



American Horticultural Society  
Travel Study Program

# GARDENS AND CASTLES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC: PRAGUE, BOHEMIA, AND MORAVIA

September 5 – 15, 2018

WITH AHS HOSTS SHIRLEY AND FRANK NICOLAI AND  
TOUR LEADER HARRIET LANDSEER OF SPECIALTOURS





Dear Friends,

I personally invite you to join an extraordinary American Horticultural Society tour: "Gardens and Castles of the Czech Republic: Prague, Bohemia, and Moravia," scheduled for September 5-15, 2018.

What a wonderful tour we have in store for you. I may be spoiling the surprise, but I will tell you right upfront: There are no less than six UNESCO World Heritage Sites included on this magnificent itinerary!

One of them, Cesky Krumlov Castle, a vast complex dating from 1253, is one of the most important historic sites in Central Europe. At another UNESCO site, Kromeriz Castle, we'll see a rare and largely intact Baroque garden. Yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site awaits us at Tugendhat Villa, an icon of modernist architecture. We'll also visit St. Nicholas Church in Prague, a superb example of Baroque architecture that is also famous because Mozart once performed on the church's pipe organ. As if that weren't enough, we'll attend an opera at the Prague National Theatre. And those are just a few highlights of this American Horticultural Society adventure.

Our accommodations are equally sublime. The boutique five-star Aria Hotel in Prague is just steps away from the Charles Bridge and Prague Castle. Inspired by music, the hotel's rooms are dedicated to a specific style of music or an artist/composer. The Hotel Ruze is a converted monastery and the only four-star hotel in Cesky Krumlov; it offers views of the castle and the Vltava River. The five-star Comsa Palace Hotel in the heart of Brno was built in the mid-19th century and is the most prestigious address in town.

Hosting this extraordinary program are Shirley and Frank Nicolai, both avid gardeners and travelers. Shirley has been actively involved at all levels of National Garden Clubs, Inc., including serving a term as National President and 14 years on the organization's Executive Committee. An Accredited Master Flower Show Judge, she has served on the Management Committee of the World Association of Floral Artists and as President of the United States Floral Design Society. She is also a former member of the AHS Board of Directors.

Specialtours' Harriet Landseer, our tour organizer, has led trips for the company since 1996, including for the AHS Travel Study Program. A Prague resident who is fluent in Czech, she studied history of art at Yale University and is also a translator for books on Czech castles and country houses. Harriet's contacts opened the doors for some unique opportunities on this trip.

I highly recommend that you accompany us to the Czech Republic in September. Space is limited and our travel study tours often sell out, so early reservations are advised. A convenient reservation form is enclosed in this brochure. A lifetime of memories awaits you.

Most sincerely,

*Holly H. Shimizu*

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Interim Executive Director  
American Horticultural Society



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Join AHS hosts Shirley and Frank Nicolai and tour leader Harriet Landseer for this once-in-a-lifetime garden travel experience.

## Itinerary Highlights

### TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

We depart the United States for the Czech Republic.

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 — PRAGUE (D)

Our journey begins this morning with our arrival at Prague's Vaclav Havel Airport and then our check-in at our first lodging, the Aria Hotel. This delightful boutique hotel has a music library and rooms themed to specific types of music, artists, or composers. Are you feeling like Elvis or Beethoven? As guests, we can also take advantage of the private entrance to the hotel's Vrtba Garden. The lovely terraced garden, the oldest Baroque garden in Prague, offers a spectacular view of the city.

This afternoon, we will depart by coach to visit the Strahov Monastery Library. There we will have exclusive access to an astounding collection of botanical books, including those by Carolus Clusius, the Flemish doctor and botanist who was one of the most influential scientific horticulturists of the 16th century.

Afterward, our orientation walk in the Hradcany district near Prague Castle will include two spectacular gardens and special access to a contemporary greenhouse. The Royal Garden, constructed in 1534, features the Belvedere (or Royal Summer Palace) built by Ferdinand I, the Habsburg emperor who lived in Prague Castle in the 16th century. Originally inspired by Italian designs, the garden was adapted to an English style in the 19th century. The garden also played an influential role in introducing tulips to Europe. On the western edge of Prague Castle, the modern Garden on the Bastion was designed by 20th-century Slovenian architect Josip Plecnik, who was inspired by Japanese and Italian gardens.

