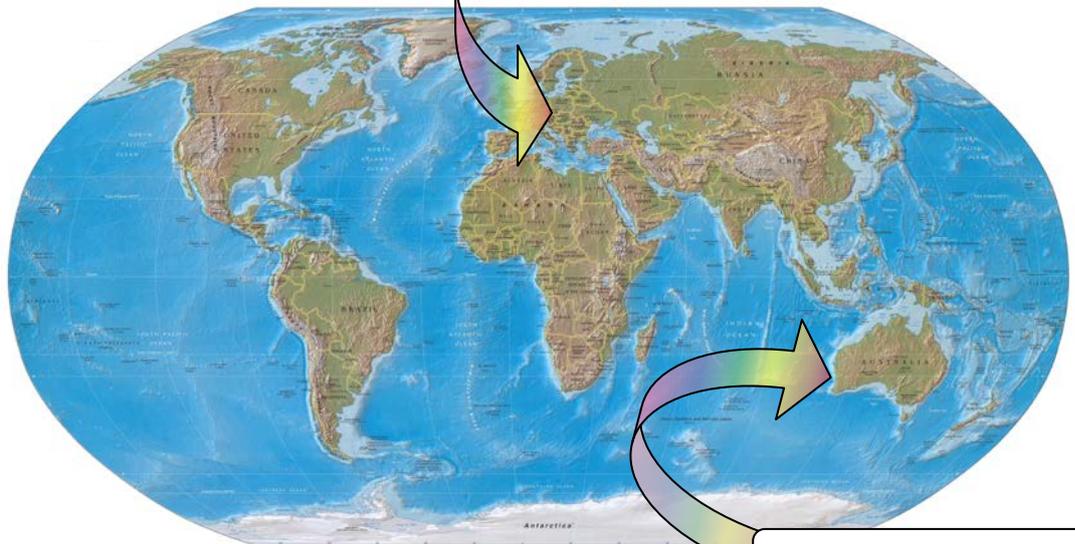


CZECH



We were there



Now we are here

FACTS:

- **Full name:** Czech Republic
- **Population:** 10.2 million (via UN, 2006)
- **Capital:** Prague
- **Area:** 78,866 sq km (30,450 sq miles)
- **Major language:** Czech
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Life expectancy:** 72 years (men), 79 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 koruna (Kc) = 100 halers
- **Main exports:** Manufactured goods, machinery, cars and transport equipment, beer
- **GNI per capita:** US \$10,710 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Internet domain:** .cz
- **International dialing code:** +420

Czech Community in WA

Czech and Slovak Association in WA Inc.

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Overview of cultural groups

The vast majority of the 10.2 million inhabitants of the Czech Republic are ethnically and linguistically Czechs. It makes 95% of the population. The largest minorities are Slovaks 1.9%, Poles 0.5%, Vietnamese 0.44%, Germans 0.4% and Gypsies.

After the 1993 division of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the border between the Czech Republic and Slovakia is open for citizens of the former Czechoslovakia.

Language/dialects spoken

The official and common language is Czech. It is widely spoken by most inhabitants of the Czech Republic, however, there is no special "language" law for its use. As given by appropriate laws, courts and authorities act and make out documents and executions in the Czech language but financial authorities also in the Slovak language. People who do not speak Czech have the right to get an interpreter. Instructions for use in Czech must be added to all marketed goods. The right of use of their languages is guaranteed by the Constitution for all national and ethnic minorities.

Since May 2004 Czech is also one of the 23 official languages in the European Union.

Dietary preferences

Czech cuisine has both influenced and been influenced by the cuisines of surrounding countries. Many of the fine cakes and pastries that are popular in Central Europe originated in the Czech lands.

Czech cuisine is marked by a strong emphasis on meat dishes. Pork is quite common, and beef and chicken are also popular. Goose, duck, rabbit and wild game are served. Fish is rare, with the occasional exception of fresh trout, and carp, which is served at Christmas.

Knedlíky (boiled sliced dumplings) are one of the mainstays of Czech cuisine and are quite often served with meals. They can be wheat or potato based, and are sometimes made from a combination of wheat flour and stale bread or rolls. They are typically large and served cut into slices, in contrast with the smaller dumplings found in Austrian cuisine. Only potato based dumplings are usually smaller.

Roast pork with dumplings and cabbage (*vepřová pečeně s knedlíky a se zelím*, colloquially *vepřo-knedlo-zelo*) is considered the most popular Czech dish. There are two variants of preparing the cabbage, Bohemian and Moravian. Bohemians prefer the cabbage to be sour, so they prepare the dish from sauerkraut. In Moravia it is preferred sweeter and so is prepared from fresh cabbage, or by adding some sugar, if the fresh variety is not available. But these variants aren't strict, and either may be available in each region.

Marinated beef sirloin (*svíčková na smetaně* or simply *svíčková*). Roast beef, usually larded, with a thick sauce of carrot, parsley root, root celery, and cream. Often served with **Knedlíky**, a cream topping, a teaspoon of cranberry compote, and a slice of lemon.

Since beer culture is a big part of Czech life, many popular Czech dishes and cheeses are usually eaten as pub fare.

