

CZECH SURVIVAL GUIDE



# Czech Survival Guide

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Plenty has been written about the challenge of moving to another country. It's the surprise of a new environment with new people and a new way of life that many fear.

We, at UCT Prague, strive for an ever-increasing number of students and workers from abroad. For years we have come across funny, bizarre, but also sad stories that stem from cultural misunderstandings or a simple lack of information.

That is why we put together a brochure aimed at preventing as many of these situations as possible. Read on and discover what makes us Czechs slightly different from others and make your experience in the heart of Europe smoother sailing.

# **The Essentials**

# Where are you going?

We like to say that the Czech Republic forms the heart of Europe. Naturally, many of its characteristics originate from its location. Its rich history, beautiful nature, and safe surroundings make it a great place to visit.



10.5 million



Prague (1.2 million)

## Language

We speak Czech in the Czech Republic. As part of the Slavic language group, we share plenty of linguistic and cultural characteristics with Slovakia and some with Poland, Croatia, Serbia, and many more. Although those languages may sound similar, be aware that we generally don't understand each other too much. Except for Slovaks – we do understand our brothers!

While 82 % of people between 18 and 24 speak a foreign language, this is not always the case with older generations. Thus, we highly recommend you learn some basic Czech words and phrases – it will please every Czech person you encounter and make your stay much easier!

**Tip 1:** Download the Duolingo app and offline Czech package on Google translate.

**Tip 2:** Check out “Czech for beginners” courses taught at UCT Prague.

**Tip 3:** When dealing with local authorities (Foreign Police, Ministry of Interior, etc.), bring a Czech acquaintance with you if possible (don’t hesitate to ask for assistance at ESN UCT Prague or Tutors). It is not uncommon that the office workers will talk to you exclusively in Czech.



## Basic Czech vocabulary

<b>Hello</b>	Ahoj (informal)
	Dobrý den (formal)
<b>Thank you</b>	Děkuji
<b>No, thanks</b>	Ne, děkuji
<b>Sorry</b>	Promiň (informal)
	Promiňte (formal)
<b>Yes</b>	Ano
<b>No</b>	Ne
<b>I don't understand.</b>	Nerozumím.
<b>I don't know.</b>	Nevím.
<b>I don't speak Czech.</b>	Nemluvím česky.
<b>Do you speak English?</b>	Mluvíte anglicky?
<b>Where is the bathroom?</b>	Kde je WC?
<b>I will have...</b>	Dám si...
<b>Beer</b>	Pivo

## Signs

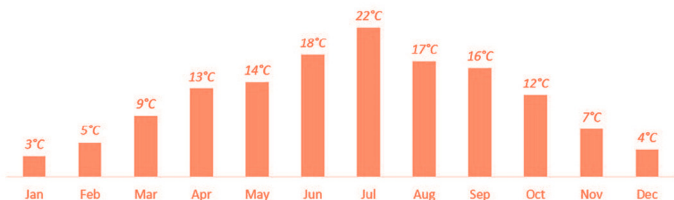
<b>Warning</b>	Upozornění/varování
<b>Exit</b>	Východ
<b>Caution</b>	Pozor
<b>No entry</b>	Zákaz vstupu
<b>Break</b>	Přestávka
<b>Open</b>	Otevřeno
<b>Close</b>	Zavřeno



# Weather

Prague and the Czech Republic in general enjoy a mild continental climate divided into four distinct seasons. The average annual temperature is 10 °C with summer (around 30 °C) and winter (around 0 °C) extremes.

## What the forecast says:



## How it actually feels:

# seasons in Czechia



# Currency

The currency we use in the Czech Republic is called the **crown**, **CZK** (*koruna*, shortly *Kč* in Czech). Unfortunately, you cannot pay in Euros just yet, but hey, at least the beer is cheaper!

The exchange rate is approximately as follows:

**1 US dollar  $\approx$  20 CZK** or **1 EUR  $\approx$  27 CZK**.

The true Czech conversion system works more like this:



Before coming to Prague, we suggest you bring some crowns with you, but not too much for safety reasons. As there are foreign exchange corners in airports or the city, you can exchange more crowns right after you arrive.

