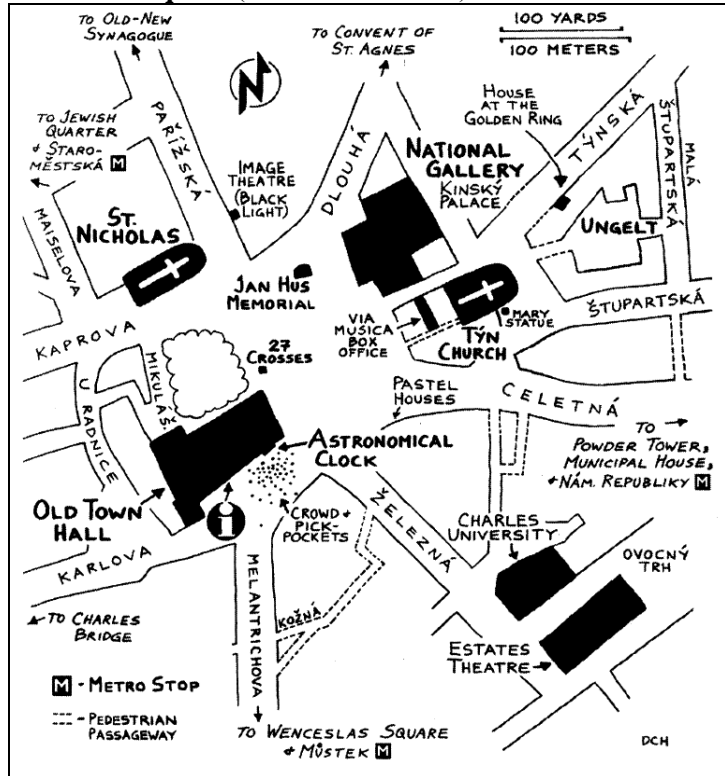


Old Town Square (Staromestske Namesti)



Jan Hus Memorial- Because of his bold stance for independence in the way common people worship God, Hus was excommunicated and burned in Germany a century before the age of Martin Luther.

Start with the green domes of the Baroque Church of **St. Nicholas**. Originally Catholic, now Hussite, this church is a popular venue for concerts. The **Jewish Quarter** (Josefov) is a few blocks behind the church, down the uniquely tree-lined Parizska-literally, "Paris street. **Parizska**, an eclectic cancan of mostly Art Nouveau facades, leads to a bluff that once sported a 100-foot-tall stone statue of Stalin. Demolished in 1962 after Khrushchev exposed Stalin's crimes, it was replaced in 1991 by a giant ticking metronome-partly to commemorate Prague's centennial exhibition (the 1891 exhibition is remembered by the Little Quarter's Eiffel-esque Petrin Tower). Spin to the right, past the Hus Memorial and the fine yellow Art Nouveau building. The large Rococo palace on the right is part of the **National Gallery**; the temporary exhibits here are often the best in town.

To the right, you can't miss the towering, Gothic **Tyn Church** (pronounced "teen"), with its fanciful spires. A narrow lane leading to the church's entrance passes the **Via Musica**, the most convenient ticket office

in town. Behind the Tyn Church is a gorgeously restored medieval courtyard called **Ungelt**. The row of pastel houses in front of Tyn Church has a mixture of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque facades. To the right of these buildings, shop-lined Celetna street leads to a square called Ovocny Trh (with the Estates Theatre and Museum of Czech Cubism, and beyond that, to the **Municipal House** and **Powder Tower** in the New Town.

Continue spinning right until you reach the pointed 250-foot-tall spire marking the 14th-century **Old Town Hall**. Across the square from the Old Town Hall (opposite the **Astronomical Clock**), touristy Melantrichova street leads directly to the New Town's **Wenceslas Square** passing the craft-packed **Havelski Market** along the way.

Twenty-Seven Crosses Embedded in the pavement at the base of the Old Town Hall tower (near the snack stand), you'll see white inlaid crosses marking the spot where 27 Protestant nobles, merchants, and intellectuals were beheaded in 1621 after rebelling against the Catholic Hapsburgs. Today the sacred soil is home to a hot-dog vendor, and few notice the crosses in the pavement.

