

# Rural Area in the Czech Republic

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## About the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic lies in a very heart of Europe. It's area is 78,866 km<sup>2</sup> (77,276 km<sup>2</sup> is land and 1,590 km<sup>2</sup> of the area occupy water resources). Area of the Czech Republic is approximately two times bigger than Taiwan.

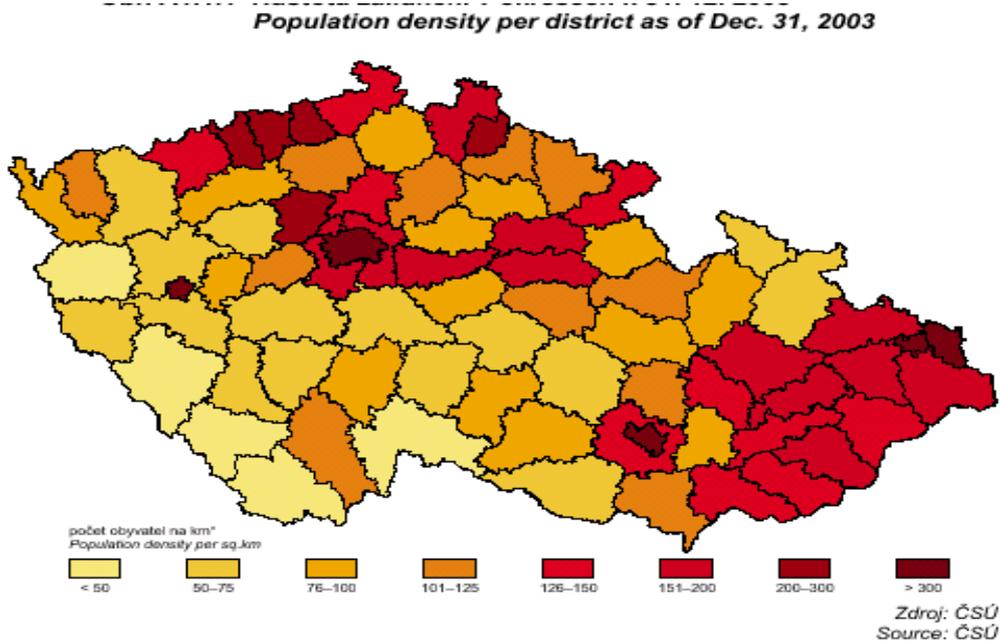
Population of the Czech Republic is 10 506 813 (year 2009), it means that in the Czech Republic lives approx. two times less people than in Taiwan. Density of population is approximately 133 people/km<sup>2</sup>, but this number is not same for all regions. The biggest density is in big cities – Prague, Brno, Ostrava and industry regions (more than 200people/km<sup>2</sup>), lowest density is in the mountains (just 40people/km<sup>2</sup>).



Map 1. – General geographic map of the Czech Republic

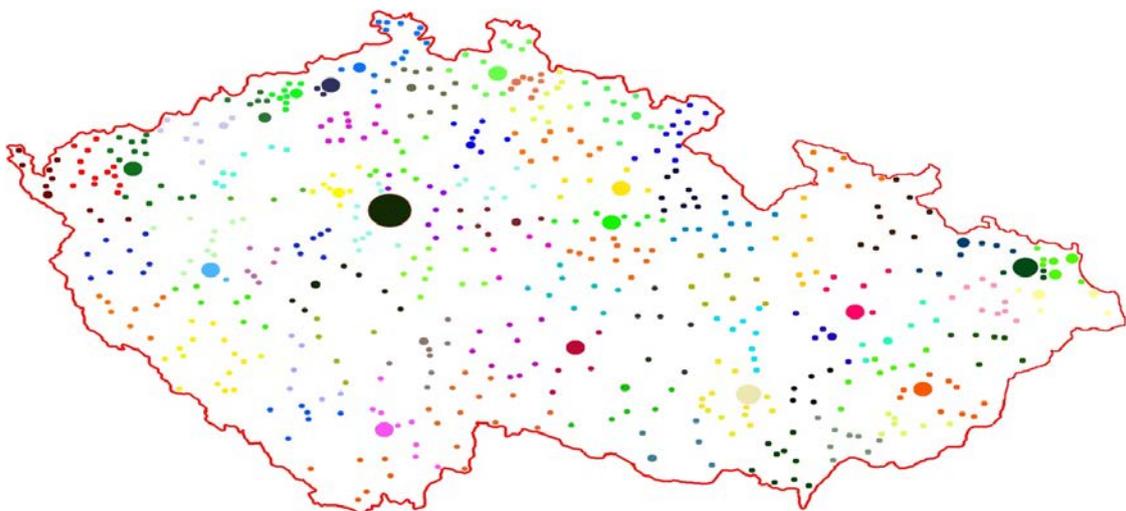
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Map 2. – Population density per district (Dec. 31, 2003)

