



Lennon Wall

fall 2023

A letter from our editors....

Dear AAU community, family, and friends,

This semester is a turning point for Lennon Wall Magazine and AAU as a whole. It marks the beginning of the Editing and Publishing class dedicated to growing our staff and improving Lennon Wall. As the first editors running the Lennon Wall class, in conjunction with Michael Kahn, there was a steep learning curve. We hope that our mistakes will smooth the path for future Lennon Wall editors to keep growing the quality and quantity of articles.

We would like to celebrate our staff—which has increased threefold—and the hard work of our new Dean, Karen Grunow, and Professor Kahn, who have helped revitalize our newspaper and journalism departments. Furthermore, we would like to thank the new chair of journalism, Seth Rogoff, for highlighting the paper in weekly updates. The growth of our staff has increased the flow of published articles, addressing more news and events both on campus and around Prague. We would like to highlight the new Sports section because athletics builds community by fostering spirit and teamwork.

With COVID-19 a distant but everlasting memory, campus events have been thriving, and school spirit is on the rise. Trivia nights have flourished, and the Student Council has thrown memorable events such as the Halloween Party and Taylor Swift Night. Being an international campus, it is important to acknowledge the ongoing conflicts around the world, as many students are adversely affected. We believe universities should be a place of debate, education, and justice with full academic freedoms, free from political polarization.

As an independent newspaper, we make it our mission to broadcast all students' voices. It is a work in progress, and we will continue to do our best to provide and seek balance and truth. As a staff, we value freedom of expression, impartiality, accuracy, and humanity. We will push through any bureaucracy that stands in the way of providing fair and factual information to our readers. We will not be silent when there are voices in need of hearing.

Warm Regards,

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by Rose Mayer

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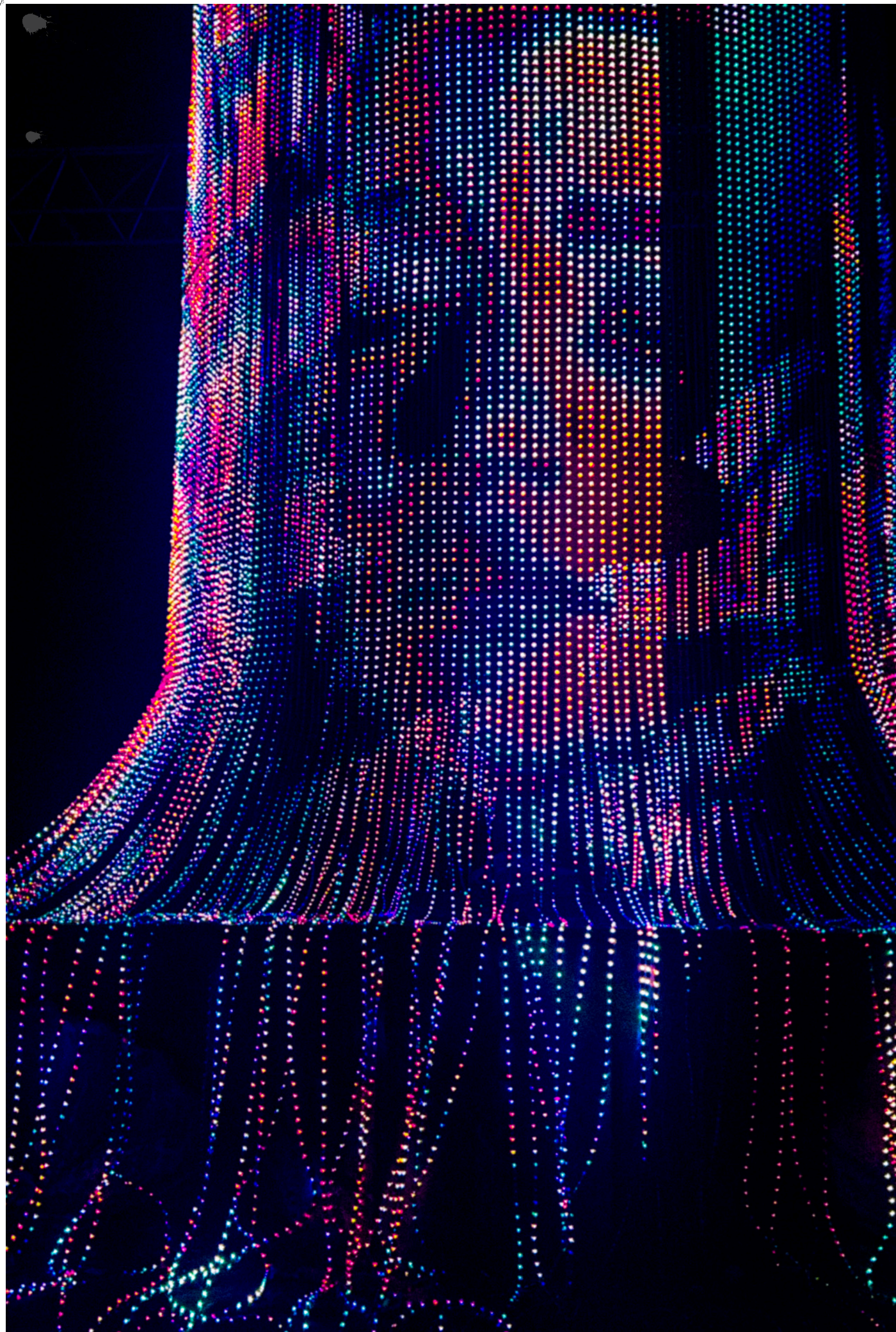


photo by Danaia Orlianska

Illuminating the Heart of Europe: A Glimpse into Signal Festival 2023

By Danaia Orlianska

Prague's annual Signal Festival, eagerly anticipated by people from all over, held a one-of-a-kind blend of art, tech, and pure creativity from October 12–15.

This year, the event pushed the envelope in terms of originality, making nature, technology, society, and culture intertwine “to form the ecosystems in which we live and search for traces of joy, beauty, and the excitement of new discoveries.”

Picture this: a towering cylindrical structure, high-speed cameras, and an eight-channel sound system—all coming together to give you an immersive experience that unravels the hidden algorithms shaping our online encounters at the speed of light.

“My impression of Signal Festival? “It’s mind-blowing. You could tell an incredibly talented team put this whole show together. The way they combined visuals and meanings, as well as the sheer scale of it, left me absolutely speechless!” said Polina, one of the festival goers.

