Tschechien Frankfurter Buchmesse Ehrengast 2026

CZECHIA AS GUEST OF HONOUR AT THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2026

Press newsletter September 2026

Young voices from Czechia: literature that takes a stand

What does it mean to be young in a world that is constantly changing? How does one find one's own voice when expectations, fears, desires and social upheavals are all vying loudly for attention? Contemporary Czech literature offers no easy answers to these questions. It tells of relationships and bodies, of violence and vulnerability, of faith, social norms and the search for one's own place in the world. It is direct and self-assured, sometimes radical, sometimes surprisingly funny – and always curious about what lies behind things.

As Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Czechia also wishes to put young voices in the spotlight and draw attention to a new generation of authors who are charting their very own literary maps.

Kristina Hampiová's novel *LoverFighter* takes the reader right to the heart of the contradictions of growing up. Amidst adolescent conflicts, fantasy, love and violence, the boundaries between tenderness and struggle become blurred. Hampiová tells her story at a brisk pace and with a keen sense of the absurdities of growing up – whilst showing just how close vulnerability and strength can be.

Sára Zeithammerová, too, turns her attention to a young woman who must stand her ground against the constraints of her time. In *Die Unerhörte (The Unheard-of)*, she transports us to Bohemia in 1881: a girl claims to have seen the Virgin Mary. What initially appears to be a religious apparition develops into a place of pilgrimage and ultimately into a court case. Zeithammerová explores faith and power, but also the question of whom we listen to and whom we believe – a question that extends far beyond the historical context.

Tereza Semotamová takes an even more immediate look at the present. Her novel *Radical Needs* scrutinises what we take for granted: what do we actually need to lead a fulfilling life? What desires are we allowed to have – and when do needs become something we have to defend against societal expectations? Semotamová is interested in the contradictions of modern life and in people who do not find it easy to navigate it.

Dorota Ambrožová also explores the quest for self-determination in *Gone*. At its heart is a young, headstrong character who is not willing to simply conform to the roles others have envisaged for her. Ambrožová writes directly and unvarnishedly about growing up, about expectations and the desire to find one's own path. It is precisely in this immediacy that the novel's strength lies: it takes young people's experiences seriously, without explaining or simplifying them.

In her novel *I Saved Death*, Lucie Faulerová, one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary Czech literature, tackles the big questions of life and death, memory and human connection in an unusual way. Faulerová combines existential themes with precise, idiosyncratic language, turning the seemingly inevitable into a starting point for a surprising literary journey.

What these books have in common is not so much a shared theme as a shared attitude: they seek to understand. To understand the world, relationships, power and the self. Contemporary Czech literature looks where things become uncomfortable – and turns into this stories that resonate far beyond the Czech Republic. It takes social issues seriously without sacrificing literary freedom or humour.

Events

8.9.2026, 20.30
Poetry Night II: Poesie im Scheinwerferlicht mit Petr Hruška
Berliner Festspiele, Berlin

9.9.2026, 16.00
Lesung mit Comiczeichnerin Lucie Lomová: „Die Wilden"
Tschechisches Zentrum, Wien

16.9.2026, 18.00
Literarische Begegnungen: Martin Vopěnka, Marek Toman und Stanislav Struhar
Steiermärkische Landesbibliothek, Graz

18.9.2026, 19.00
Prag-Berlin: Dichtung im Dialog | Internationaler Lyrik-Abend
K2B, Berlin

16.09.2026, 18.00
Literarische Begegnungen in Graz mit Martin Vopěnka, Marek Toman und Stanislav Struhar
Steiermärkische Landesbibliothek, Graz

Book Tips

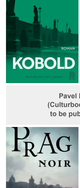
Matěj Hořava: 'Stopover' (Wieser Verlag, translated by Ruben Höppner, published on 1 September 2026)

Between arrival and departure, between the unfamiliar and memory, Matěj Hořava unfolds in 'Zwischenlandung' a poetically dense collection of prose pieces that linger long in the mind. The setting is a crumbling prefabricated housing estate on the outskirts of Tbilisi – a place of transitions, weariness and quiet desolation. Here lives a narrator in self-imposed exile, who teaches Czech by day and by night writes down what he sees and what he hears. His encounters with people whose life paths seem to differ from his own nevertheless reflect his own doubts, longings and wounds. Time and again, he seeks refuge: by the Black Sea, in the Caucasus, in other countries – and in the past, in Moravia and Bohemia, in his childhood.

