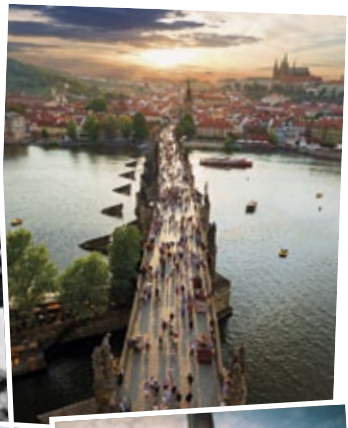




What basic facts do you know about Czechia?

Can you name some important events in Czech history?

Can you describe the Czech political system?

What are some of Czechia's geographical features?

What are some popular places to visit in Czechia?

What can you tell me about some famous Czechs?

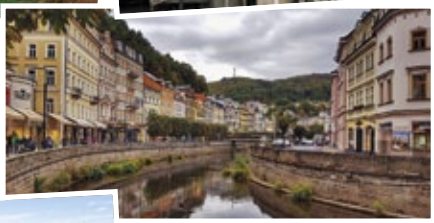
Can you name some specifically Czech holidays? What events in Czech history do they commemorate?

What do you like or dislike about living in Czechia?

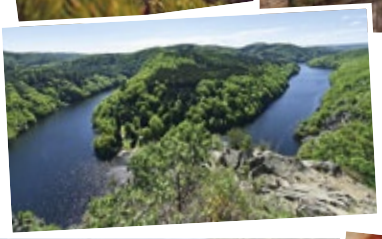




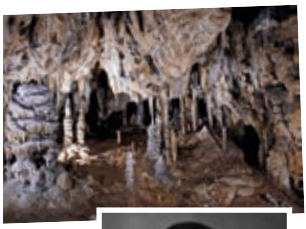


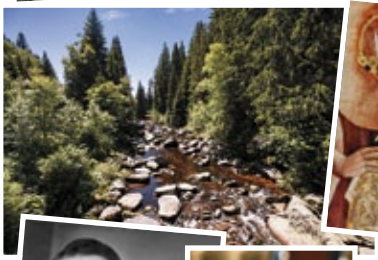










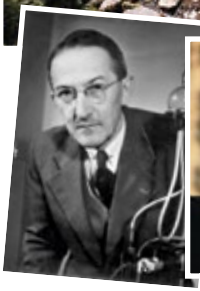






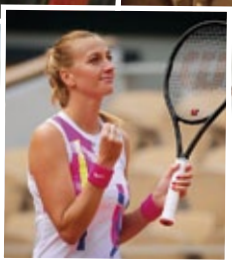














MATURITA CARD CZECHIA

Overview
The Czech Republic, or Czechia, is located in the middle of Europe. It is a landlocked country, which means there is no sea coast. It is bordered by Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Austria. It has a population of about 10.5 million and is made up of three regions: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

History
The West Slavic state of Great Moravia developed in the 9th century. Its fall was followed by the rise of the Duchy of Bohemia, which joined the Holy Roman Empire in the early 11th century and later became the Kingdom of Bohemia. King Charles IV was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in the 14th century. Under the reign of the Habsburgs, the Bohemian (or Czech) lands became part of the Austro–Hungarian Empire. The Czech National Revival, a cultural movement in the 18th and 19th centuries, managed to revive Czech language, culture and national identity. An independent Czechoslovakia was formed on October 28th 1918. In 1938, the Munich Agreement between Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom saw the Sudetenland region given to Germany, but it didn't stop Germany from invading the rest of the country the next year. After WWII, in 1948 the Communist Party took power, holding it until the Velvet Revolution of 1989. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. In 2004, both countries became members of the European Union.

Political system
The Czech government is a parliamentary democracy with two houses: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The president is the head of state and is in charge of appointing the prime minister, who is the head of government. The president serves a five-year term, deputies serve a four-year term and senators serve a six-year term.

Geography
The landscape is quite mountainous around the borders and flatter in the centre. The highest mountain is Sněžka (1,603m) in the Krkonoše Mountains. The longest river is the Vltava (430km), which flows into the Elbe (Labe). South Bohemia is famous for its many fish ponds. Šumava in the south has some of the oldest forests in the country. Bohemian Paradise, a popular area for hiking, has many interesting rock formations. The Moravian Karst is famous for its stalactite caves.

Major cities
Prague is the country's capital and its largest city, with a population of about 1.3 million. It is nicknamed "the city of a hundred spires" because of its rich architecture. Popular tourist sites include Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, the Lesser Quarter with its narrow streets, the Jewish Quarter with its old cemetery and synagogues, and the Old Town Square with its medieval astronomical clock. Brno, with a population of almost 400,000, is the second-largest city and unofficial capital of Moravia. It is famous for the Tugendhat Villa. Ostrava is known for its mining history and for the Lower Vítkovice area with its unique industrial architecture. Plzeň (Pilsen) is where pale lager (Pilsner) was first brewed. Karlovy Vary is a well-known spa and film-festival town.

Famous Czechs
Charles IV established Charles University, the first university in central Europe, in 1348. Jan Amos Komenský (John Amos Comenius) was an important educational theorist and reformer in the 17th century. Milada Horáková is regarded as a symbol of anti-communist resistance for her courageous attitude during her trial. Karel Čapek, Milan Kundera and Jaroslav Hašek are famous Czech writers. Miloš Forman is an Oscar-winning director. Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana are significant composers. Two Czechs have won Nobel prizes: Jaroslav Heyrovský for chemistry and Jaroslav Seifert for literature. Contact lenses were invented by the chemist Otto Wichterle. Famous athletes include Jaromír Jágr (ice hockey), Martina Navrátilová and Petra Kvitová (tennis), and Ester Ledecká (snowboarding and skiing; the first person to win gold in two different disciplines at the same winter Olympics).

Holidays
There are some specifically Czech holidays connected with historic events. Saints Cyril and Methodius Day (July 5th) commemorates the Christian missionaries who came to Great Moravia in 863. Jan Hus Day (July 6th) celebrates the religious reformer who was burned at the stake in 1415. Statehood Day (September 28th) is connected with the death of Saint Wenceslas, the Duke of Bohemia. October 28th is Independent Czechoslovak State Day. Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day (November 17th) commemorates student demonstrations in 1939 and 1989.