



PAVLINA'S PRAGUE



jewellery and modern design." gallerymillennium.cz

1 JUBILEE (JERUSALEM) SYNAGOGUE

"This is a beautiful place. If I want go to a synagogue service, this is where I go. Architecturally, it melds Art Nouveau and Moorish styles. Built in 1906, it commemorates the silver Jubilee of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, and boasts a stunning Art Nouveau interior."

2 NEW JEWISH CEMETERY

"I was walking here recently and the light felt magical. The cemetery was built in 1890 and you can see the development of artistic styles and fonts on the gravestones, from Neo-Gothic to Constructivism and present day styles. Until World War II, the community was huge and people really invested in these gravestones – some were designed by prominent Czech architects and sculptors. During the war, Jews were not allowed to walk in Prague's centre so they often walked in the cemetery. This is also where Franz Kafka is buried and his grave has become quite a tourist attraction."

SECRET TIP

"If you look from the staircase window of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague you get a great view over the Old Jewish Cemetery." upm.cz

Prague's architecture can make you feel as if you are walking in a fairy tale, although some artists once said to me that it's like being surrounded by huge, fluffy, pink cakes.

Other cities, such as Berlin, have succeeded in giving tribute to the empty spaces where the Jewish community lived. Here there are only solperstein dotted round the city." synagogue.cz

3 MAMACOFFEE

"This is a coffee roastery and kosher bakery run by Daniel and Marta Kolsky. It imports coffee directly from Ethiopian or Nicaraguan farmers. All the ingredients are seasonal and everything, from the leavened bread to the cheesecake, carrot cake and bundt cake, is delicious." mamacoffee.cz

4 ARTIVIST LAB

"This buzzy space, founded by the artists Tamara Moyzes [see pxx] and Shlomi Yaffe, gives a voice to political art, 'Artivism' and social issues." artivistlab.info

5 GALLERY MILLENNIUM

"This gallery, owned by the Hoffmeister family, features contemporary art as well as the work of avant-garde artists from the 1920s, such as Adolf Hoffmeister and Bedrich Stefan. Its shop specialises in

6 STATUE OF KAFKA BY DAVID CERNÝ

"This statue of Kafka has clever, moving parts: Kafka's head consists of 42 stainless steel panels that rotate independently of each other. I like the combination of art and technology." [Narodni / Quadrio square](http://Narodni/Quadrio square)

7 VILLA WINTERNITZ

The villa is in a residential part of Prague, off the beaten tourist track. It was commissioned in 1932 from architects Adolf Loos and Karel Lhota by the lawyer Dr Josef Winternitz, and built as a home for Winternitz's wife Jenny, daughter Suzana and son Peter. The family lived there until 1941, when the Nazis confiscated the property. The family were transported to Terezin in 1943 and then to Auschwitz. Jenny and Suzana survived but after the war were unable to live in the residence because its return was conditional on the payment of enormous taxes to the Czech state. The villa was returned to the descendants of the Winternitz family in the 1990s and they have renovated the building beautifully to its 1930s state. It also has guided tours and a rich cultural programme. loosovavila.cz

8 PAPRIKA - MEDITERRANEAN KITCHEN & BAR

"Coming back to Czech food after 10 years in Israel was a challenge so this cosy bistro is much appreciated. Apart from staples such as hummus, falafel and shakshuka, it also offers vegan shawarama." my-paprika.com

9 THE JEWISH MUSEUM PRAGUE

In 1942, the Nazi's ordered all Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia to send their "historically valuable" items to the Jewish Museum in Prague. Some of Prague's Jewish community persuaded the Nazis to also allow them to bring other treasures from the deserted communities to the comparative safety of Prague. More than 212,000 artefacts were brought to the museum. Each item was meticulously recorded by the museum staff. The Nazis' interest in the project was because it gave them in-depth knowledge about valuable confiscated Jewish objects. "There is a weight of history about the museum, but there are some exciting projects going on there. I'm looking forward to its new exhibition about the legacy of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, who was in charge of art education in Terezin." ■

jewishmuseum.cz

A new generation is bringing fresh energy to Prague's ancient streets

Pavlina Sulcova hopes that Prague's new Jewish community centre will be a lively hub for the city's nascent Jewish revival. Rebecca Taylor reports. Illustrations Thomas Fournier

