

19 pages of inspiring caravan travel ideas

November 2009 £3.80

# Practical caravan

**TINY 2-BERTHS  
ON TRIAL** p55

Latest models from Sterling and Elddis



AMAZING NEW

## BAILEY PEGASUS

"The most complete  
caravan ever built" p46

Britain's best-selling caravan magazine

**Mid-size 4x4s rated**

Awesome Volvo XC60 takes  
on Audi's stunning Q5 p73



Our 1000-mile verdict on  
Vauxhall's Insignia p67



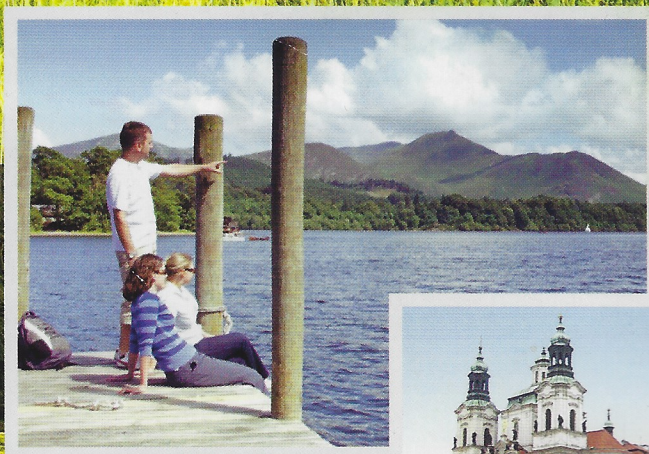
haymarket



**Inspiring travel ideas**

**Lake District** for beginners  
**Czech Republic** adventures

**PLUS** Touring Britain's seaside piers  
5 great sites for outdoor activities



■ Perfect touring toolkit ■ 90 years of Eccles ■ Mercedes E-Class  
■ Bike racks rated ■ Buying used: Skoda Octavia and Bessacarr



## CZECH REPUBLIC

CARAVANNERS  
**JANE AND  
ANDREW  
SULLIVAN WITH  
THEIR CHILDREN  
ELENA (11) AND  
MADELEINE (9)**

STAY  
**ONE WEEK**  
CAR  
**2007 NISSAN  
TERRANO 2.7 TD**  
CARAVAN  
**2005 LUNAR  
CHATEAU 500**

So far during our once-in-a-lifetime caravan tour of the Continent we have travelled through much of Northern Europe. We've been north of the Arctic Circle in Norway, passed through Sweden and explored once communist-ruled eastern Germany.

We were heading for Austria and, fortunately, our route took us through the Czech Republic.

We've wanted to visit Prague for many years so passing through provided an ideal opportunity to see this beautiful city.



The Sullivans are touring the Continent with their caravan



# Crowning glory

**Jane Sullivan** and family spend a week in the Czech Republic exploring castles and the city of Prague

THE FIRST THING we noticed as we left Germany and entered the Czech Republic was that our sat-nav had even less idea of what road we were on than we did. It didn't have Czech maps. So it was back to old-fashioned map reading for me.

This border crossing was the first time we'd had to show our passports since we left England, although I think the woman at passport control believed we were trying to bribe our way in. We knew we had to buy a vignette to drive on the motorways and when we pulled up at the border I had the money out ready to pay. From the surprise on the officer's face, I realised I should have handed over our passports rather than waving money at her.

I don't think I was the first person to make the mistake, as she pointed out the vignette office 100

yards up the motorway and chuckled as I finally handed over our passports. It was a good thing we didn't have to explain ourselves because Czech is a daunting language to learn. Fortunately, most people whom foreign visitors encounter there speak English and we only needed such basic words as 'please' and 'thank you'.

After a two-hour drive we arrived at Caravan Camp Valek, in the village of Chrutenice. We were about 20km west of Prague in central Bohemia. It was September and the campsite was almost deserted, so we had a great spot by the pool and playground.

