

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic (Czechia) is a small state in Central Europe. Its area is about 79 thousand sq. km (square kilometres). It borders on Germany (the longest border –in the Southwest and West), Poland (in the North), Slovakia (in the East) and Austria (in the South). It consists of three historical parts: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. At present it is divided into 14 regions –one of them is Vysočina Region with Jihlava as its seat. Among others are e.g. Central Bohemian Region (Prague), South Bohemian Region (České Budějovice), and South Moravian Region (Brno).

This country has a population of about 10 million. The main nationalities are the Czechs and the Moravians, but there are also minority groups such as the Slovaks, the Ukrainians, the Vietnamese, the Roma, the Russians, the Poles, and the Germans.

The border of both Bohemia and Moravia is mostly lined with mountains: The highest of them are the Giant Mountains with our highest mountain Sněžka (1,603 m) in Bohemia and the Jeseníky Mountains in Moravia. There are other important mountain ranges, e.g. the Šumava, the Krušné hory, the Jizerské hory, the Orlické hory in Bohemia and the Beskydy and the Bílé Karpaty in Moravia.

The countryside is often hilly, lowlands can be found in the valleys of big rivers: the Vltava, the Elbe (flowing into the North Sea), the Oder (flowing into the Baltic Sea) and the Morava (flowing into the Danube and the Black Sea).

Southern Bohemia is very rich in ponds (the largest one's name is Rožmberk), both Bohemia and Moravia are rich in mineral springs and spas (Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, Františkovy Lázně, Poděbrady, Luhačovice).

The Czech Republic is visited by many tourists every year. Some of the places with the most beautiful nature are e.g. Macocha abyss and caves in Moravský kras (the Moravian karst) near Brno, "rock towns" in northern Bohemia (e.g. Prachov rocks, Czech Switzerland), some of the mountains, the "national park" Podyjí in southern Moravia etc.

There are also a lot of places important for our history. Among the most beautiful historical towns are Prague, Kutná Hora, Tábor, Telč, Olomouc, Třebíč, Kroměříž. Tourists also like visiting old castles or ruins such as Karlštejn, Křivoklát, Hluboká, Pernštejn, Lednice and many others.

The Czech Republic came into existence on 1st January 1993 after the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had split into two independent states (Czechia and Slovakia). Both countries (since 2004 members of the European Union) have been trying to be democratic states, but it is not easy, there are quite a lot of problems.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Where is the Czech Republic situated? What countries does it border on? What is its area? What are the names of the original historical parts? How many regions is the country divided at present into? Give some examples.
- 2) How many people live here? What are the major nationalities and minority groups?
- 3) What can you say about the main mountain ranges?
- 4) Where can be the largest lowlands found? Enumerate the most important rivers.
- 5) What do you know about ponds and spas in the Czech Republic?
- 6) Give some places with beautiful nature in Czechia.
- 7) Give some places important for our history.
- 8) When and how did the Czech Republic come into existence?
- 9) Are you glad to live in the Czech Republic these days or would you prefer to live at any other time or in any other country – why?

The Czech Republic - supplements

Other important Czech and Moravian cities

Brno – the 2nd biggest town, almost 400 thousand inhabitants, the former capital of Moravia, the most important sight – Špilberk castle (in the past an important prison), in the Pisárky neighbourhood the largest exhibition grounds in the Czech Republic (fairs)

Ostrava – the 3rd biggest town, the population of 300 thousand, important since the end of the 19th century, after WWII “the steel heart of the republic” – an important coal mining and industrial centre, these days industries not so important but air pollution still quite bad

Plzeň – the 4th biggest town, about 170 thousand inhabitants, a historical town as well as industrial centre (production of beer, engineering – Škoda)

My region in the Czech Republic (more with the topic of Jihlava)

The Vysočina Region: situated almost in the centre of the country, nice countryside -mostly a hilly region with a lot of woods and ponds, relatively little pollution, quite cold, not so big cities, the biggest town – Jihlava, other important ones: Třebíč, Žďár n/S, H. Brod, Pelhřimov, transport - the most important motorway in the country (D1), three UNESCO sights: basilica and Jewish quarter in Třebíč, pilgrimage church in Žďár n/S, historic town of Telč, cultural and sports events (“Holidays in Telč” music festival, biathlon + skiing especially near Nové Město na Moravě...)