

---

# Sunday in the Footsteps of Franz Kafka

---

## Sunday in the Footsteps of Franz Kafka

Prague is a city of contrasts, with modernist buildings and centuries – old cobble streets – every corner tells stories of a past that is still present in the reflection of the windows, in the eyes of the citizens. There are secrets and stories waiting to be told, there are people who remain icons of the city transcending the barriers of time. Last week a group of curious Erasmus students decided to spend their Sunday afternoon exploring the links between the city and a writer, enigmatic and full of legends. Thanks to the Erasmus Club of the Faculty of Arts, the activity called “The Walk in the Footsteps of Franz Kafka” was a successful adventure.

In the early afternoon of Sunday 27 of April, a group of students started to arrive on the Želivského metro station. The platform, unusually uncrowned, was the perfect run-up for the expected tour. 15 students and one afternoon to learn about the intricacies of a key icon in the Czech culture.

Accompanied by the few rays of a hidden sun, the New Jewish Cemetery, a place with magical beauty of its vegetation and silence, was the first stop. The graves told us about the history of the family into which Kafka was born in 1883 and grew up with, a German-language writer of novels and short stories, regarded by critics as one of the most influential authors of the 20th century. In June 1924 the body of Franz Kafka, who passed away of tuberculosis, was turned over to the City Funeral Services of Community of Vienna and transferred to Prague. The stones, as symbols of respect and mourning, decorate the place where other key characters such as the architect Antonín Balšánek and the writer Ota Pavel also rest.

In the middle of Wenceslas Square in Nové Město (New Town of Prague), the years have preserved the Prague branch of the Italian insurance company Assicurazioni Generali. In spite of the current use of the building as an international clothing brand shop, we can still imagine a young Kafka working between those walls, a place where he spent nearly a year really unhappy with the working time schedule that made it extremely difficult to concentrate on writing.

The tour continued between the labyrinthine main streets, full of tourists deaf to the biographic story. On Železná Street 9, Kafka was admitted to the German Charles-Ferdinand University of Prague in 1901, where he began to study Chemistry but switched to Law after two weeks. The House "Of Three Kings" (Celetná Street 3) is another little unknown treasure in the middle of the Old Town, and the building was the new home where the Kafka family moved into in September of 1896 and which was also the location of the paternal store. Celetná Street, as full of stories as it was full of people at this time of spring, observed years ago Kafka's first love adventure.

With mid-afternoon arriving, the “Walk in the Footsteps of Franz Kafka” continued towards the Kinský Palace where Kafka's high school and in the later years also his father's shop were located. The famous Kafka's birth house, on the northeast side of the Old Town Square with modest living conditions when Prague Jewish ghetto had still existed, gave us an idea of the reality of Franz Kafka's early childhood. The Oppelt House on the corner of the Old Town Square and Pařížská Street (Kafka's family home from November 1913 till his death) or the Kafka's childhood home, House of the Minute (where the family lived 1889-1896) were ones of the last stops.

Without doubt, there couldn't be a better way to end the Franz Kafka tour than at the sculpture honouring the talented man who wrote *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial* or *The Castle*; words that still resonate in the streets of a city that keeps in mind the imagination, life, legends and contradictions of a universal writer. The statue is located in Dušní Street, just next to the Spanish Synagogue.



**By:**

**Queralt Morros Baro** is for a semester at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Charles University, Prague. Born near Barcelona, she is in her last year studying for a BA in Journalism at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Interested in literature, culture and society, iForum is for her the perfect way to practice journalism skills in a foreigner country and learning about the experience of working abroad.



**Proofreading:**

**Elan Grug Muse** is in her second year studying for a BA in Politics at the University of Nottingham, and is studying for a year at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Charles University, Prague. She is interested in international politics, music and literature, and was motivated to write for iForum because it offered a good opportunity to improve her journalism skills.