

Czech Republic through the eyes of EVS volunteers



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Czech Republic through the eyes of EVS volunteers



Dear volunteers,

This publication first came to existence in the year 2012. It was created as a mini-project of two EVS volunteers from Germany – Katrin and Franziska. They participated in EVS during years 2009 – 2010 and it was them, who had the idea to make this booklet to help all the future volunteers in their first steps in a foreign and sometimes weird country. It was full of useful information about the Czech Republic, its language, food, history and culture and also tips on where to travel, what to see and experience. All that was written by Katrin, Franziska and other volunteers in their team.

Now, after five years their work has been helping new EVS volunteers, we have decided it is time for an update. While wanting to preserve the original and very well working concept, we have asked this year's volunteers to help us in creating the new content. The aim of this booklet is not to give always perfectly correct and objective information but rather to reflect on each person's opinions and feelings. This book should not serve as an official manual but rather as an inspiration for all those who decide to live (even for a short while), volunteer and travel through the Czech Republic.

We own many thanks to all of those amazing volunteers who sent us all the articles you will find in this booklet but also those who sent us their pictures, tips and or participated in the survey about the life in the Czech Republic.

We would like to wish you wholeheartedly a pleasant stay in the Czech Republic. May this time be the best time of your life.

TEAM OF ERASMUS+ YOUTH

Content



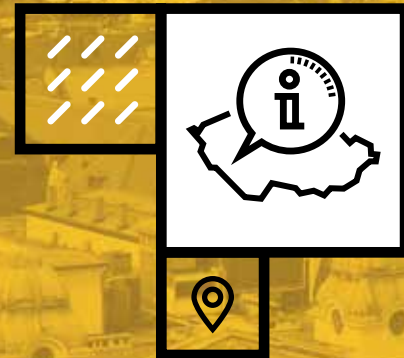
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The Practical Information on the Czech Republic



General information

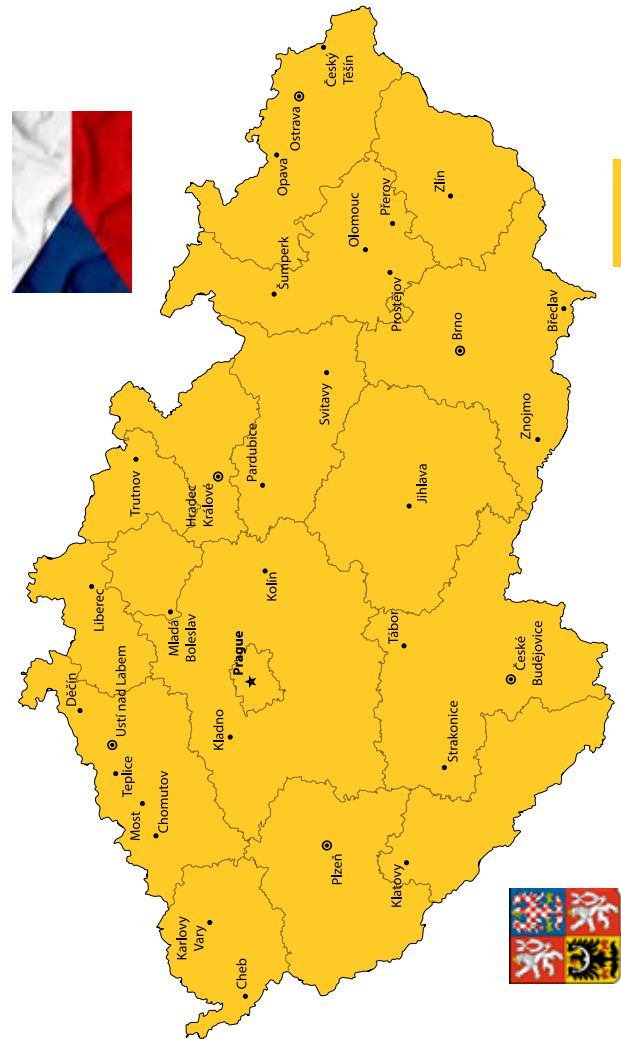


Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is located in the heart of Europe and is historically divided into three regions: Čechy (Bohemia), Morava (Moravia) and Slezko (Silesia). The name of the country, according to the legend, comes from the Forefather Čech, who brought Slavic tribe Czechs to Říp Mountain in Bohemia, where they have settled. The Czech Republic was established on first of January in 1993.

Geographically, the country borders with Germany to the west, Austria to the south, Slovakia to east and Poland to the northeast. The whole country is surrounded by mountains. The highest mountain is Sněžka (Snow mountain) at 1602 m. Unfortunately, being a land-locked country, there is no sea. However, there are many beautiful forests and four national parks, namely Krkonoše National Park, Šumava National Park, Podyjí National Park and Bohemian Switzerland. As for the climate, the Czech Republic has a temperate continental climate with warm summers and cold snowy winters. The warmest month of the year is July, followed by August and June. On average, summer temperatures are about 20°C - 30 °C higher than during winter. Autumn generally begins in September, which is still relatively warm and dry. During October, temperatures usually fall below 15 °C (59 °F) or 10 °C (50 °F) and deciduous trees begin to shed their leaves. By the end of November, temperatures usually range around the freezing point.

The national symbols of the Czech Republic are the coat of arms (with three animals symbolizing three parts of the state – black eagle for Silesia, red and silver chequered eagle for Moravia and silver double-tailed lion for Bohemia), the official colors (white, red and blue), the national flag, the flag of the president (coat of arms with lime tree branches and the motto „Pravda vítězí - Truth prevails“), the official seal and the national anthem (Kde domov můj – Where is My Home?).





QUICK FACTS

Capital:	Prague (Praha)
Area:	78,870 km ²
Population:	10,579,067 (31.3.2017)
Population density per km²:	134
Population in Prague:	1,282,496 (31.3.2017)
Time zone:	Central European Time (Central European Summer Time from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October)
Language:	Czech
Currency:	Czech koruna (CZK)
Political system:	parliamentary republic
EU member state:	Since 2004
Average temperatures:	January 0,5 °C; July 19 °C
Calling code:	+420 (from most countries 00420)
Emergency numbers:	European Emergency Number 112 Ambulance 155 Police 158 Fire Brigade 150

Czech history



Czech history

When you go to a new country, you should always research the history of the place, because without knowing its roots, you will hardly understand the nature and culture of its people today. However, you cannot just look at the history of the Czech Republic, because this state, as you might already know, has only existed since 1993. So there is not only one, but several “histories” united in the contemporary Czech territory with its historical regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Here is a short overview of some basic facts to equip you with a historical survival kit for your stay in the Czech lands.

EARLY HISTORY (6th–9th century)

At first, it might be interesting to know that no part of today's area of the Czech Republic ever belonged to the ancient Roman Empire. This is surprising, considering that so many European countries, as well as the neighboring states of Germany and Austria, belonged to it. As the Czechs are a Slavic people, their first ancestors, the first Slavs, came to this land in the 6th century, a powerful empire came to be, The Great Moravian Empire, which covered above all the territory of today's Moravia and Slovakia. The most important event for today's Czech culture was the arrival of the two Christian missionaries **Cyril and Methodius**, who did not come from Rome but from Constantinople. That is why they brought with them the Eastern Slavonic liturgy. They also codified the standard Slavic language, the forerunner of the contemporary Czech, Slovak, Polish and Russian languages, for which they invented a new alphabet. This alphabet later developed into the Cyrillic script, which is presently used by more than 200 million people mainly living in Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Bulgaria. But after the death of Cyril and Methodius and at the end of the Great Moravian Empire, the western Latin Church and culture returned to these regions. Therefore, if you wonder why the eastern Slavic languages like Russian, and the western Slavic ones like Czech, have different scripts, this is the reason. Nevertheless, these two cultural pioneers are honored

until today; there is a Czech state holiday on July 5th that is, according to legend, the day of their arrival. So if you come from a country in Eastern Europe where Cyrillic writing is used, you might pity the early end of this script in your present host land.

PŘEMYSLID DYNASTY (9th–13th century)

At the beginning of the 10th century, the center of power in the area of the present Czech state began to move from Moravia westwards, towards Bohemia – where it has stayed until today. In Prague, the Přemyslid dynasty began to build Prague Castle already in the 9th century. At the time, Prague was beginning to develop into one of the biggest Czech cities, where the most important events took place. The connection between the capital and the history of the country is therefore uniquely strong. The best-known personality of this time is **Přemyslid Duke Wenceslas** (in Czech: Václav). He made many efforts to Christianize his country and therefore, among other reasons, he was killed by his brother Boleslav the Cruel. As this happened on September 28th, 929 (or 935) in Stará Boleslav, we celebrate the “Day of Czech Statehood” on 28th of September. Wenceslas, who became a martyr for his faith, was canonized as Svatý Václav (Saint Wenceslas) and the town of Stará Boleslav became the most important place of pilgrimage in the Czech Republic. Also, Václavské náměstí (Wenceslas Square), one of the biggest squares in Prague, was named in commemoration of Sv. Václav, along with a big equestrian statue of him at the upper end of the square. But Svatý Václav also shows up often in everyday life: his statue is on the 20 CZK coin. Even though Svatý Václav was not a king (as the rulers of the Czech lands did not receive the heritable title of “king” until 1198), he is adored as the patron saint of the Czech nation. Another important change was the unification of Bohemia and Moravia in 1031. Later Moravia was called the “Margraviate of Moravia” and formed, together with the “Kingdom of Bohemia”



and the “Dukedom of Silesia”, the historic Czech lands. During this dynasty, from the 12th century on, Germans began to settle in the Czech borderlands as well as in the bigger cities. With the murder of the last Přemyslid king in 1306, this great dynasty finally ended their reign over the Czech lands. The Luxembourg dynasty in the 14th century, by marrying a sister of the last Přemyslid king, a member of the Luxembourg dynasty, came to the Bohemian throne in 1310. Their child, **Charles IV** (in Czech: Karel IV.), led the kingdom of Bohemia and the whole Czech nation into its greatest period. As Bohemian king, Charles IV was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in Rome in 1355, thereby making Prague the imperial capital. At that time, Prague became one of the biggest and most densely populated cities in all of Europe. Prague was the intellectual and cultural center of the Occident – a position confirmed by the title of “Golden City”. Important buildings and monuments were created at that time. Once Prague’s bishopric had been changed to an

archbishopric, Charles IV started the rebuilding of the already existing St. Vitus church within the Prague Castle complex into a Gothic cathedral. Furthermore, Charles University was founded as the first university north of the Alps, and the Charles Bridge, one of the oldest stone bridges in Europe, was built. On the 2005 television show “Nevětší Čech” (The Greatest Czech), Charles IV was deemed the greatest Czech in history.



Burning of Jan Hus

HUSSITE MOVEMENT IN THE 15TH CENTURY

Starting in 1402, **Jan Hus**, a catholic priest and rector of Charles University, spoke out against misconduct within the Catholic Church on such issues as wealth, corruption and hierarchical tendencies. His speeches were the origin of a reformation movement about 100 years before Martin Luther. Hus not only played an important role concerning religion, but also strongly influenced other cultural fields. As Charles IV had already codified some basics of the mod-

ern German language, Jan Hus worked out the basics of modern Czech. If you, as a foreign volunteer, are upset about those strange signs over some letters of the Czech alphabet – the acute accent (in Czech: čárka) as in á, é, í, ó, ú, ý and the caron (in Czech: háček) as in č, ě, ř, š, ž – that’s the fault of Jan Hus! But after learning some Czech you will realize that they are really helpful and harmonize pronunciation and orthography. Another important event influenced by Jan Hus was the Decree of Kutná Hora in 1409, in which the Bohemian king gave Hus and the Czech students control over Charles University. This made many of the German professors and students leave Prague, and they founded a new university in Leipzig. Hus, however, was declared a heretic because of his reformatory teachings. He was invited to explain his opinion at the Council of Constance. There, in spite of having been promised free passage, Jan Hus was burned at the stake on July 6th, 1415, which has been seen as a great injustice by many Czechs even today. Hus’s followers became known as the “Hussites”, who started a religious – as much as a nationalist and social – rebellion in Bohemia, called the “Hussite Wars”. The Hussite forces, under the military leadership of **General Jan Žižka**, survived five “crusades” ordered by the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. The most famous fight was the Battle of Vítkov in Prague; the importance of these events can be seen by the fact that this hill was chosen in the 20th century as the site for a national memorial, which commemorates modern Czechoslovak and Czech statehood and this connection. In front of the building, an equestrian statue shows Jan Žižka. In 1434, however, the Hussites were finally defeated. Some years later, in 1458, Bohemia had the first non-Catholic king in all of Europe: **George of Poděbrady** (in Czech: Jiří z Poděbrad). Finally, in 1485, the religious conciliation of Kutná Hora brought everlasting “freedom of belief” to the Czech lands (compared with other territories, quite an early achievement). Only this “eternity” did not last long, as the coming history will show. Today this significant period in Czech history is commemorated by a public holiday on July 6th, the “Day of the Burning of Jan Hus”.



