



CZECH REPUBLIC



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Central Europe.

Czech Tourist Authority

Vinohradská 46, PO Box 32, 12041 Prague 2, Czech Republic

Tel: (2) 21 58 01 11. Fax: (2) 24 25 70 91 or 24 24 75 16. E-mail: cccr@cccr-cta.cz

Web site: <http://www.visitczech.cz>

Czech Tourist Authority (Information Centre)

Na Prikope 20, 11000 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Tel: (2) 264 022 or 544 444 (tourist information line).

Embassy of the Czech Republic

26-30 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QY

Tel: (020) 7243 7943 or 7243 1115 (visa section) or (09001) 171 267 7915 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7727 9654. E-mail:

consulate.london@embassy.mzv.cz

Opening hours: 0830-1715 Monday to Thursday, 0830-1600 Friday; 1000-1230 Monday to Friday (visa section).

Czech Tourist Authority

95 Great Portland Street, London W1N 5RA

Tel: (020) 7291 9925 or (09063) 640 641 (24-hour enquiry line; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7436 8300. E-mail: ctainfo@czechcentre.org.uk Web site: <http://www.antor.com>

British Embassy

Thunovská 14, 118 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Tel: (2) 57 53 02 78. Fax: (2) 57 53 02 85. E-mail: info@britain.cz

Web site: <http://www.britain.cz>

Embassy of the Czech Republic

3900 Spring of Freedom Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Tel: (202) 274 9100. Fax: (202) 966 8540 or 363 6308 (visa enquiries).

E-mail: con_washington@embassy.mzv.cz (consular office) or eco_washington@embassy.mzv.cz (economic and commercial office)

Web site: <http://www.czech.cz/washington>

Czech Tourist Authority

1109 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10028

Tel: (212) 288 0830. Fax: (212) 288 0971. E-mail: travelczech@popnet.com

Web site: <http://www.czechcenter.com>

Embassy of the United States of America

Trziste 15, 118 01 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Tel: (2) 57 53 06 63. Fax: (2) 57 32 09 20. E-mail: webmaster@usis.cz

Web site: <http://www.usembassy.cz>

Embassy of the Czech Republic

251 Cooper Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0G2

Tel: (613) 562 3875. Fax: (613) 562 3878.
E-mail: ottawa@embassy.mzv.cz

Czech Tourist Authority
401 Bay Street, Suite 1510, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2Y4
Tel: (416) 363 3174. Fax: (416) 363 0239.
Web site: <http://www.czech-tourinfo.cz>

Canadian Embassy
Mickiewiczová 6, 125 33 Prague 6, Czech Republic
Tel: (2) 72 10 18 00. Fax: (2) 72 10 18 90.
E-mail: embcanada2@chipnet.cz
Web site: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/prague>

Country dialling code: 420.

2 GENERAL

Area: 78,866 sq km (30,450 sq miles).

Population: 10,299,125 (1997).

Population Density: 130.6 per sq km.

Capital: Prague. Population: 1,200,455 (1998).

Geography: The Czech Republic is situated in central Europe, sharing frontiers with Germany, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Austria. Only about one-quarter of the size of the British Isles, the republic is hilly and picturesque, with historic castles, romantic valleys and lakes, as well as excellent facilities to 'take the waters' at one of the famous spas or to ski and hike in the mountains. Among the most beautiful areas are the river valleys of the Vltava (Moldau) and Labe (Elbe), the hilly landscape and rocky mountains. Bohemia, to the west, is one of two main regions. Besides Prague, the Czech capital, tourists are drawn to the spa towns of Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně, and to the very beautiful region of South Bohemia. The Elbe flows through eastern Bohemia from the Krkonoše/Giant mountains, one of the most popular skiing regions. The eastern part, the rich agricultural area of Moravia offers a variety of wooded highlands, vineyards, folk art and castles. There are many historic towns such as Olomouc, Kromeríz and Telc. Brno is Moravia's administrative and cultural centre.

Government: Republic since 1993. Head of State: Václav Havel since 1993. Head of Government: Milos Zeman since 1998.

