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EVROPSKÁ UNIE



MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY



OP Vzdělávání
pro konkurenceschopnost



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

The Czech Republic



Coat of Arms

The Czech Republic's flag is red, white and blue which are traditionally slavic colours and many of its neighbour flags include them. On the left there 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 colours of Bohemia and Moravia.



Geography

The Czech Republic (CR) lies at the very heart of Europe, covering an area of 78,864 square kilometres. It has four neighbour states: Slovakia in the east, Poland in the north, Germany in the west and Austria in the south. It is an inland country with population of 10.3 million. CR consists of three main regions: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.



Mountains form natural boundaries in the north (Krkonoše – Giant Mountains), west (Krušné Mountains) and south (Šumava). The highest peak Sněžka (1,602 m) is in the Krkonoše mountain range. The major European river the Elbe rises in Krkonoše too.

The interior is more of a plain, broken by small hills, rivers and streams. The Moravian landscape has lowlands in the south as well as mountains such as Jeseníky in the north and Beskydy in the east. Natural beauty spots include **national parks** in mountains such as Krkonoše, Šumava (with the remains of primeval forests), Czech Paradise (sandstone rock formations) and Moravian Karst (a series of caves and the gorge Macocha).

The CR does not have any seacoast, but it has many **rivers**. The largest river is Elbe. Its most important tributary is the Vltava. Several huge dams have been built on this river, for example Lipno, Orlík or Slapy.



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South Bohemia is known for its large and numerous ponds. Freshwater fish are farmed here, especially carps. Also two glacial lakes can be found in CR – Černé and Čertovo in the Šumava Mountains. The Czech Republic lies in the main European watershed. It means that the water from CR flows into the three seas: Elbe – the North Sea, Odra – the Baltic Sea and Morava (through the Danube) – the Black Sea. The **climate** in the Czech Republic is a mixture of maritime and continental influences, it is temperate with warm summers and cold winters.



Brief History

Beginning in the 4th century B.C., **Celtic** tribes settled in the region, followed by Germanic and Slavic tribes. The first **Slavonic state** was Sámó's Empire in the 7th century AD. The **Great Moravian Empire** was formed in the 9th century. After its disintegration, state activities were concentrated in the Czech Land. The historical roots of the **Czech state** can be traced back to the 10th century, when the region was ruled by the Přemyslid dynasty. In 935, Duke Václav was killed by his brother Boleslav in fight for power. This violent act gave rise to the Wenceslas cult and **St. Wenceslas** is also the patron saint of the Czech Republic.

The **Czech kingdom** expanded during the reign of Přemysl Otakar II (13th century). When **Přemysl's** dynasty died out, the Czech throne was engaged by the **Luxembourg** dynasty. The most important Luxembourg king was **Charles IV**, who ruled in the 14th century. During his reign the Prague University was founded and Prague New Town was built.

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. The Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 marked the beginning of a long period of political, religious and cultural oppression under the reign of the **Habsburg** dynasty as a part of their **Empire of Austria-Hungary**.

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At the end of the World War I the Austrian-Hungarian Empire split and on 28th October **1918** the independent **Czechoslovak Republic** was proclaimed with T.G.Masaryk as the first president. But twenty years later, in March 1939 Bohemia and Moravia were occupied by Germans and after a few months World War II started. In May 1945 the Red and US armies liberated Czechoslovakia. In 1948 the Communist Party won elections and started the “**socialistic**” era until the peaceful (“velvet”) revolution in 1989. World famous dramatist Václav Havel was elected the president and Czechoslovakia started to build democracy. Conflicts between the Czech and Slovak nations worsened, resulting to a split. On 1st January **1993** Czechoslovakia was divided in two sovereign republics – the **Czech and Slovak Republics**. The Czech Republic has been a member of NATO since 1999 and EU since 2004.

Industry and Agriculture

The Czech Republic is traditionally an industrial country. The main industrial areas are located in northern part of the country. Fuel and energy industries are very well developed. Other industries include metallurgy, the machine tool industries, chemical, construction and consumer industry. Czech beer and wine have a long tradition and popularity both at home and abroad. Our country is rich in minerals – black and brown coal, lignite, sand for glass-making or iron ore are mined here. Maybe the most significant contemporary company is Škoda Works.



The lowlands are important for agriculture and crop farming. The most extensive and fertile Czech lowland is Polabská. The land along the river Morava is also very fertile. In the lowlands sugar beet, sweet corn, fruit and vegetables are grown. In the highlands mainly potatoes and grain are grown. Hops for brewing beer is traditional crop too.

