

CZECH CLINICS SEE A RISE IN MEDICAL TOURIST NUMBERS



Medical tourism is big business these days as countries with the best facilities, treatment options and skills attract patients from countries that cannot give them the same benefits. Sometimes this is a simple case of disadvantaged clients getting better care or lower costs but in Europe there seems to be more to it than that. 2013 saw another increase in the number of medical tourists from first-world, European nations who are seeking high-end procedures in the Czech Republic and, according to leading sources, paying tens of millions of crowns for the privilege.

What treatments are these foreign medical tourists enjoying and where are they coming from?

This increase for 2013 seems even more substantial when we consider that the number of foreign patients has increased by more than 50% in the last few years and they are coming from such a wide variety of countries. Germans, Austrians and Russians are all near the top of the list, but there is also a surprising number of Brits making the trip over. Four times as many English-speaking clients are said to have booked treatments between 2011 and 2012, these numbers show no sign of decreasing and some experts are now understandably claiming that the Czech Republic is the top medical tourism destination for people from the UK.

The vast majority of these visitors are coming over for plastic surgery, with breast augmentations by far the most popular treatment option - making up almost 50% of procedures - and liposuction, face lifts, abdominal work and eyelid treatments following close behind. Aside from plastic surgery, there is also a lot of business for foreign tourists looking for fertility treatments, especially for the many Germans who are crossing the border to make the most of the greater opportunities. The Czech Republic is the one of the most popular destinations for couples looking for infertility treatments, with an estimated 4000-5000 IVF treatments given to foreign clients in 2013.

None of these treatment options are particularly unusual, or in any way experimental, so why are patients flying all the way to Czech clinics to have them done?

The reason for this popularity in Czech IVF is quite simple: there is greater freedom in the laws and treatments in offer, with anonymous sperm and egg donations being completely legal. There are, however, numerous reasons why so many Brits and Germans flock to Czech plastic surgeons. Breast augmentations can cost just 60,000 Kc (about 2200 EUR) in the Czech Republic, the equivalent in the UK being over 110,000 Kc (about 4000 EUR), and the balance of low cost and high quality is arguably the leading incentive. The conditions offered by [Czech health facilities](#) are of a high standard, with patients receiving the same level of comfort and care as they would at home, but they can do so at greatly reduced rates. Alternatively, patients from these other nations may be looking less at the price and more at the chance to get some discrete, high-quality surgery without people knowing - a holiday to the Czech Republic is a good cover story.

As long as all these high-end facilities, low costs and beneficial laws stay in place, the Czech Republic should remain a top destination for European medical tourism and the profits of these desirable Czech clinics should continue to rise in 2014.

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