Czech Republic 2017 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Crime; Financial Security; Cyber

Europe > Czech Republic; Europe > Czech Republic > Prague

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation
U.S. Embassy Prague does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The ACS Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED PRAGUE AS BEING A MEDIUM-THREAT LOCATION FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Please review OSAC’s Czech Republic-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy in Central Europe. The nation became a full member of the European Union in 2004 and a member of the Schengen Zone in 2007. The Schengen Agreement allows people inside signatory nations of the European Union to move freely without being stopped at national borders.

Crime Threats
Violent or confrontational crime is rare. The most common crimes are theft and other economically-motivated offenses. Visitors are most likely to face petty street crime, particularly pickpocketing. These incidents frequently occur in crowded tourist locations. Special caution is warranted when using public transportation, including at the station/stop and while riding the metro, trams, and/or buses.

Criminals rarely use violence or the threat of violence to perpetrate the crime. The victim is often distracted on the street or jostled on a crowded tram while their wallet or valuables are picked. Mobile phones are an attractive target for thieves. Most victims of pickpockets report being unaware of the incident taking place and realize it only after the fact. As the individuals may operate in groups, and could conceivably be armed with simple weapons, victims should avoid direct confrontation with potential criminals.
There are also reports of purse snatching and handbags being subtly lifted off chairs while victims are seated at restaurants and cafes. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are widely available throughout major cities. Visitors should change money only at banks, legitimate businesses, or ATMs. An offer to change money by an unknown person on the street is most likely tied to a scam. Almost all ATMs have multilingual instructions and allow access to U.S. bank accounts. There are multiple, on-going investigations into groups illegally obtaining users’ ATM card numbers and PIN codes by electronically “skimming” the information from victims’ cards at public ATMs. This activity has reportedly occurred at ATMs in public areas, including in bank lobbies covered by security cameras and at card access points to enter ATM lobbies. Visitors requiring ATM services should attempt to use machines at more secure or heavily traveled and monitored locations, which include commercial banks, large hotels, and the airport. Some ATMs have a green translucent security device at the card input, which is designed to inhibit the installation of an illegal skimming device. Although not beyond compromise, the machines with these security enhancements are more secure than standard ATMs. Personal bank account activity should be regularly and closely monitored.

Auto theses and break-ins are common, especially in major cities. Travelers should use parking garages and some type of anti-theft device to discourage these incidents. Vehicles are stolen for re-sale or for dismantlement and sale of parts locally or abroad. The Czech Republic also serves as a transit route for stolen cars from Western Europe. The recovery rate of stolen vehicles, as with most stolen property, is extremely low.

Czech bars/dance clubs are generally safe for the vast majority of visitors. However, tourists may be approached to purchase illicit drugs. Although enforcement may vary, commerce in illegal substances is against the law. “Date rape” drugs (Rohypnol) have also been used at local bars and clubs, often reportedly to disable victims for robbery and/or sexual assault. Customers at these establishments are advised not to leave their drinks unattended or to accept drinks from anyone other than their server or bartender. Further, tourists may be targeted for pickpocketing while in popular, crowded venues. Visitors should be mindful that security at nightclubs could respond more forcefully than at similar venues in the U.S. Travelers should avoid altercations with bar personnel or other patrons. Travelers should be aware that casinos and other gaming establishments are government-regulated, but many are likely affiliated with, or have attracted the interest of, organized crime. There has been a surge of residential burglaries in recent years. Individuals should be proactive in their personal security at their residence or hotel. Always use the security
equipment that is provided. Turn door locks fully to ensure that deadbolts are engaged. Do not leave door keys in a location that may be visible from outside the residence. All members of a household should know where the door keys are kept in case they need to leave the home quickly. Valuables and important documents should be kept in a safe. In many residential neighborhoods in Prague it is common for vagrants to panhandle, especially during December and January.

Cybersecurity Issues
The Czech Parliament passed Act No. 181 (Act on Cyber Security), which provided a road map for the development of national cyber capabilities. The act defines necessary developments from 2015 to 2020 and gives specific authority and responsibility to various organizations. The Czech NSA (NBU) was given responsibility for cyber security, which was defined as the securing and protection of government and critical infrastructure computers and networks. Responsibility for investigation and mitigation of cyber incidents was given to the police. As of 2017, agencies with cyber responsibility have organized the necessary departments and begun to build their capability. The NBU has a new facility dedicated to cyber security in Brno and is working on its staffing. The police have established a National Cyber division within the police and is working on its staffing. Over the next four years, 195 cyber-trained employees are expected to be hired.

