

GREAT HOUSES OF BOHEMIA

08 OCTOBER - 14 OCTOBER 2025

FROM
£4,185
PER PERSON

Led by and in association with Lucy Abel Smith
and Harriet Landeer


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY



Travel with Guest Lecturer Lucy Abel Smith and Tour Leader Harriet Landseer on a tour of the country houses of Bohemia which rival those in the UK, both numerically and in the diversity of architecture, interiors and gardens. Yet many are little known. Under communism a few were open to the public but their history was rarely mentioned. Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries to restitute property after 1989.

During this unusual tour we will enjoy private visits to some of those estates which have been returned to the original families, now coming into the ownership of a new generation. We are fortunate that private visits play a large part in this itinerary. Important houses and gardens still retained by the state will also be seen as well as those belonging to the Metternich family.

From royal medieval castles and churches to the fruits of the Enlightenment and industrialization which are mirrored in extraordinary original interiors such as we will find at Nove Mesto nad Metuji where medieval, Baroque and Art Deco are found in a glorious mix. Originality and influence on other parts of Central Europe are the keynote of Bohemian architecture.

For most of our daily journeys to all points of the compass outside Prague we will travel through the beautiful countryside of the Czech Republic.

Many of the aristocratic owners of these country seats had palaces in Prague, hence the decision to stay in central Prague for the duration of the tour. This gives the opportunity for visits and the chance to wander at leisure through one of the most beautiful capital cities in Europe.



7-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 08 OCTOBER 2025

08 October London / Prague

Suggested flight (not included in the cost of the tour) British Airways BA 860 departing London Heathrow at 08.35 hrs arriving Prague at 11.35 hrs. Group transfer to the Grand Hotel Bohemia in Prague where six nights are spent.

Lunch at the hotel. Introductory walk through the Old Town, culminating in a private tour of Prague's Municipal House, a jewel of the Art Nouveau period, featuring decoration by artists such as Alfons Mucha, followed by a reception with a welcome drink at American Bar and introductory lecture. Dinner at the French Restaurant at Municipal House.

09 October Karlstein & Veltrusy

Leave (by coach) for a visit to Karlstejn Castle, built by Charles IV in 1348 to store the royal treasures and coronation jewels of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as his collection of holy relics. Visit its extraordinary Holy Rood Chapel to see the fourteenth century images of hundreds of saints created by Master Theodoric.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue by coach to visit the important Rococo country house of Veltrusy and the surrounding park with exotic woods and number of romantic follies. Return to Prague.

Optional: concert at Rudolfinum / Opera (not included in the price, subject to concert / opera schedule). Dinner under own arrangements.

10 October Orlik, Drahenice & Blatna

Leave by coach to visit three private houses in South Bohemia. Visit the great castle at Orlik, which sits on a bluff above the Vltava river and has fine Empire interiors (by kind arrangement with Johannes Schwarzenberg).

Continue by coach to have lunch at Drahenice, one of the houses which has been returned to the original family (by kind arrangement with Wenzel Lobkowicz). Board coach and continue to visit Blatna Castle, originally a medieval water castle (by kind arrangement with Stephanos Germentis). Return to Prague. Dinner at a local restaurant within walking distance from hotel.

11 October Kynzvalt & Krasny Dvur

Leave by coach for West Bohemia to visit Kynzvalt, a beautiful Neoclassical house, which houses the significant collections of the Metternich family, including a magnificent library and many sculptures by Canova.

Continue by coach to the Baroque mansion of Krasny Dvur and its important English park with important follies, once owned by the Czernins. Lunch at the house. Return to Prague. Dinner under own arrangements.

12 October Kutna Hora, Kacina & Trebesice

Leave by coach for the medieval silver mining town of Kutna Hora, UNESCO listed since 1995. In the 14th century it became a royal city and was endowed with monuments symbolizing its prosperity. Visit St. Barbara's Gothic Church – the most spectacular in the Czech lands. Continue by coach to visit the great Palladian house of Kacina which also has a magnificent library in one of the pavilions.

Continue by coach to visit Trebesice, a newly restored water castle with superb gardens and a private art collection. Your hosts for lunch here are Italian. Return to Prague. Dinner under own arrangements.





Kutna Hora

13 October Nove Mesto Nad Metuji, Castolovice & Kostelec

Leave by coach for East Bohemia, where quite a few houses have been restituted to their former owners. Arrive at Nove Mesto nad Metuji and visit the castle, which has beautiful and unusual interiors which fuse Baroque with early 20th century and were featured by World of Interiors. The family moved to Canada but returned after 1989.

Continue for a private lunch at Castolovice with the younger generation who have just taken over, followed by a visit. The interior rooms are furnished in styles ranging from Renaissance to Biedermeier. Continue nearby to visit Kostelec, belonging to the Kinsky family, which has been magnificently restored. We will be entertained for tea. Return to Prague. Dinner at a local restaurant within walking distance from hotel.

14 October Nelahozeves/ Prague / London

Leave by coach for Nelahozeves. Visit to the newly opened interactive exhibition in Dvorak's birthplace in the village, followed by a tour of the Renaissance Castle which belongs to the main branch of the Lobkowitz family. The interiors have been recreated as the family would have left them in 1938 and part of their magnificent collection is displayed here.

Light lunch at a nearby restaurant. Group transfer to Prague Airport for suggested flight (not included) British Airways BA 861 departing Prague at 17.45 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 18.55 hrs.

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£4,185
Single Supplement	£750

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 7 lunches; 3 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits, excursions
- Group transfers and transportation as per the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals
- Gratuities to guides/s; gratuities to driver/s; portage
- The services of your tour leader and guest lecturer throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Opera / concert tickets
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 05/03/2025



Nelahozeves Castle



Castolovice

YOUR TOUR LEADERS



LUCY ABEL SMITH

Lucy is an art historian who specialises in Central Europe and the Balkans. After many years working as a tour organiser and lecturer, she set up her independent travel company, Reality and Beyond Ltd to concentrate on this most fascinating part of the world. She first visited Prague in the early 1970s and wrote a *Walking Tour of Prague* published by John Murray in 1991.

She lives in Gloucestershire and founded the successful contemporary sculpture show Fresh Air in 1992. She has restored a house in Richi, Transylvania where she launched the Transylvanian Book Festival in 2013. She wrote the Blue Guide to the Greater Tarnava Valley in 2016 which is now in its second edition. Any spare time is spent researching the patronage of the 17th Century Duke and Duchess of Beaufort. She is a patron of the Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust.



HARRIET LANDSEER

Harriet lives between Ireland and Prague (with occasional stints in Andalucia) and has worked for Specialtours since 1996, with a focus Central Europe as her main area of expertise. Fluent in Czech, she is also at ease in German, French and Spanish. She studied History of Art at Yale University and has worked with Lucy for almost 30 years, also at Reality and Beyond Ltd.



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