General Jan Žižka



THE HABSBURG DYNASTY (1526–1918)

In 1526 another long era of Czech history begins, the reign of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty, which lasted until the end of the monarchy in 1918. The third Habsburg king and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, **Rudolf II**, moved with the whole royal court from Vienna to Prague in 1583. Prague, as the imperial residence and the Bohemian capital, which had suffered a decline after the ravages of the Hussite Wars, once more became a center of social and cultural life in Central Europe.



Jan Ámos Komenský

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR AND THE BATTLE OF WHITE MOUNTAIN

Under Rudolf's successor, who, by the way, went back with the court to Vienna, the historical religious problems erupted again. With the second, best-known Prague defenestration in 1618, when two imperial nobles were thrown out of the windows of Prague Castle, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) broke out. The reasons for this protest were both religious and political. On one hand, there was the religious difference between the mostly protestant Bohemians and the catholic Habsburgs. On the other hand, people were discontent with the already one-century-long hegemony of a foreign dynasty. In the decisive Battle of White Mountain

(in Czech: Bílá hora) near Prague in 1620, the protestant Bohemian Estates were defeated by the so-called Catholic League of the Holy Roman Empire. The following 200 years after the Battle of White Mountain are called “temno”, i.e. “the darkness”, in Czech history. Directly after the battle, a great number of Czech noblemen were executed, and, in general, the better part of the protestant Czech-speaking upper class, including the intellectual **Jan Ámos Komenský** (today on the 200 CZK banknote), fled the country. The Bohemian Estates were disempowered so that the power was even more centralized in the hands of the Habsburgs. Catholicism was declared the official faith and all Protestants were suppressed. German became the second official language, but as the intellectual Czech elite had emigrated, it virtually replaced the Czech language.

So – besides the huge destruction of the Thirty Years' War that the other countries also had to suffer – the Battle of White Mountain is the biggest catastrophe in the history of Bohemia and Moravia, as the Czechs, due to the resulting forced re-catholicization and Germanisation, almost lost their National identity.

THE CZECH NATIONAL REVIVAL IN THE 19TH CENTURY

During the two centuries of “temno”, only a few important historical events took place in the Czech lands. Influenced by the French Revolution (1789), the Czechs began to feel like a “late nation”, i.e. a people without their own national state. This led to the Czech National Revival in the 19th century. This cultural and political movement revived the Czech language, culture and national identity. So, after the long period in which there were neither grand literature nor newspapers published in Czech, academics like **Josef Dobrovský** and **Josef Jungmann** wrote great works about the grammar and vocabulary of the Czech language. Motivated by this movement, ordinary people started to take pride in their own language and to speak it instead of German. This development can still be seen in today's Czech language, as those leading linguists started again from the basis of the standard Czech used in the 17th century. They did not include the evolution of the spoken language in the centuries afterwards. This is why contemporary Czech features quite a big difference between its written and spoken components. [So when you're learning new Czech words used by your Czech friends, ask them which linguistic style they're actually using, spisovná čeština (standard Czech) OR obecná čeština (common Czech) – slang.] Looking in your purse or wallet, you can get to know another famous person belonging to that movement – **František Palacký**, pictured on the current 1000-crown note. Palacký was a historian and politician, known especially for his seminal work “The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia”. And finally, a number of monuments in Prague arose from that period. The National Theatre and National Museum were built during this time. Many sites were renamed using national symbols, such as the Prague Bridge or Stone Bridge becoming the Charles Bridge and the Horse Market becoming Wenceslas Square.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CZECH STATEHOOD UNTIL WORLD WAR I (1914–1918)

Over the course of a bit more than one century, Czech statehood had been marked by several changes. After the Czech lands had been a part of the Holy Roman Empire since the Middle Ages, the last Holy Roman Emperor laid down his crown in 1806, forced by the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. He could, however, stay Emperor of the Austrian Empire. In 1866 the Austrians lost the Battle of Hradec Králové (in Eastern Bohemia) against Prussia. The Habsburgs had to accept the Prussian hegemony over Germany and therefore they concentrated on Eastern Europe. They eventually transformed their empire into Austria-Hungary, which, as a so-called Dual Monarchy, united two independent states under one rule. In that state, the Czech lands again belonged to the Austrian part (Slovakia, in contrast, was ruled by Hungary). And through all these empires the Habsburg Emperor was at the same time King of Bohemia.

WORLD WAR I AND THE FOUNDING OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

During World War I, the Bohemian lion had to fight one last time for the Austrian double-headed eagle. As in all the preceding wars, Czech men were soldiers in the

Austrian army. But, in fact, many Czechs and Slovaks also served in the Entente troops, forming the Czechoslovak legions. One of their units gained a victory over the bigger and better-equipped Austrian forces in the Battle of Zborov (today in the Ukraine) in 1917, which was, although militarily unimportant, a milestone for Czechoslovak patriotism. In the meantime, under the leadership of **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk**, Czech and Slovak politicians in exile tried to convince the Entente powers (the enemies of Austria-Hungary) of the right of the Czechs and Slovaks to build their own independent state. Supported by France, Great Britain and the USA at the end of

the First World War, when the whole Austro-Hungarian Empire had collapsed, they finally achieved their aim: On October 28th, 1918, the “Československá republika” (ČSR), the Czechoslovak Republic, was proclaimed in Prague. This date is to this day a state holiday in the Czech Republic.

THE FIRST REPUBLIC (1918–1939)

You might ask yourself why there was a Czechoslovak Republic, as both Czechs and Slovaks today have their own independent states. First of all, it is important to note that the Czechs and the Slovaks are two nations, both with their own language and culture. (However, the Czech and Slovak cultures and languages are very similar. They can usually understand each other quite easily without having to study the other's language.) The establishment of a single state in 1918 was pushed, above all, for political reasons. Seen in a bigger European context, the Entente powers hoped, according to the concept of the “cordon sanitaire”, that the more powerful states in Eastern Europe would contain the influence of both Russian bolshevism and Germany. Concerning home affairs, the Slovaks had been dominated by the Hungarian upper class for a long time and therefore wouldn't have been able to found a new state on their own at the time. The Czechs, on the other hand, feared the quite strong German minority in their lands and were glad to join together with the Slovaks. The state consisted of the historical regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (part of today's Czech Republic), and Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus (also known as Carpathian Ruthenia) in the east of the country. The newly established state had 14 million inhabitants. About 51% of them were Czechs, 15% Slovaks, 23% Germans, 5% Hungarians and 3% Ruthenians. So, in fact, there were more Germans than Slovaks living in the first Czechoslovak Republic. And, of course, it was a multi-ethnic state – similar to the Austro-Hungarian Empire before it. The new capital was Prague, and it was from there that most of the political issues were decided. The Slovaks, the smaller and less industrially developed nation, felt disrespected and longed for more autonomy than Czech centralism provided. The constitution defined Czechoslovakia as a democratic republic headed by an elected president. From 1918 to 1935 this president was the philosopher Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. He is, to-



Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

gether with Charles IV and František Palacký, considered one of the three fathers of the Czech nation and today he is pictured on the 5000-crown banknote.

THE END OF THE FIRST REPUBLIC AND WORLD WAR II (1938–1945)

After Nazi Germany's dictator Adolf Hitler succeeded in 1938 to annex Austria, his next ambition was the incorporation of the mainly German-inhabited Czech border regions, the Sudetenland. According to the so-called appeasement policy, the Western powers Great Britain and France thought that by conceding to Hitler's "last demand", they could avoid a new big war in Europe. So, with the Munich Agreement, they allowed Nazi Germany to annex the Sudetenland. As there were only German, Italian, British and French representatives at this conference, and no Czechoslovaks, in the Czech and Slovak republics this treaty is also known as the Munich Dictate. But, of course, this was not Hitler's "last demand". Threatening the country with war, he forced the defenseless Czechoslovak government to surrender and on March 15th, 1939, German troops entered the rest of the Czech lands, meeting no resistance. The so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was built as a part of Greater Germany; Slovakia became a German satellite state, which meant it was not occupied, but was dominated by Nazi Germany. Therefore, the Czech lands already came under German rule half a year before the first shot of World War II had been fired; the Czechoslovak army did not fight in the war, but nevertheless the time of the Protectorate was one of the worst times in Czech history. During the war, the Czech economy was exploited to produce ammunition for the German army. But the long-term aim of the Nazis was to destroy the Czech nation and to "Germanize" the country. Brave Czechs formed resistance and fought against the occupants or organized student demonstrations. The most important event of this resistance was the assassination of Reichsprotektor and SS-hardliner Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in 1942. To exact revenge, some hundreds of people were executed and the village of Lidice, only a few kilometers from Prague, was completely burnt down; all of the inhabitants were killed or transported to concentration camps – one of the most well-known and cruel reprisals of the war.

Like other countries in Europe, the Czech lands also suffered the Holocaust; most of the Jewish population, but also Czechs as well as Roma and Sinti, were killed or deported to concentration camps such as Terezín or camps in Poland. But finally, in 1945, Bohemia and Moravia were liberated by Allied troops. May 8th is still celebrated today as a state holiday, the "Day of Victory".

After World War II, Czechoslovakia was mainly re-established in its pre-1938 borders (except for Carpathian Ruthenia in the very east, which was ceded to the USSR). Edvard Beneš, who had been the second Czechoslovak president between 1935 and 1938 and had led the government- in-exile during the war, was allowed to resume his position as the head of state. His name is also connected with the Beneš decrees, which, among other things, laid the groundwork for the expulsion of about 2.6 million Germans, who lived primarily in the Sudetenland. Many Hungarians were also expelled from the country. So, after the Czech culture had been enriched for several centuries by a multiethnic society of Czechs, Germans and Jews - the most recent being mostly German-speaking – within a few years the Czech population became one of the ethnically purest in the world because of the Holocaust and the Beneš decrees.

As Czechoslovakia was largely liberated by Soviet troops, the Soviet influence was strong in the post-war period. So, with aid from Moscow, the communists seized power in a coup d'état in 1948. Czechoslovakia became a people's republic and **Klement Gottwald**, as the first "workers' president", replaced Edvard Beneš. Later the name of the state was changed to Československá socialistická republika (ČSSR), the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The country's new leaders created a system following the Soviet model and the ideal of Stalinism. Although other political groups were officially allowed to exist, the only real political force was the Communist party. The legal system was subordinated to political ends and opposition to the government was prevented by the state security (in Czech, Státní bezpečnost, abbreviated StB). Show trials of party leaders accused of being enemies of the system were held in the 1950s and many politicians and academics were imprisoned or executed. A centrally planned economy was established by collectivizing agriculture and eliminating almost all private property. By means of uniform mass



organizations dominated by “the party”, the communists tried to politicize all areas of life, including education, culture, the sciences and leisure time. Concerning foreign policy, Czechoslovakia became a part of the Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc, being a member in the military alliance of the Warsaw Pact and in the economic community of the Comecon. In the late 1960s, intellectuals and party leaders, above all the Slovak communist **Alexander Dubček**, tried in the so-called Prague Spring (in Czech: Pražské jaro) to reform the communist system; that means they didn't want to abolish communism, but create “socialism with a human face” by giving more political, civil and economic freedom. The USSR, however, did not agree with this lib-Russian tanks in Prague; it feared that the reforms would spread to the other communist countries and compromise the Soviet hegemony in the Eastern Bloc. According to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which said that only the Soviet Union is allowed to define the exact direction of communism, Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia on August 21st, 1968. Afterwards the country remained occupied until 1990.

