



# Charles IV and Prague – 700 years When all roads led to Prague

Title: Charles IV and Prague – 700 years  
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Photo: Prague City Tourism, Luděk Sládek  
Mapping: IPR Praha

Graphic design and typesetting: Dynamo design s.r.o.  
Print: Agentura Bravissimo

Total print run: 25,000 copies  
Prague 2016  
Not For Sale

Prague City Tourism  
Arbesovo nám. 70/4 / Prague 5 / 150 00 / CZ  
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Wow pure emotion  
Prague



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# Welcome to the Prague of Charles IV

The charm and the magic of Prague might seem to a visitor as the cumulated works of chance, like a beautiful human face. That is not quite the case, however, and one could almost say that Prague largely bears the hallmark of one man – the Czech King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV, born in 1316. During his reign, Prague became the Imperial seat that the gazes of the whole of Europe were turned to. Get to know the wondrous legacy this exceptional personage of Czech and European history bequeathed to Prague – on the occasion of 700 years since his birth you have a unique opportunity to do so.

## An educated European and a devout Christian

Charles IV (1316–1378), King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, was one of the greatest European statesmen. His remarkable persona is a meld of seeming contradictions. This ambitious ruler, excellent diplomat and patron of the arts was also a harshly pragmatic realist. Yet he was a true European, at ease with German, French and Italian culture, too.

A Přemyslid after his mother Elizabeth, a Luxembourg after his father John. The family roots of Charles IV reach to the beginnings of the Přemyslid dynasty in Bohemia, but also to the first French kings and even to Charlemagne at the head of the medieval Roman Empire.

Charles IV was born on 14 May 1316 in Prague. At that time, Europe was the centrepiece of the known world in the minds of Europeans, without any inkling of the existence of an American continent, and the most powerful country at the time was France. It was right there that Charles' education began. He found himself at the French Royal Court, as ruled by Charles IV the Fair, "le Bel". As his ward, he had his own teacher-guardians, opening before him a path to extensive education, as well as notable political and personal contacts. His friends included e.g. the future Pope Clement VI. Last but not least, Charles brought back with him from Paris his first wife, the much loved Blanche of the ascending royal line of Valois.

His all-round preparation for life continued in Luxembourg, on the family earldom, where the adolescent heir to the throne was raised by his authoritarian great uncle Balduin Archbishop of Trier. Charles continued his studies in statecraft, added to his linguistic prowess, as well as becoming fully conversant with courtly etiquette and knightly virtues. In time, he was called over to Northern Italy by his father John, where in a setting rife with intrigue he was to help him

safeguard Luxembourg interests. This also called on his military know-how, swordsmanship and weapon-wielding, horse riding, and combat tactics.

## Diplomat and Emperor

Charles met with political acclaim especially after he became King of the Romans. He was a constant reminder of the fact that diplomacy and political negotiation were his strong suit. He almost incessantly took a say in conflict situations, always with the overall aim to reach a compromise, often with the help of matrimonial politics.

Life in Europe was influenced by many circumstances. Among the most important was the move of the Papal seat from Rome to Avignon. That was not something Charles considered appropriate, and he made returning the Pope back to Rome one of his objectives. After all, he himself had in April 1355 gone to the 'eternal city' to accept the Imperial Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, which also formally made him the first among men of the then world.

Neither France, weakened by armed conflict with England, nor Spain, faced with its Reconquista, nor the weak for the time Grand Duchy of Moscow could pose a threat to Charles' plans for the Realm. Its stability was strengthened, inter alia, by the codification of Imperial rule in legal codex form, The Golden Bull of Charles IV. Likewise, he attended to economic prosperity, education and cultural development.

Charles IV laid down sound foundations for the common good of Europe and remains an inspirational figure to this day.



