

# Along the Royal Route



“This is the year 1347 and Prague is getting ready for the coronation of the future Bohemian king, Charles IV”, said Žito as we landed on the ground again. The coronation ceremony, as Žito explained to us, was determined by Charles IV himself. The ceremony began at Vyšehrad from where the festive procession, lead by the monarch, the Archbishop of Prague and other prelates, princes and noblemen, went on along the so-called Royal Route. It lead from the Powder Tower through Celetna Street and across Old Town Square towards Charles Bridge. After crossing the river, it continued across Lesser Town Square and up Neruda street, finally reaching Prague Castle.

There were a lot of people everywhere and streets were flanked by curious crowds who wanted to see the new King. Of course we could not miss such a sight, so we blended in with the crowd.

The capitular Church of St Peter and Paul was rebuilt under the order of Charles IV after 1364. The total length of the church was 110 m.

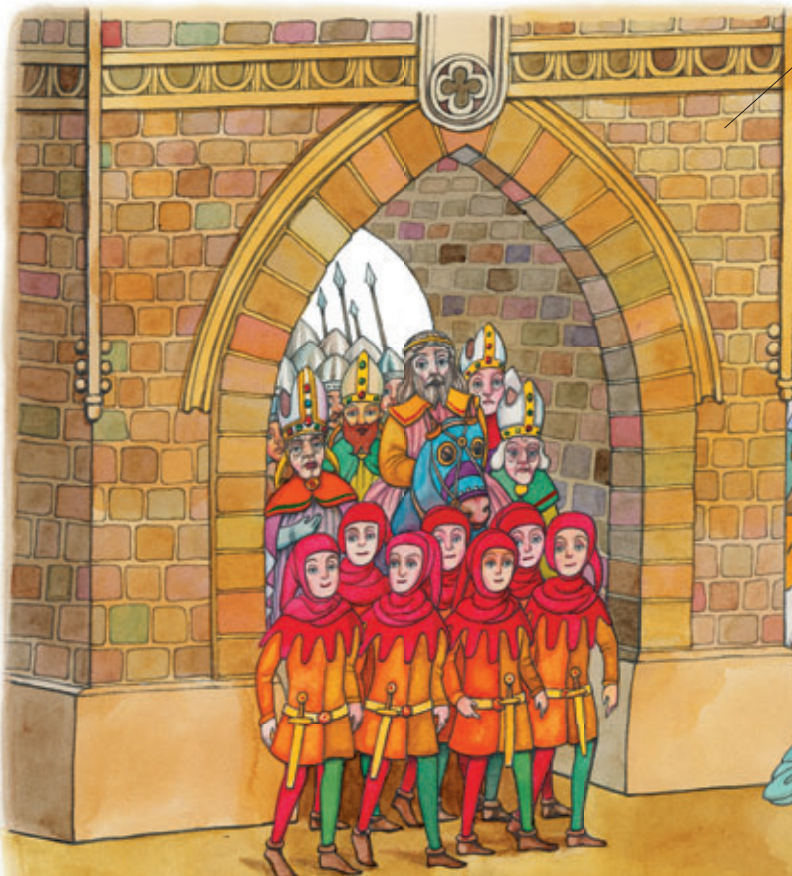
The western main gate to Vyšehrad, later called Špička. This building, almost 30 m wide, was a kind of gateway fortress with nine oriel turrets on the gallery.

One day before the coronation, the future king, accompanied by prelates, left for Vyšehrad. Here, in the ancient seat of the Přemyslids, he put on the bast fibre shoes that Přemysl the Plowman, founder of the dynasty, used to wear. Over his shoulder he hung a peasant pouch. With this act, he expressed his reverence for the Přemyslid tradition of the Czechs.

