Travel Writing in Prague
Orientation Manual

This manual was developed to facilitate a successful experience with the Travel Writing in Prague study abroad program. All information is provided according to the best knowledge at the time. Sources include the U.S. Department of State and Office of International Education.

Arrival and departure

Plan your travel to arrive and depart from Prague’s Ruzyne International Airport. Arrive no later than Monday, May 12, 2014. The last day of class is Tuesday, June 3. You may depart anytime after 10 a.m. that day.

There are no direct, non-stop flights from Atlanta to Prague. Convenient connections are available through London, Amsterdam and Paris.

The most direct, lowest cost, coach fares are on Delta. Book early.

Please provide Program Director John Greenman jgreenma@uga.edu with your air travel itinerary no later than April 5, 2014.

Request a taxi to the hotel at the AAA Taxi counter in the arrivals hall. The cost is approximately 780 CZK (about $35) and may be paid by cash or credit card.

Where we are staying

We are staying at the Courtyard by Marriott Prague Flora, Lucemburska 66, Prague 3. The telephone number, including country code, is 420 236 088 088. See the facilities at www.courtyardpragueflora.com

Regulations and laws

You are required to abide by the regulations set forth by the program director, University of Georgia, and the laws of the Czech Republic. Misconduct can jeopardize your welfare and the welfare of other participants in the program.

Neither the University of Georgia nor the United States government or any of its agencies will be able to protect you should you engage in any illegal activities. If you commit an illegal or criminal act, (such as possession, use, or distribution of illegal drugs, theft, assault, or battery) you will be subject to Czech laws, not the laws of the United States. Remember, you will be under Czech jurisdiction, not U.S. jurisdiction.
Any student found in possession of illicit drugs will be dismissed immediately from the program, and there will be no refund.

Likewise, a pattern of alcohol abuse that results in disruptive behavior is also grounds for dismissal without a refund.

**Entry Documents**

You need a valid passport to enter the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic is a party to the Schengen Agreement. This means that U.S. citizens may enter the Czech Republic and other Schengen member states for a total of up to 90 days for tourism or business purposes without a visa. Your passport should be valid for at least three months beyond your period of stay.

You should also make several copies of your passport. Leave one copy in the U.S. with your family, provide one copy to the program director, and carry a copy around with you, just in case.

The program director will register the group with the U.S. Embassy before we leave the U.S.

**Electrical current**

Voltage in Prague is 220 volts, 50 cycles. Check the “input” information on the back of your chargers to see if they will accept 220 volts, 50 cycles. If not, you will need to bring a converter. Check ahead of time to make sure your equipment will be useable in Prague. You also will need to bring one or two standard European two-pin plug adaptors.

**Preparing for the class**

Course information: JOUR 5990, Introduction to Travel Journalism, 3 credit hours

Syllabus at [www.grady.edu/prague](http://www.grady.edu/prague). Purchase and bring with you the two books.

The class is agnostic about publishing platforms. Students are welcome to adopt one of a mix of the following platforms: narrative writing for print, photography, video, web site construction, audio. Whichever platform you adopt, bring all of the required technology. Also, check whether loss or damage to your equipment is covered by your family’s property insurance.

Bring at least one reporter’s notebook.

**Safety information**
The Czech Republic remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen Zone, the Czech Republic’s open borders with its neighbors allow for the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country undetected.

Civil disorder is rare in the Czech Republic, although strikes and demonstrations may occur. You should be vigilant in protecting your security, bearing in mind that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful may turn violent. Avoid street demonstrations whenever possible.

Take some time before you travel to improve your personal security—things often work differently outside the United States. Here are some useful tips for traveling safely abroad.

Czech Republic generally has a low crime rate. However, pick-pockering is a problem, especially in major tourist areas in Prague. Travelers are at a particularly high risk when:

- On public transportation (trains, trams or the Prague metro);
- In the city center;
- In crowded areas; and
- Eating at outdoor cafes.

As the individuals may operate in groups, and could conceivably be armed with simple weapons, victims should avoid direct confrontation with potential criminals. Pick-pocketing rings in the Czech Republic tend to be professional and highly organized.

U.S. citizens have reported incidents of sexual assault in recent years. You should be aware of the reported use of rohypnol and other “date rape” drugs in the Czech Republic. Use caution when accepting open drinks at bars or clubs, and don’t leave your drinks unattended.

If you are a victim of a crime, report the event immediately to the Program Director or Program Assistant. They will help with notification of appropriate authorities. The local equivalent of 911 is 112. Also, dial 155 for an ambulance, 158 for police, 150 for fire, and 1230 or 1240 for emergency road service.

