



Cultural Package

Get Ready for the Czech Republic

We do not expect you to go through the whole list before you come, on the other hand those of you who are interested in the Czech Republic and may have time before your arrival may be curious what to read or watch. We think that news (about politics and current affairs) may tune you into the local atmosphere, so we will start forwarding daily news digest to each of you via e-mail. The list of suggestions below shows what we think might be of interest to you. If you want even more, let us know!

News in English:

- **Daily News by Czech Radio:** <http://www.radio.cz/en>
- **Prague Daily Monitor** - <http://praguemonitor.com/>

Books, Nonfiction:

- **A Brief History of the Czech Lands to 2004**, (Petr Čornej, 2003). Clear and brief, compiled by leading Czech historians. This little book is one that the reader can either read from start to finish or use as reference for years to come.
- **The Power of the Powerless** (Vaclav Havel, 1978) Future Czech President on surviving with dignity in “communist” Czechoslovakia. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource/the-power-of-the-powerless/>
- **My Crazy Century** (Ivan Klíma, 2009). Celebrated Czech author Ivan Klíma chronicles events spanning from his childhood in a concentration camp to the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution, painting a dynamic portrait of 20th-century Czechoslovakia.
- **Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937–1948** (Madeleine Albright, 2012). Former Secretary of State Albright describes her early years in Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation and World War II.

Books, Fiction:

- **The Glass Room** (Simon Mawer, 2009). Vila Tugendhat in Brno shines as a wonder of steel and glass and onyx built specially for newlyweds Viktor and Liesel Landauer, a Jew married to a non-Jewish partner. But the radiant honesty of 1930 that the house, with its unique Glass Room, seems to engender quickly tarnishes as the storm clouds of WW2 gather. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/24/simon-mawer-the-glass-room>
- **The Cowards** (Josef Škvorecký, 1958). A Czech teen comes of age in post-WWII Bohemia.
- **Dita Saxová** (Arnošt Lustig, 1962). A young concentration camp survivor struggles to resume a normal life in Prague



- ***The Garden Party and Other Plays*** (Václav Havel, 1994). The renowned playwright, the country's first post-communist president, fuses political commentary and dry humor in these absurdist plays.
- ***Good Soldier Švejk*** (Jaroslav Hašek, 1923). This darkly comic Czech classic follows the fortunes of a soldier in World War I's Austro-Hungarian army.
- ***How I Came to Know Fish*** (Ota Pavel, 1974). Pavel's imaginative memoir juxtaposes the simple act of fishing with the complexities and terror of World War II.
- ***I Served the King of England*** (Bohumil Hrabal, 1971). An eccentric busboy at a luxurious Prague hotel rises and falls in the years before WWII. Hrabal's writing captures the Czech spirit and sense of humor.
- ***The Metamorphosis*** (Franz Kafka, 1915). The famous Czech writer and existentialist wrote this novella in German, about a man turning into a giant cockroach.
- ***R.U.R.*** (Karel Čapek, 1920). Čapek created the robot in this 1920s play.
- ***Too Loud a Solitude*** (Bohumil Hrabal, 1976). Hrabal's stream-of-consciousness style explores the endurance of knowledge and written-word.
- ***The Trial*** (Franz Kafka, 1925). An urbanite is pursued and persecuted for crimes he knows nothing about.
- ***The Unbearable Lightness of Being*** (Milan Kundera, 1981). Set during the 1968 Prague Spring uprising, this novel follows the lives and choices of two men and two women.

Movies:

- ***Alice*** (1988). Inspiring Czech artist Jan Švankmajer adapts Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in stop-motion animation combined with live action.
- ***All My Loved Ones*** (1999). A Jewish family's son is sent to England in the "Kindertransports" organized by Nicholas Winton, the British humanitarian who saved almost 700 Czech Jewish children.
- ***Anthropoid*** (2016). A British-Czech co-production based on the true story of Operation Anthropoid, the WWII mission to assassinate SS General Reinhard Heydrich.
- ***Closely Watched Trains*** (1966). Jirí Menzel's Oscar-winner following a young Czech man working at a German-occupied train station during World War II.
- ***Cosy Teens*** (1999). One of the most beloved Czech films by Jan Hřebejk provides a snapshot of Czech family life leading up to the ill-fated 1968 Prague Spring.
- ***Czech Dream*** (2004). Two film students advertise and document the opening of a fake hypermarket in this hilarious, disturbing commentary on consumerism.
- ***Divided We Fall*** (2000). A Czech couple hides a Jewish friend during Nazi occupation in this Academy Award-nominated film.
- ***The Elementary School*** (1991). Set in the late 1940s, a rowdy classroom in suburban Prague faces reform under the strict guidance of a war hero teacher.
- ***Forgotten Light*** (1996) Village priest battles against the state and religious bureaucracies of 1980s Czechoslovakia in his fight to raise money for a new church roof. Permeated by his love for

the villagers, his encounters are marked by his good humor. In his losing battle against Church and State, Holy is ordered to be transferred away from his parish and his allies.

- ***I Served the King of England*** (2006). Jiri Menzel's adaptation of Bohumil Hrabal's novel, wherein a man reminisces about his past as an ambitious waiter who suffers the consequences of World War II.
- ***In the Shadow*** (2012). A burglary in 1950s Czechoslovakia sets off a political investigation of Jewish immigrants and a detective's struggle for justice under German prosecutors.
- ***Intimate Lighting*** (1965). Two musicians reunite in a small town in this showcase of 1960s Czech New Wave.
- ***Kolya*** (1996). Oscar-winner about a concert-cellist in Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia who must care for an abandoned Russian boy.
- ***Larks on a String*** (1990). Under the communist regime, bourgeois Czechs are forced into labor camps and struggle to maintain their humanity.
- ***Loves of a Blonde*** (1965). Before he directed *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Amadeus*, Czech Miloš Forman directed this film about the relationship between a rural Czech woman and a jazz pianist from Prague.
- ***Protektor*** (2009). In this WWII Czech drama, a man must reconcile his job at a Nazi-propaganda radio station and his relationship with his Jewish wife.
- ***Palach*** (2017), portrait of Jan Palach, medical student who burned himself to death in January 1969 to protest against the apathy after the Soviet occupation
- ***Burning Bush*** (2013). Miniseries detailing the communist occupation of Czechoslovakia and the Prague Spring, focusing on Jan Palach, the Czech student who set himself on fire and died in protest against the Soviet occupation.
- ***Toman*** (2018), film catching the atmosphere of 1970s "Normalization" and one the main figures in the State police, Toman. Shows the whole network of hidden threats and relations underneath "normal" society

Articles:

- ***The power of a smile (and not a fake one)***, by Emily Prucha, Prague Daily Monitor, October 23, 2015 and some of her other blogs at <http://praguemonitor.com/half-n-half>

Czech Language App:

- **Duolingo** (computer version for Czech available, no cell phone version, yet)