Since 2000, the Czech Republic is divided into thirteen regions and capital city Prague. There are 6,246 municipalities in the Czech Republic (villages, towns and cities together). Exactly 4,841 of them has less than 1000 inhabitants, it means 77.5% are considered as villages. When village wants to become a “town” it must have 3,000 inhabitants and complete other conditions, which are prescribed by Government. In the Czech Republic there is 1,405 towns (cities) with more than 3,000 inhabitants, therefore urbanization is approx. 75%.



Map 3. – Municipalities in the Czech Republic

There is just one city in the Czech Republic, which has more than 1 million inhabitants – it is capital city Prague. Other cities are much more smaller. Urban area is important because of following reasons:

- There is situated industry and services
- In urban area there are job opportunities, educational facilities, offices and seats of authorities
- Urban area has its own modern style of live and entertainment

Table 1. – The biggest cities in the Czech Republic

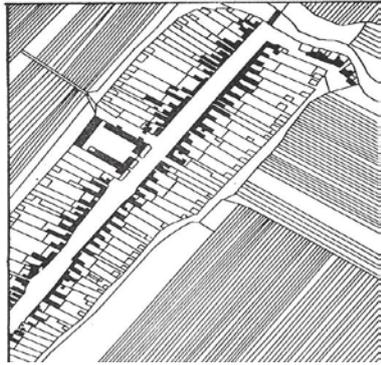
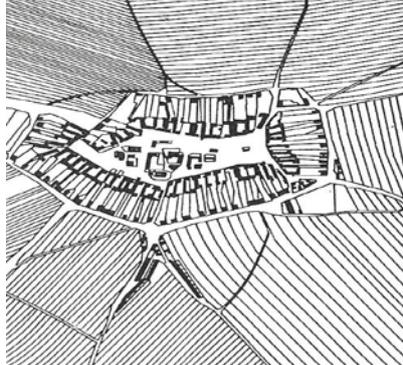
	<u>CITY</u>	<u>INHABITANTS</u>
<b>1</b>	Prague (Praha)	1,288,136
<b>2</b>	Brno	405,312
<b>3</b>	Ostrava	311,077
<b>4</b>	Plzeň	171,111
<b>5</b>	Ústí nad Labem	120,477
<b>6</b>	Liberec	105,050
<b>7</b>	Olomouc	102,979
<b>8</b>	České Budějovice	100,065
<b>9</b>	Hradec Králové	94,493
<b>10</b>	Pardubice	90,778

## **RURAL AREA AND ECONOMY**

Rural Area is important part of the Czech Republic. There are 4 main reasons:

- It produces food for itself and other areas – especially urban area, the most important products are meat, milk, corn, vegetable and fruits.
- It preserves all kinds of plants, animals and natural resources like ponds, lakes, soil, forests.
- Rural area has its special culture festivals, traditions and heritage, which is connected with life in rural area and can be held just there. This culture is interesting for people from urban area and tourist.
- Rural area has its unique way of lifestyle – calm, healthy and no stress way of living.