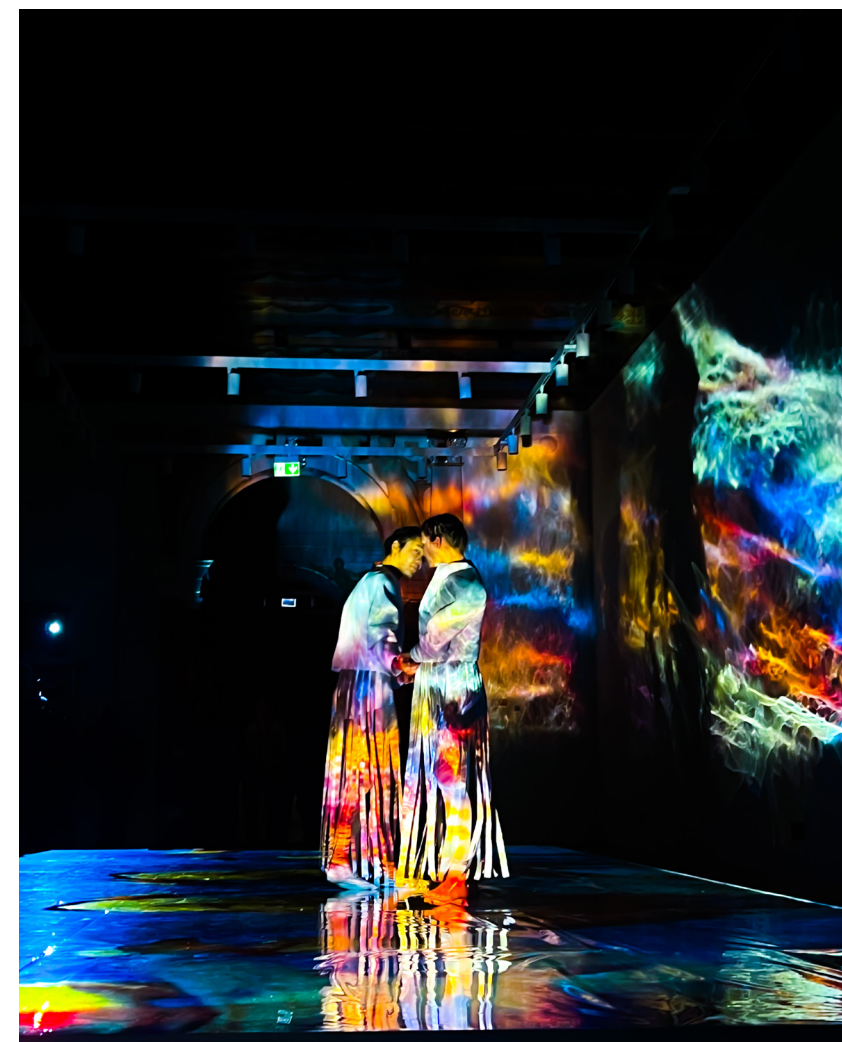


photo by Danaia Orlianska

The festival's reputation for merging art and technology lived up to its name, taking over the old buildings and sites of Old Town, Karlín, and Holešovice. One of the main installations took an extraordinary leap back in time, into a world dominated by pictograms and symbols.

András László Nagy's work, “Luminary Glyphs,” symbolically projected onto the façade of the Municipal Library, showed the moment when the human mind first invented the alphabet and changed the game of communication. Nagy used artificial intelligence to whip up eye-catching animations from symbols, text, and coding characters. It felt like a time machine merging history and tech.

“The Municipal Gallery thing amazed me the most...Honestly, it sent shivers down my spine, but not because of fear but more because of the scale. And the realization that a human created it kind of hit me hard. It really is a high-five to the art of storytelling with a dash of futuristic tech magic which puts you in sort of a trance state,” said Iana, another attendee of the festival.

The festival offered a unique opportunity to get closer to the art of light in Signal Festival’s largest gallery zone to date. It featured seven exclusive installations that were available only to the owners of Signal+ tickets. These installations were not just about lights and sounds; they dove deep into the world of communication, technology, and emotional memory.

One of them, “FLUX 2023,” by the creators behind Ksawery Komputery, took you on a ride through the digital realm. Think about those moments when you are video chatting with friends and it almost feels like you’re in the same room. Through code-driven LED light strips and four high-speed cameras, which were perfectly synced with surround sound, the artists harnessed that magic.

The first ever multimedia and multi-genre theatre in the world, “Emotional Memory” by Laterna Magika, celebrated 65 years at the Signal Festival. The artists, led by director Tereza Vejvodová, took the most iconic moments of the theater’s projects and fused them with technology and fresh ideas. During the performance, you were guided through a world where time blurs, walking through spaces that represent timelessness, the past, present, and future.

The installation is brought to life by performers who engage with the audience amid a spectacular showcase of lights, video projections, and sounds. It offered a unique opportunity to witness history and innovation converging. The Museum of the City of Prague opened its doors for the first time since reconstruction began.

Signal Festival 2023 was a journey through time and space, a testament to the endless possibilities of human creativity, redefining the perception of art, technology, and the world around us. Luckily for those who missed it, there will be an equally, if not more, mesmerizing exhibit this time next year.



Boozin' on a Budget: Is going out in Prague affordable for students?

By Sophia Pedigo

Studying in a country that actively advertises beer cheaper than water, I asked myself: is it affordable for students to go out drinking in Prague?

Czech inflation is nothing new for students who have observed the price of rent, groceries, and outings skyrocket. Over the last year, the price of a pint of twelve-degree beer rose from 58.8 CZK to 64.3 CZK, more than a nine percent increase.

The rising cost has less to do with beer becoming more expensive and more to do with the costs of running a business in a country going through rapid inflation in key categories such as gas, energy, and staff salaries.

“For beer, the breweries would increase by one crown for half a litre, but the bars are raising the prices by five or ten crowns because of the increase of the costs of energy and gas,” said Jana Koubava, the owner of Duende.

How are students managing?

A study done of AAU students revealed that 50% of students thought it was as affordable as they expected to go out in Prague with beer advertised as cheaper than water, and the other 50% disagreed.

The study also revealed that 83.3% of the respondents noticed a significant increase in the price of alcohol since the beginning of their studies, with 50% of respondents admitting that even beer is more expensive.

Although 50% of students answered that the entrance fees of clubs were preventing them from going out as much, only 33.3% said the same about the general drink price increase.

What are some affordable places to visit?

Bar No. 7 in Nové Město, Popocafepetl with three locations around Prague 1, Cafe80s in Staré Město, and small pubs were the most popular answers. Try to find cafés, pubs, or bars with cheap shots, free entry, or Erasmus discounts to keep your bill low.

Make sure to pregame! Pregaming can be a fun, affordable way to stick to a limit. Alcohol can be a lot cheaper in stores. It gives you a fun time to get ready with friends, and it removes that weird, awkward start of the night when arriving at a club stone-cold sober.

The most difficult but useful piece of advice? Set a budget and stick to it; whether that means only bringing a certain amount of cash or having some willpower while out, it is possible to go out for cheap in Prague.

