Exploring Old Town

A self-guided sightseeing walk



About 2 hours · An outdoor walk

Exploring Old Town

Explore Prague's Old Town from Powder Gate to Charles Bridge, passing through the former merchants' yard of Ungelt, Old Town Square and the Klementinum courtyards. Along the way, discover different periods of the city's history through its buildings and their details, with optional visits for those who want to spend longer.

Estimated time: about 2 hours for walking, looking around and photographs. Allow more time for refreshment breaks, guided tours, museum visits and tower climbs.

Start: Náměstí Republiky, beside Powder Gate and Municipal House.
Finish: Křižovnické náměstí, at the Old Town end of Charles Bridge.
Cost: the core walk is free; optional visits and refreshments cost extra.

Before you start

Wear comfortable shoes for the paving and bring water. In cooler weather, dress for standing and looking as well as walking. Take care on wet or frosty stone.

Food and drink: Take a break whenever it suits you, allowing extra time beyond the two-hour walk.

Use a toilet before starting if convenient; café toilets are generally for customers, and public toilets may charge a fee.

About the route: This is an outdoor walk. The visiting options listed at each stop are optional extras; allow more time if you choose to go inside or climb a tower.

If the Klementinum library and tower tour interests you, book ahead rather than relying on tickets being available when you arrive.

Route overview

View the whole-walk map

1. Municipal House and Powder Gate
2. Along Celetná: the House at the Black Madonna
3. Ungelt and Týn Church
4. Old Town Square and the Astronomical Clock
5. Through the Klementinum courtyards
6. Finish beside Charles Bridge

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Municipal House and Powder Gate

OPTIONAL VISITS

Municipal House: visit the café or look inside the foyer, or join a guided tour.

Powder Gate: climb to the viewing gallery.

View the whole-walk map →

Standing beside Powder Gate, you can see two very different periods of Prague's history side by side: the Gothic gateway and the Art Nouveau Municipal House. You'll notice this mix of architectural styles throughout Old Town.

Municipal House

Municipal House is one of Prague's best-known Art Nouveau buildings, built in the early twentieth century as a centre for concerts and civic life. Its decoration brings together the work of leading Czech artists, including Alfons Mucha, who decorated the Mayor's Hall. The café, concert hall and richly decorated rooms reflect the ambition of a city celebrating its Czech cultural identity.



Municipal House's Art Nouveau façade.

At Municipal House, look above the semicircular first-floor windows for the sculpted faces. Among the allegories of arts, knowledge and industry are motoring and aviation: look towards the side windows for heads wearing protective headgear and goggles. These details reflect the fascination with cars and flight in the early twentieth century.



A sculpted face above one of Municipal House's windows.

You can visit the café or look inside the foyer to see more of Municipal House's Art Nouveau interior.

Municipal House tour

A guided tour takes you further into the ceremonial interiors, including Smetana Hall and decorated salons. Allow about an extra hour and check the official tour schedule for available times and tickets.

Powder Gate

Construction of Powder Gate began in 1475, during the reign of Vladislav II Jagiellon. It stood beside the Royal Court, the royal residence that once occupied the site of today's Municipal House. Coronation processions passed through the gateway on their way towards Prague Castle.

Look up at the statues, coats of arms and carved decoration on the front of the gate. Much of what you see today dates from its nineteenth-century restoration.

Climb Powder Gate

Climb the 186 steps of the spiral staircase to the viewing gallery, 44 metres above the street, for views over Prague's rooftops. Allow roughly half an hour, plus any queue. Adult admission is 200 CZK; check the official visitor information for seasonal opening hours, concessions and tickets.

> **Continue to Celetná**
>
> Pass Powder Gate and continue into Celetná, keeping to the pavement. Follow the street towards the House at the Black Madonna, at the junction with Ovocný trh.



The main façade of the House at the Black Madonna.

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Along Celetná: the House at the Black Madonna

OPTIONAL VISITS

House at the Black Madonna: visit the Cubism museum or upstairs café.

St James's Church: look inside on the way to Ungelt, if open to visitors.

View the detail map →

The House at the Black Madonna is a Cubist building and a quick point of interest along the way. Look for the Black Madonna statue on the corner. There is also a Cubism museum and a café upstairs if you would like to return or spend longer here.

St James's Church

On the way to Ungelt, you can take a brief look inside St James the Greater if it is open to visitors. Its richly decorated Baroque interior offers another contrast with the buildings along Celetná.

Continue to Ungelt

The passage towards Templová is diagonally across Celetná from the House at the Black Madonna, slightly back in the direction you came from. Look for the brown public toilet sign.

Go through the passage to Templová, then follow the street towards St James's Church, visible at the end. Turn left along Jakubská and continue to the street junction. The church entrance is on your right; the passage into Ungelt is opposite, slightly to the left.



The passage into Ungelt, opposite St James's Church.

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Ungelt and Týn Church

View the detail map →

Ungelt, also called Týnský dvůr, developed as a merchants' yard by the twelfth century, according to archaeological evidence. Merchants could stay here and store their goods under the king's protection. The yard had warehouses, stables and accommodation, and customs duties were collected here.