Other Areas of Concern
Many of the popular tourist locations (Charles Bridge, Wenceslas square, Old Town square) are favored haunts of pickpockets and scam artists. Pickpockets may operate in groups or as individuals. Members of these rings can vary in age, gender, and appearance. RSO Prague received reports of pickpockets operating while dressed in business attire, posing as panhandlers, carrying babies, and posing as tourists.

Travelers transiting the country on trains (particularly the Prague-Vienna route) have reported surreptitious thefts of bags and valuables and should use extra caution.

Transportation-Safety Situation
Road Safety and Road Conditions
U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the U.S. Although road fatalities are low according to Czech safety experts, caution must be exercised on the road, and drivers must remain vigilant. Driving speeds on European highways are higher than in the U.S., and drivers are expected to stay in the right lane except when passing. Highways generally meet European standards; however, on two-lane roads, drivers should be prepared to encounter uneven surfaces, irregular lane markings, and sign

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placements that are not clear. Streets in towns are not always in good condition. You should pay special attention to driving on cobblestone and among streetcars in historic city centers, especially in wet or icy conditions. Traffic lights are placed before the intersection. Speed limits are 50 km/h (31 mph) in towns, 90 km/h (55 mph) outside of towns, and 130 km/h (80 mph) on highways, but drivers routinely flout the limits. An International Driving Permit (IDP), available from AAA (in the U.S. only), must accompany a U.S. driver’s license; failure to have the IDP with a valid license may result in denial of an insurance claim after an accident. Persons driving into the Czech Republic should be aware that a toll sticker is required on major highways. Signs stating this requirement are posted near the border but are easy to miss. The stickers are available at most gas stations. The fine for failing to display a toll sticker is assessed on the spot.

Czech law requires that drivers have their headlights on when driving. The law also requires that all private cars, including those of foreign visitors, carry each of the following items: fluorescent green high visibility safety jacket, first aid kit, spare pair of prescription glasses kept in the glove compartment (if necessary), warning triangle, and complete set of spare bulbs.

Czech law allows for breathalyzer testing of drivers stopped by local law enforcement officials for any reason. There is a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol and driving; driving with any trace of detected alcohol is illegal, and those caught usually face immediate fines and possible criminal proceedings.

U.S. citizens have reported instances of motorists stopped on the shoulders of highways waving at drivers as if they need assistance. Some drivers have reported being pressured into giving money to the person who has purportedly broken down, and it was unclear if the motorist was truly in need or trying to scam those who stopped to offer assistance.

For specific information concerning Czech requirements for driver’s permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Czech Tourist Authority offices in New York by telephone at (212) 288-0830 or by email. Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. Also, we suggest that you visit the website of the Czech Republic’s national tourist office and the Ministry of Transport.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation is considered safe and reliable, but awareness for pickpockets is encouraged. Passengers on public transportation should buy a ticket prior to boarding to avoid being fined. The ticket must be validated at the outset of the trip by inserting it into the yellow box found on trams and buses and in the entry halls of Metro stations. In Prague, ticket
offices are located in many Metro stations. Tickets can also be purchased at tabak shops (cigarettes stands), newspaper stands, post offices, and from vending machines at all metro stations and at major tram stops. The transportation inspectors operate in plain clothes but should display a small metal badge (emblazoned with the words “Prepravní Kontrola”) when inspecting travelers’ tickets. Fines range from 50 to 1,500 CZK, but the standard on-the-spot payment for traveling without a valid ticket is 800 CZK. Inspectors should provide a receipt upon payment.

Taxis are clearly marked. Visitors should be alert to the potential for substantial overcharging by taxis, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Some taxi drivers may charge unsuspecting foreigners substantially more than the standard rate. U.S. Embassy personnel are encouraged to use more reputable taxi firms. The best approach for obtaining a taxi is to call the company directly rather than hail one on the street. This ensures the ride is logged through the company’s dispatcher. Taxis should be clearly marked (ideally with a permanently installed roof lamp and taxi sign) and must list the driver’s personal information, with the registration number, company name, and price list clearly displayed on the front doors. Taxi drivers should use a taxi meter and provide a receipt (from the meter) upon completion of the trip. Visitors may also obtain a taxi at one of the "Fair Place" taxi stands regulated by the Prague municipality. The main taxi stand at Prague Ruzyně Airport has generally proven to be reliable. Clearly marked taxis service the stand. Visitors should avoid using taxis managed by individuals who approach them inside the airport or away from the main taxi queue. Fares from the airport to the city center should cost approximately 600CZK or less.

Aviation/Airport Conditions
The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of the Czech Republic’s Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Czech Republic’s air carrier operations.

