



Sv. Jan na Prádle, Mala Strana

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PO Box 950-788
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publications@ili.cc

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SERVANT LEADERS

Churches of Mala Strana, Prague

Mala Strana (the lesser quarter, beneath Hradcany) has more than its fair share of magnificent historic churches. Some date back over nine centuries; many have been remodeled from Romanesque to Gothic to Baroque, with spectacular results. Any Prague guidebook will describe *St. Nicolas Church* (Svatý Mikuláš) in Malá Strana, the most well-known specimen of Prague's Baroque architecture, but that's only the beginning. Here are four more fascinating churches.

St. John at the Laundry (sv. Jana Křtitele na prádle) on Říční ulice (River Lane). An early medieval settlement called Újezd, by the Vltava river under Petřín Hill, was founded in the 10th century. Its ecclesial and cultural center was one of the oldest churches in Prague – the Church of sv. Jana Křtitele u vody, later sv. Jana Křtitele na prádle. This modest Gothic church was built in the 12th century. In 1142, it was a refuge for the Benedictines from the St George Convent at Prague Castle, who had to flee the Castle during a siege. The church has gone through a number of renovations over the centuries, most recently in 2002. Currently, it is a Hussite church (photo to the left).

Church of the Virgin Mary under the Chain (kostel Panny Marie pod řetězem) was established in 1158 by the Order of the Maltese Knights, together with monastery and hospital. In the first half of the 14th century, the original Romanesque basilica was rebuilt in Gothic style. However, only a chancel was built together with the unfinished towers in front of the church. While the church was being rebuilt, it was burned down by the Hussites led by Jan Žižka of Trocnov in 1420.



Today's appearance results from an early Baroque reconstruction carried out by the famous architect Carlo Lurago and started in the mid 17th century.. According to one legend, the name is connected to a statue of the Virgin Mary, which had a chain on her neck. Another one indicates a connection to the old Judith Bridge and its tower, which had a gate with a chain. However, the most probable version seems to be the one that refers to the chain that was drawn out from that part of the lesser town across the river all the way to the Old Town, so as to prevent ships that were en route to Prague from going through without paying the customs duty.



Monastery in Kolin, CR



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Churches of Mala Strana, Prague

Church of the Virgin Victorious (kostel Panny Marie Vítězné) on Karmelitská ulice, was built by Prague Lutherans between 1611-1613. After the Austrian victory at White Mountain in 1620, the church was given to the Roman Catholic Carmelites. Peter Brandl renovated the interior in 1700 to make a home for the Infant Jesus of Prague (Soška Pražského Jezulátka), a small wax doll that became a popular object of veneration, attracting pilgrims from around the world. Mass is offered in Czech, Spanish, Italian, French and English.



Church of St Thomas (Kostel svatého Tomáše) at Malostranské náměstí was part of the convent of the Augustinians when they settled in Bohemia at the end of the 13th century. The Hussite movement had a brutal effect on this church; in 1420 it was first plundered, the burned to the ground by mobs claiming they were supporting Jan Hus and his martyrdom. After the defeat of the Protestants in Bohemia by the Hapsburg monarchy in 1620, the rebuilt church was renovated in Renaissance style; between 1723 and 1731, Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer remodeled it in Baroque style. Today, the church, which is Roman Catholic, offers services in English and Spanish as well as Czech (interior photo below).