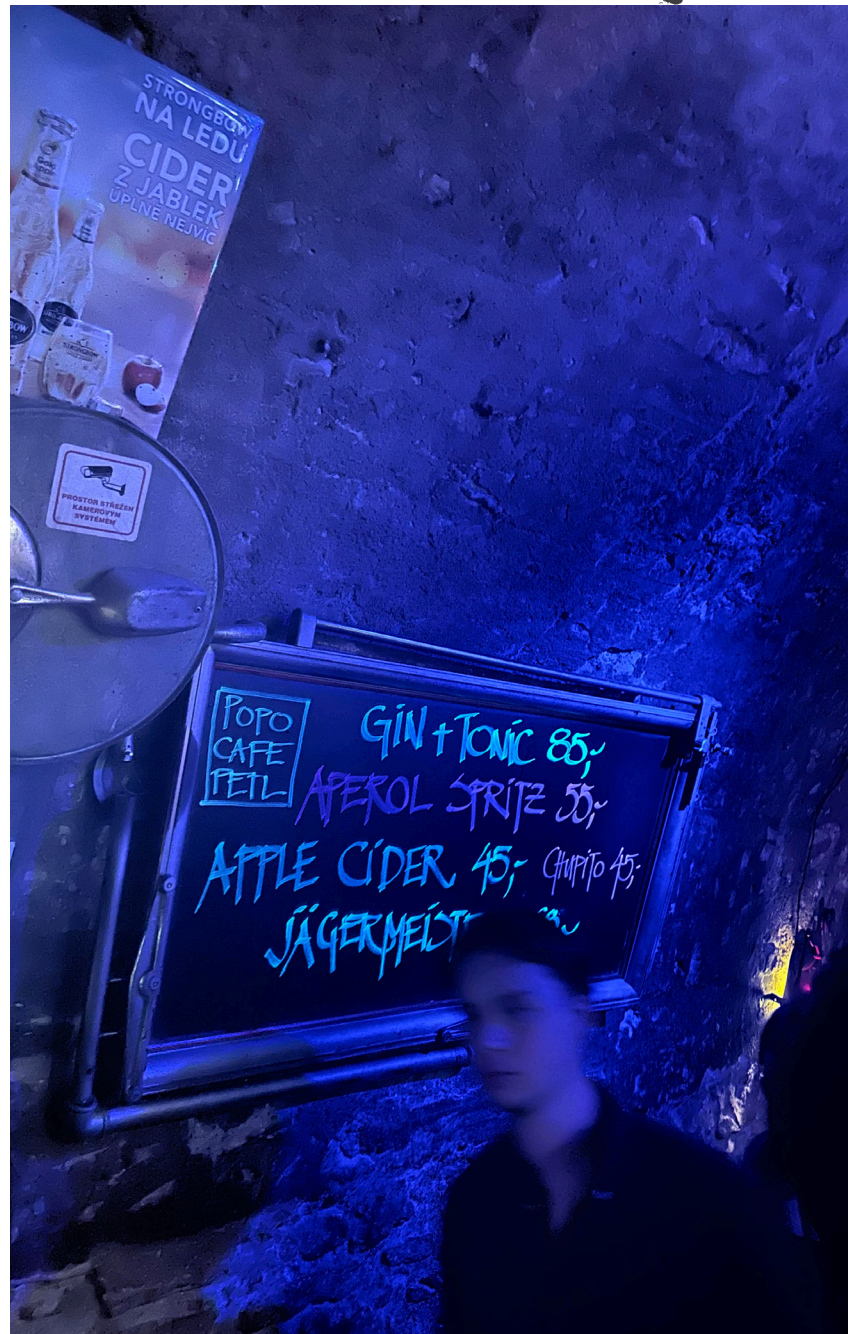


photo by Sophia Pedigo

Ambix: A Culinary Journey into Romani Culture

By Adelle Hollmer

Proclaiming to be the only authentic Romani restaurant in Prague, Ambix Gypsy Club and Restaurant provides an opportunity to delve into the gastronomy of a culture that is often a mystery to many.

The restaurant features an array of classic dishes such as halusky, marikl'l, and pierogy. With so many options to choose from, I turned to the server, who recommended the pierogy, a mashed potato dumpling dish, and the halusky, which are fried dough balls served with smoked meat, sauerkraut, fried onions, and pork greaves. These dishes paired perfectly with the classic oven-roasted flatbread, dipped in olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

An Ambix employee, Eva Chmelova, provided a glimpse into the history of the food and culture of the Roma community. She explained that, while they don't have a large variety of food, they have abundant quantities.

"From nothing, we make a lot... It's all about what life makes for us," said Chmelova.

This is evident in the variety of dishes and flavors that emerge, despite the recurring presence of staples like potatoes and pork. The food highlights the community's resilience and adaptability in crafting flavorful and satisfying meals from the limited resources.



photo by Rose Mayer



photos by Rose Mayer

This perspective sheds light on the profound connection between the Roma people, their history, and the culinary traditions that have evolved through centuries of discrimination they have faced. The Roma community has faced many stereotypes and a difficult history in the Czech Republic.

Despite an increase of Roma people living in areas such as Žižkov, Karlín, and Smíchov, according to iDnes.cz, the number of Romanies residing in Prague has halved in recent decades. Despite this, a large Roma population still lives in Prague, which is not represented by the amount of Romani cuisine available, making Ambix a unique opportunity to learn and try something new.

“We are described in books and stories by Czech people as dirty, thieves, and that we do not do anything, but that’s not true,” said Chmelova.

According to Tripadvisor, Ambix is not only worthy of a 5-star rating, but many reviews mentioned the restaurant as a wonderful opportunity to experience Romani culture—not only with food but with music as well. Even if you’re just a foodie, this place is still a must.

“I know my way around a potato, and I would say these are elite,” said AAU student Ethan Fite, an Idahoan, after trying the pierogy.

Beyond the culinary delights, Ambix Gypsy Club and Restaurant contributes to reshaping perceptions about the Roma community, challenging stereotypes ingrained in the broader Czech narrative.





photo by Mae Bryant



photo by Ela Angerine



photo by Mae Bryant



photo by Mae Bryant



photo by HP Nguyen

A Guide to Halloween FOMO

By HP Nguyen

Rejoice, all couch potatoes: this list of Halloween destinations will get you in the spooky spirit without draining your social battery.

Halloween weekend is anticipated by university students all over the world—a chance to break out the skimpy costumes and hydrate with ambiguous jungle juice. Yet many homebodies devoid themselves of the festivity to avoid the hassle from the crowd.

This guide offers some Halloween activities in Prague that will get you in the mood for the spooky season without busting a sweat on the dance floor.

The Taste of Blood, Sweat and Tears

Dedicated to all horror movie lovers, Nightmare Bar brews up many concoctions inspired by pop culture characters that have fueled fans' nightmares throughout history.

You can enjoy the sweet bitterness of death's blade in Michael Myer's Knife with the taste of molasses from spiced rum accompanied by tart pineapple and grenadine. If you want a more funky drink, the Chainsaw will get you hooked with its scarlet red tint from strawberry soda and white rum in place of traditional tequila, which is hard to find in Prague.

Not a fan of boozy drinks? Non-alcoholic cocktails are also available with equally fashionable names like the Texas Massacre or the Poltergeist, guaranteeing fun for the designated drivers.

Nightmare Prague Horror Bar is open Monday to Friday with a wide selection of drinks and reservation-based events during the weekends to satisfy your craze for horror movies and dingy dungeons all year round.

An Escape from Hell

As an alternative to the traditional haunted house experience, Thrill Park Prague offers a more interactive version that will engage the players in multiple levels of physical and mental challenges to earn an escape.

With two options—Scary Dungeon of Horror and the Experiment—visitors can choose between an obstacle course or an escape room experience. Each has its own settings and storylines that will delve into different fear factors and engage the players in various tasks to solve the puzzles.

Thrill Park Prague, an interactive flare to the common haunted houses, operates throughout the week. Visitors are encouraged to reserve their bookings beforehand for the best experience.

A Celebration of the Dead

Día de los Muertos is a celebration of the dead as a way for the memories of the deceased to be commemorated by the living. In contrast to the common notions of death, the departed souls are welcomed with colorful decorations and a bountiful feast, blurring the boundary between the presence and the afterlife.

With ongoing activities throughout the whole day from 11:00 until late at night, Mexico Pop-up is a deserving pit stop on your Halloween agenda to explore the world of the dead through a different cultural lens.

This year, Holešovická Tržnice is hosting a Mexico Pop-Up during Día de los Muertos on November 2 with an outdoor gastro zone serving delicacies from around Latin America. With an additional entrance fee of 290 CZK, you will also have access to an exclusive concert infused with Latin beats and bops, performed by South American bands Mariachi Azteca de Praga and Lozt Mezcal.

Horror at Your Own Doorstep

At the comfort of your own university, AAU brings its own flare to the spooky season, with not just one but two different events during Halloween week.

On November 2, from 11:00 to 21:00, the Union Latina will celebrate Día de Los Muertos by building an ofrenda—an altar traditionally constructed by families to commemorate their loved ones—at the Student Lounge. A screening of the movie *Coco* will begin at 19:00, with snacks and beverages.

For a Halloween finale, gather your friends at Cafe de Taxis on November 3 for a party organized by the Student Council. It is promised to be a night with food, games, and a costume contest, awaiting AAU's Peacocks to attend.

Though the Czech Republic does not celebrate Halloween like North America, Prague offers multiple opportunities to dress up or down and haunt the night away.



Courtesy of AAU Student Council Instagram

Struggles of Working in The Czech Republic on a Student Visa

By Aila Aliieva

A majority of students work while they study, but what if they do not have a work visa?

The Czech Republic has become a popular option among international students as a result of its accessible universities, rich cultural heritage, and affordability. However, many international students come to Prague on student visas hoping to complete their degrees in Europe while working.

They may face some struggles since the student visa doesn't allow them to work more than 20 hours a week. However, it could be hard to maintain both studying and working more than 20 hours. Many AAU students work at the school—a convenient way to make extra money but not support oneself fully.

The risk of legal repercussions is the biggest obstacle faced by international students who work without a work visa. Like many other nations, the Czech Republic has strict laws controlling the hiring of foreigners. Deportation, a ban on re-entry, and serious legal repercussions are all possible outcomes of working without the right authorization.

An AAU student who wishes to remain anonymous stated that it is quite scary working without a work visa—working with the fear of “being deported.” The student is currently undergoing employee training; however, since the student's visa isn't eligible, there is someone always watching in case something goes wrong.



photo by Rose Mayer

“So now when I work, they are always beside [me] in case something happens,” said the student.

Having no work visa also significantly limits a student’s choice at finding a place of employment. Alexa, a journalism student, states that working without a work visa limits her to acquiring cash jobs, which means they work at bars, clubs, restaurants, etc. She says that those jobs aren’t the healthiest, because of the informal contracts, or most compatible with a student’s schedule.

