Tour Notes

Ukraine - Echoes of the Cold War

Tour Duration – 9 Days

Tour Rating
Fitness ●●●○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●● | Culture ●●●○ | History ●●●● | Wildlife ●○○○

Tour Pace - Moderate

Tour Highlights

✓ Visit the unique Museum of Strategic Missile Forces with its command centre, similar to those the Russians are using nowadays
✓ The abandoned super-secret over-the-horizon radar system, the main part of the Soviet anti-ballistic missile early-warning network called Duga
✓ Explore the deserted ghost-city of Prypyat and Chernobyl Exclusion Zone
✓ Visit the biggest Soviet plant where missiles and rockets of the Cold War period were produced
✓ Explore abandoned missile bases, communication and control bunkers and air defence facilities
Tour Essentials

Accommodation: Mix of comfortable hotels
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum 12
Start Point: Lviv
End Point: Kiev
Transport: Private minibus, train
Countries: Ukraine
Ukraine – Echoes of the Cold War
The Cold War coloured the childhood and lives of generations, an undeclared conflict that threatened to turn
the Earth into a charred cinder. The mechanisms of the power struggle between competing ideologies were
subject to much secrecy on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This tour investigates the origins of the Soviet
power in Ukraine, together with the country’s tangible vestiges of Cold War technology, from Stalin’s bunker,
to secret early warning radar stations, missile bases, bomber forces, and the technology of the Space Race.
In addition, there’s a journey into ‘the Zone’, the area surrounding the Chernobyl power plant, a ghostly site of
the world’s worst nuclear disaster, initially denied by the Soviets. Elsewhere, there’s an opportunity to learn
about the ongoing conflict involving separatist Russian nationalists in Ukraine’s Donbass region, and the
preceding annexation by Russia of the Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula. As well as shedding light on decades of
Cold War this fascinating journey explores events making history today as the Russian Federation attempts to
regain lost Soviet influence.

Tour Itinerary Notes
While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in.
Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar
standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide
Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All
of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually
locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from
Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative
who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On this tour for group size of 3 or more you will be
accompanied by an English-speaking tour leader throughout, assisted where necessary by local English-
speaking guides.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Lviv
Arrive in Lviv and transfer to hotel accommodation. Depending upon flight arrival schedules there may be time
to explore the city independently. Tonight there’s a welcome dinner. Overnight Reikartz Medievale Hotel or
similar. (D)

Lviv
Lviv is a fantastically eclectic city with a wide variety of architectural styles combining to create a place with a
split personality, but which somehow definitely works. Founded in the 13th century, Lviv is almost dripping
with history, and walking around its wide boulevards and large squares you will see Gothic, Renaissance and
Baroque architecture among many other types. Its medieval atmosphere harks back to days when Lviv was at
the forefront of regional events, and it was once a wealthy trading centre. Unlike many other cities in Ukraine,
it mainly escaped the terrible destruction wrought by Nazi bombers in World War Two, and its charming
streets make it one of the most exciting places in Ukraine to explore. Lviv has been named as the best place
in Ukraine to live and wandering around its historic centre it is easy to see why.

Day 2 – Lviv
Today our Cold War tour starts in Lviv’s mediaeval Old City. A UNESCO World Heritage Site. Occupied by
the Nazis in WWII Lviv was important control centre for Soviet expansion into the west. We investigate both
pre and post war periods, and learn why it was important for the Soviets and the KGB to defeat the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) who fought against the occupation for many years. We visit the museum inside the former KGB prison on Lonckyi Street, and the Territory of Terror Memorial Museum of Totalitarian Regimes where we are reminded of atrocities committed in the totalitarian world. Later we walk to the abandoned Radio Centre Bunker hidden in the hills. Overnight Reikartz Medievale Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 3 – Lviv – Korosten – Zytomyr – Vinnytsa (approx. travelling times: train - 3hr40m, car - 215km, total travelling time approx. 10 hours)*

