

Traditions of the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is a country with a long history and many customs and traditions which formed over the years.

Christmas

Christmas is very popular here, just like it is in other countries especially among children, most of whom consider it their favorite time of the year.

Our weeks before Christmas eve we already begin with our preparations. We decorate our houses, bake sweets and candy and every Sunday we light one of the four candles on the Christmas wreath. The Christmas tree is then decorated with traditional ornaments by children and their parents. Finally on the 24th December we gather together with our families for a festive Christmas dinner. For the appetizer we usually have fish soup (fortunately that's not as common as it used to be) and for the main course we have fried carp with potato salad but nowadays many people eat fried chicken instead. Because there is a very morbid superstition, that the first person that leaves the table will die in the



following year, it is common between the Czechs to wait until everyone has finished their meal. After dinner a magic bell rings and everyone runs up to the Christmas tree and starts ripping the wrapper off the presents. Here, in the Czech Republic presents are brought by little Jesus Christ, whom little kids look forward to for the whole year.

These are some of the Czech Christmas customs:

Floating nutshells on the water

We get a bowl of water, some walnut shells and candles. Then we light one of the candles, put it in a nutshell and lay it on the water. The legend says that the person, whose "boat" lasts floating on the water for the longest time, is going to lead a happy and successful life. We can also say that whoever's boat floats to the centre of the bowl will leave the household and the rest will stay at home.



Pouring of lead into the water:

Every member of the family melts their piece of lead over the fire and then they pour it into cold water. By the shape of their pieces, they try to guess their fate.

The cutting of an apple



Some people do this on Christmas Eve but it is also kind of morbid. After they cut the apple in half, the shape of the core determines the destiny of the family. If it is star-shaped, it means health and happiness for them, but if it is in the shape of a cross, someone sitting at the table will die during in the upcoming year.

Afterwards we have a week of holidays during which we visit our loved ones and spend time together talking and singing Christmas carols and eating a lot of leftover candy. Slowly we prepare for the last day of the year, Silvestr. On this day we make lots of party food and drink alcohol. Right before midnight we have a countdown and at 0:00 we make a toast with Champaign and wish a happy new year each other.



Easter

Even though not many people here are religious, they still celebrate Easter. The first Sunday after the first full moon of spring, the Easter starts. Girls usually paint eggs that we use for decorating our houses and gardens and boys make pomlázka, which is a special Czech whip made out of osier sticks and colorful ribbons. They use it for whipping the girls which is supposed to make them healthy and beautiful for the whole year. In return the boys get the painted eggs from them. On Monday the kids go carol-singing with pomlázka and they get eggs and some sweets. During Easter the families bake traditional meals for example the Easter lamb (some sort of a lamb shaped cake) and the Easter stuffing. The stuffing consists of some bread, eggs, smoked meat, nettle and some spices.



All Souls' Day

All Souls' Day is very similar to Halloween in America. We also commemorate our loved ones that passed away, but we don't wear masks or do the trick-or-treating. We go to the cemetery with our families and remember our dead and light candles on their graves. This takes place on the 2nd November.