Look for the arcaded loggia and decoration of Granovský Palace. Its Renaissance details add another layer to the architecture along the walk.



Granovský Palace’s decorated façade and arcaded loggia.

Continue past Týn Church

Leave the yard through the passage and continue ahead towards the narrow street, Týnská, passing the northern doorway of the Church of Our Lady before Týn.

Look above the church’s northern doorway for the carved scenes of Christ’s suffering, with the Crucifixion at the centre. What you see is a copy of a late-fourteenth-century relief associated with Peter Parler’s workshop. The visitor entrance to the church is reached separately from the square.

Continue to Old Town Square

Follow Týnská out to Old Town Square beside the House at the Stone Bell.

The House at the Stone Bell was restored to its Gothic appearance after investigations begun in 1961 revealed medieval features hidden beneath later alterations.

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Old Town Square and the Astronomical Clock

OPTIONAL VISITS

Týn Church: You can visit the interior when it is open to sightseers. Enter through the passage at Old Town Square 14. The church is closed to sightseeing during services.

Old Town Hall: Visit the historic interiors or head up the tower for views over the square. Check the available tickets and opening times, and allow extra time for your visit.

View the detail map →

Buildings from several periods of Prague's history surround Old Town Square, with the Gothic towers of Týn Church rising above the eastern side. The Jan Hus monument stands near the centre, while the Old Town Hall and its Astronomical Clock occupy the western side.

The meridian in the paving marks where the Marian Column's shadow falls at local solar noon. Beside the Town Hall, 27 crosses commemorate the men executed here in 1621.

The Astronomical Clock

The Astronomical Clock's age and elaborate dials are its main attraction. Its oldest parts date from 1410, and it shows several ways of measuring time, alongside the movements of the Sun and Moon.



The astronomical dial above and calendar dial below.

If you're nearby just before the hour, it's worth pausing for the procession. It lasts less than two minutes: the apostles pass the windows above the dial, accompanied by a few moving figures. It's a brief display, so there's little reason to arrive twenty minutes early for a viewing spot.

The upper astronomical dial shows three ways of measuring the day:

- **Central European time:** the golden hand points to the Roman numerals.
- **Old Czech time:** the outer ring's Gothic numerals count the hours from sunset, when the new day began. The ring moves with the changing seasons.
- **Babylonian time:** the daylight hours are divided into twelve, so an hour is longer in summer and shorter in winter. The Sun's position against the curved lines shows this system.

There is a fourth system too: the small golden star indicates **star time**, based on the movement of the stars. Below the astronomical dial, the separate calendar dial follows the year rather than the hours.

Týn Church

You can visit the interior when it is open to sightseers. Enter through the passage at Old Town Square 14. The church is closed to sightseeing during services. Check the current visitor information before going in.

Old Town Hall

Visit the historic interiors or head up the tower for views over the square. Check the available tickets and opening times, and allow extra time for your visit.

Before leaving, look at Dům U Minuty, the decorated house beside the Town Hall. Its sgraffito façade rewards a short pause.

> **Continue to the Klementinum**
>
> After exploring the square, the route continues past Dům U Minuty into Malé náměstí. Follow the street to the right, then turn left into Linhartská. Follow Linhartská to Mariánské náměstí and continue across the square to the Klementinum entrance.

Across the road, Městská knihovna, the Municipal Library, often has a long queue outside. Visitors are waiting to see *Idiom*, the tower of books in its entrance hall.



The Klementinum entrance from Mariánské náměstí.

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Through the Klementinum courtyards

OPTIONAL VISITS

Baroque Library and Astronomical Tower: join a guided tour; book ahead.

View the detail map →

The Klementinum developed as a Jesuit college after the order arrived in Prague in 1556. Over the following centuries, the former monastery site grew into a large complex of churches, teaching rooms, a library and an astronomical observatory. It is now home to the National Library.

The Baroque Library is one of its best-known interiors, but it can only be viewed on a guided tour, from the doorway rather than by walking into the room. The public courtyards offer a less busy route towards Charles Bridge than nearby Karlova.

Baroque Library and Astronomical Tower tour

The guided visit combines the view into the library with an ascent of the Astronomical Tower. Book ahead, as tours often sell out and tickets at the box office are not guaranteed. Check the official tour information and tickets.

Continue to Charles Bridge

Enter through the gateway from Mariánské náměstí and follow the route to the left. Do not take the first exit onto Karlova. Continue through the courtyards, following the route as it bends to the right.

Pass through another gateway into a smaller courtyard, then through the exit gate onto Křižovnická, the main road. Walk to the traffic lights and cross towards Charles Bridge, reaching Křižovnické náměstí beside the Old Town Bridge Tower.

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Finish beside Charles Bridge

View the detail map →

The walk ends at Křižovnické náměstí, beside the statue of Charles IV, with a view of Charles Bridge. Facing the bridge, there is a viewpoint to your right overlooking the river.



Charles Bridge and the Vltava from the finishing viewpoint.

If you would like to continue, our **Charles Bridge and Malá Strana** itinerary begins here and takes you across the bridge into the Lesser Town.

