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# THANKSGIVING IN PRAGUE

Thursday, November 21st through Saturday, November 30th



*Prague on the Moldau River.*

**Prague:** "Cultural life is in full swing and offers a palette of visual as well as aural treats, in a city famed for its musical tradition."

NYTimes

**'Rusalka':** "The greatest of Dvorak's operas... (with) magical abundance of scoring and rhythmic detail... Like all the greatest operas, 'Rusalka' reveals different facets of itself in different interpretations."

Opera

"The hype about Prague's Old Town Square is completely justified. Picture a perimeter of colorful Baroque houses contrasting with the sweeping old-Gothic style of the Tyn church. . . At night the brightly lighted towers of the church rise gloriously over the glowing Baroque facades."

Fodor

**T**hanksgiving in Prague has become one of our most popular Tours. Highlighted by a traditional turkey dinner exceeding our expectations, our leisurely **eight nights** in Central Europe's most beautiful capital will include a plethora of stimulating music at a variety of exquisite theatres. (Prague boasts three major opera houses and several major concert halls.)

From the rich operatic repertoire of the Czech composers, our program will again include Antonin Dvorak's greatest opera, **Rusalka**, in the city's beautiful **National Theatre** adjacent

to the Moldau River. Also at the National, we will encounter Richard Wagner's lyrical music-drama, **Lohengrin**, and Georges Bizet's sensual French opera, **Carmen**. A fourth opera will be Mozart's peerless 18th century comedy, **Le Nozze di Figaro**, staged at the intimate **Theatre of the Estates**, the Baroque jewel where 'Don Giovanni' was premiered in 1787. (The casts for our operas have not yet been announced.)

From fall schedules still to be announced, we expect two include **Two Concerts** of instrumental/orchestral music. Prague is a city filled with music in major venues and in several of the atmospheric Renaissance/Baroque churches.



*Old Town Square*

The Czech capital of **Prague** remains among the most popular destinations in all of Europe. Because the city's architectural splendors have been almost entirely spared from the destruction of both World Wars, the principal squares and the many side-streets stretching towards the Moldau River retain most of the original facades dating from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Prague's leading theatres and concert halls also reflect some of the grandest elements of the Art Nouveau period of the early 1900's. The city center is full of life today, with busy pedestrian traffic rediscovering the Republic's artistic and musical heritage and enjoying the cafés, bars, and a wide variety of shops.

Thursday, November 21st, departure from New York's Kennedy airport at 4:36 pm on Delta Airlines flight #46, arriving in Amsterdam at 5:55

am on the morning of the 22nd. This connects with Delta flight #9532 at 6:50 am, which arrives in Prague at 8:20 am. Or independent travel to Prague.

Accommodations for **eight nights** with a generous **buffet breakfast** included at the **Paris Hotel**, Prague's deluxe 'art nouveau' hotel. Ideally located within comfortable walking distance of many important sights and theatres, the Paris is and only a few minutes walk from **Old Town Square**.

This property offers the **Sarah Bernhardt** restaurant and the convenient **Café de Paris** for light meals, as well as a small fitness area with sauna and steam bath. We are fortunate to have our confirmed reservations at this premium hotel during the busiest period of the year. All rooms are on the upgraded *Executive floors*, and all single rooms are in *double rooms for single occupancy*.

At 6:00 pm on Friday evening, November 22nd, a **cocktail reception** is arranged for you to meet other members of the Tour.



*Sarah Bernhardt Restaurant, Paris Hotel*



*Old Town Square; Painted Lady*



Our party will be in a private entertainment suite of the hotel. *No performance this evening.*

Mid-day on Saturday, November 23rd, a short one-hour **Orientation Walking Tour** will familiarize you with the **Old Town** neighborhood in the vicinity of our hotel (Wenceslaus Square and the Old Town Square).

At 6:00 pm on Saturday, our first performance will be **Lohengrin** at the **National Opera**. Premiered in Weimar in 1850, Richard Wagner's 'Lohengrin' is the most Italianate and lyrical of the major Wagner operas, proceeding from the rapturous wedding and love-duet to the culminating introspective Narration 'In fernem land' sung by the swan-knight. The hushed strains of the Prelude and the exuberant beginning of Act III are among the orchestral highlights.

Sunday morning, November 24th, is free for you to attend a religious service of your own choice and to relax.

Early Sunday afternoon, a pre-opera **lunch** will be served at the **Bellevue Restaurant** near the Charles Bridge, where we have consistently enjoyed exceptional menus in their gracious dining room.

At 5:00 pm, our performance will be Antonin Dvorak's romantic opera **Rusalka** in the **National Theatre's** superlative production. Premiered in Prague in 1901, 'Rusalka' has established itself as the most beloved of all Czech operas by virtue of Dvorak's richly symphonic orchestration and the poignant tragedy of the title wood-nymph's inability to sustain a love affair with the human Prince. Lyric sopranos Gabriela Benackova, Renée Fleming and Ana Maria Martinez have all created indelible portrayals of Rusalka in recent memory, and the ensemble of principals

includes the colorful witch Jezibaba (mezzo-soprano), the good-natured water gnome Vodnik (bass), a haughty Foreign Princess (dramatic soprano), and the passionate Prince (heldentenor). Rusalka's Act I aria, the 'Song to the Moon', has become a favorite showpiece for many of today's reigning opera divas.

