

Czech Culture

Here are a few tid-bits on Czech Culture to help you prepare for our trip. We recommend doing some more research into Czech before the trip. Some great sites include:

Wikipedia and myczechrepublic.com

Overview

- Family is central in Czech culture
- Private and reserved people – not overly emotional
- Czechs prize forward thinking, logical, practical, and efficient
- Careful planning, in both one's business and personal life, provides a sense of security.
- Rules and regulations allow people to know what is expected and to plan their life accordingly.
- Czechs are private people until they get to know you.
- Once you develop a personal relationship Czechs open up a bit
- Czechs tend not to acknowledge people whom they do not know as they walk along the street or ride the train.
- Very laid back – not in a rush

Meeting/Greeting

- Usually shake hands when meet, unless family/friend, then possible kiss on cheek
- Conversation – keep eye contact with the person you are talking to
 - Do not: interrupt, keep hands in pockets, scratch yourself, blow nose or smack tongue
- Topics to avoid: Russia, Germany (because of Nazi and Communist oppression)
- Take shoes off when entering someone's home
- Public Transportation
 - young people give up seats for elderly, disabled and pregnant people
- Entering building: if it's nice restaurant, store, etc – women first
 - If it's pub, bar, etc – men first

Meals

- Food:
 - Breakfast – cup of tea or coffee, bread or roll with ham, salami, cheese or jam.
 - Cereal is starting to get popular
 - Lunch – biggest meal of day - always starts with some sort of soup, followed by delicacies such as dumplings, pork, fish, etc
 - Dinner – usually at home – bread or rolls, cold sausage meats, fish or cheese
- Polite to eat a lot to show you like it
- Compliment the host during the meal
- Appropriate to eat with fork in left hand and knife in right
- Restaurants:
 - Slower service
 - Drink refills are NOT free

Patriotism

The people you meet may hate the government and deplore the economic situation, but most of them love their country. Try to avoid comparing your country with theirs. Comparison can be interpreted as being negative and critical of their culture. Keep a positive, constructive attitude, even in difficult situations.

Many young people, dissatisfied with life, long to emigrate to the West. Some Westerners who like to convey the impression that their own country is wonderful do not help this dissatisfaction! Be careful of the “West is best” syndrome. You should look objectively at your own culture’s problems and not try to make excuses for them. We have social and economic problems in the West that would surprise many people in Central and Eastern Europe who see Westerners as infinitely wealthy, with the opportunity to buy and do anything they want. Share openly and honestly about your nation’s problems. It helps give some perspective.

Religion and beliefs

The Czech Republic has one of the least religious populations in the European Union. According to a 2005 poll, 30% of Czech respondents do not believe in God, the Spirit, or life forces. 50% believe in some sort of spirit or life force, and only 19% believe in God. Over half of the population of the Czech Republic is agnostic or atheist, because of the systematic oppression of religion during Communism.

Communicating the Gospel

Speak to the heart and not just the mind. As well as communicating a clear statement of the Gospel, tell people what knowing the Lord means to you personally and how it has affected you. If you get into a religious argument, go on to your personal testimony. Nobody can argue against that and it communicates at a personal level.

The communist system has created a lot of distrust among people. They may be a little distant and suspicious at first until they have time to assess you. Be patient because once they get to know and trust you, they are very warm people. Be cautious whenever people say “yes” to things immediately. Even in sharing the gospel, you may get a “yes” answer, which is said in order to get something from you. Out of politeness people may say “yes” to save you from “losing face”!

Key Phrases

We have put together a few key phrases in Czech that you might want to learn. This will help in bridging the gap between us and the youth we are reaching out to:

Czech Word	Pronunciation	English Translation
Ahoj	<i>uh-hoy</i>	Hello/Bye
Cau	<i>chow</i>	Hi/Bye
Dobry den	<i>dob-ree den</i>	Good day
Dobry vecer	<i>dob-ree ve-cher</i>	Good evening
Jak se mas	<i>Jak se mash</i>	How are you?
Dobre	<i>dob-rzhe</i>	fine
Jak se jmenujete	<i>yuhk se yme-nu-ye-te</i>	What's your name?
Jmenuji se...	<i>yme-nu-yi se...</i>	My name is...
Tesi me	<i>tye-shee mye</i>	I'm pleased to meet you.
Na shledanou	<i>nuh_skhle-duh-noh</i>	Goodbye
Dobrou noc	<i>do-broh nots</i>	Good night
Jiste	<i>yis-tye</i>	sure
Mozna	<i>mozh-na</i>	maybe
Moment	<i>mo-ment</i>	Just a minute
Ano	<i>uh-noh</i>	yes
Ne	<i>ne</i>	no
Koupel	<i>koh-pel</i>	bathroom
Mluvite anglicky	<i>mly-vee-te uhn-glits-ki</i>	Do you speak English?
Rozumite	<i>ro-zu-mee-te</i>	Do you understand?
Ano, rozumim	<i>uh_no ro-zu-meem</i>	Yes, I understand
Ne, nerozumim	<i>ne ne-ro-zu-meem</i>	No, I don't understand
Mluvim anglicky	<i>mly-veem uhn-glits-ki</i>	I speak English
Nemluvim cesky	<i>ne-mly-veem ches-ki</i>	I don't speak Czech
Mluvim trochu	<i>mly-veem tro-khu</i>	I speak a little
Prominte	<i>pro-min'-te</i>	Pardon (get attention)/sorry
Prosim, muzete... to opakovat	<i>pro-seem moo-zhe-te to o-puh-ko-vuht</i>	Could you please.... repeat that
mluvit pomaleji	<i>mly-vit po-muh-le-yi</i>	speak more slowly
Prosim	<i>pro-seem</i>	Please
Dekuji	<i>dye-ku-yi</i>	Thank you
Buh Ti zehnej	<i>boo tea zah-nedge</i>	God Bless You