“When working a cash job like that, you’re not going to be caught because everyone there is paying in cash, no one there is documented, even the contracts you have, they’re often not completely honest,” said Alexa.

It is a risk for employers to hire people without a work visa, but it can also benefit them if they usually do not get caught. Working without a visa can be a dangerous step, and, out of necessity, it is a step a lot of students take. Alexa believes that AAU should help students find a way to work legally in the Czech Republic.

“It’s trying to decide whether you want to sacrifice certain things just to make money, and sometimes you need to, to provide for yourself... It is a bit frustrating because the Czech Republic and even AAU grant us permission to live in Prague to study here, but those of us that are financially independent don’t grant us the ability to financially provide for ourselves,” said Alexa.

Without student loans, banks, and private loan companies in the US that offer loans to AAU students, there are not a lot of options for students. Alexa believes a possible solution is a loan program created by AAU or an agreement reached with the government that would ease the lives of many students, but it is always more complicated than it seems.



photo by Rose Mayer

photo by Gabriella Burgess



Ted Turnau Oasis of Imagination: AAU Book Launch

By Gabriella Burgess

A book launch to celebrate Professor Ted Turnau’s latest work, *Oasis of Imagination*, shows the lively academic community of AAU.

The launch was planned and moderated by Professor Seth Rogoff. Rogoff believes the school needs to highlight and spotlight the creative works of students and faculty, and Turnau’s work is an excellent example.

“I think the institution [AAU] needs to do more to spotlight work like Teds; other than the teaching, there’s a lot of exciting things being done creatively at this school, and I don’t think a lot of people know about it. Part of why I wanted to do this event was to spotlight it; it’s good for the whole AAU community,” said Professor Rogoff.

It is beneficial to AAU students to see academics engaging in creative work alongside academia. Students can see in Ted and other similar works examples of work that can be done outside the university environment, according to Rogoff.



photo by Gabriella Burgess

“There’s a sort of myth that when academics engage in public discourse, it’s less valid than strict academic work, and I find that argument very deficient,” said Rogoff. “It’s important for students to see faculty doing work that’s even beyond academia because students aren’t usually heading into academia; they are heading into society,” he continued.

The book is aimed primarily at people in the Christian Church, especially in America and the UK. It discusses how popular culture and creativity are not being fully understood or accepted in the Church—how Christians are at a ‘culture war’ with non-Christians and how that is problematic.

“What you are doing is valid, and desperately needed, and failing in its aesthetic calling,” said Turnau to the Christian creatives.

A 19-year-old boy featured in the book told Turnau that he became a DJ and asked if he should quit, as the people in his church thought it was wrong. “If Jesus was alive, I think he’d be in the clubs,” said Turnau.

His aim for AAU students is to recognize through this book more tolerance: “I see a lot of students, especially Americans, who were hurt by the church and think the whole thing is bad, and that’s just not true. It might be convenient to say that, but it’s not true, so maybe it would make it harder for students to generalize.”

Turnau hopes that the students of AAU can read the book and learn that you can have a more nuanced approach to looking at and talking about Christianity in the mainstream media.

This event was open to the public as well as the school. Rogoff and Turnau said they were pleased with the turnout and had heard faculty and students beam about the event. AAU book launches shed light on the work of professors outside of class and show students the possibilities after university.



photo by Gabriella Burgess

The Twilight Zone of Airports: Sweden's Runway that Takes a Different Direction

By Antoinette Goldberg

A run-of-the-mill airport is as expected: shoes off, electronics out, walk through the detector, and keep your head down so as not to annoy the already aggravated security check officers.

Find your terminal, then meander to a bathroom that explains what happens when bad airport food mixes with an anxious stomach.

After grabbing a bag of overpriced chips and a water bottle, you find a chair, awaiting a cramped economy seat with a complimentary barf bag that can barely hold a drop of liquid—let alone the entirety of your stomach.

This anxiety-inducing routine misses its mark at the Stockholm Arlanda Airport in Sweden, leaving travelers questioning if they're in an episode of the Twilight Zone.

The journey begins with a train ride, ensuring passengers easily find their way to the airport. The Arlanda Express has only three stops total, one at Stockholm Central Station, to pick up travelers flying home. The other two land commuters either at the first stop, Arlanda South, which is terminals 1, 2, 3, and 4, or at the second stop, Arlanda North, for terminal 5.

The shuffle up to the security checkpoint is short and simple, taking an escalator or elevator. Once it's your turn to place your items on the belt, neither your electronics nor your shoes come off.

A rule even allows passengers weary of the body scan to opt out.

In the brief ten minutes that it took to get through, a security officer approaches a passenger in a floral gown, his stern face presumably waiting to yell at their simple mistake. However, once the individual was approached by the officer, he simply asked where she got her dress so that he could buy it for his wife.

The only moment the glamour of this airport fails is in the price of the express, leaving passengers \$15 short for one way. Though, in hindsight, between an \$80 taxi and a \$15 train, most budget-friendly travelers will see the train as the more affordable option.

Yet, the food prices remain the same as they would be outside the airport, and the bathrooms give each trekker a personal room with a sink, toilet, and even space to change.

It's easy to forget or ignore simple kindnesses in areas of mass transportation, but little accommodations can travel a long way. Whether someone is traveling to a birth, a reunion, a wedding, a business endeavor, a funeral, or a final goodbye, each traveler deserves a moment of calm.

Most of all—over the sneezing strangers, the businessmen taking phone calls, or the traveler dying to find an outlet to charge their phone—there is a gentleness to the airport. The person finds the outlet, the phone call ends, and the stranger returns to their book. No one is rushed; everyone has made their flight and simply waits.

