. I have several friends who visit the same spot every year, at the same time and love to security of knowing every street; so there’s an argument to be made on both sides of this.

For me, I last “trode the cobbles” of Prague in 2002, if only for a long weekend. There had been terrible flooding over that summer, and many of the haunts I frequented during my initial visit in 2000 were last seen floating down the Vltava.

But sixteen years is an eternity for a city like Prague, and to these eyes, the power-washed “infant-city” of 2002 is now a grown child in 2018. Admitted into the EU in 2004, Prague has wrestled the moniker “Paris of the East” from Bucharest, and the prices have been adjusted accordingly. The cheap beers of 2002 are still relatively cheap, but their price has doubled, along with food and lodging. While I could foresee all this by the wonders of the inter-tubes, to experience it first hand was sort of a shock. There was no more “quaint Prague” to visit.

My accommodation spoke to this issue fairly succinctly. In 2000 I don’t even think I knew what a hostel was. In 2002 I stayed at a “pensione” literally sleeping on a cot placed in an old bohemian “bubby’s” living room. But times have changed and I booked in at the “Mosaic” hostel, with the intention of moving to another in town after a few days. The “hostel” was more like a hotel, a retro-fitted office building offering air-conditioning, a downstairs bar and restaurant; definitely an upscale experience from what I’m accustomed to. They had an overpriced bar and restaurant and seemingly catered to a clientele whose parents were footing the bill. I was paying about \$5 more per night than I was used to,

but they were close to town, had a kitchen and a grocery store nearby...any of the competitors might save me the \$5 but I'd lose the kitchen, the store or being close to town...so I stayed

Prague Castle/ St. Vitus Church Photos

Bridges photos

Spanish Synagogue photos

Took a day trip to Kutna Hora to visit the Sedlec ossuary. The story goes that a half-blink did the digging up of bones in the 1500's, but it wasn't until 1870 that a guy named Rink made art with some of the bones. This place is now visited by 200,000 people a year, and it's estimated that the building houses the remains of between 40,000 and 70,000 people...it's kinda creepy, but once you get past that, it's kinda cool.

But after 11 days, it was time to say goodbye...

So farewell Prague,

ByeBye to the cobblestones that flattened my arches so well

TaTa to your hills leading away from the river, offering tantalizing views only one more set of stairs away, and then another....and just a few more

So long to your beers, all of them. Hunting down the best price was a challenge, with hundreds of bar rails to choose from. There are pretzels in Prague, but in the bar, they're 60-cents each.

I'll miss the early mornings spent with my camera on the Charles Bridge. We were never truly alone out there, but if I kinda squinted past the tourists waving selfie-stick, I could almost imagine solitude.

Prague, you're all grown up now, you don't need an old cheap "bohock" looking for a cheap way out, there are plenty of tourists paying full rate...my time on your cobbled streets has passed...time to let the next generation of travelers flatten *their* arches on your cobbles.

But I did take a last few days and traveled down the Vltava to Cesky Krumlov and for three days I had the sense that THIS was the quaint Czech town I had been looking for all along.

I stayed at Hostel Skippy, named after the young owner who sings and plays guitar in her own "Skippy Band". The town is nestled among three switchbacks in the Vltava river and offered the camera a target rich environment.

Krumlov church

## Krumlowtown

The hostel was right on the Vltava, and sipping a cold beer while watching sunsets seemed so right.

The “beer thing” in the Czech Republic has helped to keep its hostels at near capacity for the entire summer. I’m tempted to plan out a return during the winter months just to enjoy having some space around me, but I think I’d rather press on to see some place new.

My tour of Eastern Europe is just about over. I’m in Krakow now, enjoying a last week of decadent Slavic cooking and a few more libations. It’s been 6 weeks since I left the desert in Jordan and yet somehow I’m returning...I booked a ticket to Istanbul last night. I don’t recall a whole lot from my first visit, the 3 day whirl-wind back in 2011, so it’s sort of a new place for me.

BienThere.com Travelogues