**Tip 1:** Download one of the mobile apps for easy currency conversion ([see mobile apps on page 33](#)).

**Tip 2:** Try to avoid exchange rate offices in the city centre.

Even if a place says 0 % commission, it does not mean they will have fair rates! Check the exchange offices episodes on the YouTube '[Honest Guide](#)' channel to find out more.

## Living expenses budget

Living expenses vary depending on lifestyle. Therefore, what you see below is for general reference to give you an idea of how much a month in Prague can cost you. Generally, you should prepare **from 10 000 to 17 000 CZK.**

<b>Accommodation</b>	University Dormitory	3500–5000 CZK/month
	Shared flat	7000 CZK/month
<b>Food</b>	Lunch in the campus canteen	80–130 CZK/meal
	Lunch in the restaurant	150–200 CZK/meal
	Shopping and cooking at home	5000 CZK/month
<b>Mobile phone</b>		400 CZK/month
<b>Internet</b>		300 CZK/month
<b>Transportation</b>	Metro, bus, tram	30 CZK/30 min.
	Long-term coupon	130 CZK/month
<b>Taxi</b>		28 CZK/km
<b>Culture</b>	Cinema ticket	150 CZK
	Theatre ticket	200–500 CZK
<b>Sport</b>	Group class (yoga etc.)	150 CZK
	Indoor pool	100 CZK/hour

**Tip 1:** Check [numbeo.com](https://numbeo.com) to compare the living cost of your hometown with Prague.

**Tip 2:** If you shop online, you have the right to return your purchase within 14 days period. Nevertheless, always check the conditions of the shop before acquisition.

**Things we  
can't live  
without**

# Nature & Trips

Czechs are an *outgoing* nation – in the true meaning of this word: going outside. As much as we enjoy a cold glass of beer in the pub (more on that below), we love to spend time together in nature and to walk on perfectly marked tourist trails in the countryside or mountains. Also, don't be surprised if a Czech person asks you to go on a bike trip (biking is Czech's favourite sport!), kayaking, or even mushrooming. We do that to relax as well!

Many families also have a cottage (*chata, chalupa*) outside of the capital where they go to disconnect from the city rush almost every weekend. This phenomenon goes back almost 100 years but was the most popular in the 1960s when many people lived in small flats in big housing estates and wanted to get closer to nature and have some privacy. Don't turn down the offer for a couple of days if you are invited as you might explore an unknown part of the Czech Republic and have a little trip back in history – some of the cottages have kept their interiors from previous decades.

**Tip 1:** For trip inspiration, try [Mapy.cz](https://www.mapy.cz), which not only shows you all the marked trails you can imagine, but it can also help you with planning a nice round trip in a selected area. Even if you plan to hike around Europe, [Mapy.cz](https://www.mapy.cz) is superior to Google Maps almost anywhere!

**Tip 2:** Czechs growingly care about sustainability as we want to preserve our nature for the above-mentioned reasons. Please try to sort your waste. You will find special bins for paper, plastic, glass, and general trash at a maximum distance of 50m from each household.



## Pivo

After all, a common way of socializing is to go to a local pub (*hospoda*) to have one beer (“*na jedno*”). Needless to say, it never ends with just one. It is not unusual to drink several glasses during a night out. Beer is simply part of our culture and a natural part of most local social activities.



**Tip 1:** Expect to get served 0.5 litres of a beer when ordering one.

**Tip 2:** Don't pour beer from one glass to another. Spoiling the beverage that we treasure so much might attract many judgmental looks from any Czech in your surroundings.

## Food & Restaurants

So that is beer, but what if you are hungry? Most traditional meals are meat-based, with thick, often creamy sauces served with carb-dense sides such as dumplings or potatoes. A typical Czech restaurant would serve a good selection of them, but you can also try many of these for affordable prices in the Dejvice campus canteens. Look for *svíčková*, *znojemská*, *koprovka*, *rajská* or *vepřo-knedlo-zelo* and *moravský vrabec*. You can also find places where they keep up with the trends and offer a lighter version of the traditional meals or even vegan ones!