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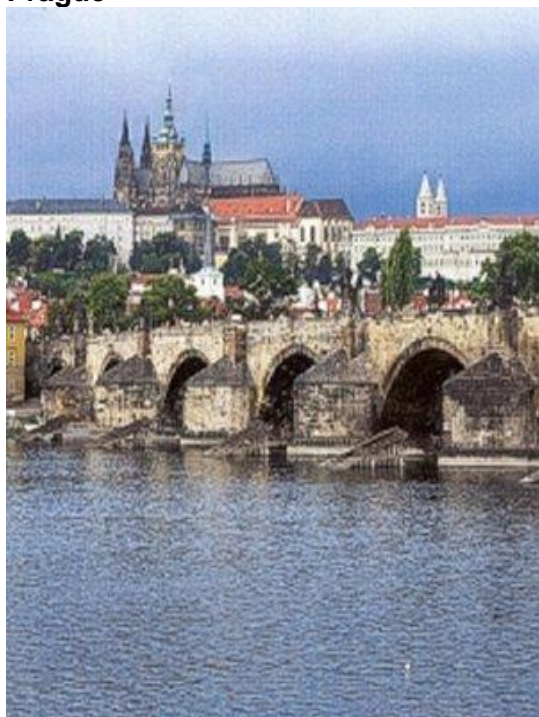
Political System

The Czech Republic is a **parliamentary democracy**. The Parliament consists of two chambers: the House of Deputies (200 members) and the Senate (81 members). The Senate is a relatively new institution, re-introduced in 1996, to balance the power of the House. The executive branch is represented by the government and the president (elected every 5 years by the parliament). After parliamentary election the president appoints the prime minister, usually from a winning party, to form a government. The MPs are elected for a four-year-term and senators for six years.

Places of Interest

The country's rich history and culture as well as its natural beauty attracts a large number of visitors every year. They come to admire the well-preserved historic towns, romantic castles and mansions or enjoy pleasant walks in the mountains. Here there are some of the most interesting places:

Prague



As for history, architecture and entertainment, the capital and the largest city, Prague, has the most to offer. It is also the political and commercial centre of the country. Its cultural heritage features outstanding examples of all major styles of architecture, from early Romanesque to Gothic and Baroque. That's why they sometimes call Prague "a hundred-tower mother of towns". **Prague Castle**, probably the city's best-known sight, is over a thousand years

old. Once the seat of kings, it is still the official residence of the President of the Republic. It is dominated by St. Vitus Cathedral. The famous part of the Castle is Golden Lane, where many craftsmen lived. The main attractions of the **Old Town Square** are the astronomical clock in the Old Town Hall and two fine churches, the Gothic Týn Church and the Baroque St. Nicholas Church. **The Lesser Town** is one of the oldest and most beautiful parts of Prague where a lot of embassies have their seats. **Charles Bridge** connects the Lesser Town with the Old Town – the historical centre of Prague. It is decorated with 30 statues in baroque style. On the bridge there are many artists and musicians, stalls with tourist souvenirs. **Wenceslas Square** is a commercial centre of Prague. It is known for its statue of St. Wenceslas on a horse. There are many shops, small cafeterias, fast foods, hotels and restaurants. On the top of the square there is the National Museum. It is the biggest and the oldest Czech museum. Another monument that shouldn't be forgotten is the **Vyšehrad Castle**. It is the oldest castle in Prague and was another seat of the kings. Near the Vyšehrad Castle there is the very famous **Slavín Cemetery** where Czech artists, writers and important Prague citizens are buried. Except of historical places you can enjoy lots of sport and cultural events, shopping, visiting museums, galleries. Everyone can choose according to his or her will.

The 12 Wonders on the UNESCO List

Because of the state's long and eventful history, there are numerous castles, palaces and places of interest presenting different architectural styles. Some of them have been listed as UNESCO sights and are under the protection of this international organisation.

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The Historical Centre of Prague (listed in 1992)

The top Czech destination leads the list with numerous monuments mentioned above.

The Historical Centre of Český Krumlov (1992)



This popular tourist attraction boasts a castle and chateaux complex and a well-preserved historical centre. The aristocratic families of Vítkovci and Rožmberkové are connected to the town's history and its renaissance look. The town is also known as a place where Egon Schiele, an expressionist painter of European renown, created many of his works.