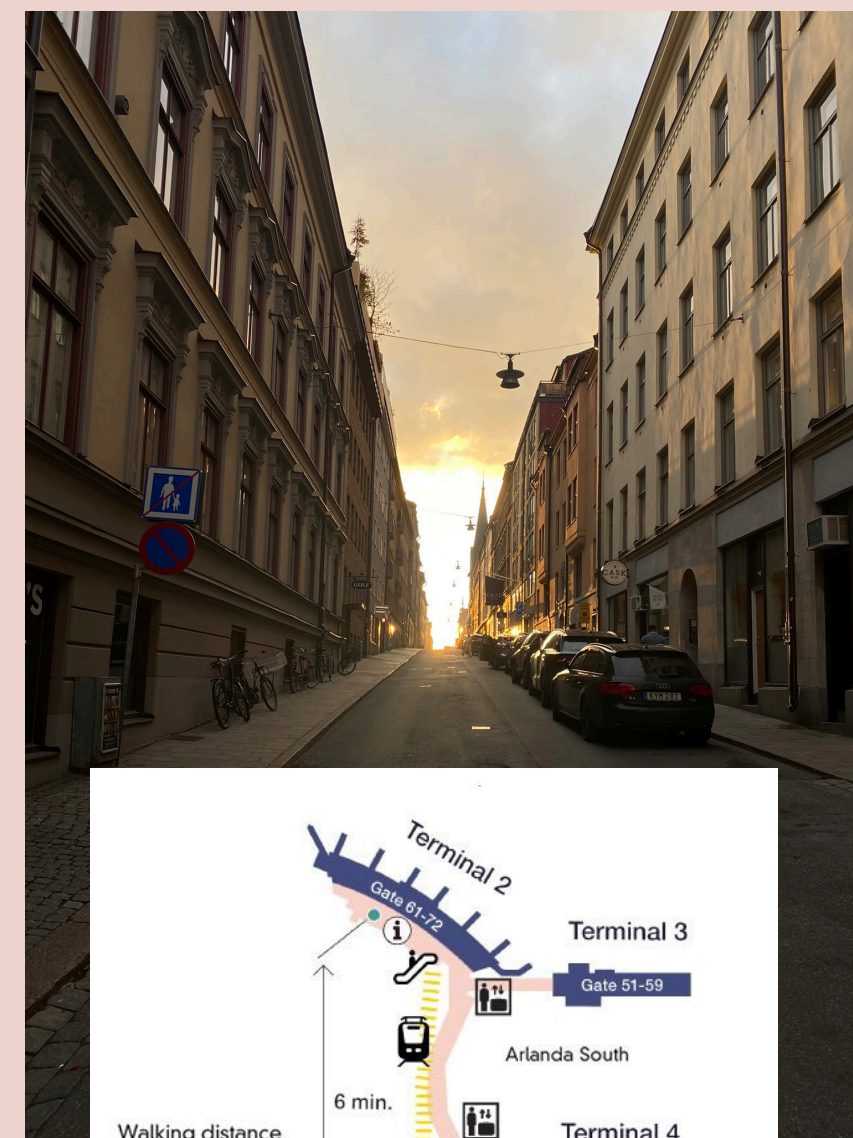
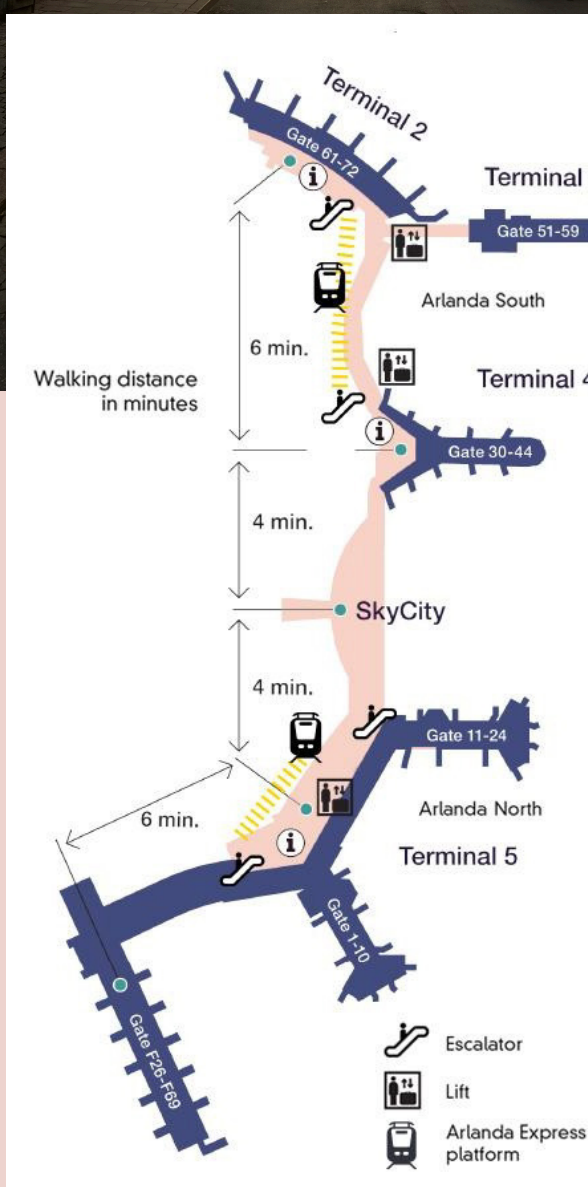


photo by
Antoinette
Goldberg



Credit Stockholm Arlanda Airport

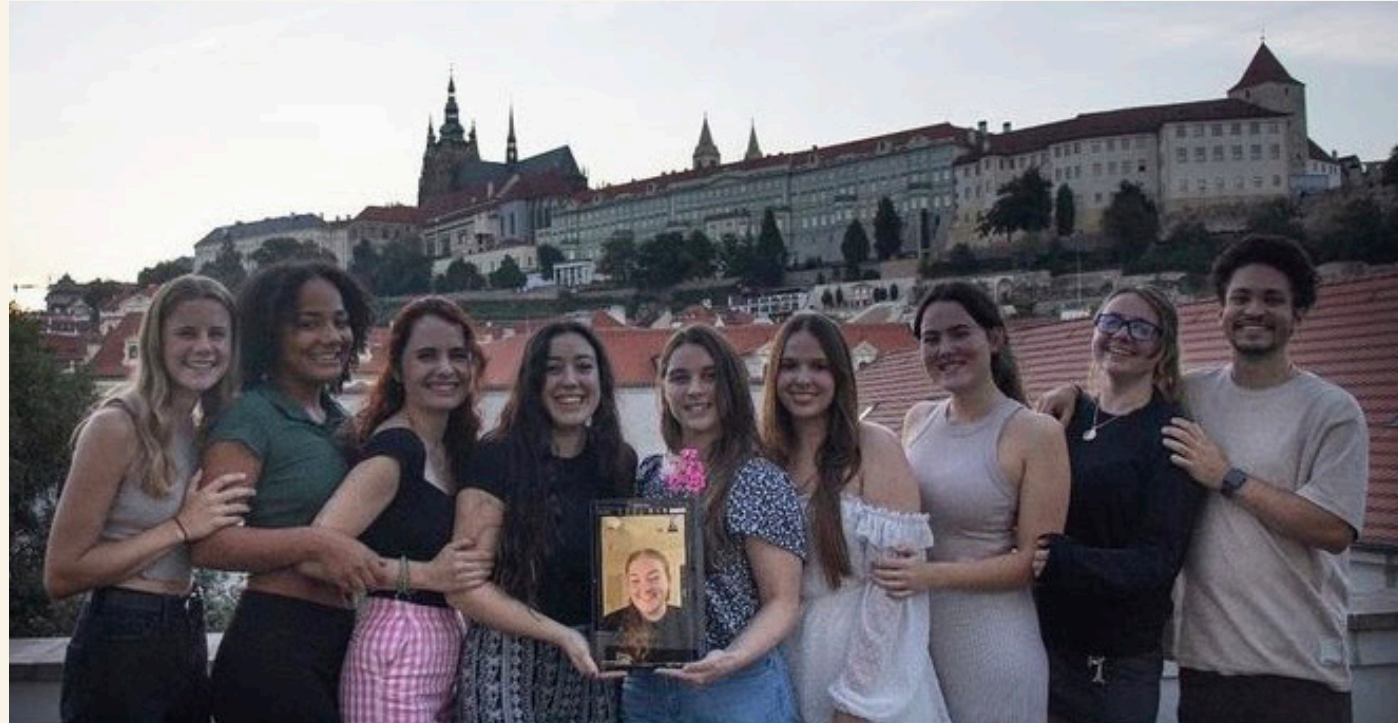


photo by Rose Mayer

What's the Problem?

Finding Solutions to Students Reported Problems

By Alexa Wandersee

The process of reporting an issue to the AAU administration can be discouraging for students as communication is obscure and trusting proper action will be taken is not easy.

If you're a student who needs to report a problem, this is the simplified and clarified process—the behind-the-scenes politics—to help you find the best solution.

There are three avenues to take: academic, non-academic, and event or club-related. Anything from harassment to a course crisis to wanting to start a new club can be reported to the university.

Reporting a Problem

The first step of all avenues is to contact Student Council (SC). SC exists to advocate on behalf of the students and hold the administration accountable. Instagram is their main channel of communication. Students frequently direct-message their questions and complaints there, but they are also accessible through everyone's AAU emails.

SC then takes the report to either Dean of Students Katerina Vonova, the Department Chair, or the President's Collegium. That position then investigates the issues as needed and determines the next steps.

“Even if we don't have control over the issue that they're bringing to us, we can help them on the road to solve it,” said SC President Simone Stansbury.

Once SC hands the report over to an administrator, the decision is out of their hands, but they still have the power to advocate and mediate for students through the process. The administration keeps the Student Council informed to fulfill their responsibility of keeping you informed.

Different cases have different resolution times. For harassment cases, which fall under non-academic reports, they are required to be addressed and resolved in six weeks. Similarly, course crisis forms are required to be acknowledged within four weeks or the end of that semester at the latest.

SC is responsible for holding administrators accountable to these deadlines.

Encouraging Future Solutions

The issue many students voice is the unknown of this “faceless administrative board,” making decisions for them without having any interaction with the student who filed the complaint.

SC has presented itself as the bridge between the two as it continues to encourage better internal communication from the administration.

The original political structure of AAU was built on the idea that students didn't care to be involved with administration. In recent years, there has been an increasing social trend in the younger generations' demand for answers, which extends to the AAU community as well.