Language: The official language is Czech. German and English are also spoken.

Religion: Approximately 43% Roman Catholic and 15% Protestant, including churches such as the Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Unity of Czech Brothers and Baptist. There is a community of approximately 15,000 Jews, mainly in Prague.

Time: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 during the European/continental summertime).

Electricity: Generally 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Most major hotels have standard international 2-pin razor plugs. Lamp fittings are normally of the screw type.

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 420. Outgoing international code: 00. There are public telephone booths, including special kiosks for international calls. Surcharges can be quite high on long-distance calls from hotels. Most of the public telephone boxes take phonecards, which can be purchased at all Telecom points of sale and at newsagent and tobacconist shops.

Mobile telephone: Dual band width. Roaming agreements exist. Network providers include Paegas, Eurotel, and Oscar. Coverage extends all over the country.

Fax: Services are available.

Internet/E-mail: There are internet cafés in Prague. Local ISPs include czcom (www.czcom.cz). Roaming agreements exist.

Telegram: Facilities are available at all main towns and hotels.

Post: There is a 24-hour service at the main post office in Prague at Jindrišská Street, Prague 1. Poste Restante services are available throughout the country. Post office hours: 0800-1800 Monday to Friday.

Press: The Prague Post (weekly) is published in English.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:
MHz17.6415.579.4106.195

Voice of America:
MHz15.489.7001.2600.792

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	2	No
Australian	Yes	Yes	No
Canadian	Yes	3	No
USA	Yes	5	No
OtherEU	1	2	No
Japanese	Yes	4	No

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least 9 months from date of departure or issue date of visa required by all except: 1. nationals of Germany who can enter with a valid national ID card.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

- (a) 2. nationals of the UK (except those with the endorsement 'British Overseas Citizen' in their passports who do need visas) for up to 180 days and nationals of other EU countries for stays of up to 3 months;
- (b) 3. nationals of Canada and Slovak Republic for up to 6 months;
- (c) 4. nationals of Andorra, Argentina, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, French Guyana, French Polynesia, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Martinique, Mexico, Monaco, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Quadeloupe, Réunion, San Marino, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tahiti, Uruguay, Vatican City and Wallis and Futuna for up to 3 months;
- (d) nationals of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Turkmenistan, who do not require visas but must contact the Consulate for details of entry requirements;
- (e) 5. nationals of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, Singapore and USA for up to 30 days.

Note: (a) Any traveller not requiring a visa may be asked at the border to prove they are carrying a minimum of £20 per day. (b) Travellers with visas must register with the police within 3 working days of arrival.

Types of visa and cost: Single-entry, Multiple-entry, Transit, Double-transit and Multiple-transit. Prices vary according to the nationality of the applicant. There are no visa fees for nationals of South Africa or for children under 15 years of age.

Validity: Single- and Multiple-entry: 6 months from date of issue for a visit of a specified period not exceeding 90 days. Transit: 5 days.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at the Embassy); see address section for details.

Application requirements: (a) 1 application form. (b) 1 recent passport-size photo per application form. (c) Passport valid for at least 9 months from date of issue of visa, with one blank page. (d) Visa fee (payable in cash, by banker's draft or by postal order only). (e) Proof of sufficient funds (eg bank statement or letter from host or sponsor). (f) Postal applications should be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped for special delivery.

Note: Immigration officials may require proof of sufficient funds to be presented at the border/airport.

Working days required: 5 in most cases, although applications should be made at least two weeks before intended date of departure.

4 MONEY

Currency: Koruna (Kc) or Crown = 100 hellers. Notes are in denominations of Kc5000, 2000, 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 20. Coins are in denominations of Kc50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50, 20 and 10 hellers.

Currency exchange: Foreign currency (including travellers cheques) can be exchanged at all bank branches and at authorised exchange offices, main hotels and road border crossings.