Gustáv Husák replaced Alexander Dubček as the head of the Communist party and rescinded all the reforms. The next two decades, mainly with Gustáv Husák as the head of the party and

of the state, are known as the “normalization”. This period was characterized by the restoration of the conditions of the time before the Prague Spring and the subsequent preservation of this new status quo. Many who had supported the reforms lost their jobs and most citizens their interest in politics. It was a time of resignation and stagnation. A few brave people, however, led by the dissident playwright Václav Havel, continued to oppose the regime, for example by publishing Charter 77 in 1977. This petition called on the government to respect human rights and to allow more freedom. “Charter 77” then also became the name of a civil rights movement. As the Eastern Bloc regimes were weakening at the end of the 1980s, Czechs and Slovaks were encouraged to go out into the streets and win their freedom. These events and demonstrations are known as



Gustáv Husák

the Velvet Revolution (in Czech: Sametová revoluce) of 1989 – “velvet” because it was a non-violent overthrow of the authoritarian government. It began on November 17th, when the police suppressed a peaceful student demonstration in Prague. This provocative intervention of the security forces triggered a series of mass demonstrations, with hundreds of thousands of protesters and a general strike. The Civic Forum (in Czech: Občanské fórum) was founded to unify the opposition in one organization. Within a few weeks the whole communist system collapsed; the government resigned and at the end of the year 1989, Václav Havel was elected president of the new democratic republic of Czechoslovakia. Nowadays November 17th is celebrated as a state holiday, called the “Day of the Fight for Freedom and Democracy”. Since the Velvet Revolution, only two decades have passed, and many Czechs still remember these events and the communist period. Therefore, it is probable that people will talk to you about it. I was, for example, surprised that the Czechs do not just say “under communism”, but they use the expression “totalita” (in English: totality). That means that they consider Czechoslovak communism a totalitarian dictatorship. Historians as well say that this system, next to the Soviet Union's, was one of the most hardline regimes in the Eastern Bloc.

THE DISSOLUTION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC SINCE 1993

The new government inherited big problems from forty years of communist rule. Many reforms concerning political and economic issues were necessary. They showed that the political conditions and economic realities of the new competitive capitalism were different for the two parts of the country. It was for this reason that the Czechoslovak state was split into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic on January 1st, 1993, although the majority of both Czechs and Slovaks did not want a separation. It is, however, remarkable that this division was again a peaceful evolution in Czech history, in contrast to the violent collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. On January 1st, the “Day of the Restoration of the Independent Czech State” is celebrated. Václav Havel was re-elected as the first president of the Czech Republic, succeeded by Václav Klaus in 2003. Like most former Eastern Bloc countries, the Czech Republic also





joined the western alliances. It became a member of NATO in 1999 and a member of the European Union in 2004. On 21 December 2007 the Czech Republic joined the Schengen Area. On 1 January 2009, the Czech Republic under Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time. From 1993 until 2012, the President of the Czech Republic was selected by a joint session of the parliament for a five-year term, with no more than two consecutive terms (2x **Václav Havel**, 2x **Václav Klaus**). Since 2013 the presidential election is direct. **Miloš Zeman** was the first directly elected Czech President. The Czech Republic has an established structure of foreign relations and ranks 6th in the 2017 Global Peace Index. According to the 2017 Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index, Czech citizens have visa-free access to 168 countries, which ranks them 9th and World Tourism Organization ranks Czech passport 24th, which makes them one of the least restricted by visas to travel abroad.



Václav Havel

So, after this short trip through Czech history, I hope that some things are clearer to you, and that you will understand why some things are as they are here in the Czech Republic. If you are not interested in history, just look forward to the many state holidays created thanks to these important historical events. But if you are a history freak then you can use this free time to learn many things about this great country, to visit museums and exhibitions, to walk through the sites of certain historic events, to ask your Czech friends about their own experiences, and much more... or also to make new Czech history on your own! ;-)

CHRISTOPH MAUERER, PRAHA

Religion in the Czech Republic



Religion in the Czech Republic

The first thing you notice, if you look at the statistics of religion in the Czech Republic, is that the population of this country is mainly **atheistic**. You can even say that the Czech Republic is one of the least religious countries in Europe or even in the world. A census

“ I am such a big atheist I am afraid the God will punish me. ”

– JÁRA CIMRMAN, FICTIONAL CZECH GENIUS

more people, in numbers, 44.7 percent gave no response regarding to their Religious affiliations. That is why you cannot say for sure, if they are truly atheistic or if they just do not want to express themselves about their relation to something spiritual. Maybe they also just do not want to be counted in some institutionalized organization like the Church. If you look at the spreading of Christianity in the Czech Republic, you can see that only 10.4 percent, ergo about one million people declared themselves to the Catholic Church, which is the biggest number of believers in an institutionalized organization in the Czech Republic. Only about one percent of the population belongs to the protestant church. Because there are not very many foreigners living in the Czech Republic, there is just a small percentage (also about one percent) of members of other religious groups in the Czech Republic: for example, Buddhists (because of a Vietnamese minority), a small number of Muslims and other smaller groups. Back in the days, there were also many Jews living in the Czech Republic, but because of the Holocaust, this population had almost been wiped out and nowadays, there are only a few thousand Jews.

about the Religious affiliations in the Czech Republic in year 2011 came to a result that supports that statement: 34.5 percent of the total population said that they had “no religion”. Even

This might be surprising, because if you look at the neighbors of Czechia, you can see that they are not that atheistic at all, like Slovakia or Austria for example and especially the inhabitants of Poland identify themselves with their faith very strong. To understand the development in the Czech Republic, you have to go back in history. Of course, it was mainly caused by the Communist leadership in the 20th century. The ideology of the communists’ regime was clearly atheistic and to force the people, living in the Czech Republic into their system, which allowed no kind of belief, they tried to annihilate everything regarding to faith in their territory and they mostly succeeded. The most affected religious group was the Catholic Church.



The Great Synagogue in Plzeň is the second largest synagogue in Europe and the third largest synagogue in the world

Before year 1950, which means only a short time after the occupation by the Communists, 76.3 percent of the total population declared themselves belonging to the Catholic Church. However, in this year, monasteries were closed by the regime and monks and nuns were arrested and they had to spend some time in prison. Churches, Monasteries and other places of worship were used by the regime mostly as warehouses, luckily, they were not destroyed. Everything related to religious groups was expropriated by the state or was just closed. Today, you can see a big amount of “empty churches” all over the Czech Republic.

If you look even further back in history of the Czech Republic, you can see that there were many tries of great rulers to Christianize the lands that are being called the Czech Republic today: Already in the ninth century, **Saints Cyril and Methodius** came from Byzantine as missionaries to spread the Christian belief in the Slavic lands. For the purpose of this mission, they devised the Glagolitic alphabet, the first alphabet to be used for Slavonic manuscripts.



Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia, who lived in the tenth century, was converted to Christianity by Saints Cyril and Methodius and thus he continued in spreading Christianity throughout the whole country. For his actions and martyrdom (he was assassinated by his brother), he was posthumously declared to be a king and came to be seen as the patron saint of the Czech state. **Charles IV**, Holy Roman Emperor, followed their example in the fourteenth century by spreading Christianity through Catholic Church. When **Jan Hus**, who is for Czechs comparable to Martin Luther for Germans, rebelled as one of the first men on earth against the Catholic Church, his life came to a quick end. The Church, which had a strong influence in the 15th century considered him a heretic and thus burned him at the stake in the year 1415. After his death, however, a movement created in his name, Hussites, had raised and fought against the Catholic Church in the so-called Hussite Wars (1419-1434). In the next century, in the religious Thirty Years' War (1618-1948), Protestants were defeated by the catholic league and that's why they were again forced to become catholic, because the Catholic Austrian Habsburg Monarchy forced them.

Nowadays the most Christian believers live in Moravia (southeast of the Czech Republic). Many protestant Christians belong to the Hussite church, which still relates to Jan Hus, their predecessor. If you are a believer or if you are just

interested in religion or in religious groups, you will be able find a community for you to join, or just to make some experiences there. The Internet might help you in this case. There are not many believers in the Czech Republic anymore, but those who are believers, identify themselves strong with their faith and do this together with other believers in communities, so you will not be alone. This small minority of groups is pretty active and lively. If you get into such a community, you can have great experiences, regarding to faith in your time in the Czech Republic!

TOBIAS J. NIESS, PRAHA



The statue of Jan Hus at the Old Town Square in Prague

Holidays in the Czech Republic





Holidays in the Czech Republic

Being in a foreign country also means enjoying local food, local customs and local traditions, and what better occasions are there than National holidays to experience this? In the Czech Republic, numerous festivities are similar to those of other European countries (with a few differences), however there are also a few, which are unique to this country and are inherently cultural and historical. Below you will find a list of holidays, their dates and a few words of description!

**1st
January**

New Year's Day and Restoration of the Independent Czech State



On the first day of a new year, you should definitely eat a bowl of lentils! According to Czech people, it will bring you money for the whole year.

**19th
January**

Jan Palach Memorial Day

On 19th of January Jan Palach died from the injuries he caused himself by setting himself on fire to stage a protest against the authoritarian regime. On this day flowers are left by his memorial in Prague

★ = State Holiday

**March,
April**



Easter

Easter is very celebrated in the Czech Republic, with the egg painting traditions (*kraslice*), with the use of the *pomlázka*, a whip used by boys on girls to enhance fertility, to the decorations that rotate around lambs, rabbits and chicken. The week before Easter Sunday is busy with activities and preparations, from Ugly Wednesday, to Green Thursday, Good Friday and White Saturday, each with its own tradition. The latter however are more felt in the countryside than in cities.

**30th
April**

Walpurgis Night

Also known as the Burning of Witches, on this night legends say that evil powers are at their highest strength. Fires are set ablaze throughout the country, burning brooms, old rags and straw. During the bonfire people share sausages, dance to music and sing. Children often dress themselves as witches.

1st May

Labor Day and Love Day



World-wide known Labor Day, on the 1st of May people take a welcome day off, but it is also used to celebrate day of Spring and Love. Inspired Karel Hynek Macha's poem Maj, on this day it is customary for boys to kiss girls under a cherry tree or birch. In villages, people create traditional *májka*, a huge pole on top on which a spruce tree or wreath is set and decorated with ribbons. Once set aloft, neighboring villagers attempt to bring down the poles of others while simultaneously defending their own.

8th May

Liberation Day



On this day Czech Republic celebrates the liberation from German occupation on behalf of American and Russian armies, which took place on the 8th of May 1945.



**5th July****St. Cyril and St. Methodius Day**

A day to pay homage to St. Cyril and St. Methodius who brought Christianity into the Czech Republic

**6th July****Jan Hus Day**

A day to pay homage to Jan Hus, a Czech Catholic reformer, philosopher and priest who because of heresy was burned at the stake. Jan Hus inspired the protestant movement and gave way to the Hussite Wars in Bohemia. On this day he is commemorated.

**28th
September****Statehood Day, also known as
St. Wenceslas Day**

Patron Saint of Czech Republic, Wenceslas was the Duke of Bohemia in the 9th century, and was murdered by his own brother. Canonized as Saint due to the miracles that took place after his death, he has now a National Holiday.

**28th
October****Independence Day of CzechoSlovak
Republic**

On this day, in 1918, the Czecho-Slovak state was officially recognized as independent, with its first president Tomas Masaryk being commemorated with flowers.

**2nd
November****Dusicky – All Souls' Day**

"Little Souls" is a quiet day during which Czechs pay visit to the graves of their relatives and honor their memory by lighting candles.

★ = State Holiday

**17th
November****Day of Struggle for Freedom and
Democracy**

Two events are commemorated on this day. On such day in 1939 the students in Czech Republic held a peaceful protest against the Nazi Occupation, and again in 1989 students once more protested against the Communist Regime during what was later called the Velvet Revolution. Two events, fifty years apart, are remembered as the days during which the Czechs demonstrated for their freedom and democracy.

**5th
December****St. Mikulas**

Marking the beginning of Christmas, the day of St. Nicholas is an important festivity among children. On this day St. Nicholas arrives to Czech Republic with his helpers, an angel and a devil, and asks children whether they have been good during the year. Songs and poems are recited and children get candies or potatoes/coal if they did not behave well. Christmas market stalls open.

**24th
December****Christmas Eve (Štědrý den) – Generous
Day**

Vesele Vanoce! On Christmas Eve the Czechs spend time at home with families, decorating the Christmas tree, feasting and hoping to see the golden piglet which will bring them wealth. A popular dish is carp, potato salad and sweet bread, which is also known as vánočka. As in many other countries, presents are exchanged on this day. Czech children believe it is the baby Jesus, Ježíšek, who puts presents under their Christmas tree.