This evening, we'll get to know one another with welcome drinks on the roof of the hotel, then we'll head downstairs for dinner.

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 — PRAGUE (B, L)

Our adventure-filled day will begin with a morning visit to Prague Castle, an important symbol of the Czech state for more than a thousand years, and the Lobkowitz Collections, the oldest and largest privately owned art collection in the Czech Republic. We'll be treated to paintings by Brueghel, Canaletto, Cranach, Rubens, Veronese, and many others; medieval and Renaissance works of art; ceramics spanning five centuries; and a collection of arms and armor.

We'll continue (on foot) down the hill through the lower gardens of Prague Castle and past a series of gardens that were restored by the Prague Heritage Fund established by former Czech President Vaclav Havel and Britain's Prince Charles. When we arrive at the Wallenstein Palace in the Mala Strana, or Lesser Quarter, we will have a chance to enjoy the famous Mannerist grotto wall, shaped hedges, and large pond with an islet featuring a marble fountain with statues of Hercules and the Naiads. Wallenstein Palace, now the seat of the Czech Senate, was built in the 1600s, and its architecture was heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance. A sala terrena, a room for entertaining that is open to the garden on one side, is decorated with frescoes and stuccos depicting the Trojan wars. The site also features an aviary filled with exotic birds.

Our well-earned lunch will be on the balcony of the nearby Palffy Palace. En route back to the hotel, we'll pay a visit to St. Nicholas Church, a superb example of Baroque architecture that boasts a main organ with more than 4,000 pipes. Mozart played the organ here during his stay in Prague in 1787.

We'll have some free time this afternoon before we visit the garden of the U.S. ambassador's residence, a magnificent neo-Baroque mansion built in the 1920s. We'll have dinner independently tonight to give us a chance to sample different cuisines and explore the city.

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 — PRAGUE (B, L, D)

Our first stop this morning is Pruhonice Park, designed by Count Arnost Emanuel Silva-Tarouca in the late 19th century. In collaboration with plantsman Camillo Schneider, he combined flowering plants, trees, and shrubs with meadows, ponds, and streams to artistic and stunning effect. The park boasts an extraordinary collection of 1,600 species of local and exotic plants, including about 8,000 rhododendrons, and a notable alpine garden. Its history and significance contributed to the Historic Center of Prague's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.





We'll break for lunch at Hlinena Basta restaurant, in a building constructed using traditional mud bricks and cutting-edge technology. Our adventure continues with a visit to Konopiste, a medieval castle transformed into a hunting lodge in the 1890s. The gardens and woods surrounding the house have original Italian Renaissance and Baroque statuary, and the final owner laid out the rose garden. He was Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, whose assassination in Sarajevo triggered World War I. The bullet that killed him is on exhibit in the castle's museum.

We'll return to Prague, where we hope to stop for refreshments at a private urban garden (possibly one belonging to the descendants of renowned Czech writer Karel Capek, who also wrote a classic book on gardening). Tonight we'll enjoy dinner at Bellevue restaurant, aptly named for its wonderful view of the Vltava River, the Charles Bridge, and Prague Castle.

### **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 — PRAGUE (B, L)**

A wide range of experiences await us today. We'll leave by coach to visit the historic castle and garden in Nove Mesto nad Metuji by kind arrangement with the owners. In the early 20th century, Slovak architect Dusan Jurkovic and Czech architect Pavel Janak redesigned the interior using modern styles such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Jurkovic also converted the lower part of the garden into a French-style decorative garden with trimmed hedges, axial symmetry, and an extraordinary covered wooden bridge connecting different terraces. The garden is also famous for the 18th-century dwarf sculptures.