Credit cards: Major cards such as American Express, Diners Club, Visa, MasterCard and others may be used to exchange currency and are also accepted in some hotels, restaurants and shops. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: These are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Eurocheques: These are also accepted by certain restaurants and shops bearing the EC sign.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Koruna against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=60.7357.4058.7754.83 \$1.00=40.9138.2640.6037.54

Currency restrictions: The import and export of local currency is limited to Kc200,000. The import and export of foreign currency is unlimited.

Banking hours: Generally 0800-1800 Monday to Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into the Czech Republic without incurring customs duty by persons over 18 years of age:

200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco; 1 litre of spirits; 2 litres of wine (only half the above mentioned quantities for stays of 2 days or less); 500g of perfume or 250ml eau de toilette; gifts up to a value of Kc6000.

Note: The export of antiques is prohibited.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 1 May Day. May 8 Liberation Day. Jul 5 Day of the Apostles St Cyril and St Methodius. Jul 6 Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Jan Hus. Oct 28 Independence Day. Nov 17 Freedom and Democracy Day. Dec 24-26 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 1 May Day. May 8 Liberation Day. Jul 5 Day of the Apostles St Cyril and St Methodius. Jul 6 Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Jan Hus. Oct 28 Independence Day. Nov 17 Freedom and Democracy Day. Dec 24-26 Christmas.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	1	-

1: Mains water is normally chlorinated, and whilst relatively safe may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available and advised. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Health care: No vaccinations are required. There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. On production of a UK passport and proof of residence, hospital and other medical care will be provided free of charge in case of illness or accident. Prescribed medicine will be charged for. Other international agreements exist for free health care and visitors are advised to check with their national health authorities. Medical insurance is advised in all other cases.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Czech Airlines (CSA). There are also several small airlines. Information can be obtained from Czech Airlines Passenger Service Centre, V Celnici 5, Prague 1 (tel: (2) 20 10 43 10). The airline also has an office in London (tel: (020) 7255 1898).

Approximate flight time: From London to Prague is 1 hour 45 minutes; from New York is 8 hours 20 minutes.

International airports: Prague (PRG) (Ruzyně) is 17km (11 miles) from the city (travel time - 30 minutes). Transport to/from city: CSA Coach every 30 minutes after flight arrivals (travel time - 20 minutes); 119 bus approximately every 10 minutes, from 0430-2330, (travel time - 30 minutes); mini-bus taxis to the city centre (24-hour service, surcharge at night). Big hotels operate frequent shuttle-bus services during the summer months to the major hotels in the city. Airport facilities include incoming and outgoing duty-free shops selling food, tobacco products, glass, china, small industrial goods and souvenirs; post office; bank/bureau de change (24-hour service); restaurant and bar (24 hours); car parking and car hire (Avis, Budget, Eurodollar and Hertz).

RAIL: The Czech Republic forms part of the European InterCity network. The most convenient routes to the Czech Republic from Western Europe are via Berlin, Würzburg or Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Munich, Zurich or Vienna to Prague. Kafka, Dvorák, Goethe and Einstein are the most famous and fastest EC trains with Pullman sleeping and dining cars available. The Vindobona Express is a once-daily through train that travels from Vienna to Prague (main station) and on to Berlin. Rail travel information is available on (tel: (2) 24 22 42 00).

ROAD: The Czech Republic can be entered via Germany, Poland, the Slovak Republic or Austria.

Bus: There is an international bus network covering most European cities. There are connections to Vienna, Munich, Frankfurt/M., Amsterdam, London and other main cities from the Florenc and Zelivského Bus Terminals (Metro stations), several times a week; for information call (tel: (2) 1034).

Travel - Internal

AIR: Czech Airlines (CSA) operates an extensive domestic service. There are regular domestic flights from Prague to Ostrava, Brno, Karlovy, Vary, and Pardubice.

RIVER: Navigable waterways can be found in the country and the main river ports are located at Prague, Ústí nad Labem and Decín.

RAIL: The rail network is operated by Czech Railways (České Drahy). There are several daily express trains between Prague and main cities and resorts. Reservations should be made in advance on major routes. Fares are low, but supplements are payable for travel by express trains.

