

Golf's best city break?

The Czech Republic, and Prague in particular, has so much to offer, as Clive Agran discovered...

It is common knowledge that Prague is one of the most beautiful and fascinating cities in the world. As home to 10 major museums, innumerable theatres, cinemas, galleries, the oldest university in central Europe and extraordinary palaces, castles and places of interest, there are countless reasons to visit. Considerably less well known, however, is the fact that it lies at the heart of one of the finest regions for golf anywhere on the continent.

Perhaps more surprising even than the sprinkling of superb courses that lie just outside the city limits is the presence inside the city of two quite remarkable tracks that are genuinely urban, but no less appealing for that.

On the eastern side, 15 minutes from the city centre, is the delightful and impressive Black Bridge Golf Resort. The eponymous black bridge takes you from the clubhouse, over a road to the excellent driving range, first-class practice facilities and the opening tee. After three holes, you cross back over for the rest of your round on this appealing parkland layout. Though there's plenty of elevation and buggies are available, the course is eminently walkable. While it's no rural idyll, it is an excellent golf course that provides a very sporting challenge.

About equidistant from the city centre, but this time to the south, is Prague City Golf Zbraslav. Not normally a fan of artificial links, I confess to loving this 'links-like' layout. Instead of the usual unnatural mounds on either side of the fairway, this genuinely looks and feels like the real thing. Created by British architect Jeremy Ford, Czech-born tour pro Alex Cejka, and the shaper Mick McShane, a man described as "Leonardo da Vinci with a digger", the trio combined to produce a masterpiece. And because it's carved out of a flood plain, it's an undemanding walk.

A few years ago it hosted the Prague Golf



Albatross Golf Resort

Challenge, which saw Englishman Ben Stow celebrate his first Challenge Tour victory. Be sure to warm up on the excellent driving range and have a putt round the 'Himalayas', a fun practice green modelled on its namesake at St Andrews.

Good things are happening at City Golf, including the construction of a brand-new clubhouse and the opening of a six-hole academy course. The latter will be very popular and indicates a genuine eagerness to provide a suitable facility where new recruits to the game can cut their teeth.

So successful has the venture been that the owners have just opened a brand-new course about 20 kilometres from the capital: Prague City Golf Vinor. It's 30 minutes from the airport and the ideal spot for that final round before catching the flight home.

It sits comfortably on top of a hill and affords excellent views of the surrounding countryside. Like a good wine, it will doubtless improve with age but it is already surprisingly well established for a course that has only just been built.

It's nice and open and the wind is an ever-present factor that has to be taken into account, courtesy of it being laid out on a plateau. There are a few scattered trees, a sprinkling of water hazards and the rough



Black Bridge Golf Resort

isn't too punishing, making it a very playable test of your game.

In common with its city cousin, it also has a six-hole academy course as well as a very comfortable and impressive clubhouse, complete with an intriguing VIP lounge.

Other exceptional courses you should consider in and around Prague include Panorama Golf Resort, south-east of the city, and Greensgate Golf and Leisure Resort, just to the west. Consider, too, the wonderfully picturesque Karlstejn Golf Resort and the hugely impressive Albatross Golf Resort, both south-west of the city, and possibly the finest of them all, the PGA National, colloquially known as The Oaks, which is to the south-east of Prague.

MORE INFORMATION

- Czech Golf Travel Association (CGTA): www.cgta.cz
- Czech Tourism: www.visitczechia.com



Panorama Golf Resort