There's a very early start today, driving to the railway station to board the morning train to Korosten. Upon arrival we descend into the town's old military command bunker, constructed within granite bedrock for Josef Stalin, later serving as a Cold War shelter for local Soviet leaders. Afterwards we drive to Zytomyr to visit the Sergei Korolev Museum of Astronautics, named after genius rocket engineer and spacecraft designer Serhii Korolev, who was born in Zhytomyr and worked as a leading designer of Soviet rockets and missiles during the USA/USSR Space Race. Later we visit the 'Wehrwolf Bunker' from where Adolf Hitler and his generals oversaw the eastern front during WWII. Overnight Hotel France or similar. (B)

Day 4 – Vinnytsa – Pervomaisk – Kropivnitsky (total travelling approx. 420km, 7hrs)*

This morning we drive to the Museum of Strategic Missile Forces, located near Pervomaisk, on the territory of the former missile base. This is the only such museum in the world, displaying the nuclear weapons potential of the so-called 'Evil Empire'. Here we'll see the main types of strategic missile still in service with the Russian military. We descend to the underground command centre, which remains exactly like a Russian combat control centre on active duty. Afterwards we travel to the small town Kropivnitsky. Overnight Reikartz Kropivnitskiy or similar. (B)

Please note: There is an option (at extra cost) to visit the Military Aviation Museum this morning. Please advise if you would like to take advantage of this.

*The road from Pervomaisk to Kropivnitsky is often in very poor condition and therefore the journey may take longer than expected.

Day 5 – Kropivnitsky – Dnipro (total travelling – 260km, approx. 5 hours)

After breakfast we drive to Dnipro and visit the Interpipe NTRP History Museum or Petrovkyi Plant Museum (subject to change). The museum has over 57,400 artefacts pertaining to Ukrainian industrial history. Afterwards we visit Aerospace Centre and discover the history of rocket construction in Ukraine. Later there’s a two-hour walking tour around the city centre. Alternatively, there’s a chance to explore the new Museum of Anti-Terrorist Operation where we investigate the ongoing conflict with Russia in the Donbass region. Overnight at Reikartz Dnipro or similar. (B)

Day 6 – Dnipro – Poltava – Kyiv (total travelling – 600km, approx. 9 hours)

Today is dedicated to the third part of the nuclear triad, bomber aircraft capable of delivering atomic weapons. We visit the unique Poltava Museum of Long-Range and Strategic Aviation and examine examples of bombers, still on active service in the Russian air force, whose long-range flights across the Atlantic continue to keep the western world on its toes. Overnight Hotel Rus or similar. (B)

Day 7 – Kyiv

Today's city tour of the Ukrainian capital explores the history of Kiev from the moment of its foundation in the Middle Ages through the Soviet period to recent revolutionary times. All these periods are deeply connected. In the post war period architecture in Kiev was much influenced by communist ideology. However, combined with Ukrainian baroque and modern European styles the contrast creates a surprising result, part green and leafy country town and part brutalist republican capital. We travel from the Old Town of Kiev to Maidan
Square and on to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kiev Pechersk Lavra monastery complex, ending at the remarkable WWII National Museum complex. Overnight Rus Hotel or similar. (B)

Kiev
Kiev is one of the oldest cities in the region, founded back in the 5th century and becoming an important centre of Slavic culture. Falling under the rule of the Varangians sometime later it became the capital of Rus, benefitting from its position on the trade routes between Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire and becoming infused with a wide variety of cultural influences which remain today. Over its time, Kiev has been sacked by the Mongols, incorporated within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and then absorbed into Russia and the Soviet Union. Straddling the banks of the Dnepr River, Kiev is Ukraine’s most cosmopolitan city, and a real mix of old and new. With a historic old quarter, the city is packed full of monuments, the most famous being the Lavra cave monastery, a collection of underground chambers and spectacular churches dating back to the 11th century. Kiev is a city with an enormous amount of churches and cathedrals, with a particular style that looks almost Russian but is unique to Ukraine, and in many areas these dominate the skyline, reminding visitors of the intense respect that ordinary Ukrainians have for religion. But perhaps one of Kiev’s greatest delights is simply walking around the city and seeing where you end up, discovering for yourself its corners, streets and cafes and immersing yourself in Ukrainian culture.

