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Prague: A Cultural and Literary Companion (Cities of the Imagination)

Richard Burton

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Richard Burton : Prague: A Cultural and Literary Companion (Cities of the Imagination) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Prague: A Cultural and Literary Companion (Cities of the Imagination):

Located at the very center of Europe, Prague has been on the frontline of international political, intellectual, religious and cultural conflicts for more than six centuries. Invaded and occupied by the Habsburgs, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Nazis, and then Communist Russia, the city's identity is shaped by a long experience of foreign domination and a strong sense of martyrdom. A treasure house of Gothic, baroque and modernist architecture, Prague is also a city of icons and symbols: statues, saints and signs reveal a turbulent history of religious and cultural conflict. As Kafka's nightmare city and home of the Good Soldier evejk, the Czech capital also produced two of the twentieth century's emblematic writers. Richard Burton explores this metropolis of theatrical allusion, in which politics and drama have always been intertwined. His interpretation of the city's cultural past and present encompasses opera and rock music, puppetry and cinema, surrealism and socialist realism. Looking at Prague's world-famous landmarks and lesser-known sites, his reading of the city through its writing and iconography is both perceptive and challenging. * THE CITY OF ARTISTS AND WRITERS: The Castle and Kafka, Ha'ek and Kundera; music from Smetana to the

Plastic People of the Universe; modernism and cubism; political theater and the playwright-president Vaclav Havel. * THE CITY OF TYRANNY AND RESISTANCE: Jan Hus and anti-Catholic revolt; subjugation and the rise of Czech nationalism; Germans, Czechs and Jews; "Prague Spring" 1968, Charter 77 and the "Velvet Revolution" of November 1989. * THE CITY OF MAGIC, MURDER AND MYTH: Medieval alchemy and astrology; the myth of the Golem, the ghetto and anti-Semitism; living puppets, robots, and a tradition of defenestration.

"...the wealth of arcane detail .. could lend even the briefest city break a new and intimate dimension. Paul Buck's Lisbon is riddled with engaging diversions..." - The Times Higher Education Supplement
About the Author Richard Burton was formerly Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Sussex University. He first visited Prague in 1970, and has recently relocated to France.