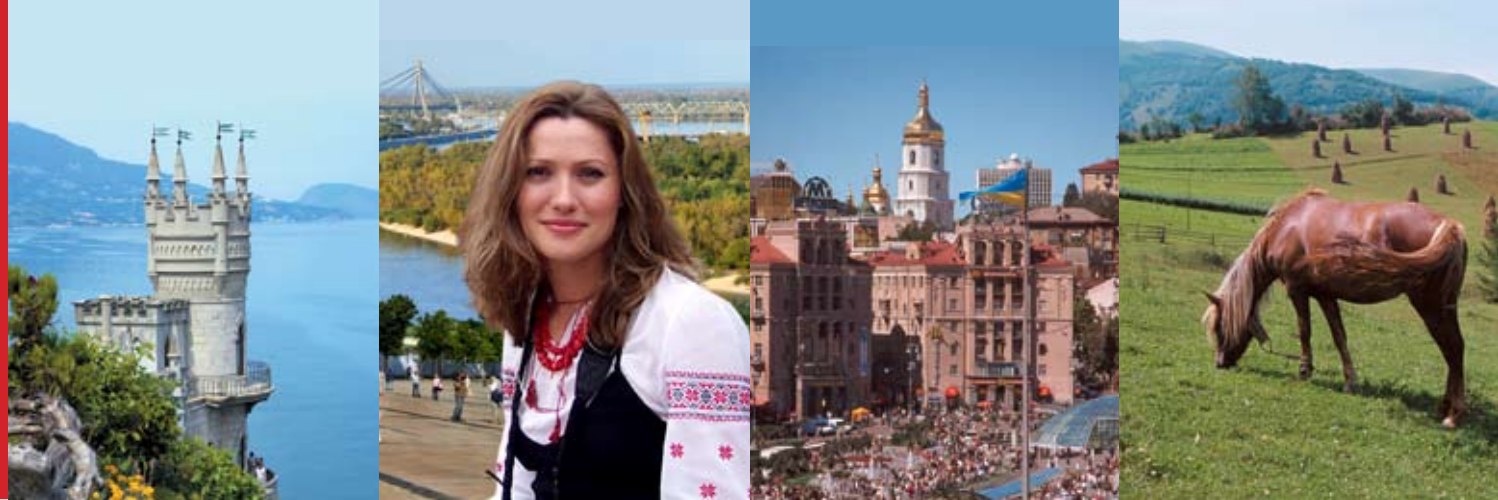


See you
in Ukraine!



The days when Ukraine was perceived as a mysterious but ambiguous Russian appendage may well be firmly in the past, but Europe's largest country remains one of the continent's most misunderstood, and its many tourist treasures are still considered off the beaten track for mainstream holiday makers.

First time guests are confronted by a world of previously unknown charm and beauty, from the world-class nightlife and entertainment opportunities of 21st century Kyiv and glamour of imperial Odesa to the majesty of the Crimean peninsula and quiet tranquility of the timeless Carpathians. They will find a country of contrasts that defies the usual stereotypes and leaves guests with a whole new perception of eastern Europe.

History confronts the visitor at every turn, and Ukraine's troubled past has created a patchwork nation which boasts a remarkably diverse range of tourist attractions including Islamic palaces dating back to the time of the Golden Horde, remnants of Tsarist splendour in the southern cities of the old Russian Empire, and the Mittel Europa of west Ukraine's Habsburg domains.

That is now all changing, with European service standards increasingly widespread and a new generation of tourism professionals leading the charge. The future looks bright for the industry, with billions of euros already earmarked for major hotel, airport and infrastructure projects to meet the challenges set by Euro 2012. The task now for the adventurous tourist is to visit the country before it becomes just another routine destination on the East European tourism circuit!



Kyiv.

A young and ancient capital?



Yes. Don't be surprised, there is no contradiction about that. Kyiv is more than 1.500 years old. In the distant past it was also a capital, although the state then was called Kyiv Rus.

The domes of the Kyivo-Pecherska Lavra and St. Sophia's Cathedral have towered above Kyiv for almost a thousand years now. They are on UNESCO's world's cultural heritage list. "The cradle of the Eastern Slav' civilization," "the mother of Rus cities," "stately and golden-domed," "the city of gardens" — these are just a few names for Kyiv. Kyivans take good care of their monuments and legends.

Kyiv became the capital of the sovereign state of Ukraine in 1991 when the country gained independence. Since then, there has been a new stage in the life of the city. Its main square, Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti), has changed its appearance and pleases the eyes of the Kyivans and visitors. Kyiv is experiencing a construction boom: new office centers and shopping malls are emerging.



Crimea. Subtropics in Ukraine?



Yes, parts of the Crimean peninsula, which is in southern Ukraine, are in the subtropical zone. That is why on its southern coast there is always something in bloom throughout the year.

This is where the Black Sea and the Crimean Mountains touch each other. As for the number of sunny days, resorts such as Yalta compare favorably with Nice and many other Mediterranean resorts. This combination makes the peninsula the most popular area in Ukraine for recreation.

In fact, the fame of the resort dates back to the 19th century when the Russian czars and nobility began building their residences on the coast. Today these palaces are open to the public: Livadiysky, Vorontsovsky, Massandrivsky, Dulber, and others. But the palaces are only part of the history. There is also Khersones (an ancient Greek town in Sevastopol), a Genoese fortress in Sudak, mysterious “cave towns” in the mountains, and a Tatar khan’s palace in Bakhchysarai. And again that is just a tiny bit of what Crimea has to offer.

Enjoy the southern sun and learn many interesting things!



The Ukrainian Carpathians.

Can mountains be blue?