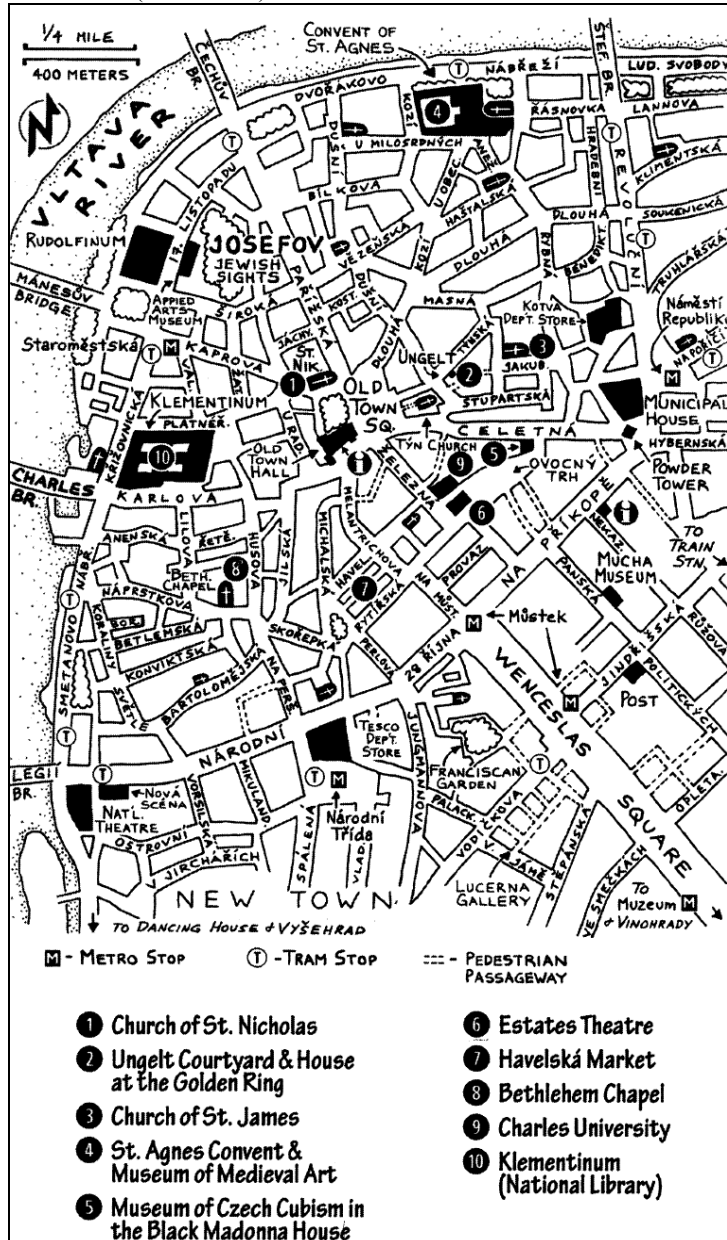
Astronomical Clock ▲▲ Join the gang for the striking of the hour on the Town Hall clock worth (daily 8:00-21:00). Two outer rings show the hour: Bohemian time (gold Gothic numbers on black background, counts from sunset-find the zero, between 23 and 1...supposedly the time of tonight's sunset) and modern time (24 Roman numerals, XII at the top being noon, XII at the bottom being midnight). Five hundred years ago, everything revolved around the earth (the fixed middle background-with Prague marking the center, of course). TO indicate the times of sunrise and sunset, arcing lines and moving spheres combine with the big hand (a sweeping golden sun) and the little hand (a moon that spins to show various stages). Look for the orbits of the sun and moon as they rise through day (blue zone) and night (black zone). The circle below shows the signs of the zodiac, scenes from the seasons of a rural peasant's life, and a ring of saints' names-one for each day of the year, with a marker showing today's special saint (at top). Four statues flanking the clock represent the 15th-century outlook on time. A Turk with a mandolin symbolizes hedonism, a Jewish moneylender is greed, and the figure staring into a mirror stands for vanity. All these worldly goals are vain in the face of death, whose hourglass reminds us that our time is unavoidably running out. At the **top of the hour** (don't blink-the show is pretty quick): first, Death tips his hourglass and pulls the cord, ringing the bell; then the windows open and the 12 apostles parade by, acknowledging the gang of onlookers; then the rooster crows; and then the hour is rung. The hour is often off because of daylight saving time. **Clock Tour and Tower Climb:** The main TI, to the left of the Astronomical Clock, contains an information desk and sells tickets for these two options: zipping up the Old Town Hall tower via elevator (50 Kt, daily 9:00-18:00, fine views); or taking a 45-minute tour of the Old Town Hall, which includes a Gothic chapel and a close-up look at the inner guts of the Astronomical Clock (plus its statues of the 12 apostles; 50 Kt, 2/hr).

Tyn Church ▲ While this church has a long history, it's most notable for its 200-year-stint as the leading church of the Hussite movement (generally open daily 10:00-13:00 & 15:00-17:00). It was Catholic before the Hussites, and returned to Catholicism after the Hussites were defeated. While Gothic, the church interior is uncharacteristically bright because of its Baroque clear window panes and whitewash. Read the church's story (posted in English, rear-left side) for a Catholic spin on the church's eventstold with barely a mention of Hus. The fine 16th-century carved John the Baptist altar (right aisle) is worth a look.

Behind Tyn Church ▲ Ungelt Courtyard (Tynsky Dvur)-Ever since the Old Town was established, the Ungelt courtyard as served as a hostel for foreign merchants. Notice there are only two entrances into the complex, for the purpose of guaranteeing the safety of goods and merchants. Ungelt courtyard is now the most pleasant area in the Old Town for an outdoor coffee (such as at Ebel Coffee House), sorting through wooden crafts, and paging through English books (at Anagram Bookshop). **House at the Golden Ring** (Dum u Zlateho Prstenu)-This medieval townhouse displays a delightful collection of 20th-century Czech art. Its exterior has rectangular graffiti etching (designs scratched out of one layer, revealing a different colored layer beneath). (just left of the entry into Ungelt courtyard as you approach it from the Old Town Square). There's a lively-with-students cafe in the courtyard.

Church of St. James (Kostel Sv. Jakuba)- is just behind Ungelt courtyard. The blue light in the altar highlights one of Prague's most venerated treasures-the bejeweled Madonna Pietatis. Above the *pieta*, as if held aloft by hummingbird- like angels, is a painting of the martyrdom of St. James. As you leave, find the black and shriveled-up arm with clenched fingers (15 feet above and to the left of the door). According to legend, a thief attempted to rob the Madonna Pietatis from the altar, but his hand was frozen the moment he touched the statue. The monks had to cut off the arm in order for it to let go. The dessicated arm now hangs here as a warning- and the entire delightful story is posted nearby in English.

Old Town (Stare Mesto)



North of the Old Town Square, near the River

▲▲ The Museum of Medieval Art in Bohemia and Central Europe (1200-1550) is housed in the St. Agnes Convent. Each exquisite piece is well-lit and thoughtfully described in English. Follow the arrows on a

chronological sweep through Gothic art history. The various Madonnas and saints were gathered here from churches all over Central Europe (two blocks northeast of the Spanish Synagogue, along the river at Anezski 12).

On Celetna Street, toward the New Town Celetna, a pedestrian-only street, is a convenient and relatively untouristy way to get from the Old Town Square to the New Town. Along the way, at the square called **Ovocny Trh**, you'll find these sights:

Museum of Czech Cubism-Cubism was a potent force in Prague in the early 20th century. The fascinating Museum of Czech Cubism in the Black Madonna House (Dum u Matky Bozi) offers the complete Cubist experience: Cubist architecture, a great cafe (upstairs), a ground-floor shop, and, of course, a museum. (museum entry-100 Kc, Tue-Sun 10:00-18:00, closed Mon, corner of Celetna and Ovocny Trh at Ovocny Trh 19). If you're not interested in touring the museum itself, consider a drink in the similarly decorated upstairs **Grand Cafe Orient**.

Estates Theatre (StavovskQ Divadlo)- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart premiered *Don Giovanni* in this building, and personally directed many of his works here. Prague's theatergoers would whistle arias from Mozart's works on the streets the morning after they premiered.

On Melantrichova

▲ **Havelská Market**-Skinny, tourist-clogged Melantrichova street leads directly from the Old Town Square's Astronomical Clock to the bottom of Wenceslas Square. The open-air market was set up in the 13th century for the German trading community. Though heavy on souvenirs these days, the market still keeps hungry locals and vagabonds fed cheaply.

Bethlehem Square (Betlemska Namesti) A pleasantly untouristy chunk of Old Town real estate. **Bethlehem Chapel (Betlemska Kaple)**-Emperor Charles IV founded the first university in Central Europe, and this was the university's chapel. In about the year 1400, priest and professor Jan Hus preached from the pulpit here..