ROAD: Traffic drives on the right. Motorways run from Prague to Plzeň, Písek to Bratislava (Slovak Republic) via Brno. Users of the Czech motorways have to buy a vignette (season ticket) which costs approximately Kč800 for each year. A 10-day vignette is now available at a lower price. Bus: The extensive bus network mostly covers areas not accessible by rail and is efficient and comfortable. Car hire: Self-drive cars may be hired through Avis, Eurodollar, Hertz and other companies. Seat belts are compulsory and drinking is absolutely prohibited. Many petrol stations open 24 hours. There is a road emergency service available by calling 154. Documentation: A valid national driving licence is sufficient for car hire.

URBAN: Public transport is excellent. There is a metro service that runs from 0500-0000 and three flat fares are charged. There are also tramway and bus services in Prague (for which tickets must be purchased in advance from tobacconist shops or any shop displaying the sign Předprodej Jízdenek). Buses, trolleybuses and tramways also exist in Brno, Ostrava, Plzeň and several other towns. Most services run from 0430-0000. All the cities operate flat-fare systems and pre-purchased passes are available. Tickets should be punched in the appropriate machine on entering the tram or bus. A separate ticket is required when changing routes. There is a fine for fare evasion. Blue badges on tram and bus stops indicate an all-night service. Taxis are available in all the main towns, and are metered; higher fares are charged at night.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Prague to other major towns/cities in the Czech Republic.

AirRoadRail
Brno0.452.154.45
Karlovy Vary0.302.004.45
Ostrava1.006.456.00

8 ACCOMMODATION

The Czech Republic is able to offer a full range of accommodation to suit every pocket. There is a wide range of hotels, graded from one to five stars, boarding hostels and private apartments. Many campsites are also open during the summer. For further information on the range of accommodation available, contact the National Federation of Hotels and Restaurants, Senovážné **Nám. 23, 11282 Prague 1** (tel: (2) 24 14 26 76; fax: (2) 24 14 26 81; e-mail: nfhr@iol.cz; web site: <http://www.nfhr.cz>).

9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

Travellers should make advance hotel bookings when intending to visit the Czech Republic through travel agencies. Some visitors travel alone, but many take package holidays. Travel agencies offer a large selection. For the purposes of the guide, this section has been divided into **two parts:** Prague and Bohemia.

Prague

Picturesquely sited on the banks of the Vltava (Moldau) River, the city of Prague has played an important part in the history of Europe. It is noted for some magnificent Gothic, Baroque and Romanesque, Belle Epoque/Art Nouveau and Cubist architecture and a cultural scene of elegance. There is the annual Spring Music Festival, the excellent Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Theatre. The city's historical centre features the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site which includes the Hradcany complex of the Castle, the St Vitus Cathedral and all the Palace rooms including the Vladislav Hall, which were once used by Bohemian kings for jousting. The views over the Moldau, spanned by the medieval Charles Bridge, contribute to making Prague one of the loveliest cities in Europe. Worth visiting are the St Nicholas Cupola, the Town Hall of the Old City, where you can also see the Gothic Tyn Church, and the beautiful 15th-century astronomical clock in the Old Town Square. The Lesser Town (Mala Strana) is a quarter of winding narrow streets of small artisan houses and palaces from the 17th and 18th centuries. Along with eight other European cities, Prague was a European City of Culture 2000.

EXCURSIONS: Near to Prague is a grim reminder of the horrors of the Second World War - the site of the concentration camp at Terezin, where there is now a museum. Also in the area are the castles of Karlštejn, Krivoklat and Konopiste. The historic town of Kutná Hora with the dominating cathedral of St Barbara is also a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site.

Brno: Brno dates from the 13th century and has a fine museum and the Gothic Pílsberk castle. There is also an international music festival from September to October. A large number of international trade fairs take place in the Brno Exhibition Centre.

