

# Київ Київ



Your first impression of Kyiv is bound to be one of surprise. This cradle of all that is Russian, this receptacle of 'New Ukrainian' wealth, this paradise of crooked politicians and gangsters is so...beautiful. Especially if you arrive in the summer, Kyiv will entice you the moment you gaze upon its gold domes lighting up the leafy banks of the Dniro.

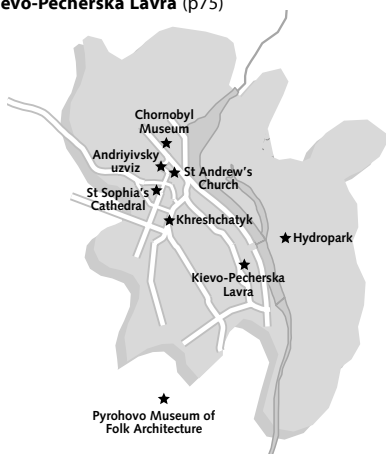
Kyiv's original settlers surely chose this spot 1500 years ago because of its natural beauty. Modern-day Kyiv is part Kyivan Rus, part Soviet, part Ukrainian-nationalist and part capitalist mayhem. Turn-of-the-20th-century architecture mixes with Soviet monumentalism and flashy office buildings; and statues glorify characters as diverse as Lesi Ukrainka, Lenin and Lobanovsky.

Of course there is a tinge of truth to those gangster stereotypes, as anybody who's anybody in the often shady world of Ukrainian business maintains a private apartment in the capital. Aggressive drivers and late-model BMWs are the norm. Smiles can seem in short supply.

But the churches and trees and architecture and parks and history have a way of making up for all that. By all means do the typical tourist stuff: check out the mummified monks of the Lavra or visit the charming street of Andriyivsky uzviz. But also leave time to join the ever-present local crowds simply drinking in the atmosphere. Wander through hilltop parkland overlooking the Dniro River and Soviet-built suburbs on the far bank. Or, in summer, set out your towel on the city beaches of Hydropark. Stroll along the main street of Khreshchatyk, eat well, have a beer, go clubbing – that's when this whirlwind of a city really sweeps you off your feet.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- See mummified monks by candlelight in the **Kievo-Pecherska Lavra** (p75)
- Walk up **Andriyivsky uzviz** in the shadow of the magnificent **St Andrew's Church** (p73)
- Inspect **St Sophia's Cathedral** (p70) and any other major church that takes your fancy
- Visit the **Chornobyl Museum** (p75) or even the damaged **reactor** (p95) itself
- Take a stroll along **Khreshchatyk** (p67) and the leafy parks lining the river
- Join locals in pursuit of a dizzying array of activities in inimitable **Hydropark** (p81)
- Sample vodka, *salo* and other hearty Ukrainian dishes in the city's many excellent **restaurants** (p86)
- Enjoy a day in the 'countryside' at the excellent **Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture** (p79)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: (8)-044

■ POPULATION: 5.6 MILLION

■ HIGHEST POINT: 179M

## HISTORY

Legend has it that three Slavic brothers and their sister founded Kyiv. The eldest, Ky, gave the city its name. The names of brothers Shchek, Khoriv and sister Lybid now appear in its topography. An iconic statue of the four siblings – the Foundation of Kyiv Monument (Map p66) – stands on the banks of the Dnipro River.

Four hundred years later the city really started to prosper, after Vikings from Novgorod took control. In 879 Scandinavian King Oleh had sent two emissaries, Askold and Dir, to Kyiv to strike a deal with the ruling Magyars. But, wanting greater control himself, Oleh journeyed to Kyiv in 882, dispatched his emissaries and declared himself ruler. This was the beginning of Kyivan Rus ('Rus' being the Slavic name for the red-haired Scandinavians). The city thrived on river trade, sending furs, honey and slaves to pay for luxury goods from Constantinople. Within 100 years its empire stretched from the Volga to the Danube and to Novgorod.

In 989 Kyivan ruler Volodymyr decided to forge a closer alliance with Constantinople, marrying the emperor's daughter and adopting Orthodox Christianity. Kyiv's pagan idols were destroyed and its people driven into the Dnipro for a mass baptism – an event still commemorated during Epiphany (see p83).

Under Volodymyr's son, Yaroslav the Wise (1017–54), Kyiv became a cultural and political centre in the Byzantine mould. St Sophia's Cathedral (p70) was built to proclaim the glory of both God and city. However, by the 12th century, Kyiv's economic prowess had begun to wane, with power shifting successively to several breakaway principalities.

In 1240 Mongol raiders sacked Kyiv. Citizens fled or took refuge wherever they could, including the roof of the Desyatynna Church (see p74), which collapsed under the weight.

The city shrank to the riverside district of Podil, which remained its centre for centuries. Only when Ukraine formally passed into Russian hands at the end of the 18th century did Kyiv again grow in importance, as tsarist policies encouraged Russian immigration. The city went through an enormous boom at the turn of the 20th century because of an upsurge in nearby sugar milling. Many new mansions were erected at this time, including the remarkable House of Chimeras (p80).

During the chaos following the Bolshevik Revolution, Kyiv was the site of frequent battles between Red and White Ukrainian forces. Acclaimed author Mikhail Bulgakov captured the era's uncertainty in his first novel, *The White Guard*. The home in which he wrote this book is now a museum (see p73).

In August 1941, German troops captured Kyiv and more than half a million Soviet soldiers were caught or killed. The entire city suffered terribly. Germans massaged about 100,000 at Babyn Yar (see p79) and 80% of the city's inhabitants were homeless by the time the Red Army retook Kyiv on 6 November 1943.

The post-war years saw rapid industrialisation and the construction of unsightly suburbs. During the late 1980s nationalistic and democratic movements from western Ukraine began to catch on in the capital. Throughout the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, Kyiv and its young population increasingly became a base of opposition politics. During the Orange Revolution of 2004, activists from around Ukraine poured into the capital to demonstrate on maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence square) and outside the parliament building.

## ORIENTATION

Kyiv's modern centre and old city are on the Dnipro River's west bank – called the 'right bank' because it's on the right as you travel down the river. If you were to sail downstream into Kyiv from the north, your first port of call on the right bank would be Podil, which sits below the rest of the city on the river plain. Continuing south, the woody, park-covered hills of the Pechersk district rise up from the river, extending south to Kyiv's main attraction, the Kievo-Pecherska Lavra.

The commercial heart of modern-day Kyiv – vul Khreshchatyk and maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence square) – is above Podil and the river, west of Pechersk's hills. The city's ancient centre, located around Zoloti Vorota and St Sophia's Cathedral, is perched on a long hill overlooking, and running parallel to, vul Khreshchatyk.

Kyiv's 'left bank' and the right-bank suburbs are endless sprawls of grey housing blocks. Between the city's left and right banks, in the middle of the Dnipro, there's a cluster of islands with beaches and parkland.