



# Ukraine

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## Why Go?

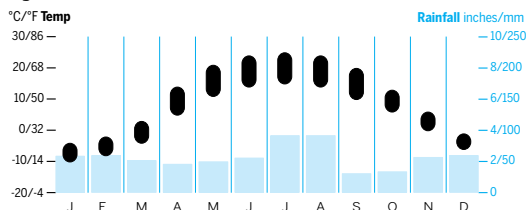
Big, diverse and largely undiscovered, Ukraine (Україна) is one of Europe's last genuine travel frontiers, a poor nation rich in colour-splashed tradition, warm-hearted people and off-the-map travel experiences.

'Ukraine' means 'land on the edge', an apt title for this slab of Eurasia in many ways. This is the Slavic hinterland on Europe's periphery, a mere two decades into a troubled independence and dogged by political anguish, ethnic divisions and deep-rooted corruption. But it's a country whose peoples pull together when needed, most recently for the remarkably successful Euro 2012 soccer championships, which showed off Ukraine at its hospitable best.

Soviet-flavoured Kyiv and the central European charms of Lviv are the main draws but wherever you head, Ukraine is great budget-travel territory thanks to the favourable exchange rate. Transport, food and accommodation are all cheaper than destinations further west.

## When to Go

### Kyiv



**Jan–Mar** Travel across Ukraine's endless steppe in a winter white-out.

**Apr–May** Stroll through spring-time Kyiv when horse chestnut trees blossom across the city.

**Sep** Wake up and smell the beans during Lviv's famous coffee festival.

## AT A GLANCE

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

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 603,628 sq km
- » **Capital** Kyiv
- » **Country code** +380
- » **Emergency** 112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	8.51uah
Canada	C\$1	8.02uah
Euro Zone	€1	10.42uah
Japan	¥100	8.64uah
New Zealand	NZ\$1	6.82uah
UK	UK£1	12.33uah
USA	US\$1	8.15uah

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 200uah
- » **Two-course meal** 60uah
- » **Museum entrance** 10–30uah
- » **Beer** 15–25uah
- » **City transport ticket** 1–2uah

## Resources

- » **Brama** ([www.brama.com](http://www.brama.com))
- » **Infoukes** ([www.infoukes.com](http://www.infoukes.com))
- » **Ukraine.com** ([www.ukraine.com](http://www.ukraine.com))

## 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 and St Petersburg (Russia), Minsk (Belarus), Warsaw (Poland) and Budapest (Hungary), as well as other eastern European capitals. Odesa is the hub for travelling to the Moldovan capital Chişinău and Tiraspol in Transdniester, with several daily buses and one train a day making the trip. 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 main line into Europe at Chop, connecting Ukraine with Slovakia and Hungary. Lviv is the biggest city servicing the Polish border and many 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 (Slovakia), 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 artsy Andriyivsky Uzviz for a taste of prewar Ukraine before plunging into the beeswax-perfumed Byzantine interior of Unesco-listed St Sophia's Cathedral.

### 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 quaintly rattling trams.

## 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.
- » **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.
- » **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.
- » **Varenyky** Similar to Polish *pierogi* – pasta pockets filled with everything from mashed potato to sour cherries.
- » **Vodka** Also known in Ukraine as *horilka*, it accompanies every celebration, red-letter day and get-together – in copious amounts.