Bohemia

Southern Bohemia, with its lakes and woods, has for a long time been a favourite holiday place for families, since it has many recreation facilities and points of historic interest. These include the medieval town of Český Krumlov (a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site) and Hluboká Castle, one of the many atmospheric Gothic castles in Bohemia, perched on wooded hillsides and adorned with the round towers and pointed caps so loved by producers of Hammer horror films. With imagination, the visitor can easily picture the lives led by the nobles who once lived here and hunted in the woods. Other outstanding examples of Czech architectural achievements can be **found in Cheb and Moravian places such as Slavonice, Telc and Olomouc:** indeed there are over 3000 castles, chateaux and other historic sights and monuments throughout the country. Less well-known but equally characteristic are Bohemia's baroque churches. The small town of Telc (a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site) is a perfect example of a 16th-century town with rows of pastel coloured houses. Gables and pediments adorn the houses and encompass various styles. The Main Square is surrounded by Renaissance arcades with the Château at its western end. It boasts beautiful painted ceilings, a small art gallery and cloistered gardens. The country is also famed for its caves: the rock formation of the mountain ranges form underground rivers and chambers decorated above and below with stalactites and stalagmites. Of note are also two further remarkable UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites. The Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk located near to Zdar nad Sazavou was designed by Prague-born Johann Blasius Santini, one of the greatest artists of the Central European Baroque. The Baroque Valtice-Lednice area (South Moravia) lies between the small towns of Lednice and Valtice and was once a possession of the grand dukes of Liechtenstein. Several impressive castles, landscape pavilions and structural follies are dotted on an area of 250 sq km (96 sq miles) broken up by numerous ponds and forests. A landscaped park with Romantic sculptures and fine examples of various other artistic styles can be found throughout Valtice itself.

Health Resorts and Spas: The health resorts or spas of Bohemia remain one of the primary attractions, as they have been for centuries. Beethoven, Wagner, Edward VII and Goethe all admired the resort of Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad), whilst the town of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) has attracted the crowned heads of Europe for many years to bathe in

the sulphurous waters; there is also an annual International Film Festival at Karlovy Vary. Františkovy Lázně has delightful parks and 24 springs used to cure heart disease and infertility. There is also a nature reserve near the town. Another important spa resort in this area is Jáchymov (Joachimsthal) which offers famed relief from rheumatism.

Plzen: Plzen, the largest city in Bohemia after Prague, boasts eclectic architecture, interesting museums and the world famous Pilsner beer to which the town has given its name since its foundation in 1295; guided tours of the brewery are available every week, and an annual beer festival takes place in October.

National Parks: National Parks: The Krkonoše Mountains of northeast Bohemia and the Orlické (Eagle) Mountains towards the Polish border, the Sumava/Bohemian Forest in the south towards the German border and Podyjí in South Moravia are protected as National Parks and thus have an untouched quality rare in Europe.

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Outdoor Pursuits: Outdoor Pursuits: The Czech Republic has a wealth of beautiful areas to explore. More than 10% of the country's surface area is occupied by the 3 national parks and the 1200 protected natural areas. Skiing is a very popular activity, and there are many well-established resorts. The most frequented areas for downhill skiing are in the Krkonoše (Giant Mountains) in northern Bohemia, where Pec pod Sněžkou, Spindlový Mlýn and Harachov are the main resorts. Facilities are also to be found in the Jeseníky and Besníky ranges, and in the Orlické Hory (Eagle Mountains). Cross-country skiing is also a widespread sport, and facilities and tracks are to be found not only in the Krkonoše, but also in the Šumava (Bohemian Forest) in southern Bohemia. In summer, these areas become havens for hikers, and contain well-marked trails. The Krkonoše are the Czech Republic's highest mountain range, with the country's highest peak, Sněžka (1602m/5255ft). Several other peaks exceed 1500m (4920ft). Less strenuous walks can be pursued in other natural areas, such as the Beskydy range. Rock climbers should go to the sandstone rock formations in the north (Český ráj, Andrášovy Skály and Českosaské Švýcarsko). Cavers should go to the Moravský Kras (Moravian karst) near Brno, where there are interesting caves. Cycling is emerging as a popular pastime, and the network of cycle tracks is growing. Southern Bohemia is a good region for this.

