

cíee

Prague, Czech
Republic

Central European
Studies



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Welcome to Your Program

Academic Program

Country/City Background

This is an exciting time to live and study in the Czech Republic. The Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Jews, and the Roma who have inhabited this area over the past millennium share a history of wars, revolutions, and foreign domination. In 1918, Czechoslovakia was founded out of the ruins of the Habsburg Empire. After twenty years of independence, the Czechoslovak state was partitioned at the Munich conference, and then further divided by Nazi Germany during World War II, eventually coming under Soviet control in 1948. Twenty years later, Czechoslovakia was again invaded by Soviet armies, after an attempt at political reform commonly referred to as the "Prague Spring". With the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989, 40 years of Soviet domination ended. Czechoslovakia underwent transition from a Soviet state-controlled political and economic system and one of the results of the transition was the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993. The Czech Republic successfully joined NATO in 1999 and the European Community in May 2004.

The dynamics at work in the aftermath of these changes are complex, and coverage in English language sources is sketchy and often inaccurate. You may find western reports on accomplished transitions conflicting with local experience and analyses. So how can you sort it out? Read as many different sources of information as you can, absorb as much as possible, and then arrive in Prague with an open mind, ready to take in new and different perspectives.

Prague has become an international city with many permanent foreign residents who add to the town's more cosmopolitan atmosphere. It also attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists to one of the only major European cities left largely intact despite the ravages of the World Wars.

Host University Overview

Charles University

Charles University (CU), the oldest in Central Europe, was founded in 1348 by King Charles IV of Bohemia. It was open to all nationalities with instruction in Latin. One of the original Gothic buildings remains and is known as the *Karolinum*. Charles University doesn't have a campus-proper; its buildings are spread all over Prague and in towns outside of it.

The location of the CIEE Study Center is in its own premises at Vysehrad, at the top of one of Prague's highest hills, within medieval castle walls in a beautiful park-like setting. The area was once a legendary seat of Czech royalty before the Prague castle was established, and is about 15 minutes from the old town area. All CIEE Charles University classes are held in the CIEE Study Center. FAMU classes are held in the FAMU building downtown. CU classes are held at two locations downtown.

Academic Culture

You'll hear this more than once: teaching methods will be quite different from what you are used to. There may be less discussion and more memorization, a typical pedagogical approach in most European universities: transmission of traditional knowledge is the focus.

Adjusting to Czech university life and accepting its different perspective on the academic process may be one of the greater challenges confronting you during your time in the Czech Republic. Czech professors usually have high expectations regarding input from students, but do not provide guidance to success in the courses. The Czech university system is geared to the motivated and self-sufficient scholar who is deeply interested in the subject matter. In addition, courses tend to be theoretically oriented. Past CIEE participants have commented that U.S. students may perceive the workload to be light during the semester and very intense at term's end. Planning and self-motivation are prerequisites for success.

Relationships between students and teachers are more formal. Behavior that is taken for granted as normal in the United States may be considered quite rude in the Czech Republic, such as eating, internet browsing, chewing gum, wearing baseball caps, dressing shabbily, talking out of turn, or slouching in your seat. Also be aware that some classes can meet for 3 hours, while most courses have two 90-minute class meetings. While such a schedule can be taxing, it is not uncommon in the Central European university system. Also, it is important to prepare for listening to lectures in accented English and to practice cross-cultural communication skills in classes.

Student ID

You will have a student ID from Charles University that you must carry with you at all times. Most museums, theaters, and some stores offer discounts to Charles University students. This card is also your library and computer lab card for CIEE and Charles University.

Make sure you have uploaded the required passport-style ID photo into your online CIEE account—this was a required part of your online application. These photos are used to produce your student ID, tram pass, etc.

In order to obtain discounts available to students with some services and businesses in Prague, we strongly recommend that you come with ISIC, internationally recognized student ID. These IDs are available for purchase in the U.S. – see www.isic.org for more information. This is not something your CIEE advisor can help with.

Libraries

All libraries open to Charles University students are open to you, including the various departmental reading rooms and the Narodni knihovna (National Library or NK), where most Czech students study. The NK is also the Charles University library. During orientation you will be advised on where to go and how the library system works. The National Library is located at Marianske namesti 5, and contains a large and beautiful reading room. CIEE students can use any books and reference materials at the National Library for a small fee.

You may also use the Slovanská knihovna (The Slavic Library), or the Library of the National Museum, among others.

Courses and Program Requirements

At Charles University you will take:

- A Czech Language course (including 2 weeks of intensive languages training during orientation)
- Four area study courses (combination of CIEE, FAMU and Charles University Courses)
- Optional CIEE Seminar on Living in Learning in Prague for an additional 2 credits

Semester Focus

The overall focus of the CIEE courses is the “Development and Transformation of Society, Culture, and Environmental Consciousness: Czech Perspectives in a European Context.” Students explore the diversity and rich cultural heritage of a Central European society, including its transition from communism,

and learn about Prague's and Czech's cultural foundations in the Central European region and Europe as a whole.

CIEE Program Mission

The goal of the CIEE Prague program is to provide a broad and challenging academic program, which gives students the opportunity to learn about subjects related to the region, and to provide the experience of living in the setting on which their studies are focused.

The overall focus of the CIEE courses is the "Development and Transformation of Society, Culture, and Environmental Consciousness: Czech Perspectives in a European Context."

CIEE's program goals for students are:

1. Be able to define and place in the right context key events and terminology specific for Czech and Central European culture (i.e. know significance of and use appropriately: Great Moravia, National Revival, Vyšehrad, Austria-Habsburg Empire, 1918, 1938, 1948, 1968, 1989, 2003, 2004, sequence and main characteristics of different architectural styles, communism, Charta 77, dissent, samizdat, biedermaier, totalitarianism, Švejk, New Wave, Roma, Labor Camps, Terezín, Easter and Christmas traditions, mushroom picking, social context of beer and wine appreciation...)
2. Explore culture specificity and be able to recommend main Prague and CR cultural venues in which Czech culture flourishes
3. Explore and be able to describe differences in Czech and American academic and student lives
4. Be able to draw a special map and describe significant cultural sites in the Czech Republic
5. Explore and learn to respect differences in the way of thinking evident in Czech vs. American culture (in areas of perception, of national identity, history, religion, values, life-styles)
6. Demonstrate independence and self-reliance and learn new skills through explorations of different ways of life-style
7. Be able to understand and increasingly (in time) become more comfortable with adjusting to local cultural norms in terms of velocity of discoursing in public, proximity, service-expectations, cleanliness, formal wear, and respectful behavior
8. Be able to talk with basic expertise on Prague's cultural heritage sites
9. Use Czech language in practical daily situations and as means of becoming familiar with Czech reality (demonstrated through report – semester's language immersion project)
10. Develop a relationship with the country and its culture in order to return to it and use knowledge of it in their further studies and life.

Classes

Classes are held at the CIEE Study Center open Monday through Thursday 8am to 7pm; Friday 9am to 5pm. The CIEE Study Center is occupied predominantly by CIEE students with a handful of CU and Erasmus exchange students present. Along with classrooms, the Center has a computer lab, library, student lounge, cellar student club, and garden for students to use. The Study Center also has wi-fi.

Class attendance is **mandatory; classes are held Monday through Thursday with mandatory longer weekend excursions and make-up sessions possibly scheduled on Fridays**; you may not miss class without the approval of the Resident Director. Absences are tracked by your professors and consequently the CIEE staff. This is due to the lecture format of the professors, which means your course material and information comes via your professors lectures in class; therefore, absences limit your ability to succeed and will harm your grade, possibly jeopardizing the transfer credits to your university or college.

Registration

You will be required to pre-register for courses before arriving in Prague. Your CIEE Study Abroad Advisor will notify you when details about the course registration process are available on your online CIEE account. Please take this pre-registration seriously and act fast—enrollment follows a ‘first come-first served’ principle! In case you have courses required for graduation, please make sure you indicate this on the online course pre-selection form.

It is your responsibility to make sure that all of your course selections, including your alternate courses, have been approved by your academic advisor.

PLEASE NOTE: students are enrolled on a first- come, first-served basis based on when they submit their online course selection form. Be sure that your online form matches the courses that your advisor has approved!

Have your advisor pre-approve as many alternative courses as possible, because this will make your final registration on site easier. Note that you can only take 2 courses outside of CIEE Study Center and unless your course is verified as required, you cannot be given any preference in pre-registration placements. Students are placed in courses on a first-come, first-served basis, so it will be important for you to submit your online course pre-selection form as soon as it’s available **with required courses clearly indicated**. The minimum number of participants needed for a course to open is six and there will be conflicts in time between courses, so flexibility is crucial. Please note all students will enroll in a total of 16 credits (one Czech Language course and four Area Studies courses; a maximum of two of these Area Studies courses can be taken outside of the Study Center at either CU or FAMU.) Students also have the option of enrolling in the optional Seminar on Living and Learning in Prague in addition to their other required courses.