# The life of Charles IV in key dates

- 1310 The Luxembourg dynasty ascends to the Czech throne  
Eliška Přemyslovna marries John of Luxembourg
- 1311 John of Luxembourg's coronation as Czech King
- 14/5/1316 Birth of Charles IV**
- 30/5/1316 Christened with the traditional name of Czech kings –  
as Václav (Wenceslas)
- 1323 Sent off to be educated in France
- 1323–1330 Residing at the French Royal Court, upon his  
confirmation took the name of his godfather, the  
French King – Charles.**  
Engagement and marriage to Blanche of Valois, a  
cousin of the French king
- 1330–1331 Residing and being raised in Luxembourg
- 1331 Called up to join his father in Northern Italy, to help  
him create a Northern Italian power base for the  
Luxembourgs
- 1331–1333 Residing in Italy  
The attempted poisoning of Charles by the Visconti  
family of Milan  
Charles' first meeting with his younger brother John  
Henry  
Charles appointed as representative of John of  
Luxembourg in Northern Italy  
Charles founded the fortress of Montecarlo
- 25/11/1332 Battle of San Felice, Charles knighted
- 1333 Settled in the Old Town of Prague
- 1334 Charles receives from his father the title of Margrave  
of Moravia Charles is joined in Bohemia by his wife  
Blanche of Valois
- 1335 Luxembourg power struggle over the Tyrol with  
Emperor Louis IV of Bavaria
- 1337 Charles' exploration through Hungary, Croatia and the  
Adriatic to Tyrol, the war in Lombardy
- 1337–1339 Altercation between Charles and John (son and  
father) on the question of the mandate of the Czech  
Kingdom, Charles' attempt at tutelary rule in Tyrol to  
help his brother John Henry
- 11/6/1341 The Czech Provincial Assembly accepts and confirms  
Margrave Charles as the future Czech King
- 1341 Despite Luxembourg efforts, John Henry loses Tyrol  
and the legacy of Henry of Carinthia; Charles tried in  
1347 to get Tyrol back again, but without success
- 1342 Pierre Roger becomes the new Pope Clement VI
- 1344 Prague bishopric elevated to an archbishopric**
- 1344–1346 Political lobbying by the Luxembourgs to get Charles  
the Holy Roman Crown
- 11/7/1346 Charles IV elected King of the Romans
- 26/11/1346 Coronation as King of the Romans in Bonn**
- 2/9/1347 Coronation as King of Bohemia in Prague, the making  
of the St Wenceslas Crown, coronation ordinance  
written
- October 1347 Triumphant procession introducing Charles IV to the  
realm
- 8/3/1348 Prague New Town founded
- 7/4/1348 The University (today's Charles University) founded**
- March 1349 Widowed Charles IV marries Anne of Bavaria  
Charles IV crushes opposition in the realm
- 25/7/1349 Coronation as King of the Romans in Aachen**
- 27/5/1353 Widowed a second time, Charles IV marries Anna of  
Schweidnitz
- 6/1/1355 Lombardy coronation in Milano
- 5/4/1355 Imperial coronation in Rome**
- 1355–1356 Proclamation and adoption of the Roman codex  
through the Imperial Golden Bull of Charles IV
- 9/7/1357 Charles IV lays the foundation stone for the  
"stone bridge" (today's Charles Bridge)**
- 26/2/1361 Nuremberg becomes the birthplace of his long-  
awaited son Wenceslas
- 21/5/1363 Marriage to Elizabeth of Pomerania in Krakow
- May 1365 Visit to Avignon, in an effort to convince Pope  
Urban V to return to Rome
- 4/6/1365 Coronation in Arles
- 14/2/1368 Birth of Sigismund of Luxembourg
- October 1368 Charles' 2nd journey to Rome, the Pope's support for  
his resettlement there
- 1370 Brandenburg acquired
- 10/6/1376 Eldest son Wenceslas elected King of the Romans
- 1377–1378 Diplomatic mission to France
- 29/11/1378 Death of Charles IV in Prague

## Notable events to mark 700 years since the birth of Charles IV

Throughout 2016 Prague will host a number of interesting exhibitions, concerts, festivals and celebrations, thematically connected with the life and times of Charles IV, the Czech King and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, born 700 years ago this May.

### The most significant expo project

#### Emperor Charles IV 1316–2016

#### 15 May – 25 September 2016 / The National Gallery in Prague - Wallenstein Riding Hall, Carolinum /

A Bavarian-Czech exhibition will present Charles IV as an extraordinary personage of European political and cultural history, as a pious, educated, confident and far-sighted ruler who did not hesitate to push his own agenda using a wide repertoire of diplomatic means. The exhibition aims to depict Charles IV free of the distorting layers of ideological prejudice and to offer the public an all-round portrayal of this historical personage with his positive and more sombre facets.

One of the unmistakable features of Charles' concept of rule was the systematic use of fine art and architecture to promote Imperial Majesty. Charles IV entered the history books as one of the most generous of art patrons and founders, at the same time as one of the most often portrayed rulers in European medieval history.

The Persona of Charles IV will be reflected against the kaleidoscopic backdrop of the broad cultural-historical realities of the time, which in the 14th century encompassed e.g. climate change, crop failures, plague epidemics, the Jewish pogroms and financial crises. And it is precisely in this historical context with its many obvious pitfalls that we shall be seeing an admirable flowering of Carolian art and architecture. Was life at the Imperial court quite so divorced from the not always satisfactory reality of everyday life surrounding the castle? How was Charles IV actually perceived by his contemporaries? Where did the funds come from to cover the lavish and costly imperial pomp and splendour? How are we to understand the collecting of Holy relics, and what was the role of art in the service of Charles' imperial policy? The exhibition seeks to answer these questions through 140 exhibits of diverse artistry and craftsmanship as well as through cultural-historical and archival documents, on loan from many European and American museums, ecclesiastical and private collections.

One of the most important exhibits in the exhibition will be the Crown with which Charles IV was crowned King of the Romans. This Crown will be on Czech territory for the first ever time. Also on their first ever outing from the St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna are two sculptures of Rudolf IV of Habsburg and his wife, the daughter of Charles.

### Exhibitions at Prague Castle

#### The Sceptre and the Crown

**15 May – 28 September 2016 / Prague Castle – Imperial Stables /** The mainstay exhibition of the Charles IV commemorative events at Prague Castle. The chief exhibit, exceptionally shown separately, will be the Czech Royal Crown. For the first time in modern history it will not be accompanied by the well known Renaissance insignia (orb and sceptre) on display every five years, but by the Gothic insignia that went with the Crown at the time of Charles, whose artistic replicas were made for this exhibition using specific art restoration techniques.



#### The Crown of the Kingdom

**15 May – 28 September 2016 / Prague Castle – Riding Hall /** An exposition to give symbolic access to the internal and external triforium of the Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert in their simplified spatial reconstruction. The triforium is historically the most secure, off-limits, sculpturally richly decorated gallery on the outer and inner side of the nave of the Cathedral. In this showy exhibit visitors will find even the funeral vestments from the royal tomb, as well as getting sight of the royal busts in original form with the gold and polychromatic finish originally intended.

#### The Crown without a King

**15 May – 28 September 2016 / Prague Castle – The Old Royal Palace /**

Visitors are taken on a tour of modern history via by the 'Crown without a King' exhibit, on show in the Romanesque cellar of the Old Royal Palace, the site where the Crown jewels were walled-up during

World War II. It presents the tale of these most valuable artefacts of nationhood during the dramatic 20th century, from the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 until the year 1968.

