**January 1 Establishment of the independent state**

The first of January is New Year’s Day. This day also **marks the beginning** of the independent Czech Republic. The Czech Republic came into existence on January 1, 1993 after the separation of Czechoslovakia into two states – the Czech and Slovak Republics – on December 31, 1992.

**Reality:** It’s the day after the New Year celebration so most Czechs try to **recover from** the **hangover**. Those Christians who are **sober** attend **mass** to give thanks for the previous year. Many people prepare a big meal including pork for good luck and lentils for prosperity and avoid fish or poultry because they may force your luck to swim or fly away.

**Easter Sunday and Monday** (dates vary every year)

Easter is the most important Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus **was crucified** on the cross on **Good Friday** and came back to life on Easter Sunday. In the Czech republic Easter is mixture of Christian and **pagan** traditions. On the morning of Easter Monday, boys and men **whip** girls and women on their bottoms with a **willow stick** to make sure they stay healthy for the rest of the year. As a reward girls treat them with hand-painted eggs. The egg is a symbol of fertility and new life.

The date is different every year, as it falls on the first Sunday after the spring full moon after March 21.

**Reality:** Kids get a lot of chocolate sweets and adult men are often treated with a **shot** of alcohol, so they may get very weary in the middle of the day if they visit a few female friends.

**May 1 International Workers’Day, Labour Day**

An international Day of Labour is celebrated to remember **a strike** by American workers in Chicago that took place on May 1, 1886. The strikers were demanding an 8-hour working day because at that time most workers worked ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week. The police attacked the strikers for no reason, killing two and wounding several others. This led to protests in many other places.It is celebrated in many countries as International Workers’Day or Labour Day, the idea is to honour all workers by giving them a day off. In Czechoslovakia before the Velvet Revolution this day was “joyfully”celebrated by all the workers. It was obligatory to take part in the parade under the socialist regime.

**Reality:** Nowadays it is another day off, many people head for their cottages. May 1 has become a day of love when lovers kiss under blooming cherry trees or, if in Prague they go and pay tribute to K. H. Mácha, the poet of everybody in love.

**May 8 Liberation Day**

This day celebrates the end of the Second World War (WWII) in Europe. Soviet **troops** captured Berlin, which led to Germany’s **unconditional surrender** on M ay 8, 1945. In some parts of the world, however, WWII continued. The American army was still fighting with Japan. Prague **was liberated** in the morning on May 8, 1945 by the Soviet Army. It’s a good time to remember the people who fought and died for our freedom.

**Reality:** Ceremonial acts take place; the Czech president, political representatives and WWII veteran commemorate the end of the war by placing flower **wreaths** at memorials of the victims of WWII.

**July 5 Saints Cyril and Methodius Day**

A day to remember Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius, to Byzantine Greek brothers who came to Great Moravia in 863 to spread Christianity. They influenced the cultural life and development of **Slavs** because they used the old Slavic languages during masses (and wrote down the old standard Slavic language at the time) and created the **Glagolitic alphabet**.

**Reality:** Religious celebrations take place, as well as masses and processions remembering the two brothers that brought Christianity to Central Europe. The majority of Czechs enjoy a day off at the beginning of summer.

**July 6 Jan Hus Day**

On July 6 1415, religious reformer Jan Hus was burned at the **stake** in Kostnice. Jan Hus was a **priest**, rector of Charles University and reformer who blamed Catholic representatives for unholy behavior and corruption. Eventually he was sentenced to death by burning for spreading his revolutionary criticism.

**Reality:** Because it is two **consecutive** days off, Cyril and Methodius on July 5 followed by Jan Hus Day on July 6, Czechs take two days off, join them with the weekend and then spend it at their summer cottages. Jan Hus is remembered mainly by protestant church.

**September 28 St. Wenceslas Day**

The day when the whole nation remembers the patron saint of the Czech state. This date is celebrated as Czech Statehood day. Wenceslas was one of the early Premyslid dukes of Bohemia. He was born in 907, the son of Bořivoj I and Drahomíra. In 921 Wenceslas became the duke of Bohemia and ruled until his death on September 28, 935 when he was murdered by his younger brother Boleslav I. He is the first Czech ruler **to suffer a martyr’s death** and many legends were created afterwards.

**Reality:** One of thelongest squares in Prague is named after this historical figure. The statue of Saint Wenceslas at the top of the square is a popular meeting point. Masses in the name of St Wenceslas are also held.

**October 28 Czechoslovak Independence Day**

On this day the Czechoslovak state declared independence at the end of the First World War (WWI) in 1918. Until that time the Czech and Slovak countries had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, worked from exile on the formation and later the recognition of Czechoslovakia as an independent state.

**Reality:** On this day the president of the republic gives honours to eminent personalities of cultural and social life. He also places bunches of flowers on the grave of TGM at the castle of Lány, and also at the monument in Vítkov.

**November 17 Fight for Freedom and Democracy Day**

A day when we remember very important **milestones** form our history. In 1939, Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia and proclaimed it the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Czech students demonstrated against the occupation and the demonstration was brutally **suppressed**. A medical student Jan Opletal was shot and killed. On the day of his funeral, hundreds of people, mostly students, demonstrated again and the Germans violently suppressed the protests. The tensions culminated on November 17 when the Gestapo and SS units attacked students hostels arresting more than 1200 students and taking them to concentration camps. Nine students were executed without trial and Czech universities were closed. Later, the day was proclaimed Students’ Day.

In November 1989 the Velvet Revolution started as a student demonstration against the communist regime. This date commemorates the struggle and fight for freedom.

**Reality:** This day is a little more than a day off for most people. Some bring flowers and light candles on Národní třída in Prague and other places connected with the Velvet Revolution.

**24-26 December Christmas**

Christmas Eve – Christmas in Christian tradition is a celebration of the birth of baby Jesus. Jesus was born the son of a poor carpenter Joseph and his wife Mary in a stable in Bethlehem. His arrival in the world was announced by a comet that appeared in the sky.

**Reality:** Christmas Ev eis the most important feast day of Czech holidays. In the morning a Christmas tree is decorated. People are not supposed to eat meat (or nothing at all during the day in order to see a golden piglet). In the evening the family gathers together to have a traditional dinner that consists of fish soup and carp fillet with potato salad. After dinner children await the ringing of the bell that announces that litlle baby Jesus has come to visit them and left presents under the Christmas tree. People often go to midnight mass on Christmas Eve.

**Christmas Day and St. Stephen’s Day** are not celebrated in a special manner, these days are just for family visits.

To mark the beginning – značit počátek

To recover from hangover – zotavit se z kocoviny

Sober – střízlivý

Mass – mše

Resurrection – zmrtvýchvstání

To crucify – ukřitovat

Good Friday – Velký pátek

Pagan – pohanský

To whip – šlehat

Willow stick – pomlázka

A shot – panák (alkoholu)

Strike – stávka

Parade – slavnostní přehlídka, průvod

Troops – vojenské jednotky

Unconditional surrender – bezpodmínečná kapitulace

To liberate – osvobodit

Wreath – věnec

Slav – Slovan

Glagolitic alphabet – hlaholice

Stake – hranice

Priest – kněz

Consecutive – ze sebou jdoucí

Premyslid duke of Bohemia – přemyslovský český kníže

To suffer a martyr’s death – zemřít mučednickou smrtí

Recognition – uznání

Milestones from our history – milníky naší historie

To supress – poltačit

Carpenter – tesař

Stable in Bethlehem – chlév, stodola v Betlémě