Add/ Drop

Once in Prague, you will only be able to change your course selection if space is available. The first three weeks of the program is the Drop/Add period. Drop/Add procedures and deadlines are outlined in detail during orientation. Students must make any changes to their schedule and fix their conflicts through the CIEE office in Prague.

You may not drop Czech language. In certain instances, you may take an independent study, but only after you and your home institution have included an approved, written proposal with your registration form.

Continued Study

If you want to continue your studies in Prague for a second semester or enroll in a summer or semester program at one of the other CIEE Study Centers, remember that the deadline is April 1st for summer and fall programs and November 1st for most spring semester programs. See the Resident Staff for the appropriate enrollment extension form.

CIEE Academic Field Trips

Part of the experiential learning will be mandatory participation in two academic field trips of your choice in the Czech Republic, which will be determined by your enrollment in courses. These trips are paid for in full, offer meals and lodging, guided visits, as well as discussions with local institutions, experts and/or students - combining active learning with the fun of travel outside of Prague. CIEE will take you to lesser known parts of the Czech Republic and sites of national importance and/or sites relevant for area studies instruction. The excursions will assist not only in comprehending the theoretical concepts in reality, but mainly help you understand Czech culture in full. The tentative dates of the day, overnight, and optional field trips are posted on the “Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information” document available on your online CIEE account. Detailed information about these trips will be available once you arrive on-site.

Please note that the Optional Trips outside of the Czech Republic are not included in your CIEE Program fees. There is an additional fee for these trips to Berlin, Vienna and Krakow.

Office and Onsite Staff

Study Center Office Location

The location of the CIEE Study Center is at the top of one of Prague's highest hills within medieval fortification walls in a beautiful park-like setting. The area was once a legendary seat of Czech royalty, before Prague castle was established as such, yet it is still a seat of legends and pilgrimages from the past.

The historical three-story building at Štulcova 89/4 is close to the Neo-Gothic St. Petr and Pavel Basilica, and near a cemetery where the country's most famous writers, musicians, and scientists are buried.

The building is a 15-minute walk from trams or the subway, which provide access to the city center in 5 minutes. Please note that all CIEE classes are held at the CIEE Study Center.

The CIEE office is open Monday through Thursday 8am-7pm and on Fridays 9am-5pm throughout the program. The office houses a good collection of books and movies for student use.

Program Mailing Address

Throughout the semester, have your mail sent to your assigned housing address (and be sure to mark any letters with "Air Mail"). Due to capacity and practical reasons, no mail can be accepted at the CIEE Study Center address.

Site Staff Team

Jana Cemusova

Resident Director

Jana Cemusová heads the CIEE Study Center in Prague, leading study abroad programs, customized partnerships with Charles University and other educational institutions. She served as a Student Services Director from 2008 to 2011. Prior to joining CIEE in a full-time position, Jana gained extensive experience with CIEE students through her many years of teaching and leading Czech language instruction through the CIEE Study Center at Charles University.

Jana has teaching experience as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Kansas, expertise in training language teachers, and leading projects in immigrant communities. She served as a chair of Association of Czech Teachers Teaching Czech as a Foreign Language in 2003 – 2009.

Jana is a double graduate at the Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Philosophy, where she studied Theory of Culture (Anthropology) and Czech Language and Creative Studies at the Faculty of Education.

Pavla Klimesova

Student Services Assistant

Pavla works for the CIEE Study Center in Prague as a Student Services Assistant and is primarily responsible for assisting and advising students, assistance in enrollment and student administration, extracurricular activity research and planning, foreigner police visa registration, program administration, and development of immersion opportunities.

Pavla graduated at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Social Sciences, with major in Journalism.

Veronika Tobiasova

Housing Coordinator

Veronika works for the CIEE Study Center in Prague as a Housing Coordinator and she is mainly responsible for housing management (dorm, apartments, homestay), solving student issues, Flat Buddy Program, Meet Czech Families and Friends, CIEE promotion, greening, etc.

Veronika received her Master's degree in English and American Studies and Spanish Philology at Charles University in Prague, with specialization in American and Argentinean literature. During high school, she was an exchange student in Madison, WI for one year. She also studied at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Spain for a year.

Her previous working experience includes teaching both English and Spanish in different language schools and a high school in Prague. She also worked for a trade promotion agency and Peruvian Embassy.

Eva Tomiskova

Program Coordinator

Eva Tomišková works for the CIEE Study Center in Prague as a Program Assistant and her main responsibilities involve orientation, academic trips planning, volunteering program coordination, site visit planning, catering, and overall office management.

Eva is a graduate of The Technical University in Liberec, the Faculty of Education, with major in Social studies and English language.

Prior to joining CIEE, Eva gained extensive experience in human resources and educational field not only in her home country but abroad as well.

Petr Zak

Administrative Assistant

Petr "Franky" Žák, Administrative and Technical Assistant, has a B.A. in Economics from Charles University and previously worked with CIEE as a Flat Buddy to CIEE students.

Arrival and Departure

Discount Airfare and Booking

Included in your program materials will be an iNext insurance card/student ID that allows airfare discounts through Student Universe (www.studentuniverse.com)

Benefits include:

- \$15.00 discount on flights costing \$100.01 to \$249.99
- \$25.00 discount on flights costing \$250.00 or more
- Simply type "iNext" into the Promo Code text box when you finalize your reservation
- Your iNext card is valid for 365 days; the discount code is applicable for up to two separate purchases
- Most tickets allow changes to the ticket for as little as \$50

You may book tickets directly through the airlines, many of which offer discounted prices on their websites. Iberia, Air Europa, British Airways, Continental and Delta are some of the airlines that fly to Spain. Also, the following websites may be useful when searching for airlines and fares to Seville: <http://www.expedia.com/>; <http://www.travelocity.com/>; <http://www.flycheap.com/>; <http://www.orbitz.com/>.

STA Travel (<http://www.statravel.com/>) and Student Universe (<http://www.studentuniverse.com/>) also offer great options for students.

CIEE strongly recommends that all students travel with a round trip ticket. In the past, some students travelling to Europe have been denied boarding by their airline when they attempted to travel with a one-way ticket. For students who are unsure of their plans at the end of the program or will be taking regular university courses, we recommend researching fairs with low change fees so that tickets may be changed later.

Dates

Students should plan to arrive in Prague during the indicated time period of the program start date. If you arrive during this time, you will be met at the airport by the Resident Staff, and you will be provided with transportation to the hotel, where you will spend the first night and obtain your orientation packet. You will be moved into your dorm, CIEE apartment, or homestay the next day. For more information, please see the Program Dates, Details, and Arrival Information page. Note that CIEE arranges for airport transfer only for students who arrive within the half day listed in the “final details” email instructions; however Prague airport is very easy to navigate and students arriving earlier or later will be able to get to the orientation hotel on their own using cabs easily.

You will also have an option to explore a local restaurant with CIEE students, staff, or buddies. Details will be provided in the “final details” email you will receive from your CIEE Study Abroad Advisor 3-4 weeks before you leave for Prague.

Metro or Bus

Public transportation is available from the airport, however it takes about 1 hour by multiple transfers to get downtown.

Taxi

If you choose to take a taxi from the airport, please **use an airport authorized taxi**. Yellow cabs and small minivans are available at the airport arrival gate area and are plentiful. The drivers and/or their dispatchers all speak English.

Fees

The cost of transportation to and from the program is not included in the CIEE program fee. Students should make their flight reservation to arrive on the date and time indicated in the Program Dates, Details and Arrival Information document available on your online CIEE account.

Delayed Arrivals

If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the CIEE home office at 1-800-407-8839 and Resident staff **as soon as you realize that you will be late**.

In the event of a forced or unforeseen early departure from the program, any alternate arrangement to complete course work must be approved in writing by a representative of your institution and the CIEE Chief Academic Office.

Important Note: If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the CIEE home office at 1-800-40-STUDY as soon as you realize you will be late. CIEE does not permit students to arrive after the program start date for any circumstance with the only exception being unforeseen flight delays.

Orientation

Online Pre-Departure Orientation

Before leaving home you will be participating in a CIEE Online Pre-Departure Orientation. During the online orientation, you will:

- Be meeting with other students online
- Get information about your program and site from your Resident Director
- Receive important alumni tips and concerns
- Get time to ask any questions you may have before leaving home.

The orientation will allow you to connect, reflect and learn about what others in your group would like to accomplish.

The CIEE goal for the pre-departure orientation is simple: to help students understand more about the program and site, as well as their goals for the program, so that they arrive informed and return home having made significant progress toward their goals.

On-site Orientation

It is required that all students attend the onsite orientation.

During orientation, the resident staff (and local student guides) will provide a structured introduction to the country, the culture, and the academic program. They will also give you lots of practical information about living in Prague, including:

- A review of emergency procedures
- Detailed information on health, well-being, and safety issues
- Academic information relating to the program and university
- Information on home stays
- Introduction to your host family
- Local tours and guided visits in order to help with adjustment
- Further orientation continues throughout the program

All students must attend the on-site orientation. If you have trouble with your travel arrangements while en route, please leave a message with the CIEE home office or with the Resident Director.

