

Prague and Český Krumlov, Czech Republic

This was another 3-day weekend trip (I was able to work a full day Friday and Tuesday). There's a lot to see in Prague (easily a week's worth), but as it was my third visit to the city, I was not concerned with seeing all the usual tourist sites. A quick visit to Prague, for those already familiar with the city, would be quite doable in a 2-day weekend. You need at least three days to see Prague and Český Krumlov. It's about a 2 ½ hour drive from Prague to Český Krumlov or 3 hours by bus. Another option if you wanted to just visit Český Krumlov would be to fly into Linz, Austria, just 1 ½ hours away by car. Unfortunately there are no direct flights from Paris to Linz (at least as of May 2011) but Lufthansa has a number of flights via Dusseldorf, or there are direct flights from London (Stanstead) on Easyjet.

May is a great time to visit both Prague and Český Krumlov as with a little luck you may hit some warm, sunny days and the flowers are out. I've also visited Prague in early December when it's dark and cold, but the Christmas festivities made up for the weather and lack of sunlight. Prague has unfortunately become overrun with tourists in the last decade or so; I'd avoid it in August and during holidays. Despite the crowds, it's not a city to be missed. This was also my second visit to the small town of Český Krumlov in the south of the Czech Republic. Despite it also being a bit more crowded this second time, it is still one of my favorite small towns in all of Europe.

Fri, May 21—Fly to Prague at night

Sat, May 22—Prague

Sun, May 23—Český Krumlov

Mon, May 24—Český Krumlov; Prague at night

Tues, May 25—Fly back to Paris early in the morning

Date	To	Flight/Train/Hotel Details
Fri, May 21	Fly Paris to Prague 9:20PM-11:00PM	<p>Reservation/Invoice No.: H40G1 Flight No. QS1037 Depart 21:20 Paris Ch. de Gaulle (Terminal 3—get off at Terminal 1 and take CDGVAL to Terminal 3) Arrive 23:00 Prague (Terminal 2)</p> <p>We flew with Smart Wings, a low-cost airline that flies primarily to and from the Czech Republic. I would fly with them again (though their only flight from Paris is to Prague).</p> <p>Airport transfer free of charge</p> <p>Hotel: Charles Bridge Residence Contact: Michal Musil Mostecka 12, 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic phone/fax +420 257 532 626/mobile +420 724 082 295 www.charlesbridgeresidence.com/e-mail: info@charlesbridgeresidence.com</p> <p>The Charles Bridge Residence is in a perfect location, just steps from the Charles Bridge in Malá Strana (the Prague Castle side, which means you are slightly removed from the hoards of people around Old Town Square. Michal, who runs the guesthouse, is extremely friendly and helpful and organized all of our airport and bus station transfers. The guesthouse also gives you vouchers for an excellent little breakfast/bagel place across the street.</p>

Date	To	Flight/Train/Hotel Details
Sat, May 22	Prague	<p>Hotel: Charles Bridge Residence</p> <p>On Saturday we strolled around town, and when we got fed up with the crowds, headed for the hills, literally. Head for the giant metronome (which replaced a statue of Stalin in 1991), across the Vltava River from the Intercontinental Hotel and the Old Jewish Cemetery in Letná Park (Letenské Sady). Then make your way west along the back side of Prague Castle, through the Castle grounds then right outside the front entrance towards the Strahovsky monastery. Walk through the monastery yard towards Petrin Hill. Then, you'll be able to wind your way down through Petrin Hill and back to Malá Strana. This walk was definitely the highlight of our stay in Prague. Other highlights included a boat trip on the Vltava River, a visit to the Old Jewish Cemetery, a stroll around the quiet island of Kampa, under the Charles Bridge, a visit to the Charles Bridge at night (fewer tourists!) and a good Czech beer and soft pretzels!</p>
Sun, May 23	Bus to Cesky Krumlov, night in Cesky Krumlov	<p>Buses leave from Praha, Na Knížecí: 8:15AM-11:15AM, 8:30AM-11:35AM, 9:00AM-11:55AM (see schedule: http://jizdnirady.idnes.cz/vlakyautobusy/spojeni/)</p> <p>Hotel: Pension BARBAKAN Kaplická 26, 27 381 01 Český Krumlov Tel. :+420-380-717017 info@barbakan.cz, www.barbakan.cz The Order: 67/2010, Check-in 2PM (call if arriving after 3pm) Breakfast: 8.00-10.00 AM, Check-out till 11.00A</p> <p>The Barbakan hotel is just at the entrance to the pedestrian old town, which makes it well-located for visitors: an easy downhill walk from the bus terminal, and only a 5 or 10 minute walk from the center of the old town. The room was spacious and nicely decorated and the adjoining restaurant had perhaps the best apple strudel I've ever had (and I did try apple strudel in Austria and Switzerland that same month—we're talking at least 8 sample specimens in that one month).</p> <p>It's really hard to find a more picturesque village than Český Krumlov, with its medieval architecture, pedestrian streets, winding river, extravagant castle and gardens and green rolling hills enveloping the town. The highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —wandering and exploring every little street in town —outdoor riverside dining in the shadow of the castle —a rather rigorous walk up the hill to the east of town, following the stations of the cross to an old abandoned chapel and photographing the view of the village below (ask your hotel to point you in the right direction) —perhaps my #1, kayaking/rafting to Vyšší Brod Monastery. We rented a raft with a company next door to the Pension Barbakan and they gave us instructions to the monastery (a few hours' away) and arranged to pick us and the raft up at the end and bring us back to town. A fantastic way to spend a sunny day in Český Krumlov.

Date	To	Flight/Train/Hotel Details
Mon, May 24	Cesky Krumlov, late afternoon bus to Prague	<p>Buses leave from Český Krumlov, aut.nádr.: 3:00PM-5:55PM, 4:10PM-7:15PM, 5:00PM-7:55PM</p> <p>Hotel: Charles Bridge Residence</p> <p><i>A note on dining in Prague: beware as anything that could possibly cost extra will cost extra. The peanuts on the table, condiments, you name it. Annoying if you don't realize this from the start, but acceptable if you know the rules of the game ahead of time.</i></p>
Tues, May 25	Fly back to Paris 6:00AM	<p>Pick-up from hotel at 4:00AM—pay driver 690 CZK in cash</p> <p>Abby's flight information: Reservation/Invoice No.: H40G6 Flight No. QS1034 Depart 6:00 Prague (Terminal 2) Arrive 7:45 Paris Ch. de Gaulle (Terminal 3—CDGVAL to Terminal 1 then Air France bus)</p>