



# Czech

**PHRASEBOOK & DICTIONARY**

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# acknowledgments

This 3rd edition of Lonely Planet's *Czech phrasebook* is based on the previous edition by the Lonely Planet Language Products team and translator Richard Nebeský, who provided the translations and cultural advice.

Richard spent the first decade or so of his life in the bilingual environment of Czechoslovakia, where he also studied Russian in primary school. He moved to Australia, where French was added to his curriculum in high school, and he studied linguistics at Monash University. After graduating, extensive travels in many European and Asian countries as well as working in Austria, Switzerland and the USA broadened his linguistic horizons further. Richard has authored many European and Asian titles for Lonely Planet as well as the Czech chapter for the first editions of both the *Central Europe phrasebook* and *Eastern Europe phrasebooks*.

Richard would like to thank his wife Romana for fine-tuning phrases and proofing, his mother Jitka for tirelessly proofing the entire manuscript, Daniel Mourek for his assistance and Dr Pavel Sturza and his wife Stana for proofing the Health chapter.

Thanks also to the Lonely Planet Language Products team who produced the 2nd edition of the *Czech phrasebook* on which this one is based: Vanessa Battersby, Francesca Coles, Pablo Gastar, David Kemp, Karin Vidstrup Monk and Michael Ruff.



## make the most of this phrasebook ...

Anyone can speak another language! It's all about confidence. Don't worry if you can't remember your school language lessons or if you've never learnt a language before. Even if you learn the very basics (on the inside front cover of this book), your travel experience will be the better for it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort.

### finding things in this book

For easy navigation, this book is in sections. The Basics chapters are the ones you'll thumb through time and again. The Practical section covers basic travel situations like catching transport and finding a bed. The Social section gives you conversational phrases, pick-up lines, the ability to express opinions – so you can get to know people. Food has a section all of its own: gourmets and vegetarians are covered and local dishes feature. Safe Travel equips you with health and police phrases, just in case. Remember the colours of each section and you'll find everything easily; or use the comprehensive Index. Otherwise, check the two-way traveller's Dictionary for the word you need.

### being understood

Throughout this book you'll see coloured phrases on each page. They're phonetic guides to help you pronounce the language. Start with them to get a feel for how the language sounds. The pronunciation chapter in Basics will explain more, but you can be confident that if you read the coloured phrase, you'll be understood. As you become familiar with the spoken language, move on to using the actual text in the language which will help you perfect your pronunciation.

### communication tips

Body language, ways of doing things, sense of humour – all have a role to play in every culture. 'Local talk' boxes show you common ways of saying things, or everyday language to drop into conversation. 'Listen for ...' boxes supply the phrases you may hear. They start with the language (so a local can find the phrase they want and point it out to you) and then lead in to the phonetic guide and the English translation.

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czech



 official language

For more details, see the **introduction**.



If the Czech language was a person, she could be excused for needing serious therapy. The Czech Republic may now be one of the most stable and well-off Eastern European countries, but over the centuries the land and the language have been regularly swallowed and regurgitated by their neighbours. Most recently, in 1993 the Velvet Divorce ended the patched-together affair that was Czechoslovakia, and allowed Czech to go its own way after being tied to Slovak for over 70 years.

Both Czech and Slovak belong to the western branch of the Slavic language family, pushed westward with the Slavic people by the onslaught of the Huns, Avars, Bulgars and Magyars in the 5th and 6th centuries. Czech is also related to Polish, though not as closely as to Slovak – adults in Slovakia and the Czech Republic can generally understand one another, although younger people who have not been exposed to much of the other language may have difficulty in communication.

### at a glance ...

**language name:**

Czech

**name in language:**

Čeština *chesh·tyi·nuh*

**language family:**

Slavic

**approximate number of speakers:** 12 million

**close relatives:**

Polish, Slovak

**donations to English:**

dollar, howitzer, pistol, robot

The earliest written literature dates from the 13th century upswing in Czech political power, which continued for several centuries. In the 17th century, however, the Thirty Years War nearly caused literature in Czech to become extinct. Fortunately, the national revival of the late 18th century brought it to the forefront again, at least until the 20th century, when first Nazi and then Communist rule pressed it into a subordinate place once more.

Many English speakers flinch when they see written Czech – especially words like *prst* **prst** (finger) and *krk* **krk** (neck) with no apparent vowels, and the seemingly unpronounceable clusters of consonants in phrases like *čtrnáct dní* **chtr-natst dnyee** (fortnight). Don't despair! With a little practice and the coloured pronunciation guides in this book you'll be enjoying the buttery mouthfeel of Czech words in no time. Czech also has one big advantage in the pronunciation stakes – unlike English, each Czech letter is always pronounced exactly the same way, so once you've got the hang of the Czech alphabet you'll be able to read any word put before you with aplomb. Thank religious writer and martyr Jan Hus for this – he reformed the spelling system in the 15th and 16th centuries and introduced the *háček* **ha·chek** (ˇ) and the various other accents you'll see above Czech letters.

This book will give you all the practical phrases you need to explore the countryside, visit Golden Prague, and tour castles and mountains worthy of the Brothers Grimm (in fact, the 2005 movie of that name was filmed here). It also contains all the fun phrases you need to connect with local people and get a better understanding of the country and its culture. Local knowledge, new relationships and a sense of satisfaction are on the tip of your tongue. So don't just stand there – say something!

## abbreviations used in this book

a	adjective	n	neuter (after Czech)
adv	adverb	n	noun (after English)
f	feminine	pl	plural
inf	informal	pol	polite
lit	literally	sg	singular
m	masculine	v	verb