The intensive orientation, conducted at the beginning of the program, provides a structured introduction to the country, the culture, and the academic program. It also provides practical information about living in Prague.

Housing and Meals

Students will have a choice of living in a homestay, Charles University dorm, or CIEE apartments with other CIEE students in addition to one Charles University student, otherwise known as a “flat buddy.” Students should expect to commute to the CIEE Study Center via public transportation. The trip may take up to 45 minutes or longer outside of peak hours when transport runs less frequently. Prague’s public transportation system is fairly easy to navigate, especially with some practice. This commute time is common when living in any major city.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Not all students can be placed in their first choice. Your housing allocation or the fact whether you get a single room might depend on a first-come, first-serve basis. We strongly recommend that you complete **the housing survey**, accessed via your CIEE online account, as soon as possible. There you can indicate your housing and lifestyle preferences. Participants from the same universities will typically not be placed together, so that students have a chance to meet other students

from other institutions and to interact with locals. Also, requests for specific roommates will only be considered for the CIEE dorm, but cannot be guaranteed (please indicate this on your housing survey). Requests to live with specific roommates in the apartments or homestays will not be considered.

The housing coordinator in Prague will do her best to accommodate student requests, but please recognize the difficulties associated with data from over 100 students. Therefore, receiving your first choice in housing is not always guaranteed.

Remember, the amenities of housing in the Czech Republic are very different from those of a typical American university or home. Self-serve laundry facilities are usually available, but laundry supplies are not provided and students should expect to purchase these on their own. Dryers are available only in dormitories. Internet access cannot be guaranteed in housing provided by CIEE. However, students have Wi-Fi Internet and email access at the CIEE study center. Cable internet is also available in the dormitories for free. There is no internet access guaranteed in CIEE apartments (although in most apartments buddies have set up internet in their name and share the costs with their US roommates). Similarly, the use of internet cannot be guaranteed in homestays, although internet is very common these days in Czech households.

*** Please note: You will receive your housing assignment during Orientation.** A change is sometimes possible, but only between people in one accommodation type (i.e. you cannot change from homestay to apartment or to dorm or vice versa). Changes are only allowed if all parties involved agree to the switch. CIEE tries to mix students from various backgrounds rather than house students from the same universities together in order to increase chances for interaction with locals rather than stay within comfortable clusters of old friends.

Homestay

This option provides an opportunity for immersion into the local culture and is strongly recommended for students who wish to take full advantage of their study and life abroad experiences. Students in the homestay should be prepared to take more of a pro-active approach in regards to joining CIEE activities and meeting other CIEE students. Those wishing to be placed in a homestay should also be prepared to adapt to the local culture and family life, as well as to be flexible regarding differences which they may encounter. Students in homestays should be willing to spend time with the family at least two times per week and to eat dinners with the family when their schedules allow for it. Homestay students will also be acquainted with Czech buddies (Charles University students) when available, as a way for them to get to know a Czech person their own age. Students who have chosen homestays in the past have been extremely pleased with their experience.

Homestays are arranged on an individual basis according to student answers on the housing survey.

This option is experiencing Czech culture first hand. It is geared towards students who are interested in experiencing the Czech lifestyle and practicing the language.

It offers privacy as well as family, and a friendly home-base atmosphere to open, flexible, and motivated students.

Students have their own room. Breakfast and dinner are included and are arranged based on the family's daily schedule. Some families are willing to accommodate a vegetarian or other diet, although this requires some flexibility from the student as well (please note this on your housing survey).

It is possible for two students to be placed in the same homestay (let CIEE know if you would be interested in this option in your housing survey).

There is no curfew in homestays and students are given their own key to enter and exit the home.

As in the U.S., the Czech Republic has many types of families. You may experience a typical, nuclear family, with a mother, father, and two children or you may live in the home of a single-parent family or with a young Czech couple. Please note that the level of English spoken in families could be very different, but there will be at least one family member who speaks English well.

Homestays are usually located in quieter parts of Prague, mostly in family houses or in apartments, approximately 45 minutes from the Study Center and not necessarily near other CIEE students.

If you requested a homestay as your first choice, it is best to prepare a photo album of your life at home and perhaps to bring some small gifts connected to your state or region. It will help to break the ice and share your life with your Czech hosts.

Courtesies: Czechs remove their shoes before entering their houses and apartments, so in a Czech apartment be prepared to remove your shoes upon entry.

Private Accommodations

Dormitories

Vyšehrad Dormitory

Students who choose this option reside in double or single rooms/suites with bathroom facilities either in the room or on one of the dorm floors. Some singles may be available for an additional \$500/semester fee. If you are interested in a single, please note this on your housing survey and know these are allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The Charles University student dormitory is occupied predominantly by CIEE students; there are usually a handful of “dorm buddies,” or Charles University students living here in order to share Czech culture with you. Please keep in mind that CIEE students are the majority in the dorm. Many former students have chosen this housing option due to its proximity to CIEE and for reasons of socializing. Use of cable internet in the dorm is free of charge. Coin operated washing machines and dryers are available on the ground floor; the cost is 60 CZK per cycle, including washing and drying. There is also a cleaning service available and bedding is changed every two weeks. All bedding and a small and large towel are given to each student upon arrival and are to be returned upon departure. One overnight visitor per room is allowed for a fee of 200 CZK per night. The Vyšehrad dorm displays the best qualities CU dorms provide, and is located in the residential section of Prague 2 under Vyšehrad. It only takes about 10 minutes on foot to reach the Study Center and about 15 minutes by public transportation to the city center. The dormitory is the housing option that is closest to the Study Center. Please note that spaces are limited in the Vyšehrad dorm.

A basic, continental breakfast (served Mon-Fri from 8am-10am) is included in the dormitory option. For other meals, students can use the small kitchenette areas, containing a hot plate and a microwave, although please note that ovens are not available. There are two kitchenettes for approximately 35 tenants: one on each of the third and fourth floors. There is also a refrigerator on each floor. The kitchenettes are suitable mainly for preparing basic dishes.

Apartment Options

CIEE Apartments

CIEE apartments each house three CIEE participants and one Charles University student, otherwise known as a “flat buddy.” Many past students have thoroughly enjoyed living in the apartments, since this option grants a lot of independence comparable to off-campus housing. Students are fully responsible for all meals, appropriate use of all rented equipment, damages not resulting from regular wear and tear, and cleaning. CIEE conducts periodic checks to ensure students’ compliance with the local standards of appropriate use. Please note that no overnight visitors are allowed in CIEE apartments. The apartments are completely furnished and two students share one bedroom. Although no two apartments are exactly the same in layout and details, overall standards are comparable and all apartments are within the same price range. There may also be a few single rooms available in the apartments (depending on enrollment) for an additional, \$500/semester fee. If you are interested in a single, please note this on your housing survey.

Students are responsible for cleaning their apartment. There are equipped kitchens that include basic cooking facilities, a refrigerator, and a microwave. Washing machines are also available for student use, while dryers are not. Students line dry their clothes, which is a typical practice in most of Europe.

Students are not guaranteed internet access in CIEE apartments, although many of the flat buddies do make arrangements for it when possible and split the costs with their roommates. Regardless, students have Wi-Fi Internet and e-mail access at the CIEE Study Center. There are also numerous cyber cafés in Prague.

CIEE apartments are located in various parts of the greater city and are not always in the same neighborhood or by other CIEE apartments – a 35 minute commute or less to the Study Center. Apartments are located in neighborhoods of Prague where Czech locals reside. They are not downtown, though the downtown area can be reached easily by public transportation in about 15-20 minutes during peak hours.

Meals

Breakfast is provided Mon-Fri in a restaurant right next to the dorm from 8am-10am. In the homestays, breakfast and dinner are included, based on the family's schedule and habits. Students living in CIEE apartments will be responsible for all meals. Remember that doing your own cooking is always far less expensive than dining out!

Note to Vegetarians

The traditional Czech diet consists mainly of meat, fat, and starch. Fresh vegetables, though readily available, are largely absent from most cafeteria meals. However, a variety of vegetable salads and vegetarian meals is growing in most cafeterias and restaurants. There are several vegetarian restaurants in Prague to choose from as well (in fact, there are excellent vegetarian restaurants in the downtown area within walking distance to the apartments). So, maintaining a vegetarian diet can be done relatively easily.

Problems with Housing

It is important for you to allow yourself time to experience and get comfortable in your housing option. Getting to know your roommates or host family and/or adjusting to your new lifestyle in Prague is part of the challenge of cultural learning that study abroad provides. Avoid acting on first impressions and jumping to conclusions based on incomplete knowledge of the area - give it some time and see how it really works out.