Smaller than a typical American university, AAU can have open communication and develop better relationships between faculty and students, but this new interest from students has risen faster than administration can keep up with.

It's important for students who report a problem to be patient with the solution and continue going to SC for help, both during the process and for future problems. Though some problems may require a longer time to find solutions, they will be addressed. As SC is responsible for holding the administration accountable, students are encouraged to check in, hold SC accountable, and give them feedback on the outcome.

“There's never been an instance where a student has brought an issue to us that we didn't address,” Stansbury concluded.

Queer Athletes Represented in the Media

By Andrii Kolisnychenko

Queer athletes have made sports history recently by challenging norms and inspiring change. From Billie Jean King to Michael Sam, coming-out has paved the way for a more diverse and inclusive sporting world.

In exploring the global presence of openly queer athletes, this focuses on countries with substantial representation: the Americas, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. However, some players still express discomfort rooted in homophobia and a lack of education about their teammates' coming-out.

Soccer

Soccer may be one of the sports with the largest number of openly LGBTQ+ players. Getafe CF Czech midfielder, Jakub Jankto, recently made an announcement that received overwhelming support from his teammates. His courage reflects the growing acceptance and openness among male soccer players.

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup was a historic event for LGBTQ+ representation. Over 13% of the athletes competing in the tournament are proudly out, marking a significant milestone in the journey toward inclusivity in international sports.

Megan Rapinoe and Marta Silva, two figures in soccer, are LGBTQ+ icons. Rapinoe, who recently announced her retirement, is not only known for her soccer skills but also advocates for LGBTQ+ rights. Marta participated in her sixth and final Women's World Cup but continues to leave a lasting impact on the sport.

As women from various backgrounds and nations proudly represent the queer community on the world stage, they send a resounding message of love, acceptance, and unity, signifying a positive cultural shift.

Soccer's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity is further evidenced by partnerships with organizations like "You Can Play," dedicated to eradicating homophobia in sports, as some athletes can't come out due to violence and discrimination.

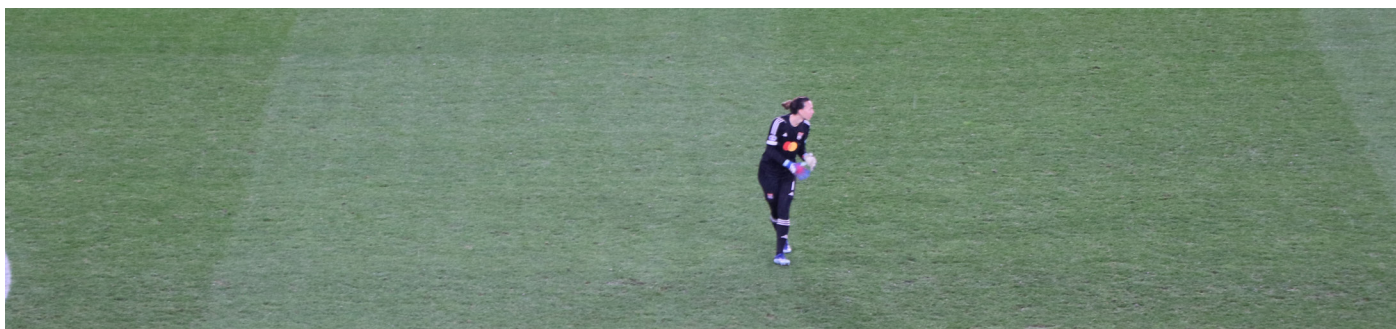


photo by Hayley Gallaber

American Football (NFL)

The most widely known coming out story belongs to Carl Nassib. Using social media, Nassib announced in 2021 that he is gay and donated \$100,000 to an LGBTQ+ youth suicide prevention organization.

Nassib mentioned that youth sports are influenced by harmful language and behavior from older players, which spread stereotypes that delay younger athletes from coming out. Nassib's story catalyzes change, challenging the deep-seated norms of masculinity and pushing the professional sports world to reevaluate its culture.

Basketball (NBA)

"I didn't set out to be the first openly gay athlete playing in a major American team sport. But since I am, I'm happy to start the conversation. I wish I wasn't the kid in the classroom raising his hand and saying, 'I'm different.' If I had my way, someone else would have already done this. Nobody has, which is why I'm raising my hand," stated Jason Collins in 2013.

Collins is a former National Basketball Association (NBA) center who played for the Stanford Cardinals. His coming out happened against the backdrop of a broader discussion about LGBTQ+ representation in American professional sports although there is still a lot of hate and bigotry.

It's not just about one individual; it's about changing the culture and creating a more inclusive space for queer athletes. Collins challenged stereotypes as the first NBA player to publicly come out, and he reinforced the notion that living truthfully and authentically is vital.

Ice Hockey

Known for its intense physicality, hockey is another arena where open queerness is becoming slightly more visible. The National Hockey League (NHL) has taken steps towards inclusivity, also partnering with organizations like "You Can Play".

Stephen Finkle and Brock McGillis, both affiliated with the National Hockey League (NHL), came out in this hypermasculine world of professional sports. As a former NHL player, McGillis shared the challenges that he faced, highlighting the resistance within these environments to LGBTQ+ visibility.

These trailblazers not only create a safer environment but also influence how queer individuals are portrayed in sports media. While the world has a long way to go, there is anticipation for a future where LGBTQ+ athletes are universally embraced—in sports and beyond.



photo by Rose Mayer

Uncovering the Unusual Laws in the Czech Republic

By Victoria Kiper

Whether new to Prague or a seasoned veteran, many may not be aware of some peculiar laws in this country.

Headlights on at ALL Times

According to Czech law, all moving vehicles are required to keep their headlights on at all times, even on sunny days. Failure to comply with this law can result in a fine of 2000 CZK.

No Writing on the Lennon Wall

The Lennon Wall, known as a symbol of resistance and freedom of speech worldwide, has enacted a largely unknown regulation. In the past, people would frequently graffiti crude slogans or images on the wall, leading to conflicts with security. To address this, a designated portion of the wall was allocated for public use.

This designated section allows for visitors to write on the wall with marker or chalk, but the sections remain poorly laid out. Additionally, there are certain days allotted to visitors being allowed to spray paint the wall, with the exact dates of these also being unspecified. Individuals can be detained by the police for up to a year if caught writing on the wrong part or spray painting on the wrong days.

Radio & Television Fee

If you own a device capable of receiving radio or TV stations, you are required to pay a fee, regardless of whether you use it or not. There are a few exceptions for individuals who are deaf (for radio) or blind (for television). The monthly tax for television is 135 CZK, while the radio tax is 45 CZK.

No Single-Use Plastics

While this law has become the norm in the EU, it may still come as strange to Americans and other third-country nationals. In late 2022, the Czech Republic enacted this ban on the production and distribution of single-use plastics such as straws and cups.

No Spitting Chewing Gum

Under Czech cleanliness laws, it is illegal to spit out chewing gum or discard cigarette butts on the ground. There are plenty of trash cans located all around the city to help combat this common problem.

These are just a few examples of the sometimes unusual laws in the Czech Republic. It's always a good idea to become familiar with the local regulations to avoid any surprises!



photo by Rose Mayer

Bathroom Breakthrough: A Look Inside AAU's Gender-Inclusive Campus Bathroom

By Sophia Pedigo

On September 15, AAU Student Council announced that the men's restroom on the second floor would be replaced by the first gender-neutral restroom on the AAU campus.

Q Club's latest project was the addition of an inclusive restroom on campus, with the intention of stopping students from feeling forced to choose a restroom that does not reflect their gender identity. The design of the restroom will not change, as it will still have a stall, a urinal, and extras, namely menstrual products.

AAU student Michael Watkins said, "Access to a restroom is, like, a basic human right. It doesn't matter what you identify as or with... If you gotta pee, you gotta pee."

Non-gender conforming and non-binary students say they have felt some discomfort when using the newly labeled bathroom, which was formerly the men's room, when male students walk in and get confused.



photo by Rose Mayer

Queer Club President Marisa Mikels said, "Because it was a male bathroom before, a lot of the male students haven't got the memo yet and have been confused when female-presenting people have walked into the bathroom."