The Historical Centre of Telč (1992)



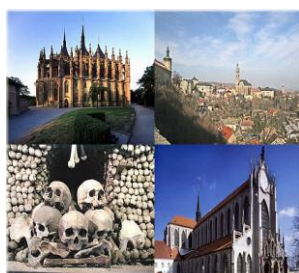
The town's square offers a unique combination of Renaissance and Baroque houses with characteristic arcades and sgraffiti design. There is also a chateaux in the town.

The Pilgrimage Church of Jan Nepomuk in Zelená Hora, close to Žďár nad Sázavou (1994)



The star shaped pilgrimage church built by Santini-Aichl, a Czech Baroque builder of Italian origin, is characteristic of Baroque-Gothic style. The building includes a lot of complex symbolism based on the number five.

Kutná Hora (1995)



A medieval mining town, which became rich because of its silver deposits, is famous for its historical centre and the Church of St. Barbara. This eye-catching piece of Gothic architecture was begun in 1388 but was not completed until 1905. The construction was often interrupted as the town suffered from wars, flood and financial collapse following the closure of the mine.

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Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape (1996)



As every Czech knows, “lednice” means “refridgerator” but this chateaux complex in South Moravia is unlikely to leave you feeling frosty. This impressive combination of Baroque and Neo-Gothic styles stands in the largest park in the CR (200 km²) and is an important example of English Romantic landscape design.

Holašovice (1998)



This village in south Bohemia represents a rural style architecture, known as folk baroque, from the mid 19th century

Kroměříž Castle and Gardens (1998)



Originally a summer residence of Olomouc bishops, Kroměříž's palace is considered a fine example of Baroque architecture. But the gardens received the most praise for being an example of the period's landscaping. The castle houses an impressive art collection, including works by Titian.

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Litomyšl Castle (1999)



This unique arcade palace is one of the most important examples of Renaissance architecture in the Czech Republic. It is an important venue for cultural events, the most notable being the opera festival Smetana's Litomyšl, named after the famous composer who was born in the town.

Holy Trinity Column Olomouc (2000)



The town of Olomouc is an important medieval town and a university centre. The UNESCO attraction is one of the tallest Baroque memorial columns in the Czech Republic (35m). Decorated with copper adornments and statues, it is a monument to a Plague epidemic between 1714-1716. The town also has its own astrological clock, though the saints have been replaced by figurines from the socialist period.

Villa Tugendhat, Brno (2001)



Brno, the second biggest city in the CR, has many architectural jewels, among them the fortress Špilberk and the gothic St. Peter and Paul's cathedral. The functionalist Villa Tugendhat (named after its owners) was based on a design of a major modernist architect and furniture designer Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, made in 1928. The building is divided into three levels but gives the impression of a one-storey building. The owners, being of Jewish origin, had to leave Czechoslovakia in 1938 because of persecution by Nazis. Interestingly, the talks between the Czech and Slovak government that led to the division of Czechoslovakia took place on this site in July 1992.



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Třebíč (2003)



This historical centre includes St. Prokopius' Romanesque-Gothic basilica as well as the remains of the Jewish quarter, which is the only Jewish site on the UNESCO list beside Israel. It documents a big Jewish community in the Czech lands before the WWII.

Cultural Legacy, Famous Czechs

Czech culture has a long and distinguished history. Prague especially, has been a centre of cultural life during various periods and the work of Czech musicians, composers, architects, scientists, artists and writers has been widely recognized abroad. In the 17th century, the educational reformer **Jan Ámos Komenský (Comenius)** produced a series of textbooks that were to be used throughout Europe for two centuries. Some Czech composers received great international acclaim, for example, **Bedřich Smetana**, **Antonín Dvořák**, **Bohuslav Martinů**, **Leoš Janáček**. The writer **Karel Čapek** gave the world the new word *robot* through his play.

Two Czechs were given the Nobel prize. **Jaroslav Heyrovský** (1890-1967) in 1959 for the chemistry-polarography. And **Jaroslav Seifert** (1901-1986) in 1984 for the literature-poetry.