All CIEE dorm and apartment students are given a chance to switch their dorm rooms and apartments (i.e. if you meet a person during orientation that you wish to share a dorm room or apartment with and talk with others to agree with your switch) during the first two weeks of the program. The CIEE staff will make the best effort in accommodating all the requests. No changes, however, can be 100% guaranteed. You will need to hand in the request forms to CIEE Study Center staff. These changes must be within the same housing unit: apartments with apartments and dorm with dorm. There will be no requests honored for moving, for example, from the dorm to an apartment.

Students from the same institutions or who were previously friends are not allowed to live together in the apartments and homestays. If two students would like to live together, they can mark this on their housing survey WITH DORMS AS THEIR FIRST HOUSING CHOICE.

CIEE's housing coordinator will be available to you and understands your needs. We are here to help you in the process and want you to feel comfortable in your housing assignment.

Home

Before you leave

Essential Documents

When preparing to travel and live abroad, it is essential that you obtain all the proper documents prior to your departure. CIEE cannot accept responsibility, financial or otherwise, for a student who travels without proper documentation.

Passport

You must have a signed passport. If you do not have one, apply immediately, as the process can take several weeks. If you already have a passport, be sure that it is valid for at least six months after the duration of your program, plus any post-program travel.

U.S. citizens applying for their first passports must apply in person at a passport agency or at one of the several thousand federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications. Applicants must present the following materials:

1. A completed Passport Application Form (DS-11)
2. Proof of U.S. citizenship (certified birth certificate, expired passport, certificate of naturalization, or consular report of birth)
3. Personal identification bearing your photograph and signature, e.g., a valid driver's license;
4. Two recent passport-sized photographs
5. A check or money order for the required amount.

Visa

A visa is an endorsement or stamp placed in your passport by a foreign government allowing you to enter, stay, and study in that country for a specified purpose and period of time.

You will need to secure what is referred to as a long-stay student visa before your departure. This type of visa is marked VC and is valid for a stay of over 90 days in the Czech Republic. Please note that it is your responsibility to secure this visa – CIEE does NOT secure this visa for you. **Make sure that your visa says “multiple entry”. With a multi-entry visa you may travel in and out of the Czech Republic multiple times without having to re-register with the foreign police upon each return to the country. If you are not a U.S. passport holder you may also need a multiple entry visa to be able to travel in Schengen territory.**

Soon after acceptance into the program, CIEE will send, via express mail, supporting documentation that MUST be included with your visa application. To assist expedience in processing, please **make sure you use your full official name as it is stated in your passport on all CIEE online materials.**

Please refer to the visa instructions available on your CIEE account page for further information. **All students must have a visa to participate in the program; read your visa instructions immediately. It takes approximately 60 days to process a Czech visa and there is no way for CIEE to rush this process for you.**

CIEE's staff will help you register with the foreign police during orientation, as long as you follow guidelines and submit all the necessary paperwork on time.

Documents for non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with your consulate for regulations regarding your stay in the country and re-entry into the United States. As visa procedures may vary, you should also check with the country consulate that has jurisdiction over your place of residence immediately for their specific visa procedures. Failure to do this may result in your being refused permission to enter the country or not even being allowed to board the aircraft at the point of departure. Also, you should call the nearest district office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for information on the documents necessary for you to leave and re-enter the U.S.

If you hold a passport from a European Union country, you may be able to reside in the Czech Republic for up to six months without the necessity of getting a visa. Check with your Consulate or Embassy to be sure.

Permanent Residents

Permanent residents may need to apply for a Re-entry Permit, which serves as a passport while overseas. Being out of the United States for more than one year may jeopardize your permanent resident status. Check with the nearest INS office for information regarding documentation and procedures for returning to the U.S.

Stateless Persons

If you do not have a country of citizenship, contact the nearest INS office and the appropriate consulate or embassy to determine the procedures you must follow in order to obtain the proper travel documents and visas. In addition, be sure to check with the consulate of any country you may be visiting to/from/on the way to the Czech Republic. Failure to do this may result in refusal of permission to enter that country or even to board the aircraft at the point of departure

Additional Items

iNext Travel Insurance Card

CIEE provides you with supplementary iNext travel insurance while you are abroad. You will need to have your iNext card with you to access the policies' provisions. For more information, please refer to the Insurance, Health and Medical section below.

Lost Passport Kit

Preparing a lost passport kit can help you speed up the process in re-obtaining your passport if it is lost or stolen while you are abroad.

A passport kit should include:

1. Two passport photos
2. Official copy of his or her birth certificate
3. Photocopy of passport's photo, signature, and visa pages

Spare Passport Photos

You may need to bring up to 2-4 additional passport sized photos for both school ID and city registration purposes.

Insurance, Health and Medical

iNext Travel Insurance

The iNext Accident and Sickness Insurance policy

- Helps you cover cost of accidents and/or routine sickness while abroad
- Offers Emergency Evacuation and Emergency Medical Transportation coverage
- 24-hour Travel and Medical Assistance Service
- Offers you travel document replacement and limited travel delay and lost/stolen baggage coverage.
- Coverage begins two weeks before the program start date and continues for 365 days.
- This Health Insurance is an additional or secondary policy only, and does not cover liability.
- It also does not include routine physical, dental examinations, or preventive medicine.

You can find a complete description of the Accident and Sickness Insurance policy on the enrollment website. It is important that you read the policy carefully and note exactly what coverage it provides and excludes. Doctors, hospitals, and clinics will require you to pay bills at the time of treatment. You must then submit receipts to the insurance company for reimbursement. With this in mind, be sure to budget at least \$400 to pay for medical expenses and unexpected illnesses up front.

Personal Insurance

If you are covered by a personal or parental insurance plan, CIEE recommends that you continue this coverage while abroad. Prior to departure, you should contact your current insurance carrier concerning coverage for accidents, illnesses, and liability cases that occur outside the United States. Check your policy's limitations before making any assumptions about coverage. Most U.S. based insurance companies will not cover property lost or stolen overseas.

Immunizations

You are not required to get any vaccinations for travel in the Czech Republic unless you are a citizen of, or arriving from, one of a number of less-developed countries or sites of disease outbreak.

Other Precautions

Inform the Resident Staff of any existing health problems, including mental health, or any potential problems you anticipate arising throughout the course of the program. This includes allergies to any medications. Be sure to fill out the "Student Medical Questionnaire on your MY CIEE online account to make the staff aware of your allergies, medications and any health concerns. CIEE staff will use this information to assist you in securing appropriate accommodations and to assist you should any health problems arise during the semester. CIEE holds all of this information in confidentiality and treats all students with respect regardless of any given medical condition, whether it be mental or physical. Please inform the Resident Staff if you become ill during the program.

Smoking

Note that smoking is more common in the Czech Republic than in the U.S. The anti-smoking regulations that are prevalent in the U.S. and are becoming common in Europe are not enforced in the Czech Republic. Therefore, if you are allergic to or easily bothered by smoke, be aware that it will be more difficult to avoid in the Czech Republic than it is in the United States.

Drinking alcohol

Excessive availability of alcohol may be a problem in the Czech Republic, where beer is served with virtually every meal. Drinking accompanies social gatherings, but few Czechs find appearing under the influence acceptable. Most regard it as a sign of immaturity and poor manners. If you decide to drink, do not try to match your hosts drink for drink. Follow your hosts' example, but if they throw a toast back "bottoms up", you may take only a third or a quarter of yours if you want. Try not to exceed your normal intake of alcohol, and be very wary of homemade slivovice and/or absinth.

Czech beer is world famous, very tasty, and very strong. Use caution, common sense, and moderation. Czechs usually eat while drinking; and should you choose to drink, this is a custom worth copying. Despite all this imbibing, drinking in public is illegal, and among most local people is considered to be in poor taste and boorish. Indeed, public drinking is viewed with contempt. Public drunkenness is rarely seen among Czechs in Prague, and while many Czechs drink a lot, few drink with the gusto frequently displayed by tourists or American college students. Remember that drunkenness is never an excuse for rude, loud, or inappropriate behavior, and is always looked down upon by locals. Abuse of alcohol is also considered a breach of the code of conduct and will lead to program dismissal.

Drugs

Any use of illegal drugs during the whole duration of the program is **strictly prohibited** and will lead to a dismissal from the program.

AIDS

The HIV virus is now pandemic, meaning it is present everywhere, including Europe. Take the appropriate precautions. Many U.S. doctors are concerned about needle re-use in other countries, yet re-use of needles has not been a problem in the Czech Republic in the health care field. Should you need an injection while in the Czech Republic, make sure the needle comes sealed in a special package and is opened in front of you. This is a normal procedure in the clinics you would go to in Prague.

CDC Recommendations

If you plan to travel after the program to other countries, you may want to consult the CDC information specific to these countries. The CDC website is www.cdc.gov.