From Town Square to Charles Bridge

Karlova Street-Winds through medieval Prague from the Old Town Square to the Charles Bridge (it zigzags ...j ust follow the crowds). This is a commercial gauntlet, and it's here that the touristy feeding frenzy of Prague is most ugly. Street signs keep you on track, and *Karluv most* signs point to the bridge. Two favorite places providing a quick break from the crowds are just a few steps off Karlova on **Husova** street: **Cream and Dream Ice Cream** (Husova 12) and **U Zlatkhu Tygra**, a colorful pub that serves great, cheap beer in a classic and untouristy setting (Husova 17).

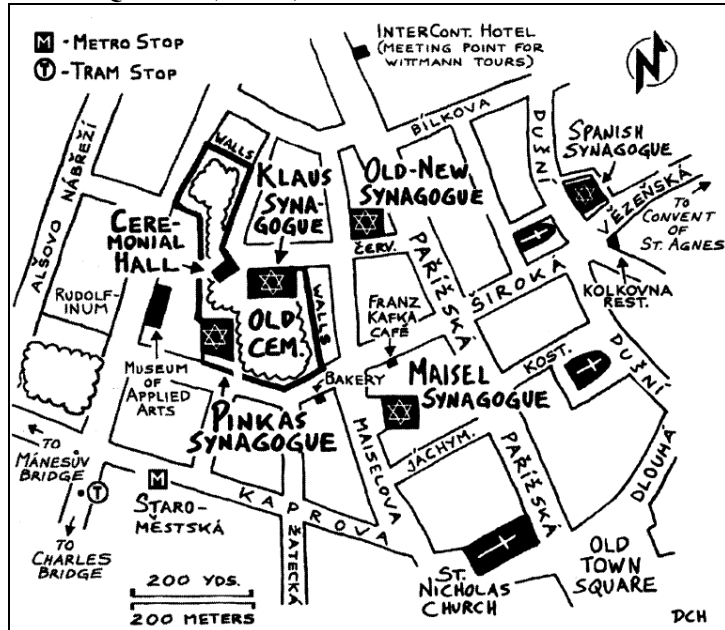
Strolling down Karlova, turn at the intersection with Liliovi through an archway into the Klementinum's courtyard)

▲ **Klementinum**-The Czech Republic's massive National Library borders touristy Karlova street. The Klementinum was built to house a college in the 1600s by the Jesuits, who had been invited to Prague by the Catholic

Hapsburgs to offset the influence of the predominantly Protestant Charles University nearby. The building was transformed into a library in the early 1700s, when the Jesuits took firm control of the university. Their books form the nucleus of the National and University Library, which is now six-million-volumes strong. **Library Tour and Tower Climb:** While much of the Klementinum building is simply a vast library, its magnificent original Baroque Hall and Observatory Tower are open to the public by tour only (45 min, in English).

▲ ▲ ▲ **Charles Bridge (Karlův Most)** Enjoy the bridge at different times of day. The bridge is most memorable early-before the crowds-and late, during that photographers' "magic hour" when the sun is low in the sky. At the Old Town end of the bridge, in a little square, is a statue **Charles IV**. This Holy Roman Emperor (Karlo Quatro-the guy on the 100-Kt bill) ruled his vast empire from Prague in the 14th century. He's holding a contract establishing Prague's university. The women around Charles' pedestal symbolize the university's four subjects: the arts, medicine, law, and theology. Bridges had been built on this spot before, as the remnant tower from the Judith Bridge testifies (see the smaller of the two bridge towers at the far end). All were washed away by floods. The founding stone was laid in 1357, on the 9th of July at 531 (it's a palindrome: 135797531). On the Old Town bank, a spot was chosen for the ending of the bridge that lined up perfectly with the tomb of St. Vitus (in the cathedral across the river) and the setting sun at summer solstice. This magical spot is now occupied by the **bridge tower**, considered one of the finest Gothic gates anywhere. Climbing the tower rewards you with wonderful views over the bridge (40 KC, daily 10:00-19:00, as late as 22:00 in summer). The bronze Baroque statue depicting **John of Nepomuk**-a saint of the Czech people-draws a crowd (look for the guy with the five golden stars around his head, near the Little Quarter end of the bridge on the right). John of Nepomuk was a 14th-century priest to whom the queen confessed all her sins. According to a 17th-century legend, the king wanted to know his wife's secrets, but Father John dutifully refused to tell. He was tortured and eventually killed by being tossed off the bridge. When he hit the water, five stars appeared. The shiny plaque at the base of the heave-ho. Devout pilgrims touch the engraving to make a wish come true. You get only one chance in life for this wish, so think carefully before you touch the saint. squares and bridges throughout the country.

Jewish Quarter (Josefov)



▲▲▲ The Jewish Quarter is an easy walk from Old Town Square, up delightful Parizska. Seven sights scattered over a three-block area make up the tourists' Jewish Quarter. Six of the sights—all except the Old-New Synagogue—are called "The Museum" and are covered by one admission ticket. Your ticket comes with a map that locates the sights and lists admission appointments—the times you'll be let in if it's very busy. (Ignore the times unless it's really crowded.) You'll notice plenty of security (stepped up since 9/11). **Cost, Hours, Tours:** To visit all seven sights, you'll pay 500 Kc (300 KC for the six sights that make up the Museum, plus 200 Kc for the Old-New Synagogue; all sights open Sun-Fri 9:00-18:00, closed Sat). Buy your ticket at **Pinkas Synagogue**

Pinkas Synagogue (Pinkasova Synagoga) The walls are covered with the handwritten names of 77,297 Czech Jews who were sent from here to the gas chambers at Auschwitz and other camps. Hometowns are in gold and family names are in red, followed in black by the individual's first name, birthday, and last date known to be alive. Extermination camps are listed on the east wall. Climb eight steps into the women's gallery. When the communists moved in, they closed the synagogue and erased virtually everything. With freedom, in 1989, the Pinkas Synagogue was reopened and the names were rewritten (The names in poor condition near the ceiling are original.) Note that large tour groups may disturb this small memorial's compelling atmosphere between 10:00 and 12:00. Upstairs is the **Terezin Children's Art Exhibit** (very well described in English).

Old Jewish Cemetery (Stary Zidovsky Hrbítov) From the Pinkas Synagogue, you enter one of the most wistful scenes in Europe—Prague's Old Jewish Cemetery. As you wander among 12,000 evocative

tombstones, remember that from 1439 until 1787, this was the only burial ground allowed for the Jews of Prague.