Watersports: Watersports: There are many lakes, both natural and artificial, and a variety of watersports can be pursued there. South Bohemia and Lednice-Valtice (south Moravia) contain extensive fishing lakes. Canoeing is done on rivers such as the Lužnice, upper Vltava and Sázava.

Spas: Spas: The many thermal springs and mineral baths in Bohemia and Moravia have been frequented by patients seeking cures for various ailments for centuries. Nowadays, advanced medical techniques are combined with traditional methods of treatment. The best known spas are at Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně (see the Resorts and Excursions sections for details). There are world famous radioactive springs in Jáchymov, which specialises in the treatment of disorders of the nervous system, while Janské Lázně in the Krkonoše is also a very popular resort. In northern Moravia, the most significant spas are at Jeseník and Luhacovice, where Vincenc Priessnitz, a local doctor developed methods of treatment which are still followed today. All the spa resorts are located in beautiful surroundings. For further information on spa stays, contact the Czech Tourist Authority (see address section).

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Food is often based on Austro-Hungarian dishes; (Wiener) Schnitzel and pork are very popular. Specialities include bramborak, a delicacy of a potato pancake filled with garlic and herbs, and Prague ham. Meat dishes are mostly served with knedliky, a type of large dough dumpling, and zeli (sauerkraut). Western-style fresh vegetables are often missing in lower-class restaurants. There is a wide selection of restaurants, beer taverns and wine cellars. Drink: Popular beverages include beers (lager, dark ales, pilsner), red, white and sparkling wines from Bohemia and Moravia, fruit juices and liqueurs. Particular specialities include becherovka (herb brandy) and two Moravian favourites, slivovice (plum brandy) and merunkovice (apricot brandy). There are no rigid licensing hours.

Nightlife: Theatre and opera are of a good standard all over Eastern Europe. Much of the nightlife takes place in nightclubs, bars, and casinos which are to be found in major cities.

Shopping: Souvenirs include Bohemian glass and crystal, pottery, porcelain, wooden folk carvings, hand-embroidered clothing, and food items. There are a number of excellent shops specialising in glass and crystal, while various associations of regional artists and craftsmen run their own retail outlets (pay in local currency). Other special purchases include pottery (particularly from Kolovec and Straznice); china ornaments and geyserstone carvings from Karlovy Vary; delicate lace and needle embroidery from many Moravian towns; and blood-red garnets and semi-precious stones from Bohemia. Shopping hours: 0800-1800 Monday to Friday; 0800-1200 Saturday. Supermarkets and food shops in large towns and cities are open from 0600. The number of shops also open on Sunday is constantly increasing.

Special Events: The Czech nation is one of the most musical in Central Europe. Throughout the year there are many occasions to enjoy music in concert halls, theatres, stately homes and churches. Regular music festivals and concert cycles also take place. Most towns have their own folk festivals, with dancing, local costumes and food. These tend to be in the summer months leading up to the harvest festivals in September. For further details, check with the Czech Tourist Authority and travel agencies (who can also arrange music festival tours). The Czech Republic's theme for 2001 is a Thousand Years of Architecture, which comprises of two major exhibitions (see below). The following is a selection of major events held in the Czech Republic during 2001: Jan 2-7 2001 "Prague Winter" Music Festival. Mar-Dec Agharta Prague Jazz Festival. Apr 5-Oct 31 Ten Centuries of Architecture, Prague. Apr-Oct The Glory of the Baroque in Bohemia, Prague. May 12-Jun 3 Prague Spring (International Music Festival), Prague. Jun-Jul International Opera Festival, Litomyšl. Jul International Film Festival, Karlovy Vary. Aug 16th Annual Folklore Festival, Kyjov. Aug 18-25 Annual Chopin Festival, Mariánské Lázně. Aug World Championship Motorcycle Grand Prix, Brno. Oct Annual Velká Pardubická Steeplechase, Pardubice.

