

## Why learn Czech?

Czech belongs among the West Slavic languages, together with Slovak and Polish. It is an immensely rich language. Following the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the language came to serve as the main means of expressing the Czech nation's identity. This also meant that literature was of great importance and people cared deeply about their writers; and they still do. The country has produced a number of famous authors, including Karel Čapek (who in his 1920 play *R.U.R.* coined the word *robot* – derived from *robota* which means 'serf labour'), Bohumil Hrabal and Milan Kundera. Czech cultural history is also rich in significant classical, jazz and other musicians, visual artists and filmmakers. Among the names that spring to people's minds when the word *Czech* is uttered are, for example, composers Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, artist Alfons Mucha, film directors Miloš Forman and Jan Svěrák, and president Václav Havel.

Given its location in the heart of Europe (*v srdci Evropy*), the country, and especially its capital city of Prague, has for centuries been an important centre of trade, diplomacy, culture and education, and this is reflected in its life today. As by far not everybody in the Czech Republic (established after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993) speaks English, knowing Czech will help you enjoy the cultural and other offerings during your stay there, and people will appreciate your effort. Being able to do more than just order a *pivo* in Czech will make you feel great. If you are thinking about studying in the Czech Republic (perhaps at the great Charles University, founded in Prague in 1348) or getting a job there (perhaps in one of the many multinational companies), having a reasonably good level of Czech will open doors for you, and it will be a great advantage in your social life, too.