

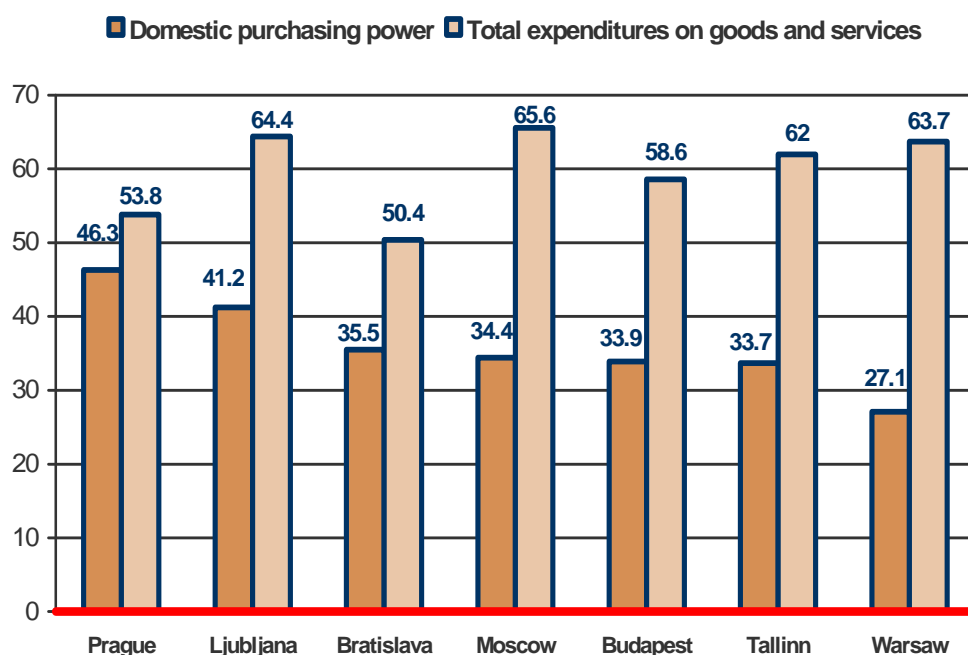
24. Life in the Czech Republic

Since the 1989 Velvet Revolution the Czech Republic has become a highly popular destination. Tens of thousands of foreigners have happily settled here, enjoying the country's combination of high standard of living and low costs.

LIFESTYLE

Although in most respects life in the Czech Republic has rapidly approached Western standards of living, the cost of living remains substantially lower than in Western Europe. According to the Union Bank of Switzerland, average prices of goods and services in Prague are only 53.8% of those in New York. Domestic purchasing power in Prague is 46.3% of New York's level.

Domestic purchasing power and total expenditures on goods and services (2006, New York = 100)



Source: Prices and Earnings, Union Bank of Switzerland, 2006

The Czech Republic ranks 20th o of 55 countries in the worldwide quality-of-life index and has the best result among the countries of Central and Eastern European.

Quality of life index, 2007

Rank	Country	Score
1	Austria	9.71
2	Iceland	9.56
3	Switzerland	9.45
4	Norway	9.25
20	Czech Republic	7.31
29	Slovenia	6.34
32	Slovak Republic	5.67
36	Hungary	5.30
50	Bulgaria	3.42
51	Poland	3.41
53	Romania	3.38

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2007

HOUSING

Prague and all larger cities in the CR boast a wide range of rented furnished and unfurnished housing for expatriates and their families, ranging from centrally-located apartments to spacious villas in leafy suburbs. Many real estate agencies offer relocation services for a charge of one to two months' rent.

The sale and rental prices of residential premises can vary widely depending on the city, location, size and quality. The purchase price of three-room apartment in Prague varies from USD 700 to 4,000 per m², in Brno from USD 300 to 1,100 per m², and in Ostrava from USD 200 to 900 per m². The average monthly rent for a standard three-room apartment is USD 660 in Prague, USD 390 in Brno and USD 350 in Ostrava. The prices in other cities are lower than those in Prague or Brno.

