

CZECH REPUBLIC – CULTURE DOs AND DON'T

1. Respect older people. Let them enter first and sit down in public transportation.
2. Be quiet in public places. In general, Czechs are much quieter than Americans. Please adjust to this.
3. Be on time. If you are meeting someone, make sure the person doesn't have to wait for you. By coming on time you are showing that he or she is important to you.
4. Take off your shoes when you enter someone's apartment or house. If you are going to a gym for an outreach, be prepared to carry indoor gym shoes with you. Take your outdoor shoes off when you get to the gym and then put on your gym shoes when you get there. Czechs take very good care of their gym floors and do not want you to carry dirt in from outdoors. Also be careful to not put your feet up on chairs or tables with your shoes on ... For example if you are on the train or bus, don't put your feet up on the seat opposite you. The train people get very upset for they don't want your dirty shoes on their seats. You can take your shoes off & then put your feet up.
5. When you enter small stores or order things at the counter say "hello" and "good-bye" when you leave. This is the same at many public places.
6. When you are invited to someone's house for dinner, try to finish your meal. If you leave too much on the plate, you may offend the person who cooked for you. On the other hand, if you eat your meal very quickly, be prepared for seconds.
7. Be prepared to pay 3 to 10 Kč at public restrooms.
8. What should you do when you want to leave a tip at a restaurant? (e.g. You are supposed to pay 85 Kč. You want to leave a 5 Kč tip so you give the waiter 90 Kč and say, "Thank you, it is good, Děkuji, to je dobré," If you do not have change you may give them 100 Kč and say "90". The waiter will know there is a 5 Kč tip, and he will give you the right amount back: Waiters do not live off of tips here, and it can be arrogant to leave too much. You can tip to the nearest round number as most Czechs do if they tip at all. If your bill is big, you can figure about 10%.
9. When you are finished eating, put your fork and knife together on the plate. This tells the waiter that he can take your plate and offer you a dessert. If bread is brought to the table in a basket, be aware that it is not complimentary, and you pay per slice. It is usual to ask for your bill by saying, "zaplatíme prosím," which means, "we'll pay please."
10. If you go to a store, you have to take a cart or basket. Most stores have carts. To use one you will need a 5 or 10 Kč coin that you insert to release the cart. You will get the coin back when you put the cart back in its place.
11. You can drink the tap water, but if you want to buy water, there are basically two kinds. "Neperlivá voda," is non-carbonated and "perlivá voda," is carbonated. If you order water in a restaurant, it will normally be carbonated. There are no free refills. The glass drink bottles belong to the restaurant so please do not take them with you as a souvenir.

12. Pay attention to where you are walking. Do not bump into people, and do not be loud. Let people pass around you.
13. Beware of pornography and nudity. Especially bad areas are gas stations and newsstands.
14. Be careful with your belongings. Make sure that your passport or money does not hang out of your pockets. You might lose it if it is easily accessible. Men should put money in their front pockets. Pick pocketing is rampant in Prague.
15. Do not promise to write if you do not intend to do it. If you get someone's address, make sure that you write to them or all your ministry will go out of the window.
16. Do not tell people that they can come to visit anytime unless you really mean it. They may just show up on your doorstep one day. Surprise!
17. Do not flirt. Remember to stay focused on serving the Lord. Do not take anyone of the opposite sex out one on one, but always in groups. If you want to give flowers to someone (e.g. at hospital, nursing home, or to a friend), always give an odd number, and try not to give red ones. It may be misunderstood. An even number of flowers is only used for funerals.
18. Be careful what you say. Czechs are perfectionists, so they may tell you they don't speak any English when they really do. Even if they know very little, they understand the "bad words" and what you say may be offensive. There are also some cross-cultural words like stupid, idiot, crazy, and not normal, so please do not criticize or be sarcastic.
19. Do not burp in public places or around other people. It is considered rude and offensive and is always associated with drunken men. Of course accidents happen, but are sure to apologize.
20. Please take off baseball caps when you are in a ministry setting (i.e. public school buses, inside children's homes ...)
21. As a general rule, Czechs do not hug the first time they meet a person. They are more reserved than Americans. You can give hugs to children and possibly seniors in nursing homes.

For more information please read

Culture Shock – Czech Republic – A Guide to Customs and Etiquette Tim Nallen, Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, Portland, Oregon