The nuclear bunker hotel

THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

By Mohammed Reza Amirinia

CATEGORY: TRAVEL DESTINATIONS



THE CORINTHIA	BUILT IN 1988	THE BUNKER	ROOM 214
The glass facade	*Designed by the army*	*Size of a tennis court*	*Carlos the Jackal*

A RIVETING STORY TO TELL

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The glass facade of the Corinthia Hotel conceals so much!

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this huge glass fronted hotel

Gazing at the outside of the Hotel Corinthia in Prague, you would never guess what it contains. This huge glass fronted hotel – the tallest building in the Czech Republic – looks very much like any other modern, upmarket hotel that you would find in cities across the world.

It was only built in 1988, just as the cold war was ending and a rapprochement was developing between the old east and the west. Communism, Soviet style, was on the wane but that is not how the designers saw it in the years leading up to 1988.

The designers were the army and the hotel was one of the first international investments in the country before the collapse of communism. They didn't realise that the world was changing and, with the cold war mentality still to the fore, they built it with heavy, reinforced concrete. Look hard, very hard and you will find a huge area three floors in the underground car park and there you will find a space the size of a tennis court.

This concealed area was to be used as a nuclear shelter in case of attack.

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THE TOP-LEVEL POLITICAL TALKS



the tallest building in the Czech Republic

Is it any wonder, then, that – standing in my room on the twenty-third floor – I subconsciously felt as though I was standing in a fortress as I looked down, seeing most of Prague in front of me.

During the cold war, the hotel, then called the Forum Hotel, witnessed the top-level political talks. At the time, every room in the hotel was bugged in order to monitor foreign guests' conversations. A friend's sister stayed here and, talking to herself, mentioned that there was no plug for the bath. Next day when she returned to the hotel a bathplug was there, sitting on the wash stand!

It was not just down in the bunker that things happened. Stay in Room 214 and you will have international terrorist links. It was here that German intelligence interrogated the Styrian diplomat, Nabil Sharitah, in connection with Carlos the Jackal, the most wanted international terrorist of the time.

Staying here reminded me that not all luxury hotels are just glass and concrete. Some have a riveting story to tell as well.



the glass facade of the Corinthia Hotel

PLAN YOUR JOURNEY

For more information about what to do and see in Prague, go to www.czechtourism.com.

For more of Reza's images of the Hotel Corinthia, go to www.purevisionjourneys.com/the-corinthia-hotel-prague.

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