**25th
December**

Christmas Day



There are many traditions, which can be seen during the Christmas holidays in Czech. Families cut apples to reveal star shapes for good luck, put fish scales under their plates to bring them money during the following year, girls throw their shoes to see if they get married (they do if the tip of their shoe points at the door), and every family member makes a small boat out of a walnut shell and candle and then let it float on a bowl on water hoping it will not sink which would bring bad luck.

**26th
December**

St. Stephen's Day



The following days Czechs usually spend watching Christmas fairy tales (the most popular one is called *Tři oříšky pro Popelku* – Three nuts for Cinderella) and eating *cukroví*, small cookies in different shapes and flavours.

**31st
December**

New Year's Eve

On the last day of the year people gather to celebrate often in pubs, in their home or in their cottages in the mountains. They drink a lot of alcohol and eat *chlebičky*, small pieces of bread decorated with various ingredients. Sparklers, *prskavky*, and fireworks are being lit and kisses and good wishes are being exchanged.

★ = State Holiday

Getting started with Czech language



Getting started with Czech language

Probably one of the things you are more worried about is Czech language, especially if your own is not close at all to the Slavic languages. But don't worry! Sure, during the first few weeks, you won't understand anything or anyone around you, but soon you will start getting the hang of it. The best advice I can give you is to not be afraid to sound ridiculous. Most people will help you when they notice you are a foreigner, so try to speak as much as you can. First, you should learn a bit of pronunciation, and then listen to the everyday conversations that happen around you and repeat the most common sentences. Also, try to use the new vocabulary and grammar that you learn in your lessons. Soon you will speak Czech, you will see!

”Kolik jazyků znáš, tolikrát jsi člověkem.“

(YOU ARE HUMAN AS MANY TIMES AS THE NUMBER OF LANGUAGES YOU SPEAK.)

– CZECH PROVERB

TO HELP YOU GETTING STARTED, HERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THIS LANGUAGE:

- Some of the problems will come because of the pronunciation. For example, Czech differentiates between short (a, e, i, y, o, u) and long vowels (á, é, í, ý, ó, ú/ů). Then, there is the famous ř: even some Czech people cannot pronounce it correctly. To learn how to pronounce, it is better if you ask a Czech person to help you. Also, č, š and ž can be a problem for some. Č is the sound of “ch” in cheap, š is the “sh” in shark and ž is the sound of the last “ge” syllable in garage.
- Czech is a synthetic language, which means it uses a lot of morphemes in words to give information. For example, with the conjugation of a verb we know which person it is referring to and we do not need to say the personal pronoun (I do = dělám). Also, substantives and adjectives have 7 cases, which are different endings depending on the grammatical use of the word. So get ready to learn those!
- Substantives have three genders: masculine (ten), feminine (ta) and neuter (to). However, it is not very common to use these pronouns explicitly.
- Verbs have only three tenses: present, past and future. No continuous and no perfect. And that's good news for us, Czech learners.
- There are differences (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) between spoken and written Czech, or informal and formal.
- The order of the words in the sentence is mostly flexible. In general, you put the information you already know in the beginning of the sentence and the new information at the end.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE EXPRESSIONS YOU WILL USE THE MOST IN YOUR DAILY LIFE, SO THAT YOU CAN START SPEAKING RIGHT AWAY!

Good morning / Hello	Dobrý den / Ahoj
Goodbye / Bye	Na shledanou / Ahoj
Yes / No	Ano / Ne
Please	Prosím
Thank you	Děkuji
Sorry (Informal/formal)	Promiň / Promiňte
What is your name? (Informal/formal)	Jak se jmenuješ? / Jak se jmenujete?
My name is...	Jmenuju se...
I don't speak Czech.	Nemluvím česky.
I don't understand you. (Informal/formal)	Nerozumím ti. / Nerozumím Vám.
Do you speak English? (Informal/formal)	Mluvíš anglicky? / Mluvíte anglicky?
Where is (the hospital, the station) ?	Kde je (nemocnice, nádraží)?
Numbers one to ten	Jedna, dva, tři, čtyři, pět, šest, sedm, osm, devět, deset
How? How much? Where? When? Why?	Jak? Kolik? Kde? Kdy? Proč?



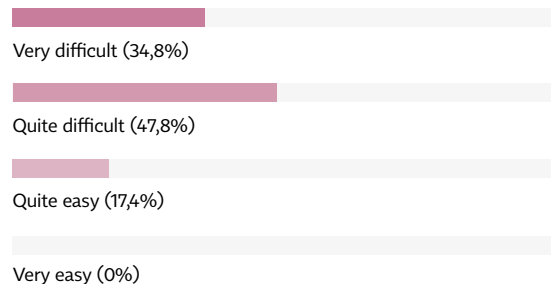
Did you know?

The 30-characters word 'nejneobhospodařovatelnějšímú' is the traditional longest word in Czech language, even though other artificial words can be longer. It means "to the least cultivable ones".



ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS:

How difficult is Czech language for you?



ANNA PIÑOL FERRÉ, HRONOV



Czech Culture



Czech Literature

Czech Literature

Ahoj, dear volunteer. If you decided to come to Czech Republic, you should be interested in Czech culture. In this case you can't be indifferent to Czech literature, because if you want to know much about Czech history, Czech people, their habits, traditions, temperament and of course Czech humor from the viewpoint of Czech people themselves, you have to get acquainted with Czech literature. You will be able to understand Czech people better, if you read their books.

There are many remarkable Czech authors, but I am going to suggest only those, who have worldwide fame, and are translated in different languages. Maybe you can read them in your native language, or, at least, in English.

If you want to get involved in the society, you have to understand its humor. That is why the first author that I offer you to read is **Jaroslav Hašek** and his satirical novel *Dobrý voják Švejk* (The Good Soldier Švejk). This is a story of interesting adventures of Josef Švejk, who is a dealer of stolen dogs. When World War I begins, he decides to take part in it, and here is the beginning of his long way to the front. The hero seems stupid and funny. He never gets in confusion and he comes up with an absurd story in every situation. Reading this novel, you can enjoy many jokes and dark humor of the author. *The Good Soldier Švejk* is considered as a comic masterpiece of world's literature.

You will see the most dramatic interpersonal contradiction if you read the play *Matka* (The Mother) of **Karel Čapek**. This is the story of a family, where the mother tries everything to keep her sons safe, away from war. Author brings a conflict between men who want to fight and women who do not want them to be dead. This story tells us that sometimes we do not have a choice between War and Peace. In this play, you can see psychological drama of a heroine whose infinite love of motherhood is struggling with the sense of debt to her motherland.

Surely, you have heard about **Franz Kafka**, who is one of the highest peaks in 20th century's literature. He definitely differs by his style of writing. His work *Proměna* (The Metamorphosis) is so unique that you will never see such kind of novel in worldwide literature. His way of revelation of human being is the one that no other author has. Though using absurdist fiction, Kafka is a realist. Reading his works repeatedly makes you find another meaning and subtext, which was hidden from your attention the last time.



Tatevik Tamazyan

I am sure, that you have plans for travelling. Books of **Miroslav Šašek** will help you a lot. There is a series of books for children titled *This is Rome, This is New York, This is London, This is Hong Kong* and so on. You can read them in Czech, because they are very easy and with many beautiful illustrations, which the author made all by himself. If you work with children during your EVS, these books will help you to organize an interesting lesson or speaking club.

The next author is my favorite: **Milan Kundera** and his *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (The Unbearable Lightness of Being) is the most impressive book I have ever read. The plot of this book is very interesting. In parallel of the love story of Tomas and Teresa, Sabina and Franc, you see real historical episodes of 1960s and 1970s Czech history and political situations. With the experience of the heroes, you will read about the Soviet regime and the emigration of intellectuals, the difficulties that they had to overcome. Of course, you can read historical books about it, but when you read history in fiction, you remember it better. You get historical knowledge just by enjoying a fictional book. It is important to know that the author himself faced

these problems, so this book is in some way an autobiography. Besides the plot, this novel is a philosophy of life. Kundera analyzes human beings, love, responsibility, strength and weakness of a human, loyalty and betrayal, lightness and heaviness of life. You will meet many interesting thoughts that you will want to rewrite into your notebook, as I did. The author has a new viewpoint to everything, so if you are tired of standard ideas Milan Kundera is for you.

If you want to improve your Czech, I will suggest you to read literature for children, because it is usually very easy and you will have a lot of fun reading them. The most famous classical writers are **Karel Jaromír Erben** and **Božena Němcová**. **Dagmar Urbánková** is a contemporary author, whose books are originally constructed, and you can change sentences and illustrations as you want.

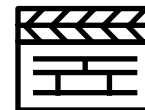
TATEVIK TAMAZYAN, ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM



Did you know?

There is only one Czech author who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. His name is **Jaroslav Seifert** and he was an important writer, poet and journalist of the 20th century. He got the Prize in the year 1984 for his poetry "which endowed with freshness, sensuality and rich inventiveness provides a liberating image of the indomitable spirit and versatility of man". His poems are being taught in schools until this day. His most well known works are: *Býti básníkem* (To Be a Poet), *Maminka* (Mother), *Všechny krásy světa* (All the Beauty in the World) or *Šel malíř chudě do světa* (A Penniless Painter Went Out into the World).

Czech movie industry



Czech movie industry

Can you name at least three Czech films? Maybe not, but if I tell you that *Přetel nad kukačím hnízdem* (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest), *Tři oříšky pro Popelku* (Three Nuts for Cinderella), and *Kolja* were made by Czech directors, you will probably recognize at least one of them! The two most important and world-renowned Czech directors are Miloš Forman and Jiří Menzel. Forman has made films such as *Larry Flint*, *Hair*, *Goya's Ghosts* and *Amadeus*, and received an Oscar for *Přetel nad kukačím hnízdem* (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest). Menzel's most famous film, however, is *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely Watched Trains).

During the time of the communist regime, the production of propaganda films was being promoted and films were censored, which slowed down the film industry immensely. Puppet films by Jiří Trnka and cartoons by Karel Zeman and Jan Švankmajer, however, are examples of successful productions from that time. Try watching *Meat Love* by Jan Švankmajer. To escape censorship or persecution, many directors emigrated in the 1960s, especially after the invasion of Soviet troops in 1968. Among them were M. Forman and J. Menzel, along with J. Jirěš, V. Chytilová, J. Němec, E. Schorm and F. Vláčil. They were all producing movies that were somehow related to the current system or took a critical approach towards the Soviet occupation. Their movies were prohibited in the Czech Republic, but two of them – *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely Watched Trains) by Jiří Menzel and *Obchod na korze* (The Shop on Main Street) by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos – later received Oscars. Other successful films from that time are *Hoří, má panenko* (The Firemen's Ball) by Miloš Forman, *Spalovač mrtvol* (The Cremator) by Juraj Herz, and *Skřivánci na niti* (Larks on a String) by Jiří Menzel.

Some newer Czech films worth watching are: *Výchova dívek v Čechách* (1997) by Petr Koliha, *Báječná léta pod psa* (1997) by Petr Nikolaev, *Musíme si pomáhat* (2000) by Jan Hřebejk, *Román pro ženy* (2004) by Filip Renč or *Účastníci zájezdu* (2006) by Jiří Vejdělek.

If you love going to the cinema, but your Czech is not so good yet, do not worry; films are usually shown in cinemas in the original version with Czech subtitles. So, you can easily watch films from your home country, or American and English films, of course. If you want to get to know Czech cinema, and Czech films, however, you will have to learn some Czech. :)

If you feel like watching something, that is easier to understand, especially when watching the original version, why do not you try some of the famous Czech children's films from the 1970s and 1980s? There are, for example, *Pan Tau* (Mister Tau), *Lucie – postrach ulice* (Lucie – Terror of the Street), *Létající Čestmír* (Flying Čestmír), *Chobotnice z II. patra* (The Octopuses from the Second Floor), *Ať žijí duchové* (Long Live Ghosts!) and *Kačenka a strašidla* (Kate and the

ghosts). Then there are the Czech fairy tales filmed by Václav Vorlíček. They are famous all over the world; maybe you have already seen some of them in the past. Why not try to watch

“ - That's some awesome music! What music is that?

- That's the Czech national anthem, dude.”

