

Prague Excursion

2016 was the year everyone in Bohemia (Prague) and Franconia (Nuremberg) seemed to be celebrating the birth of one of Europe's greatest emperors, namely Charles IV. And we, curious Franconians that we are, joined in.

Travelling in 2016 - compared to 1316, the year of Charles's birth - meant that our two-day excursion took us to the Czech Republic in a fraction of the time the emperor would have needed, galloping along his famous imperial thoroughfare, the "Golden Road" linking Prague with Nuremberg. Our time was limited, though, our programme full, and we were grateful for modern coaches and motorways.

No sooner had we arrived than we set off on a rather strenuous four-hour walking tour that took us through the splendid St Vitus Cathedral, the castle complex and down to the magnificent Charles Bridge that straddles the river Moldau. That explains the group picture, our crew looking happy to smile at the camera and rest tired feet, but not for long. The splendid Wenceslas Square and other Gothic delights were beckoning.



The second highlight of the day was far less strenuous, a relaxing evening cruise on the Moldau with buffet dinner and a backdrop of mediaeval history and Czech music.

The next day, Sunday 18th, was spent in the Reiterhalle, the location of the joint state exhibition of the Free State of Bavaria and the Czech Republic and utterly fascinating for anyone who loves European history. Charles IV, count of Luxembourg by birth, king of Bohemia by inheritance and Holy Roman emperor by election, is one of the most captivating mediaeval rulers. Of course, many in Nuremberg recall that he was the emperor who allowed the Jewish quarter next to the River Pegnitz to be razed to the ground to make way for a central market square and a new church

dedicated to the Holy Virgin, the Frauenkirche, known to everyone who loves Christmas markets. It's Charles, of course, who looks down over the market as the seven Prince Electors slowly process past him, paying homage to his greatness.

After the exhibition it was time to bid the city farewell and to head back to Franconia, not however before visiting Karlštejn Castle, the large Gothic castle founded in 1348 by Charles IV, a short distance from Prague. It's here that the Imperial insignia and regalia were kept before they were brought to Nuremberg in 1424.



Karlštejn Castle

I could mention that many of our Franconian Society members also went to the second exhibition on Charles IV in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in early February 2017. We enjoyed that, too!