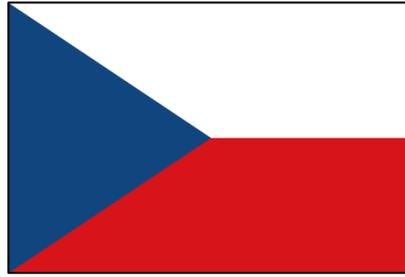


# IDENTITIES ABROAD: CZECH REPUBLIC\*



## IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

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

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. IEI understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to the Czech Republic, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at [study.abroad@purchase.edu](mailto:study.abroad@purchase.edu) and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

### FAST FACTS:

**Capital:** Prague

**Population:** 10,708,950 (July 2020 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.)



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

*\*Special thanks to the SUNY Binghamton International Education and Global Initiatives Office (IEGI) for adapting this document and for sharing it with the Purchase Office for Global Education (OGE).*

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. On 1 January 1993, the country underwent a nonviolent "velvet divorce" into its two national components, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. The country added the short-form name Czechia in 2016, while continuing to use the full form name, the Czech Republic.

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 Eurozone countries. 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.

Travelers can explore some of the [Best Places to Visit in Czech Republic](#) or get familiar with the basics by viewing [Geography NOW! Czech Republic \(Czechia\)](#) Recognized as a [World Bank High-Income Country](#), the average [Numbeo Cost of Living](#) is 38.54% lower than in the United States (aggregate data for all cities, rent is not taken into account).

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Review current travel risks for the Czech Republic:

- [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)
- [Safe Travel to Czech Republic](#)

The Czech Republic is one of the top twenty most popular destinations for U.S. students studying abroad. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 5,248 U.S. students participated in education abroad programs in the Czech Republic during the 2017-2018 academic year, a 9.9% increase from the year before.

## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN 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 people 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 83,000 people of Vietnamese descent living in the Czech Republic, and it is the third largest Vietnamese diaspora in Europe, and one of the most populous Vietnamese diasporas of the world. Anti-minority sentiment tends to be more nationalistic and focused more on groups for their national history, particularly the Roma population, 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, South Asia, or Middle Eastern immigrants to Czech Republic.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [The Black Experience in the Czech Republic](#), Radio Praha
- [The 4 Stages You'll Go Through as a Minority Abroad](#)

- [Juwana Jenkins: African-American Blues Singer Adjusts to Czech Culture](#), Radio Praha
- [Pensive in Prague: Examining Identity Abroad Latina Perspective](#), The Harvard Independent
- [2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Czech Republic](#), U.S. Department of State, (See National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities section)

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN CZECH REPUBLIC

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER 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 and civil unions since 2006. As of 2019, members of parliament are considering a bill that would officially legalize same-sex marriage, granting same-sex couples equal benefits as heterosexual couples. With this, the Czech Republic could become the first post-Communist Eastern European country to legalize same-sex marriage. In line with the country's progressive gay rights laws, the Czech Republic is considered one of the most gay-friendly countries in Europe.

Anti-discrimination laws protect homosexuals in Czech Republic, however the country does not have specific hate crime provisions covering sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite this, the number of incidents of violence based on sexual orientation is reported as low, and local LGBTI leaders stated that citizens were largely tolerant of LGBTI persons.

The Czech Republic's policy for legal gender recognition mandates transgender people to undergo sterilization surgeries to legally change their gender and is heavily opposed by many social and economic groups.

### NOTES:

- There is a vibrant gay scene in Prague, which is considered one of the most gay-friendly cities in Europe.
- Transgender and non-binary students whose travel documents don't reflect their gender identity may find travel through Czech Republic difficult.
- Although Prague is widely considered to be gay friendly, in areas outside of Prague this may be less the case

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Czech Republic](#), 2019, ILGA-Europe
- [LGBT Rights in Czech Republic](#), Equaldex
- [Information for LGBT Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State- Bureau of Consular Affairs (See Local Laws & Special Circumstances section)
- [Tips for Gay and Lesbian Travelers in Czech Republic](#), Frommer's
- [Annual Prague Pride Festival](#), Prague Pride

## DISABILITY IN CZECH REPUBLIC

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL 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. The historic tourist sites of Prague contain older buildings, narrow, and cobblestone streets that may make accessibility difficult.