We'll combine lunch with a visit to Castolovice, a beautiful Renaissance castle situated in wooded countryside. The castle has been owned by the Sternberg family, patrons of the arts and sciences, since 1694. Our first sight as we pass through the castle gate will remind us why we love horticulture: the courtyard is surrounded by blossoming flowers.

We'll return to Prague to attend an opera at Prague's National Theatre. A beautiful example of Renaissance Revival architecture, the National Theatre has a rich artistic tradition that dates back to 1881. We will dine independently tonight.

### **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 — CESKY KRUMLOV (B, L, D)**

Our morning departure (with luggage) is by coach to visit the gardens at Dobris chateau. Built in the mid-18th century in the Late Baroque and Rococo style, the chateau and its terraced French gardens offer a treat for our senses. Here, we'll follow in the footsteps of writer Karel Capek, who spent the last years of his life nearby. Back on the road, we'll break for lunch at Ceske Budejovice. The city, which dates from 1256, is the largest in the South Bohemian Region and is the home of the original Budweiser beer.

After lunch, we'll be transported back in time at Kratochvile, a picturesque Renaissance summer chateau built in the 16th century and surrounded by a park and a moat. The chateau is a *Lustschloss*, or a small palace that served the private pleasure of its owner, usually the ruler of the area. Our afternoon continues with our arrival in Cesky Krumlov, a small but important town with a castle that we'll get to know well. We'll check into the four-star Hotel Ruze in the town center.

### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 — CESKY KRUMLOV (B, L)**

A profound morning is in store as we head out on foot for Cesky Krumlov Castle, one of the outstanding sites in the Czech Republic. The enormous complex dates from 1253 and was designed in the Renaissance and Baroque styles. The castle ranks among the most important historic sites in Central Europe, and the town's historic center is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Our visit will include the castle's Baroque theater and a special tour of the gardens in the company of the head gardener. The extensive gardens are dominated by a stone fountain dating from the 18th century.

We'll stop for lunch at a restaurant in town and then we'll have some free time in the afternoon to wander. A recommended detour is the Egon Schiele Art Centre, a gallery and museum with a fascinating permanent collection and temporary exhibits. Schiele, an Austrian painter known for his distorted figures and provocative nudes, lived for a time in Cesky Krumlov. While we're on our own, we will dine independently. This will be a good chance to make dinner plans with fellow AHS tour companions.

### **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 — BRNO (B, L, D)**

This morning we'll leave (with luggage) by coach to visit the magnificent Baroque garden and sala terrena at Jaromerice. The chateau's design was inspired by Versailles, and the French-style garden, created around 1706, is adorned with statues and ornate stone benches. We'll then continue to Brno, with lunch at a restaurant en route.

Next we will explore the Botanical Garden and Arboretum at Mendel University — considered by some to be the most significant modern garden in Central Europe. Professor and architect Ivar Otruba designed and planted the innovative garden in the 1930s.

Then yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site awaits us with our visit, by special permission, to Tugendhat Villa. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and built in 1929-1930, it has become an icon of modernism with a design that sought to link the building with its natural surroundings. The structure and adjoining gardens have been restored to their original appearance only in the last decade.

Afterward, we will check in at the five-star Comsa Palace Hotel. This elegant, modern hotel is located in the heart of Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic and the seat of a number of state entities. Tonight we will stay close to home and dine at the hotel.

### **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 — BRNO (B, L)**

This morning we will hop on the coach to explore the garden complex of Valtice-Lednice. The complex at this UNESCO World Heritage Site comprises a landscaped park between the chateaux Valtice, in the Baroque style, and Lednice, which reflects neo-Gothic, Baroque, and Classical styles. Both were built by the Liechtenstein family. The gardens boast rare tree species, fish ponds, and a number of charming structures, including a hunting lodge in the form of a Neoclassical arch, a Moorish Revival minaret observation tower, and a Gothic Revival folly of "artificial ruins."



We'll break for a picnic lunch at the Rendezvous and then make our way to Milotice chateau, set amid fertile vineyards, and its French Baroque garden. The parterre garden features an orangery and is connected to the inner courtyard by means of a sala terrena. The chateau was built in the 1740s by a Hungarian count who prized his collection of thoroughbred horses, and it features portraits of 32 of his most precious stallions. We will dine independently in Brno tonight.

#### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 — BRNO (B, L, D)

Our first stop today is, yes, another UNESCO World Heritage Site! The castle of the Archbishops of Olomouc in Kromeriz was created in the Baroque style and influenced by Versailles. The Flower, or Pleasure, Garden established in 1665 is a rare and largely intact example of an Italian Baroque garden. In addition, there are formal parterres and a less formal 19th-century English garden. We will also have a chance to tour the interior of the castle, which Czech director Milos Forman featured in the 1984 movie *Amadeus*, and view its notable art collection, which includes Titian's last mythological painting, *The Flaying of Marsyas*.

We'll take lunch at a local restaurant before we continue with a visit to the late Renaissance-style Buchlovice chateau and garden. Its terraces, formal parterres, and fountains are complemented by French topiary, balustrades, and statuary. The 19th-century owners added a landscaped park with rare conifers, and there is also an outstanding fuchsia collection. We'll return to Brno, where we'll have dinner at Restaurant Pavillon, whose modern, airy interior features a spectacular glass bar.

#### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 — PRAGUE (B, L, D)

We'll depart (with our luggage) to visit Lysice manor. The Neoclassical gardens are divided into rooms, and a monumental colonnade — with spectacular views — surrounds a parterre flower garden. In addition, miniature gardens grace the terraces. We will take lunch privately with Countess Kinsky (quite a gardener herself) at Zdar nad Sazavou and visit the church above her home. The Pilgrimage Church of St. John of Nepomuk is the most significant work of Jan Blazej Santini Aichel, a Czech architect of Italian descent who combined Baroque and Gothic

elements in both construction and decoration. The church, with many furnishings designed by Santini, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

En route back to Prague, we'll pay a visit to Vlasim Castle, which boasts a well-preserved landscape garden and a charming Chinese pavilion. In Prague, we'll check into the Aria Hotel for our final night. Our dinner will be in a setting that's suited for a grand celebration. The Municipal House holds the celebrated concert venue Smetana Hall and was the location of the 1918 Czechoslovak declaration of independence. The exterior of the Art Nouveau building is adorned with allegorical art and Karel Spillar's mosaic *Homage to Prague*, which lies above the entrance. After dinner, it will be time to say our farewells and share stories of our travels together.

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 (B)

We will depart for flights back to the United States.

*While revisions of this itinerary are not anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice, that may become necessary.*







Announcing the American  
Horticultural Society  
Travel Study Program

American Horticultural Society  
7931 East Boulevard Drive  
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## JOIN US FOR PROFOUND EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING:

- Six UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Cesky Krumlov Castle, one of the top sites in Eastern Europe
- Kromeriz Castle and its Baroque garden
- Tugendhat Villa, an icon of modernist architecture
- Pruhonice Park, with an extraordinary collection of woody species
- St. Nicholas Church in Prague, a superb example of Baroque architecture
- An opera at the Prague National Theatre

## OUR ACCOMMODATIONS ARE EQUALLY OUTSTANDING:

- The boutique five-star Aria Hotel, just steps away from the Charles Bridge and Prague Castle. Its rooms are dedicated to specific styles of music, artists, and composers.
- Hotel Ruze, a four-star property set in the historic center of Cesky Krumlov, with views of the castle and the Vltava River
- The five-star Comsa Palace Hotel in Brno's city center, the most prestigious address in the city

Please refer to the enclosed reservation form for pricing and instructions for reserving your place on this AHS Travel Study Program tour. For more information about Travel Study Program tours, please contact [development@ahsgardening.org](mailto:development@ahsgardening.org) or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127 or ext. 132. Information is also available at [www.ahsgardening.org/travel](http://www.ahsgardening.org/travel).

Designed with the connoisseur of garden travel in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers an exceptional itinerary that includes many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of *“Making America a Nation of Gardeners, A Land of Gardens.”*