### Types of Villages in the Czech Republic:

		
Map 4. – Type 1. Village along road or river	Map 5. – Type 2. Central type of Village	Map 6. – Type 3. Dispersed type of Village

The most common type of village in the Czech Republic is Type 2. - Central Type. Square - village is very important for the village appearance. It is central place, where is always church or chapel, building of town hall, school, monument, benches, bus stop and small pub or tavern. Square-village is important for village's culture – it is place, where people can meet, tell the news to each other, celebrate festivals, keep traditions.

### Economy and agriculture and its problems

Services and industry are the main sectors of Czech economy. In agriculture sector works less than 5% active population. National agriculture production almost satisfies national demand. The Czech Republic produces: corn (wheat, barley, and corn), potatoes, rape, vegetable, fruits, and sugar-beet. Animal production: pork, beef, chicken meat, milk. There are agriculture products which Czech has to import, such as: rice, fish and seafood, exotic fruits.

Czech agriculture has to deal with two main problems:

- According to quotas of the European Union, in the last years Czech Republic had to decrease production of sugar-beet and milk, which brought many problems for farmers. The Czech Republic nowadays became an importer of sugar while last 80 years was big exporter.
- Import of agriculture products from non-EU countries (Third countries), which are usually cheaper. Czech farmers cannot produce some product as cheap as third countries, so they can sell their products just with higher prices and it means that customer don't want to buy it.

## Czech Rural Handicraft

As for urban area is important industry, for rural area is important handicraft. Nowadays economic value is not so significant, the importance is mainly because of preservation traditions and culture. Every region has its unique handicraft products. In the past times regions competed who will have the most beautiful needlework or ceramics, but today not so many people can make these handicraft products, but still you can buy it as a souvenir. The most famous handicraft Czech products are: needlework, ceramics, costumes, marionettes, glass or bijouterie.

	
<p>Picture 1. – Needlework</p>	<p>Picture 2. - Ceramics</p>
	
<p>Picture 3. – National costumes</p>	<p>Picture 4. - Marionettes</p>
	
<p>Picture 5 – Handmade glass</p>	<p>Picture 6 - Bijouterie</p>

### Problems of Czech rural area

- Lack of job opportunities
- Lower salaries
- Bad infrastructure
- Lack of civil facilities – schools, doctors, offices, services

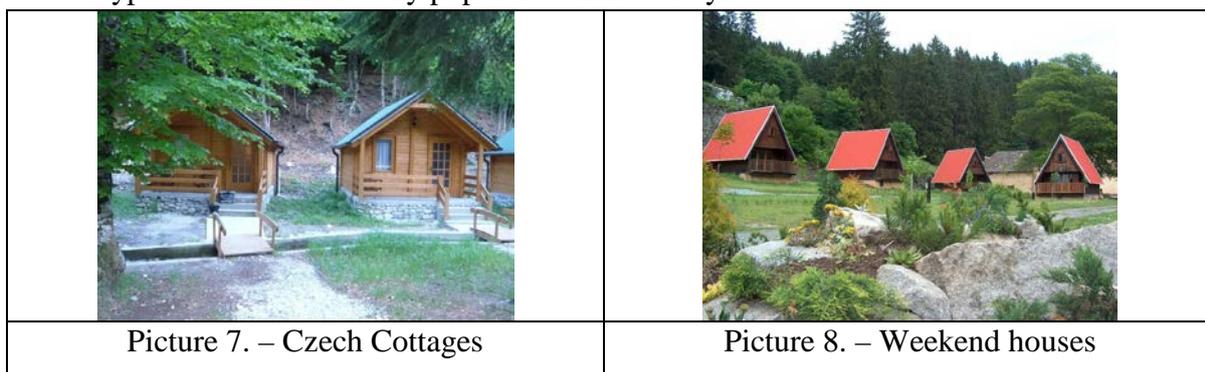
## Potentials of Czech rural area

- Good-quality living environment – nature, air, water...
- Staying in a calm place mostly with good, friendly relationship with neighbours
- All generations can stay together
- Safe place with low criminality
- Unique culture, traditions and appearance