Terrorism Threat
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED PRAGUE AS BEING A LOW-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns
Credible information indicates terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Europe. European governments are taking action to guard against terrorist attacks; however, all European countries remain potentially vulnerable to attacks from transnational terrorist
organizations. Furthermore, the Czech Republic’s open borders with its neighbors allow for the possibility that terrorist groups may enter or transit the country undetected.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED PRAGUE AS BEING A LOW-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

**Civil Unrest**

Civil disorder is rare, although strikes and demonstrations may occur. Czech authorities are generally well-prepared and handle disruptions in a professional manner. One should be vigilant, bearing in mind that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful may turn violent and should be avoided whenever possible.

**Post-specific Concerns**

**Privacy Concerns**

The Czech Republic prioritizes its citizens’ privacy and affords strict protections to them with its privacy laws.

**Personal Identity Concerns**

Travelers will find it Prague one of the most LGBTI-friendly cities in central Europe. There is a comparatively large gay community in the city, centered in the Vinohrady district, with several openly gay venues catering to the local LGBTI clientele. In contrast, outside of Prague—particularly in small towns—views are relatively conservative, and open displays of affection by same sex couples are less common. LGBTI travelers should use discretion when traveling in these areas.

Individuals may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what is available in the U.S. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services; the government generally enforces these provisions. Most buses and new tram cars are configured for special needs access, but only 60% of Prague’s metro stations are accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility outside of Prague is generally less available.

**Drug-related Crimes**

Drug-related crimes lean toward petty theft and are generally non-confrontational in nature.

**Police Response**

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

While you are traveling, you are subject to local laws even as a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. The Czech Republic has a zero-tolerance...
policy for drinking and driving, and this is strictly enforced. If you break local laws in the Czech Republic, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Authorities are required to notify the **U.S. Embassy in Prague** of the arrest of a U.S. citizen. If you are concerned the Embassy may not be aware of your situation, you should request that the police or prison officials notify the **U.S. Embassy**.

Crime Victim Assistance

Victims of crime abroad should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy. The local emergency line is 112 with personnel having English language capabilities. The Embassy can:

- replace a stolen passport during regular business hours;
- help visitors find appropriate medical care for violent crimes;
- put visitors in contact with appropriate police authorities;
- contact family/friends; and
- help visitors understand the local criminal justice process and provide visitors with a list of local attorneys, although local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

In case of a life or death emergency for a U.S. citizen, a Consular Duty Officer is available 24 hours a day. Please call +420-257-022-000.

Police/Security Agencies

Czech Republic National Police Force

Local City Police Forces – Mestska Police

In an emergency: Dial 112

**Medical Emergencies**

While significant differences do exist between American and Czech medical systems, many outdated misconceptions and fears about post-communist medical systems may still linger. The Czech medical system is no longer entirely socialized. It is partially government-run and partially private, and there are a number of Western-trained doctors in Prague.

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While medical facilities may seem worn and outdated to the average American, the staff does maintain a standard of cleanliness (many require that you wear disposable shoe coverings in the hospitals).

The Czech philosophy of medical care and the doctor-patient relationship tend to be more European in approach. That is, the doctor will be less likely to share information about the patient’s condition with the patient than is generally the case in the U.S. This is a cultural difference and not a deficiency in medical care.

The Czech medical system is very segmented. There is no one central emergency room, and so emergencies are often sent to the facility that treats the specific medical condition (broken noses are sent to the ear, nose, and throat facility). Also, it is not uncommon to find closed doors (where you would knock or ring for service) rather than an open nursing station.

Life-threatening emergencies in Prague and Brno should be dealt with by calling Záchranná Služba (“emergency services”) by dialing 112. Specify that a physician is needed. The emergency services physician will generally send the patient by ambulance to the nearest hospital best equipped to deal with the specific type of emergency. Patients can request to be moved to a different health facility after their condition has stabilized. Charges will be incurred for services. Transportation to the health care facilities is not free. Payment in cash will be requested by the ambulance crew (aprox. U.S.$200; credit cards are also accepted).

Contact Information for Available Medical Services
The ones included here do cater to foreigners and speak at least some English.