Medical Supplies

If you take prescription drugs, pack enough to last throughout the program. Most people seriously underestimate the amount of medicine they will need. Also, it may be a hassle to get any prescription drugs sent by mail through customs. **Be sure to pack these in their original packages and with the original prescription indicating the generic name of the drug (not the U.S. brand name) and information concerning dosage. Also carry a copy of the prescription from your doctor.**

Be aware that in the Czech Republic Ritalin, Cylert, Dexedrine, and Adderall are only available after a full doctor's examination. Following the exam a doctor may prescribe equivalents (not brand name), BUT there are quotas on these drugs and they are not commonly prescribed. Students taking these or similar medications should bring a four-month supply and doctor's letter of explanation for customs and the local doctors.

Students who wear glasses or contact lenses should be sure to take an extra pair as well as a copy of their prescription. If you use oral contraceptives, please take an adequate supply with you. Western-made condoms are readily available.

Although you may enjoy excellent health, you may find yourself susceptible to colds, diarrhea, and other types of travelers' maladies after you arrive in the country. Discuss with your doctor the program in the country, the weather and climate, the Central European diet, and the hectic pace of activity.

Most over-the-counter medicines (or at least a Central European equivalent) are available, but we recommend that you bring medication for upset stomach, surface scratches and cuts. Be sure to take medicine for any recent or chronic ailment, which might recur; e.g., athlete's foot, insomnia, or skin problems. Women prone to bladder or yeast infections should bring appropriate medication. Quite a number of past participants have come down with bronchitis in Prague (mainly in winter months), so it is definitely a good idea to pack some Bronkaid or a similar over-the-counter medicine. Remember, however, to be careful about treating yourself, and be sure to seek professional help when necessary.

Note to Asthma and Allergy Sufferers: In Central Europe, air pollution is markedly worse than what you are used to. If you have a history of respiratory illness, such as asthma or allergies, though you may not have been affected by it since childhood, we strongly recommend that you bring an inhaler and any other appropriate medication.

Medical Facilities

If you have a medical emergency, please notify your resident staff. They will know of the best facilities for your treatment. For non-emergency visits, students go to the university hospital. It's free and very good since the doctors are either students or professors, but you must be willing to wait for hours. In Bahia, the resident staff will direct you to the best emergency center. Be prepared to have cash money and possibly pay up to \$100 U.S. for a doctor's visit. Your medical insurance through CIEE will reimburse you later.

Things to do before you leave

Preparing for study abroad entails a lot more than just packing a suitcase. In fact, the thought and effort you put into preparing yourself will largely determine the success of the program you are embarking upon. At CIEE, we will do everything we can to provide you with the information you require prior to departure, but there is only so much we can do; it is important for you to recognize your own responsibilities, which include:

- Thoroughly discussing your study and travel plans with your financial aid office, study abroad office, and academic advisor.
- Taking a course in European/Central European studies in any of the following disciplines: history, sociology, political science, literature, language or economics, and preparing to be able to answer with confidence questions listed further in the Charles University Entry Test located in Part V of this handbook. (You will not be taking the test. We only give you a copy of this test to you as an example of what is considered common knowledge in a university in Prague. You will be given an ungraded survey test at the end of the term to see how much of this information you have learned.)
- Having as many courses as possible pre-approved by home university advisors. This will significantly improve your drop and add process on site.
- Making any necessary arrangements for the following academic year, including housing, registration, and graduate school application. If you are a senior, be sure to make necessary arrangements for graduation.
- Learn about environmental impact of travel and get information on how to minimize your ecological footprint – see www.greenpassport.us for more information and possibilities to join in a community of conscious sojourners abroad
- Arriving at the program site with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a positive attitude toward what lies ahead.
- Take advantage of your home schools services to meet Czechs and learn more about what to expect
- Brush up on your Czech
- Get a good Guide Book

- Reading all of the materials that CIEE has made available to you, including this handbook. Many of the questions that students ask are answered in this handbook.
- Doing additional reading about the region/the country you will be visiting and the customs of the host culture. While you couldn't possibly be prepared for every new experience that awaits you, reading about the Czech Republic will give you a base of knowledge that will serve you well in the early weeks of the program. (Refer to the Reading List and the entry test at the back of this handbook for recommended reading.)

Personal Finance

Your CIEE Program fees include:

- Pre-departure information and services
- Optional on-site airport meet and greet
- Orientation
- On-site support
- Tuition
- Cultural activities and require local excursions and field trips
- iNext health insurance
- The cost of housing, some meals

Budgeting

Your money will go a little further in the Czech Republic, but the price gap is quickly disappearing, especially in Prague downtown areas. These days, basic survival items cost about the same as in the U.S. Electronics and clothing are slightly more expensive, while food and services prices may tend to be a bit lower than in the U.S. - you can still find Czech restaurants and other restaurants where a meal will cost less than eight dollars.

You will need money for meals, course materials, a cell phone and phone credit, toiletries, cosmetics, cleaning supplies, medical expenses, entertainment, gifts, and independent travel. Past participants note that phone calls home can really add up, while SKYPE is a great program to download. Expenditures on restaurant meals, travel, and nights out can also add up. It is easy to spend a lot of money without realizing it.

Please visit your program details on CIEE's website for estimated additional expenses.

Besides inflation and currency exchange, another variable that will affect your spending abroad is your individual taste requirements. When creating a budget, it may be helpful to consider how much you normally spend in a semester (including meals, books, personal items and all other expenses) and inflate it a bit. Although the cost of living for a student in the Czech Republic is comparable to that of a student in the U.S., the added cost of independent travel, along with the impulse to splurge, makes careful budgeting imperative. Former students have saved considerably by making their own meals and limiting vacation travel to the general area around Prague. We suggest you take extra money, if possible, for unforeseeable expenses.

CIEE Program Cost and Billing

For general FAQ about CIEE fees and billing, see our website at <http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/faq.aspx>. Also, information on CIEE billing procedures can be found at

<http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/billing-procedures.aspx>. For more specific billing inquiries, contact CIEE Customer Service at 1-800-40-STUDY or studyinfo@ciee.org.

Financial Arrangements and Banking

Money

The national currency is the Koruna (or Crown), broken down into 100 Halíre (Hellere).

It is difficult to advise you about the best method for bringing money. Some past participants have felt that traveler's checks were the way to go while others insisted that international ATM cards (such as a Visa check card) were the only way to handle one's money. Your best bet is to have several methods of obtaining funds in the event that one method fails or is inconvenient. Plan this before you depart.

Best practice recently is a regular debit card with a Visa or MasterCard logo (students should verify with the bank that the card works in Europe: NYCE, Cirrus, Plus machines are available everywhere), which allows one to withdraw cash. Please note that you should check with your bank or credit company before departure about international ATM charges and conversion fees. We recommend you notify your bank about living abroad and having access from the Czech Republic for a period of time, so that your withdrawals from Europe do not raise suspicion of fraud.

Bankcards and Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa are accepted in all major supermarkets, restaurants, and big stores in the center of Prague, although generally Czech society is a cash-based one. Prices on craft items are lower in the Czech countryside, but villagers do not take credit cards. Note that ATMs do not provide your available balance, but if you are able to keep track independently of your funds in your account, past participants say that ATMs are an excellent way to access money.

Please note that American Express is not as widely accepted as Visa or MasterCard and Discover card is not yet accepted in Europe.

Wiring Money

There are Western Union offices in Prague that students can use. We advise you not to rely on these unless it is necessary, due to the additional fees involved. If you must, make sure both you and the sender have called Western Union (for example) and have confirmed an exact address and working phone number for the place you will be picking the money up. If it goes to the wrong place, your money may float in limbo for weeks or worse. The phone number for Western Union in the U.S. is 1-800-325-6000. The phone number for Western Union in Prague is (420) 224 222- 954.

Traveler's Check

Traveler's checks are much safer to carry than cash (though they may be more difficult to exchange) and should be purchased in \$20s or \$50s. A small charge is levied each time a traveler's check is cashed. In most cases, traveler's checks can only be cashed for Czech currency, not U.S. dollars. American Express and EuroCheques are the most widely recognized in the Czech Republic. You may be required to show your passport or a photocopy of it when cashing them, so be prepared.

Personal Checks

Personal checks from non-Czech banks are not accepted anywhere in the Czech Republic.

Travelers Checks and Cash Advances

While there are many places to exchange money throughout Prague, including banks, hotels, and American Express, most charge very high service fees. The best place to change money is in any regular bank. There are banks both before and after Customs at the Airport that charge only a 2% fee. Other good places to change money are the major banks on Na Prikope or in Vodickova streets, just off Vaclavske namesti

For a cash advance you will need your passport. The large banks charge about 2% per check to change a traveler's check.

Cash

Make sure any cash you bring is crisp, in small denominations, as banks and change counters tend to be wary of dirty or wrinkled banknotes. Note that U.S. coins are not accepted in banks and other money changing places.

Packing

Try to organize and pack a day or two prior to departure so that you can judge if you'll be able to carry your bags (you must be able to do this). Some students have even practiced by carrying their bags around the block! Also, by packing early, you'll have time to rest before the long trip.

Please use baggage tags for each luggage piece and fill in your home address and your address abroad. For your address abroad use the program mailing address.