Day 8 – Kyiv – Chernobyl – Kyiv (total travelling – 320km, approx. 8 hours)
Early in the morning we leave Kiev and drive to the largest abandoned area in Europe, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Life here stopped in 1986 after the world’s worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl’s Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Power Plant. Gazing across the Zone’s landscape it’s almost as though the Cold War became hot. During the tour we see the remains of the plant and visit the ghost city of Prypyat. Here there are also many facilities built for Cold War purposes, including the over-the-horizon radar system, known as the Russian Woodpecker or Duga, part of a super-secret Soviet anti-ballistic missile early-warning network. Back in Kiev there’s a farewell dinner at a Ukrainian restaurant, a chance to share impressions and say goodbye to new friends. Overnight Rus Hotel or similar. (BD)

Day 9 – Kiev Departure
After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight from Kiev (B)

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions
Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Services of an English-speaking guide
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Enterance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary
All transport for the tour
First-class train tickets

Excluded:
International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks
Tips
Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings
Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

Our tours to Ukraine do not visit any areas currently subject to UK FCO warnings. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times
As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an ‘arrival day’. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating
At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Please note that at the local farmstead single rooms are available but will have shared facilities, and single accommodation is not available on overnight train journeys; travellers will be allocated twin share accommodation. Please be advised that on overnight trains compartments are not divided by sex; single male and female passengers may be required to share the same compartment. If you are travelling alone and wish to guarantee a private compartment on the overnight trains for sole occupancy please contact us. An additional charge will apply.
Food & Drink
The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements
If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour
You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food
The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £3-5
Dinner £6-9

Drink
The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £0.30
Beer £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers
If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. A reasonable amount to tip a guide would be between $10-20 per day between the groups. In restaurants tips of 10-15% are expected on top of the bill. Some restaurants include the service fee. When in a taxi tips are not normally required, but outstanding service can be rewarded within the same 10 – 15% or by rounding the amount up.

Foreign Exchange
ATM Availability: ATMs are wide spread but only the local currency only can be withdrawn. Some ATMs have a limit on the amount that can be withdrawn at one transaction
Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: MasterCard, Maestro and VISA are usually accepted but American Express cards are rarely accepted in hotels and retail locations.
Local Currency: Hryvnia (UAH)
Recommended Currency for Exchange: US dollars or Euros
Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information
You are able to book this tour on a ‘land only’ basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.
Joining Tour Abroad
Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance
It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information
Most nationals, including EU, UK and US citizens no longer require a visa to visit Ukraine for stays of less than 90 days.

Regulations do frequently change though, so we advise that you check the current requirements with your nearest embassy.

Passports
It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country’s embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Vaccinations & Protection
We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor’s surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A and B, Polio and Typhoid.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you’re travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you’ll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you’re travelling to.
Preparing for your tour

Climate
It’s possible to visit Ukraine at any time of year, but it’s significantly warmer from June to September. The winter months can experience significant snowfall – although that’s not necessarily an impediment to visiting it can limit your options to explore the mountains, and is accompanied by shorter days.

Clothing
Our general recommendation is to bring light clothing with a couple of fleeces or jumpers for cooler evenings. You should also bring a waterproof jacket for any days that it may rain. You should bring at least one long sleeved top for any churches that you will visit.

Equipment
The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must – you should not rely on being able to find it in Ukraine.

Insect repellent, including a bite spray will be useful to have. You should also bring a torch / flashlight.

Footwear
Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended although sandals will be suitable for travelling in general.

Luggage on tour
Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable. We advise you to travel with a rucksack or soft bag rather than a suitcase.

Electric Supply & Plugs
Generally electrical supply is 220V AC (50 Hz) and uses European two circular pin style plugs. A so-called Europlug or CEE7/16 should work with all outlets, both Soviet era and new ones.

Tour Itinerary Versions
Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 14 November 2019.