Social Conventions: Dress should be casual, but conservative, except at formal dinners and at quality hotels or restaurants. Tipping: A 5-10% tip is usual.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: The Czech Republic has adapted reasonably well to a market economy since the process began at the turn of the 1990s, although it has recently run into some difficulties. The former Czechoslovak economy was subject to a particularly high level of state control, lacking even the small-scale private enterprise that existed to some extent in all other Eastern European economies. Under central planning, and particularly in the aftermath of the 'Prague Spring',

economic development concentrated on heavy industry at the expense of traditional strengths in light and craft-based industries, such as textiles, clothing, glass and ceramics (though these remain significant). These inefficient and, in some cases, redundant industrial monoliths appeared to be a considerable impediment to the growth of the economy. The other problem was a dearth of natural resources - the country relied heavily on the former Soviet Union for most of its raw materials, particularly oil. After a period of political and economic crisis, which ended with the separation of the Czech and Slovak republics and a dispute with the Soviets over oil supplies, the Czech government pushed ahead with a rapid programme of market reforms, including a programme of mass privatisation and a major overhaul of the country's financial system. The Government has identified priority industries for development such as the aircraft and automobile industries, electronics, nuclear energy, textiles, leather and glass, gasification of coal, transport and communications. Agriculture is particularly important as an export sector (beer and timber are much in demand). Service industries are growing rapidly. The country has negotiated associate membership with the European Union and in 1998 began the lengthy process of negotiation which may allow it to achieve full membership between 2003 and 2005. Trade links with Austria and Germany in particular, and with the EU generally, have grown substantially. The Czech Republic has acquired membership of the IMF, World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Business: Businessmen wear suits. A knowledge of German is useful as English is not widely spoken among the older generation. Long business lunches are usual. Avoid visits during July and August as many businesses close for holidays. Office hours: 0800-1600 Monday to Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Hospodárská Komora České Republiky (Czech Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Seifertová 22, 103 00 Prague 3 (tel: (2) 24 09 61 11; fax: (2) 24 09 62 21; e-mail: info@hkcr.cz; web site: <http://www.hkcr.cz>).

Conferences/Conventions: The Prague International Congress Centre can seat up to 5000 people. There are also facilities in many hotels throughout the country. Trade fairs are held in Brno. Information can be obtained from the Brno Trade Fairs and Exhibitions, Výstaviste 1, 647 00 Brno (tel: (5) 41 15 29 51; fax: (5) 41 15 30 61; e-mail: info@bvvcz.cz; web site: <http://www.bvvcz.cz>); or Prague Convention Bureau, Rytířská 26, 110 00 Prague 1 (tel: (2) 24 23 51 59 or 24 23 31 66; fax: (2) 24 23 43 99; e-mail: pakt@comp.cz; web site: <http://www.pragueconvention.cz>).

13 CLIMATE

Cold winters, mild summers.

Required clothing: Mediumweights, heavy topcoat and overshoes for winter; lightweights for summer.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Czechoslovakia's independence was established in 1918. Previously, Moravia and Bohemia were under Austrian rule and Slovakia came under the aegis of Hungary. During the Second World War the whole country, except for Slovakia, became a German protectorate. After the war, a reconstituted Czechoslovakia was established under the supervision of the occupying Red Army. By 1948, as planned, the Communists had become the dominant political force in the