Limits vary. Read the weight limitation and baggage allowance information provided by your international airline carrier on the ticket. Generally, flights overseas permit one piece of checked baggage and one carry-on piece + one personal item (such as a purse). Your checked bag must weigh less than 50 pounds. Total dimensions (length + width + height) of your checked bag must be less than 62 inches. Total dimensions of the carry-on must not exceed 45 inches and must be able to fit below the seat in front of you or in the overhead compartment. If your baggage exceeds any of these standards you may be charged significantly for excess baggage. Check with your airline regarding any items that are oversized and please always double-check with your airline for the most up-to-date baggage information.

Clothing

Much of your time during the semester is spent outdoors walking long distances. Therefore durable, comfortable, and practical clothing is absolutely essential.

Appearance is important and people dress up more than regular US students on campus. Neatness, good taste, and cleanliness are expected both in the classroom, in the dorms, and in public. Don't bring just baggy jeans and sweatpants. They're not acceptable in the classroom.

Choose the type of clothing you pack carefully. Take items that are suitable for several types of occasions. You'll be surprised at how little is really necessary. Past participants emphasize that over-packing is a bad idea, and that it's easy to have variety with a few choices of clothing.

Do not take expensive or elaborate jewelry. Not only will these kinds of things mark you for thieves, they are rarely appropriate.

You'll need one outfit suitable for the opera or theater. (Yes, you read that correctly.) A sports coat and tie with nice pants for men and a nice dress or slacks for women. Almost all students dress up at least once during the semester, so it's best to be prepared.

The climate in the Czech Republic tends to be slightly cooler and less humid than in the northern U.S. Temperatures range from the 80s and even 90s during the summer, to well below freezing in the winter. This means it is best to be prepared for any weather. The layered approach works well and makes packing easier.

Toiletries

For both men and women, almost all toiletries are readily available in Prague although you may not find your favorite brand. Some past participants have noted that US brand cosmetics can be significantly more expensive in Prague. If you are particular about any of the products that you use, bring an adequate supply. Regarding feminine hygiene products, tampons and pads are readily available, although tampons are usually available without an applicator. Other products like yeast infection medication may not be available other than through doctor's prescription.

Birth Control

It is best to bring your own contraceptives. Birth control pills are also available with prescription, but it is certainly easier to bring an adequate supply with you. Depo pro Vera shots are available only with a local doctor's prescription.

Linens

Full bedding, including sheets, blankets, and pillowcases is provided within each housing option. Please note that the pillows may be down pillows, so if you are allergic to down, you will need to buy a pillow once in Prague. If you plan to travel in Europe before or after the program dates, you may want to bring a twin-size flat sheet or hosteller's sleep-sack. We also recommend that you pack a bath towel.

Contact Lenses

If you wear contacts, bring solution with you. While it is available in Prague, it is quite expensive. Also, you may have trouble using long-wear lenses because of Prague's pollution.

Electronics

Essential note: please bring a plug adapter for Europe with you if you take your laptop! The current in the Czech Republic, as in nearly all of Europe, is 220 volts, 50 cycle AC. Electric converters are needed for small appliances and adapter plugs must be used to connect North American equipment. Travel supply shops, electronics retailers and some hardware stores in the U.S. carry them. If you can't get them in the U.S. most big airport hubs have stores where you can purchase adapter plugs. If you plan on using any electrical appliance that you are bringing with you from the U.S., you must bring a converter and plug adapter with you because they are not available in Prague. If you are buying any new electric items to bring with you, try to get dual-voltage models so you won't need a converter at all (though you will still need the adapter plug). The Czech plug is a standard European plug with two round prongs.

Laptop

A laptop is not required, but if you do have one, you will find it very handy to have with you.

As mentioned above, if you plan to take a laptop, be sure you have the appropriate electrical adapter. Additionally, we recommend that any students taking a laptop consider installing security/theft recovery software. One example of this software is Computrace LoJack for laptops, made by Absolute software.

Camera

Regulations on photography have been greatly relaxed, but it is courteous to request permission before taking pictures of people. Photographing military installations, power plants and other "sensitive" subjects- usually including train stations-is still illegal.

Be sure to try out your camera thoroughly before departure. If you are buying a new camera, it is good to have one suitable for taking pictures in low-light indoor conditions, as flash photography is often prohibited in many museums and buildings.

Gifts

Czechs customarily give gifts to their guests, even those of short acquaintance. It is appropriate to reciprocate. Upon visiting someone's home for the first time (e.g., for dinner) you may show courtesy by bringing a modest bouquet of flowers, a bottle of wine, or a box of chocolates.

Courtesies

Czechs remove their shoes before entering their houses and apartments, so be prepared to remove your shoes upon entry to apartments or someone's home.

While Away

Living in Prague

Sometimes living in a university environment abroad makes it easy to forget you're not home. Remember, you're in another country with its own laws and customs, and they are different from the ones you're used to. Be aware of this and conduct yourself accordingly. Also, be sure to attend classes regularly and participate in program activities.

The orientation described in Part I of this handbook will also cover practical aspects of living in a new place, Czech laws, proper social conduct, and cultural differences, including race, gender, and class. For example, some past participants have found that many Czech nationals had a particular image of U.S. women, often acquired through advertising, television, and movies. The resident staff will provide insights into the local culture's view of women and suggest ways to reduce anxiety and to ensure personal safety.

Remember that despite the presence of pizzerias, American fast food places, and American television, the country is still working its way out of the technological and cultural legacies of the Soviet empire. Telephones and internet may not always work, plumbing problems arise, and the maze-like bureaucracy can try your patience. All of these things are part of daily life in the Czech Republic.

You may have written in your application essay that you want to immerse yourself in another culture. This means that you have to be willing to accept the negatives along with the positives. Be persistent and resourceful, but also patient and understanding if you find you simply can't do something. Nobody takes kindly to ugly tourist behavior and a little politeness goes a long way.

Cultural Adaptation

Although cultural adaptation is highly individual, research indicates that most people go through similar stages in adapting to a new environment. Any travel you've done abroad, and perhaps even within your own country has exposed you to culture shock. But if you've never had to overcome culture shock, you might want to read about it before you depart. You'll find books relating to culture adaptation and culture shock on the recommended reading list at the back of this handbook.

During your on-site orientation, the Resident Staff will discuss details about culture shock and give strategies for adapting to your new surroundings. Near the end of the program, they will also provide information on reverse culture shock and suggest ways of coping with returning home, which can be equally traumatic.

Safety Precautions

The health and safety of program participants abroad is understandably an important issue for all concerned. CIEE was a founding member of the Inter-Organization Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad. The following website contains information about the Task Force and study abroad safety issues –

http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.sec/education_abroad_1/developing_and_managing_practice_resources_36/policies/guidelines_for_health

CIEE's approach to safety is fourfold. First, we conduct a careful safety evaluation of every program we run. Next we provide comprehensive and realistic information to prospective applicants so that they may make informed decisions as to participation. Then, when the students arrive on site, we conduct a thorough orientation that includes tips on reducing risk and handling difficult situations should they arise. Finally, program staff continuously monitors local conditions in order to provide guidance to participants throughout their stay.

Experience has shown that the single most important factor in assuring a safe study abroad experience is the sensible and cautious behavior of the participants themselves. When traveling abroad, you should exercise additional caution and always remain alert to what is going on around you, especially in crowded tourist areas and on public transportation.

Although the Czech Republic is safe, you must be careful about what you do and where you go. Petty crime has escalated over the past years, especially in Prague. Take the same precautions as you would in any major city in the world. Students need to remember to lock their apartments diligently at all times, due to possible opportunity theft. Pick pocketing and other forms of theft occur frequently. More violent crime occurs less frequently, but be careful to avoid questionable, potential crime areas. Tourists are common targets for pickpockets, because they may appear confused and disoriented. Be aware of your backpacks and cameras, especially in crowded public transport. Follow these general rules:

- Don't carry large amounts of cash
- Remain alert in crowded tourist areas and on public transportation; it's easy to be pick pocketed.
- When you carry your passport, wear it around your neck in a thin pouch inside your shirt. If you must carry it in a bag, use one that can be slung diagonally across your chest and that has a sturdy strap that cannot be easily ripped.
- At night, don't take shortcuts. Call yourself a cab or walk on main, well-lit, and populated streets. Avoid walking alone, avoid parks, and deserted areas.
- Never keep things in your wallet or purse that you would mind losing.
- Do not accept rides with anybody you do not know.
- As noted earlier, keep a photocopy of your passport in a separate place. This will speed up the process of replacing your documents should they be lost or stolen. Never carry valuables in the pockets of your pants.
- As a Westerner, you will be a natural target for a pickpocket. Leave tempting electronic equipment, flashy clothes, jewelry or anything else you would not like to part with, at home. Remember, the standard of living in the Czech Republic is not yet that of Western Europe.
- If you are the victim of a pickpocket, or if something is stolen, inform the Resident Staff, who can help you make a police report, if you deem necessary.
- Be aware of the heating situation provided by your host institution and residence. For locations where carbon monoxide producing appliances may be present – i.e., any appliance that burns fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal – learn detailed information on the possible dangers associated with such appliances, along with safe operating instructions. For further information, please visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at www.epa.gov. You may wish to take a small battery-operated carbon monoxide detector to have in your housing.

