



# THE CZECH REPUBLIC



The Czech Republic is a country in Central Europe. It occupies an area of 78,870 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of almost 10.7 million inhabitants. About a half of the people live in cities and a significant part of the population lives in the country. The Czech Republic can be divided into three main areas: Bohemia (Prague), Moravia (Brno) and Silesia (Ostrava). Bohemia is located in the west of the country, Moravia in the south-east and Silesia in the north-east. Each region is somehow special, be it its dialect, culture or traditions. There are 13 regions, which are the main administrative parts of the country. These are then divided into districts. The currency is the Czech Crown. The capital and largest city is Prague. Other big cities include: Brno, Plzeň, Ostrava, Olomouc and Liberec. The state flag consists of 2 horizontal stripes - white on the top, red on the bottom, and a blue wedge. The Czech Republic borders Poland in the north, Slovakia in the east, Austria in the south and Germany in the west. Although the Czech Republic isn't a large country, the geography is quite diverse. You may find mountainous areas such as the highest Krkonoše mountains, but also lowlands with large fields and rivers. Bohemia is surrounded by mountains – the Šumava range, the Czech Forest, the Ore Mountains, the Jizerské Mountains, the Giant Mountains (with the highest Czech mountain Sněžka) and the Eagle Mountains. The Bohemian-Moravian Highlands are located in the west of the Moravian Plain and the mountain ranges covered with forest, Jeseníky and Beskydy, are in the north of the Highlands. Fertile lowlands can be found in the valleys of big rivers – the Vltava, the Elbe (flowing into the North Sea), the Oder (flowing into the Baltic Sea) and the Morava (flowing into the Danube and then into the Black Sea). Czech lakes include: Mácha Lake, the Black Lake and the Great Moss Lake. There are also dams in Czechia, for instance Orlický, Slapy, Vranov and Lipno.

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

The head of state is the president, the executive power is in hands of the Prime Minister and their cabinet. The legislative power belongs to the Parliament, which has two chambers - the Senate and the House of Commons. The main political parties are: *Civil Democrats, Social Democrats, Communists, Union of Liberty, Christian Democrats.*

## AGRICULTURE

Agricultural production is one of the traditional industries of the national economy. Agricultural entrepreneurs now farm around half (54 %) of the total area of the country. Animal production mainly involves submontane and mountain areas where the pastoral breeding of cattle and sheep predominates. The principal aim of animal production is to produce meat, milk and eggs for the domestic market and for effective export. While pigs and poultry are also bred, goat and horse breeding are rare. Fish breeding, especially carp-breeding, has a long tradition in South Bohemian ponds. Plant commodities are understood to be field and special crops cultivated for their primary and secondary products for use in human sustenance and consumption and are used to feed farm animals and for technical and pharmaceutical use. They include products such as grain, pulses, root crops, fodder plants and technical and special crops that include vines, sugar beet, crops, hops, fruit, vegetables and curative and aromatic plants. The principal crops are grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats, and corn), which support the Czech Republic's dozens of small breweries.

## INDUSTRY

Metallurgy, mining, chemical and heavy industry is very traditional. The principal industries are high tech engineering, electronics and machine-building, steel production, transportation equipment (automotive, rail and aerospace industry) and pharmaceuticals. Quite common is also food, textile and electromechanical industry. The Czech Republic is famous for its porcelain and glass. The main industrial zones are Prague, Northern Bohemia and Northern Moravia. Czechia is rich in minerals. Black coal is found in the Ostrava coal basin and in the area of Kladno, while brown coal and lignite are found in North Bohemia's coal basin). Sand for glass production (cut glass), iron ore, uranium, kaolinite, etc., are also mined in the Czech Republic.

## CLIMATE

The climate is continental. The summer is quite hot with days with a temperature of more than 30 degrees. On the other hand, in winter you may experience days with more than minus 20 degrees, especially in January or February. The warmest area is in South Moravia.

## TRANSPORT

The most common way of travelling by car and by bus. People also use trains and planes for holidays and business trips. In some cities, you may travel by trams and in Prague, there is a subway. Taxis are popular in cities and towns. The most important airport is the Václav Havel Airport in Prague. Other international airports are situated in Brno, Ostrava and Karlovy Vary.





## PLACES TO SEE



The capital, Prague, has many monuments, cultural events and is definitely the highlight of the Czech Republic for tourists. Prague is full of tourists from all over the world all year long. Other popular places are ski centres (Špindlerův Mlýn, Harrachov, etc.), where people ski, snowboard or go cross-country skiing. Moravia is famous for its wine culture and hospitality. In the Czech Republic there are also plenty of historic buildings such as castles, for instance, Karlštejn, Blatná and Hluboka). Czech people like hiking, cycling or relaxing near lakes. Lake Mácha is a very popular camping, for example.



## THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CZECH HISTORY

Our territory has been inhabited by Slavonic tribes since the 5th century A.D. In 623, the first Slavonic state – Samo's Empire – was founded. Then all Slavonic tribes were united and the Great Moravian Empire was formed in the 9th century. In the 9th century, power was taken over by the Přemyslid family. The first historically documented Czech prince Bořivoj I. ruled over the territory of the Czech lands and over a big part of Great Moravia. When the Přemyslid dynasty died out in 1306, the Czech throne went by way of a dynastic wedding to the Luxemburgs, and thus the Czech Kingdom became the centre of the Holy Roman Empire during the reign of Charles IV. and his son Wenceslas IV.

Charles IV. was the most important person of the 7 electors of the emperors. During his reign, Prague grew into one of the largest European metropolia, was an important centre of education, architecture and the arts. In 1348 Charles IV. founded Charles University – the oldest one in Central Europe.

The first part of the 15th century was marked by the Hussite Movement. It's named after Jan Hus, professor, dean, and later rector of Charles University. He was a preacher in the Bethlehem Chapel. He was burnt at the stake as a heretic in 1415 in Constance. The big leaders of the Hussite Movement were Jan Žižka and Prokop Holý. Žižka was never defeated and Holý was a prominent Hussite diplomat. After the reign of the king Jiří of Poděbrady, known for his appeal to other European kings to make a treaty securing peace, and after the period of the rule of the Jagiellonian dynasty, the Habsburg dynasty came to the Czech throne. The rulers tried to oppress the Czech nation in favour of the Germans and the Romans Catholic Church, yet unsuccessfully until the Battle on the White Mountain in 1620 followed by 300 years of Germanisation. Many non-Catholic artists and scientists had to leave the country and the Czech literature was liquidated. The 19th century was a time of national revival.

At the end of World War I., in October 1918, the Czechoslovak Republic was established. The country was destroyed by the German occupation during WWII. In 1948, the power was taken over by communists directed by the Soviet Union. The Prague Spring in 1968 was oppressed by the invasion of the Soviet army and the process of "normalisation" lasted about another 20 years till the Velvet revolution in 1989. The following development led to the splitting of the republic, and in 1993 two new states appeared – the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