Are you not up for a whole meal? Unsurprisingly, a nation that is famous for its beer has plenty of tasty pub snacks. Often called "*něco k pivu*" (something with beer) is a must-try.

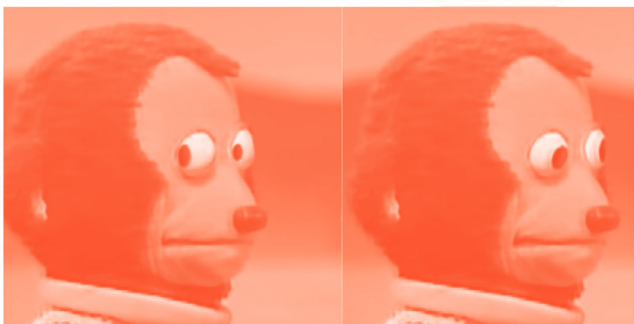
**Tip 1:** Czech waiters are typically a bit gloomy and might not speak English. Please don't take it personally and try to use that before-mentioned vocabulary.



**Tip 2:** It is common to tip waiters for their service (around 10–15 % of the total price), which is almost never included in the bill. Usually, you do not leave the money on the table but add it to the bill directly when paying.

**Tip 3:** Eating dumplings with a hand is a big no-no.

Czech people when foreigners eat dumplings with their hands



# Culture & Events

If you fancy something more than pub culture, Prague offers plenty of possibilities. We would suggest only a few here:

Many bigger **theatres** offer plays with English subtitles – *Dejvické divadlo*, *Švandovo divadlo* or even *Národní divadlo* (which is worth the visit just for its interior).

**Tip 1:** Try the *Cimrman English Theatre*, which will give you a great insight into Czech humour as it presents comedies about the legendary, albeit non-existing Czech creative genius, Jára Cimrman.

Are you thinking about going to the **cinema**? Avoid multiplexes and visit smaller local venues like *Lucerna*, *Bio Oko*, *Kino Přítomnost*, *Edison Film Hub*, or *Kino Pilotů*. They screen Hollywood movies, but also smaller foreign films or documentaries. For example, *Kino Ponrepo* has made a name for screening old-school gems! Furthermore, these venues are worth visiting for their cosy vibe and interior design.

Would you rather watch something at home? No problem! **Netflix** is streaming some of the greatest Czech movies, especially comedies. So next time you are scrolling down their offer, check some out. It might give you an insight into the local lifestyle, culture, or history. The biggest household names of Czech directors are Forman, Menzel, or Chytilová.

Do you want to **get to know Prague** and its hidden gems like a local? Try some of the less touristy guided tours, for example the one led by homeless people. Because who knows the city streets better than the people who live there?

For more tips on what to do and where to go, we recommend checking [GoOut.cz](https://goout.cz) or [Expats.cz](https://expats.cz).

## Relations & Humour

For the untrained eye, Czechs can seem a bit grim. We are relatively reserved people that don't just throw smiles all around.

- We like to keep our personal distance (1–1,5 m), especially with strangers, but also with co-workers or fellow students. Touching people is considered intimate and is reserved for family members, partners, or close friends.
- We greet (unknown) people by shaking hands; kissing on the cheeks or hugging is only for personal relations.
- Our handshake is rather firm.
- On the other hand, it is okay to keep a (shorter) eye contact with someone or smile at strangers if you feel like it with no meaning behind it.
- If you fancy someone and would like to invite him/her for a coffee sometimes, it is accepted to politely ask someone out.

However, when you get to meet us closer, be ready to share plenty of beer invitations and jokes. Be prepared for Czech humour, though. Many find it rather dry (a bit like the British) and, on occasion, a bit inappropriate or even dark. According to Sir Michael Palin, a member of Monty Python, Czechs would laugh at almost everything, and like the British, we lack a “laughter ceiling”, which many other countries have.

**Tip 1:** Czechs care about planning and punctuality. We share a bit with our fellow Germans on this one. To arrive late is considered disrespectful – especially for a lecture, a meeting, but even when just going to a pub.



**Tip 2:** Get in touch with the expat community in Prague. It may help you in everyday life, in case you feel homesick or just for plain sharing of stories and situations that you found yourself in when dealing with Czechs.

## When can you do all of that?

### Opening hours and public holidays

We observe a few days as public holidays when banks, offices, department stores, and some shops are closed. Bigger grocery shops are also closed on selected days (\*). On the other hand, they are generally open on Sunday (in Prague at least; don't be surprised if it is not the case in smaller cities).

Museums and tourist attractions tend to stay open on those days, though many may be closed on Monday or the first working day after a holiday.

## Public holidays in the Czech Republic

1 January	New Year's Day*
March, April	Good Friday*
March, April	Easter Monday*
1 May	Labour Day
8 May	Liberation Day*
5 July	Saints Cyril and Methodius
6 July	Jan Hus Day
28 September	Statehood Day*
28 October	Independence Day*
17 November	Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day
24 December	Christmas Eve
25 December	Christmas Day*
26 December	The Second Christmas Day*

**You too  
can live  
like a local**

# Phone & Internet

## Mobile service

There are three main mobile network providers in the Czech Republic – Vodafone, T-Mobile, and Telefónica O2. All are comparable in terms of services and prices offered. But every company has its niche! Be sure to compare offers before you buy.

The price of a prepaid SIM card differs according to the services and usually costs around 200–500 CZK/month with calls, SMS, and mobile data included.

## Internet

There are many local providers which offer a wide range of options in terms of speed etc. It is a good idea to ask about the options also while arranging a mobile service.

Restaurants, some shops, or shopping centres offer free Wi-Fi. You can catch it even in selected trams or at stops. There is also a free Wi-Fi service on the campus – eduroam (login instructions are available [on the university website](#)). However, we recommend you get mobile service as soon as possible.

**Tip 1:** Ask the International Department of UCT Prague for a free sim card (Czech number + 3 GB of data for starters always helps).

**Tip 2:** Around 25 % of all Czech internet searches are made via [Seznam.cz](#). Check this website out and see where Czechs get their information day in day out.



# Transportation

Prague (and the Czech Republic in general) enjoys one of the world's most reliable public transport systems. How does it work?

## **Metro, trams, and buses**

Those are the three basic means how to get around the capital.

Prague has **three metro lines** (A, B, C) in operation, covering the main city areas. It is very convenient and popular to travel the city by metro which can save you a lot of time in traffic jams, especially in the morning and evening rush hours.

**Trams** are also popular in the city centre as well as on the outskirts. If you want to have a nice tour through the whole inner city, try line 22 from Vinohrady to Pražský hrad and get on and off wherever you feel like it. On the other hand, **buses** operate less frequently in the city centre and are more used in the suburbs as a connection to metro lines.

Apart from those, **small ferry boats** are also a crucial part of the public transport system as they offer a quick connection from one side of the Vltava River to the other.



## Night lines

It is very common to use public transport even during the night. Even though the **metro is not in operation from 12 pm until 5 am**, you can take the night buses and trams which still pass frequently. While it might take you longer, you can generally get anywhere you need anytime.

## Tickets

The same ticket is valid for every type of public transport. The general price is 30–120 CZK per ticket according to the time validity period of your ticket.

You can buy a one-time ticket from ticket machines on the stops or inside the trams (card payment only) or download the **PID Lítačka** app and buy tickets online.

If you stay for longer and plan to use public transport often, we strongly suggest you get the transport card, *Lítačka*, and purchase a month or even a year ticket – it is also valid for all types of vehicles, and it will save you plenty of money and nerves!

**Tip 1:** Always **buy your ticket and get it validated** right after entering a public transport vehicle. There are regular controls that will fine you should you not have your ticket or have it unstamped.



**Tip 2:** You should stand on the right-hand side of the metro escalator to let people in a hurry pass.



**Tip 3:** As a general rule, people exit the public transport first, then people get on. It is also polite to free your seat and let the elderly sit.

## First steps on the Czech ground

### From the Prague airport to the city centre

Taking a taxi can be costly. So, we recommend you take fast and cheap **public transport for less than 1/10 of the price**. You can buy the ticket (90 min.) from a ticket machine at the bus stop just outside Terminal 2. Take bus 119, get off at “Nádraží Veleslavín” and take metro A (the green one) to “Můstek” - the city centre.

### From the Prague airport to UCT Prague dormitories

You take the same bus 119, get off at “Nádraží Veleslavín” and take metro A to “Muzeum”. Change to metro C (the red one) and go to “Chodov” (direction “Háje”). Then, take bus 177 to the “Volha” stop. You will find the *Sázava* and *Volha* dormitories within walking distance.

## Taxi

Taxis in Prague charge around 50 CZK to get in and 28 CZK for every extra kilometre. Please be careful especially close to the main tourist sites because there are plenty of crooks that overcharge foreigners.

**Tip 1:** When you pay the taxi fee, ask the driver for a receipt in case you leave your belongings in the car.

**Tip 2:** We recommend using alternative apps like **Uber**, **Bolt**, or **Liftago**.

**Tip 3:** Do not take a taxi in downtown Prague, they might try to rip you off!



## **Banks & ATMs**

Most stores here accept bank cards – both MasterCard and Visa. If you stay in the Czech Republic for a longer time, we recommend you set up an account in a Czech bank to save on the exchange rates.

**Tip 1:** Do not use ATMs only marked with the “ATM” sign. Try to find bank-branded ones (there are plenty). If you do so anyway, always decline the dynamic conversion.



**Tip 2:** To set up an account in a Czech bank, always bring your passport and another identity document (national ID, driving license, etc.).

## Health & Other useful contacts

Need a health care service in Prague? You can choose from several medical centres. The most expat-friendly are **Na Homolce** and **Motol** (a special department for English-speakers).

**Tip 1:** Make sure you have valid medical insurance in the Czech Republic.

**Tip 2:** Once in Prague, doctors may require you to pay for treatment in cash. Ask for a medical report, a bill, and proof of payment; your health insurance company will reimburse you.

**Are you dealing with an emergency?** It is always better to call the service you need directly through the specific numbers below, but 112 is a good choice too and easy to remember. Calling emergency lines is free of charge.



fire brigade

**150**



ambulance

**155**



police

**158**



emergency

**112**



**Tip 1:** Look for the nearest street lamp in case of an accident. They are marked with identification numbers to help people on the emergency line locate you instantly.



**Tip 2:** Should you need help with translation or legal assistance, contact the Centre for Integration of Foreigners or Association for Integration and Migration. Their services are free of charge.

# Phone applica- tions

There are many mobile apps that will make your life in the Czech Republic much easier. Here is a shortlist of free applications that may help you:

### **Public transport**

- **PID Lítačka** (Prague public transport – tickets, coupons, timetables)
- **IDOS** (public transport timetables and connections – Prague and regional)
- **ČD Můj vlak** (Czech railway company timetables and connections)
- **Regiojet** (private railway/intercity buses timetables and connections)

### **Food delivery**

- Dáme jídlo
- Wolt
- Bolt Food

### **Bike-sharing**

- Rekola
- Nextbike

### **Scooter-sharing**

- Berider

### **Car-sharing**

- Uniqway
- Ajo
- Car4way

### **Online supermarkets**

- Rohlík
- Košík

### **Maps**

- Mapy.cz

### **Taxi service**

- Liftago
- Uber
- Bolt

### **Cultural tips and events**

- GoOut

### **Learning Czech**

- Duolingo
- Offline Czech package on Google translate

### **Banking transfers and budget**

- Revolut
- Splitwise

# Checklist at a glance

- ☐ Passport validity
- ☐ Long-term (study) visa from Czech Embassies/Consulates in your home country
- ☐ Health insurance coverage valid in the Czech Republic
- ☐ Pre-departure medical check-up
- ☐ Airplane ticket to the Czech Republic
- ☐ Credit cards and cash in CZK

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Free work by unknown authors

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EVROPSKÁ UNIE  
Evropské strukturální a investiční fondy  
Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání



MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,  
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