- SAMOTÁŘI (CZECH COMEDY MOVIE, 2000)

them in Czech? Here are some titles: *Princ a Večernice* (The Prince and the Evening Star princess), *Dívka na koštěti* (The Girl on the Broomstick), *Jak utopit Dr. Mráčka aneb Konec vodníků v Čechách* (How to Drown Dr. Mracek, the Lawyer) and *Jak se budí princezny* (How to Wake up Princesses). And the most famous one is probably *Tři oříšky pro Popelku* (Three Nuts for Cinderella). However, nowadays, the most popular fairytales director is probably Zdeněk Troška. His famous films are *O princezně Jasněnce a létajícím ševci* (Princess Jasnenka and the Flying Shoemaker), *Z Pekla štěstí* (Helluva Good Luck) or *Princezna ze mlejna* (The Mill Princess). Czech people really love their fairytales, especially around Christmas!

BASED ON THE ARTICLE BY FRANZISKA KOCH, PLZEŇ



ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS:

What Czech movie would you recommend to watch?

I have seen a weird movie called "Skřítek" – it's without dialogue and contains Czech humour; you should watch it!

Every evening Večerníček is on TV; these are kid's bedtime stories, for example Bob a Bobek (cartoon with two white rabbits), Maxipes Fik (a huge dog), Krteček (a little mole) or Pat a Mat (two handymen).

Želary (2003), Tmavomodrý svět (2001) or Kolja (1996) – These are some good Czech dramas

I liked the new wave surrealist movies (Daisies, Svankmajer's movies,...)

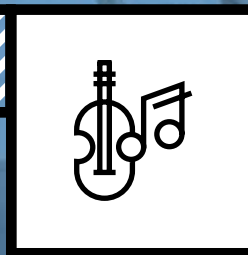
There are many comedies worth watching. For example Účastníci zájezdu (2016), Pelíšky (1999) or Postřižiny (1980).

Three nuts for Cinderella is the best!

You should definitely visit the international film festival in Karlovy Vary!



Czech music



Czech music

There are many world-famous composers of Czech origin you might have heard of. For example there is **Bedřich Smetana** (1824-1884) with his opera *Prodaná nevěsta* (The Bartered Bride), numerous piano compositions and a set of six symphonic poems *Má vlast* (My homeland), *Vltava* (Modau) being the most famous poem of them all. In tribute to his work, a national classical music festival takes place in Litomyšl, Bedřich Smetana's hometown. Another popular composer is **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904) famous for his symphony *Novosvětská* (From the New World), symphonic poems based on Karel Jaromír Erben's notorious collection of ballads *Kytice* (Bouquet) and opera *Rusalka*. The third composer well known to all Czech people is **Leoš Janáček** (1854-1928) author of operas *Její pastorkyňa* (Her Stepdaughter), *Šárka* or *Počátek Románu* (The Beginning of a Romance).

“Co Čech, to muzikant”

(“WHO IS CZECH, IS A MUSICIAN”)
- AN OLD CZECH PROVERB

Dechovka (or *dechová hudba*) is a type of Czech folk music characterized by the use of brass and percussion instruments. In one band, there are usually a few singers, musicians but also dancers wearing folk costumes. The songs are mostly about young love, nature and country life. This type of music is still popular nowadays, especially between elderly people and you can still hear it during some traditional festivals. You can see grandpas and grandmas singing along and dancing polka, a traditional Czech dance. Try to search for *Vysoký jalovec* (A Tall Juniper tree) song.

The beginning of the 19th century marks the beginning of a traditional musical genre called *dechovka*.

When talking about history, we cannot forget to mention the importance of rock music during the time of socialism. Rock music was often connected to one's political orientation and many bands were banned. That led to the beginning of Czech underground culture. One rock band, Plastic People of the Universe, was arrested. It was partly in protest of these arrests and prosecution that playwright Václav Havel and others wrote the Charter 77, a civic initiative criticizing government for failing to implement human rights.

What about Czech music today? There are many modern musical bands which are popular. Just to name a few: Čechomor (folkrock), Divokej Bill (rock), Chinaski (pop rock), Kabát (rock), Krucipůsk (metal), Kryštof (pop), Mandrage (punk rock), Mig 21 (pop rock), Mňága a Žďorp (alternative rock), Nightwork (dance music), Olympic (pop rock), Ready Kirken (rock, pop), Slza (pop), Sto Zvířat (ska), Support Lesbians (pop rock), Tři sestry (punk, rock), UDG (pop rock), Vypsaná fixa (punk), Wohnout (punk). There are also many popular soloists, some of them are: Tomáš Klus, Lucie Bílá, Lucie Vondráčková, Ewa Farna, Marta Kubišová, Aneta Langerová, Radůza, Daniel Landa, Anna K, Michal Hrůza, Ben Christovao, Markéta Irglová and many more. Of course you can look all of these up on the Internet but it is even better if you see them and hear them during one of many music festivals which take place in the Czech republic (see the table below).

**BASED ON THE
ARTICLE BY
FRANZISKA KOCH,
PLZEŇ**



Did you know?

Český slavík (Czech Nightingale) is a Czech award, similar in nature to the American Grammy Award, to recognize outstanding achievement and annual popularity in the Czech music industry. The most successful artists in the history of the poll are **Karel Gott** (male soloist) and **Lucie Bílá** (female soloist), both with eighteen awards each.



LIST OF CZECH MUSIC FESTIVALS

Name	Month	Place
Pardubické hudební jaro	únor – květen	Pardubice
Majáles	duben - květen	Various places in CZ
Mezi ploty	květen	Praha
United Islands	červen	Praha
Metronom festival	červen	Praha
Pražské jaro	květen – červen	Praha
Votvírák	červen	Milovice
Metalfest Open Air	červen	Plzeň
Jamrock	červen	Žamberk
Smetanova Litomyšl	červen – červenec	Litomyšl
Benátská noc	červenec	Liberec
Jazz Fest Brno	červenec	Brno
Colors of Ostrava	červenec	Ostrava
Masters of Rock	červenec	Vizovice
Rock for people	červenec	Hradec Králové
Mighty sounds	červenec	Tábor
Sázavafest	červenec	Světlá nad Sázavou
Bohemia Jazz Fest	červenec	Various places in CZ
České hrady	červenec – září	Various places in CZ
Moravské hrady	srpen	Various places in CZ
Brutal Assault	srpen	Josefov
Rock for Churchill	srpen	Vroutek
Okoř	srpen	Okoř
Struny podzimu	říjen – listopad	Praha
Zimní Masters of Rock	prosinec	Zlín

Czech sport



Czech sport. Hockey, hockey, hockey?

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the words „Czech Republic“ and „sport“? I am sure that most of you thought about hockey. And for good reason! The Czech team is included in the so-called „Big Seven“ – seven countries dominating in the international hockey arena. Czech hockey players managed to become the Olympic champions only once, whereas they won the title of world champions 12 times (6 of them as the Czechoslovak team)! In this regard, Czechs are behind only two best hockey superpowers - Canada and Russia.



Jaromír Jágr

Hockey in the Czech Republic is more than just a sport. I even read the opinion that the Czech hockey union was created in 1908 to show the world that Czechia is not just the province of Austria-Hungary but is a different nation, different country. Even then, a patriotic foundation of Czech hockey was laid. The situation was repeated in 1938, when Hitler had already voiced his intentions to expand Germany. Then the national teams of Czechoslovakia and Germany played for the bronze of the World Championship and the background of the match caused an unprecedented wave of patriotism in the Czech Republic.

Apart from hockey players, there are many other great athletes in the Czech Republic. I believe, even those who are far cry from

sport fans have ever heard the name of **Martina Navrátilová**, one of the greatest tennis players in history: the former first racket of the world and 18 times Grand Slam champion. Moreover, Czech winners of the Grand Slams are **Hana Mandlíková**, **Jana Novotná**, **Ivan Lendl**, **Petra Kvitová**, **Lucie Šafářová** and many others. The Czech national team won 5 of the last 7 FedCups - does not it confirm the highest level of Czech tennis?

The Czech Republic has great achievements in athletics as well. For many years, the Czechs occupied the leading positions in the decathlon: dozens of Olympic and world championships medals as well as world records belong to **Robert Změlík**, **Tomáš Dvořák** and **Roman Šebrle**. The best javelin thrower in the world in the 1990s was **Jan Železný**, who won three consecutive Olympics and three World Championships. The world record set by him in 1996 (!) has not been beaten to this day! Železný's endeavors were followed by **Barbora Špotáková**, 2-time Olympic and world champion in the same discipline.



Štěpánka Hilgertová

Impressive achievements belong to **Štěpánka Hilgertová** who was one of the world whitewater leaders for 10 years. During this time, Štěpánka won 5 world championships and two Olympic Games. But what's even more fascinating is that she finished her career at the age of 48 just before the Olympic Games in Rio! What a passion for the sport!

Over the last years due to success of Czech athletes biathlon is on the march in this country. **Gabriela Koukalová** is one of the most titled winter sportswomen in the Czech Republic: among her awards is the World Cup 2015-2016 win, 6 Small Crystal Globes in all disciplines, two gold World championships and two silver Olympic Games medals. Together with **Veronika Vítková**, **Ondřej Moravec**,

Michal Šlesinger/Jaroslav Soukup Gabi complects one of the best mixed-relay teams in biathlon. In different years both Vítková and Moravec won the World Cup races.

Still, I would give a title of Czech Snow Queen to **Martina Sáblíková**, one of the best speedskaters in the world. Martina has won 5 Olympic medals, 3 of which are gold! 16 gold World championships medals! In addition, Sáblíková is passionate about cycling and could even take part in the Olympic Games-2008 unless the organizers of qualification competitions hadn't broken the rules.



Martina Sáblíková

Universally recognized legend of Czech sport is an artistic gymnast Věra Čáslavská. 7-time Olympic and 4-time world champion but what is most important, a great patriot of her country. She was not afraid to oppose the communist regime sacrificing, in fact, her career. The scale of her personality is evidenced by the fact that in 1968 she became the second most popular woman in the world behind only Jacqueline Kennedy.

Of course, here are not all the achievements of Czech athletes. I want to name the names of **Lukáš Bauer, Kateřina Neumannová, Petr Čech, Pavel Nedvěd, Helena Suková, Eva Samková** and many others. And it seems to me, for a country with a population of 10 million, these achievements are very impressive! Czech fans have great compatriots to cheer for!

ANNA BULSOEVA, UHERSKÉ HRADIŠTĚ

Food and recipes



Meat, dumplings, pivo ... don't they sound Czech?

Indeed these are very common foods in the Czech Republic, but there are many other things that are unusual for me. I'm working in a kindergarten and eat there every day. The meals (soup + main dish) are great, very inexpensive and quite good. They cook very healthily, with a lot of vegetables and potatoes. For me it was a bit strange to get to eat soup every day, as I am not used to that. In addition, there are many different kinds of meat with sauce and a side dish. Usually you have to order the side dish extra, so you can choose. *Guláš* is also very common here, and for a snack, you can eat *utopenec*, a sausage macerated in vinegar with onion and pepper.

Going to the supermarket is the same for me here as at home; I can find everything. One thing I did not know before was the *rohlík*, a kind of very cheap crescent roll. About drinks, the most common is *pivo* (beer). I never really liked it, but since I have been here in the Czech Republic, I drink it quite often. It is normal to drink beer when you have your lunch, sit in a café, or relax in the

evening. And it's so cheap! But there's not only beer, you can also find *Kofola* (it's a bit similar to Coke, but not really; it's more spicy, less fizzy and less sweet). Not everybody likes it, but you should try it! *Slivovice*, *Becherovka*, *Fernet*..., these are all Czech spirits; *Becherovka* is very herbal while *Slivovice* is rather clear and very strong.

SUSANNE STERRER, PRAHA



Guláš



ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS:

How is Czech food?

Very tasty (10%)

Quite tasty (60%)

So-so (15%)

Not very tasty (15%)

MEAT, MEAT AND MEAT? WHAT IS A TYPICAL CZECH FOOD?

