

Understand Ukraine

UKRAINE TODAY.....226

Several years on from the 2004 Orange Revolution, Ukraine faces an uncertain future.

HISTORY228

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

THE PEOPLE239

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

THE UKRAINIAN TABLE245

Beyond *borshch* – we take you into the heart of Ukrainian cuisine.

ART & ARCHITECTURE248

From folk art to cutting-edge contemporary, get the low-down on the intriguing arts scene.

MUSIC & LITERATURE.....250

Hook into gypsy punk bands and revolutionary poets with our pick of Ukraine's best.

Ukraine Today

In November 2013 Ukraine erupted in mass demonstrations against the government when president Viktor Yanukovych, under pressure from Russian president Putin to join a customs union with Russia, refused to sign an Association Agreement with the EU, a first step to membership. Thousands of protesters set up a round-the-clock camp in central Kyiv in sub-zero temperatures. But underlying the Euromaidan protests are deeper issues than just EU membership.

Best on Film

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

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

The Battle of Chernobyl (2006) Detailed documentary on the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath.

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

Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka (1961) Technicolor film version of Gogol's most Ukrainian tales.

Best in Print

Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka Nikolai Gogol's stories, mostly set in his native Poltava region.

Borderland Anna Reid's journey through Ukrainian history.

Death and the Penguin Andrey Kurkov's Kafkaesque tale set in the troubled early 1990s.

Everything Is Illuminated Jonathan Safran Foer searches for the lost west Ukrainian *shtetl* (village) of Trachimbrod.

Taras Bulba Gogol's swashbuckling Cossack tale.

The White Guard Bulgakov's portrait of Kyiv during the Russian Civil War.

Dictatorship?

The protests of 2013 are seen by many as a repeat performance of the Orange Revolution of 2004, a popular pro-Western uprising that forced a rerun of disputed elections. The man behind the alleged electoral fraud was Viktor Yanukovych, who was finally elected the country's president in 2010. Many at the time feared Yanukovych and his oligarch-backed Party of the Regions would curtail press freedom and dismantle democracy in the country. So, a few years down the line, has Ukraine descended into dictatorship? Well, not quite. Opposition parties function quite freely (if occasionally hassled by police), protests are still permitted on Kyiv's squares (then normally broken up by riot police), and a few newspapers and TV channels still attempt investigative journalism. But in general, Ukraine feels less free than it did in 2009, with journalists experiencing intimidation and sometimes violence, members of protest groups (such as Femen) effectively exiled, and any successful businesses under threat of confiscation by the Yanukovych family. And as long as ailing opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko languishes in jail, the overriding atmosphere in the country will be one of pessimism and fear of what the regime and its associates might do next.

Divided Nation

Even the most optimistic Ukrainians would admit that theirs is a divided nation. The opposition is led 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 Dnipro River the Orthodox Church rules supreme; west Ukrainians observe a mishmash of faiths. The east bathes in a very selective nostalgia for the Soviet Union, while west Ukrainian na-