## Rural tourism

Rural tourism in the Czech Republic can has few forms:

- Village tourism – is connected with nature, rural landscape and some village
- Agro-tourism – agricultural tourism; tourist stay at farm or country estate, very often do some agricultural work
- Eco-agro-tourism – connected with staying and working at ecological farms
- “Staying in cottages and weekend houses” – it is special form of rural tourism, very typical for the Czech Republic. In fact it is second housing, wooden cottage or house with basic equipment in a rural area, where people from urban area stay during the weekends, holidays or summer season. In a recent history, the Czechs couldn’t travel abroad because it was problem of political system, so they wanted to invest their money to some land. Land in the rural area was cheap, they could build there small house, where they could stay in a calm nature after the hard work in urban area. This type of “tourism” is very popular even nowadays.



## Rural traditions and festivals

All festivals are connected with rural area, with nature and rural activities. These festivals are attractive for people from urban area and for foreigners. The most popular Czech rural festivals are:

“Masopust” (Carnival season) – it is celebrated from January 13th till the Easter. It is season of carnivals, celebrations and eating before fast season of Easter.

Velikonoce (Easter) – Christian festival, which is celebrated in March or April and which is connected with birth of Jesus and coming spring. In the rural area it is season of birth many animals, time when rural people have to start work on their fields, when they sow plants. It is like new beginning.

“Pálení čarodějnic” (Burning of the witches) – 31st April, the day that winter is ceremonially brought to an end by the burning of rag and straw witches

„Májka“ (Maypole) – 1st May celebration. Young men of village have to build and guard over night the maypole – ornate tree. If they protect it till the next day, it means good luck and good year for the village.

„Dožínky“ (Harvest festival) – it is celebration of the end of harvest season, time of the festival depends on the region and product

Advent – winter season four weeks before Christmas; fasting, preparations for Christmas, baking cakes, decorating houses, keeping Christmas traditions, last 4 Sundays before Christmas Eve have its names: steel, bronze, silver, gold and every Sunday you have to light candle on the Advent wreath

	
<p>Picture 9. – Carnival season</p>	<p>Picture 10. - Easter</p>
	
<p>Picture 11. - Burning of the witches</p>	<p>Picture 12. - Maypole</p>

	
<p>Picture 13. – Harvest festival</p>	<p>Picture 14. - Advent</p>

### Village of the year

Competition “Village of the year” is every year held in the Czech Republic. It is organized by Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Regional Development. The main point of this competition is to make rural area not just nice place for living, but also show rural traditions and activities, unique culture life of rural area and attract young people to live there. When village wins this competitions it helps to their rural tourism, because many people want to see which village is the best one this year.

	
<p>Picture 15. – Village Olesnice</p>	<p>Picture 16. – Village Tistin</p>

### Holasovice – Village at the UNESCO Heritage list

Holasovice is small historical village in the south of Czech Republic and it is considered to be the most typical village which keeps all its rural appearance and culture. All houses are built in rural baroque style.



## CONCLUSION

In my opinion rural area in the Czech Republic is in a good position and Czech people have good relationship with rural area. Many people live there or they have second housing there. It is connected with way of live in Czech; people want to have a rest after hard work in a nature and nice landscape. However there is also lot of things which should be changed. In the rural area should be more job opportunities, more accommodation facilities and more activities to do. Nowadays operates many regional organizations for rural development, which focus mainly on creating activities and keeping rural traditions, they try to attract young people to rural area. I think that Czech people are starting to realize, that every region has its own unique traditions and appearance and that is important to keep all this for next generations.

## References

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