Czech Republic

References: CIA World Fact Book Czech Republic | Lonely Planet Czech Republic

Description :: Czech Republic

Diversity Network’s Country Diversity Notes provide readily accessible summaries of country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in study abroad programs. The notes were created to facilitate the ability of study abroad professionals to find a good country fit for prospective study abroad students who are uncertain of how they will be received abroad because of their race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion or disability.

The Czech Republic diversity note, below, features a country overview as well as information pertinent to the climate of respect that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in those countries. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in a given country. Links for students to pursue additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

While the note provides a bird’s-eye view of diversity matters in each country as they pertain to U.S. students, the country information found in the notes is not exhaustive. Advisors should use the information contained below in collaboration with faculty and staff who have experience in the particular country, returned study abroad students who are able and feel comfortable to discuss their own observations of diversity in the country, and the advisor’s own knowledge.
COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The Czech Republic is one of the top twenty five most popular destinations for U.S. study abroad students. More than 3,500 U.S. students participated in education abroad programs in the Czech Republic during the 2012-2013 academic year, a minor increase from the year before.

A small, landlocked country in Central Europe that has a varied topography and temperate climate, the Czech Republic has a rich history that makes up in depth what the country may lack in breadth. Prague was the seat of the Holy Roman Empire twice and the center of the Hapsburg Empire, among others. Despite this tumult, higher education has been a continued presence in the Czech Republic for nearly seven centuries. Charles University in Prague, founded in 1348, is among the oldest universities in Europe and still maintains a reputation for academic excellence. After leaving the Soviet Union following its collapse, the country, formerly one half of Czechoslovakia, returned to being an independent nation-state.

As the country and its economy have opened its level of economic development and standards of living have increased. The Czech Republic is now considered a developed country. Many U.S. study abroad programs take place in Prague, the cultural, political, and economic center of the Czech Republic. Many U.S. students are lured to Prague, a city more than 1,100 years old, to experience its ancient old-world charm with a cost of living that is below many Euro zone counties. Prague is a modern, cosmopolitan city that is accustomed to visitors from around the world. Despite the country’s racial homogeneity overall, Prague is an international city with residents from all parts of the world with a wide range of beliefs and lifestyles calling it home.

Ethnic Minorities :: Czech Republic

Potential Considerations for Students of Color

Although the Czech Republic is a racially homogenous country, many report that even in small villages darker-skinned people do not attract unwanted stares. Compared with the rest of the country, Prague is relatively diverse, with peoples of various backgrounds living and working there. Although U.S. students of color are unlikely to encounter racial hostility in Prague, especially in a campus setting, neo-Nazi extremist youth are a presence, if minor, in Czech society.

The largest non-white minority group in the Czech Republic is the Vietnamese, who began to settle there under a government-sponsored work program to attract Vietnamese during the Soviet era. Currently there are over 400,000 people of Vietnamese descent living in the Czech Republic. Anti-minority sentiment tends to be more nationalistic and focused more on groups for their national history, such as Roma gypsies, or immigrant status than their race.
Notes:

- Students of color may have difficulty finding certain ethnic beauty products found in the United States.
- Students of color may be one of few minority members within their program, and thus work and live with individuals who have minimal understanding of their cultures and cannot provide adequate support.
- The experience of U.S. students of color is likely to be fairly different than that of African or Middle Eastern immigrants to Czech Republic.

Additional Links:

- The black experience in the Czech Republic, Radio Praha
- A confession of a Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, Prague Daily Monitor
- Blog post on racism in Czech Republic, Think Magazine
- Asian-American (Vietnamese) living in the Czech Republic, thread on Expats.cz

Potential Considerations for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Students

The Czech Republic is considered to be one of the most liberal countries in Central Europe with respect to gay rights. Same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in 1962. The age of consent was equalized to 15 in 1990, and the state has recognized same sex partnerships since 2006.

Anti-discrimination laws protect homosexuals in Czech Republic. In line with the country’s progressive gay rights laws, the Czech Republic is considered one of the most gay-friendly countries in Europe.

Notes:

- There is a vibrant gay scene in Prague, which is considered one of the most gay-friendly cities in Europe.
- Many establishments exist to serve local gay communities across the Czech Republic, especially in Prague.
- Although Prague is widely considered to be gay friendly, in areas outside of Prague this may be less the case.

Additional Links:

Physical Disability :: Czech Republic

Potential Considerations for Students with Disabilities

As the Czech Republic has evolved into a modern country, in urban centers the infrastructure to accommodate people with physical disabilities exists. Sidewalks, public transport, and public buildings generally have accommodations for the physically disabled.

Several universities in the Czech Republic tout their accessibility for disabled students, including Masaryk University in Brno-Bohunice, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, and Metropolitan University in Prague.

Before selecting a study abroad program option it is a good idea for the student to inquire with the program itself as to whether a destination offers amenities and services specific to the needs of the individual student.

Notes:

- Several universities in the Czech Republic tout their accessibility for disabled students, including Masaryk University in Brno-Bohunice, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, and Metropolitan University in Prague.
- Sidewalks, public transport, and public buildings generally have accommodations for the physically disabled.

Additional Links:

- Resources for disabled travelers to Czech Republic, DisabledTravelers.com
- Resources for disabled travelers to Prague, AllPraha.com
- Mobility International USA, Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, International Laws (See Czech Republic)
Religion :: Czech Republic

**Potential Considerations for Religious Students**

The Czech Republic has one of the least religious populations in the world. A majority of Czechs are agnostic or unaffiliated with any religion. Despite this lack of religiosity, religion is not castigated in the Czech Republic and students should still feel comfortable practicing their faith there.

Following the unaffiliated portion of the Czech population, the next largest group is Roman Catholic. The remainder of Czechs tend to be Protestant, Muslim, or Jewish. It is estimated that the Czech Republic is home to between 3,500 & 15,000 practicing Jews and 10,000 practicing Muslims live in the Czech Republic currently. Most Muslims living there are either of Bosnian or Arab descent.

**Notes:**

- Christian students can find Catholic and Protestant churches across Czech Republic.
- There are synagogues in eight cities across the Czech Republic, with more than a half dozen located in Prague alone.
- A mosque exists in Prague. Two others exist, one in Brno, Czech Republic's second most important city, and another in Lednice.

**Additional Links:**

- Synagogues in Czech Republic, Maven Search
- Mosques and Czech Republic Muslim prayer times, Islamic Finder
- Churches in Czech Republic, Expats.cz
- US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, Czech Republic
- Religious Freedom in Czech Republic, the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)

Women :: Czech Republic

**The Diversity Network encourages comments and updates from members**

Fast Facts :: Czech Republic

**Capital:** Prague
Population: 10,644,842 (July 2015 est.)
Language(s): Czech (official) 95.4%, Slovak 1.6%, other 3% (2011 census)
Religions: Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant (includes Czech Brethren and Hussite) 1.1%, other and unspecified 54%, none 34.5% (2011 est.)
Ethnic groups: Czech 64.3%, Moravian 5%, Slovak 1.4%, other 1.8%, unspecified 27.5% (2011 est.)

References :: Czech Republic

Map, flag, and country facts are from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook online. Accessed 8/12/2015.

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