



Ukraine Україна

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Why Go?

Big, diverse and largely undiscovered, Ukraine is one of Europe's last genuine travel frontiers, a poor nation rich in colour-splashed tradition, warm-hearted people and off-the-map travel experiences.

'Ukraine' means 'land on the edge', an apt title for this slab of Eurasia in more ways than one. This is the Slavic hinterland on Europe's periphery, but it's also a country creeping towards change and modernity. One look at its renovated city centres, resurfaced roads and the infrastructure erected for the Euro 2012 soccer championships is enough to see that after two decades of independence, Ukraine is edging closer to where it aspires to be.

Most visitors head for the eclectic capital Kyiv, but architecturally rich Lviv and hedonistic Odesa are attracting ever greater numbers. Add a spot of hiking or skiing in the Carpathians and the balmy beaches of Crimea, and Ukraine becomes a much more diverse destination than many realise.

Best Places to Stay

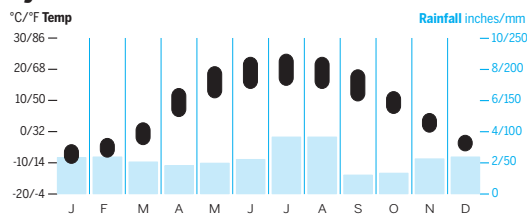
- » Sunflower B&B (p951)
- » Vintage (p962)
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Best Places to Eat

- » Spotykach (p955)
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- » Masonic Restaurant (p963)
- » Reflection (p967)

When to Go

Kyiv



April Witness Ukraine's funny side at Odesa's Carnival Humourina festival of humour.

May Take a Sunday morning stroll through Lviv when church music wafts through streets.

December Enjoy some hearty Hutsul apres-ski during the Carpathian ski season.

Connections

Ukraine is well linked to its neighbours, particularly Russia and Belarus, with whom it shares the former Soviet rail system. Kyiv is connected by bus or train to Moscow, St Petersburg, Minsk, Warsaw and Budapest, as well as other Eastern European capitals. Odesa is the hub for travelling to Moldova, with several daily buses to Chişinău (both going via and avoiding Tiraspol); the city also has ferries to Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkey, though the service is erratic. From Uzhhorod it's a short journey to the international mainline into Europe at Chop, connecting Ukraine with Slovakia and Hungary. Lviv is the biggest city servicing the Polish border and an ever-increasing number of travellers are taking budget flights to Poland then crossing the border to Lviv by bus or train. It's also possible to take no-frills flights to Budapest or Bratislava, and continue to Ukraine from there by train.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Begin by sampling the charms of Kyiv before heading either south to party in Odesa or west for a more refined and relaxed time in Lviv. Alternatively, take in Kyiv and Lviv then trundle on down into the Carpathian mountains for a spot of skiing, hiking or mountain biking.

Two Weeks

Spend three days in Kyiv, two in Lviv, then pass through rocking Odesa to Crimea, making Yalta your base and being sure to visit Bakhchysaray.

Essential Food & Drink

» **Borsch** The Ukrainian national soup, which is made with beetroot, pork fat and herbs. There's also an aromatic 'green' variety, based on sorrel.

» **Salo** Basically raw pig fat, cut into slices and eaten with bread or added to soups and other dishes. Look out for the 'Ukrainian Snickers bar' – *salo* in chocolate

» **Varenky** Similar to Polish *pierogi* – pasta pockets filled with everything from mashed potato to sour cherries.

» **Kasha** Sometimes translated as 'porridge', but usually turns out to be buckwheat drenched in milk and served for breakfast.

» **Vodka** Also known in Ukraine as *horilka*, it accompanies every celebration, red-letter day and get-together – in copious amounts.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Hryvnya (uah)
- » **Language** Ukrainian, Russian
- » **Money** ATMs widespread; credit cards accepted at most hotels
- » **Visas** Not required for EU, UK, US and Canadian citizens for stays of up to 90 days

Fast Facts

- » **Area:** 603,550 sq km
- » **Capital** Kyiv
- » **Telephone country code** 380
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	8.44uah
Canada	C\$1	8.36uah
euro	€1	11.48uah
Japan	¥100	9.64uah
New Zealand	NZ\$1	6.33uah
UK	UK£1	13.04uah
USA	US\$1	7.98uah

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget room** 200uah
- » **Two-course meal** 60uah
- » **Museum entry** 5-15uah
- » **Beer** 10-20uah
- » **City transport ticket** 1-2uah

Resources

- » **Brama** (www.brama.com) Useful gateway site
- » **Ukraine.com** (www.ukraine.com) Up-to-date news and heaps of background information