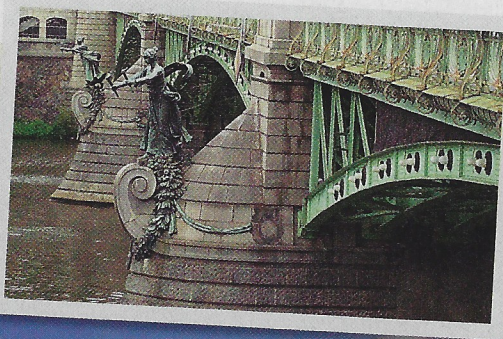
We stayed on site for the rest of the day

and took advantage of its restaurant for an easy dinner. The food was very good and only cost £15 for four meals and drinks. (The currency is the Czech crown, or koruna, abbreviated as CZK, which is worth about 3p.) We had internet access on site as well, so we used it to check the weather report. The day had been a mix of sun one minute and rain the next and it

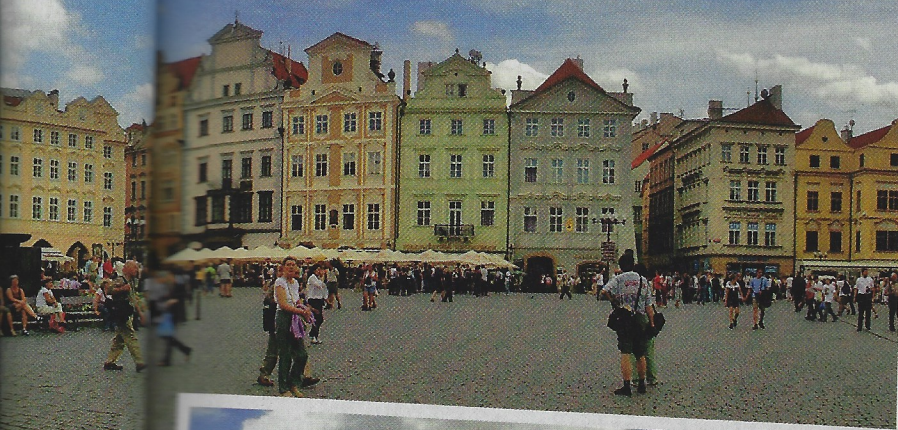
looked as though this would continue for the coming week.

It didn't really matter, though, because there was plenty to do nearby, indoors and out. Our first stop the next day was the village of Lodenice where we tried to find a cash machine. Failing that





ABOVE Cechuv Bridge is one of several over the Vltava River in Prague. MAIN Old Town Square is dominated by the twin-spires of the Tyn Church



The stunning Baroque St Nicholas' Church on Old Town Square in Prague  
BELOW The Sullivan family had their choice of touring pitches during the slow season in the rural idyll of Caravan Camp Valek



## ESSENTIALS



### KARLŠTEJN CASTLE

■ This Gothic castle (pictured above) was founded in 1348 by the Czech King and Roman Emperor Charles IV. It was designed to be a safe place for royal treasures, including Charles's collection of holy relics and the coronation jewels of the Roman Empire.  
**CHARGES** Admission to the castle grounds is free.

For English-language tours, it is best to reserve for busy periods. Book and pay in advance online. Fees from: Adult 250 CZK (£8). Child (6-16) 150 CZK (£5). Child (0-6) 20 CZK (70p).  
**OPENING TIMES**  
Daily, February-November.

Weekends and occasional weekdays, December-January. Closes 3pm in winter and 6pm in summer. Check website for details.  
**TEL** 00 420 311 681 617  
**WEB** [www.hradkarlstejn.cz](http://www.hradkarlstejn.cz)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

■ Prague  
Mostecká 4  
118 00 Prague 1  
**TEL** 00 420 257 213 420

■ Central Bohemia  
Středočeský kraj, Husova 19-21, Prague 1  
**TEL** 00 420 222 210 844 or 00 420 222 222 398  
**WEB** [www.centralbohemia.cz](http://www.centralbohemia.cz)



