

PRAGUE CONFERENCE SUMMARY REPORT and HIGHLIGHTS

Irene Jacoby, Communications Chair

The 2016 International Conference was held May 15 to 20 in the beautiful city of Prague in the Czech Republic. Ninety-four participants attended the Conference, including twenty-two men and five ladies as guests. The attendees were from seven countries.



WCI President Pam Bansbach (standing) with other WCI officers

A welcoming reception was held on Sunday evening, May 15, at the Hotel Modra Ruze, the conference venue in the heart of the city. The reception gave members the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with their sisters from other clubs and to introduce and welcome newcomers.

The next morning, the attendees convened to start on the business at hand. Conference Coordinator Sarka DeJong (Prague) invited the representative of each club to introduce herself and her club. When this was finished, attention turned to financial matters that included a report and review of income and expenses.





Conference attendees

Appreciation was expressed for donations from the International Women's Club of Hamburg, Welcome to Washington, the Berkshire International Club, and Welcome to Colorado.

Special thanks were given to Helen Salazar (Welcome to Washington), who obtained a donation from her employer, George Washington University Hospital. The hospital donated the cost of printing a brochure and the LINK magazine, as well as the cost of shipping them to Prague. The very attractive brochure is on the WCI website and can be downloaded. This is a useful tool with which to educate prospective members, be it individuals or clubs.



Board of Directors' Meeting



Maria Fernanda Arduino
Incoming President

The discussion of the Website included issues of privacy, content and cost of maintenance. It was decided to have the WCI website maintained professionally. Members can view the site, which is still being built, and may submit a suggestion regarding its content and look.

Other discussions covered the directorship/running of a club, and although the modus operandi might be different, all clubs face the same challenges: how to attract new members – especially younger members – and how to maintain interest. Ideas for attracting new members were: activities with other special interest clubs; invitations for guests to attend special occasions; and making a club's website more interesting by posting photos of current events. It was also suggested that when hosting a sit-down meal, new members could be strategically seated.

Regarding our Communications, it was noted that Rihab Ouri (Lebanon) has continually sent us, via the WCI website, the Sister Club News. The newsletter is an update of the events of the various clubs, submitted by them to her twice a year. All representatives were encouraged to send information to Rihab.

The days did not pass only in a conference room – far from it. Host Sarka DeJong had organized many a treat for participants. As any visitor to Prague knows, it is a magical city. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Prague has become one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. It contains one of the world's most pristine and varied collections of architecture – Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Gothic, Art Noveau, Cubist, Neo-Classical and Ultra-Modern. Conference participants were taken on tours of the city, on a private tour of the Castle, the Strahov Monastery, the Jewish quarter, the old town square and new town square, among many other famous sites in Prague.





Conference participants on a tour of Prague's Municipal House



Other attractions toured by attendees:

1. *Astronomical Clock – oldest in the world*
2. *Prague - The City of a Hundred Spires*
3. *Old Town's cobblestone streets*
4. *Dancing House – Architect Gehry-designed curving tower*
5. *Charles Bridge and Palace Complex*
6. *View from the iconic 14th century Charles Bridge*

The evenings were taken up by much eating and drinking of good Czech food and beer. A very special evening at the Estates Theatre thrilled the opera lovers. Mozart lived in Prague for quite some time and had conducted in this baroque opera house. The group was given the opportunity to watch Mozart's opera, "The Abduction from the Seraglio." As May is the month of the music festival, many could attend concerts in libraries, churches—wherever music was to be found – and that was everywhere.

It was a very special week in Prague! WCI thanks Sarka for giving the conference attendees such a wonderful time.



The group enjoyed a private river cruise and dinner

The baton was passed, and WCI looks forward to its next international conference to be held in Washington, DC, USA. It promises to be an event fulfilling the mission of WCI—that of friendship and understanding. Till we next meet . . .



Left to right: Outgoing President Pam Bansbach; Conference Coordinator Sarka DeJong; Alena Klenotova; Incoming President Maria Fernanda Arduino



WCI members reveled at the Farewell Dinner and Awards Presentation



Faye Wickersham and Eshrat Demougeot Founder's Representatives



Happy 30th Anniversary WCI!

POST-CONFERENCE TRIP

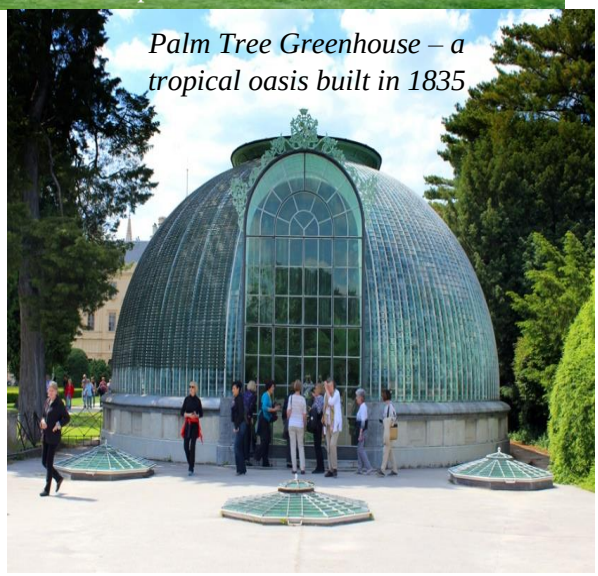
May 21-25, 2016



Chateau Lednice is in the beautiful Lednice-Valtice Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site in South Moravia, Czech Republic



The English-style park and gardens that surround Chateau Lednice – former holiday home of the Liechtenstein family



Palm Tree Greenhouse – a tropical oasis built in 1835



Chateau interior



Wine-tasting at the neighboring town of Valtice, the center of winemaking in Czech Republic



Enjoying Slovakian cuisine and entertainment in Bratislava, Slovakia



The group visited the Cathedral of Ostrihom (Esztergom) – Hungary's largest church and tallest building. This massive church offers spectacular views of the Danube River.

Photographs by **Isabel Etkin**