Avoid those areas of Prague you are not thoroughly familiar with. If anyone begins to harass or follow you, move to a populated area, get on a tram that is full of people, and head for a place where you can find friends. If someone is following you, never go home unless you are sure someone is there.

It is important to have a healthy respect for where you are. Governments of the former Soviet bloc used their police to repress dissent as well as to fight crime. Re-educating and retraining the police force is a long and delicate process that is nowhere near completion. While it has happened rarely, students have been harassed by the police.

In addition to ensuring safety on the street or while traveling, you also need to protect your valuables in your place of residence. While there have only been a few minor incidents of theft in the past, the apartments and dorm are not unlike college dormitories and apartments in the U.S. Be certain to lock your room whenever you leave, even for a very brief period of time, and return the key to the reception desk. If you bring valuable items, such as expensive cameras or computers, lock them in your suitcase. Remember, most U.S. based insurance companies will not cover property lost or stolen overseas.

The Glimpse Foundation

CIEE is an institutional member of The Glimpse Foundation. As a CIEE student, you get access to a full range of services that will help you prepare for your time abroad and/or enable you to share your insights during and after your overseas experience.

These services include:

- Access to Glimpse's content archive, which currently contains over 400 student-written articles from 88 countries.
- Access to the Glimpse 'Ask the Expert' database so you can connect with current and returned study abroad students in your country/region.

To get started go to GlimpseAbroad.org: <http://glimpse.org>

Meeting Czechs

Just as it is impossible to define a typical American, it is equally impossible to define a typical Czech. You will meet many types of people in the Czech Republic who have different opinions, attitudes, and habits. The more you interact with the Czech people, the better chance you'll have of forming relationships and understanding the culture. During these interactions, you should use common sense, intelligence, and a sense of objectivity. Be prepared to discuss your views freely and openly, and try to listen with an open mind.

You may arrive in the Czech Republic with some preconceptions about the Czechs and may encounter some Czechs with preconceptions about people from the U.S. Try to put aside stereotypes and make judgments based on real experiences. If you are confronted with what you feel is a false stereotype about the U.S., be frank and truthful, yet tactful in your response. Avoid refuting arguments with odious comparisons to the country. This type of reaction will only create bad feelings. A positive and serious response from you will help dispel myths about the United States.

Special Notes

For Women

Gender roles are different in Czech society from those in the U.S., although this may not seem apparent at first. As in big American cities, women may be stared at or "catcalled". Smiling at men or making direct eye contact can be considered flirtatious and may invite unwanted attention. Relationships between men and women are usually not as casual as they are on an American college campus. While it may be easy to strike up a conversation and become casually friendly with someone of the opposite sex at your home school, a Czech man may think you're flirting with him and behave accordingly. Be observant and careful not to be misunderstood.

For Minorities

Students that are members of ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, gay and lesbian students, or overweight students may experience challenges in the study abroad setting. Czech society is fairly homogeneous, and therefore many Czechs stare at people who look different. Resident staff is sensitive to these issues and will provide as much information and support as possible. Czech society is undergoing tremendous change. As a result of the stress this causes, some social problems are emerging. These problems are familiar to the West, but have been either long suppressed in Central Europe, or are completely new. Some may show resentment particularly toward those who appear Roma, Asian, or African. Some students have reported being stared at or remarked about. This is most typically a result of curiosity rather than a reflection of negative or resentful feelings, but students should prepare for differences in perception and talk with local staff about all of these issues.

It is also not uncommon to hear some Czechs speak about minorities in a manner that Americans generally feel is unacceptable. In general, Czechs are very direct and do not “spare” each other’s feelings. Most of the xenophobic tendencies and attitudes are the result of the economic pressures involved in the ongoing transition and the black market activities, real and imagined, stemming from foreign based operation.

Additionally, because of the large expatriate community in Prague, there can sometimes be seen a backlash against Americans, Germans, British, and the like (who often visit Prague briefly in order to have fun in the town, i.e. stag-parties, and display loud and out of control behavior Czechs object to). The best advice is simply to distinguish oneself as different; more than just a tourist, and act with respect to locals. Prague is by-and-large a progressive and liberal city, which welcomes all well-intended visitors.

Transportation

Daily Commute

Information about local transportation will be covered at Orientation.

Independent Travel

You will no doubt want to explore the city, particularly on weekends. Before leaving the U.S., gather as much information as possible about places you may want to visit. A worthwhile guide to pick up is the Eyewitness Guide to Prague. Of course, this may require additional funds.

Look online for locations of the National Tourism Board of the country offices. Other sources which may be helpful are the various Michelin Guides, Let’s Go or the Lonely Planet series.

You are permitted to travel independently outside of the country only when the program is not in session or when it does not interfere with class attendance and upon notification to CIEE. Classes missed due to travel are considered unexcused absences, and are subject to CIEE Attendance Policy requirements.

Contact the embassies or consulates of the countries you wish to visit before you leave for Prague in order to find out what documents, visas, etc. are required for entry into and exit out of these countries. Also, see the section in this handbook on visas for more information.

Many students assume that since they are going to Europe, they should automatically get a Eurail pass. However, it is ISIC card which proves students’ status and allows for many discounts in Prague and Czech Republic (cinemas, international bus/train tickets, museums, etc.) For the amount and type of traveling that students usually do while on the program, a Eurail pass is rarely the most cost effective option. For example, you won’t be able to use Eurail in most Eastern European countries. Think carefully about your travel plans before you discuss them with your travel agent. For example, the Eurolines bus pass is cheaper than the Eurail pass and is easily available in Prague.

Hostelling International Card

If you plan to travel independently while you are abroad, you may want to purchase a Hostelling International card at <http://www.hiayh.org/>. The card allows you to stay at hostels in many countries around the world at a discount rate.

International Student Identity Card

Most Czech and European businesses (bus/train companies, cinemas, etc.) offer student discounts upon a prove of student status through ISIC card. US university student IDs are not recognized for this purpose, so should obtain the International Student Identity Card prior to your departure, see: www.isic.org

Communications and Mail

Telephones and Cellular Phones

Telephones

Telephone machines operate on a system of local telephone cards with chips. Phone cards are available in small shops, the main post office, and any newsstands. Every participant needs to make sure they keep one in case of emergency.

Placing international phone calls is possible from public phones, mobile phones, at post offices, or at private phones. The Czech Republic is also served by USA Direct, a service offered by several long distance companies that allows one to make calling-card and collect overseas calls to the U.S. from some public, and all private and institutional phones. You will use your Czech phone card to access the operator.

Dorm rooms and homestays have phones that accept incoming calls, but you cannot call out. While we realize that this situation is inconvenient, it is common practice. Public pay phones are used to make local or international calls. You will need to purchase a Czech phone card (aprox. \$10) for all calls. The system will not charge you for collect or calling card calls, but to activate the phone machine a local phone card may be necessary. If you borrow a Czech mobile phone from CIEE, you will be able to receive incoming calls from the US at no charge while the person calling you in the US is charged based on US plan charges for calls into CR.

Cell Phones

Many students find using a cell phone is a convenient and effective way to communicate while abroad. CIEE offers a limited amount of used cell phones for rent free of charge or cell phones can be purchased once you arrive in Prague. The cost of a new phone usually starts at about \$70 -100, depending on quality and provider. These are pre-paid phones that will require you to add credit as you go (usually \$20 at a time). Depending on the amount and duration of phone calls, students may spend an additional \$100 on phone credit.

Information on purchasing a cell phone will be covered during Orientation. We advise students to wait for their arrival to arrange their cell phones as local staff will have tips from their own research and from previous student feedback.

More Details

Students typically find that switching their US cellphone plan to a temporary international plan is not cost-effective. We recommend utilizing CIEE's rental cell phones and sim cards, or staff will help you find a used or inexpensive phone and sim card to purchase. CIEE typically has enough cell phones/sim cards for everyone. Bringing an unlocked cell phone abroad with you and purchasing or renting an inexpensive sim card is an option, but we don't recommend this as student's phones might be expensive and you can risk breaking or losing them during your travels.

Cost

Unlike in the US, European cell phones tend to be "pay-as-you-go," meaning you pay for what you get. You can "Top-up" your phone at many convenient locations throughout the city. While student cell phone usage varies, we find that you spend much less on a pay-as-you-go phone than on a monthly unlimited plan in the US.

Fax

You can send and receive faxes from the Main Post Office, which is on Jindřišská street (just off Václavské náměstí). Any charges will be based on current fax rates in Prague. The CIEE Office will send a free fax if you need course approval, in order to guarantee a semester credit.

Internet

Skype

Consider bringing personal headphones along with your laptop so you can contact family and friends through Skype as it is more affordable and convenient.

