



Understand Ukraine

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Several years on from the Orange Revolution, Ukraine faces an uncertain future.

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Winds of change from east and west have been blowing through Ukraine for centuries.

THE PEOPLE245

They may be divided by politics, religion and history, but Ukraine's people share one thing: a talent for survival.

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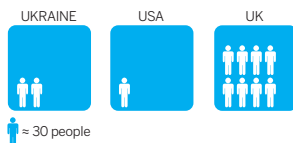
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population per sq km



Ukraine Today

RIP Orange Revolution

The Orange Revolution of 2004, a popular pro-Western uprising which forced a rerun of disputed elections, seems a very distant memory in today's Ukraine. The man behind the alleged electoral fraud was pro-Russia candidate Viktor Yanukovych, who was finally elected the country's president in 2010. The post-mortem of failed post-revolution politics continues, but as those orange days and nights on Kyiv's Independence Square fade into folk memory, Ukrainians enter a new and uncertain chapter in their history as the focus of power shifts once again.

Divided Nation

Even the most optimistic Ukrainians would admit that theirs is a divided nation. The Orange Revolution was driven by Ukrainian-speaking politicians with their support base in the west of the country, but President Yanukovych represents the interests of the Russian-speaking east and south. East of the River Dnipro the Orthodox Church rules supreme; west Ukrainians observe a mishmash of faiths. The east bathes in cosy nostalgia for the Soviet Union, while west Ukrainian nationalists re-name streets after Stepan Bandera (controversial WWII leader of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organisation), and hanker to be enveloped in the EU's Russia-proof bubble. Odesa and Zaporizhzhya erect new Stalin monuments as west Ukrainians drag Moscow through international courts to gain compensation for relatives exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia. 'How do these people live together?' you might ask yourself – but they do. To the outsider the differences are small, seemingly insignificant – people eat the same food, look the same, dress in the same cheap clothes, drive the same bad cars on the same bad roads, and vodka unites Ukraine's east and west. But a turbulent history still makes

Faux Pas

- » Leaving your shoes on when entering someone's house, even if implored to do so.
- » Giving an even number of flowers; that's for funerals.
- » Tucking straight into food before your hosts have said *smachnoho* (bon appetit).

- » Not bringing a gift when invited to someone's house.
- » Gulping vodka without waiting for a toast.
- » Shaking hands across a threshold – it brings bad luck.
- » Leaving an empty bottle on the table – again, bad luck.

Top Films

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1964) Shaggy Hutsul customs and symbolism.

Za Dvumya Zaytsami (Chasing Two Hares; 1961) Diverting romp through early-20th-century Kyiv.

Orange Revolution (2007) Steven York's doco on the events of 2004.