MEDICAL CARE

The Czech healthcare system is inspired by the European tradition, founded on public services and financed by predominantly public means. Czech physicians are at least of the same quality as in Western European countries. The Diplomatic Health Centre at the Na Homolce hospital provides healthcare for foreigners. Prague and other cities enjoy a growing number of private Czech (e.g. Top Moravia Health Brno - www.tmhklinika.cz, Doctor Health Centre Prague www.doctor-prague.cz, GHC Clinic Prague and Brno - www.ghc.cz and others) and Canadian (e.g. Canadian Medical Care Prague - www.cmcpraha.cz/en/index.shtml) clinics where a variety of foreign languages are spoken and a number of international medical insurers are present.

TRANSPORT

Public transport in the Czech Republic is comprehensive, efficient and very reasonably priced compared to Western Europe. Large towns all boast excellent local networks.

Foreigners who spend more than 185 days per year in the Czech Republic must obtain a Czech driving license in addition to their own license by presenting the original license at the local authority at place of residence. The deadline for applying for a Czech license is 90 days after the issue date of the long-term visa.

ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS AND FOOD

Prague and many cities in the Czech Republic are famous for their architectural heritage (see, e.g., the UNESCO World Heritage List at whc.unesco.org/heritage, which includes 12 places in the Czech Republic), museums, theatres, cinemas, galleries, historic gardens and cafes. An overwhelming choice of cultural events is on offer, embracing all types of music and an outstanding theatrical tradition. A number of foreign culture centres, ranging from the British Council to the Goethe-Institut, also offer a wide range of events and services (see "Other Leisure Activities" below).

A wealth of foreign language publications exists in the Czech Republic, including the *Prague Post*, *Prague Business Journal*, *The Prague Tribune* (English) and *Prager Zeitung* (German).

Restaurants in the Czech Republic cater to a wide range of tastes. In larger cities all types of international cuisine are available, from renowned traditional Czech food to Asian specialities. Alongside the country's famous Czech pubs (with the famous Czech beer brands), larger cities and especially Prague boast an extensive number of pubs and restaurants catering especially to foreigners, ranging from Irish pubs to Indian restaurants. For more information, see the restaurants guides at, e.g., www.restauraceonline.cz or www.czrb.cz.

SHOPPING

Retail in Prague and all larger cities has undergone a revolution in the past decade with many big shopping centres now located within and around the cities. Local concepts of shopping and customer service are now comparable to those of Western European countries, and major international retail chains (e.g., Tesco, Billa, Makro, IKEA, OBI, Bauhaus and others) as well as boutique stores (e.g., Zara, C&A, Marks & Spencer, Promod, H&M, Next, Max Mara and others) are found in abundance.

SPORT

In keeping with its reputation as a highly successful sporting nation, the Czech Republic provides a wealth of sporting opportunities. The most popular sports are ice hockey, football (soccer), basketball, tennis, volleyball, swimming and table tennis, for which there are many clubs and stadiums in all regions of the country. In addition to these sports, all kinds of other sports are also catered to, including rowing, canoeing, squash, beach volleyball, baseball, gliding, paragliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, go-cart racing, paintball, curling, etc. For more information, see the website of the Czech Sports Association at www.cstv.cz.

GOLF

Golf is growing rapidly in popularity. There are 112 clubs boasting two 36-hole courses, two 27-hole courses, nineteen 18-hole courses, 51 nine-hole courses, 15 indoor courses, 16 driving ranges and a further 11 courses under construction throughout the Czech Republic. For more information, see the website of the Czech Golf Federation at www.cgf.cz or see the interactive map of golf courses on the CzechInvest website.