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Route maps

M1 · Exploring Old Town — overview



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1 Municipal House / Powder Gate

2 House at the Black Madonna

3 Ungelt

4 Old Town Square / clock

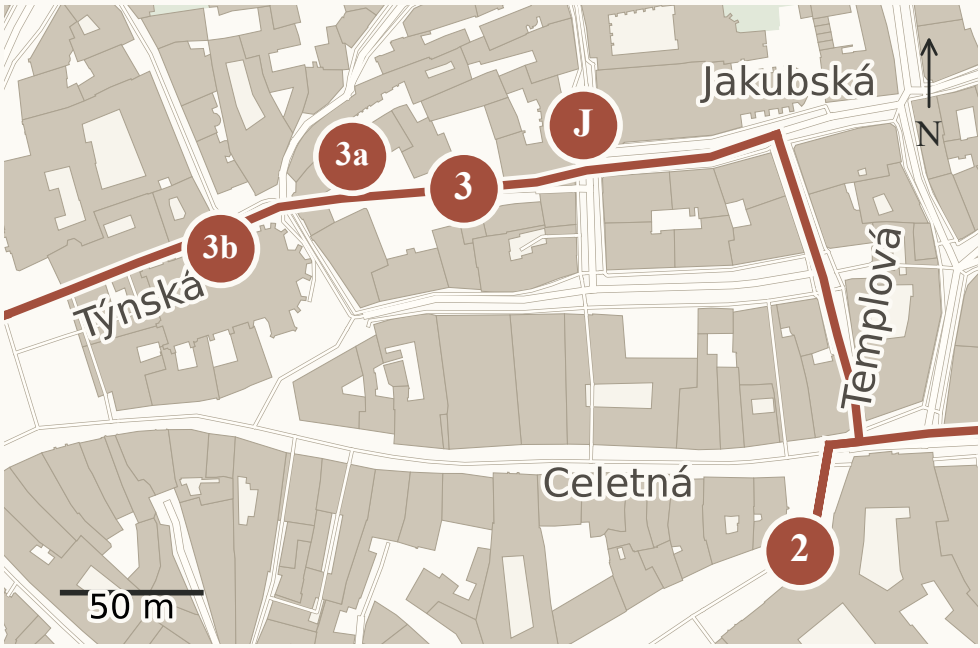
5 Klementinum

6 Riverside viewpoint / finish

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M2 · Celetná, Ungelt and Týn Church



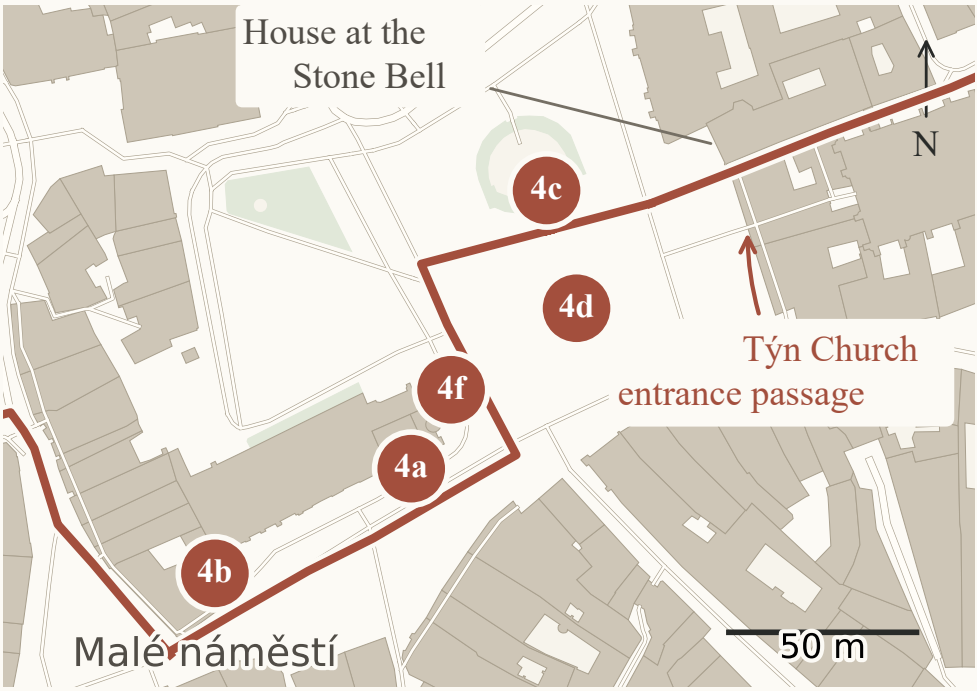
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2	House at the Black Madonna
3	Ungelt
3a	Granovský Palace
3b	Týn north doorway
J	St James entrance

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M3 · Old Town Square



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4a Astronomical Clock

4b Dům U Minuty

4c Jan Hus monument

4d Marian Column and meridian

4f Execution crosses

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M4 · Klementinum to Charles Bridge



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5 Klementinum

6 Riverside viewpoint / finish

L Municipal Library

G Exit onto Křižovnická

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