

FREE GUIDE

Find your Czech village in 3 steps.

From "my great-grandpa was Czech" to the exact village, and the archive that holds his records. Free sources only.

- 1 Find the name
- 2 Pin it on the map
- 3 Confirm it in the records

Why the village matters

Czech records were kept locally. Births, marriages and deaths were written into parish books, one book per parish, and those books now sit in regional archives.

That means you can't search "all of the Czech Republic" for a name. You need the place first. Once you have it, most of the old parish books are digitized and free to view online.

What you need

- Your ancestor's name, including any older spelling the family used.
- A rough birth year (a decade is enough to start).
- Roughly when they emigrated.
- About an hour, and a free FamilySearch account (familysearch.org).

Good to know: before 1918, today's Czech Republic was part of Austria-Hungary. Records in America often list your ancestor's country as "Austria" or "Bohemia". That's normal, and it doesn't mean you have the wrong person.

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STEP 1

Find the name

The village name is almost always written down somewhere. These are the places it most often hides.

Start with family

Ask the oldest relatives first, and look through family papers: old letters, passports, prayer books, photos with writing on the back, funeral cards.

Then check American records

- **Passenger lists.** After 1885 the place of origin is often given. From 1907 the form required both last residence and place of birth. Ellis Island lists from 1892 to 1924 are online.
- **Naturalization papers.** From 1906 these became more detailed, and they often name the birthplace.
- **Census records (1900 to 1930).** These give the year of immigration and citizenship status. That helps you find the right ship and the right papers.
- **Church, marriage and death records, obituaries and gravestones.** Any of these can state a birthplace.

Write down every spelling you find. The same village can appear in Czech, in German, and misspelled by an American clerk. Keep them all. You'll need them in step 2.

Pin it on the map

A name isn't a place yet. Czech has many villages with almost the same name, so this step stops you researching the wrong one.

Watch for look-alikes

Names like Kámen, Kamenec, Kamenice, Kamenička, Kamenka and Kamenná are all different places. Czech grammar also changes endings: "in Kamenka" is **v Kamence** and "from Kamenka" is **z Kamenky**. If a record gives a name with an odd ending, try the base form.

Translate German names

Many older records use German place names. A few well-known ones: Budweis is České Budějovice, Brunn is Brno, Pilsen is Plzeň. Smaller villages had German names too.

Use these free tools

- **Mapy.cz** (mapy.cz): search the name and see every match, with the region.
- **GenTeam gazetteer** (genteam.at, free registration): look up a place, including German names, and see which parish and archive cover it.
- **matriky.online**: an independent index of Czech parish registers with a map. Search a municipality to see its parish and a direct link to the scanned books.

Use your other clues to choose. If two villages match, the region named in a record ("Bohemia" or "Moravia"), a nearby town, or the family's church usually settles it.

Confirm it in the records

You've found the village when you find your ancestor's baptism in its parish book. Every Czech regional archive now publishes its parish registers online.

Region	Archive	Where to view the books online
Prague city	Prague City Archives	Linked from matriky.online
Central Bohemia	State Regional Archives in Prague	ebadatelna.soapraha.cz
Northern Bohemia	State Regional Archives in Litoměřice	vademecum.soalitomerice.cz
Western Bohemia	State Regional Archives in Plzeň	portafontium.eu
Southern Bohemia	State Regional Archives in Třeboň	digi.ceskearchivy.cz
Eastern Bohemia	State Regional Archives in Zámorsk	FamilySearch (see below)
Southern Moravia	Moravian Land Archives in Brno	actapublica.eu
Northern Moravia & Silesia	Land Archives in Opava	digi.archives.cz

FamilySearch shortcut: the free collection "Czech Republic, Church Books, 1552-1981" holds images from the Litoměřice, Opava, Třeboň and Zámorsk archives (births through 1912, marriages and deaths through 1937), and some of it is searchable by name.

How to confirm

1. Open the parish's birth (baptism) book covering your ancestor's birth year.
2. Look for the family name around that year. Entries are by date.
3. Check the parents' names against what you already know. A match means you've found the village.

WHAT'S NEXT

You've found the village. Now the hard part.

Opening the parish book is one thing. Reading it is another. Older entries are handwritten, often in Latin or German, in old script, with abbreviations.

The FamilySearch Research Wiki (familysearch.org/en/wiki) has free help pages for Czech research, including word lists for the Latin, German and Czech terms you will meet in the records.

Love Czech stories? **The Czech Fact Book** has 150 surprising, true facts about the Czech Republic, every one sourced. halfczech.com

SOURCES

FamilySearch Research Wiki: "Czechia Finding Town of Origin", "Czechia Determining a Place of Origin", "Czechia Beginning Research", "U.S. Immigration and Emigration Class Handout". FamilySearch collection "Czech Republic, Church Books, 1552-1981". Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (cgsi.org), "Which Records to Search". Regional archive portals as published by each archive. Website addresses change; checked October 2026.

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