OTHER LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Most embassies run clubs, groups and even bars for fellow nationals and will be happy to give you details of family-oriented events. There are many international cultural institutes in Prague and other cities, e.g. the British Council in Prague, Brno and Pilsen (www.britishcouncil.cz), the Goethe-Institut Prag (www.goethe.de/ins/cz/pra), the American Culture and Trade Center Prague, Österreichisches Kulturinstitut Prag, L'Institut Français de Prague (www.ifp.cz), the Japanese Information and Culture Centre Prague, Istituto Italiano di Cultura Praga (www.iic-praga.cz), etc.

The International Women's Association of Prague (www.iwa-prague.com) is a highly popular club for Czech and foreign women that organises classes, international activities, charity and social events and children's groups of all types.

For further information about life in the Czech Republic, you can also visit the website at www.expats.cz.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The Czech Republic is a landlocked country located in moderate geographical latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere. The climate of the Czech Republic is mild but variable locally and throughout the year.

The climate differs markedly among the various regions of the Czech Republic, depending on the height above sea level. Generally speaking, the higher you are, average temperatures may drop more and rainfall is more likely. Many other factors also play a role in this – the border mountain ranges, for example, significantly influence ground-level air flow and rainfall.

Various height levels of the sun during the year cause the changing of the seasons, differentiated from each other mainly by the development of temperatures and precipitation. Similarly to the whole moderate northern band, the beginning of the year in the Czech Republic is also characterized by a cold winter. After this comes spring, followed by a warm summer and chilly autumn.

EDUCATION

The Czech Republic boasts a significant and growing choice of foreign-language education programmes ranging from kindergartens to MBA studies.

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

School	Foreign language	Contact
The International School of Prague	English	www.isp.cz
The International School of Prague – Olomouc branch	English	www.isp.cz
The Prague British School	English	www.pbschool.cz
The English International School Prague	English	www.eisp.cz
The English College in Prague	English	www.englishcollege.cz
Business School Prague	English	www.aavs.cz , www.aac.edu
CMC Graduate School of Business	English	www.cmc.cz
Riverside School Prague	English	www.riversideschool.cz
Global Concepts International School – Prague	English	www.globalconcepts.cz
University of New York in Prague	English	www.unyp.cz
University of Northern Virginia - Prague	English	www.unva.cz
International School of Music & Fine Arts Prague	English	www.musicschoolprague.com
Bumble Bee – School of Creative Children – Prague	English	www.bumblebee.cz
Lycée Français de Prague	French	www.lfp.cz
Lycée Jan Neruda – Prague	French	www.gjn.cz
Lycée Matyáš Lerch – Brno	French	www.gml.cz
Lycée Slave – Olomouc	French	www.sgo.cz
Lycée Pierre de Coubertin – Tabor	French	www.gymta.cz
Institut Franco-Tchèque de Gestion (IFTG) Prague	French	Tel.: + 420 222 230 701, 706
Magistère d'administration économique et sociale (AES) d'Olomouc	French	Tel.: + 420 585 633 360
Filière de droit de l'université Charles de Prague	French	Tel.: + 420 221 005 455
Filière de comptabilité et gestion de l'entreprise de České Budejovice	French	Tel.: + 420 387 772 697
Filière d'administration publique de Brno (université Masaryk)	French	Tel.: + 420 221 610 206
Filière d'études européennes francophones en sciences humaines et sociales (université Charles de Prague)	French	Tel.: + 420 221 610 206
Deutsche Schule Prag	German	www.dsp-praha.cz
Österreichische Schule Prag	German	Tel.: + 420 257 322 494
Thomas-Mann-Gymnasium – Prague	German	www.gtmskola.cz
Gymnasium /Sternberk	German	www.gymst.cz
Bernard-Bolzano – Grundschule – Tabor	German	www.skolabolzano.cz
Zweisprachiges Gymnasium – Znojmo	German	Tel.: + 420 515 225 835
School at the Japanese Embassy – Prague	Japanese	www.volweb.cz/jschool