country and took effective control following elections that year. Soviet-style political and economic systems were put in place; Czechoslovakia became a firm Soviet ally, joining the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. The Government adhered closely to Soviet policy in all respects until the emergence in the late 1960s of a new leadership group under Alexander Dubcek. In what became known as the 'Prague Spring', the Dubcek governments introduced a series of liberalising reforms. After several months, the Soviets decided that the reforms had gone too far and, after failing to persuade the Czechoslovaks to desist from their chosen course, sent the tanks in. Dubcek and his allies were deposed in favour of a hard-line leadership led by Gustav Husak. For the next two decades, Czechoslovakia barely deviated from the Soviet line. That was until the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as Soviet leader and his promotion of glasnost and perestroika. The Husak Government aligned itself with those, such as East Germany's Honeker, who were opposed to such reforms. But 4 years later, as Eastern Europe was engulfed by political upheaval and massive demonstrations, the communists were swept from office. The main opposition movement, Civic Forum, became the principal political force in the country; its most celebrated member, playwright Vaclav Havel, was appointed president as the country set about introducing a pluralistic political system and market economy. Multi-party elections for a new national assembly in June 1990 were won by Civic Forum. However, divisions within the victorious party quickly emerged. The decisive split occurred in January 1991 when the right-wing federal Finance Minister Václav Klaus, the architect and chief engineer of the privatisation programme, left the Forum with his supporters to create the Civic Democratic Party (Obcanske Demokraticka Strana, ODS). Klaus emerged as the most powerful figure within the federal government. Meanwhile, there was a growing clamour in Slovakia, the eastern part of the country, for greater autonomy and, among a vocal and growing constituency, full independence. Despite the firm opposition of President Havel, who considered that the country could ill afford such diversions at this critical stage in its development, negotiations opened between representatives of the two republican Governments in November 1991. The talks broke down within weeks and both sides retired to await the June 1992 national election. At the poll on June 5 and 6, Klaus' ODS took 34% of the national vote - over 50% in the Czech part of the country. The main Slovak party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), led by an ex-communist turned nationalist, Vladimir Meciar, polled 37% nationally and the lion's share in Slovakia. A complete split into two independent countries was quickly accepted thereafter as the only mutually acceptable option and the formal division took place on January 1, 1993. Under Klaus, the Czech Republic pursued a comprehensive programme of market-oriented reforms and social policies designed to reduce the role of the state. A period of economic growth and rising prosperity for most of the population followed. At the 1996 general election, the ruling coalition was widely expected to improve its position in the national assembly: in fact, it declined slightly, but Klaus was still able to form a new Government. It lasted less than eighteen months, however, as an economic slowdown took hold and allegations of improper funding of the ODS emerged. An interim coalition under the independent Josef Tosovsky took office pending the scheduled national election in June 1998. By now the electorate had tired of the centre-right and returned the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) as the largest single party. CSSD leader Milos Zeman currently leads a minority centre-left administration which continues to operate with the unlikely support of Klaus' ODS. It is not entirely clear why Klaus, who is now speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, decided to prop up the Zeman Government given his undisguised ambition to become premier once again. Also in 1998, Vaclav Havel, the country's towering political figure, was comfortably re-elected to a second term as president although ill-health may force him to truncate it in due course. The new government's policies have brought a change of emphasis and pace rather than of fundamentals. This is true as much of foreign as of domestic policy. The priority abroad remains securing membership of the EU - an application which was lodged in January 1996 - to go with the Czech Republic's recently acquired membership of NATO. Despite its eager pursuit of close relations with Western Europe, Prague remains concerned to maintain good relations with its former Warsaw Pact partners and has signed a friendship and co-operation

treaty with Russia. The Czech Republic has also joined Hungary and Poland in the Visegrad group which aims to promote regional economic and security co-operation.

Government: Under the Czech Republic's constitution, legislative power rests with the bicameral legislature, comprising a 200-member Chamber of Deputies (Poslanecka Snemovna) and an 81-member Senate (Senat) which are elected for 4 and 6-year terms respectively. The legislature jointly elects the president of the republic for a 5-year term. The president appoints the prime minister as head of the Government.

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: The Czech Republic is situated in central Europe, sharing frontiers with Germany, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Austria. The republic is hilly and picturesque, with historic castles, romantic valleys and lakes, famous spas and skiing resorts.

Prague, the capital, picturesquely sited on the banks of the Moldau River, is noted for some magnificent Gothic, Baroque and Romanesque architecture and is noted as a cultural scene of elegance.

The health resorts or spas of Bohemia remain one of the primary attractions, as they have been for centuries.

The mountains, forests and lakes are enchanting and ideal for outdoor holidays as well as winter sports. The most popular winter sports centres are based in the Krkonose (Giant Mountains).

Food is often based on Austro-Hungarian dishes. Specialities include bramborak, a potato pancake filled with garlic and herbs, and Prague ham.

Much of the nightlife takes place in nightclubs, bars, and casinos, all of which are to be found in major cities.

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