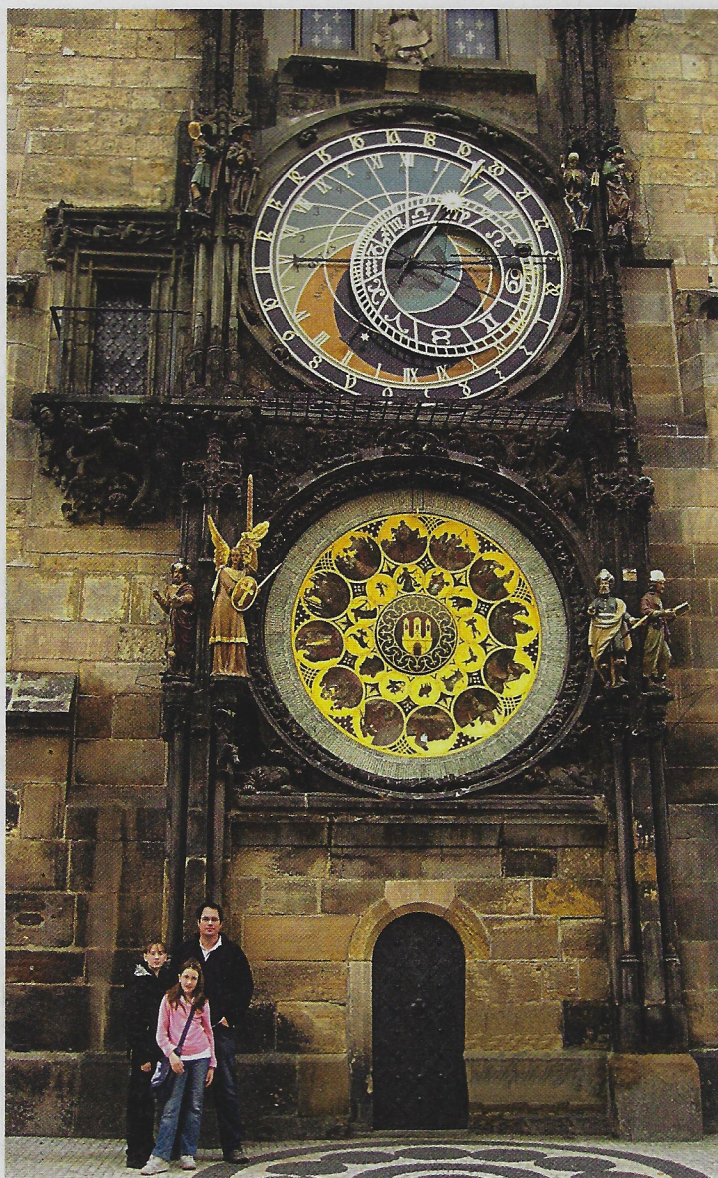
Br'er bears – two of the three in the town of Beroun – share a brotherly moment in their enclosure in the town park. The bear is the town's symbol

we tried the post office and received a less than friendly welcome. A row of picture signs with red crosses set out the rules for entering: no smoking, no ice creams, no cameras, no dogs, no phones and no guns! A last sign featured a silhouette of a man with a hat, trench coat and briefcase: no thieves? No spies? No men with briefcases? The mind boggles.

We thought we might have more luck in a larger town, so drove on

to Beroun. The tourist information point there had a leaflet on the Beroun bears but Elena and Madi voted for the indoor swimming pool as our first stop. The pool turned out to be great, and cheap – £8 for two hours for the four of us. It had turned grey outside, so the pool was a good rainy-day activity.

The weather cheered up after lunch so we headed into the local park to see the bears. The bear is the heraldic symbol of Beroun and



Andrew and the girls got to see the astronomical clock put on its show. The enormous timepiece is built into the side of Prague's Old Town Hall

they have three bears, all brothers, called Vojta, Kuba and Matej. They were born in Cesky Krumlov, South Bohemia, in 2000. They have a much larger enclosure than the Bern bears we saw in Switzerland and were more active, too.

The next day we set out to find Karlštejn Castle, a Gothic castle built for Czech King Charles IV as a country retreat. It sits on a crag overlooking the River Berounka so to reach it we had to take a short but steep walk from the car park along a small road lined with souvenir shops and restaurants.

We could have taken a horse and carriage to the top but chose to walk the mile and a quarter so that Madi, our family shopaholic, could browse at every shop. It took us a lot longer than the expected 40 minutes but we reached the castle

in the end and wandered around the courtyard and Well Tower, admiring the views. These parts of the castle are free to visitors but there are also guided tours inside the castle for a fee.

We had been lucky with the weather, but the next day the rain caught up with us. There is a large shopping complex, Metropole Zlicín, just a few kilometres from Camp Valek, which made a handy wet-weather activity. It is a lovely big centre with many international shops – including M&S! – and the added bonus of a cinema. About half of the films were dubbed but half were in English with subtitles, so we were able to find something we could understand.

We'd saved the highlight of our week, the trip to Prague, for last. We thought getting there would be



Elaborate and fanciful buildings with painted facades line the squares and streets in the Old Town section of the country's capital city

*“Prague became my favourite capital we had seen so far on our trip across the Continent. I loved the small streets, fancy architecture and painted facades of the houses”*

expensive but we were pleasantly surprised. We drove to the Metropole station a few miles from our site and paid just 25p to park for the whole day. The train to the capital city cost 50p for adults and 25p for kids.

