

CZECH ROOTS

YOUR GUIDE TO EU CITIZENSHIP BY DESCENT

For those with a Czech parent or grandparent

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- > Am I eligible? — how to check, including 2024 rule changes
- > What Czech citizenship actually gives you (EU passport, 27 countries)
- > Section 31 vs Section 32 — which pathway applies to you
- > Political exile & Benes Decrees — the simplified path
- > Step-by-step application process
- > Complete documents checklist
- > What to do when documents are missing or destroyed
- > US consulate district breakdown
- > Costs, timelines, common pitfalls, and FAQ

"Being half-Czech is not half anything. It is a full second identity."

HalfCzech

halfczech.com - @halfczech on TikTok - @thehalfczech on Instagram

Informational only. Not legal advice. Verify eligibility with a qualified immigration advisor.

Your Path to an EU Passport Starts Here

If you have a Czech parent or grandparent, you may be entitled to something most people never realised: full Czech citizenship, an EU passport, and the right to live and work across 27 countries. Without moving there. Without a language test. Without giving up your current passport.

The Czech Republic allows descendants of former Czech and Czechoslovak citizens to reclaim citizenship by declaration under Act No. 186/2013. This is not standard naturalization — it is recognition of ancestry. For many in the diaspora, it has been a life-changing discovery.

A note from HalfCzech

I am half-Czech. I left the Bay Area and moved to Prague. I built the HalfCzech community because the global Czech diaspora deserves a home — and because the information in this guide took me far too long to piece together. This is the shortcut I wish I had.

Important

This guide is for informational purposes only. Czech citizenship law is complex and individual circumstances vary. Always verify your specific situation with a qualified immigration lawyer before submitting any application.

Need a Czech immigration lawyer?

Email hello@halfczech.com or DM @halfczech on TikTok / @thehalfczech on Instagram. We'll connect you with a specialist. No obligation.

Am I Eligible?

Eligibility is based on **blood (jus sanguinis)**, not birthplace. The key question: did at least one ancestor hold Czech or Czechoslovak citizenship — and how was it lost?

WHO QUALIFIES?

Parent was Czech or Czechoslovak

- > Very likely eligible. The strongest and most straightforward pathway.

Grandparent was Czech or Czechoslovak

- > Likely eligible, subject to how and when citizenship was lost.

Great-grandparent or beyond

- > Not eligible under current law (as of 2026). A proposed amendment to extend eligibility to great-grandchildren has been discussed in Czech parliament but did not pass before the October 2025 elections and has not been enacted. Check mzv.gov.cz for any future updates.

KEY CONDITIONS

- > Ancestor **does not need to be alive** — historical records suffice.
- > **No Czech residency required** — apply at your local Czech consulate.
- > **No language test** — this is a declaration, not naturalization.
- > **Keep your current passport** — dual citizenship allowed since 2014.
- > **Must NOT be a Slovak citizen** — a Declaration of Non-Slovak Citizenship is mandatory.
- > **The ancestor must have lost citizenship by 31 December 2013.** This is a legal requirement under Section 31. If your parent or grandparent lost Czech citizenship after that date, this specific pathway may not apply — consult an immigration lawyer.

POLITICAL EXILE, NAZI ERA AND BENES DECREES

If your ancestor lost citizenship due to political persecution — Communist-era emigration, Nazi-era displacement, or expulsion under the Benes Decrees — a **simplified restoration pathway** exists. The Czech government explicitly recognises these as historical injustices and has created an easier process for descendants. Key points:

- > Expulsion under the Benes Decrees (1945-46) qualifies for simplified restoration.
- > Communist-era emigration (post-1948) is explicitly covered.
- > Ancestors who fled Nazi occupation and lost citizenship qualify.
- > Documentation requirements may differ — consult a specialist for these cases.
- > This pathway is separate from the standard Section 31 route and may have different timelines.

Need help navigating your application?