### **The Crown of the Mother of Cities**

**15 May – 28 September 2016 / Prague Castle – Theresian wing of the Old Royal Palace /**

The exhibition will focus on the Cathedral as the foremost edifice in the country. Presented will be the activities of the 'Association for completion of the Cathedral', and information on its prominent members. Also on display will be photographs from the Prague Castle archives, taken in the course of building completion in the 19th and 20th centuries, and some artefacts from the completion of the Cathedral.

### **The Crown in the Palm of your Hand**

**15 May – 28 September 2016 / Prague Castle – Rosenberg Palace /**

An exhibition to take the visitor through not only the reign of Charles IV, showing the Prague Groschen as the Kingdom of Bohemia's enduring coin. The exhibition will be based around the history of silver processing and gold plating techniques. The visitor will also learn, inter alia, what face value the coin had, and what it could buy.

### **Architecture for the Crown**

**15 May – 10 October 2016 / Prague Castle – Monastery of St George /**

An interactive exhibition particularly for children, showing architecture in the Charles IV era. This will take place in cooperation with the organizers of the international artistic-architectural project 'The Playful Architect', whose aim is to bring closer to children the historical architecture of their city, to teach them about architectural heritage, why it matters to care about it, and for it.

From 15 to 29 May the **Czech Crown jewels** will be exhibited in the Vladislav Hall of Prague Castle.

## **Other Events**

### **Medieval festivities at Prague Castle**

**July and August 2016 / Prague Castle – Deer Moat /**

Knightly weekends in the beautiful environment of the upper Deer Moat of Prague Castle presenting the life of medieval knights and jousting tournaments from the days of Charles IV.

### **The Mystery of the Tower**

**from 1 April 2016 / The City of Prague Museum – Old Town Bridge Tower /**

The main exhibit of the new permanent exhibition will be the tower itself, its inner spaces, dungeons, stairs, roof and especially the gallery platform with its wonderful view. The Old Town Bridge Tower

belongs among the most impressive Gothic works in Prague, and was personally commissioned by Charles IV to be built along with the bridge, to a design by Petr Parléř. The tower was ultimately conceived as a symbolic triumphal arch, through which Czech Kings would pass on their coronation procession through the city, heading for the Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert at Prague Castle. The symbolism of the whole edifice and of its decoration is an important cultural phenomenon in the history of Prague's medieval architecture, hence the new exposition focuses on this aspect, highlighting the connection between the construction and artistic expression in the conceptual setting of its time. The exposition will present the historical and contextual interlinking between the existence of the tower, Charles Bridge and their vicinity and the circumstances that led to both heritage monuments being built.

### **Civitas Carolina or Building in the Times of Charles IV**

**13 May 2016 – 8 January 2017 / National Technical Museum /**

The main exhibition hall will present building crafts, at the time of the great building boom during the reign of Charles IV. On show will be a series of historical building elements and construction procedures, for example, a functioning replica of the medieval human-power driven wooden hoist, whose design is based on the drawing in the Bible of King Wenceslas IV. Among other examples of large construction machinery will be a fully functional replica of a Gothic pile driver used for driving/hammering wooden pilot posts into the foundations of buildings or bridges.

### **Commemorative service of worship in honour of Charles IV**

**14 May 2016 / Prague Castle – Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert /**

Pontifical mass held on the 700th birthday of Charles IV, who was, among other things, actively engaged in the spiritual revival of the Czech lands. The mass will be attended by Statesmen, Church leaders and foreign guests.

### **A Tribute to Charles IV**

**17 May 2016 / Prague Castle – Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert /**

The Czech Philharmonic Orchestra will mark the anniversary of Charles IV with a concert in St Vitus Cathedral. The program was conceived to celebrate this great ruler with dignity, majesty and sensitivity. Under the baton of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra chief conductor Jiří Bělohlávek we'll hear the Petr Eben composition aptly named A Tribute to Charles IV, the symphonic poem Praga by Josef Suk and the Te Deum by Antonín Dvořák.

### **The History of Charles University until 31 December 2017 / Carolinum /**

An exhibition in the vast underground vaults of the Carolinum opened on the occasion of the 667th anniversary of the founding of Charles University. Presented here are the inception Charter of the

University and copies of the University seal as well as sceptres and artefacts marking historical milestones: e.g. the schools changed greatly under the Josephinist reforms; the split of the University into Czech and German parts; the inception of Czechoslovakia or the fall of the Communist regime.

The exhibition is divided into several parts mapping out the University's progress – from the Utraquist, through 'Charles-Ferdinand' and Charles University today. Also recollected are notable personae associated with the University, e.g. the biologist and physiologist Jan Evangelista Purkyně, the renowned physicist Albert Einstein or the Nobel Prize for Chemistry laureate Jaroslav Heyrovský.

**Prague Spring 2016: Tiburtina Ensemble**  
**18 May 2016 / National Gallery in Prague – Monastery of St Agnes of Bohemia /**

The Tiburtina female vocal ensemble with the Swiss counter-tenor Terry Wey presents a programme subtitled Reverence for the Virgin Mary in the 14th century. At the core is the Messe de Nostre Dame (Mass to the Virgin Mary) by the medieval master Guillaume de Machaut (circa 1300–1377), who was much connected with the Czech lands. This composer was active from 1323 for a full 17 years as Secretary serving the Czech King John of Luxembourg. The programme adds to his works with monophonic Marian chants from Czech sources of Charles' time.