Ceremonial Hall (Obradni Sin) Leaving the cemetery, you'll find a Neo-Romanesque mortuary house built in 1911 for the purification of the dead (on left). It's filled with a worthwhile exhibition, described in English, on Jewish medicine, death, and burial traditions.

Klaus Synagogue (Klauseva Synagoga) This 17th-century synagogue (also near the cemetery exit) is the final wing of a museum devoted to Jewish religious practices. Exhibits on the ground floor explain the Jewish calendar of festivals. The central case displays a Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and solid silver pointers used when reading necessary since the Torah is not to be touched. Upstairs is an exhibit on the rituals of Jewish life (circumcisions, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings, kosher eating, and so on).

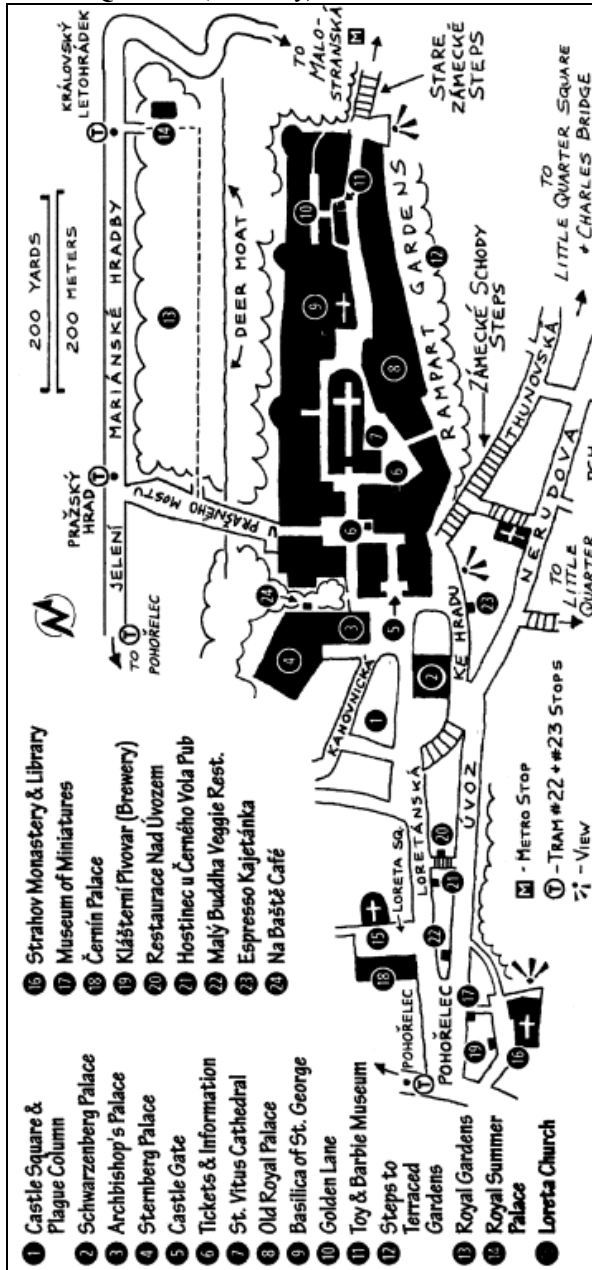
Old-New Synagogue (Staronova Synagoga) For more than 700 years, this has been the most important synagogue and the central building in Josefov. Stairs take you down to the street level of the 13th century and into the Gothic interior. Built in 1270, it's the oldest synagogue in Eastern Europe (separate 200-Kc admission includes worthwhile 10-minute tour—ask about it, Sun-Thu 9:30-18:00, Fri 9:30-17:00, closed Sat). Snare an attendant who is likely to love showing visitors around. The interior is pure 1300s. The Shrine of the Ark in front is the focus of worship. The holiest place in the synagogue, it holds the sacred scrolls of the Torah. The old rabbi's chair to the right remains empty (notice the thin black chain) out of respect. The red banner is a copy of the one that the Jewish community carried through town during medieval parades. Notice the yellow-pointed hat within the Star of David (on the banner), which the pope ordered all Jewish men to wear in 1215. Twelve is a popular number (e.g., windows), because it symbolizes the 12 tribes of Israel. The horizontal slit-like windows are an 18th-century addition, allowing women to view the male-only services.

Have a coffee break **Pekaistvi** "bakery" (Siroka 10 near Pinkas) or **Franz Kafka Café** (block from cemetery Siroka 12).

Maisel Synagogue (Maiselova Synagoga) This synagogue was built as a private place of worship for the Maisel family during the 16th-century Golden Age of Prague's Jews. Maisel, the financier of the Hapsburg king, had lots of money. The synagogue's interior is decorated Neo-Gothic. In World War II, it served as a warehouse for the accumulated treasures of decimated Jewish communities that Hitler planned to use for his "Museum of the Extinct Jewish Race"

Spanish Synagogue (Spanelska Synagoga) Jewish history continues through the 18th, 19th, and tumultuous 20th centuries in this ornate, Moorish-style synagogue built in the 1800s. The upstairs is particularly intriguing, with circa-1900 photos of Josefov, an exhibit on the fascinating story of this museum and its relationship with the Nazi regime, and life in Terezin.

Castle Quarter (Hradcany)



Getting to Prague Castle By Library entrance is in front of the church on the right). **Tram Tips:** If visiting in the morning, use the Prahský Hrad for the quickest commute to the castle. Be at the door of St. Vitus Cathedral

when it opens at 9:00. See the castle sights quickly, then move on to the Strahov Monastery. I'd avoid the castle entirely mid-morning, but by mid-afternoon, the tour groups are napping and the grounds are (relatively) uncrowded. If going in the afternoon, take the tram to the Pohorelec stop, see the Strahov Monastery, then wander down to the castle.

Sights Above the Castle, near the Kralovský Letohrádek Tram Stop
Royal Summer Palace (Kralovský Letohrádek) It's the purest Renaissance building in town. You can't go inside, but the building's detailed reliefs are worth a close look. The fountain in front of the palace features the most elaborate bronzework in the country. (Stick your head under the bottom of the fountain. The audio rainbow you hear is the reason it's called the "Singing Fountain.") From here, set your sights on the cathedral's lacy, black spires-marking the castle's entrance-and stroll through the ... **Royal Gardens** (Kralovská Zahrada)-Once the private residence (you'll see the building) of the communist presidents, these were opened to the public (free 10:00-18:00). Walk through these gardens to the gate, which leads you over the moat and into Castle Square, the entrance to the vast castle complex.

