

VOLHYNIAN VILLAGE ADVENTURE TOURS

Orientation Guide

by
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PASSPORT

You must have a valid passport to travel to Ukraine. A passport is valid only if it does not expire within six months of the date of arrival. Be sure to check your passport carefully for this information. It normally takes four to six weeks to process an application in the US. To get a passport you must have a certified birth certificate (with raised seal) and two passport pictures. The current cost is around a \$100.+ It is valid for ten years. The cost to renew your current passport is about \$75. Canadian requirements and costs may vary. Applications can normally be obtained from your local county and/or the post office. If you do not presently have a valid passport, you are advised to apply immediately. Space on the tour is not guaranteed unless you have a passport in hand.

VISA

If you are a US or Canadian citizen, a visa is no longer required to enter Ukraine.

PREPARATON

You are encouraged to gather as much information as possible about your ancestry and village(s) before the trip. Many of you, of course, will already have done extensive research, but for those just starting out, here are some obvious sources:

- Family and friends (personal interviews, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, backs of photos, inside of old books, including records in the family Bible, birth, marriage, baptism, military, school and death certificates, baby books, obituary notices, school year books, business and financial papers, announcements and invitations, newspaper clippings, awards and certificates, immigration and naturalization papers, deeds, family artifacts, tomb stones, etc.)
- County and State records (birth, marriage, divorce, death).
- Funeral homes, church records, genealogical societies, census records, passenger lists, LDS library, Social Security Death Index.
- Recent arrival of German relatives from Siberia, Kazakhstan, etc.
- Old telephone directories, various archives, AHSGR Obituary files
- Genealogical researchers, EWZ records (forms completed by refugees retreating with the German Army).
- Maps of Volhynia and Poland to identify your villages. The names of the villages should also be submitted to me, as well as your family names, so that I can help you make this a meaningful tour.
- Read articles of general interest giving historical perspective. If you have Baptist roots, consider reading my book entitled, *In the Midst of Wolves* (A History of

German Baptists in Volhynia, 1863 – 1943), and if a family member was arrested during the repression of the 1930s, my book *Under Arrest* is a must. For general information about the times in which the people lived, you may want to get my latest book *The Old Country*. Also you can go to my web site: www.volhynia.org for additional information.

- Consider bringing a small hand battery powered recorder. It's a great time saver and memory jogger. A camcorder or digital camera also works fine.

LUGGAGE

1. Ordinarily, you are entitled to one 50 lb. suitcase and one carry-on bag not to exceed 22 X 14 X 9 inches, depending on the airlines you're using. **But regulations are changing all the time, so be sure to check with your airline.** Also watch the size of your carry-on bag. In any case, do not take more luggage than you can personally carry and be responsible for. Try to get all your personal items into one suitcase. **Exception:** In the event you are making a stopover in Europe, you may need an additional piece of luggage. Or if you would be willing to bring in some good used clothing, especially warm sweaters, men's shoes, gloves, etc. for our mission work in an old suitcase that you don't mind leaving there or a duffel bag.
2. Bring along a small padlock for your luggage. Most airline carriers do not allow you to lock your luggage when you check in, but there may be occasions when you may want to keep your suitcases locked.

PACKING HINTS

1. Roll sweaters, shirts and blouses rather than folding them. This causes fewer wrinkles and saves space.
2. Place heavy items, such as shoes and appliances along the back of your suitcase. This will keep them from wrinkling your clothes.
3. Stuff socks and underwear inside your shoes to utilize space.
4. Pack a small flashlight. Keep in mind that there are often no operative streetlights in Zhitomir or in small towns and villages. Also, often light bulbs are missing in the hallway or restrooms of the archives and other public buildings.
5. Put your shampoo, lotion, hairspray, mouthwash, etc. in regulation size bottles to avoid forfeiture at security check-in points. Security usually requires that all this be in a small plastic bag.
6. You may want to bring a small hand mirror. That way you can shave, fix your hair or apply make-up while the other person is using the bathroom.
7. Avoid clothes that need ironing.
8. Make a checklist prior to departure, i.e. of passport, tickets, cash, maps, genealogy records, notebook, suitcases, etc.
9. Couples should split their clothing, putting some of each ones clothing in each other's luggage, in the event one piece is lost or does not arrive on time. However, in many trips I have made only twice has anyone's luggage been delayed; never lost.
10. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes for village exploration and adventure.

APPLIANCES- ADAPTERS

1. Go with an easy-care hairstyle. If you need a hair dryer, get a small travel size or share one with a tour member. Do not bring curling irons.
2. You must purchase an international converter and plug adapter if you plan on taking any electronic appliances, such as shavers (if not a dual system), hair dryers, video cameras that do not have a built in converter, as the electrical current is 220 volts A.C. 50 cycles. If your appliance has a built in converter, you will only need a plug adapter. These items can be purchased for a small cost at most K-Mart, AAA or luggage stores.