Michael Watkins added that the confusion could have been avoided by sending out a mass email from AAU or making another big announcement, as many students didn't know that the change had been made. The bathroom sign is currently a piece of paper and not all students follow the Student Council Instagram page. Other than this small confusion amongst a few students, the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive.

Queer Club brought up the idea to Student Council President Simone Stansbury, who then proposed the concept to an eagerly agreeing student council. The students took action almost immediately, and the restroom is currently awaiting a new sign.

Queer Club Vice President Louie Banks said, "I am nonbinary, so having a place that is dedicated for someone who is not either female or male has been very supportive, welcoming, and really important for me personally."

Since its founding, the AAU Queer Club has been actively involved in advancing equality in Prague and on campus. In November 2021, the Q Club's bake sale fundraiser smashed their goal by raising 16,000 CZK for Trans*parent, a Czech Trans Rights Organization. The November 2022 bake sale to raise money for Sbarvouvan, a nonprofit queer resource center, raised 4,000 CZK. Sbarvouvan's sponsor, ČSOB, doubled the contribution.

The International School in Prague announced its unisex bathrooms in November 2021, meaning AAU is not the first school in Prague to implement gender-neutral restrooms. Despite the increase in inclusivity and diversity in international universities in Prague, Czech society has a binary view of gender and gendered language.

Regardless of the existence of laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity, a nonbinary person's request to change the gender identity option on their state identification was turned down in a Czech court case.

The AAU Queer Club is always looking for new members, including queer students and allies. Every other Wednesday, they meet in Room 3.26 on campus. Keep an eye out for their upcoming events, such as Movie and Trivia Nights.

Classically Studious: Opera and Orchestra in Prague Offering Student Tickets

By Nazani Cassidy

Classical music organizations and festivals are making student access easier through discounted rates and online purchases in Prague.

Many well known composers have lived, studied, and premiered their works in the Czech Republic such as Antonín Dvořák, Bedřich Smetana, and even Wolfgang Amadus Mozart. The capital's storied history with classical music continues today through the echoes of The Estates Theatre (Švandovo Divadlo), State Opera house (Státní Opera), and the Rudolfinum. Though students may pass these performance spaces every day, they are unaware of discounted tickets to classical music concerts many arts organizations have made available.

Speaking to students at Anglo American University, they expressed interest in going to classical music concerts once reduced ticket prices were mentioned.

"I didn't know you got discounts," Abby Fenchak stated, "I'd totally go."

Another student, Noelle O'Braitis, brought up how it can be hard to get groups of people their age to go to performances with them.

"You don't really see {young} people going to shows," O'Braitis expressed. She said that she herself has taken advantage of the student offers on multiple occasions.

Arts organizations in Prague have noticed this, and many have provided heavily reduced rates for students. Often, last minute tickets are also offered at a lower rate for students prior to performances. The Czech Philharmonic website says, "Our goal is to make our concerts accessible to everyone whose heart is open to music."



photo by Nazani Cassidy

One of the most well known organizations is The National Theater (Národní Divadlo), and it's home to four companies – ballet, drama, opera, and Laterna magika, all of which perform in four different theaters in Prague. They often premiere new pieces by both Czech and international composers, and are a longtime fixture of the fine arts in Prague. Home to the Czech national ballet company, they also perform a wide variety of dance styles. For select performances, The National Theater offers a 50% discount for students up to 26 years old with a valid ISIC card, for prices as low as 150 CZK.

The Czech Philharmonic (Česká Filharmonie) also offers a standard student discount of 50% off with reserved seating for both its Orchestra and chamber ensemble concerts. Besides the standard discount, they have 'Last Minute' tickets available online or in person at Rudolfinum box office so that students can purchase tickets for 100 CZK the day of the performance.

The Philharmonic's Chamber music division, The Czech Chamber Music Society (Český spolek pro komorní hudbu), has hosted concerts since 1894 in the Rudolfinum. The society often hosts concerts with various chamber ensembles. The Czech Philharmonic is opened its 23/24 season with violinist Augustin Hadelich and conductor Semyon Bychkov.

The other Philharmonic in town, Prague Philharmonia, also offers 100 CZK tickets to various concerts 24 hours prior to their concerts online and in person. The Philharmonia hosts chamber music concerts as well as orchestral performances.

Along with all of the regular opera and orchestra seasons in Prague, annual events such as The Dvorak Festival (Dvořákova Praha) also have various discounts for students. The Dvorak Festival offers the Youth Club which entitles students to a 20% discount on all tickets, and for particular concerts, they sell a 100 CZK ticket with a valid ISIC. The festival is internationally renowned for bringing famous artists to Prague every year, and often hosts world premiere performances.

Along with price reductions, classical organizations regularly have kid-friendly performances. On 8 October 2023, Prague Philharmonia performed Traveling Through Nature, a family friendly production that guides children to explore the outdoors through the help of an orchestra.

Discounted tickets are readily available, they just have to know where to find them. AAU university student O'Braitis said, "I knew I wouldn't have been able to go without the discount. Young people would rather go to clubs, even though I feel like I'm getting a deal every time I go."



Twelve Hours in Český Krumlov

By Rose Mayer

Upon arrival in Český Krumlov, expect to be met with cobblestone roads worn by centuries of traffic and look out at rolling hills and a breathtaking view of the castle on the hill.

This quaint town is a two-to-three-hour bus ride from Prague and well worth the time. With good food, gorgeous streets, and friendly locals, tourists flock to Český Krumlov each warm season, but the best time to go is October or early November, when the air chills and the crowds thin out.

The town is a young visitor's dream, with most locals speaking multiple languages, plenty of available tours, and great affordability, especially with an ISIC card.

"I think young people should travel in general because they become tolerant, open-minded, and so forth," said David Heide, a local restaurant owner. David owns Liabon, a vegetarian restaurant nestled on the bank of the Vltava River. With friendly staff and a delicious menu, this restaurant makes a wonderful place to grab a meal or sit and chat over drinks in between activities.

10 A.M.

To get acquainted, take a leisurely walk on the enchanting streets and make a trip down to dip your toes in the river. There are a plethora of walking tours offered to get a closer look at the area and its people, if interested.

Looking to do a little shopping? There is a gemstone shop inhabiting almost every corner with an array of jewelry. These shops are especially unique to Český Krumlov because it is home to the precious stone moldavite.

1 P.M.

Finding a good lunch spot will not be difficult, as the streets are full of food, seating, and the echo of music. For a traditional Czech meal, stop by Hostinec Depo for a delicious pork schnitzel. Walk into My Saigon, a Vietnamese restaurant, and order a warm plate of fried rice or a Vietnamese-style salad.

3 P.M.

Escape the afternoon sun and head into Český Krumlov Castle for a guided tour. The castle submerges its visitors into life from the Renaissance through the 18th century, with intricately furnished rooms and historical paintings and artifacts adorning the walls. Stroll through the rooms and see dining rooms set for Renaissance-style meals and prayer rooms so ornamental they glow.

From the castle, make sure to walk across the bridge to get an aerial view of the picturesque town tucked between the surrounding hills. Once across the bridge, follow the signs to the gardens to see a spread of flowers and plants intricately swirled together, accompanied by ornate fountains, and yet again, a breathtaking view of the area below.

7 P.M

After all that walking, your feet may need a rest. Schmooze the last few hours away at Pizza Liberta, rumored to be the best Italian food in the Czech Republic. Sit under the brick archways on a tasteful set of eclectic chairs and have a leisurely meal.

"I ordered the carbonara pizza, and it was some of the best I've had," said tourist Risa Kalish after dining at Pizzeria Liberta. Pair the meal with a few glasses of wine and relax the rest of the night.

photos by Rose Mayer



photos by Hannah Major

Literary Night at the Library

By Ela Angevine

Tony—wielding a knife and in a dark, husky voice—recited the first paragraph from a chapter of *The Cure* that, he says, “is my baby,” at AAU’s literary night at the library.

AAU professors Anthony Marais (aka Tony), Stephan Delbos, and Seth Rogoff show an unseen side of themselves at an open book reading of their original works on November 10.