Typical Czech food is usually meat based and heavy, and does not have much vegetables in it. But what can you do if all these delicacies just make you shiver because you are not a friend of meat and bones but prefer vegetables and grains on your plate? Especially in smaller towns and villages in the Czech Republic, being vegetarian can be somewhat complicated. One vegetarian dish you can find nearly everywhere is *Smažený sýr* (fried cheese) coated in flour, egg and breadcrumbs, fried and served with tartar sauce and potatoes. Sometimes you also find different kinds of fried vegetables (broccoli, mushrooms or cauliflower) – dishes with non-fried vegetables are rarely to be found. In the bigger cities, like Prague, Brno and Ostrava, there are vegetarian restaurants. You can find a list of them on www.happycow.net.

SERENA FONZO, HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

**ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS:**

What kind of dishes would you recommend to try?

Guláš (goulash)

Segedínský guláš (meat stew with paprika and sauerkraut)

Nakládaný hermelín (soft cheese marinated with peppers and onions in oil)

Vepřová pečeně se zelím a knedlíkem (roast pork, dumplings and sauerkraut)

Žebra (roasted ribs in a marinade)

Hovězí líčka s bramborovou kaší (beef cheeks with mashed potatoes)

Bramboračka (potatoe soup)

Bramboráky (potatoe pancakes)

Smažený sýr (fried cheese)

Houskové knedlíky (dumplings)

Koláče (small pies)

Pavlišovský řízek (meat coated in bread crumbs and fried with sauerkraut and dumplings)

Svíčková s knedlíkama (beef sirloin with dumplings and vegetable cream sauce)

Trdlo (chimney cake)

Palačinky (pancakes)

Bramborák (potato pancake)

(4 servings)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg of starchy potatoes, peeled and washed
- 2 eggs
- roughly 4 tablespoons of soft wheat flour
- 4 garlic cloves
- Salt and pepper
- 3-4 handfuls of marjoram, fresh or dried
- Lard or oil for frying

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Grate the potatoes, drain the liquid and dry them with paper towel or squeeze them in a cloth. In a bowl, make a dough by adding eggs, flour, garlic, salt, pepper and marjoram to the potatoes.
- 2 Heat up the lard or oil in a wide pan on medium flame (adjust the amount of fat to the type of pan). Then put the dough into the heated pan, one or two spoon at a time and use the bottom of the spoon to make the pancake as thin as possible. Adjust the number of dough to the size of the pan. Flip the pancake to fry it on both sides. Fry until golden brown.
- 3 If you are using more fat to fry the pancakes, remove the excess grease with a paper towel.
- 4 Eat warm.



Bramborový salát (Potato salad)

(4 servings)

Potato salad is very popular as a Christmas dish in the Czech Republic. It is meant to be a side dish and we usually eat it with a fried carp during Christmas but the salad also perfectly fits to schnitzel or sausage.

INGREDIENTS:

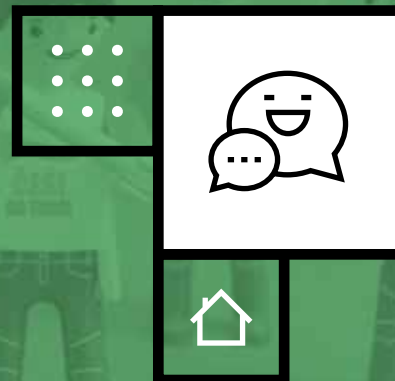
- Potatoes (1,5 kg)
- 1 Celery
- 4 Carrots
- 3 Boiled eggs
- 4 Pickles
- 1 Onion
- 1 small can of Peas
- 5 spoons of Mayonnaise (this is up to your preference, some prefer to add white yoghurt)
- 1 teaspoon of Mustard
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- Whole black pepper



INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Boil the potatoes with the skin for about 15 minutes. Boil the eggs for 10 minutes.
- 2 Peel the carrots and celery, then boil them in salted water with whole black pepper. Cook until soft.
- 3 Let all the vegetables and eggs cool down. Then peel the potatoes and eggs.
- 4 Dice potatoes, eggs, celery and carrots into small pieces, then chop pickles and onions. Also add one can of peas.
- 5 Add salt, mayonnaise and mustard and gently mix all ingredients together.

What are Czech people like?



What are Czech people like?

If you have never been to the Czech Republic, there may be some things that can really surprise you. In this section, I want to take the opportunity to familiarize you with the locals and to share with you some of the things I found strange here.

Fact #1: A typical Czech family is consisted of Mother, Father, two kids and a dog 😊

Fact #2: At school, most of the students have dance lessons and there are many balls on different themes - masquerade ball, colorful ball, Valentine's Day ball, regular prom, etc.

Fact #3: Czech people are not direct when it comes to asking for something or expressing an opinion. They will always try to make it sound mild and polite. They use sentences like "I thought it would be nice if...", "I was wondering if there is an option where..." etc.

Fact #4: Czech people are very active about how they spend their free time. You can often see their lists full of tasks starting at 7 am on Saturday, including lots of hiking, mushrooming, kayaking or any other type of outdoor activities. Yes, they love mushrooming!

Fact #5: People in the Czech Republic highly respect one's private life and they are not used to gossiping. No matter if you are LGBT, having affairs or cheat, they will act as nothing happened.

Fact #6: Most of the citizens in the Czech Republic are non-religious (about 60% of the population), although there are many churches, especially in the biggest cities (there are around 150 churches in Prague only!).

Fact #7: Czech people get crazy when it comes to ice hockey.

Fact #8: Beer! Apart from the huge well-known producers, there are lots of small family breweries. There are even different ways how you can order a beer in a restaurant, depending on how it is served – hladinka (beer with creamy foam on top), mlíko (beer foam only), šnyt (beer in a small glass), čochtan (beer without foam) or říz (mix of light and dark beer).

Fact #9: Lining for the bus. Czech people are used to show respect to those who came first by giving them the opportunity to enter first. People are also used to giving up their seats to elderly or pregnant women.

Fact #10: Early lunch. In some regions in the Czech Republic, people have lunch at 11am. This is due to the fact that in some areas people start working really early and they have breakfast at as early as 5am. The given lunchtime can be a bit difficult if you are used to late lunch.

PETYA HRISTOVA, OCHOZ U BRNA



Did you know?

In 2015, there was a show called *The Greatest Czech*, in which a television poll of the populace to name the greatest Czech in history was conducted. The winners were: King **Charles IV** (1st place), president **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** (2nd place) and president **Václav Havel** (3rd place). The first round was originally won by the fictional genius **Jára Cimrman**, but he was disqualified.





ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS

What is the biggest (culture) shock you have ever faced in the Czech republic?

- The most shocking thing for me was sexism.
- Czechs think that it's almost a crime when they hear that someone likes to drink HOT beer in winter. For me it's completely normal.
- The weather.
- Too many dogs.
- Sometimes what appears like rudeness and anger and no desire to speak to foreigners (only old generation)
- The easter tradition of the whipping.
- Czech culture is quite similar to the culture in my home country, but it was shocking to me that people don't like giving stuff for free/sharing as much because of the communist past where a lot of people had to suffer and didn't have enough stuff available.
- People see shooting with guns as a „sport“. Also, children learn it on summer camps and are often allowed to play violent video games at home.
- That it is really (really) true that they are the biggest beer drinkers in the world.
- Having lunch as early as 11.30, which is difficult if you come from the south of Europe like me.
- Eastern slapping.
- I was shocked by the bathroom. In the Czech Republic it is very common that the toilet and the shower are in two different rooms.
- Easter traditions!
- You can find people drinking beer at any time of the day.
- Nothing.
- Czech people change the end of the names when are talking to the person.
- Eastern tradition.

- So far, I have not had a major culture shock.
- For french people it's hard because Czech people don't take a really special time to eat, so for a lot of volunteer we work during lunch time.
- They change all the names (celebrities, films...)
- That people bath in beer sometimes.
- There are differences, but I was not shocked.
- Political situation.
- Too much bread with cumin.
- Sexism.



ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS:

How do you think Czech people spend their free time?

- They are most often in nature: hiking, travelling, going somewhere by bike.
- They spend their free time in pubs. :-)
- Usually they go to a pub and sit there drinking their beers without any other movement.
- Czech people like to spend their free time outside of cities ... in nature on a vikend trip or at their cottage.
- Drinking beer, eating knedlíky and relaxing at their cottage!
- Sports are very popular: in summertime riding a bicycle and going hiking; in wintertime going cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and playing hockey.



Traveling in the Czech Republic



Traveling in the Czech Republic



Traveling in the Czech Republic

I think there is no better possibility for travelling than during your EVS. You live in a new country, you will start to speak the native language, and you have many free weekends and holidays to explore everything the country has to offer. And, above all, you have the great luck to be not just in any country, but in the Czech Republic!

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.”

- SAINT AUGUSTINE

Usually you need to spend a lot of money on travelling, but in the Czech Republic public transport is always affordable. The train connections are usually very good and if

this is not the case then you will always find a connecting coach. What is also good to know is that you get a 50% reduction on the normal train ticket price as soon as you travel with two or more people. You just have to buy the ticket together and then the fun can start. And, honestly, who likes travelling alone? I am sure that most of the time you will profit from this special offer!

From Prague, you can reach any city in the country without any problems, because most of the buses, coaches, and trains start from here. But also, from smaller cities and villages you will find your way

for sure. Within not only the Czech Republic, but also internationally, you will find great options. With Student Agency buses, for example, you can travel from Prague to Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava and many more European cities for less than 35€ – round-trip!

BASED ON THE ARTICLE BY VANESSA HOFEDITZ, PRAHA



Did you know?

HOW TO GET A DISCOUNT FROM ČESKÉ DRÁHY?

Buy „In-karta“ and you'll get 25% discount on train tickets,

www.cd.cz/jizdne/in-karta/default.htm

- It is cheaper to buy one if you take (or plan to take) at least two (longer) journeys;
- To get the discount card, go to the train station with your ID and one passport.
- In-karta gives you a discount of 25% on tickets for trains in first or second class. Further reductions are available on seat reservations and multiple-day tickets.
- The price of In-Karta is 150/190Kč per 3 months or 250/450Kč per 1 year (the price depends on your age, if you are under 26 you pay less)



Pravčická brána



USEFUL WEBSITES WHEN TRAVELING:

- www.idos.cz – For finding connections
www.dpp.cz – Public transport in Prague
www.cd.cz – Czech Railways
www.regiojet.cz – International buses and trains
www.elines.cz – International buses
www.flixbus.cz – International buses
www.polskibus.com – International buses
www.blablacar.cz – Car-sharing
www.hitchwiki.org – Information about hitchhiking
www.kudyznudy.cz – Traveling tips, events, festivals...
www.czechtourism.com – Traveling tips

**ASK EVS VOLUNTEERS**

How do you usually travel when you travel through the Czech republic?

65% By train

35% By bus

0% By car

THE SMALLEST GUIDE TO PRAGUE

To truly understand Prague, the best thing to do is to walk, however the transport system is so incredibly efficient that any bus or metro will take you anywhere! Google maps works perfectly in Prague, showing you all possible connections! The 3 metro lines cross the city covering a great expanse, and where the metro doesn't reach, the trams or the busses do. There are various types of tickets: 30 min – 24Kč, 90 min – 32Kč and 24h tickets for 110Kč. The easiest way to buy tickets is in metro stops where yellow machines will accept either cash or card. You can also buy tickets on board of trams and busses but be aware that they will be more expensive! A real fun ride is Tram Line 2, which if taken from the head station in *Petriny*, will tour all of the main sights in Prague leaving you with awe!



Charles Bridge

It is impossible to list all that must be seen in Prague on one page, as the city is so rich and so beautiful in attractions and secrets. For the classical tour suggestions obviously will include the *Dancing House*, the *Old Town Square*, the *Charles Bridge* and the *Prague Castle*, but there is much more than that. First of all, it is good to know that to see the clock exhibiting the famous show you must be there at the top of the hour, every hour. Furthermore, there is no need to pay to see the Castle because the premises are free for everybody: the first part of the Cathedral can be visited for free and the famous, beautiful *Golden Lane* can be visited for free after 5pm! Isn't that great? If however, you want to experience a different Prague, below you will find a few favourites.