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Section 31 vs Section 32

Act No. 186/2013 contains two distinct pathways for citizenship by descent. Knowing which applies to you changes the documentation required.

| | SECTION 31 | SECTION 32 |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Who it covers | Children and grandchildren of former Czech/Czechoslovak citizens who LOST citizenship by 31 December 2013. | Individuals who were citizens of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic on 31 December 1992 but became neither Czech nor Slovak citizens when the federation dissolved. |
| Key requirement | Must prove ancestor lost Czech/Czechoslovak citizenship — and how. | Must prove the person held CSFR citizenship on the dissolution date and was left without successor state citizenship. |
| Slovak restriction | You must not be a Slovak citizen. | You must not have become a Slovak citizen. Slovak citizens cannot apply. |
| Common cases | Most diaspora — emigrants, exiles, descendants of those who left or were expelled from Czechoslovakia. | Rare and narrow. Applies to a specific group left stateless after 1993. |

Most diaspora applicants use Section 31. If your ancestor emigrated, was exiled, or lost Czech or Czechoslovak citizenship at any point before or after the federation dissolved, Section 31 is almost certainly your pathway.

What You Actually Get

Czech citizenship by descent is **full citizenship** — not a heritage card, not a residency permit.

Czech Passport

Visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to approximately 188 countries including the US, UK, Canada, Japan, and Australia.

EU Citizenship

The right to live, work, and study in all 27 EU member states — no visa, no sponsor, no time limit.

Keep Your Current Passport

Dual citizenship has been allowed since 2014. You do not have to choose.

Czech Residency Rights

Live permanently in Czechia, purchase property, access healthcare, vote in local elections.

Pass It to Your Children

Once you hold Czech citizenship, your children acquire it at birth.

Restore What Was Taken

For families expelled or forced out under Nazi or Communist rule — this is a restoration of something that should never have been lost.

The Process: Step by Step

Step 1. Identify your pathway and confirm the December 2013 cutoff

Determine whether Section 31 or Section 32 applies (Section 31 for most diaspora). Confirm your parent or grandparent lost Czech or Czechoslovak citizenship BY 31 December 2013 — this is a legal requirement under Section 31. Also establish how that citizenship was lost.

Step 2. Build your document chain

An unbroken documentary link from you to your Czech ancestor: birth certificates, marriage certificates for name changes, death certificates where relevant.

Step 3. Get certified Czech translations

All foreign documents must be translated by a certified legal translator. Standard translation agencies without legal certification do not qualify.

Step 4. Get documents apostilled

Foreign public documents require an Apostille from the issuing country. Documents are valid for 180 days — stagger your preparation.

Step 5. Request a preliminary consulate assessment

Contact your local Czech consulate before submitting anything. Most offer free preliminary assessments. This saves months of wasted work if an eligibility issue exists.

Step 6. Submit Declaration of Citizenship

A formal legal declaration made in person at the consulate, with your complete document package.

Step 7. Submit Declaration of Non-Slovak Citizenship

Mandatory for all applicants — not just those with potential Slovak ties.

Step 8. Wait for Ministry of Interior decision

Typically several months to over a year. Complex ancestry (Benes, Communist-era, wartime) may take longer.

Step 9. Receive certificate and apply for passport

Citizenship certificate arrives first. Then apply separately for a Czech passport at the consulate. Passport fee approx. EUR 10-40.

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Documents Checklist

Every link in the chain must be documented. Print this list.

YOUR DOCUMENTS

- Your birth certificate (apostilled + certified Czech translation)
- Your current valid passport or national ID

PARENT OR GRANDPARENT'S DOCUMENTS

- Their birth certificate
- Proof of Czech or Czechoslovak citizenship (passport, national ID, registry record, or archival confirmation)
- Proof of how and when citizenship was lost (emigration records, renunciation, archival evidence, or legal document)
- Marriage certificate (for any name changes)
- Death certificate (if deceased)

IF APPLYING THROUGH A GRANDPARENT

- Your parent's birth certificate
- Your parent's marriage certificate (if applicable)
- All connecting documents across every generation in the chain

DECLARATIONS

- Declaration of Non-Acquisition of Slovak Citizenship (mandatory for all)
- Any additional declarations required by your specific consulate

180-day validity warning

Apostilled and officially translated documents are valid for 180 days only. Do not certify everything at once if you expect a long wait. Stagger your preparation to avoid costly re-certification.