With hors d’oeuvres and wine, students and faculty alike were enthralled into a world of dark mystery with Tony’s book *The Cure*, relatable fiction with Rogoff’s short story “Boundaries Transgressions,” and pensive poetry from Delbos’s collections, *Small Talk* and *Light Reading*, and some of his Czech-English translated works.

The attendees got their books signed, and the professors had an opportunity to showcase their hard work outside the classroom. Though it wasn’t without anticipation and nerves.

“I haven’t done a reading in six years [of this book], and I’m really nervous. No, at a serious level, I’m actually quite excited. It’s just great to have this opportunity. It’s fun,” said Tony before reading.



photos by Ela Angevine



Going first, Tony set the scene in Wiesbaden, Germany, where he spent a decade of his life. The story centers around the main character's life crisis and the water that defines the spa town. The book builds on the dark irony that the main character found a cure to his ailments in the spa town when, historically, people went to spa towns to spend their last days, according to Tony.

Next, Delbos read from a few of his poetry books and translated works, starting with a pick-up line on the first page of *Small Talk*. Suffused with descriptions, unlikely pairs, and metaphors, Delbos bewitched the audience with prose about his hobbies, student life, and more.

The poem that left the air charged was one that an audience member during a reading in the US told him to skip: "Gaza Beach." He did not skip it. It memorialized the killing of four boys on Gaza Beach.

After such a powerful piece, the audience and lecturers took a break before the final reading. "I'm happy we had a break," Rogoff said. "I'm not sure I could have followed the final poem."

Rogoff chose to read his short story "Boundaries, Transgressions" instead of one of his novels the morning of. He wanted to come back to it, as he had never read it for an audience before.

It brought back memories from quarantine and "COVID-times" as it described one odd, seemingly dream-like encounter during a Zoom meeting. Rogoff got some laughs as he described losing focus to the monotony of the "pointless, tedious hour" long call when you "cut the video" and "do other tasks." It combined the relatable life crisis that COVID brought with his specialty in media history.

Students who attended the lecture were pleased to see a personal side of their professors that you might not see at other universities. In such a small setting, it is hard not to.

"I've taken, like, most of my classes with two of the professors who are here," said AAU student Lora Lukova, "It's kind of supporting your friends, more or less, because you know these people so well."



photo by Ela Angervine



photos by Rose Mayer



photos by Alisa Snihur

The Boršč: How Ukrainian Food Has Spread in Prague

By Alisa Snihur

The Boršč, an authentic Ukrainian restaurant in Prague, went through a hard time when the war started, but now it has become a beacon of hope, spreading Ukrainian culture.

How did it start?

“Everything started when my husband received an invitation for work... It was six years ago,” said Nataalka Bas, the owner, “the proposal offered family relocation... We sat and agreed to go.”

The Boršč was just an idea at first. When Nataalka and her husband came to Prague to start a whole new life, they realized that they missed the national dishes, which seemed to be unknown to the place at that time. They wanted to share Ukrainian food.

When Nataalka and her husband finally found a place for their restaurant, it was less than perfect. Nataalka hated the outdated interior, so she found Mariko to start by painting the walls. Mariko was the one who created the perfect-suiting drawing for Nataalka: “She was the one. I am still very happy with what she has done, and so are our customers.”

Maria “from Odesa,” as Nataalka calls her, created the entire interior design with colors, pillows, and paintings. The Boršč became an authentic, cozy Ukrainian space because of the panache of these two women. The next problem was the perception of Ukrainian culture by Czechs.

Who are we?

“Czechs have always thought that Ukrainians were the cheap working class, who occupied all vacant places in factories. We wanted to change it.” These stereotypes scared Nataalka and her husband, as they thought the business would not be popular among Czechs.

“We had a pre-opening party on the 24th of August, which is our National Independence Day, and it was a disaster. We were running out of products, we could not handle the flow of clients, we forgot to charge people, to give them back the change, and so on... But after six days, on the 1st of September, we opened. We wanted them to know us from the inside—our cuisine,” said Nataalka.

When the restaurant finally opened on September 1, 2021, the couple was shocked. Many Czechs came to try out the new cuisine. Ukrainians who lived in Prague came from all over to try their beloved cuisine.

“Our cuisine is exotic for them; they don’t understand it,” said Nataalka. People from all around were coming to the restaurant and wondering how to eat soups, syrnykys (fried quark fritters), and what salo was; despite similar, sometimes even shared, cultures, Czechs had no idea what the ingredients of the most popular Ukrainian dishes were.

“Our dishes differ from theirs, which seemed crazy even for us; when we came to some restaurants that included Ukrainian cuisine, it was all different, so we knew we had to do something with it,” said the owner.

When the war started, Nataalka was in complete confusion.

“On the 24th of February, the Council of Ukraine in the Czech Republic called me as he was going to visit that day and told me that, unfortunately, he was not going to visit today... I was questioning this, but as I eventually saw the news, my heart skipped a beat. Since the war started, we have gained popularity, though I do not really enjoy it... I did not want this kind of popularity,” said Nataalka.

Lots of Ukrainians came to Prague to escape the war, and most of them stayed because they either liked the place or found some opportunities there. The Boršč has become a hotspot, and sales rose drastically. People need this precious, almost saintly part of the culture: the food.

“No restaurant could compete at the time, and that was the moment when we knew we were doing right,” said the owner.



photo by Alisa Snibur

Since the war started, the restaurant has welcomed hundreds of visitors. Nataalka puts her heart and soul into her restaurant: “I love this place. I haven’t ever thought that the restaurant will gain its popularity from such horrible obstacles. But now we talk about morality. I want this place to live.”

The Boršč is not just an ordinary soup shop; it is a place where Ukrainians can feel at home and newcomers can learn about the culture.



photo by Rose Mayer

chicken wing spot in Holešovice that suffers from the same problem. This leads to a devastating cliffhanger for fans.

While this does not work for those who may have fantasy leagues and need to catch all the action, the atmosphere defines the experience. Lots of American fans pack into the place, with beer and cheap food bountiful. It is easy to find a fellow fan to talk smack about your favorite teams, why referees suck and should be replaced by robots, or how the cameras seem to be showing more Taylor Swift than football in recent games.

For those who like a quiet environment or don’t want to leave the house on a Sunday night, going to a bar is not an ideal option. Sitting at home in a comfy chair with snacks is another great way to enjoy sports. This is where the NFL Game Pass comes in handy.

The NFL has collaborated with DAZN to distribute the NFL Game Pass to fans in Europe, which, while convenient, has downsides. The game pass is a whopping 4450 CZK for the entire season, an unaffordable snag for most people, especially students.

How Can Students Watch the NFL in Prague?

By Hayley Gallaher

For American football fans living in Prague, finding the Sunday night gridiron fix is a tall order with scattered options and venues that show the late games.

There are a few different bars that play American football games on Sundays. Third Coast Pizza, located in Žižkov, plays games on Sundays, but they close at 22:00, before even the early kickoffs finish. They are also closed on Mondays, meaning the Sunday night and Monday night games are unavailable to watch.

The same can be said about Wingz, a

For the average fan who only wants to watch one game, Game Pass is a massive overkill. This is probably the best option for those avid fans absorbed in all the action or who want detailed statistics and analysis. It shows all scoring plays, which is perfect for fantasy football gurus, though perhaps the greatest advantage is that it records everything.

Thursday night, Sunday night, and Monday night football games are aired at 2:15 in the morning, so for those who work the next day, the Game Pass is a necessary feature. Unfortunately, the price tag will force many students out. It is cheaper to have a Netflix subscription for a year, 3108 CZK, than to get the GamePass.

Of course, there is another, less legal, option. There are a lot of websites that stream NFL games illegally if one knows where to look. It takes just a computer and a handy HDMI cord to put the games on a big screen. Naturally, these streams tend to fluctuate in quality and sometimes get taken down as corporations want to protect their copyright and do not want to lose out on money.

Many options exist for students looking to catch an NFL game in Prague. Depending on what you are looking for, chances are there is someone or something out there for everyone.



photo by Rose Mayer

Thank You