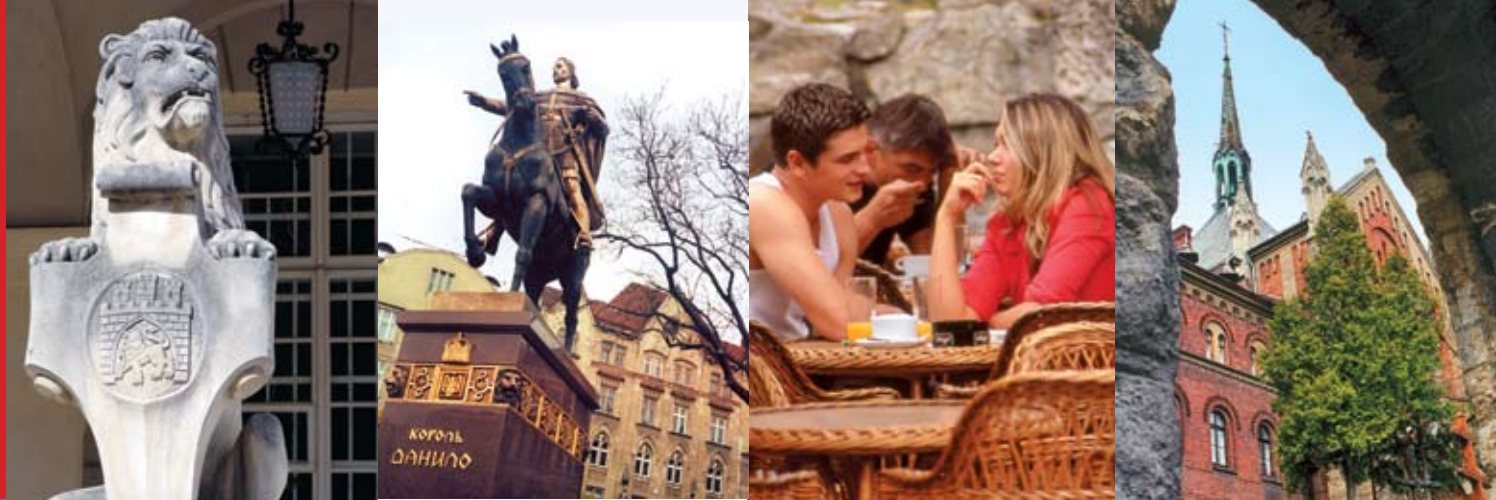


It is not quite clear why the mountains in western Ukraine are called blue. Probably, because of the mist that usually closes in from the valleys. It may be this mist that makes the feeling for time and space here different than elsewhere.

The Carpathians offer tourists various forms of attractions for any season: historical, recreational and extreme programs. In winter this is a place for mountain skiers.

What makes the mountains original is the fact that this is the only place with the unique ancient Central European forests still intact. That is why the largest part of the Carpathians is a preserve. And then there is the wild narcissus valley. Not far from the town of Khust is Europe's only preserve of narrow-leaved narcissuses. Another thing that fascinates visitors are the local traditions. They were not recreated for purposes of the tourist business, but have remained from ancient times. Climbing to the top of a rolling Carpathian hill, called "polonyna", one can hear the world's longest musical instrument — the trembita, or taste some fresh sheep's cheese. Choosing a souvenir can be problem as there is a lot of choice.

Lviv. Lion City?



You've been to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, and you think you know everything about the country? That is not true, since one can't really understand this country without visiting Lviv (Lemberg, in the days of Austro-Hungarian Empire), Ukraine's "secret western capital".

The Lion City (the translation of the town's name) is just an hour by plane from Vienna or Berlin. The lion is held in high respect in Lviv. Sculptures of hundreds of lions will greet you in Lviv.

Lviv is a very poetic city steeped in legends both ancient and relatively new! Narrow medieval streets paved with stones, architectural decoration done in different styles — all that is preserved in its original form. Thus, it is no wonder that the central part of the city is included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List. You can admire monuments of different eras created by way of combining numerous national cultural traditions in this open-air museum for hours.

The city's unique Bohemian aura seems to magnetically attract unconventional people. There were many geniuses among them: The Polish poet Adam Mitskevich, Ukrainian historian and philosopher Mykhailo Hrushevsky, the biologist and inventor of the typhus vaccine Rudolf Vigel, the author of classics of Jewish literature Sholom Aleikhem, the famous science fiction novelist of the 20th century Stanislav Lem and many others looked for inspiration for their creative and scientific work in Lviv. With a cup of fragrant Lviv coffee they were kissed by muses and became full of bright ideas.

Odesa.

Is “Odesite”
a nationality?



At least that's what residents of Odesa claim. And they have grounds for that. When Odesa was being founded over 200 years ago, energetic and brave representatives of many nations came from different places to build the city.

The French duke de Richelieu, a grandson of the famous French Cardinal, and later the prime minister of France, is called one of the fathers of the city by its residents. There is a monument to the duke in the central square of Odesa. Here one can see Ukrainians, Russians, Moldavians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Jews, people from France, England and many others. This ethnic “cocktail” created the unique character of the city. They even have their own dialect here which cannot be confused with any other.

Today, Odesa is Ukraine's largest port. As for the entertainment industry, it has no equal in Ukraine. Aesthetes will be amazed at the city's theaters, concerts and splendid museum collections. A wide range of sport and entertainment centers, restaurants, casinos and discotheques concentrated on the coastline will create a festive mood. Still, Odesa's biggest treasure is its people. Their optimism and effervescent humor earned the city a reputation as the capital of laughter. Every year holidays of humor as well as music and art festivals imbue everyone with energy and joy. And the celebration of the Day of the City at the beginning of September adds to this.

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