"What you see, is what you get!" says Pavlina Sulcova, laughing, as she gestures to her Prague living room, during our Zoom interview. It's a light, bright space, but the 42-year-old, who took up the post as director of Prague's Jewish Community Centre last year, tells me she had hoped at this point to be speaking from the centre's newly opened building rather than her flat. But, as with everything, Covid has paused plans for Prague's new JCC.

"I hope it will be a lively meeting place, where you can get a coffee and a vegetarian snack, see an exhibition and listen to music," she sighs, adding, "It will happen." In the meantime she is organising activity

online, including a new podcast series. She hopes the new centre will also offer a fresh perspective on Prague's Jewish history. "Prague has a huge beautiful Jewish heritage, but it's not always easy to think of in a contemporary way. Our new-born organisation has the potential to explore how Jewish tradition can inspire and reflect the city in a new light."

Prague's Jewish community numbers around 1,000. Many more people have Jewish roots but don't affiliate formally. Pavlina senses a revival of Jewish life in the city. "There has been a baby boom in the community. Our Jewish school is packed. It's time to give space to the younger generation."

Born in Prague under Communism, Pavlina says Judaism was little talked about at home. "My mother was hidden during the war and many of her family didn't survive it." With fall of Communism in 1989, everything changed. "Things opened up and my mother and I bonded as we uncovered our roots." She made aliyah to Israel in 2008, working firstly for the Czech Embassy in Tel Aviv and then at the city's Czech Centre, heading its cultural programmes. But, looking for a challenge, she returned to Prague in 2019. "It's easy to be Jewish in Israel. Here it takes some effort and commitment," she says. ■

en.jccprague.com

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THOMAS TO ILLUSTRATE



“We will flourish in Prague once more”

After surviving the dark years of Nazism and the Communist regime, Prague’s Jewish community is looking to the future with optimism. **Rebecca Taylor** and **Judi Herman** report. Portraits **Karel Cudlín**



MARTIN VOPENKA, 57

Novelist

“My grandmother worked for the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London during the war and my mother was born there in 1942. My ancestors were social democrats, identifying as Czechs rather than Jews. I only decided five years ago to contact the Prague Jewish community.

I wrote a book about my childhood memories and the Prague Spring called *Black and White* because there was no colour or joy at that time. My father, a world-famous mathematician, wanted me to follow in his footsteps, but I always wanted to be a writer.

My first novel was censored but published in 1989 just before the revolution when censorship was weaker. In 1990 I established my own publishing house and I am Chairman of the Czech Publishers’ Association.

My youngest son went to the Lauder Jewish elementary school and connected me with Jewish traditions. My sons are now 26 and 18, and I have two stepdaughters. Family is very important.” JH

Martin Vopenka’s latest book is My Brother the Messiah (tr Anna Bryson Gustova), Barbican Press, 2020. See p53.

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MARINA ŠTERNOVÁ, 40

Editor in Chief of Revue Prostor magazine

“As long as we talk we’re good’ is my motto. I studied diplomacy and was cultural attaché at the Czech Embassy in Israel from 2009-14. After the Velvet Revolution many diplomats were sacked as collaborators with the old regime, so the Foreign Office was full of young people.

When I returned to Prague, I established the Days of Jerusalem festival to create a platform for Palestinians and Israelis, and Jews and Arabs living in Prague, could perform. I’m proud that I established links between music, theatre artists and fashion designers who continue to work together.

My husband runs rock festivals. He is Catholic. Our sons, aged 5 and 2, attend Jewish preschool.