CURRENCY

1. The local currency in Ukraine is called **grivnas**. The current rate of exchange is approximately 7.5 to one in our favor, i.e. seven and a half grivnas to \$1. USD, which is a very good rate currently.
2. Bring enough US cash (Canadian cash or Euros can be used, but American bills are generally preferred) to cover any additional on-location costs, such as shopping, as Ukraine does not readily accept credit cards, except at major stores and hotels. Traveler's checks are not accepted at all. The exchange is best done in a bank or exchange stand once we get there. Major credit cards and ATM cards are accepted at select locations in downtown Kiev and Zhitomir, but at a cost.
3. You must have clean 100., \$50. or \$20. bills for exchange. The money changers are suspicious of old, dirty, marked or torn bills. Order ahead of time at your bank. The maximum you can take into the country is \$10,000., which I am sure is not a problem for any of us. It is also good to take some single dollar bills along for baggage tipping.
4. It is generally best to carry your money and passport with you at all times in a money belt or neck pouch. **Do not carry your passport or cash in a backpack or rump sack, but around your neck or in a money belt.**
5. Other valuables should be kept in a locked suitcase, Pick pocketing and petty theft is probably the single most common crime foreigners encounter, but it shouldn't be a problem where we're going or staying.

SIGHTSEEING IN KIEV

Kiev, with a population of over two million, is a very old historical city. It was founded around 400 AD. Some sites we may visit include Kiev-Pecherskaya Lavra (a complex of Orthodox temples), St. Sophia's Cathedral, an outstanding architectural monument dating back to 1037, Chernobyl's Museum, depicting the nuclear explosion, Andrei's Descent (a great place to buy souvenirs), Babi Yar Monument, the site of mass extermination of Jews during II World War and Prince Vladimir's Monument on the Dneiper River, commemorating the beginning of Christianity in Russia. We usually take a two-hour boat cruise down the Dneiper River, depending on time and availability, and of course, it is always interesting just to walk the streets and enjoy an evening out on the town..

VILLAGE GIFTS

The people in the villages are very poor. It can be a very beautiful thing to give an old *babushka* (Granny) in your village a small gift, such as a pack of needles, a pair of gloves or socks, a bottle of aspirin or Tylenol, vitamins or Ben Gay. Stars, balloons, crayons, stickers, colorful pencils are great gifts for the kids. This can be supplemented with something from your state/province or country, such as postcards of your city, small flags, and pictures of your family. **You are requested not to give money to street beggars or needy people in the villages, except through our national director of Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine or myself, as we have learned from experience that it is not always safe and often the money is used for alcoholism and drugs.** (A few years ago one of our tour members gave a Gypsy boy a \$1. in the market place and before he knew it about 30 adult gypsies adults boxed him in and bombarded him with requests. He was lucky he didn't lose his wallet, passport and camera).

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

1. Even if the Ukrainians smile at your attempts to speak a few words of their language, they'll appreciate it. I'll send you a "Russian Language" guide to learn some important phrases. You may also want to get a small Ukrainian-English dictionary to supplement the guide I'm sending you.
2. Guard what you say around the nationals about their culture or country.

BOTTLED WATER

DO NOT DRINK WATER FROM THE TAP in Ukraine. Drink only bottled water or distilled water, which we will provide. Any other water is unsafe. Coffee and tea made in restaurants is safe. In addition, it is not wise to drink cold beverages with ice or brush your teeth with anything other than boiled or bottled water. If affected by the parasite in their water, you will suffer diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fatigue, nausea and vomiting. Because we will be traveling in villages where there may not be any restaurants, we will carry a packed lunch for our noon meal. This will also maximize our time.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS

1. Do not buy foodstuffs from vendors on the street.
- 2 **DO NOT GO OUT FOR A WALK ALONE UNLESS YOU TRAVEL IN PAIRS OR GROUPS.** Women should always be accompanied by a man, especially at night. It is safe in Ukraine, especially when we are with nationals we know, or in the villages, but it is not prudent to venture out by your self at night in the big city.

WEATHER

1. The weather in Ukraine at this time of the year is continental, which means that spring and fall can still be a bit cool, like the Midwest or Western Canada, so you are advised to bring along a sweater and/or light jacket.

2. A hat (cap) is also a good idea.

EMERGENCIES

For all practical purposes, it is best not to think in terms of your family or friends contacting you during your trip. However, if there is an emergency, they can contact you through Alex Brzheztsky, the national director for Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine. His e-mail is guaki@mail.ru. His cell phone number is +38 0 67 963 5905. Family members can always reach him at that number day or night. When needing to reach Alex while in the Ukraine, dial 067 963 5905. It is a good idea to keep this number in your wallet or with your passport/papers in the event of emergency.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND HEALTH CARE

1. There are no immunizations required for visiting Ukraine, but it is advisable that your tetanus and diphtheria shots are up to date.
2. Since medical facilities and supplies are limited, good health is a requirement. If you are over 70 years of age, you are required to send me a statement from your doctor that you are physically able to make the trip.
3. Take along an adequate supply of all prescriptions, vitamins and other medications. Don't check these in your suitcase. Carry them with you.
4. Also consider taking aspirin, cold tablets, a pack of Kleenex, moist towelettes and other personal hygiene and first aid items, at your discretion. Put in zip lock bags.

