# **07-The Czech Republic**

1. **BASIC INFORMATION**

The Czech Republic **is situated** in the center of Europe and that's why it is called the heart of Europe. Czech Republic consists of three **historical lands**: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. The capital city of our country is Prague.

* The Czech Republic is a **member of** the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe (CE). In March 1999 the Czech Republic joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In May 2004 our country became part of the European Union (EU).

1. **POPULATION**

The population in the Czech Republic is over **10 million** people and there are also a lot of **minorities** – most important is most numerous are Slovaks, it has historical reasons, of course. Other minorities: Poles, Vietnamese, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians. According to some estimates, there are actually at least a quarter of a million of Romani people in the Czech Republic. Most of the population lives in the urban areas.

1. **SURFACE**

The Czech Republic lies in the middle of Europe. It **borders on** Germany in the west, Austria in the south, Slovakia in the east and Poland in the north.

The **natural border** with Germany is made by the Krušné Mountains, the Czech Forest and the Šumava. The border with Poland is made by the Jizerské Mountains, The Krkonošské hory with the biggest mountain Sněžka (1620 m. above sea-level), the Orlické Mountains and the Jesenik Mountain range. The border with Austria is made by the river of Dyje and the border with Slovakia is made by the Moravia river.

The Czech Republic has a **varied landscape**, so it also has some highlands e.g. Bohemian — Moravian highland as well as lowlands, which we can find mainly near the rivers - the Vltava, the Elbe and the Morava river. The **Vltava** is the longest Czech river. It has a large number of dams like for example Lipno, Orlík and Slapy. The Vltava flows into Labe in Mělník, the most important river for shipping. The Labe flows into the North Sea.

1. **CLIMATE**

The Czech Republic has a continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. Rainfalls are generally heaviest during the summer and autumn months.

1. **HISTORY**

History of our republic is very rich. Our territory has been inhabited by **Slavonic tribes** since the 5th century. The first Slavonic state was **Samo’s Empire**. Later in the 9th century **Great Moravian Empire** was formed. It was centre of Slavonic culture. In 863 **missionaries** Cyril and Methodius came here. They brought not only Christianity, but also Slavonic language.

The Great Moravia fell after several years of fighting with the Hungarian raiders in the 10th century. In that time new Czech state was created. **Prince Bořivoj** is the first historically documented Czech prince and member of the Přemyslid dynasty. The best known ruler of this period is **Prince Wenceslas**, who was murdered and later like his grandmother Ludmila canonized. Then the Přemyslid dynasty died out by the sword. The most famous **Czech king is Charles IV**. He was also King of the Romans and even Holy Roman Emperor.

Charles chose Prague for his residence and it became the most important city of the empire. Prague was also centre of architecture, arts and education. Charles founded **Charles University** (1348), the first in Central Europe. When he died, the Bohemian state was among the most powerful in Europe. But it didn‘t take a long time.

Not long after his death the crisis in Europe culminated and the famous **Hussite Revolution** began. It‘s named after Master John Huss. He was preacher and rector of Charles University. In the end, he was burnt at the stake in 1415. After the battle on **White Mountain** in 1620 the Habsburgs stared germanization and re-catholicization.

The 19th century brought a time of **National Revival** – Palacký and Jungmann were fighting for saving Czech language. After the World War I. (in 1918) the Czechoslovak Republic was established. But this was destroyed by the German occupation (1939-1945).

In 1948 the power was taken over by **the communists**. The period of normalization lasted until the „Velvet revolution” in 1989. In 1993 republic has split, two new states appeared – the **Czech Republic** and the **Slovak Republic.**

1. **POLITICAL SYSTEM**

The Czech Republic is a democratic state. Its **power is divided into three branches** — the legislative, represented by the Parliament, the executive, represented by president and the government, and the judicial, represented by courts. The Czech parliament consists of two chambers: **The Chamber of Deputies** **and the Senate**. The Chamber of Deputies consists of 200 members and they are elected for 4 years and the Senate has 81 members. Every second year one third of the members of the Senate are publicly elected.

**The president**, head of state, had been elected every five years by Parliament; however since January 2013 the president has been elected by the people (it is call as “direct presidential election”). Our current president is

**Economy**

The most important part of our economy is engineering. Other important branches are metallurgical and chemical industries and tourism, textile and glass industries have a long tradition. One of our most significant raw materials is coal.

1. **IMPORTANT CITIES**

**Brno** is the second largest city and unofficial capital city of Moravia. **Morava** is known for its wines. **Brno** was once called the “Moravian Manchester” because of its fast industrialization in the 19th century. It is famous for the Tugendhat Villa. **Ostrava** is known for its mining history. **Plzeň and České Budějovice** are internationally famous for their bear and **Karlovy Vary** is a famous spa town.

Among the most beautiful **historic towns** belong Prague, Kutna Hora, Tabor, Telč, and Olomouc. Also many castles, ruins and chateaux can be found in our republic. To the most interesting ones belongs Karlštejn, Bezděz, Hluboká and of course the Prague castle.