Bramboráky (regionally called *cmunda* or *vošouch* in Pilsen and "strik" or "striky" in Czech Silesia) are fried pancakes made of rough-grated or fine-grated raw potatoes (**brambory** in Czech), flour, milk and sometimes sliced sausages (but this is not common, because

bramboráky are usually intended to be a vegetarian meal). They are spiced with marjoram, salt, pepper, and garlic. Usually sized to fit the

cooking dish. Smaller variants are often eaten as a side dish. There is a similar dish from the Slovakian-Ruthenian borderland called **harula**, which is prepared with less milk and fat, and an addition of an onion. **Harula** are baked on tin in an oven instead of frying.

Utopenci (literally "drowned men") are piquantly pickled bratwursts.

Religion/spirituality/observances

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 19% of Czech citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", whereas 50% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 30% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force", the lowest rate of EU countries after Estonia with 16%.

There are: Roman Catholics 39,2%, Protestants churches 4,1%, atheists and non-believers 39,7%, others 17 %.

Public Holidays:

Date	English Name	Local Name
January 1	Restoration of the Czech Independence Day; New Year's Day	Den obnovy samostatného českého státu; Nový rok
May 8	Liberation Day	Den vítězství or Den osvobození
July 5	Saints Cyril and Methodius Day	Den slovanských věrozvěstů Cyrila a Metoděje
July 6	Jan Hus Day	Den upálení mistra Jana Husa
September 28	St. Wenczeslas Day (Czech Statehood Day)	Den české státnosti
October 28	Independent Czechoslovak State Day	Den vzniku samostatného československého státu
November 17	Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day	Den boje za svobodu a demokracii

Customs/traditions

Folk traditions are not usually based on Christian, pagan or regional traditions. The most interesting ones include the Ride of the Kings of Vičnov, so called "Burning of the Witches" and the Walpurgis Night, May 1 "the time of love", Feasts, All Souls' Day or Barborky.

In the eastern region of the Czech Republic, Moravia, visitors have an exceptional opportunity to experience folk traditions and music. The summer is the season for the largest folklore festivals. Many village museums, such as Vičnov, Strážnice, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm and many more, revive the old celebrations, customs and traditions, where in addition to cultural programmes on offer are traditional foods, crafts, and the sale of craft items.

One of the oldest and the largest folklore festivals in Europe is the **International folklore festival in Strážnice**, which in 2005 celebrated its well-deserved **60th anniversary**.

Among other interesting folklore festivals, we can specifically recommend the **Rožnovská Valaška International Festival**, the **Rožnovské Slavnosti Festival**, the **bagpipe festival in Strakonice** or the **International folklore festival of Karlovy Vary**.

Ride of the Kings (Jízda králů), is held every year at the end of May in the South Moravian village of **Vičnov**. Boys on gaily beribboned horses ride through the village collecting gifts for their king, a ceremony based on the tale of Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus returning to the kingdom of Hungary in disguise after his lost battle in 1469. The king is traditionally a boy between the ages of 10-12, who rides through the village in woman's garb, guarded by two knights with drawn sabres.

The folk costume comprises clothing that is characteristic of a certain region. In the areas of the Czech Republic connected with the historical division of the state, the costumes of the villages have experienced a rather complex evolution. Folk clothing can only be classified in a clear historical manner with some difficulty.

Recreational activities

Sport plays a significant part in the life of many Czechs who are generally loyal supporters of their favourite teams or individuals. The two leading sports in the Czech Republic are soccer and ice hockey, both drawing the largest attention of both the media and supporters. The many other sports with professional leagues and structures include basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, floorball and others. Sport is a source of strong waves of patriotism, usually rising several days or weeks before an event and sinking several days after. The events considered the most important by Czech fans are: the Ice Hockey World Championship, the Euro, the Soccer World Cup and qualification matches for such events. In general, any international match of the Czech ice hockey or soccer national team draws attention, especially when played against a traditional rival: Germany in soccer; Russia, Sweden and Canada in ice hockey; and Slovakia in both.

Both summer and winter Olympic Games are also very popular.

Environment

The Czech landscape is quite varied. Bohemia to the west consists of a basin, drained by the Elbe (Czech: *Labe*) and Vltava rivers, and surrounded by mostly low mountains such as the Krkonoše range of the Sudeten mountains. The highest point in the country, the Sněžka, at 1,602 metres, is located here. Moravia, the eastern part of the country, is also quite hilly. It is drained mainly by the Moravia River, but it also contains the source of the Oder (Czech: *Odra*) River.

The Czech Republic has a temperate, continental climate with relatively hot summers and cold, cloudy winters, usually with snow. Most rains are during the summer. The temperature difference between summers and winters is relatively high due to its landlocked geographical position.

The coldest month is usually January followed by February and December. During these months there is usually snow in the mountains and sometimes in the major cities and lowlands.

The warmest month of the year is July, followed by August and June. On average, the summer temperatures are about 20°C higher than during winter. Especially in the last decade, temperatures above 30°C are not unusual. Summer is also characterized by rains and storms.

It borders with Germany, Poland, Austria and Slovakia.

Your Notes and Comments: