

The Czech Republic

Total area: 78,866 sq km

Population: 10 million

Capital: Prague

Geography

The Czech Republic is a land-locked country, meaning it doesn't have a **border** with the sea, but is surrounded by other countries (Poland, Germany, Slovakia and Austria). The country is made up of two regions, Bohemia in the west and Moravia to the east.

The Czech landscape is quite varied. Bohemia is surrounded by mountains with the highest point of Sněžka (1,602 m). Moravia in the east is hilly and in the south low-country. The climate is a **mixture of maritime and continental influences**, it is temperate with warm summers and cold winters.

History

Beginning in the 4th century B.C., Celtic **tribes settled** in the region, followed by Germanic and **Slavic** tribes. The country began to form in the 9th century with the creation of Great Moravia. After its fall, the Czech state **emerged** with help from the Premyslids. The kingdom of Bohemia was important and powerful in the region, but conflicts like the Hussite Wars in the 15th century and the 30 Years War (the 17th century) hurt it. Under the reign of the Habsburgs



The highest Czech mountain Sněžka is located in the Krkonoše mountains.



The main square in Olomouc.

it became part of the **Empire** of Austria-Hungary.

This empire collapsed after WWI, and together with its Slovak neighbors, the Czechs formed a new country, known as Czechoslovakia. WWII was again **destructive** to the country, which was occupied by the Germans. After the war ended, Czechoslovakia fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. The country remained a Communist state until the peaceful revolution in 1989. The Czechs and Slovaks **split**, and in 1993, the country we call the Czech Republic was put on the map.

Political system

After **overthrowing** Communism, the country **set up** a parliamentary democracy. The parliament consists of two houses; the **Chamber of Deputies** and the Senate. The head of state is the president, and it is he who **appoints** a prime minister. There are 200 people in the Chamber of Deputies, and they serve a 4-year term. The 81 Senate members are elected for 6 years. The president is elected every 5 years by the parliament.



The Czech Republic's flag is red, white and blue which are traditionally Slavic colors and many of its neighbor flags include them. On the left is a blue triangle, which was added to the flag in 1918 to represent Slovakia. The top band is white; the bottom band is red, the traditional colors of Bohemia and Moravia.



The Czech education system

TASK: Read the following article and try to fill in the gaps with the most appropriate words from the box below. (Solution on p.3)

age, art, business, ceremony, degree, entrance, grades/marks, graduates/students, handicapped/disabled, jobs, obligatory/compulsory, optional, primary/elementary, private, school-leaving, state, state, subjects, thesis, uniforms

In the Czech Republic all children go to school from the **1)** of 6 to 15, because school attendance is compulsory. Six-year-olds enroll in the nine-year **2)** school. Most children attend **3)** schools where education is free of charge but there are also some **4)** schools where parents have to participate in covering expenses of the education of their children, and church religious schools. Physically or mentally **5)** children are educated in special schools.

Primary schools have 2 stages. Children in the first five grades are mostly taught by one class teacher. Older children (6 - 9 grade) have more teachers who specialize in various **6)** - Czech, math, physics, chemistry, history, geography, biology, etc.

Pupils in the CR do not wear **7)** to school. The school year starts on 1st September, and ends on June 30th, when pupils get their school report with **8)** from 1 to 5. In the 5th, 7th or 9th class, children try to pass **9)** exams and continue their studies at a secondary school.

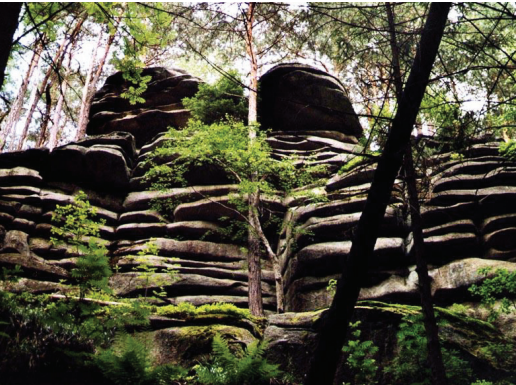
Students can enroll in secondary general school (grammar school) which prepares its students for university studies and lasts 4, 6 or 8 years. Students complete their studies with a **10)** exam, which is required for all universities and colleges. The exam is taken in 4 subjects. Czech and a foreign language are **11)** and math, history, biology, physics, chemistry, geography, music, art or civics are **12)**

Secondary technical schools (SOŠ) train students for various branches: chemistry, glassmaking or agriculture. Economics can be studied at **13)** colleges, culture, singing, dancing and drama at **14)** schools. Most of the courses last 4 years and then the students can apply for university or go to work.

Secondary vocational schools (SOU) train apprentices - future bakers, bricklayers, hairdressers etc. for practical **15)**

University education is provided from 3 to 6 years. Most secondary school **16)** have to pass an entrance exam. Students can study at the School of Economics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Journalism, Teacher's Training College, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Science etc. The university is finished with a **17)** exam. Students have to defend a **18)** in order to receive a diploma at a graduation **19)** After 3-year courses they receive a Bachelor's **20)**, after 4 and 5-year courses a Master's degree.

Jana Kubánková (teacher of English at the Gymnázium Budějovická in Prague 4)



The Novohradské mountains in the south of Bohemia are a paradise for hikers.

Holidays

Some of the most important holidays celebrated by Czechs are St. Wenceslas Day, Independence Day, and Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day. They are all important dates in Czech history. Celebrating the patron saint of the country, St. Wenceslas happens on September 28. On October 28, Independence Day is celebrated to **commemorate** the date in 1918 when Czechoslovakia was formed. The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day is on November 17, and remembers the students who protested both against the Nazis and Communism.

Zuzana Pernicová, Jacy Meyer (USA)

vocabulary

border ['bɔ:də] - hranice

mixture of maritime and continental influences

[ˈmɪksʃə 'mæɪrɪtəm kɒntrɪ'nent(ə)l 'ɪnfluənsɪz]
- směs přímořských a vnitrozemských vlivů

tribe [traɪb] - kmen

to settle ['set(ə)l] - usadit se

Slavic ['sla:vɪk] - slovanský

to emerge [rɪ'mɜ:dʒ] - objevit se

empire ['empaɪə] - říše

destructive [dɪ'strʌktɪv] - ničivý

to split [splɪt] - rozdělit se

to overthrow [əʊvə'throʊ] - svrhnout

to set up - ustanovit

Chamber of Deputies ['tʃembə(r) 'depju:tɪz] - poslanecká sněmovna

to appoint [ə'pɔɪnt] - jmenovat

to commemorate [kə'meməreɪt] - připomínat si

