CZECH REPUBLIC *(Česká republika)*



Born out of the "velvet divorce" in 1993, the Czech Republic is a small, but geographically varied country nestled between Germany and Poland inhabiting the historic region of Bohemia and Moravia. The Elbe and Vltava rivers criss-cross the countryside from north to south. The Czech Republic was born out of historic Czechoslovakia along with Slovakia in an amicable referendum on independence in 1993. Czechoslovakia lays claim to the linguistic heritage of Cyril and Methodius, who were Byzantine Christian missionaries to Greater Moravia. They wrote the first alphabet for Old Church Slavonic, known as the Glagolitic alphabet, a precursor to Cyrillic and other Slavonic written languages. The capital city of Prague is considered one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and the world.

QUICK FACTS

Population: 10.5 million (2014)
Area: 78,866 sq. km (size of South Carolina)
Capital: Prague (1.25 million)
Languages: Czech (official), German

EDUCATION

Czech education follows similar patterns to its Central European neighbors, with 9 years of primary, compulsory education and variable secondary, or upper secondary, which can involve technical and vocational education tracks. In order to attend university, all students must pass a *Maturita* test as a culmination to a four-year secondary school degree. Public higher education in the Czech Republic is considered much more prestigious than private.

RELIGION

The Czech Republic, traditionally Christian since the days of Slavic paganism and Cyril and Methodius' missionary efforts, has seen a steady decline of religiosity over the course of the twentieth century. Today, it is considered one of the least religious European countries and thus,in the world, with only 16% of citizens polled responding that "they believe there is a God." About 10% of the population continues to practice Catholicism and another 1% adhere to forms of Protestant Christianity. Trace numbers of Buddhists (largely Vietnamese and Korean immigrants) and Jewish populations exist in the larger cities.

ETHNICITY

Ethnic Czechs were known as Bohemians in English until the mid-twentieth century. Czechs are united by their common Czech language, regional history, and Slavic identity on the border of the Germanic world. Bohemian and Moravian ethnic identity goes back to the conversion of the peoples to Christianity and the founding of Prague by Prince Bořivoj in the 9th century.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Hromnice is celebrated among the Czechs on February 2 and is in many ways, an equivalent to the American Groundhog Day. The holiday gets its name from a tradition of lighting a candle overnight if there is a thunderstorm on that day. July 5 & 6 are holidays in celebration of historic Czech Christian heroes: Cyril and Methodius and fifteenth century Catholic reformer Jan Huss. Czech family dynamics are still largely governed by its Christian heritage.



Bridge over the Elbe.

Updated: 8/1/15

THE HENRY M. JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

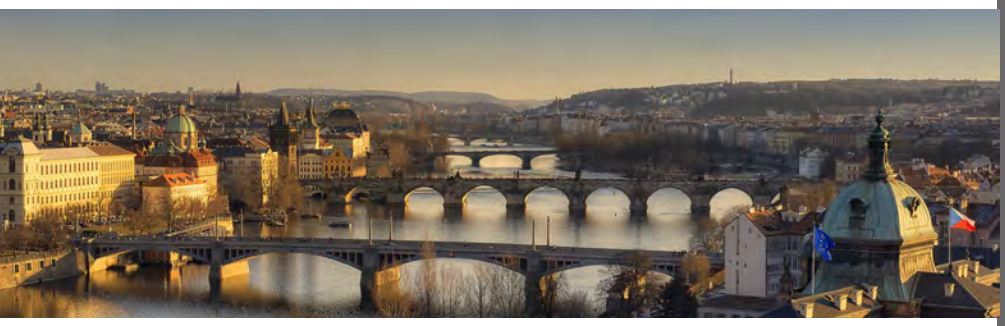
CONTEMPORARY CZECH REPUBLIC

Miloš Zeman is the current president of the Czech republic and he has come under significant criticism in the last year for his relatively Russia-friendly stance. He considers the conflict in Ukraine to be between two Ukrainian groups. His predecessor, Vaclav Klaus was a veteran politician of the post-communist Czech government till 2013. Klaus replaced famous dissident playwright turned politician, Vaclav Havel, in the largely ceremonial role in 2003. Klaus was famous for his "Euroskepticism" or as he terms it "Eurorealism," a tradition that Zeman continues. Klaus was the last political leader to sign the Treaty of Lisbon which reformed and consolidated the legal identity and political power of the EU.

The Czech Republic along with Moldova is one of the only European countries where a communist party still retains some power in government. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia forms part of a coalition government with the Czech Social Democratic Party. Current Czech political concerns revolve around economic policy and broader European concerns with "austerity" measures. National debt levels are considered to be too high. Economically, the Czech Republic exports primarily manufactured goods, as well as cars, transport equipment, and probably most famously, beer.



Prague Castle



CZECHS IN THE USA

Czech migration to the United States over the last 150 years has yielded a population of over 1.5 million Americans who claim Czech heritage. Regionally, Czech immigrants settled primarily in the Midwest (Kansas and Nebraska) as well as around Houston, TX. Overall, Texas and Illinois have the highest numbers of residents who claim Czech heritage. The number was apparently higher in the 1980s, saw a dip in the 1990s and has steadily climbed in the last decade.

NAMES

Czech names are often distinct and recognizable as Czech apart from the broader Slavic community, with greatest similarities existing with the Slovaks. Examples include Jiri, Vaclav, Klaudie, and Jarmila.

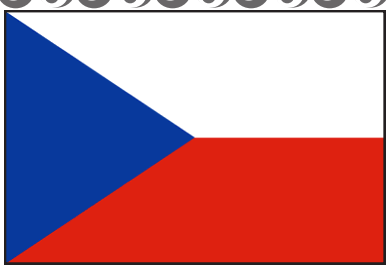
FAMOUS CZECHS

Barbara Bush and John Kerry are both Americans of Czech descent. Famous Czech film director Miloš Forman made a name for himself in the American film industry with his adaptation of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest and Amadeus.* Karel Čapek was a Czech playwright from the early twentieth century who coined the term *robot*.

CZECH WORDS

Hi ..... dobree den
Bye .....nas-khledanow
Good morning .....dobrye rano
Yes .....ano
No ..... ne
Please/You're welcome ..... proseem
Thank you .....dyekooyi vam
How are you? ..... jak se mahte ?
I do not understand ..... nerozoomeem
I understand.....rozoomeem
What is your name?.....yak se menooyete
My name is ..... menooyi se …
Nice to meet you .....tyeh-sheee mnyeh

The flag is comprised of two bands, white and red with a blue triangle wedge on the hoist side.



USEFUL LINKS

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17220018

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ez.html

http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/