▲ Strahov Monastery and Library, near the Pohorelec Tram Stop
 Twin Baroque domes high above the castle mark the Strahov Monastery. This complex is best reached from the Pohorelec stop on tram #22 or #23 (from the stop, go up the red-railed ramp and through the gate into the monastery grounds). **Monastery:** The monastery (Strahovský Klášter Premonstratu) had a booming economy of its own in its heyday, with vineyards and the biggest beer hall in town-still open. Its main church, dedicated to the Assumption of St. Mary, is an originally Romanesque structure decorated by the monks in textbook Baroque (usually closed, but look through the window inside the front door to see its interior). **Library:** The adjacent library (Strahovská Knihovna) offers a peek at how enlightened thinkers in the 18th century influenced learning. To reach the castle from Strahov Monastery, take Loretánská (the upper road, passing Loreta Square); this is a more interesting route than the lower road, Úvoz.

On Loreta Square, Between Strahov Monastery and Castle Square As you wander this road, you'll pass several Mansions and palaces, and an important pilgrimage church. **Loreta Church**-This church has been a hit with pilgrims for centuries, thanks to its dazzling bell tower, peaceful yet plush cloister, and much-venerated "Holy House". In the garden-like center of the cloister stands the ornate **Santa Casa (Holy House)**. On the opposite side of the square is the ... **Cernin Palace**-In 1918, it was turned into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Castle Square (Hradcanské Namesti) Enjoy the awesome city view. A cafe with dramatic city views called *Espresso Kajetánka* hides a few steps down, immediately to the right as you face the castle. From here, stairs lead into the **Little Quarter**. Look uphill from the gate. The Renaissance **Schwarzenberg Palace**.

The archbishop still lives in the yellow Rococo **palace** across the square (with the three white goose necks in the red field-the coat of arms of

Prague's Through the portal on the left-hand side of the palace, a lane leads to **Sternberg Palace** (Sternbersky Palac), filled with the National Gallery's skip-able collection of European Prague Castle. The black Baroque sculpture in the middle of the square is a **plague column**, erected as a token of gratitude to the saints who saved the population from the epidemic, and an integral part of the main square of many Hapsburg towns.

▲ ▲ **Prague Castle (Prazsky Hrad)** Four stops matter, St. Vitus Cathedral, Old Royal Palace, Basilica of St. George, and the Golden Lane.

Tickets: St. Vitus Cathedral requires its own ticket (100 Kc). For the other castle sights I recommend buying the **short tour ticket** (250 Kc, covers the Old Royal Palace, Basilica of St. George, and the Golden Lane at peak hours, buy in palace or in Basilica). Consider the worthwhile audioguide (250 Kc/2 hrs, 300 Kc/3 hrs, must leave ID).

Castle Gate and Courtyards - Begin at Castle Square. From here, survey the castle-the tip of a 1,500-foot-long series of courtyards, churches, and palaces. The guard changes on the hour (5:00-23:00), with the most ceremony and music at **noon**.

Walk under the fighting giants, under an arch, through the passageway, and into the courtyard. The modern green awning with the golden-winged cat (just past the ticket office) marks the offices of the Czech president.

As you walk through another passageway, you'll find yourself Facing ...

▲ ▲ ▲ **St. Vitus Cathedral** (Katedrala Sv. Vita)-It contains the tombs and relics of the most important local saints and kings, including the first three Hapsburg kings. **Cathedral Façade:** What's up with the guys in suits carved into the facade below the big round window? They're the architects and builders who finished the church. Started in 1344, it was finished in 1929 for the 1,000th anniversary of the death of St. Wenceslas. **Mucha Stained-Glass Window:** Go inside, buy your ticket, show your ticket at the fenced-off area, and find the third window on the left. This masterful 1931 Art Nouveau window is by Czech artist Alfons Mucha. **Hapsburg Emperor's Tomb:** Continue circulating around the apse. The big royal tomb (within the black iron fence) is of the first Hapsburg emperor. It dates from 1590. **Relief of Prague:** As you walk around the high altar, study the fascinating carved-wood (1630) relief of Prague. It depicts the victorious Hapsburg armies entering the castle after the Battle of White Mountain, while the Protestant king Frederic escapes over the Charles Bridge. The Jewish Quarter (the slummy, muddy zone along the riverside below the bridge on the left) fills land no one else wanted. **Apsse:** Circling around the high altar, you pass graves of bishops, including the tomb of St. Vitus (behind the chair of the bishop). The stone sarcophagi contain kings from the Premysl dynasty (12th to 14th centuries). Locals claim the gigantic, shiny tomb of St. John of Nepomuk has more than a ton of silver. After the silver tomb, look up at the royal box from where the king would attend Mass in his jammies (an elevated corridor connected his private apartment with his own altar-side box pew). Look for the finely carved wood panel that gives a Counter- Reformation spin on the Wars of

Religion. It shows the "barbaric" Protestant nobles destroying the Catholic icons in the cathedral after their short-lived victory. **Wenceslas Chapel:** A fancy roped-off chapel (right transept) houses the tomb of St. Wenceslas, surrounded by precious 14th-century murals showing scenes of his life, and a locked door leading to the crown jewels. The chapel is roped off because the wallpaper is encrusted with precious and semiprecious stones. **Spire:** You can climb 287 steps up the spire for one of the best views of the whole city. **Back Outside the Cathedral:** Leaving the cathedral, turn left (past the public WC). The **obelisk** was erected in 1928 celebrating the the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Find the 14th-century **mosaic** of the Last Judgment outside the right transept. Jesus oversees the action, as some go to heaven and some go to hell.

