



4 EUROPEAN FAVOURITES

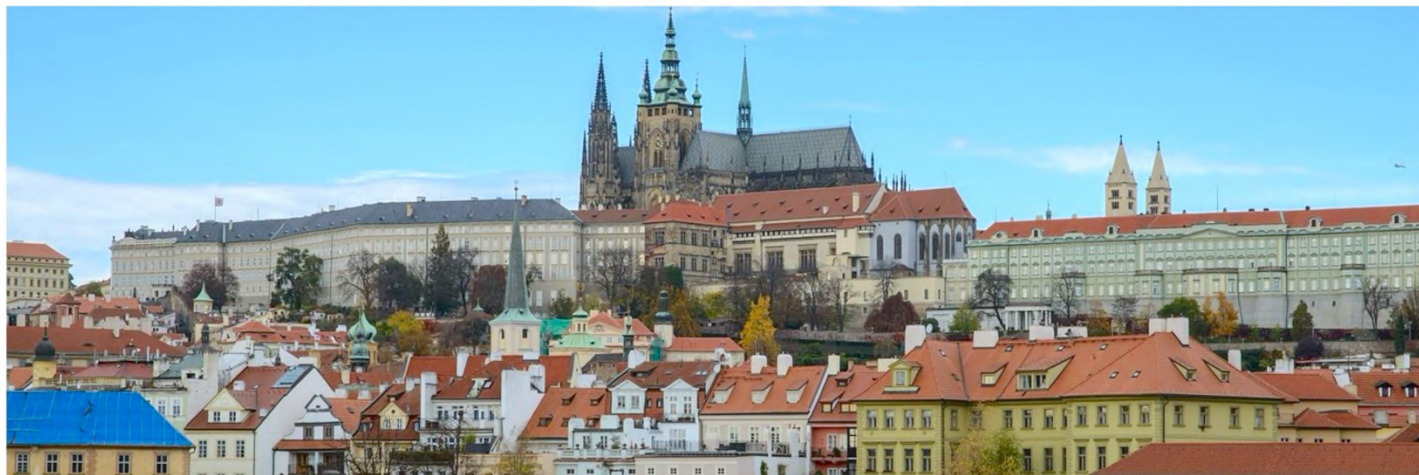
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Paul Almeida
President

 azorcantours

Azorcan Global Ltd., Box 50041, Edmonton, AB, T5Y 2M9



Clockwise from top left: Konopiště Castle, Křivoklát Castle, Prague Castle, Karlštejn Castle.

***** AZORCAN'S MY EUROPEAN FAVOURITES *****

4 CASTLES IN AND AROUND PRAGUE

PRAGUE CASTLE

Prague Castle was most likely founded around the year 880 by Prince Bořivoj of the Premyslid Dynasty. It is the largest coherent castle complex in the world at 70,000 m². The castle features styles from Romanesque to Gothic and Renaissance. The castle has served various roles throughout its history including the seat of power for Bohemian kings, Holy Roman emperors, and Czech presidents plus as a significant ecclesiastical site. The catholic St. Vitus Cathedral located in the castle complex serves as the seat of the Archbishop of Prague and is renowned for its Gothic architecture. It also houses the tombs of many Bohemian kings and Holy Roman Emperors.

As a UNESCO World Heritage site it remains an important cultural institution in the Czech Republic. With a history spanning over a 1000 years, the complex architectural styles, stunning gardens, and historic monuments, attract millions of tourists each year.

KARLŠTEJN CASTLE

Karlštejn Castle, a large Gothic castle founded in 1348 by King Charles IV as a place to safeguard the Imperial Regalia, including the Bohemian Crown Jewels and holy relics. The construction was completed in 1365 with the consecration of the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Karlštejn Castle is located only 16 kilometers southwest of Prague and contains original 14th-century wall decorations, 129 paintings by Master Theodoric in the Chapel of the Holy Cross, and the largest portrait gallery of Czech rulers. It is one of the most visited castles in the Czech Republic with over 200,000 visitors annually.

KONOPIŠŤE CASTLE

Konopiště Castle founded in 1294 by the Bishop of Prague, Tobias of Benešov. Over the years it has changed ownership multiple times, notably being held by the Sternberg family for 275 years starting in 1327. Significant modifications were made in the late 15th century and again in the 18th century when it was transformed into a baroque residence. In 1887, it was sold to Franz Ferdinand d'Este, who made extensive renovations and turned it into a faux-historical style chateau. After his assassination in 1914, the castle was nationalized by the Czechoslovak government in 1921. Konopiště is noted for its well-preserved architecture and attractive gardens including the Rose Garden. Archduke Franz Ferdinand's passion for hunting has left an impressive armory with numerous hunting trophies and weapons.

KŘIVOKLÁT CASTLE

Křivoklát Castle, founded in the 12th century and located in the Central Bohemian Region, is one of the oldest Gothic castles in Czechia. Křivoklát was originally a royal residence for the kings of Bohemia. During the reigns of various kings, including Otakar II, Wenceslaus IV, and Vladislaus II the castle underwent significant construction. Křivoklát unfortunately has suffered many fires and subsequent periods of neglect and deterioration. Especially when it was used as a prison. Currently as a museum, visitors can enjoy its collection of hunting weapons, Gothic paintings, and historical books.