**Prague Spring 2016: Graindelavoix**  
**19 May 2016 / Na Slovanech (Emmaus) Monastery /**

The Belgian ensemble Graindelavoix performs the "Cyprus Vespers" – vocal compositions from the Turin manuscript from the late 14th and the first half of the 15th century, where Gothic chants meet the Byzantine vocal tradition and the Maronite (Lebanon) Catholic Church. This music will appropriately enough be heard within the walls of the Emmaus monastery, where Charles IV let the rites be done in Old Church Slavonic.

**A Musical medley on the Luxembourg theme**  
**11 May 2016 / Old Town Square /**

A concert in honour of Charles IV performed by the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

**Coronation Festivities**  
**3–4 September 2016 / Vyšehrad, Old Town Square, and other places in the historical centre /**

A reenactment of the coronation of Charles IV and his wife, Blanche of Valois, investing them with the titles of King and Queen of Bohemia. With a coronation procession through Prague, a feast at the royal court, and a knights' tournament in honour of the new King.

*For more supplemented and updated information go to [www.charlesivinprague.com](http://www.charlesivinprague.com).*

Content subject to change

## Prague Castle and surroundings /1/

**During the reign of Charles IV Prague became his Imperial seat. Its most important aspect was Prague Castle, commanding the rocky promontory above the River Vltava. Naturally enough, the monarch paid most attention to this particular locality. The experience from his youthful years at the French Royal Court, in the Italian Signoria or the lavish Archbishopric of Trier, made Charles wish to combine security with a pleasant ambience, to be enveloped with beauty and riches. The power- and political centre of the Holy Roman Empire had to be a dignified, representative and impressive place for incoming visitors.**

**Prague Castle III. Courtyard**

Prague Castle dominates Prague's panorama. The main historical part is that of the III. courtyard, lined with buildings of the Old Royal Palace, the All Saints Chapel, the Black Tower, and medieval wall remnants. The life of the Imperial Court was centred right here. Diplomats, artists, craftsmen, envoys from the imperial cities found "their King" ready to give audiences. At the same time, however, the monarch was mindful of his exclusive status and expected due respect. Charles IV was able to combine within the Castle walls a perfect blend of secular and ecclesiastical power. The silhouette of the Gothic Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert stands in witness.

**The Cathedral of Sts Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert**

The monumental form of the Cathedral at first glance tells of its spiritual significance for Czech statehood. It became not only the Coronation venue for Czech Kings and Queens, but also the most appropriate place for the safekeeping of the newly crafted Crown and crown jewels. The laying of the foundation stone of the Gothic building on the site of an earlier rotunda and basilica in 1344 was no accident. It was closely tied to the Prague bishopric being elevated to an Archdiocese, which was one of the major achievements of Charles' policymaking.



The French Gothic inspiration is clearly evident. The first Master builder, Matthias of Arras built the choir with ambulatory chapels, then Petr Parléř added the span and built the cultural centre of the temple – the chapel of St Wenceslas, followed by the Golden Gate and part of the main tower. For centuries, the Cathedral remained incomplete. What began in the times of Charles was added to, and only finished in the 20th century.



Among the most highly prized parts of the cathedral is the Golden Gate – the ceremonial entrance to the temple from the III. courtyard, which is adorned with the original mosaic of the Last Judgement including the matchless rendition of Emperor Charles IV and his wife Elizabeth of Pomerania. Another portrait of the monarch can be found in the chapel of St Wenceslas. The beautiful decoration and distinctive architectural conception emphasize the uniqueness of the place, standing over the grave of the land's most notable of patrons, St Wenceslas. The wall covering of gold leaf, set with precious stones and wall paintings depicting the Passion form part of the original decorations from the 14th century. Later additions show scenes from the life of St Wenceslas, ascribed to the Master who authored the altar of Litoměřice.

The triple span of the nave and aisles is modern, but made to the original medieval plans. The Gothic tombs in chapels around the choir were made to Charles' bidding, as a dignified resting place for his Přemyslid ancestors. Busts of Royal family members, including the Emperor himself, are featured in the inner gallery of the cathedral, called the triforium. The underground Royal Tomb holds the remains of Charles IV and other Czech Kings.

The monumentality of the temple is witnessed by its scale: 124 metres long, 60 metres wide at the transept, 33 metres high vaulting, with the main tower standing 96.5 metres tall.

### The St Vitus Treasury

The unique role of the Cathedral is also borne out by its ecclesiastical treasury. Many rare pyxes with saintly relics have been preserved from Charles' time. The Emperor was an avid collector. Perhaps

cognisant of his own sins, he was prone to showy piety and missed no opportunity to obtain such relics. The high degree of artistic craftsmanship, the lavish implementation, these are a perfect expression of the personality of Charles IV. Outstanding among the most precious objects is the gold relic cross, the reliquary arm of St George or the onyx bowl and tower reliquary of St Catherine. Historic within the Treasury were the Crown jewels, created to honour St Wenceslas. Don't miss the opportunity to see this rare treasury with your own eyes. It is located in the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the second courtyard.



### The Old Royal Palace

The Emperor's court and palace were in the immediate vicinity of the Cathedral. At the time of Charles' permanent relocation to Prague, the situation at Prague Castle was not ideal. The original palace of the early medieval building style was far from apt for the demands of royal entertainment and life. The result of the rigorous reconstruction has not survived to this day, but the Old Royal Palace has a whole Gothic floor to offer the visitor, which was originally intended to house the Queen. Although Charles' audience rooms are gone, their place taken by today's Vladislav Hall, at least some details can be seen, e.g. remnants of the Oriol Chapel, the ground floor Gothic arcades, or the hypostyle hall, there to remind us.







