



# Ukraine Україна

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Kosmonaut Hostel, Lviv (p1302)
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## Why Go?

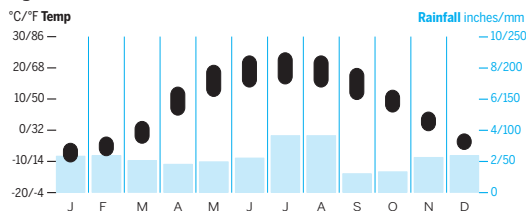
Big, diverse and largely undiscovered, Ukraine is one of Europe's last genuine travel frontiers, a poor nation rich in colour-splashed tradition, warm-hearted people and off-the-map travel experiences.

'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 toward the edge of change and modernity. One look at its renovated city centres, its resurfaced roads and the infrastructure erected for the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship is enough to see that after two decades of independence, Ukraine is edging toward where it aspires to be, despite the failure of the 2004 Orange Revolution.

Kyiv and Lviv are the main draws but wherever you head, Ukraine is great budget travel territory thanks to the devaluation of the local currency, the hryvnya, in 2008.

## When to Go

### Kyiv



**Jan** Plunge starters into the nippy Dnipro river during Kyiv's Epiphany celebrations.

**May** Take a Sunday-morning stroll through Lviv's centre with church music around you.

**Sep** Get back to the grind at Lviv's famous coffee festival.

## 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 (some going via 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, the biggest city, is close to 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 and Bratislava and continue to Ukraine from there by train.

## ITINERARIES

### Two Days

A couple of days are just enough to 'do' Kyiv, starting at its stellar attraction, the Caves Monastery. Follow this with a hike up arty Andriyivsky Uzviz, for a taste of pre-war Ukraine before plunging into the beeswax-perfumed Byzantine interior of Unesco-listed St Sophia's Church.

### Five Days

Having seen the sights in Kyiv, hop aboard a slow night train to Lviv, Ukraine's most central-European city complete with bean-scented coffee houses, Gothic and Baroque churches and trundling trams.

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Borshch** Ukrainian national soup made with beetroot, pork fat and herbs; there's also an aromatic 'green' variety, based on sorrel
- » **Kasha** Sometimes translated as porridge, but usually turns out to be buckwheat drenched in milk and served for breakfast
- » **Khlib** Bread is often used in religious ceremonies and on special occasions; visitors are traditionally greeted with bread and salt
- » **Saló** 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' – *saló* in chocolate
- » **Varenky** Ukrainian dumplings; similar to Polish *pierogi* – pasta pockets filled with everything from mashed potato to sour cherries
- » **Vodka** Also known in Ukraine as *horilka*; accompanies every celebration, red-letter day and get-together in copious amounts

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Hryvnya (uah)
- » **Language** Ukrainian, Russian
- » **Money** ATMs wide-spread; credit cards accepted at most hotels but only upmarket restaurants
- » **Visas** Generally not needed for stays of up to 90 days but Australians and New Zealanders need visas (see p1305)

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 603,550 sq km
- » **Capital** Kyiv
- » **Country code** 380
- » **Emergency** 112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	8.17uah
Canada	C\$1	8.12uah
euro zone	€1	11.22uah
Japan	¥100	9.79uah
New Zealand	NZ\$1	5.99uah
UK	UK£1	12.77uah
USA	US\$1	7.97uah

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 200uah
- » **Two-course evening meal** 60uah
- » **Museum admission** 5 to 15uah
- » **0.5L beer** 10 to 20uah

## Resources

- » See Internet Resources, p1305.