

And the New Prague is... Prague:

Two Days in the Czech Capital

Want to escape the overcrowded Prague of tour groups, stag parties and rip-off pubs, and discover the laid-back Prague of cool cafés, elegant architecture and stylish restaurants? Then leave the city centre behind and follow the Praguers to the city's hippest suburbs.

THE VIEW FROM VYŠEHRAĐ

Spend a lazy morning strolling around the ancient citadel of **Vyšehrad**. The 'High Castle' is regarded as Prague's mythical birthplace, and you can walk almost all the way round the battlements, with ever-changing views across the city. Take a peek inside the **Church of SS Peter & Paul** (K rotundé 10; closed Tuesday), with its swirling acid-trip of multi-coloured Art Nouveau murals, and visit the grave of composer **Antonín Dvořák** in the neighbouring cemetery.

Bring a picnic and enjoy lunch in the leafy corner of your choice – our favourite spot is the park bench on the ramparts in the southwest corner, with a glorious view upriver. You can get supplies from one of the many supermarkets or produce markets in town. If you'd prefer not to eat outside, descend from the **Brick Gate** (Cihelná brána) to the friendly neighbourhood pub **U Neklana** (Neklanova 30), housed in a cool Cubist apartment block, and tuck into goulash and dumplings and a glass of Budvar.

After lunch, walk across the railway bridge just north of Vyšehrad to reach the up-and-coming district of **Smíchov**. This once-industrial area is filling up with achingly trendy restaurants, bars and clubs, but is still dominated by the **Staropramen Brewery** (Nádražní 84; www.pivovary-staropramen.cz). Even if you're not interested in a guided tour, the brewery's bustling pub,

Hospoda na Verandách (Nádražní 84), is a great place for a beer or a bite to eat.

You have a choice now – culture vultures can head for the **Futura Gallery** (Holečkova 49; closed Monday & Tuesday), a showcase for contemporary art (including David Černý's most outrageous installation), or hike uphill to the **Vila Bertramka** (Mozartova 169), a shrine to Mozart, who completed the score of *Don Giovanni* while staying here.

If your tastes run more to retail, point your Ferragamo pumps in the direction of **Nový Smíchov** (Plzeňská 8; www.novysmichovoc.cz), a glitzy shopping mall crammed with fashion boutiques and speciality stores.

For dinner, there's pasta at cosy **Pizzeria Corleone** (cnr Nádražní & Na Bělidle), authentic sushi at **Nagoya** (Stroupežnického 23; closed Tuesday), and an international menu at arty **Café-Bar Wigwam** (Zborovská 54). And if you're still up for more, club **Futurum** (Zborovská 7; www.musicbar.cz) parties on till 3am every night.

WINDING DOWN IN VINOHRADY

Take the metro to **Náměstí Míru** (Peace Square), the heart of Vinohrady, Prague's trendiest suburb. The name Vinohrady means 'vineyards' and refers to the vines that were cultivated here in centuries past; as recently as 200 years ago there was little urbanisation. Today it is an upmarket residential district of elegant, early-20th-century apartment blocks and wooded parks.

Start the day with a relaxed breakfast. Choose from chilled-out, old-fashioned **Medúza** (Belgická 17), 1950s-

And the New Prague is... Prague:

Two Days in the Czech Capital



retro **Kaaba** (Mánesova 20) or big, bustling and boozy **Cheers** (Belgická 116).

Explore the spider's web of streets that spreads out from Náměstí Míru. The main shopping street is **Vinohradská**, where you'll find everything from antique, bric-a-brac and furniture shops – browse for collectables at **Antik Bazrekà** (No 44) or admire the Persian and Turkish rugs at **Orientální Koberce Paláčka** (No 42) – to a collection of cutting-edge brand names housed in a 19th-century market hall at **Vinohradský Pavilón** (No 50).

Work your way east towards Vinohrady's other main square, **Náměstí Jiřího z Poděbrad**, dominated by the bizarre **Church of the Most Sacred Heart**. Built in 1932, it looks like a cross between an Egyptian temple and a railway station clock. There are lots of good lunch options nearby – from the gourmet delights of Italian **Aromi** (Mánesova 78; www.aromi.cz) to the weird and wonderful **Wings Club** (Lucemburská 11), a treasure house of WWII aviation artefacts.

In the afternoon, wander up to the **TV Tower** (Mahlerovy sady 1; www.tower.cz), the city's most prominent landmark (decorated with David Černý's strange crawling babies) and take the high-speed lift to the observation platform for a bird's-eye view of the city.

Explore the old **Jewish Cemetery** at the foot of the tower, then head west along Křižkovského and Na Šihance, lined with superb examples of Cubist, Rondocubist and Art Nouveau apartment blocks. You'll end up in **Riegrový sady**, one of the world's most pleasant parks, where you can enjoy an outdoor beer at the hilltop **Park Café**.

Now you have a choice. Head back into sophisticated Vinohrady for steak, ribs or fajitas at **Ambiente** (Mánesova 59; www.ambi.cz), cocktails at **Hapu** (Orlická 8) and clubbing at glitzy **Radost FX** (Bělehradská 120; www.radostfx.cz); or descend north into edgier Žižkov

for a curry at **Mailsi** (Lipanská 1), a live rock band at **Palác Akropolis** (Kubelíkova 27; www.palacakropolis.cz) or cool tunes and candlelight at laid-back club **Sedm Vlků** (Vlkova 7; www.sedmvlku.cz).

SLEEPING

Budget:

Pension Arco (www.arco-guesthouse.cz; ☎ 271 740 734) Comfortable, gay-friendly pension on a quiet Vinohrady back street, offering private apartments as well as pension rooms.

Midrange:

Hotel U Blaženky (www.ublazenky.cz; ☎ 251 564 532) Romantic boutique hotel with fresh flowers in your room, champagne on request, and a cosy candle-lit dining room.

Top End:

Le Palais (www.palaishotel.cz; ☎ 234 634 111) The lap of luxury in a sumptuous Belle Epoque building with glorious views over Vyšehrad.

For more reviews of Prague accommodation, check out the Sleep section on www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation.

By Neil Wilson

For the complete guide to Prague grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *Prague* guide; or get right under the skin of the city with *Best of Prague*. Both books are available online at shop.lonelyplanet.com.

