Beginning of the 20th Century: Austro-Hungarian Empire, World War 1, and the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Before 2018, Czech Republic as a country didn’t exist. Czech populations as an ethnical group were always part of bigger empires, and in this time, they belonged to the population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. All changed when the Empire started World War 1 in response to the assassination of the heir Franz-Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist (Serbia was also part of the Empire). Czech people were not particularly happy to fight for the Empire, which had never really given them any kind of autonomy, though they were the industrial, therefore strategic, part of it. When the Empire collapsed after its defeat in 1918, the Czech political leader Tomas Guarrigue Masaryk convinced the Allies countries to recognize Czechoslovakia as an independent state. It was the start of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia. The split of Czechoslovakia into two independent countries, Czech Republic and Slovakia, will only happen many years after, in 1993.

**Readings**- I highly recommend to read the book [1913, the year before the storm](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jul/19/1913-before-storm-florian-illies-review) by Florian Illies, which focuses on the artistic and cultural movements in Europe, and especially in Central Europe, before World War 1. You follow month after month the life of some of the most famous artists and political figures of this time.
- Read about the famous [Good soldier Svejk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Good_Soldier_%C5%A0vejk), from the book of Jaroslav Hasek. The story of a naïve Czech soldier enrolled in the First World War and his comic adventures. A big classic of Czech culture and mindset (the Czech themselves say it!), you will see this figure a bit everywhere in Prague.
- Learn about the writer [Kafka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Kafka) and read one of his most famous books such as *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, *The Castle*.
- Learn about the founder of the first Republic of Czechoslovakia, [Tomas Garrigue Masaryk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom%C3%A1%C5%A1_Garrigue_Masaryk). He is still, to this day, the most popular political figure in Czech Republic, together with Vaclav Havel. Some historical video images [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCUYMZU-mwQ).
- Read about the painter [Alphonse Mucha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphonse_Mucha), the leader figure of the “Art Nouveau” movement in Central Europe

**Visits**- [Konopiste](https://www.zamek-konopiste.cz/en) Castle where the archduke Franz Ferdinand, whom assassination in Sarajevo escalated to the First World War in Europe, lived with his Czech wife and his family.
- [Muzeum Kafka](http://www.kafkamuseum.cz/ShowPage.aspx?tabId=-1), in the area of Mala Strana in Prague.
- [Mucha Museum](https://www.mucha.cz/en/), in the city center of Prague.
- Most of the old building in Prague date back from the Empire. During your walks in Prague, you might notice in several buildings the [double-headed eagle](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/K.u.k._Hoflieferant#/media/File:Wappen_Kaisertum_%C3%96sterreich_1815_(Klein).png), symbol of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Go for coffee to the [Café Savoy](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Caf%C3%A9%2BSavoy/%4050.0809911%2C14.4072524%2C15z/data%3D%214m5%213m4%211s0x0%3A0xa79ca53a2235f18f%218m2%213d50.0809911%214d14.4072524), [Café Slavia](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Kav%C3%A1rna%2BSlavia/%4050.0815821%2C14.4110666%2C17z/data%3D%213m1%214b1%214m5%213m4%211s0x470b94f003cf77db%3A0x93eb4fbe7519bdf2%218m2%213d50.0815787%214d14.4132606), or to the [Imperial Café](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Caf%C3%A9%2BImperial/%4050.0898498%2C14.4306719%2C17z/data%3D%213m1%214b1%214m5%213m4%211s0x470b949558c1bf45%3A0x9fea082416e2f3e9%218m2%213d50.0898464%214d14.4328659)… they are still testifying of the Austrian culture of coffee houses and have kept a bit the flair from the imperial times.
- [Museum of Czech Cubism](http://www.czkubismus.cz/)

**Video**- [Fighting without a country: Czechoslovak legions in World War 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSpuM0I5Uao)