### Chapel of All Saints

Alongside his residence reconstruction, Charles also had built a new Chapel of All Saints. The compact regal chapel for the secluded contemplation of kings was replaced by a free-standing sanctuary, in which Charles IV founded the collegiate chapter in 1339. This supremely Gothic edifice built by the Parlěř Stoneworks was inspired by the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. The great fire of the Lesser Town and Hradčany in 1541 sadly caused much damage to this grand work, so we cannot admire the original building details any more. The long languishing interim condition was remedied by the sister of Emperor Rudolf II, Archduchess Elisabeth of Austria, who decided to finance a partial rebuild.

### St George's Basilica

Charles IV also turned his attention to other buildings on Prague Castle grounds. True to the tradition and role of the Přemyslid family he so proudly belonged to, the King arranged for the Chapel of St Ludmila over the grave of this first Patron Saint of Czech statehood, in the Basilica of St George. Again it was the Parlěř Stoneworks that took care of the implementation. The new Gothic level of the Chapel, its vaulting, the tombstone with the recumbent Saint and the wall paintings are of great artistic merit.



### The Old Burgrave House and Black Tower

There is one more location at Prague Castle closely linked with King Charles. These are the old castle Burgrave's quarters, where the young monarch spent his first months after returning to Bohemia in late 1333, and some years after. This site near the Black Tower became a temporary substitute residence for the uninhabitable Royal Palace. Its stronghold-style, less-than-cosy architecture offered no luxury, but was a new home for Charles nevertheless.

Prague Castle has remained a symbol of Czech statehood for more than a millennium. The reign of Charles IV belongs to its most important epochs.

### Hradčany and the Lesser Town

Charles didn't confine his attention only to the Castle. The Hradčany district and beneath the battlements, today's Lesser Town, were

part of his urbanistic plans. The original township of Hradčany and the Lesser Town of Prague with it were an important access route to, and trade infrastructure for the Imperial residence. Close by was the Premonstratensian Monastery in Strahov. Charles IV decided to expand, secure and fit-out his immediate surroundings. He substantially increased the adjacent castle grounds connecting to Petřín Hill and around it, and right down to the River he erected the so-called **Hunger Wall /2/**. Why the "hunger"? The marl wall was to strengthen the defences of the city and of the residential seat. It was built at a time of raging famine in Bohemia. According to lore, Charles secured subsistence for many of the city's poor, given them work on the construction site.



The Lesser Town below the Castle, being the seat of the Archbishop and the Knights of St John of Jerusalem (**Church of Our Lady beneath the Chain) /3/** was a key part of Charles' power-base. For the sake of developing the city, however, there was a need to bring together both banks of the Vltava River. Charles IV took care of this with his usual panache.

## Prague's bridge of Charles IV

**The Stone heart of Prague – the famous bridge which has been like a magnet for figural sculptors and poets alike. We walk across the bridge aware of the famed many who have done so before us since the 14th century, in the sure hope that this architectural gem of Charles IV will last for times to come. Yet this beautiful monument did not start out as anything more than a vital connection of two riverbanks beneath Prague Castle. The residential town of the Czech Kings and its inhabitants needed to cross the River with dry feet. The requirement was clear, but its solution far from simple.**

### Judith's Bridge

Apart from the fording points across the river and a wooden bridge, unfit to face the vagaries of the weather, Prague did in fact have its

first real stone bridge already in the 12th century. The idea for the bridge may have come from Daniel, the Bishop of Prague, but the sponsor was the Přemyslid king Vladislav and, in particular, his wife Judith of Thuringia, hence the bridge so named. The construction, finished in 1172, survived without mishap until the great flood of February 1342, overcome by water which shocked with "... vastness and thickness of ice...". From this point, the city had to make do with a makeshift solution. At last, a new bridge was being built.

### Charles Bridge /4/

The Czech King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV was well aware how important a river crossing can be. Finally, on 9 July 1357 the foundation stone was laid, for a technically extremely demanding construction. Why not sooner? Maybe because the project was financially too demanding. Because of it, the Czech Kingdom became indebted for many years to come.

Construction continued well under the leadership of Petr Parléř. The young builder proved himself. Firstly, he had to avoid the remains of the earlier bridge, so the River was bridged a few yards upstream. To keep to the older bridge gate and tower on the Lesser Town side, the bridge was built in a slight arc; 515.76 metres (564 yds) long and 9.5 metres (30 ft) wide. The sandstone bridge rests on 16 arches of varying spans. Anchoring the pillars to millstones and oak slats was the approach of the time, and the bridge crossing level was uniquely some 13 metres (over 42 ft) above the waterline.

Everyone envisioned a beautiful and solid construction, built to withstand all floods. Maybe this was why the legend arose that raw eggs were mixed into the mortar, for maximal strength. Construction continued for many years, but was not completed in Charles' lifetime. Still, the funeral procession of the King and Emperor in 1378 had use of a near-completed bridge.



After a lot of thought the patron chosen for the bridge was St Vitus, whose rendition dominated the representative entry point to the bridge. It stands with others decorating the Old Town Bridge Tower, a beautiful example of Prague's Gothic architecture. Here we can

also find the antique sculptural portrait of Charles IV sitting a little to one side with his son and successor Wenceslas, above the gate. Wonderful details indicate that the whole entrance tower was also made by Parléř Stoneworks and completed in the 1380s.

A stroll along Charles Bridge is one of the finest things to experience. From here, the city lies beckoning, at your fingertips. It's hard to believe it was in its day open to cars and even tram traffic. The statues looking down from the pillars attest the fact that at the time of its founding father Charles IV, the only decorative statue was Christ on the cross. Only much later were the sculptures added whose mainly Baroque appearance tells of their era.