At Revue Prostor we provide a space, in print and at our events, where all voices are heard with respect. Contributors analyse an idea from all perspectives: right, left or centrist, with texts running side by side.” JH



PAVEL STINGL, 60

Filmmaker

“My mother, aunt and grandmother were rescued from Auschwitz. They had lost 36 close relatives. My father is not Jewish – after the war my mother and her sister were looking for non-Jewish partners as Jewish lads were scarce and they were afraid. Even before the war my family were typical of Czech Jews in that they were very secular.

I founded a non-profit organisation to rebuild the train station at Bubny, which saw the deportations of 50,000 Prague Jews. It will be a Holocaust memorial and education centre but we have been stalled by administrative issues.

I also have a film company and make documentaries and some are about the Holocaust. RT bubny.org



TAMARA MOYZES, 45

Artist and activist

“I emigrated to Israel from my native Slovakia aged 18. In Israel, I met my husband, Shlomi Yaffe. We studied Fine Arts at the Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem and then came to Prague, as did many Slovak Jews after Czechoslovakia split in 1992. Many of my friends now have teenage kids and we take turns to host Shabbat dinner and also meet up at the Jerusalem synagogue – our son Tamil was bar mitzvah there last year. He’s now at the Lauder Jewish school.

Our Artist Lab is an initiative

that gives voice to vulnerable communities including Roma and refugees. Our experience as Jews informs our projects, such as 2019’s, ‘Uncovered’, which focused on the pavement in Prague’s Vaclav Square. The square had been built on a bed of Jewish gravestones stolen under Communism. We staged a performance in the closely guarded square at 4am and were filmed prising up the stones. Afterwards, the municipality gave the stones back to the community.” JH



RABBI DAVID MAXA, 30

Rabbi of Ec Chajim (Tree of Life), Prague

“Ec chajim is a new Progressive community and is mostly made up of families with children, although our oldest member is 95. My father was a Holocaust survivor; he died when I was 11, when I wanted to know more about being Jewish. I enrolled in Jewish studies at Prague’s Charles University, which led to my wish to become a rabbi.

My wife, Judita is a historian and comes from one of the oldest Czech Jewish families. She’s related to Gustav Mahler. Her father was a survivor of Terezin, Auschwitz and Mauthausen. My mum is the cantorial soloist for the Jewish Liberal Union, as well as a music teacher and opera singer who has performed with Prague’s National Theatre.

I spend a lot of time with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes that bring me lots of optimism. I often teach the students’ parents who never had Bar/Bat Mitzvahs – in the spring I’m officiating at a Bat Mitzvah of a mother and her daughter. JH

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LEO PAVLÁT, 70

director of the Jewish Museum, Prague

“My mother was the only Holocaust survivor in her family. I grew up seeing the camp number on her arm. I’ve always known it’s a privilege to be alive.

We were not encouraged to be Jewish. That feeling intensified after the 1952 Slánský trials, which resulted in the hanging of 11 Communist officials – most of them were Jewish.

Our school textbooks said that 360,000 Czech citizens had been killed in World War II, with no mention that three quarters were Jewish.

I worked for a children’s publisher, Albatros, and became interested in Jewish children’s literature.

I was in a group of people who learnt Hebrew, attended prayers at the Old-New synagogue and translated Jewish writers, printing them in limited numbers of copies on typewriter. We were watched and interrogated by the police.

After the fall of Communism I was appointed second secretary at the Czech Embassy in Tel Aviv and became

director of the Jewish Museum in Prague in 1994.

The Jewish Museum was established in 1906. During the war it became a storehouse for thousands of confiscated items from local Jewish communities. Most of these items remained there after the war – in my office, for example, is a table that belonged to a family who probably celebrated Shabbat around it.

Today, the number of Jews across the Czech Republic is around 4,000, with the largest concentration in Prague. Jews are almost invisible in the capital but the wider public is positive about Jewish life and the Czech government supports Israel. Our Jewish kindergarten and the community’s two Lauder schools are booming.

I feel confident that Jewish life will flourish here. RT ■

To hear more from Leo Pavlát and other members of the Prague Jewish community, join JR’s online event on 21 March. See pxx.