For nature lovers Prague offers numerous parks, from the fairy-tale castle park of *Průhonice*, to the extensive *Stromovka* and to the *Petřín Hill*, from which on top of a copy of the Eiffel tower you are able to see all of Prague! On that note for a perfect city view, climb up *Letná*

Park and sit where Stalin's biggest statue in the world once was! For lovers of alternative tours Prague also offers numerous activities and sights that are truly unique. You can go enjoy a movie at the *Bio Oko* cinema, where a laidback atmosphere allows you to watch a hipster movie on sun chairs. If you are more into open street art, how about a fun hunt around Prague looking for the over 16 strange statues that inhabit the city? From the upside down horse, to creepy babies crawling towers and statues pee-ing over the map of the Czech Republic, you will not get bored! These are all statues by a rather controversial artist *David Černý*. Also for industrial alternative lovers head over to the *Holešovice* neighbourhood, booming with cafes, thrift shops and recycling boutiques.

Shopping enthusiasts will love the farmers' markets all across the city and in particular, the one on the famous river bank *Náplavka*, where weekly food festivals are also held.



Trdelník (Chimney cake)

As an EVS, budget is always a concern, and even though Prague is more expensive than the great majority of Czech Republic, fear not you will always find some cheap food to eat! If on a tight budget, you can find numerous sandwiches at the *Bageterie Boulevard* franchise for cheap. Also, there are 3 buffet chains across Prague (*Loving Hut*, *Dhaba Beas* and *Govinda*). Despite all being vegetarian meals, you can eat a full

meal for 115kc, and better yet, in *Govinda* you can go for a second round for free! Typical Czech food includes *Gulášová polévka* (Goulash soup) and *Svičkova with knedlík* (Vegetable cream sauce and bread dumplings). Go ahead to *U Fleku*, possibly the most typical restaurant in Prague, decorated in very welcoming rustic manner. Finally do not miss on *Trdelník* (Chimney cake). Even though not originally Czech, they are absolutely delicious, with the best ones being served at *Creperie U Kajetana* on the steep road to the Castle. Hey, at least you burn the calories off!

ROSEMARIE DI BLASIO, PRAHA

DEAR BRNO,

This is a love letter.

On this late afternoon,
the sun dips low on the horizon.
It shines brightly on the unique façades
of your Baroque buildings.
In the streets, one can smell the rain.
It has left puddles of water on the pavement
that reflect lazy clouds and the crisscross pattern
of the tramlines in the blue sky.
Following an inner beat,
pedestrians walk through you
without really looking at you.
At first maybe I did, too.

I met you by night after an entire day of travelling,
passing cities and countries
like one does obstacles.
You were at the end of that long race.
But at that point,
I had no curiosity for you.
I was exhausted.
And you were a threatening stranger.
After a night of turning around,
I woke up to the fog
that lovingly embraced my neighborhood.
Like a veil being lift,
you slowly appeared to me.
Your buildings speak to me.
They tell tales of the passing of time
in this country,
that has know a rich history.

On top of the hill,
the Gothic Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul
dominates the old city since the 14th century.
Its twin tower form your characteristics silhouette.

Its noon bell ring traditionally at 11 am,
 a legacy of the Swedish siege in 1645.
 The Swedes had promised to call off their attack
 if by noon they hadn't breach the defense.
 Some shrewd inhabitants rung the bells an hour early,
 fooling the invading army into breaking off the siege.

On one of your most popular square,
 the Freedom Square or ‚*Náměstí Svobody*‘,
 another monument celebrates this famous event.
 There, a strange black clock stands.
 At 11 am,
 it becomes an attraction
 for tourists and inhabitants alike.
 Four slots in this bullet-shape sculpture
 give people the occasion of trying to grab a pebble.
 Since I have been here,
 I still haven't caught it.
 But I still have more than 10 months left.
 The clock's pebble is only
 but one small souvenir from you
 than I intend to take home with me.

Every weekend,
 an event is taking place here.
 Be it a flea market,
 a traditional market
 or a food market,
 there's always something to do,
 to learn
 or to taste.
 I have tried pastries from so many of your cafés,
 than I orient myself in your streets by them.
 And laying around the bend,
 is always a street musician,
 a wooden wagon selling hot beverages,
 a new bookshop
 or a cozy bar.
 There's an innate dynamism to you.

A richness of possibilities.
 Each passing moment,
 is a new experience
 and with it,
 I feel my passion for you growing steadily.
 At the heart of my love
 is the mystery and wonder,
 that I feel for you.
 I feel like I have already walked
 through all your cobblestone streets
 and at the same time
 every day is a discovery
 waiting to happen.
 Will I have a chance
 to take a stroll in Kamenná kolonie,
 where you can find that countryside atmosphere
 in the middle of a big city?
 Or will I see the ghost
 haunting the house at Vranovská 4?
 Will I have the time
 to go visit the underground parts
 dating back from the Middle Ages
 or see an ice hockey match
 and go support the home team,
 wrapped in their famous blue scarf ?

The clocks that adorn all your crossroads
 reminds me of our inevitable separation.
 Would have had ten years by your side that still,
 my heart would have grown heavy with sadness
 at the thought of leaving you.
 If you have teach me one thing,
 it's to take pleasure in every second,
 every new experience
 and every new day.

MARIE FACÉLINA, BRNO





PLZEŇ: MORE THAN JUST BEER

If you want to travel to the most beautiful city of the Czech Republic (at least according to me), you have the following possibilities. For young people between the ages of 16-26, there are several bus companies, such as Flixbus or Regiojet. With Flixbus, you can travel for just 3 Euros from Prague to Plzeň. Also, the Czech Railways trains run every hour for about 100 crowns to Plzeň. Personally, I would prefer the bus ride as the bus station is right near the famous main square *Náměstí Republiky*. To get around the compact city center, it is best to walk.

The buildings in *Náměstí Republiky* square are built mostly in Gothic and Renaissance style. In the farms on the east side, remains of the medieval walls have been preserved. The best-preserved part of the square is its southern part. In the square, you can also see *Church of St. Bartholomew* and *Plague column*.



Náměstí Republiky

If you like beer, a guided tour in the brewery *Pilsner Urquell* is a must. Enjoy a drink of *Pilsner Urquell* in the city that gave its name to all the pilsners in the world. In a few pubs, for example in *Šenk na Parkánu*, and at the brewery itself, you can get the unfiltered, unpasteurized version of *Pilsner Urquell*, which tastes even better than the common filtered version. Less well known is the fact that Plzeň is also home of *Bohemia Sekt*, a winery producing sparkling wine that is not only popular in the Czech republic but is also being sold in more than 30 countries in the world.

Another attraction is the Great Synagogue of Plzen. The Great Synagogue in Plzen is Europe's the second largest synagogue and the third largest in the world. In addition, Plzen is also famous for its classic puppet theater. A visit to the doll museum enriches every stay.



Pilsner Urquell brewery

There are many great and cheap bars and that makes the city a great place to go partying. If you are more into coffee, you can grab a cup of warm coffee at *Papp's Coffee* and then easily walk through the historic city center of Plzen. Alternatively, you can visit *Sky Bar Café*. In this place, you have a breathtaking view of the city. In addition, there are many small tearooms. The place *Nebeská čajovna* is one of my personal favorites.



And one last final tip: If you want to visit the city definitely check out the *Pilsner Fest* - the biggest and most famous beer festival in the Czech Republic takes place every year around September when *Pilsner Urquell* Brewery celebrates its birthday.

PAUL SCHNEIDER, PLZEŇ



OLOMOUC

Okay, if you like large cities, Prague is nice as well, but there is nothing comparable to the charm of this lovely little baroque town. You can easily walk across the center of the city in about half an hour. The heart of the city is *Horní náměstí* with its town hall and 32-metre-high Holy Trinity Column, which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. The astronomical clock on the side of the town hall chimes just once a day. Therefore, if you want to see the wonderful socialistic figures in action you should be there at exactly 12 o'clock. Olomouc has many interesting churches, which you should take a look at! And if you are visiting the *Church of Svatý Mořic* (Saint Maurice), you should climb the 200 stairs up the tower and enjoy the view (unfortunately closed in the winter months). Olomouc seems small, but with its 100,000 inhabitants, it is not just a provincial town any more. And because 20,000 of these 100,000 inhabitants are students, it is definitely never boring! There are more than a hundred little cafés, pubs and restaurants in Olomouc. The café *Mahler* (Horní náměstí 11) is mentioned as being the best café of the city, but if you want to eat tasty homemade cakes and drink very good milkshakes, you should go to *Café 87*. It is located next to the Museum of Modern Art (Denisova 47), which hosts temporary exhibitions. For real epicures I would recommend the teahouse

Kratochvíle (Sokolská 36). But, attention! You should have a lot of time, because once you have entered this place, you will not be able to leave it anytime soon. *Pozor!* Danger of addiction! If you would like to go with more than one person, you had better make a reservation.

When planning your evening, you have several possibilities: If you want to dance, you can visit one of the clubs – I like the music club *15 minut* (Biskupské nám. 1). If you want to hear some extraordinary

music, you should see what is happening at *Jazz Tibet Club* (Sokolská 551/48). Do not forget to check the blackboard in the *Konvikl* (Univerzitní 3). It is a building just for students in the middle of the city and there are often festivals, concerts or exhibitions. For a calm evening, you can go to the cinema *Metropol* (Sokolská 25), it has a program that changes daily, where you can find not really the newest, but always very interesting films. Many are in English. If you want to get a bit more culture, you can visit one of the three theatres in Olomouc. The best for foreigners is *Moravské divadlo* on *Horní náměstí*. They often have ballets or modern dance performances there, so you do not need to know a word of Czech. For dinner, you can go to the *Hanácká hospoda* (Dolní náměstí 38). There you can eat typical Czech food from the region around Olomouc. They also have menus in English and German. Please read them! The translations are very cute!

If you are fed up with Czech food, there are, of course, other options. For example, *The Crack Irish Pub* (Mlýnská 4) is a smoky place to drink your beer at night, but during the day, you can eat great Nepalese food there. From 11am to 3pm Monday to Friday, they offer an all-you-can-eat lunch buffet for 110Kč.

Finally, some special insider information for anybody who wants to stay here for a longer time: If you need to take a language course, go visit the university. Try to find the faculty of philosophy and explain to them that you are a volunteer and do not receive a lot of money. If you are lucky, you will be allowed to attend the ERASMUS course for free.

MAGDALENA PRINZLER, OLOMOUC



Olomouc



Palacký University

Bored on EVS

It happens during your EVS that you might get bored: it can happen on weekends when you still don't know people, or when your new town starts to feel tight, or even when nostalgia from home seems to overcome, but don't worry that is also part of the EVS equation, and from it you will learn a lot!

First thing to establish upon arriving is certainly the connection with your mentor: your guide and friend in the Czech Republic. A positive relationship with your mentor is your key to settling in and finding your space, so if you feel that you and your mentor are not a perfect match feel free to ask for help and look for another one. Your mentor will help you invite you to and find events; he/she will enrich your local experience and your weekends. Other tips and tricks to make friendships during your EVS include joining the gym or an artistic class, joining the expat community and find out what they do and where they meet, and finally also try looking for activities and meetups you are interested in by signing up to the friendly page [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), where you can find likeminded people in your area meeting for coffees or activities of different sorts. Outdoor and indoor events are always going on so keep your eyes and ears open for the ones close to you, you might end up in a street food festival or in a film festival.

Another important key and aspect depends on the bonds you will create during your on-arrival training which will hopefully take place early on during your project. The on arrival training is the perfect place for you to meet other EVS volunteers in your area and in all of Czech Republic, allowing for you to feel not so alone in this strange new country. What is truly fantastic is also the network of friendships you can create which will allow you to travel to see each other or to do trips within and without of the country.