When Documents Are Missing

Many families lost documents during WWII, Communist-era emigration, or simply across generations. This is one of the most common obstacles — and it is more solvable than most people think.

CZECH ARCHIVES (FREE ONLINE ACCESS)

archivnimapy.cz

Czech State Archives portal. Searchable birth, marriage, and death registers going back centuries. Many diaspora applicants find their ancestors here without leaving home. Free to use.

nacr.cz

National Archives of the Czech Republic. Request archival documents, emigration records, and historical citizenship evidence. Submit requests online or by post.

Regional archives

Each Czech region has its own archive (Statni oblastni archiv). If you know your ancestor's home village or town, the relevant regional archive often holds the most complete records.

IF RECORDS WERE DESTROYED

Wartime destruction and Communist-era record suppression affected many archives. Options when original documents cannot be found:

- > **Secondary evidence** — old photographs, letters, Czech-language documents kept by the family, school records, religious records (church birth/marriage registers often survived when civil records did not).
- > **Czech consulate preliminary assessment** — explain the situation early. Consulates are experienced with incomplete documentation from historical cases.
- > **Genealogical research services** — professional researchers based in Czechia who specialise in archive searches. Cost: approx. EUR 500-2,000 depending on complexity.
- > **Legal assistance** — an immigration lawyer can advise on alternative evidence routes recognised under Czech law for your specific case.

Costs and Timeline

| Item | Estimated Cost (2026) | Notes |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Application fee | approx. EUR 20 (CZK 2,000) | Standard adult rate |
| Genealogy / archive research | EUR 500 - EUR 2,000 | Only if needed; Czech archives free online |
| Document translation | Varies by country | Per page; certified translators only |
| Apostille stamps | Varies by country | Required for all foreign public documents |
| Immigration lawyer | EUR 1,000 - EUR 3,000 | Optional; recommended for complex cases |
| Czech passport fee | approx. EUR 10 - EUR 40 | Applied for after citizenship approval |

REALISTIC TIMELINE

Document gathering (1 to 6 months)

Depends on how much your family already has. Czech archive requests can take 2-4 months on their own — start early.

Consulate processing (3 months to 1+ year)

Varies by consulate. New York, London, and Chicago tend to have longer queues. Complex ancestry cases take longer.

Passport issuance (4 to 6 weeks after approval)

Applied for separately once the citizenship certificate is received.

US Consulate Districts

US applicants must apply at the Czech consulate responsible for their state of residence — not any Czech consulate. Submitting to the wrong one will result in rejection.

| Office | States Covered |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| New York, NY (Consulate General) | Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont |
| Chicago, IL (Consulate General) | Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin |
| Los Angeles, CA (Consulate General) | Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming |
| Washington, DC (Embassy) | Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia |

Outside the US: find your consular district at mzv.gov.cz/jnp/en/diplomatic_missions

OTHER KEY CONSULATES FOR THE DIASPORA

London, UK

Covers England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Edinburgh, UK

Covers Scotland.

Sydney, Australia

Covers New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, ACT.

Melbourne, Australia

Covers Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, Northern Territory.

Toronto, Canada

Covers Ontario and Eastern Canada.

Vancouver, Canada

Covers Western Canada.

Common Pitfalls

! Document expiry

Apostilled and translated documents are valid for 180 days. Stagger your preparation to avoid re-certifying everything.

! Wrong consulate

You must apply at the consulate for your region of residence. Check the district table on the previous page.

! Non-certified translations

Only certified legal translators. Standard agencies without legal certification are rejected.