Bast fibre shoes



1



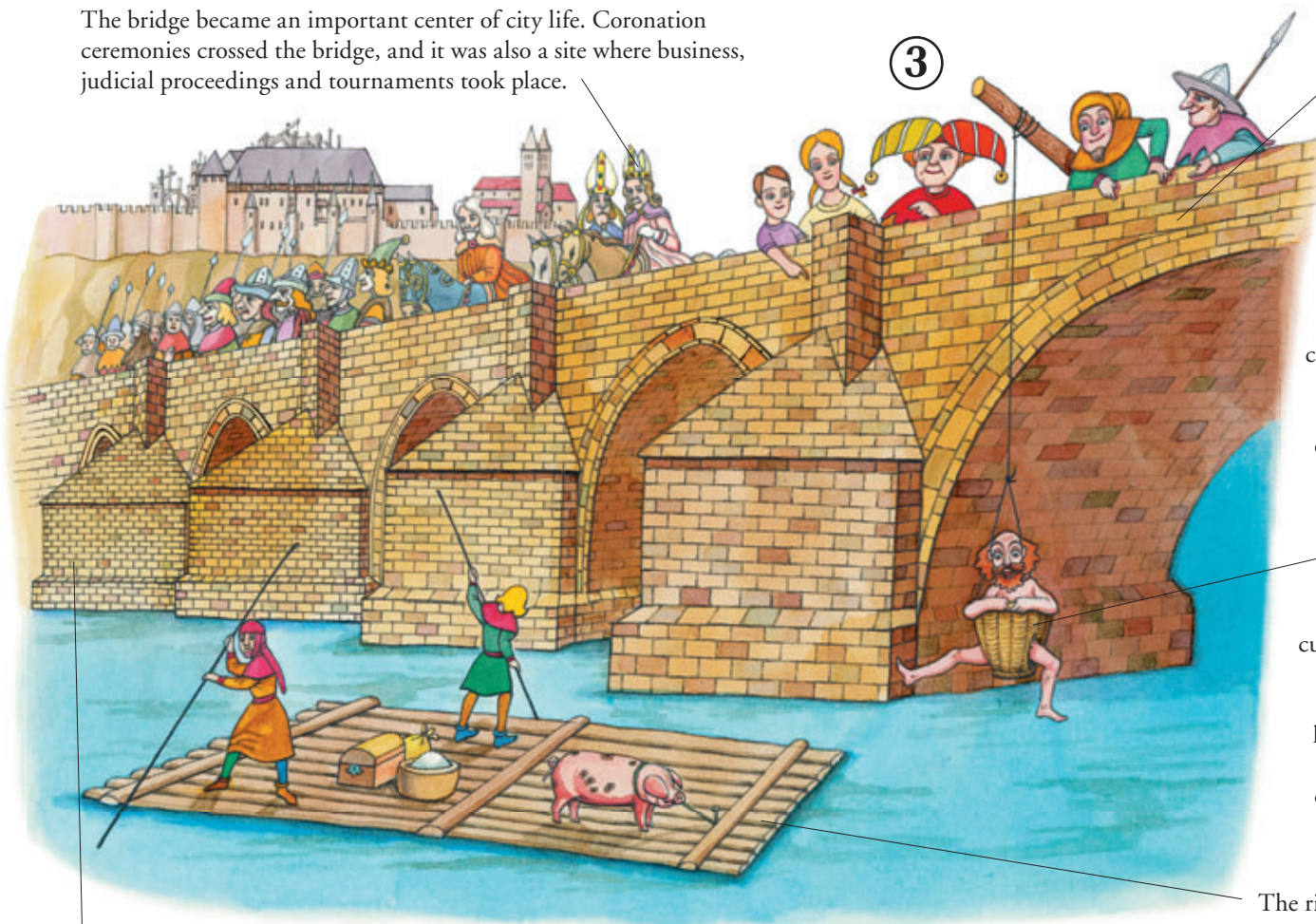
One of the thirteen original gates of the Old Town ramparts, called **Odraná Gate**, was located at the beginning of Celetná street where the Royal Route began. Its importance grew towards the end of the 14th century when a new royal court (Králov dvůr) was built in its neighborhood. King Wenceslas IV lived here from 1383 on.



Stepped Gable  
Half-timbered Masonry  
Pocket Sack

2

The bridge became an important center of city life. Coronation ceremonies crossed the bridge, and it was also a site where business, judicial proceedings and tournaments took place.



3

**Stone Bridge** (later called **Charles Bridge**) was built under Charles IV in 1357 at the location of the 12th century Judith's Bridge, which had been destroyed. The 27-year old Peter Parler supervised its construction. The bridge was finished at the beginning of the 15th century. It is 516 m long and 10 m wide.

To the merriment of Prague's citizens, bakers who cheated their customers were immersed into the river in wicker baskets. This peculiar kind of punishment was meant to reform these cunning masters at least for a while.

The river **Vltava** was not only a source of water and fish but also a busy thoroughfare. Wood and also building materials for the cathedral were brought to Prague on water. In 1364, a prohibition against polluting the river was issued.

**Charles Bridge** is an outstanding technical achievement. It rests on 16 semicircular bridge-arches faced with chiseled sand stone blocks. According to medieval method, eggs were added to the mortar to make it harder.

Half-timbered half-story

4



Oriel Turret  
Arcades

The Romanesque palatial **All Saints Chapel** from the 12th century was rebuilt after 1370 by Peter Parler in Gothic style, according to Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.



The ceremonial coronation sword from the time of Charles IV is also called **St Wenceslas's Sword**. A cross-shaped opening in its blade allegedly contained a relic of St Wenceslas. The sword is 93,5 cm long and has been preserved as a part of the **Coronation Jewels**.

On the morning following the festive procession, the Archbishop with prelates and noblemen entered the King's bedchamber and the waking ceremony began. The future king was dressed and smoked with incense. Then he continued in the festive procession to the church for the coronation ceremony.