*Across the square and 20 yards to the right, a door leads into the Old Royal Palace. **Old Royal Palace** (Stary Kralovsky Palac)-Starting in the 12th century, this was the seat of the Bohemian princes. While extensively rebuilt, the **large hall** is late Gothic, designed as a multipurpose hall for the old nobility. It's big enough for jousts-even the staircase was designed to let a mounted soldier gallop in. Look down on the chapel from the end, and go out on the **balcony** for a fine Prague view. Before leaving, pause at the door to consider the subtle yet racy little Renaissance knocker. Go ahead-play with it for a little sex in the palace (be gentle).*

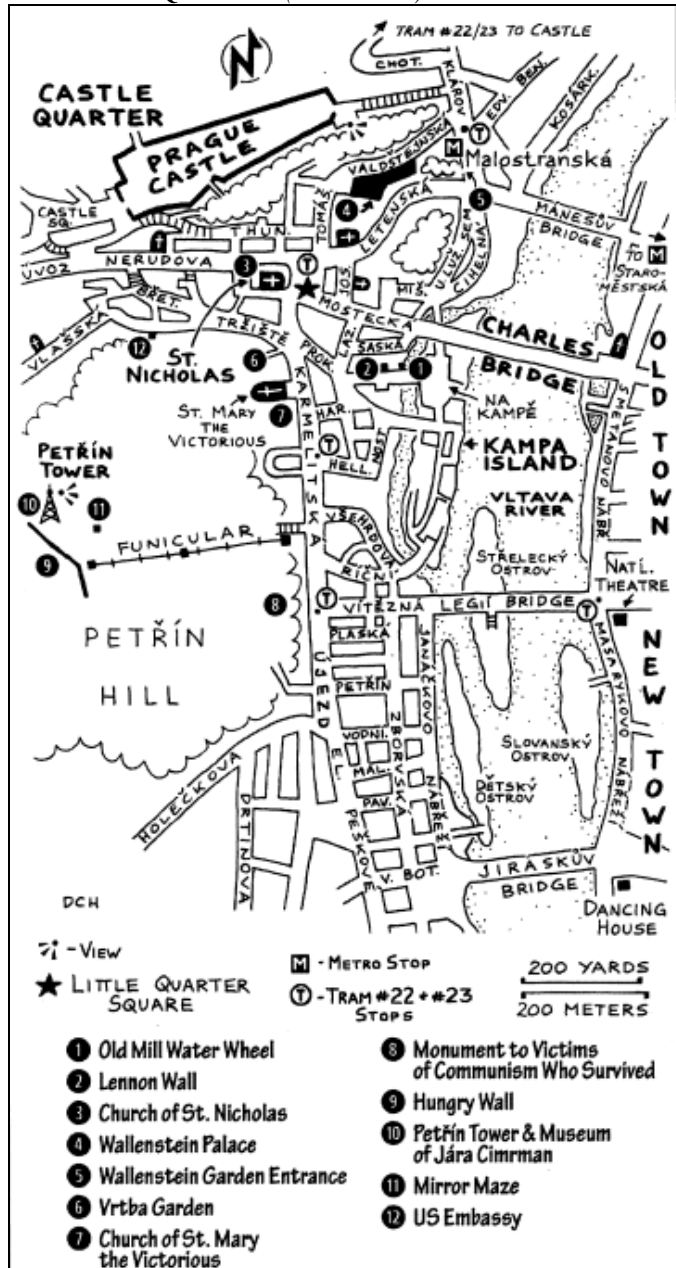
*Across from the palace exit is the ... **Basilica of St. George** (Bazilika Sv. Jiri)-Step into the beautifully lit Basilica of St. George to see Prague's best-preserved Romanesque church.*

*Continue walking downhill through the castle grounds. Turn left on the first street, which leads into the ... **Golden Lane** (Zlata Ulicka)-During the day, this street of old buildings, which originally housed goldsmiths, is jammed with tourists and lined with overpriced gift shops. Franz Kafka lived briefly at #22. Exit the lane through a corridor at the last house(#12).*

Toy and Barbie Museum (Muzeum Hracek)-At the bottom of the castle complex, just after leaving the Golden Lane, a long, wooden staircase leads to two entertaining floors of old toys and dolls thoughtfully described in English. Find the buxom 1959 first edition.

After Your Castle Visit: Tourists squirt slowly through a fortified door at the bottom end of the castle. From there, you can follow the steep lane directly back to the riverbank (and the Malostranski Metro station). Or you can take a hard right and stroll through the long, delightful park. Along the way, notice the modernist design of the NaValech Garden. Halfway through the long park is a viewpoint overlooking **terraced gardens**; you can zigzag down through these gardens into the Little Quarter (80 Kc, daily 10:00-18:00). If you continue through the park all the way to Castle Square, you'll find two more options: a staircase leading down into the Little Quarter, or a cobbled street taking you to historic Nerudova Street,

THE LITTLE QUARTER (Mala Strana)



Kampa Island-One hundred yards before the castle end of the Charles Bridge, stairs on the left lead down to the main square of Kampa Island. The island features relaxing pubs, a breezy park, hippies, lovers, a fine contemporary art gallery, and river access. From the main square,

Hroznova lane (on the right) leads to a bridge. Behind the **old mill wheel**, notice the high-water marks from the flood of 2002.

Fifty yards beyond the bridge (on the right, under the trees) is the ...

John Lennon Wall (Lennonova Zed)-

*From here, you can continue up to the Little Quarter Square. The focal point of this neighborhood, the **Little Quarter Square** (Malostranske Namesti) is dominated by the huge Church of St. Nicholas. **Church of St. Nicholas** (Kostel Sv. Mikulase)- The church (built 1703-1760) is the best example of High Baroque in town. The altar features a lavish gold-plated Nicholas, flanked by the two top Jesuits: the founder, St. Ignatius Loyola and his missionary follower, St. Francis Xavier. Climb up the **gallery** through the staircase in the left transept for a close-up look at a collection of large canvases and illusionary frescoes by Karel. Find St. Nick with his bishop's miter in the center of the ceiling, on his way to heaven*

Tower Climb: For a good look at the city and the church's 250-foot dome, climb 215 steps up the bell tower.

*From here, you can hike 10 minutes uphill to the castle (and five more minutes to the Strahov Monastery). If you're walking up to the castle, consider going via ... **Nerudova Street**-This steep, cobbled street, leading from Little Quarter Square to the castle, is lined with old buildings still sporting the characteristic doorway signs (e.g., the lion, three violinists, house of the golden suns) that once served as street addresses.*

North of Little Quarter Square, near Malostranska Metro Station

Twenty yards from the Malostranska Metro station (go left from the top of the escalator and turn right when you get outside), a few blocks north of Little Quarter Square, is a fine palace and garden. If you want to reach Little Quarter Square from here, follow ValdStejska street. **Wallenstein Palace Garden** (ValdStejska Palac Zahrada)-Of the neighborhood's many impressive palace gardens, this is by far the largest and most beautiful. The inconspicuous entry to the palace's Wallenstein Garden by the Malostranska Metro station. Exit through the door in the right corner of the garden by the *sala terena*. You'll pass into a small courtyard surrounded by what once was the residential part of the palace. Today, the upper chamber of the Czech Parliament meets inside.

