

A City Free (to Ban Smoking!)

As a foreigner I'm willing to accept almost anything Prague has to offer, however, if I could offer one tip for the future, banning smoking indoors it would be. The long-term health costs of smoking and second hand-smoke inhalation have long been proven by scientists, whereas the rest of what I've written is only my personal opinion.

The City of 100 Spires

Prague has always lived up to one of my expectations: the enchanted world of the ancient, mixed with the clash of modernity. It exists everywhere in the city; whether it's a fourteenth century building, the lobby of Lucerna, or the Paneláks of Malešice. Even the vibrant post-punk Kross Klub hints at a city that can still reinvent itself as it marches into the future. As a North American, where history is something you read about in text books, this collage of time never ceases to amaze me, and I've found it only astonishes more deeply the longer I live here.



A Cultural Mecca

Beyond the buildings, Prague has also revealed itself to be a hotbed of culture; even more so given its modest size. As a rule, I try to experience at least two cultural events a week, and perhaps because of the added tourism or the history itself breathing life into the Czech imagination, but there seems to be no end to the creativity put forward by this city. It might not be New York or Berlin, but it is certainly a city where almost anything seems possible – a critical detail in finding success as a new resident.

Czech Lessons (whether you like it or not)

Of course, while becoming more active and involved in a new community can be an adventure, it is also not without its trials. Now on my third stay in Prague, I've learned that knowledge of Czech is the pre-requisite to fully becoming part of the society. However, slowly but surely learning the language is offering rewards: like ordering food at a restaurant or speaking to a neighbor (what a great feeling to understand that first sentence spoken to you by a stranger!). Sure I still have a long way to go, but with each new word, I get closer to the city and its people.

Globalization

For me, work is still THE big struggle. Because I came here for family, I left a good job behind and language prevents me from working in my field. However, as I become more accustomed to my new situation, I'm also finding new ways of working, making my international mobility an asset, forging relationships where I wouldn't have before, even creating new opportunities back home in Canada. The globalized era has been forced upon me; and while I don't know where it will take me, it is definitely exciting.

The irony is that longer I stay here, the more I see this exact force at work in Prague as well. Farmer's markets, vegan restaurants, international film festivals, engaged NGO's, all hinting to the influence of a global exchange of ideas at work, helping turn Prague into a truly livable modern city. And it is this thought that gives me the most hope; as I grow into this city, it will also grow with me, becoming a place I can call home.

So please, as a resident, trust me on the smoking.