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:

- The main umbrella organization for the rights of those with disabilities is the Prague Association of Wheelchair Users (Pražská organizace vozíčkářů)
- The Czech Republic does not quarantine cats and dogs that meet the requirements from approved countries ([Pet Travel](#)). All requirements also apply to [service and emotional support animals](#) when traveling abroad.
- Medical facilities in the Czech Republic (Prague) are adequate Western-style medical clinics with English-speaking doctors and dentists, but its system is organized differently than in the United States. Though central emergency rooms exist in most hospitals, patients are often sent to a specialty clinic to treat specific medical conditions. Family practices like those in the United States are mostly in larger cities. Although you can purchase many prescription and non-prescription medications at pharmacies, some common U.S. medications may not be available and thus it is recommended by the [U.S. Dept. of State Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) that travelers carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with a doctor's prescription. As a precaution, travelers should check with the [U.S. Embassy website](#) to find a list of medical facilities.
- Travelers should check with their health insurance policy to see if they are covered abroad. If not, it is advised that travelers acquire supplemental insurance or travel insurance because they could be responsible for all medical costs. U.S. Medicare does not cover travelers overseas. Local healthcare facilities might demand on-the-spot cash payment if your insurance doesn't cover the cost of treatment.
- If students are hearing impaired, or travelling with someone who has a hearing impairment, they should check with potential hosts to determine whether they have: visual adaptation aids for telephone ringers, smoke alarms, fire alarms, doorbell, audio loop systems, amplification on telephone handsets and televisions with teletext.
- For travelers with visual impairment, it is important to check whether accommodations welcome their guide dog, as well as: having markings denoting changes in floor space and height, braille instructions for appliances and controls and use of large print.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities](#)
- [Prague, Czech Republic Wheelchair Accessible Travel Guide](#), Wheelchair Travel Blog
- [Accessible Prague](#)
- [Tips for Travelers with Disabilities in Prague](#), Frommer's
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State- Bureau of Consular Affairs (See Local Laws & Special Circumstances section)
- [Academic Network of European Disability Experts \(ANED\)](#), (See Czech Republic)
- [Disabilities and Medical Conditions](#), Transportation Security Administration

## RELIGION IN 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 and 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 descents.

The rise of populism across the Eastern European region has created some instances of right-wing nationalist sentiment in the Czech Republic. There has been a rise in Anti-Semitic and Anti-Islamic acts in the Czech Republic – attacks on properties, a rise of threats on the internet, and abusive remarks by a few politicians – but the level remains relatively low compared to other countries in the continent.

## 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. The Jewish Quarter in the city is a top tourist site.
- There are two mosques in Prague and one mosque in Brno.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Czech Republic](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Countries and their Culture: Czech Republic](#), Every Culture (See Religion Section)
- [Faith Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Department of State- Bureau of Consular Affairs
- [Synagogues in Czech Republic](#), Maven Search
- [Mosques and Czech Republic Muslim prayer times](#), Islamic Finder
- [Churches in Czech Republic](#), Expats.cz (enter "Churches" in search bar)
- [Religious Freedom in Czech Republic](#), The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)

## WOMEN IN CZECH REPUBLIC

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

Women in the Czech Republic enjoy almost equal status as men socially, however there is still work to be done for equality in wages, employment sector, and household duties.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically low, attacks do occur. Female students should take the usual precautions at bars and clubs where alcohol is served. It is preferred for women to dress in more modest fashion when out in regardless of the weather.

## NOTES:

- The Czech Republic ranked 78th (out of 153 countries) in the 2020 [Global Gender Gap Index](#) conducted by the World Economic Forum.
- The Czech Republic is usually safe to travel around alone, including for women travelers. However, since women travelers have been more likely to be targets of high-risk crimes, it is recommended that travelers are vigilant of their surroundings and make a conscious effort to travel in groups as often as possible.
- The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape and prohibits sexual harassment and provides civil penalties.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Pink Pangea](#), The Community for Women Who Love to Travel
- [Go World Travel: For Those Who Love to Travel](#), Go World Travel Magazine
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State- Bureau of Consular Affairs
- [Gender Equality Index 2019](#), European Institute for Global Equality
- [Two Days in Prague: A Solo Female Traveler's Guide](#), The Curated Collective Blog

## REFERENCES

Maps, flag and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook 2019](#) Accessed online in August 2020  
[CIA World Factbook](#) | [IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Czech Republic](#)

**Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in August 2020 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Purchase Office for Global Education.**