

Independent Presbyterian Church Choir Tour

Prague, Bratislava, Vienna

June 25 – July 6, 2011

Day 1 – Saturday June 25

Depart for Prague, via overnight flight on scheduled airline.

Day 2 – Sunday June 26 – Prague

We will arrive at the Prague airport, check into the Astoria Hotel, and enjoy an orientation walking tour. That night will feature a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Prague is one of the most enchanting cities in Europe. It was under Charles IV during the 14th century that Prague briefly became the seat of the Holy Roman Empire – virtually the capital of Western Europe – and acquired its distinctive Gothic imprint. Prague escaped serious wartime damage and is considered one of the most beautiful cities in Europe today. Mozart claimed that no one understood him better than the citizens of Prague, and he was only one of several great masters who lived or lingered here.

Day 3 – Monday June 27 – Prague

We will take a guided city tour to see the old town hall with its Gothic horloge and the St. Nicholas Church. Crossing the river Vitava (Moldau) by the well known Charles Bridge to the other side, we will visit Prague Castle, St. Vitus Cathedral and the Hradcany area. This castle was founded in the 9th century, then rebuilt and extended many times. When you enter the castle area you will see and visit sights like the St. Vitus Cathedral and the Golden Lane, a 16th century tradesman's quarter of tiny houses built into the castle walls. The novelist Franz Kafka lived and wrote in the tiny house at No. 22.

That afternoon, the choir will perform at the beautiful St. Nicholas Church on the Old Town Square, which was completed in 1735. It replaced a parish church, mentioned in records dating back as early as 1273. It is a Baroque church, decorated with sculptures by Antonín Braun. The interior design was inspired by the chapel of St. Louis-des-invalides in Paris.

Day 4 – Tuesday June 28 – Prague

We will continue our walking tour of Prague covering the New Town and the Jewish Quarter. The Jewish quarter (also know as Josefov) dates from the 13th Century and it is one of the best preserved Jewish sites in Europe. We will visit the Old-New Synagogue and the Old Jewish Cemetery, where the dead are buried on 12 levels because of the lack of space.

That afternoon the choir will sing a concert at St. Ignatius Church.

Day 5 – Wednesday June 29 - Kladruby Monastery & Pilsen

Today, we travel to visit the Kladruby Monastery near Pilsen. Originating from 1114 AD, this is one of the oldest Czech monasteries and the longest Romanesque Basilicas in Bohemia. The main attraction is the Abbey Church of the Holy Virgin, rebuilt between 1712 and 1726 by Giovanni Santini in his extraordinary "baroque Gothic" style seen nowhere outside Bohemia. Over the years the monastery became rich and powerful and several times it housed the Emperor Charles IV.

Continuing to Pilsen centre, we will lunch together and enjoy free time in Pilsen before traveling back to Prague. There is an option for a tour to the Pilsner Urquell Brewery!

Day 6 – Thursday June 30 – Prague

Our final day in Prague will be leisure time for everyone to enjoy sightseeing, shopping, and to hear Jeff McLelland play an organ recital at the St. Salvator Church.

Day 7 – Friday July 01 - Cesky Krumlov- Bratislava

Today we will travel to Bratislava by the way of Cesky Krumlov. **Cesky Krumlov** is the architectural jewel which was included in the UNESCO list of world heritage in 1992. It has an extensive castle and chateau complex which overlooks the Vitava river.

After these visits you will continue your journey to **Bratislava**, the capital of Slovakia. Bratislava is situated in Central Europe. It is stretching on both banks of the Danube-river, the second biggest river in Europe, and at the foot of the mountains of Small Carpathians. Bratislava spreads at the borders of three countries, neighboring with Hungary in the south and Austria in the west.

Day 8 – Saturday July 02 – Bratislava

After breakfast, we will enjoy a guided tour of Bratislava and see the main sights such as the Presidential Palace, the Old Town Hall, St Martin's Cathedral and the Bratislava Castle. This majestic castle stands on a rocky outcrop which forms part of the Malé Karpaty mountains above the Danube River.. The massive rectangular building with four corner towers stands in a strategic place which was inhabited during Celtic times and in the time of Greater Moravia.

That afternoon, the choir will sing a concert at The Church of St. Francis of Assisi, which is the oldest church in Bratislava and still an active monastery.

Day 9 – Sunday July 03 – Bratislava/Castles

Today, we travel north to wine region of Moravia to visit the Valtice Castle, the Lednice Castle, and Castle of Mikulov. The choir will sing for the annual Music Festival at the Valtice Castle before touring various Bohemian vineyards.

Day 10 – Monday July 04 – Vienna

We will travel to Vienna and spend the afternoon singing for Mass and a concert at the St. Peter's Church.

Vienna was the Imperial capital of the Habsburgs, the most powerful family in European history. It also was the European capital of music in the 18th and 19th century, thanks to the many composers it attracted from Mozart to Strauss.

Day 11 – Tuesday July 05 – Vienna

Today, we will enjoy a free day in Vienna to see the sights and perhaps listen to Jeff McLelland play a recital at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Tonight there will be the farewell dinner to say goodbye to Europe.

Day 12 – Wednesday July 06- USA

Time to fly home to the USA!