Prague
Motol Hospital
U Uvalu 84, Prague 5
224-433-681 Adults
224-433-690 Children
American patients are requested to approach the hospital through the Foreigners’ department Mon-Fri 7 am – 9 pm and Sat-Sun 8 am – 9 pm
24-hour Trauma facility adult and pediatric care
24-hour care for major and minor trauma, illness. Has surgery capability, lab, and other diagnostic testing equipment, including CT and MRI. There is an English speaking representative available 24 hours/day upon request.
Accepts Visa, MasterCard, Amex, and Diners Club.
Na Homolce Hospital  
Roentgenova 2, Prague 5  
2244 Adults (0730-1600 hrs)  
257-272-025 Kids (0730-1600 hrs)  
American patients are requested to approach the hospital through the Foreigners’ department  
Mon-Fri 7am-4:30pm  
NO 24-hour emergency care. NOT for major trauma.  
Accepts Visa, MasterCard

Prague Central Military Hospital  
U vojenské nemocnice 1200, Prague 6  
Phone: 973 203 023 (our POC)  
24-hour emergency facility. major trauma center. Has isolation unit, surgery capability, lab,  
diagnostic testing equipment (CT, MRI). There is an English speaking representative available  
24 hours/day upon request.

Fakultní Nemocnice Královské Vinohrady  
Šrobárova 50, Prague 10  
Phone: 267 161 111  
Emergency room, adult/pediatric burn center, plastic surgery clinic.

Fakultní Nemocnice Bulovka  
Budínova 2, Prague 8  
Phone (Call Center): 266 081 111  
Emergency kids: 266 084 220  
Emergency adults: 266 082 017  
Emergency room, orthopedic surgery, infectious diseases clinic, etc.  
Accepts payment by Visa, and has an ATM that accepts Cirrus, MasterCard, and American  
Express.

Institute of Clinical and Experimental Medicine (IKEM)  
Videnska 1958, Krc, Prague 4  
Phone: 236 051 111  
Cardiac Unit Emergency: 236 053 002
Invasive cardiology with cardiovascular surgical support. English speaking medical staff for the most part.

Dental Emergencies
American Dentist in Prague
Pštrossova 10, 110 00 Prague 1
Phone: (+420) 773 505 773
Email: info@americandentist.cz
Website: www.americandentist.cz
Hours: 0800-1900 hours Mon-Thur

Medical Emergencies

Dental Office
Hvezdova 33, 140 21 Prague 4
Phone: (+420) 241 410 001
(+420) 733 737 337
Email: info@dental-office.cz
Website: www.dental-office.cz/en
Hours: 0800-2000 Mon-Thur

Brno
Research Institute of Traumatology (Ústav Traumatologický)
Ponavká 8
Phone: 545 538 111

Children
Faculty Children Hospital (Fakultní Dtská Nemocnice)
ernoplní 9
Phone: 545 122 111

First Aid, Dental, Eye Emergencies: 545 541 111
Bratislavská 2
Non-Emergency Care
PolyClinic Narodní
Národní tída 9, Prague 1
Dr. Šašek — Emergency: 777 942 270, 222 075 101
Website: www.poliklinika.narodni.cz
Medical clinic offering general medical care as well as specialized care for adults and children. Run by U.S. Board Certified Physicians. 24-hour emergency service including direct hospital care. Preventive care, home visits, on-site laboratory, all medical staff fluent in English.
Accepts major credit cards.

Unicare Medical Center
Dr. Julia Concha (Pediatrician)
Na Dlouhem lanu 11, Prague 6
24-hour emergency: 602-201-040; 608 10 30 50
Family-oriented medical center offering comprehensive medical and dental services. Center has two locations, Prague 6 and Prhonice. Provides English speaking physicians in a variety of specialities. Will arrange diagnostic tests, X-ray, and can assist with local hospitalization as needed.
Website: www.unicare.cz
Accepts major credit cards.

Canadian Medical Care
Veleslavínská 1
162 02 Prague 6
+420 235 360 133
After-hours adults: +420 724 300 301
Pediatrician: +420 724 300 303
Website: www.cmcpraha.cz
Well-established private outpatient medical clinic providing high quality health care to all foreign residents, visitors to Prague, and Czech citizens who desire above-standard medical services. English speaking medical staff, primary health care for people of all ages, referral to specialists is required, 24-hour on call service
Major credit cards accepted.
Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Czech Republic.

**OSAC Country Council Information**
There is currently no active Country Council in the Czech Republic. Please contact OSAC’s Europe team if you are interested in private-sector engagement in Prague or have questions about OSAC’s Country Council programs.

**U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**
Embassy Address and Hours of Operation
Embassy Address: Trziste 15, 118 01 Praha 1

Hours of Operation: 0800-1630, Mon-Fri
Embassy Contact Numbers
Switchboard: +420-257-022-000
Website: https://cz.usembassy.gov/
Embassy Guidance
U.S. citizens traveling in the Czech Republic are encouraged to register in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP is a free service that helps the U.S. Embassy disseminate information about safety conditions and contact travelers in an emergency.

Additional Resources
Czech Republic Country Information Sheet