Zwischenlandung is a book for readers who seek more from literature than mere entertainment – a collection of short stories that speak of the present yet feel timeless. A quiet, haunting gift – also for those who have at times felt alienated from themselves.

You can find further information about the book here.

Radka Denemarková: 'Kobold' (Hoffmann und Campe, translated by Ralja Hauck, published on 1 September 2026)



This unique novel tells two interwoven stories that clash like water and fire – opposites, yet inseparable. At its heart lie indomitable love and subtle violence, the influence of family and ideological temptations. The characters in this novel bear the scars of their origins and their times: a society that is hardened both internally and at its fringes – towards the sensitive, the emotional, the so-called weaker ones. Their suffering is not a result of individual failure, but a symptom of an era. And behind it all, a dark force seems to be at work: the goblins.

You can find further information about the book here.

Pavel Mandys (editor): 'Prag Noir' (Culturbooks, translated by Hana Hadas, to be published on 15 September 2026)

A man vanishes without trace on Charles Bridge. The heiress to a house on the banks of the Vltava, devastated by flooding, uncovers a long-kept family secret. A rare book dealer in Malá Strana discovers that it could be a crime. Fourteen Czech authors take readers from Vyšehrad and the Charles Bridge, via Panrác and the Olšany Cemetery, to the exhibition grounds and the former Žižkov freight station. Each story is set in a different part of the city. The tales range from Jewish legends and the aftermath of communism to contemporary Prague.

The collection takes a broad view of noir: it deals with crime and menace, but also with people whose lives have gone off the rails. Prague is never merely a backdrop. Its places, myths and historical ruptures shape the stories and the lives of their characters. Together, the stories paint a polyphonic portrait of a city in which history and the present, magic and crime intertwine.

You can find further information about the book here.

Michal Ajvaz: "The Return of the Old Monitor Lizard | Murder at the Intercontinental Hotel" (Allee Verlag, translated by Veronika Siska, to be published on 15 September 2026)

A two-volume set featuring the early works of the cult Czech author Michal Ajvaz: the poetry collection *Murder at the Intercontinental Hotel* (1989) and the short stories *The Return of the Old Monitor Lizard* (1991) transport the reader into surreal worlds.

No sooner is he airborne than a literature-savvy kangaroo, whilst performing a pirouette, jumps back into a scathing review of the very book she is currently being flying through the icy landscape. But it could just as easily be a small elephant, a monitor lizard, a coelacanth, a mussel or a seahorse that challenges him to a duel of a very special kind.

Nothing is certain in these whimsical stories and poems, which lead through an existential zoo where the subtle seed of madness flourishes like nowhere else – in a world of fables, in which everyone is constantly surrounding with ideas, where the 'gentle lapping of language' surges...

You can find further information about the book here.

Lucie Lučanská: 'The Book of the Five Senses' (Rotopol, translated by Katharina Hinderer, published on 1 September 2026)

Lucie Lučanská invites us to explore our perception of the world. Across five chapters – each with its own visual language – the same walk is presented from different perspectives. Let's begin with sight: colours glow, blend and harmonise with the landscape. Next comes hearing, for the book itself is full of sounds, and a sound – whether read aloud or in our minds – can be heard. Magical! Then comes smell: the scents we associate with the illustrations transport us to other worlds. For the sense of touch, a special varnish highlights details in the illustrations and invites us to feel the textures depicted in the book. And the final chapter, which is about taste, makes our mouths water! The walk ends with the return home, where the day's experiences are shared over dinner.

'The Book of the Five Senses' is a narrative and visual invitation to discover the world and our perceptions of it, whilst also showing how these perceptions vary from person to person. The use of spot colours and selected varnishes complements the different sensory impressions and makes the book a special tactile and visual experience – and not just for children.

You can find further information about 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 budoucnost.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."

https://czechia2026.com/

Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic

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Czech Lit

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PPF FOUNDATION

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