

24. Life in the Czech Republic

HISTORY

Czech countries were born more than one thousand years ago. The Czech history which has always been interwoven with the European history is very rich and offers many interesting facts about lives of societies through the centuries.

In 1918, after the defeat of Austria-Hungary, several centuries of Habsburg rule came to an end with the birth of independent Czechoslovakia, uniting the Czechs and Slovaks in one nation-state. During the years between the two World Wars, the First Republic (as it is referred to) was a rapidly developing industrial society, with a stable democratic system of governance and a vibrant cultural and intellectual life. However, the Munich Agreement, signed in October 1938, essentially sealed Czechoslovakia's fate and led to the occupation by the Nazi Germany in March 1939. At the end of the World War II, Czechoslovakia fell under the sphere of the Soviet influence. In 1948, the Communist Party had taken full control of the state and Soviet dominance extended for the next 40 years.

„The Velvet Revolution“ took place in November 1989 and is referred to as „velvet“ simply because there were no casualties. On November 17th, following the events in the neighboring East Germany (the Berlin Wall was taken down), a student demonstration confronted the police in the center of Prague. More extensive demonstrations followed with Vaclav Havel at the forefront, until the Communist government resigned on December 3rd, 1989. Vaclav Havel was elected president on December 29th, 1989.

The separation of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic into Czech Republic and Slovak Republic took place in January 1993. Although the Czechs did not want the country to be separated from Slovakia, the economic circumstances and objectives of the two newly emerging market economies varied significantly.

The Czech Republic applied for EU membership in 1996 and started negotiations in March 1999. On 16 April 2003 the Treaty on Accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia was signed in Athens. On 1 May 2004, the Czech Republic became a full member of the European Union.

Source: Businessinfo.cz, 2017

QUALITY OF LIFE

The Czech Republic ranks 19th of 61 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, 2016

Rank	Country	Score
1	Switzerland	9.83
2	Austria	9.71
3	Norway	9.71
4	New Zealand	9.56
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19	Czech Republic	8.20
20	Japan	8.11
24	United Kingdom	7.92
32	Slovak Republic	6.68
43	Poland	5.36
57	Hungary	3.69

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Online, 2017

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 average purchase price in Prague per m² is EUR 1,550-2,000, in Brno EUR 1,350-1,400 and in Ostrava EUR 500-550. The average monthly rent / flat 60m² is in Prague EUR 700, in Brno EUR 470 and in Ostrava 330. The prices in other cities are lower than those in Prague or Brno (Source: RealityMix, 2017).

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. Prague and other cities enjoy wide range of public and private hospitals and clinics – these are some examples of them - Top Moravia Health Brno (www.tmhklinika.cz), Doctor Health Centre Prague (<http://doctor-prague.cz/>), GHC Clinic Prague and Brno (www.ghc.cz), Canadian Medical Care Prague (www.cmcpraha.cz/en-US).

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/en/list, 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.grand-restaurant.cz.

SHOPPING

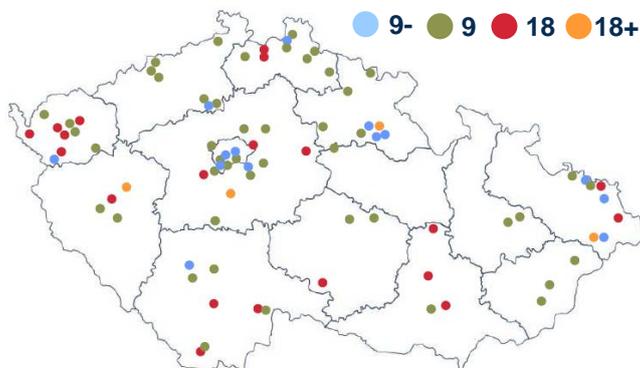
Retail in Prague and all larger cities has undergone a revolution in the past decade with many big shopping centres now located within and around the cities. Local concepts of shopping and customer service are now comparable to those of Western European countries, and major international retail chains (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 106 outdoor courses - 36-hole courses, 27-hole, 18-hole, 9-hole courses, indoor courses, driving ranges and 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.