TOTE BAG

1. Bring a tote bag along which you can carry on the trip each day.
2. Important things to carry in your tote bag are your camera, film/chip (plus an extra battery for your camera), pictures of your home and family, business cards, pen and notebook, snacks, bottled water, breath mints, small gifts, tissue, medication, bottle opener, Kleenex, hand wipes, sun glasses, laxative, Imodium and other necessary items for quick accessibility. Be sure to identify your bag with your name and home address and while in Ukraine with a second tag bearing the name of Alex and his telephone numbers on it. **Address labels will be sent to you.** Cut to fit your luggage ID holder and carry one copy in your wallet.

AIRPORT CHECK-IN BRIEFS

1. Check your luggage all the way through to Kiev, even if you are staying overnight in Frankfurt, unless, of course, you are making a stop-over in Europe. If you are leaving on another flight within 24 hours, the airlines will hold your baggage overnight and see that it gets on the flight in the morning.
2. Keep your boarding pass stub and ticket stubs for ID and for frequent flyer records. If you have not applied for a frequent flyer card, you may want to do so, or you can get a card at the counter.

3. Wear comfortable traveling clothes.
4. Bring your cosmetics, including toothbrush, on the plane with you in your carry-on or tote bag. You will want to freshen up on the plane before we land.
5. Take some reading material along, which you can pass on to someone in Ukraine.
6. Bring all medication with you on the plane.
7. If you tend to get motion sickness, bring *Dramamine*.
8. Leave a copy of the front page of your passport at home with a family member, also make an extra copy and bring it with you (including a couple of passport pictures), in the event that your passport is lost or stolen. Keep these separate from your passport.
9. Get a small pouch with a zipper, like a bank pouch used to carry cash, to store your passport, tickets, schedule, etc. Put a copy of Alex's address and telephone number in the pouch. That way your important documents are always easy to reach and find.
10. To help combat jet lag, if you don't overnight, don't go to sleep until you get to your destination. Even if you end up staying up 24 hours, after the first night you'll be right on schedule.
11. If you tip for baggage assistance, it is customary to give \$1./bag, but you may prefer to handle your own stuff.

ARRIVAL IN KIEV

Upon arrival at the airport in Kiev, the first thing you will be required to do is go through the passport control line. Before you go through the line, you may need to pick up an entry form and complete it in detail before you get to the line (both parts), although things are changing, especially in view of the European soccer games. Sometimes the forms are passed out on the plane. The passport control people there tend to be fussy. You will need to indicate the person you are staying with. Indicate Alex Brzhezitsky, Noviy Bulvar 7/48, Zhitomir, Ukraine 10000, even though we may be staying in a hotel. That's another reason to keep Alex's information handy. They may also ask you this information even though you have already indicated it on the form. Point to Alex's name and address as the place where you are staying while in Ukraine.

Next, pick up a declaration form and fill it out, if still needed. The most important information is the amount of money you are bringing in. **DO NOT LIST ANY GIFTS, HUMANITARIAN SUPPLIES OR PERSONAL ITEMS ON THE SECOND PAGE. JUST RUN A DIAGONAL LINE THROUGH THAT SECTION.** As soon as you have your luggage, you are ready to go through customs. At this point it is good to get a cart for your luggage. There is no cost.

In the event that your luggage does not arrive, see your airline rep ASAP and complete the necessary paper work. The luggage should be sent to Alex Brzhezitsky, Noviy Bulvat 7/48, Zhitomir, Ukraine 10000. Cell: 067 963-5905. This is the same name and address as on your luggage label.

VERY IMPORTANT. Once you have your luggage, you will be required to go through security. There are two security lines, the red line and the green line. Go through the **GREEN LINE. It's the one designed for tourists. In this line, seldom will any**

questions be asked and you will just breeze through. But if you go through the **RED LINE**, they will hassel you about gifts, cash and/or humanitarian items you may be bringing in. They could end up charging you 37% of the value. So be sure you go through the **GREEN LINE**. If anyone asks you the purpose of your visit, just say **“Tourist.”** When asked where you are staying, say **“With Alex Brzhezitskky, My tourist guide in Ukraine.”** Also, if they ask you if you have any gifts, say **“No, just my own stuff.”** If they repeat the question about gifts, play the broken record and say, **“No, just my own stuff.”**

WHAT TO TAKE (Final Check List)

1. Passport
2. Tickets
3. Cash
4. Money Belt or Pouch
5. Credit Card (one only)
6. Genealogy records
7. Small Lock
8. Camera and Film (Extra Battery)
9. Village Gifts
10. Pictures of Family/Home/America
11. Medications
12. Snacks (Trail Mix, Granola Bars, Nuts)
13. Kleenex/Hand wipes
14. Aspirin/Cold Tablets/Pepso Bismol/Alka Seltzer
15. Travel Alarm
16. Bottle Opener
17. Toiletry Items
18. Pen and Notebook
19. Business Cards
20. Feminine Supplies
21. Small mirror
22. Flashlight
23. Clothes
24. Converter/Adapter

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