Vocabulary

Coat of Arms
flag
neighbour
boundary
rise
primeval forest
tributary
dam
pond
glacial lake
watershed
maritime
temperate
tribe
split

erb
vlajka
soused
hranice
pramenit
prehistorický les
přítok
přehrada
rybník
ledovcové jezero
rozvodí
přímořské
mírné
kmen
rozdělit se

hops
House of Deputies
executive branch
MP
Golden Lane
stall
boast
pilgrimage
rural
praise
copper
plague
Jewish
acclaim

chmel
poslanecká sněmovna
výkonná moc
poslanec
Zlatá ulička
stánek
pyšnit se
poutní
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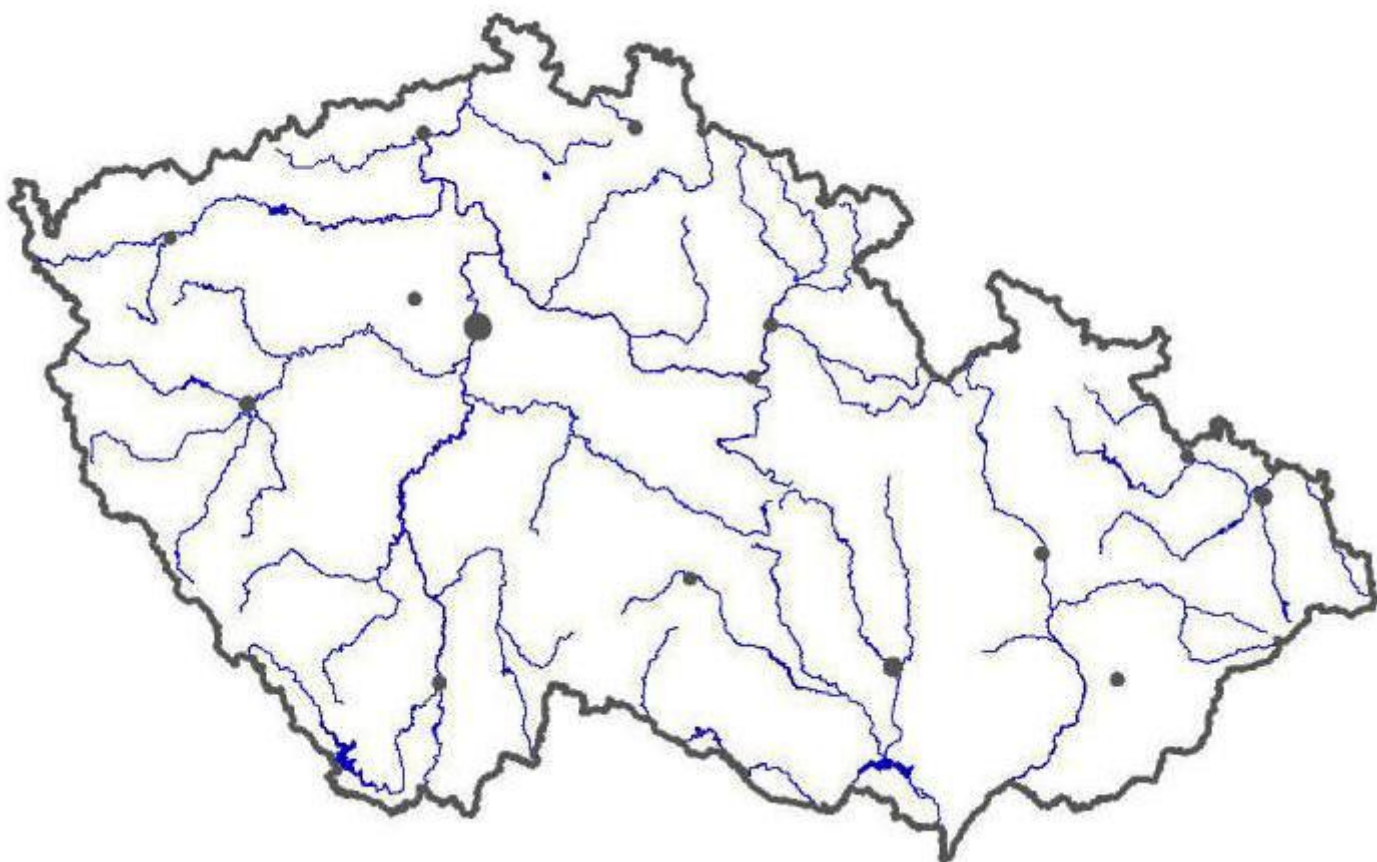
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Tasks

- a. Put into the map: 4 neighbour states
5 cities
5 rivers
3 dams
5 mountain ranges
2 lowlands
- b. Describe 5 UNESCO wonders



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