There is one statue, though, to be looked at closely. It is on the Old Town bridgehead and portrays the famous co-author of the bridge – **Charles IV /5/**. Why not make your homage to him!



## The Old Town

**The winding streets of the Old Town and its tiny nooks and crannies still recall how Prague used to be at the beginning of the reign of Charles IV. It was a city surrounded by solid walls and a moat, with a central market square, a fortified mercantile courtyard and a City Hall, representing civic government; a solid foundation for building a royal residence. It used to be called the Great City of Prague, but also Mater Urbium, the Mother of Cities.**

**Although Charles' urbanistic projects were very grand, he paid attention to the Old Town in all respects. He expanded rights, assured the citizenry against potential losses, guarded their trade interests, supported the guilds. By instating higher education he gave the Old Town lustre and privileged standing.**

### The House at the Stone Bell /6/

It was 1316, when the Old Town of Prague, perhaps even the House at the Stone Bell saw the birth of the future King and Emperor Charles IV. The wonderful house emblem and the Gothic façade details hint of the once large manor house, probably belonging to the Royal family. An ordinary burgher house would hardly be so

richly decorated, with a fine Chapel on the ground floor. Its own well, inner courtyard, representational spaces in the tower of the House, all of this attests to an exceptional place.

### **The Church of Our Lady before Týn /7/**

This three-nave basilica with its two 80 m tall towers is an outstanding landmark. This Church too was largely built after the mid-14th century, with Court stoneworks participation and the active support of Emperor Charles IV. The curious name of the Church derives from the mercantile court and toll-house, known as Týn or Ungelt. The supremely Gothic structure's second phase of construction was supervised by Petr Parléř, as seen from many of the details. For example, the richly decorated windows, chancel and its arcade, but especially the architecture and decoration of the monumental north portal leading to Týn Lane bear the unmistakable Parléř touch. The carved relief plates in the tympanum belong among the very best of Czech sculptural masonry. They illustrate the passion scenes of flagellation and crowning with thorns, and the crucifixion of Christ.



The interior of the temple is a veritable art gallery with an outstanding Gothic pewter baptismal font, the oldest in Prague, decorated with embossed figures of the Apostles, the Gothic stone pulpit, or the two sediles with consoles shaped as crowned heads. Singular woodcarvings are to be seen in the Calvary and the Seated Madonna, both dating from 1410. Although the Church has undergone many subsequent modifications, it is ever linked to the time of Charles IV.

### **The Church of St James and the Franciscan Minorite Convent /8/**

Another place inextricably linked with Emperor Charles IV is the Minorite Convent with the Church of St James. The supremely Gothic structure of the Church began construction in the reign of Charles' parents, John and Elizabeth, who even celebrated their royal coronation there, but completion dates to as late as 1374. The importance of the shrine was confirmed when it came to the death of the Czech King and Holy Roman Emperor. It was here that the body of Charles lay in State surrounded by five hundred burning

candles. It was here that people came to honour the memory of their King.

Although the Church no longer has the original Gothic interior, its ground-plan is of the three-nave basilica and choir. The monastery cloister and former summer refectory attest to the high level artistic professionalism of Charles' time.



### **The U Štupartů House /9/**

Near the Church of St Jacob there once stood a great court, U Štupartů, known for being a residence of the Royal family and Charles himself. It would seem that after his return to Bohemia in 1333 the young and politically ambitious royal heir-apparent spent a few months and made key decisions here.

### **Relics and the Church of St Gall /10/**

Charles IV was famed for his collecting Holy relics and their reverent deposition in artistically made pyxes. He also managed to get a part of the skull of St Gall, directly in the monastery of St Gallen in Switzerland. On 29 September 1353 Charles personally gave the Church Plebanus this relic in a gold and silver reliquary. No wonder that the monarch had a weakness for this Old Town Church of St Gall. After all, we know he commissioned its Gothic reconstruction, and celebrated his glorious coronation here, when on 2 September 1347 he and Blanche de Valois were finally crowned as Czech rulers.

### **The Chapel of the Old Town Hall /11/**

Our journey of discovery of Prague in Charles' time next leads to the middle of the Old Town Square. It is hard to leave unnoticed the almost 70 metres high tower of the Old Town Hall, which hosts the famous Prague astronomical clock with its astrolabe and enchanting figurines of the 12 Apostles.

The Town Hall Tower and its Marian Chapel, facing with its Oriel window onto the big market square, are once again the work of the courtly stoneworks. The Chapel used to be an indivisible part of what was the Town Hall proper, or Wolflin House, where the councillors and Burgermeister sat deciding the city's weighty matters.

The Chapel itself came into being shortly after the tower was finished, and was consecrated in 1381. Its space is formed by the nave in the corpus of the Tower, complete with richly decorated five-sided Oriel, one of the finest works of Charles' court architect Petr Parléř. He was also responsible for the remarkable corner-piece statue, known as the Old Town Madonna. It is a fine example of the high standard of Czech sculptural work at the end of the 14th century, as are other relief elements, themed with human faces and animals.



### The Church of St Giles /12/

The Church of St Giles, also founded by Charles, is quite unmistakable. It stands proud of its Old Town surroundings even today. We can easily imagine how astounding it must have seemed at the time Charles IV sponsored this Gothic edifice, to go with the collegiate chapter he established.

The monumental triple nave was built on the site of an earlier Romanesque church and consecrated in May 1371 by Archbishop Jan Očko of Vlašim, in the presence of Charles IV himself, his Lady and the whole Court.