We arrived at Prague's Mustek station, near Wenceslas Square, and walked up to the huge bronze monument of Wenceslas, Bohemia's best-known patron saint. We also saw the memorial to Jan Palach, a student who immolated himself there – and died of his burns – in 1969 to protest the

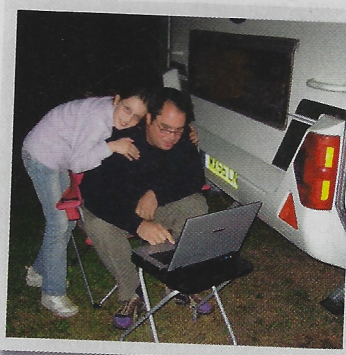
Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia the year before.

We then headed for the Old Town, passing market stalls set between beautifully painted houses, and made our way to the busy Old Town Square. The Old Town Hall, with its astronomical clock, is very beautiful and as the clock strikes the hour a series of moving figures (the Apostles, Death, Vanity, Greed and the Turk) perform a display.

We were heading directly for historic Charles Bridge. Tourists, street artists and musicians converged here to create a lively, thoroughly enjoyable atmosphere.

The day flew by and, after coffee and cake at the foot of the castle in the Little Quarter, we headed back to the Metropole station.

Prague became my favourite capital we had seen so far on our trip across the Continent. I loved the small streets, fancy architecture and painted facades of the houses in the Old Town area. It is definitely a city that demands a longer return visit because there is so much more for us to see.



Andrew and Madeleine check the forecast over the site's Wi-Fi



The view of Prague's Old Town from the city's famous Charles Bridge, which is filled with buskers, street artists and tourists LEFT The statue of Wenceslas, the country's patron saint, stands in the central-city square that bears his name. In the background is the magnificent National Museum

## CAMPSITES

### Caravan Camp Valek

Chrutenice 155, 267 12

Loděnice, Czech Republic

Tel 00 420 311 67 21 47

Web [www.campvalek.cz](http://www.campvalek.cz)

Email [info@campvalek.cz](mailto:info@campvalek.cz)

Open May-September

This site is 20km southwest of Prague. The pitches are set on a large, gently sloping meadow. It has good facilities, including washblocks, a launderette, an outdoor swimming pool, a play area, tennis courts and table tennis. There is also a licensed on-site restaurant that serves

good-quality Czech food at very reasonable prices.

The staff all speak excellent English and are friendly. They are happy to give advice on local attractions, including those in Prague.

Getting to Prague is easy because the Metro is just a few miles away. All-day parking there costs 25p.

#### Charges

Pitch+2+hook-up....	475 CZK (£16)
Extra adult.....	115 CZK (£4)
Extra child (6-14).....	55 CZK (£2)
Dog.....	45 CZK (£1.50)

#### Facilities

- Grass pitches ■ Washblocks
- Launderette ■ Children's play area
- Outdoor swimming pool
- Tennis courts ■ Table tennis
- Wi-Fi

### Camping Oase Praha

Zlatníky 47, 252 41 Dolní Brezany,

Czech Republic

Tel 00 420 241 932 044

Web [www.campoase.cz](http://www.campoase.cz)

Open 4 April-20 September

When Prague is the focus of your trip to the republic, consider this well-appointed and beautifully

maintained site. It is just over two miles from the capital and a bus that goes there stops right by the site's entrance. Besides Prague, there are castles, a cave and other attractions nearby.

There are plenty of activities on site, including trampolining, mini-golf and table tennis. There are also a dedicated football pitch and a paddling pool.

All 100 pitches have electrical hook-ups and 20 of them also boast water and drainage connections. Basic groceries are sold in reception. The atmosphere is friendly and the helpful manager speaks English.

#### Charges

Pitch+2+hook-up.....	420-820 CZK (£14-£27)
Full-service pitch+2.....	450-920 CZK (£15-£31)
Extra adult.....	120 CZK (£4)
Extra child (0-12).....	90 CZK (£3)
Pup tent/extra car....	100CZK (£4)
Dog.....	Free-50 CZK (£5)

#### Facilities

- Heated washblock ■ Facilities for disabled ■ Baby-care facilities
- Launderette ■ Indoor dishwashing sinks ■ Restaurant
- Children's play area ■ Outdoor and indoor swimming pools
- Recreation field ■ TV/games room ■ Wi-Fi

Note: All pound equivalents approximate



Caravan Camp Valek has a restaurant and many other good amenities