South of Little Quarter Square, to Petrin Hill Karmelitska street,

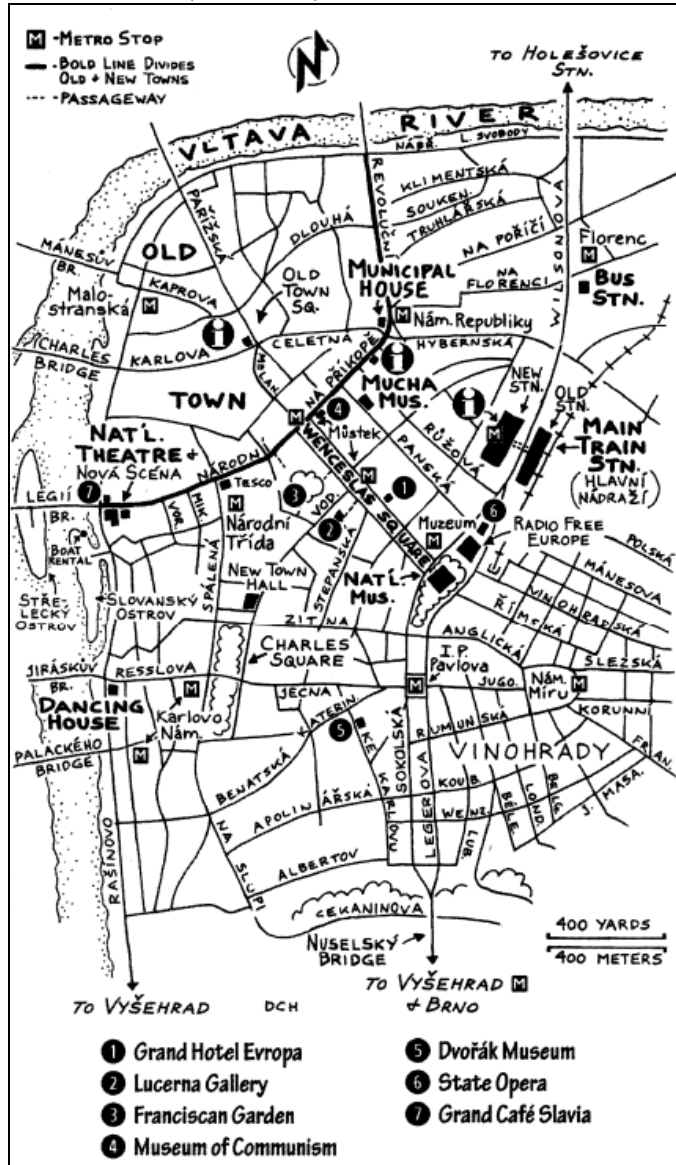
leading south (along the tram tracks) from Little Quarter Square, is home to these sights. **Church of St. Mary the Victorious (Kostel Panny Marie Vitezne)**-This otherwise ordinary Carmelite church displays Prague's most worshipped treasure, the Infant of Prague (Prazske Jezulatko).

Continue a few more blocks down Karmelitska to the south end of the Little Quarter (where the street is called Ujezd, roughly across the Legions' Bridge from the National Theatre). Here you find yourself at the base of...

Petrin Hill- topped by a replica of the Eiffel Tower, features several unusual sights. The figures walking down the steps in the hillside make up the **Monument to Victims of Communism Who Survived**. The monument's figures are gradually atrophied by the totalitarian regime. They do not die, but slowly disappear, one limb at a time.

To the left of the monument is the **Hungry Wall**, Charles IV's 14th-century equivalent of FDR's work-for-food projects. On the right (50 yards away) is the base of a handy **funicular**-hop on to reach Petrin Tower (uses 20-Kc tram/Metro ticket). The summit of Petrin Hill is considered the best place in Prague to take your date for a romantic city view. The 200-foot-tall Tower is a fifth the height of its Parisian big brother built two years earlier. But, thanks to this hill, the top of the tower sits at the same elevation as the real Eiffel Tower. Climbing the 400 steps rewards you with amazing views over the city. In the tower's basement is the funniest sight in Prague, the **Museum of Jhra Cimrman**, Genius Who Did Not Become Famous. (50 Kc includes tower and Cimrman museum, daily 10:00-22:00).

NEW TOWN (Nove Mesto)



▲▲ Wenceslas Square Starting near the Wenceslas statue at the top (Metro: Muzeum), stroll down the square. **National Museum (Národní Muzeum):** Collection is dull. The light-colored patches in the museum's columns fill holes where Soviet bullets hit during 1968 Prague uprising

To the left of the National Museum (as you face it) is an ugly ... Communist-Era Building: This housed the rubber-stamp Parliament back

when they voted with Moscow. A Social Realist statue showing triumphant workers still stands at its base. It's now home to Radio Free Europe In gratitude for its broads casts-which kept the people of Eastern Europe in touch with real news-the current Czech government now rents the building to RFE for 1 KE a year. (As RFE energetically beams its American message deep into Islam from here, it has been threatened recently by Al-Qaeda.)

In front of the National Museum is the equestrian ... **St. Wenceslas Statue:** 10th century Duke of Bohemia. A rare example of a well-educated and literate ruler. After his murder in 929, Wenceslas was canonized as a saint. Supposedly, when the Czechs face their darkest hour, Wenceslas will come riding out of Blanik Mountain with an army of knights to rescue the nation. In 1620, when Austria stripped Czechs of their independence, many people went to Blanik Mountain to see whether it had opened up. They did the same at other critical points in their history (in 1938, 1948, and 1968)-but Wenceslas never emerged. Although now safely part of NATO and the EU, Czechs remain pessimistic: If Wenceslas hasn't come out yet, the worst times must still lie ahead ... Study the statue. Notice the focus on books. A small nation without great military power, the Czech Republic chose national heroes who enriched the culture by thinking, rather than fighting.

Thirty yards below the big horse is a small garden with a low-key ... **Memorial:** This commemorates victims of communism, such as Jan Palach. In 1969, Jan Palach, a philosophy student who loved life, but wanted it with freedom, set himself on fire on the steps of the National Museum for the cause of Czech. Huge demonstrations swept the city on the 20th anniversary of Palach's death. These protests led, 10 months later, to the overthrow of the Czech communist government in 1989.

Walk a couple of blocks downhill through the real people of Prague (not tourists) to **Grand Hotel Europa**, with its hard-to-miss, dazzling Art Nouveau exterior and plush cap interior full of tourists. Stop for a moment to consider the events of...