! Missing Slovak citizenship declaration

Mandatory for every applicant — not just those with Slovak ties. Missing it stalls the application.

! Not checking the December 2013 cutoff

Section 31 requires that the ancestor lost Czech citizenship BY 31 December 2013. If your parent or grandparent lost citizenship after that date, this pathway may not apply. Check this before gathering documents.

! Skipping the preliminary consulate assessment

Most consulates offer these free. One hour of assessment can save months of wasted document gathering.

! No legal advice for complex ancestry

Benes Decrees, WWII-era cases, Communist-era emigration, and citizenship renunciations all have more complex documentation paths. A lawyer is strongly recommended for these.

! Assuming you cannot apply without Czech language skills

Language is not a requirement for the declaration pathway. The process is conducted through official forms and documentation, not a language interview.

Need help navigating your application?

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: My ancestor was a great-grandparent, not a grandparent. Am I eligible?

Under current law (2026), no — the standard Section 31 pathway covers children and grandchildren of former Czech/Czechoslovak citizens only. A proposed amendment to extend eligibility to great-grandchildren was discussed in Czech parliament but did not pass before the October 2025 elections and has not been enacted. The new parliament may revisit this. Monitor mzv.gov.cz for updates, or consult an immigration lawyer if you believe a sequential registration strategy (parent applies first, then you) may be relevant to your situation.

Q: My ancestor naturalized in the US (or elsewhere) and gave up Czech citizenship voluntarily. Can I still apply?

Yes, in most cases. Voluntary naturalization in another country is one of the most common ways Czech citizenship was lost — and it is specifically covered under Section 31. The fact that your ancestor chose to naturalize elsewhere does not disqualify you.

Q: I have both Czech and Slovak ancestry. What happens?

You can apply for Czech citizenship by descent — but you must not currently hold Slovak citizenship. If you do hold Slovak citizenship, you would need to renounce it before applying, as Czech law requires the Declaration of Non-Slovak Citizenship. Consult an immigration lawyer if this applies to you.

Q: My ancestor's documents were destroyed in the war or by the Communist government. Is my application hopeless?

No. Czech consulates are experienced with incomplete documentation from historical cases. Secondary evidence (church records, family documents, photographs with Czech markings) can sometimes substitute. Czech archives (archivnimapy.cz, nacr.cz) often hold records that families do not know exist. A preliminary consulate assessment is the best first step.

Q: Can I pass Czech citizenship on to my children?

Yes. Once you hold Czech citizenship, children born after that point acquire it at birth. Children born before you obtained Czech citizenship may be able to acquire it through a separate process — consult the consulate.

Q: My ancestor was expelled under the Benes Decrees. Does that help or hurt?

It helps — significantly. The Czech Republic explicitly acknowledges Benes Decree expulsions as historical injustices and has a simplified restoration pathway for descendants. This is one of the stronger grounds for an application.

Q: Do I need to speak Czech?

No. The declaration pathway does not require a language test or Czech language skills at any stage of the process.

Q: How long does the passport last and can I use it straight away?

Czech passports are valid for 10 years for adults. Once issued, you can use it immediately — it is a full EU travel document from day one.

Your Next Steps

The biggest mistake is waiting until everything feels ready. The process is long — begin now, even if your picture is incomplete.

START THIS WEEK

- > **Start with what you already have.** Dig out your birth certificate and any family documents — old Czech passports, letters, photographs. All of it is potentially useful.
- > **Search Czech archives free.** archivnimapy.cz lets you search birth, marriage, and death registers from home. Many applicants find their ancestors' records in the first session.
- > **Request a preliminary consulate assessment.** Find your consulate's district from the table in this guide. Most assessments are free and will tell you immediately where you stand.
- > **For complex ancestry, consult a lawyer first.** An hour before you start is far cheaper than restarting a rejected application.

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Join the Czech Global Community

Connect with Czechs, half-Czechs, and Czech-rooted people worldwide. Get support from others going through the citizenship process, share your journey, and stay connected to your heritage.

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