Internet and Email

CIEE has a computer lab and wireless connection available for use by CIEE students. There are nineteen computers for student use. The lab is open from 8am–7pm Monday through Thursday and 9am-5pm on Fridays. There are also many cyber cafes in Prague that are scattered all over downtown and are open late.

WIFI specifications in CIEE Prague Study Center: Students need to understand and be able to set up the wireless connection on their computers prior to coming to Prague. Learn how to connect to a network that requires a key password (WEP) before arriving on site. CIEE uses Charles University network and has to comply with its rules of use. CIEE staff assists students in setting up the network connection in the study center directly.

The Charles University IT office does not offer individual computer trouble-shooting services for CIEE students. Students will obtain instructions on how to connect to the local network and will have to navigate their accessibility independently. If you have an external WIFI card with its own software, know how to use it and bring your instruction manual and CD.

Wi-fi cards must be IEEE 802.11 g/b compatible, and support WEP encryption.

Note: In all cases you should bring your operational system backup CDs with you (or a copy) in case you experience problems with your laptop.

Program Mailing Address

Mail service to and from the Czech Republic is adequate, and there are post offices near the school, the dormitories, and in the center of town. Airmail letters arrive within a week or two, but surface parcels may take as long as 2 months if they arrive at all. While we do not recommend having costly items sent to you or sending packages from Prague, more often than not I-Pods, computers, winter coats, etc., get stuck in customs and students either pay exorbitant fees or do not receive the items. If you do take a chance, keep separate lists of the contents, as all parcels are subject to opening and inspection by customs officials. Mail tampering in the Czech Republic is not uncommon. Also, if you do send something of value to the Czech Republic, it is a good idea for the sender to insure the package. Do not send cash through the mail at any time (see below under Money and Banking). Mailing cash is an excellent way to supplement a postal worker's income, but a terrible way to get money to you.

Prague is served by UPS, FedEx, and other express mail services. CIEE has found them to be reliable for sending items to Prague. It usually takes 3-4 business days for packages from the U.S. to arrive to Prague. If you need to send express mail from Prague, there are several DHL offices in Prague, for example, at Václavské náměstí 47, Prague 1. Their phone number is 840 103 000 (open even on Saturdays). The Federal Express office is at Olbrachtova 1, Prague 4 and can be reached by phone at 800 133 339 or 244 002 200.

Import Taxes

Import taxes are imposed on certain goods sent through the mail. These charges can be quite high (often more than the value of the goods themselves) and must be paid by the receiver (the student) before delivery is made. Tell senders to be extremely careful in how they complete the customs declaration form on the package. In most cases the words "USED PERSONAL ITEMS (and specify clothes, cds, etc...) FOR USE WHILE STUDYING" solve the problem of packages being held at customs. Do not state a value higher than \$25 on packages. It is best to send items under a \$25 stated value. Items with a higher stated value are sure to get stuck in customs with a 19% tax on that value. Items may be insured for more than \$25. The insurance and stated value are independent of one another.

Additional Resources

Information you should know

Policies and Procedures

CIEE Program Policies

The link below provides additional details and information regarding CIEE program policies, academic policies, program fees and payment policies.

To view CIEE's Policies and Procedures please follow:

<http://ciee.org/study/terms.aspx>

Suggested Reading

We urge you to read several of these publications to expand your knowledge of the Czech Republic and ease your adjustment to Czech culture. Many of these books can be purchased at your local bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

Professors at Charles University have strongly suggested that students read at least one of the listed books before coming to Prague. In addition, all of the professors have suggested that students study a map of East/Central Europe and be able to identify the following cities/countries: Regensburg, Prague, Bratislava, Presov, Kosice, Ceske Budejovice, Ostrava, Plzen, Vienna, Linz, Budapest, Belgrade, Zagreb, Krakow, Warsaw, Gdansk, Berlin, Bonn, Frankfurt, Moscow, Minsk, L'vov, Kiev, Bucharest, Sofia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia. You should also be able to locate the Danube, the Elbe and the Vltava rivers.

Students should also be familiar with the following names, events and things and be able to answer questions in the entry test below: Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Great Moravian Empire, Glagolitic Alphabet, Holy Roman Empire, Charles IV of Bohemia, Wenceslas I of Bohemia, Jan Hus, Jan Zizka, George of Podebrady, Utraquists, Taborites, Moravian Brethren, Battle of White Mountain, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Empress Maria Theresa, Czech Legions, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Munich Agreement of 1938, Alexander Dubcek, Prague Spring, Charter 77, Vaclav Havel, Franz Kafka, Milos Forman.

Books on Czech Republic

- Ash, Timothy Garton. The Uses of Adversity, Essays on the Fate of Central Europe. Vintage Books, Random House, NY.
- Hasek, Jaroslav. The Good Soldier Svejk and His Fortunes in the World War. Penguin, USA.
- Havel, Vaclav. Disturbing the Peace. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1990.
- Hrabal, Bohumil. I Served the King of England.
- Lytle, Douglas. Pink Tanks and Velvet Hangovers: An American in Prague. Frog, Ltd. Berkeley, CA, 1995.
- Mason, David. Revolution in East-Central Europe. Westview Press.
- Škvorecký, Josef. The Engineer of Human Souls.

Books on Cultural Adaptation

Adaptation to a new culture can be difficult. The following reading list contains publications that deal specifically with issues of culture shock and the difficulties associated with living overseas. Many of these books can be purchased at your local bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

- Citron, James. Short-Term Study Abroad: Integration, Third Culture Formation and Reentry. NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1996.
- Kepets, Dawn. Back in the USA: Reflecting on Your Study Abroad Experience. NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1999.
- Kohls, Robert. Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad. Intercultural Press, 2001.
- Storti, Craig. The Art of Crossing Cultures (Second Edition). Intercultural Press, 2001.
- Storti, Craig. The Art of Coming Home. Intercultural Press, 2001.
- Wolfgang, Aaron. Everybody's Guide to People Watching, Intercultural Press, 1995.

Additional Info

Websites

For those students with access to the Internet, we also encourage you to look at the many sites on Prague and Czech Republic including the following:

www.ciee.org

The CIEE website. If you haven't already, take a look and find out about other CIEE programs and activities around the world.

www.greenpassport.us

Information on a "green" abroad experience

www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/cze.htm

Online travel guide to the Czech Republic from the respected "Lonely Planet" series of travel guides

www.czech.cz

The official web page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not only does it provide some practical information about the Czech Republic, it has links to many other sites.

www.praguepost.cz

Prague's leading English language newspaper

www.expats.cz

excellent resource for English speakers living in the Czech Republic. Discussion forums and numerous articles in English.

www.ff.cuni.cz

The Faculty of Philosophy and Art at Charles University

www.travel.state.gov

The U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs home page providing Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, U.S. Passport Information and Application Procedures, U.S. Consulate and Embassy Addresses Abroad, and U.S. Customs Information.

www.oanda.com or www.x-rates.com

Information on exchange rates

www.cdc.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This site provides updated information on required immunization and regional health advisories for travelers.

Suggested Packing Checklist

Important Documents

- Airline ticket (including return ticket)
- Printed copy of CIEE "final details" email (which will be sent to you 3-4 weeks prior to the program start date)
- Credit Card/debit card with pin numbers
- Home advisor's (both academic and study abroad) address, fax, e-mail
- Passport/Photocopy of passport (keep separate from passport)
- Traveler's checks (optional) and list of traveler's check numbers (keep separate)
- Youth hostel pass/Eurail pass (if desired)
- International Student Identity Card (if purchased, CIEE does not provide)

Clothing

- Underwear
- Bras
- Slip (if necessary)
- Swim suit
- Shower sandals
- Pants (including one dressy pair)
- Shorts for warm weather
- Skirts or dresses (including one dressier for the opera/ball)
- Belts
- Tie
- Sports coat/blazer
- Shirts
- Sweaters/sweatshirts, including some for under a jacket
- Winter coat/gloves/hat/scarf
- Socks
- Pajamas/nightgown
- Robe
- Shoes: sturdy (water resistant), comfortable walking shoes, athletic, dress, sandals.

General

- 110/220 volt current converter with European outlet adapter
- European outlet adapter (esp. if you bring laptop)
- Backpack/Overnight bag for traveling

- Batteries
- Battery operated CO detector
- Camera/memory cards/batteries
- Contact lens solution
- Contraceptives
- Extra pair of glasses or contact lenses
- Flashlight
- Gifts/Photos from home (photos especially recommended for homestay students)
- Guidebook
- Gynecological supplies
- Hair dryer (preferably dual voltage)
- Laptop (optional); WiFi enabled, with electrical adapter and security/theft recovery software
- Medications and their descriptions, a copy of the prescription
- Money belt or neck pouch
- MP3/music player
- Sewing kit
- Towels
- Reading material: books, magazines
- Small medical kit including Pepto-Bismol and anti-diarrhea medications, cough/cold medicine.etc.
- Toiletries/personal items
- Travel alarm clock