November of 1989: This huge square was filled every evening with more than 300,000 ecstatic Czechs and Slovaks who believed freedom was at hand. Alexander Havel's voice boomed over the gathered masses, announcing the resignation of the Politburo and saying that the Republic of Czechoslovakia's freedom was imminent. Picture that cold November evening, with thousands of Czechs jingling their keychains in solidarity, chanting at the government, "It's time to go now!"

Immediately opposite Grand Hotel Evropa is the Lucerna Gallery (use entry marked Palic Rokoko and walk straight in). **Lucerna Gallery:** This grand mall retains some of its Art Deco glamour from the 1930s, with shops, theaters, a ballroom in the basement, and the fine Lucerna Cafe upstairs.

Directly across busy Voditkova street (with a handy tram stop) is the Svstozor mall. Inside, you'll find the **World of Fruit Bar SvStozor**; it's every local's favorite ice-cream joint.

Farther down the mall on the left is the entrance to the peaceful...

Franciscan Garden (Františkova zahrada): Its white benches and spreading rosebushes are a universe away from the fast beat of the city. Back on Wenceslas Square, if you're in the mood for a mellow hippie teahouse, consider a break at **Dobra Cajovna** (Good Teahouse) near the bottom of the square (#14). Or, if you'd like an old-time wine bar, pop into the plain **Senk Vrbovec** (nearby at #10);

The bottom of Wenceslas Square is called **Miistek**, which means "Bridge"; a bridge used to cross a moat here, allowing entrance into the Old Town (you can still see the original Old Town entrance down in the Metro station).

Running to the right from the bottom of Wenceslas Square is the street...

Na Prikope: Meaning "On the Moat," this busy boulevard follows the line of the Old Town wall, leading to one of the wall's former gates, the **Powder Tower**. Along the way, it passes the Museum of Communism and a couple of Art Nouveau. Along this street offers plenty of shopping temptations (such as these malls: Slovansky Dum at Na Prikope 22, and Cerna Ruze at Na Prikope: 12, next door to Mosers, with a crystal showroom upstairs).

Stroll up Na Prikope to take in two of Prague's best Art Nouveau sights. The first one is on the street called Panska (turn right up the first street you reach as you walk up Na Prikope: from Wenceslas Square); the second is two blocks farther up Na Prikope, next to the big, Gothic Powder Tower. **▲ ▲ Mucha Museum**-This is one of Europe's most enjoyable little museums.. Partly overseen by Mucha's grandson, the museum is two blocks off Wenceslas Square.

Coming back to Na Prikope and continuing toward the Powder Tower, notice the neo-Renaissance Zivnostenska Banka building on the corner of Nekdžanka. It houses a modern bank with classy circa-1900 ambience. At the end of Na Prikope, you'll arrive at the...

▲ ▲ Municipal House (Obecní Dum)-The Municipal House the "pearl of Czech Art Nouveau." Pop in and wander around the lobby of the concert hall. Walk through to the ticket office on the ground floor. For the best look, including impressive halls and murals you won't see otherwise, take one of the regular **hour-long tours** (tours generally at 10:15, 12:00, 14:00, and 16:00, in **English 2/day**, buy ticket from ground-floor shop where tour departs;).

Powder Tower: The big, black Powder Tower (not worth touring inside) was the Gothic gate of the town wall, built to house the city's gunpowder. If you go through the tower, you'll reach Celetná Street, which leads past a few sights to the Old Town Square

From Mustek at the bottom of Wenceslas Square, you can head west on Narodni Trida (in the opposite direction from Na Prikope and the Art Nouveau sights) for an interesting stroll through urban Prague to the National Theatre and the Vltava River. But first, consider dropping into

▲ ▲ Museum of Communism, a few steps down Na Prikope (on the right) -This museum traces the story of communism in Prague: the origins, dream, reality, and nightmare; the cult of personality; and finally, the Velvet Revolution. Slices of communist life are re-created here, from a bland store counter to a typical classroom (with textbooks using Russia's Cyrillic alphabet-no longer studied-and a poem on the chalkboard that extols the virtues of the tractor). Don't miss the Jan Palach exhibit and the 20-minute video. Na Prikope 10, above a McDonald's and next to a Casino.

Now head for the river (with your back to Wenceslas Square, go left down 28 Rijnna to Narodni Trida).

Make your way down Narodni Trida until you hit the tram tracks (just beyond the Tesco department store). On the left, look for the photo of Bill Clinton playing saxophone, with Vaclav Havel on the side (next door are two recommended eateries, Cafe Louvre and Le Patio). Just beyond that, you'll come to a short corridor with white arches. Inside this arcade is a simple memorial to the hundreds of students injured here by the Police on November 17, 1989.

Along the Vltava River I've listed these sights from north to south, beginning at the grand, Neo-Renaissance **National Theatre** (opened in 1893), which is five blocks south of Charles Bridge and stands along the riverbank at the end of Narodni Trida.

Next door (just inland, on Narodni Trida) is the boxy, glassy facade of the **Nova Scena**. This "New National Theatre" (1983) building, reflects the bold and stark communist aesthetic. Across the street from the National Theatre is the former haunt of Prague's intelligentsia, **Grand Cafe Slavia**, a Viennese-style coffeehouse that is fine for a meal or drink with a view of the river.

Just south of the National Theater in the Vltava, you'll find. ...

Prague's Islands-From the National Theatre, the Legions' Bridge (Most Legii) leads across the island called **Strelecký Ostrov**. Covered with chestnut trees, this island boasts Prague's best beach (on the sandy tip that points north to Charles Bridge). On the next island down, **Slovansky Ostrov**, you can rent a paddleboat.

A 10-minute walk (or one stop on tram #17) from the National theatre, beyond the islands, is Jirasek Bridge (Jirasekuv Most), where you'll find... **Dancing House** (Tancic Dum)-Knicknamed "Fred and Ginger" by American architecture buffs. This metallic samba is the work of Frank Gehry (who designed the equally striking Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and Seattle's Experience Music Project). Eight-legged Ginger's wispy dress and Fred's metal mesh head are easy to spot.

Three blocks up Resslova street is ... **Charles Square** (Karlovo Namesti)-Prague's largest square. It's a quiet antidote to the bustling Wenceslas and Old Town squares. The Gothic New Town Hall at the top-left corner of the square has excellent views and labeled panoramic photographs. The little parlor across the street has some of the best Italian ice cream in town.