Press newsletter December 2025

Christmas in Czechia





Christmas is just around the corner! The Czech Republic has various customs and traditions that make the festive season something very special.

On Christmas Eve – Štědrý večer – when the Christ Child – Ježíšek – brings gifts, the most important Christmas dinner of the holidays takes place, traditionally featuring carp with potato salad (made according to each family's own recipe, of course!). The carp is often bought directly before Christmas on the street from large water barrels. It is slaughtered there, or you take it home alive and then decide whether to prepare and eat it or release it into a nearby river or pond.

A popular custom is to cut apples during the meal. Those who see a star in the shape of the apple seeds are predicted to enjoy good health in the coming year, while a cross signifies bad luck. Another sign of what the coming year will bring can be found in the so-called nut shell boats: small boats are made from one half of a walnut shell, a candle is placed inside and they are left to float in a bowl or bathtub on December 24. Whether the boat drifts far, stays at the edge, or even sinks is said to symbolically reflect the future path of the person's life.

At the end of the year and throughout December, many Czechs love to send out greeting cards they have designed themselves (known as P.F. cards, from the French "pour féliciter"). This has become a real craze: many people share their posts on social media and enjoy the different designs and messages of good luck for the new year.

With this in mind, we would like to end the year with a few exciting book and event tips and look forward to the Year of Czech Culture 2026!

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season!

Your Guest of Honour Czechia press team Annika Grützner, Nathalie Weber and Mathias Voigt

Please contact us if you would like further information, review copies, or if we can arrange interviews for you!

Cultural tips

Magdaléna Platzová was awarded Bavaria's Best Independent Books prize for "**Leben nach Kafka**" (Balaena Verlag, translated by Kathrin Janka). <u>Here</u> you can find the details and the jury's reasoning.

WIR—Das Volksgruppenmagazin on **ORF2** accompanied an event with authors Marek Toman, Viktorie Hanišová, and Stanislav Struhar in Vienna. You can watch it <u>here</u> (from minute 09:35).

Events

11.12.2025, 7 pm Reading & discussion: Matěj Hořava – Pálenka

Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum, Ulm

Ingeborg-Drewitz-Bibliothek, Berlin

29.01.2025, 6:30 pm

Reading & discussion: Michal Ajvaz – Die andere Stadt

Book tips for your Christmas presents

Dora Kaprálová: "Winterbuch der Liebe" (mikrotext, translated by Nataša von Kopp)



In "Winterbuch der Liebe", Czech author Dora Kaprálová explores with linguistic lightness and playful audacity the relationship with the other, which appears to her everywhere in life. She wrote it as a literary response to "Eine Frau" by Hungarian writer Peter Esterházy. Every day for a whole winter, she wrote a vignette about a man, thinking that Peter Esterházy would one day enjoy the texts. (He did.)

It is a book about men, but perhaps also about a single, multifaceted, and elusive man, because it is about love.

You can find further information on the book here.

Jaroslav Rudiš: "Weihnachten in Prag" (Luchterhand)



Christmas Eve. Probably the quietest day of the year in Prague. Jaroslav Rudiš wanders through the metropolis on the Vltava River. It is snowing, it is cold, and the streets are deserted. And yet, everywhere you go, you encounter the old and new stories of this city. Rudiš waits for his friends and stops at a few pubs in the meantime. Here, over a freshly tapped beer, he meets three lonely figures: Kavka (known as Kafka), the King of Prague, and an Italian woman from Milan. They all talk about this special day of the year. Of glowing pears and warming hands, of carp in pickle jars, whose eyes still stare out at the deceased inhabitants of the city, and of the Christ Child, who comes to the same pub every year and steals away again on the rattling tram.

On his Christmas walk, Jaroslav Rudiš is accompanied by his best friend Jaromír 99, who has illustrated this magical and also tragicomic journey through snow-covered Prague.

You can find further information on the book <u>here</u>.

Zdeněk Miler, Hana Doskočilová: "Der kleine Maulwurf und der Schneemann" (Carlsen Verlag)

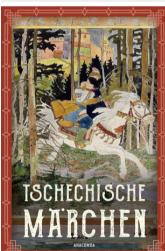


Winter is mole season! Deep snow is perfect for sledding, tobogganing, throwing snowballs, and sucking on icicles. But when all your friends are asleep, who can you play with? The little mole wouldn't be the little mole if he didn't have an idea: he simply builds himself a companion! Together with the cute snowman, all that white stuff is twice as much fun. And next winter, the fun continues.

One of the most popular Mole stories by Mole creator Zdeněk Miler.

You can find further information on the book here.

"Tschechische Märchen" (Anaconda Verlag)



In Germany, we are familiar with Czech fairy tales mainly through popular film adaptations — "Drei Haselnüsse für Aschenbrödel," for example, has become a must-see during the Advent season. The stories contain many motifs from classic fairy tales, such as the victory of good over evil, dwarves, giants, witches, and talking animals. Bohemian-Slavic customs and local color also lend them a special charm. The richly illustrated volume includes texts from the fairy tale collections of Karel Erben and Božena Němcová, who are as well known in Czechia as the

Grimms are in Germany.

You can find further information on the book here.

About the Guest of Honour

Czechia is the Guest of Honour of the Frankfurt Book Fair 2026. The Guest of Honour appearance is being organised by the Moravian Library in Brno and its Czech Literature Centre section. It is being financed by public funds from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and is implemented with the support of PPF Foundation. Partner of the Year of Czech Culture and Guest of Honour is Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfonds / Česko-německý fond budoucnosti. The Frankfurt Book Fair, which will take place from October 7 to 11, 2026, is the world's largest trade fair for publishing. The Guest of Honour presents its literature and culture at the fair, in the city of Frankfurt, and at many other locations in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Czechia's Guest of Honour appearance is themed "Czechia – A Country on the Coast."

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