You should only change money at banks or legitimate money kiosks. An offer to change money by an unknown person on the street is most likely a scam. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are widely available throughout major cities in the Czech Republic. Most Czech ATMs offer instructions in multiple languages and allow access to U.S. bank accounts. They are typically labeled, “Bankomat.”

American citizens have reported being overcharged by merchants on credit card transactions. Visitors to the Czech Republic should carefully verify that charges are correct before signing for purchases, keep all receipts, and check your credit card accounts online to ensure that you are billed properly for credit card payments.
Czech bars and dance clubs are generally safe. However, as with many cities, you may be approached to purchase illicit drugs; this is against the law in the Czech Republic. Be mindful that security at nightclubs could respond more forcefully than at similar venues in the United States. Be aware that casinos and gaming establishments are government-regulated, but some have been affiliated with, or attracted the interest of, organized crime.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs’ web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State’s pamphlet A Safe Trip Abroad.

**Clothing**

Pack light. Most airlines have restrictions on luggage weight and size as well as what you are allowed to have onboard. Label your luggage inside and out, mark the outside with some distinguishing mark (like a brightly colored ribbon) for easier identification of your bags.

Prague’s temperatures are mild to chilly in May. The average high temperature is 64F, the low 45F.

Light rain is common.

Prague is a large, cosmopolitan city. Better to dress like a young, professional journalist, than a tourist. Shirts and blouses, pants or skirts, jackets or sweaters are common.

Many streets and sidewalks are paved with cobblestones. Sturdy shoes are essential.

Laundry services are available at the hotel, but are expensive. Best to bring clothes that you can wash and hang. There is a nearby wash-and-fold shop – about $10 a load, same-day service.

**Money**

The currency is the Czech koruna – exchanged at a rate of about 20 per U.S. dollar. Credit cards are widely accepted. ATMs are widely available.

How much money should you bring with you? That depends on your own buying habits. Breakfast and daily transit passes are included in the program fee. Other likely expenses: lunch and dinner and optional excursions.
Health

Make an appointment with the university’s Travel Clinic as soon as possible and no later than three months before departure. It is recommended that you visit your personal physician and your dentist before you travel.

To help assure that you maintain your health, there are several preventive measures you must follow.

Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand cleaner (you may want to bring a supply from the U.S.).

Be certain to bring from the U.S. enough of any prescription medications you require for your normal health regime throughout the entire period of travel. Prescription drugs must be kept in the original container, complete with the label supplied by the pharmacy. Let your pharmacist know in advance that you will require a month’s supply of all prescription medicines. You may also need to contact your insurance company to request a “vacation over-ride” for your pharmacy. Think ahead of your travel on how you will adjust any medications that must be taken at a particular time of day. You should discuss with your personal physician how to maintain any medication routine, keeping in mind that there is a six hour difference in time between Prague and Athens.

You may want to bring a spare pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses with you. If you wear contact lenses, you should plan to bring enough contact solutions to last for the duration of the trip. You may also want to bring the prescription for your corrective lenses as there are vendors who can make replacement eyeglasses should that need arise.

You must have routine vaccinations as required by the University of Georgia.

Many over-the-counter medications are available in Prague. Because it is not possible to be certain that you will be able to find your favorite brand, it is recommended that you pack a ‘health maintenance’ kit of analgesics, small bandages and ointment, and any other standard OTC medications you routinely use.

You should also plan to bring medicine for diarrhea, either immodium or lomotil. You may want to bring a supply of “pocket-sized” packets of tissue because toilet paper is not always available in public restrooms. Feminine hygiene products are available in most markets. However, if you have a favorite brand, you should plan to bring enough to for the entire trip.

If you feel ill, tell the Program Director or Program Assistant, who will facilitate getting you medical care.

Food safety
Breakfast will be taken at the hotel. Other meals will be taken on the local economy. Food and water are considered safe.

**Weather and climate**

Prague’s temperatures are mild to chilly in May. The average high temperature is 64F, the low 45F. Light rain is common.

**Traffic and pedestrian safety**

Traffic and pedestrian safety are not an issue in Prague.

**Telecommunications and connectivity**

Internet is available free in the hotel lobby and our classroom.

To call home, most GSM mobile phones work fine in Prague.

We will provide you with a local mobile phone that we all will use to keep track of one another. The phone, served by Vodaphone, is pay-as-you-go. An initial cache of 20 minutes will be loaded on your phone. You can top up at the Vodaphone shop in the mall across from the hotel.

For local use, use pay telephones, widely available.

Making international calls from land lines or U.S.-based mobile phones is expensive (about U.S. $2 per minute). An inexpensive and popular alternative is to use the Internet (Skype, for example) to make international calls. You may want to bring your own headset if you plan to use this option for staying in touch with home.

**Contact information:**

Contact information in Prague to follow.