The history of the temple is associated with interesting events, a noteworthy fact being that even during Charles' reign it was already a venue for the sermons of John Milíč of Kroměříž, the most notable preacher of the pre-Hussite reformation period. This was most certainly evidence of the broad-mindedness and spiritual diversity of Charles' Prague.

Following an extensive Baroque refit the interior lost much of its Gothic style, but from the outside this spiritual sanctuary's details, such as the original Gothic portal, still speak of 14th century architecture.

### Carolinum – Charles University /13/

The Old Town holds one more important first – on 7 April 1348 it became a seat of higher learning, the University of Prague. This was

not, at first, a building, but an institution, the oldest founded North of the Alps. Step by step, the Colleges of the four University faculties were founded: law, medicine, theology and the arts (the seven liberal arts), all on the territory of the Old Town.

The prime symbol of the University is, however, the Carolinum, i.e. Charles' College, originally the house of Rotlev, the Master of the Mint. Its medieval palace architecture built of rough brick and stone, with a preserved Cloister ambulatory, an Oriel Chapel and other Gothic details are world-class.

### And what came next...

Charles' IV interest in developing his residential seat went beyond the existing city walls. Two major inceptions – of the "Coronation" Church of Our Lady of the Snows, and of the Slavic Benedictines' Monastery in the year 1347 foreshadowed that the monarch's most important edict was yet to come: to create a city, whose size and importance would aspire to Christ's Jerusalem.

## The New Town and Vyšehrad – Prague as a European Capital

**The intention to establish a New Town of Prague was implemented by Charles IV only after careful preparation. Its founding Charter was issued on 8 March 1348 and just a few weeks later, attended by the Monarch and many guests from the Empire, the foundation stone of the new town fortifications was laid. The Gothic fortifications, stretching almost 3.5 km in length, with twenty-four defensive towers and four gates, were completed in just two years.**

**The New Town is one of the greatest medieval establishments in Europe whose generosity drew on the ancient principles of city building, about a hundred years before their resurgence under the Italian Renaissance. Prague became in size, administrative and economic security and its number of places of worship, the third most important city in Europe. The principles of founding the New Town meant much more to Charles IV, as a palpable manifestation of Heavenly Jerusalem.**

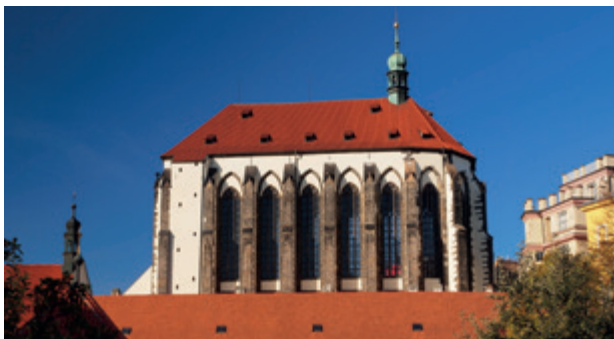
### Heavenly Jerusalem

While Charles IV surely considered extending his residence important, even more important was the effort to build a new Jerusalem, a place medieval mysticism deemed the ideal city, the dwelling place of the redeemed. This intention corresponded to the thoughtful layout of squares and church buildings, and their distinctiveness. The five New Town churches are located at regular intervals which, when viewed from above, mark out a cruciform

blessing of the city. Also the consecration of each shrine, which links Prague with key imperial cities, shows Charles' aim to make Prague the Capital of the Holy Roman Empire and the Centre of secular government in the Christian world. The sacred halo of the New Town was crowned in 1350 with the transfer of the Imperial Crown jewels to Prague. The jewels, along with rare relics then were always displayed on the first Sunday after Good Friday to large crowds of the faithful at the New Town cattle market, today's Karlovo (Charles') Square. Perhaps it was already then the intent to build for this purpose the exceptionally showy Chapel of Corpus Christi, albeit its implementation was left to the next generation.

#### **Church of Our Lady of the Snows /14/**

A sign of the future intention to found the town was the founding of the Carmelites monastery with the Church of Our Lady of the Snows. Charles IV founded it together with his wife, Blanche of Valois, the day after coronation as Czech King, on 3 September 1347. The sovereign bequeathed land and timber for the construction of the Church and the monastic buildings. Indeed, he deployed the material left from the temporary constructions for the coronation banquet. Yet, of the monumental temple conceived in the project, which was to have a total length of 100 metres, by 1397 only the chancel had been built, rising to a height of almost 40 metres, over the roofs of New Town houses. The temple was to have become the dominant feature of Prague's towns on the right bank, which Charles sought to unite. Also interesting was the consecration of the Church, which linked it to Rome's basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, symbolic of the spiritual bond between Prague and Rome. Further construction was halted by the Hussite wars. The Carmelitans eventually returned, too late to save this shrine, which was in a very bad condition. Its current form dates from the 17th century, at the onset of which Rudolf II chose to cede the monastery to the Franciscan order. They then managed to repair the dilapidated temple, restoring its roof span and significance.



#### **Church of Our Lady Na Slovanech /15/**

The Slavic Benedictines monastery with the Church of the Virgin Mary, St Jerome, Cyril and Methodius, and Adalbert and Procopius

held a very specific role in Charles' Prague. It was founded in November 1347 as the only monastery with Slavic rites in Western Christendom, "trial run" by the Croatian monks that Charles IV brought to Prague from the Benedictine Abbey of the island of Pašman near Zadar. They served the Roman Liturgy in the Old Church Slavonic tongue, and under Charles' concept were a symbolic bridge between Western and Eastern Christianity, one of his aspirations.