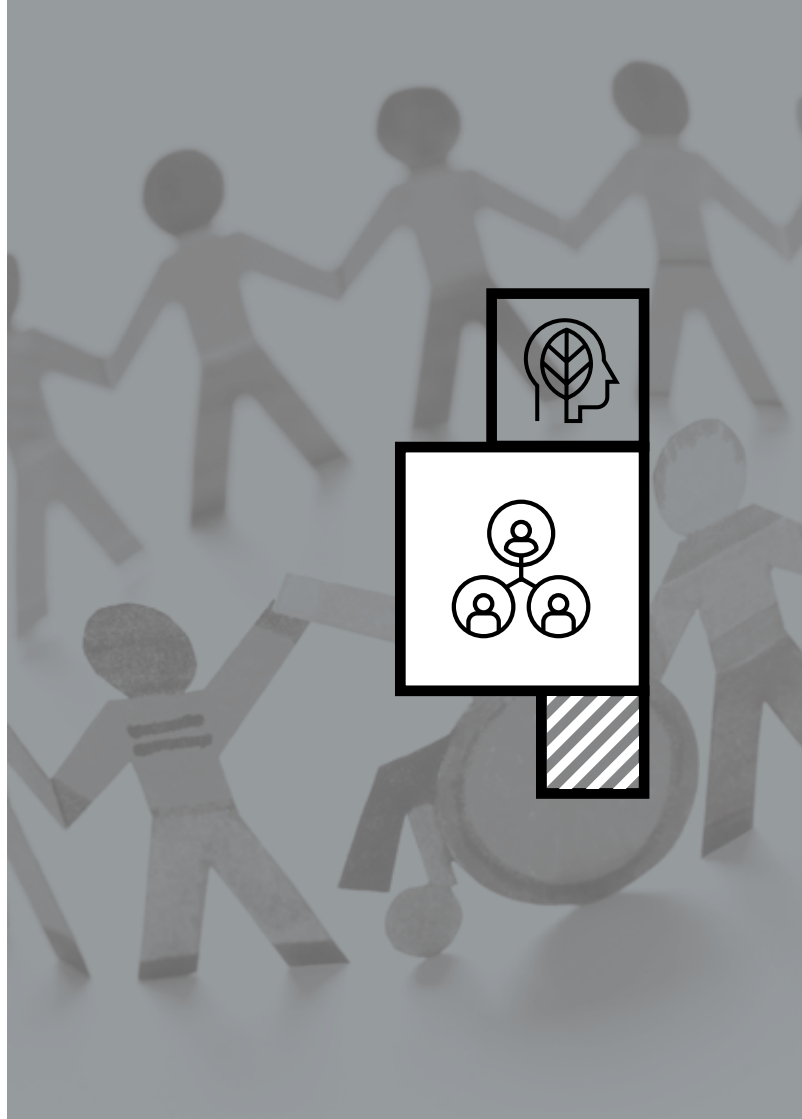
Understandably, there will be times when you will prefer your own company and in those moments you will have a chance to enrich

your EVS experience and cure your boredom with other activities. Most cities in the Czech Republic have public libraries, some with a few English books, some with more, but regardless by getting the card, you can easily lose yourself among the bookshelves and fill your time. If reading however is not your favourite leisure time you can always go on a fun exploration hunt of your area and improve your photographic skills. Back home your friends and family will be glad to see all the beautiful places you are experiencing. On that note, how about starting a blog, or writing weekly letters to yourself about all that you are going through? One day they will be a beautiful treasure to keep. Most towns in Czech Republic will also have numerous DIY shops, so it is a perfect chance to increase your handy skills and make homemade crafts such as jewellery or textile works. By living alone in a new country you will also face the possible challenge of always having to cook for yourself, and that can be a great way to spend time when boredom hits. You can learn how to make perfect pizza and local dishes and you can invent new recipes to astonish your guests and to surprise your family when you return home! EVS, European Voluntary Service, is an acronym that forgets to include an essential factor within it, and that is maturity. Due to the occasional loneliness, due to the possible boredom you will find fruitful time for yourself, your interests and your personal growth. It is a chance that must not be wasted, so enjoy your free and boring time!

ROSEMARIE DI BLASIO, PRAHA

IV.

The life of long-term volunteers



Everyday life of a volunteer – DDM Déčko

It is hard to describe the everyday life of us, the EVS volunteers, since each day really differs from the next one. I have a working schedule with different courses and times every day. Every Monday differs from another Monday. I love my work in DDM-Déčko, which is a youth centre in Rychnov nad Kněžnou, a small city in northeast. We offer there more than 150 different courses in different departments, like sport, art, dancing, cooking, animals etc. I am mainly in the dancing department and that is what I normally do in my everyday life. So let us start in a typical Monday morning.



Hannah and other volunteers

All four of us, the volunteers, together we leave the dorm to go to “work”. The way is only a few minutes long and we talk about anything going on right now. The first “Ahoj” in the morning always

goes to the reception’s lady, while signing in our working times in the book. Afterwards, everyone brings their stuff to their offices and we meet together in the EVS-room for our Czech lesson. Our Monday lesson is just about conversation. That means we talk a lot with the teacher, describe pictures, read texts together and learn vocabularies. After the lesson, it is preparation time, which is also different every day. In this time, we help our “mini-boss”, who is our leading pedagogue and the person we share the office and tasks with. Sometimes it happens that my boss does not need my help. Then I prepare presentations for schools, do my Czech homework, organize something with the other volunteers or ask other mini-bosses if they need my help. At 11.30, we have a lunch break until 14.00. In this time I go to the dorm and cook my lunch together with the other volunteers, we are in the kitchen cooking, talking and resting. Afterwards, everyone disappears in his or her own rooms to have little nap, watch something or go to the supermarket. My first course on Monday starts at 14.45, so right after the lunch break. Back in Déčko, my mini-boss and me talk about the following lessons and put together all the needed stuff. Before we leave Déčko to go to the gym I have to ask at the reception for the course-booklet and the key to the gym. Our first course is for children between four and six years and it is some kind of dance preparation class. We dance easy dances with them, try to give them a feeling for the rhythm and play different games referring to dance. Also, after every lesson they get a stamp in their little booklets I created in the beginning of the year and they are always more than happy about this. In the second lesson, the children are between five and seven years old and it is a street dance class. Here we also do easy warm-ups and try to give them a feeling for dancing, but we also teach them easy choreographies. And yes, you might wonder how I do this with my little knowledge of Czech? I do not really know myself, but it works out quite well. Of course, I already know the important words and if I do not know a word, I try to explain it with my body language and do not worry, children can understand! After the lessons, I help my mini-boss clean the gym and put all the stuff where it belongs and then I leave back to Déčko. Here I have one more hour for preparation, which I mostly use to write my new vocabularies of the day and fill in my weekly review from the week before. Moreover, I finish my work from the morning. I finish on Mondays at 18.30, being tired and hap-



py. Back home in the dorm I mostly meet the other volunteers in the kitchen again (yes food is important for volunteers). We talk about our days and plans for the evening while cooking. Depending on the tiredness, we sometimes go to a bar in the evening to talk more and to meet Czech friends or we watch a series together in one of our rooms. It may not seem as perfect for you as it is for me, but I really love working with children and dancing, so this job is more than perfect for me. Moreover, our bond with the volunteers is really tight, which makes the everyday life here much easier and more amazing!

HANNAH SCHÜTT, RYCHNOV NAD KNEŽNOU

Everyday life of a volunteer – Lužánky

The aspect that changes most between volunteers is their routine. Of course, it depends on your workplace's schedule. Offices, kindergarten or schools are mainly open during the morning and early afternoon. On the other hand, if you work in afterschool activities or clubs, your work probably starts after lunch and finishes in the evening. You may think the second case are the lucky ones as they do not have to wake up early but also the working hours may change each day and trust me, at the begging it is really confusing.

I wake up and everything seems to be the same as when I am in my house. However, I go to the kitchen and instead of your parents, you see other young people that at the beginning you will call “my flat mates” or “the other volunteers” and at the end you will call friends. I can see how different are our breakfasts and that is one of the best things about EVS and living abroad in general. Probably, you think “oh that’s a weird breakfast” but soon you get used to it. I totally believe that those small details are the way to make a new

open-minded generation. After breakfast, I take the bus and I go to the Czech lessons with the rest of the volunteers. Once a week after the lesson, we have a meeting with the coordinator. This is the moment for complains and share opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings.

Now it is time to work! Everyone goes to his or her workplaces. Well, the truth is that we always have lunch before going to work, as there is nothing cheaper in the Czech Republic than eating in a restaurant. In my case, I normally work from 1pm to 6pm, but as I said, it changes depending on your work. I myself go to schools to do handcrafts with kids and help in clubs or ceramic atelier. Once a week I also teach Spanish to adults. At the beginning, you may feel your life it is more or less like a circle.

Soon you will find what to do in your free time: Facebook groups of international students, cafes or bars that host many events... And of course, each day you will feel how those people turn to friends and soon you will be making tons of plans with them.

IRATI ECHAGOYEN SASTRILLO, BRNO



Language activity



From heart to heart

People, I want this to be like a little story time, a compilation of what ways you might feel in Czech Republic during your volunteer stay. You have indeed chosen an unconventional country to live in - but trust me, this makes it even better sometimes. So let me try to introduce you to weird struggles in everyday life in this small, landlocked country that has much more to offer than many people think.

At first glance, you might feel like this is not very different from home, if you are from a Central European country as I am. Apart from dumplings that look like bread, food is recognizable - however, if you are from South Europe, you might have some issues with eating culture in Czech Republic. Be warned: When you go on any training or project in a hotel, the omnivore option will most likely mean that you are going to have meat at every single meal and quite frankly not too much veggies. If you choose the vegetarian options, be prepared for anything ranging from great options to three salad leaves and one quarter of a tomato. Since Czech Republic is not as much influenced by immigrants (apart from Prague and maybe Brno), you will find a lot of traditional cuisine here and that means mostly meat and potatoes. So if you are not the person to enjoy meals like these, hope for good options while saying you are going to eat vegetarian. My roommate is from Portugal, she is not a vegetarian but after one project with Omni food, she decided to switch to vegetarian for all other hotels. Reading through the evaluation forms of all our projects most people from Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, etc. feel the same way. Be prepared.

The next thing that I really regret not being prepared for is that needle and thread are not available in every store here. My friends from here told me that you need to go to a special store to find them - say what? It is probably best to just bring that from home in case any of your clothing is going to rip.

To move onto something more enjoyable, you are probably going to travel a lot. Why? Because Czech Republic is in the heart of Europe and it is a small country. Take this chance! Go to Prague, go to Olomouc, go to Brno, go to the countryside, hike in the mountains - or go to Vienna, Bratislava, Krakow, anywhere. You are close to everything. Trains and busses are your best friends.

The next thing is something positive and at the same time negative in my opinion: Czech people are usually not the ones who are talking to you randomly on the streets. That is great because you are not going to be bothered, but on the other hand it can be quite hard to socialize here. But don't worry, we got your back! Going to a pub or a club in the evening is one option, a beer after work or university does not mean you're going to get drunk here, it's a common thing (partly because beer here has good quality but is cheap at the same time), but what I found to be way better for my taste is dancing. If you are one of the lucky ones to live in a bigger city, you can absolutely find a beginners (or advanced) course for salsa or other dances - a great way to meet people and have fun at the same time. After all, guys, just don't be afraid. Do not be afraid to talk about your problems with your coordinators, remember it is okay to be homesick and please, do not let the language barrier in particular frustrate you. Even if it might seem impossible in the beginning, you will be able to learn Czech and you will be able to talk to people, it just takes time. Just like getting used to this small, unique and sometimes a little weird country takes time. But it is worth it 100%.

MONA BICKEL, OSTRAVA

EVS and Solidarity Corps

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The **European Voluntary Service (EVS)** is a programme run by European Commission since 1996. The programme helps young people travel abroad to participate in vol-

unteering projects. As an EVS volunteer, you commit yourself to the work of an organization abroad. Volunteering projects can involve many different kinds of activities in areas such as youth work, cultural activities, social care or environmental protection. You volunteer on an unpaid and full-time basis. What you have achieved and learned through volunteering is certified Europe-wide via the Youthpass recognition tool. Volunteers already involved in EVS should read an Info Kit explaining what to expect and with information on the Youthpass and the insurance cover provided. Access to Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support will help you learn the language that you volunteer in. Volunteering activities last a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 12 months and you must be between the ages of 17 and 30 to volunteer. All essential costs related to your volunteering project are covered. You will be provided with accommodation, board and any local transport that you may need. You may also receive a small amount of 'pocket money'. All volunteers are covered by insurance during their time abroad.



The **European Solidarity Corps** is the new European Union initiative, which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities and people around Europe. It was announced by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, during his annual State of the European Union speech in September 2016, and officially launched in December 2016. After completing a simple registration process, participants could be selected to join a wide range of projects. These projects will be run by organizations which have been checked and authorized to run European Solidarity Corps projects. You can register for the European Solidarity Corps when you are 17 years old, but you cannot start a project until you are over 18. You must also complete the European Solidarity Corps project before you turn 31. Projects supported by the European Solidarity Corps can last from two to twelve months.

Czech Republic through the eyes of EVS volunteers

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**Big thanks goes to all
volunteers.**

**We wish you all a great
time in the Czech Republic
and many extraordinary
learning experiences!**





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