



# PRAGUE

## new economy, new country

I arrived in Prague last summer, only 25 years after Soviet tanks rolled in and signalled a hasty retreat to the social and economic changes of what was then called the Prague Spring. It wasn't until the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989 that Czechoslovakia's reformers took advantage of the changes in Eastern Europe and set the stage for the country's social, political and economic rebirth.

Today, the very streets and squares of former student protests and occupying Soviet soldiers are packed with tourists and shops. American companies like McDonalds, Apple Computer and Motorola are heralding the more open economy.

The arts are flourishing in a country headed by former political prisoner and playwright Vaclav Havel. The new Czech Republic, which was created from the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak Republics, is adjusting to its status as an independent nation-state.

Set these changes in a country with a beautiful historic capital and the peaceful countryside of Moravia and Bohemia, and you have a fascinating holiday destination. Whether you come for the history, to witness the development of a new economy, to enjoy the vibrant street life or to relax in the calm splendor of one of Europe's most beautiful cities, you won't be disappointed.

During Prague's pre-eminence from the 9th to the 19th centuries as a trading port along the Vltava river, its kings, emperors and conquerors left behind Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque castles, churches and synagogues that remain today. A focal point for visitors is the 9th century Prague castle which affords spectacular views from its site on a hill overlooking the city.



*Prague is a city to be discovered by foot. Here, people relax with a view of St. Nicholas Church.*



*The dome of St. Nicholas Church is a Prague landmark.*

Prague is a city to be discovered on foot. The grey cobblestone streets in the castle district, the Old Town, and the Mala Strana or Little Quarter lead you to many of Prague's cafés, shops, street entertainers, restaurants, and historic sites. Popular tourist spots like the scenic Charles Bridge are filled with hawkers, artists and musicians.

Although Prague's architecture escaped destruction in World War II, the city did not escape the tragedies of that war. Over