Source: Czech Golf Federation, 2017

Country	Golf courses (outdoor)	Registered players
Czech Republic	106	56 352
Poland	39	4 021
Hungary	12	1 498
Slovakia	22	7 644

Source: European Golf Association, 2017

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/prag), 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), Instituto Cervantes Praha (praga.cervantes.es) etc.

The International Women's Association of Prague (www.iwa-prague.com) is a highly popular club for Czech and foreign women (approx. 300 women from over 35 different countries) that organises classes, international activities, charity and social events and children's groups of all types. IWAP is an independent, non-political, non-profit making organization, whose purpose is to welcome all women living in the CR.

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

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

International Secondary Schools			
International School of Prague	www.isp.cz	English	Prague
The English College	www.englishcollege.cz	English	Prague
English International School of Prague	www.eisp.cz	English	Prague
Riverside School	www.riversideschool.cz	English	Prague
Prague British School (several branches)	www.pbschool.cz	English	Prague
1st International School of Ostrava	www.is-ostrava.cz	English	Ostrava
1st International School of Brno	www.isob.cz	English	Brno
International School in Olomouc	www.ischool.cz	English	Olomouc
Deutsche Schule	www.dsp-praha.cz	German	Prague
Lycée Français de Prague	www.lfp.cz	French	Prague
Secondary School at Russian Embassy	www.ruschool.cz	Russian	Prague

Source: National Institute of Children and Youth, 2017

Note: Internationally accredited schools outside of the Network of Czech Schools following foreign curriculums.

Selected Schools Teaching in Foreign Languages

Kindergarten

Bumble Bee	www.bumblebee.cz	English	Prague
Die Grundschule der deutsch-tschechischen Verständigung	www.gtmskola.cz	German	Prague
KIDS Company	www.kidscompany-praha.eu	English/ German	Prague

Primary Education

Bernard Bolzano Grundschule	www.skolabolzano.cz	German	Tabor
Park Lane International School	www.parklane-is.com	English	Prague
Japanese School in Prague	www.jpschool.cz	Japanese	Prague
Thomas Mann Gymnasium	www.gtmskola.cz	German	Prague

Secondary Education

The Prague British School	www.pbschool.cz	English	Prague
Lycée Matyáš Lerch	www.gml.cz/fr	French	Brno
The English College	www.englishcollege.cz	English	Prague
Lycée Pierre de Coubertin	www.gymta.cz/informace/resume_fr.html	French	Tabor
Lycée Slave	www.sgo.cz	French	Olomouc
Lycée Jan Neruda	www.gjn.cz	French	Prague
Thomas Mann Gymnasium	www.gtmskola.cz	German	Prague

Source: National Institute of Children and Youth, 2015; CzechInvest, 2017

Note: Schools within the Network of Czech Schools working with the curriculum established by the Czech Ministry of Education.

Universities

There are over 40 universities, public and private, offering courses in foreign languages (mostly in English) and almost 10 accredited institutions offering MBA education. The courses are usually paid, but there may be exceptions (e.g. language course as part of a scholarship). The Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies (www.ujop.cz) offers teaching of Czech language to foreigners and preparing them for university studies. Foreign students can receive a scholarship under bilateral international agreements on cooperation in the field of education (offered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic) or within the framework of the Foreign Development Aid (offered by the Government of the Czech Republic). Information about these scholarships is available at Czech embassies and consulates. Some higher education institutions offer student mobilities under bilateral university agreements or grant scholarships for excellent study results or in cases of hard circumstances of a student. European students can take the advantage of number of exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus, EEA/Norway Financial Mechanisms, Aktion, Ceepus). The Erasmus Mundus programme offers scholarships also for non-European students to study selected degree courses.

Source: CzechInvest, 2017; National Agency for European Educational Programmes, 2017

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