

PRAGUE LA BELLE



Dear Friends,

Despite four days of grey sky, humidity and cold temperatures I loved Prague! I just returned two days ago and I am still reflecting on all the emotions this beautiful city brought to me.

I am amazed by the complexity of its character. So present in my mind because of the events and changes which happened in the late sixties, visiting the city is revisiting history in the making.

My first morning in Prague was spent with a private guide and it is the best investment anybody can make. Sylvie, our guide, was friendly, pleasant and very knowledgeable. It gave me a chance to get acquainted with the Czech culture, the way Czech people talk about their history and their city. It also taught me how to look for special details as we were walking along large avenues or small alleys. After that first introduction I spent the rest of my days walking, visiting, listening and watching.

I came back home with more powerful memories than pictures in my camera. Of all the many moments I had I can mention the following special experiences:



A unique moment occurred when I had the opportunity to visit the library of the St. Augustine monastery. I was staying at the hotel Augustine (member of the Rocco Forte collection), and I was allowed to have a private visit of the monastery. A friendly, funny, high spirited priest, Father Juan, gave me a tour. The library with a collection of books dating back to the 16th century is a site I will never forget. I was able to touch the books, turn the pages and look at the amazing work.

A relaxing moment came when I attended a concert in St. Michael's Monastery. If you have a chance, do attend a concert in the Mirror Chapel at Klementinum. The chapel is a great example of baroque style and the acoustics are exceptional.

A touching moment (as well as painful) occurred when I visited the Jewish cemetery (oldest Jewish cemetery in Europe) and most of all the exhibit of drawings from the children interned in the concentration camp of Terezin.



An art discovery when I visited the museum of Czech Cubism located in the Black Madonna House. This little museum offers a complete Cubist experience. The café upstairs is a great place to have a snack in a typical Art Nouveau room.

A moment of reflection when I saw the memorial dedicated to Jan Palach the young student who set himself on fire on January 16th 1969 (see photo at the top of this letter) in protest against the Soviet occupation.

I enjoyed a reading moment at the Kanzelsberger Jan book store, the best place in town to find beautiful art books, picture books on Prague and post cards.

I also had a fun time eating a simple Czech family meal in a self service restaurant frequented by local students and professionals. Upon entering the restaurant you are given a form. Each dish you select has a code. After you are finished eating your meal, as you exit, the cashier adds up the codes and gives you the final price. The restaurant is called Havelska Koruna. Try it on your next visit to Prague.

I enjoyed following the signs on each of the buildings on Celetna, Karlova or Nerudova Street and trying to unveil the mystery of their meaning.

Most of all I was enchanted by Prague at night. To stroll on the Old Town Square at night is an invitation to dream and meditation. The atmosphere is mystic. Many famous names come to mind: Antonin Dvorak, Milos Forman, Vaclav Havel, Jaroslav Hasek, Jan Hus, Franz Kafka, Milan Kundera, Alfons Mucha, Jan Palach, Bedrich Smetana.... and many more.

From Prague to you!

Fondly,

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