

Prague: A Gateway to Eastern Europe
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Syllabus

At the crossroad between Eastern and Western Europe, Prague carries the traces of a potent Gothic tradition, expanded in the Baroque and Art Nouveau era with definitive landmarks in architectural history. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the historic city of Prague, home of renown writer Franz Kafka, shared for a time a common history with Vienna, while at the same time retaining distinctive characteristics. The Bohemia's capital displays great examples of diamond vaults of its late Gothic as well as modernist examples such as Villa Müller by Adolf Loos. This course will explore the layered built environment equal to no other.

Lesson 1. PRAGUE: FROM ITS CELTIC ORIGINS TO ITS GOTHIC HERITAGE

Founded along the banks of the Vltava River, Prague is a melting pot of diverse ethnicities coming together in a unique urban environment. The Celts, the Germans, the Slavs, and other populations left built traces of their passage over time. Central to the architectural identity of the city is the Castle started in the 9th century, held as the largest castle in the world, and the seat of the Holy Roman Emperor under Charles IV (1346-1378). Of equal importance is Old Town Square at the heart of the historical city where the pulse of the public realm is at its highest. This talk covers the various stages of expansion of Prague and its associated monuments.

Lesson 2. PRAGUE: THE CAPITAL OF BOHEMIA

In the multiple transformations the city underwent, a strong artistic legacy remained its consistent trait. Dominant in Prague's heritage is its Baroque period, which unfolded, similarly to many German states, 100 years later than in Italy and France. Saint Nicholas Church and Kinsky Palace are the two primary sites where this architectural expression can be seen. Integral to the Habsburg Empire, Prague experienced the same stylistic changes taking place in other Vienna and Budapest. Although the architecture of the State Opera is suspended between Neo-Classicism and Eclecticism, it is Art Nouveau that Prague showcase some of the most elegant structures in Europe. This talk will connect these heterogeneous dots in a chronological sequence.

Lesson 3. GUEST SPEAKER: ADAM ŠTĚCH

Born and based in Prague, Adam Štěch is an imaginative architectural curator with encyclopedic knowledge of Modern architecture worldwide. Adam is an archistar of social media. His Instagram account with 210K followers is a true resource for anyone interested in exploring the vastness of modernity and architecture. Being an authority on Czech Modernism, he will map a legacy often overlooked in history books, albeit

substantive in quality and milestones. In this special talk, Adam will share with us highlights work by modernist architects Ladislav Žák, Josef Gočá, Adolf Bens, and Frantisek Zelenka, as well as a few surprises he found. He is the author of several books, his latest being *Modernist Travel Guide*. A frequent contributor to notable English magazine *Wallpaper*, Adam is also the author of *Modern Prague Map*.

Lesson 4. PRAGUE TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Prague opened its city to Western architects. *Ginger and Fred/Dancing House* is Frank Gehry's signature building in that city completed in 1996. Spanish architect Josep Lluís Mateo also contributed to the city's architecture with the Prague National Gallery Entrance Hall. Among the local offices of significance, IO Studio is certainly one of the most advanced practices in the capital today; the VODAFONE CEC headquarters built in 2011 is an elegant statement of continuous space. The National Technical Library in Prague is another remarkable project the firm Projektil Architekti designed. This talk goes over the most significant trends in the city and its urban transformations.