Beginning at 11:00 am on Monday, November 25th, a sightseeing excursion will take us to **St. Vitus Cathedral** and the buildings collectively known as **Prague Castle** situated on the city's highest point. After driving through the commercial center of **Wenceslaus Square**, we will pass the 1357 **Charles Bridge** spanning the Moldau and a wealth of Baroque Palaces which still bear the names of the nation's oldest families (Czernin, Lobkowitz and Wallenstein). We will then visit the Cathedral and the restored **Lobkowitz Palace** overlooking the city, which now contains many of the artworks and musical manuscripts owned by this distinguished family. The priceless **Lobkowitz Princely Collection** includes works by Brueghel, Canaletto, Cranach and Velazquez. A light **lunch** is included in the Palace's convenient café prior to the 1:00 pm daily **Concert**. The program of a dozen short works will range from Vivaldi, Mozart and Beethoven to the Czech melodies of Dvorak, Smetana and Janacek.

With no performance on Monday evening, you will enjoy the opportunity of dining in your own choice among Prague's many unusual restaurants within

easy walking distance of our hotel.

Tuesday, November 26th – and several other periods during our week – is free for independent activities in Prague. The Czech talent for



*The National Theater.*

crafts, artifacts, glassware, and antique jewelry is exceptional, and there are many intriguing shops and open markets within easy walking distance of our hotel. Among the wealth of Prague's museums are the **National Gallery** of Czech and European paintings near Prague Castle; the **Loretto Monastery** displaying jeweled chalices, monstrances and other religious objects; and the **Alfonse Mucha Museum** with a fascinating collection of

posters and memorabilia commemorating Mucha's unique Art Nouveau vision and his Czech heritage.

Tuesday evening, we expect to include a **Concert** from the fall programs still to be announced.

On Wednesday afternoon, November 27th, a **backstage tour** of the **Theatre of the Estates** will take us behind the scenes of this historic small theatre in the city center. The intimate stage is ideal for the classical repertoire of Mozart's operas and some of the light-hearted 'bel canto' comedies. We will be returning for 'Le Nozze di Figaro' on Friday evening. *(The theatre is within easy walking distance of our hotel. Depending on rehearsal schedules, our backstage tour may be changed to an alternate time during our week.)*



Charles Bridge



Lobkowitz Palace,

Pieter Breughel's Haymaking



At 7:00 pm on Wednesday evening, we will return to the **National Theatre** for a performance of Georges Bizet's **Carmen**. The most popular work of the French operatic repertoire, 'Carmen' is based on Prosper Mérimée's classic novel of stark realism, vividly recreating the sensual ambience of Seville in the 1830's. Bizet's score boasts brilliant orchestral colors and a seamless succession of melodic arias, duets and ensembles.

**Thanksgiving Day** is Thursday, November 28th. For several years, we have



Theatre of the Estates

been fêted on our National Holiday at **V Zatisi**. This charming restaurant near our hotel has surprised our recent travelers with the warmest welcome and a memorable menu.

Early Friday evening, November 29th, we will enjoy a pre-opera Czech menu at the **Pilsner Restaurant**, a popular gathering place for Prague's artistic society. The Pilsner is located in the Municipal Hall, very near the Estates Theatre.

Our final performance will be at 7:00 pm on Friday evening in the **Theatre of the Estates**, which has been

revered as 'The Mozart House' ever since 'Don Giovanni' was premiered there in 1787. Formerly known as the Tyl Theatre, it was prominently featured in the award-winning film 'Amadeus'. Our culminating opera of the week will appropriately be **Le Nozze di Figaro**, Mozart's sublime human comedy inspired by Lorenzo da Ponte's iconoclastic libretto based on Beaumarchais' classic French play. Mozart surpassed himself with his characterizations of Figaro and his betrothed Susanna, the poignantly resigned Countess, and the exuberant page-boy Cherubino. The final dénouement ranks among the greatest passages of the entire repertoire, as the Countess forgives her philandering husband much against the advice of this writer.

Saturday, November 30th, departure from Prague's international airport at 2:30 pm on Delta flight #9693, arriving in Amsterdam at 4:00 pm. This connects with Delta flight #9358, departing at 5:10 pm and arriving at New York's Kennedy Airport at 7:30 pm. Or independent departure.



Mucha Museum doors

### Prague Thanksgiving

Price per person, based on double occupancy	\$ 5,680
Single room supplement	\$ 950

*All of our rooms are on the Executive level, and our single rooms are 'doubles for single occupancy'. In order to include the 4 operas of our choice, the Tour includes 8 nights instead of our usual 7.*

### Airfare NOT included.

Air fare: Prices are subject to change, depending on the time of booking. Please contact our agent Linda Botros (back-page cover) for lowest current fares.