The magnificent monastery church, devoted to the Virgin Mary and Slavic patrons, was consecrated in the presence of the Emperor on Easter Monday in the year 1372. Drawing on the Gospel account of Jesus' journey and meeting his disciples in Emmaus, which was read at the occasion, the monastery became known as Emmaus. The monastery quickly became a centre of Slavic liturgy and survived unscathed through the Hussite wars.

Its history is remarkable, relating both to its Beuron decoration and due to events during World War II, when the area was heavily damaged by Allied bombing. Its present and very interesting appearance is the result of extensive post-war reconstruction. Singular in Europe are its Gothic frescoes in the cloister, called the Emmaus cycle, that takes us back to the reign of Charles IV.



#### **Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and of St Charlemagne /16/**

The Augustinian canonry with the Church of the Virgin Mary and of St Charlemagne was founded by Emperor Charles IV in 1350. The Gothic centrepiece has its place on the highest elevated point of the New Town, on the hill opposite Vyšehrad, which was thus given the honorific name Karlov – Mons Caroli Sancti. The consecration of the Church refers to the beatification of the Emperor Charlemagne, whom Charles IV was related to and saw as his personal and monarchic role model. By this extraordinary temple, Prague was connected with the city of Aachen, where the Kings of the Romans were crowned. The Church was in fact built according to the layout of the temple in which Charles IV was garlanded with the Crown of Rome in 1349. It took a whole 27 years before the Church was largely

finished and consecrated. The original form of the temple has been retained only partly, but it is still a remarkable work of Charles' Prague.



### **The Church of St Catherine /17/**

The Augustinian monastery with its Church of St Catherine was another temple of the New Jerusalem. Charles IV founded it in 1355 and the consecration was, once again, not at all arbitrary. Saint Catherine of Alexandria was held in much esteem by Charles. The Monarch believed that her intercession had won him the near-lost battle of San Felice on 25 November 1332. He did not forget his patroness when founding this New Town temple in Prague. Of the original Gothic church only the tall steeple tower remains. Otherwise, it is predominantly the work of the Baroque architect Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer.

### **The Church of St Apollinaire /18/**

The set of five key temples includes this unmissable hilltop church at Větrov. It was founded by Emperor Charles IV in 1362, along with the collegiate chapter transferred from Sadská in Eastern Bohemia. The consecration of the Church to St Apollinaire refers to the Italian Ravenna, where, tradition tells us, Apollinaris was the first bishop. The Church dedicated to his name in Prague creates a spiritual connection with Ravenna, a place which in the 5th century was the seat of Roman emperors and whose Basilica di Sant' Apollinare in Classe architecturally inspired the Prague shrine.



### **Church of Our Lady Na trávníčku /19/**

The monastery of the Servite alms order, and the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Na trávníčku (also known as Na Slupi) were also founded by Charles IV, in 1360. Legend has it, the Emperor so promised before the Virgin Mary's depiction in the Florentine monastery of the Servite order, giving thanks for his restored health. Charles IV held the Marian devotional cult in special reverence and dedicated a number of shrines accordingly. This temple is remarkable for its rectangular ground plan and for the most leaning tower in Prague. Even despite its partial neo-Gothic refit in the 19th century the building remains a significant example of the architectural and spiritual intentions of Charles.

**Yet the founding of the New Town of Prague was not just about the aforementioned symbolism.** Older parishes located on the newly commandeered territory were respected and included. Two new parish churches were built, dividing the unusually large territory into two parts.

### **The Church of St Stephen /20/**

The parish church of the upper part of the New Town was built in the 2nd half of the 14th century and entrusted to the order of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. Worth a mention is its being the only order originating from the Czech Lands and moreover a male order founded by a woman – St Agnes of Bohemia. The land around the Church used to be the largest cemetery in the New Town of Prague.

### **The Church of St Henry and Kunhuta /21/**

The parish church of the lower part of the New Town was consecrated in 1351 by the Prague Archbishop, Arnošt of Pardubice. This shrine was entrusted to the Crusaders, from whom Charles IV acquired most of the land for the New Town. The Church was consecrated in honour of the Roman imperial couple Henry II and his wife Kunhuta. An interesting dedication once again, this time referencing not only the Imperial tradition, but also the only Patron Saint of the Luxembourg dynasty.

**Marketplaces were a major aspect of the New Town.** The Horse market (Wenceslas square), The Grain market (Senovážné square) and the Cattle market (Karlovo square) astounded with their unprecedented size, in the case of the central Cattle market extending over 8 hectares (20 acres). No wonder the New Town Hall came to be built right here.

### **New Town Hall /22/**

As is clear from its timing, Charles IV supported the construction of the New Town Hall, featuring a massive corner tower, as the seat of local government. The supremely Gothic architecture of the Great Hall with its original arches and columns as well as the remnants of Gothic wall paintings bear this out; one of the most beautiful interiors of medieval Prague.



### **Vyšehrad /23/**

This Royal Castle and legendary Czech site, associated with the first ruler of the Přemyslid dynasty, played a key role in Charles' ideas. Vyšehrad stood for the continuity of the Přemyslid dynasty, which the Luxembourgs joined when ascending to the Czech throne. Charles' beloved mother, Queen Elizabeth, died there in 1330. Also, under the new coronation regulations, every incumbent Czech King was to stop there in prayer on the eve of his coronation. The Vyšehrad acropolis was connected to the New Town in the 1350s, with a rebuilding of the chapter-house Church of Sts Peter and Paul, whose symbolic conjoining to the cross of Heavenly Jerusalem underscored this site's significance.



*"What Augustus did for Rome, Charles IV did for the Capital of Bohemia"*  
(Uberto Decembrio, 1399)



# Emperor Charles IV



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