Letters From Prague

**IN JANUARY 2007**, we held a Teacher Convention in the beautiful city of Prague—Praha in Czech. You can visit Prague on NETC’s Berlin, Bohemia and Bavaria, Europe: East and West and Paris, Switzerland and Bavaria. The convention has been described by more than one Teacher as “an incredible experience”. During the convention, Teachers visited the castle, admired the grand astronomical clock, and were entertained by live Bohemian music. Some teachers also visited the castle, saw the grand astronomical clock, and made many connections and friendships. Others attended because they didn’t know what to expect, but it was well worth it. It was so great meeting everyone from NETC. Thank you for organizing such a fantastic convention. I learned so much and made many connections and friendships. I’m looking forward to the next one!” —BECKY PIETROPAOLI, NEW YORK

“I had the best time and got to find out first-hand how wonderful NETC people really are!” —MYRA MCINTYRE, INDIANA

“Thanks to the NETC staff involved in the convention, Prague, and every aspect of the time we spent there, far exceeded any expectation that I had. I truly appreciate all of the time and effort put into making this trip so fabulous. Spending time with other trip leaders was additionally invaluable. I can’t wait for the next opportunity to attend another teacher convention!” —LYNDA RAUSCH-ARBOGAST, OHIO

“It was an opportunity of a lifetime, which I enjoyed immensely!” —DIANE MIKAN, CONNECTICUT

**“Ah Ha, Praha!”**

BY DANAJEAN MABRY, NORTH CAROLINA

A remarkable weekend in January prompted a new-found colleague to invent this slogan at the NETC Prague Teacher Convention.

The convention began as a reunion of old friends and colleagues at the Amsterdam Airport, en route to Prague. As I looked around, I realized half the passengers were NETC hosts and teachers headed for the convention together! I was delighted to see traveling buddies who’d attended the Rome convention with me in ’05, and pleased to meet new teachers. We began sharing experiences on past tours and exchanging new ideas before even landing in Prague.

Upon arrival, I was greeted by NETC hosts at the Hotel Maria Prague, a unique and splendid historic hotel. It seemed to reflect the entire experience in this fantastic city. It’s amazing how historic Prague is, and when you visit with a group of teachers, you gain a new perspective of the art, history, language and culture (not to mention the best beer in Europe) that has survived in this eclectic city. The only capital city in central Europe to escape the bombs of the last century’s wars, Prague is one of Europe’s best-preserved cities.

From the welcome dinner in the hotel’s dining area, to the farewell dinner at the Strahov Monastery to enjoy the incredible sunset and view of the Charles Bridge, NETC offered something unpredictable and memorable every day and night. While NETC had exciting activities planned for us, some of the most memorable moments were sharing travel experiences with colleagues. I learned great trip customization tips and collected an extensive list of sites around the world, “off-the-beaten-path”, to visit with my students. I was also able to share successful recruitment ideas with new teachers. NETC sponsored a focus group the first morning of the convention, involving a wide spectrum of teachers from new to “experienced”. This focus group was very beneficial to those attending and will continue to benefit future groups.

Teachers were encouraged to present ideas, successful and unsuccessful travel experiences, and share some student assessment and learning techniques that have worked well in the past. The focus group reaffirmed my confidence in NETC’s commitment to student learning. The best education takes place when the student is fully engaged with the learning experience as it’s taking place, which is what NETC provides through LEAP!™ activities on tour, and what they provided throughout the convention.

A learning circle is a group who meets to learn and discuss issues of importance to themselves and their community. Learning circles have proven an effective and practical method of learning—with action outcomes. The learning circle created through friendships made in Prague will continue with contacts throughout the year and the slogan “Ah Ha, Praha!” will become one of the mantras we share as educators who travel.