

10 things no one told me about living in the Czech Republic

13 Sep, 2016

1. You can still smoke indoors

The smoking ban was introduced in Scotland when I was 15 years old. I had almost completely forgotten what it was like before the ban existed.

Then I moved to Czech and the memories came floating back like a puff of smoke in a crowded room.

Czech is one of the very last countries in the EU which hasn't introduced the smoking ban yet. It gets talked about in parliament but that's as far as it seems to go (perhaps the MP's stop the discussions for a cigarette break?)

2. The Czechs love flavoured tea

Until I moved here I had no idea of the amount of flavoured tea that existed. Raspberry, ginger, summer fruits, winter berries, cinnamon and honey, peach and a personal favourite of mine, cherry.

I never used to drink anything except English Breakfast but now I will be trying to cram as many boxes of flavoured tea as possible into my suitcase when I leave.

3. It's home to the best wine you've ever tasted

Did you know the Czech Republic produces some incredible wine? Probably not, as Czechs actually drink more wine than the country can produce, which means there isn't much left to export. The wine produced in the southern region of Moravia is some of the best I've ever had and throughout the summer months there are endless wine festivals to enjoy. I thought New Zealand had ruined me when it came to wine, but I am very proud to say that the Czech Republic can certainly hold its own.

4. It is also the home of Burcak

What is Burcak you wonder? It is only the most deliciously intoxicating drink I've ever had and it's only available for a few weeks in September each year. It is a fermented wine which can have an alcohol content of anywhere between 1% and 7%, but this is where it gets better. Upon consumption of this fruity drink, it continues to ferment in your stomach which means if you drank the wine at 3%, its alcohol content may very well have doubled since. Burcak makes for great night out and is an essential thing to try if visiting Czech around this time of year.

5. Lunches are a very important part of the day

Having worked in both the UK and New Zealand, I have become accustomed to grabbing a sandwich and eating it at my desk. Who doesn't love Tesco's meal deal? However, the Czechs take their lunch seriously. Not only do most people eat out for lunch, but pretty much every restaurant provides at least two course lunch menu. Even in the height of summer, you will find people eating steaming hot soup followed by some delicious Czech meat and dumplings. I don't know how I will ever readjust to sandwiches again..

6. There is no such thing as customer service

Now, this may be different if you are in Prague which can be very catered towards tourists. But at least in Brno, the policy of "the customer is always right" is pretty much nonexistent. Service generally doesn't come with a smile, unfortunately. My Czech friends tell me this is slowly improving but don't take it personally if the lady in the supermarket shouts at you because you haven't weighed your apples, it's just how it is.

7. Czech people aren't what they seem

The Czechs have a reputation for not being the friendliest of nations. In fact they recently came 3rd in a poll of the most unwelcoming countries to expats in the world; so when I moved here I was a little apprehensive about what to expect. However, after living in Brno for over 1 year, I can honestly say Czech people are actually incredibly warm and welcoming. Although they may have a tough exterior and sure, the waitress who just served your table may not have smiled. But I do believe they are a nation with very big hearts, you just need to get to know them. I have formed some lifelong friendships during my time here. Adjusting to a new country and language is never easy but the people I have met have made this one of the most incredible experiences I've had.

8. Everyone has a dog

Like everyone. I very rarely met someone that did not own a dog. I tried to research the number of dogs in relation to humans but findings were inconclusive.

AND, some companies allow you to bring your pets to work.

Yep, you read that right.

So all you dog owners out there who need to leave beloved pets at home whilst your work, just move to Czech and work with them. And it's not just dogs, a guy I work with brings his lizard to work. No innuendo intended.

9. The Beer is the Best in the World

The Czech Republic is the biggest consumer of beer per capita in the world, and once you taste it it's not hard to see why. They have been brewing here since 993 AD, so it's fair to say they have perfected the art of creating the perfect beer.

10. There is a lot more to the Czech Republic than Prague

Before I moved here, I had only ever heard of Prague but over the past 12 months I have had the privilege of discovering the lesser known towns and cities of the Czech Republic. I adore the city of [Brno](#), as well as charming Olomouc and the wine town of Mikulov. Once you get out of Prague you start to discover the authentic Czech Republic and not one designed for tourists, as beautiful as Prague is, I can honestly say the rest of the country is pretty incredible too.