

EXPLORE!

Ukraine in Depth
13 days

Ukraine - Trip code UKA

Ukraine in Depth

Ukraine is a vast country which is still largely undiscovered and feels like one of Europe's last frontiers. Its Soviet history, stunning natural beauty and colourful traditions make it a truly unique travel destination. We take in the highlights starting from the capital city of Kiev, down to Odessa on the Black Sea coast and across into the Carpathian Mountains. During our journey we stay overnight in the enthralling Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, relax in the beautiful city of Lviv, stroll through Klevan's Tunnel of Love and visit the control room of a decommissioned nuclear missile base.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Chernobyl** - Stay the night inside the Exclusion Zone and explore the ghost town of Pripjat, the Red Forest and the 'New Safe Confinement' structure around Reactor 4
- ★ **Odessa** - Spend time on the Black Sea coast and see the Monument to the Orange Tree, Mother-in-Law Bridge and Devil's House
- ★ **Carpathian Mountains** - Discover the glistening waters of Lake Synevyr, Shypit Waterfall and the views from the top of Gemba Mountain
- ★ **Lviv** - Appreciate one of Ukraine's most beautiful cities with its elegant, brightly coloured houses, tucked away courtyards and golden domed churches
- ★ **Kiev** - Experience Ukraine's lively capital city including the 100 metre tall Mother Motherland statue
- ★ **Tunnel of Love** - Wander through the foliage along this former railway line

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Ukraine's capital Kiev

Our adventure begins in Kiev, Ukraine's capital city, which is situated on the banks of the Dnieper River. It has been inhabited for almost 2000 years and was once the capital of the Kievan Rus State, from which all later Russian states were descended. Although Ukrainian nationalism is stronger than ever, you will still hear Russian spoken widely here today.

The city is filled with attractive architecture, wide shopping boulevards with coffee stands every few metres, parks where the locals stop to feed the squirrels and play chess, and a mix of high-end department stores and a warren of underground malls selling everything from hot corn on the cob to traditional ceramics. Kreshchatyk is the capital's main street and stretches from the traditional food market of Besarabsky to Maidan Square, where the 2014 revolution took place, which resulted in the country's president Viktor Yanukovich being overthrown and fleeing to Russia.

You'll find a selection of good restaurants and bars to choose from this evening. Ukraine is well known for its dumplings, called varenyky that come with a range of different fillings such as mutton, cabbage or sweeter varieties like cherry. You should also try nastoyanka, which is a Ukrainian liqueur made from honey and herbs and comes in a selection of fruit flavours and even horseradish! Potential dining spots include Spotykach Restaurant, which is a retro Soviet style canteen cellar or for something quicker you could try the local fast food at Kyivska Perepichka, which specialises in fried dough encased sausages.



Accommodation: Hotel Rus (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Kiev guided tour; visit the huge Lavra Monastic Complex

This morning a local guide will show us the highlights of Kiev including the onion domed exterior of Santa Sophia Cathedral, the

Golden Gate which was once the main entrance to the city, Saint Andrews Baroque church and Mother Motherland, a 100 metre high statue to honour the heroes of the Soviet Union.

This afternoon we take the metro to Arsenalna, which is the deepest station in the world. We continue from here to the Lavra Historical and Cultural Reserve and visit the remarkable Monastery of the Caves founded in AD 1051, where the labyrinths provide all the natural conditions needed for mummification. When the monks first dug into the ground they discovered that the soil was rich in silver, and so the monastery became very wealthy and the complex grew hugely in size. Today we can see the vast number of ornately decorated buildings that were created. A guide will take us on a tour of the caves and we will have time to either visit the Museum of Miniatures or the Museum Of Historical Treasures and the Holy Trinity Church.



Accommodation: Hotel Rus (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Drive to Odessa and visit a Strategic Missile Base en route

We make an early start this morning and begin our drive to Odessa on the Black Sea coast. In total today the drive will take us around 7 hours, but we'll break our journey and pass by a variety of interesting scenery and towns along the way.

We have a guided tour of the Strategic Missile Force Museum at Pervomaysk, which before being decommissioned was an actual nuclear weapon launch site. We will see the most powerful Cold War Soviet missile - the R-36M2 'governor' bomb, which was nicknamed 'Satan' by the Americans. We will descend down in a small lift to the original control room - the Unified Command Post (UCP), which is three metres below the surface and part of 150 metre long tunnel complex.

We have the chance to have lunch in a local restaurant during our journey and will arrive into Odessa this evening.

Odessa is a character filled port city with tree lined streets and colourful buildings. Although it's on the Black Sea coast, it has an almost Mediterranean feel to it, as in years gone by thousands of immigrants from all over Europe were invited to make the city their home and they brought their own architectural styles with them, including Neo-Classical, Renaissance and Art Nouveau.



Accommodation: Uno Design Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Odessa walking tour; chance to see the world's largest catacombs

This morning we set off with our local guide on a walking tour of Odessa. We will walk down the tree-lined Primorsky Boulevard, see the many steps of the Potemkin Stairs leading down to the seafront, the elegant Baroque style Opera House and Palace of Count Vorontsov and a few of the more unusual highlights like the Mother-in-Law Bridge, Devil's House and Monument to the Orange

Tree. The Devil's House is an especially interesting building; when times were hard the owners of the land didn't have enough money to build a house with four walls, so they built it with three. When looking at the house it creates the optical illusion that the house only has a front wall, which has given it the name Devil's House, because it plays tricks on the eye and doesn't look like it should be able to remain standing.

After our walk, this afternoon is free for you to continue your own explorations. You may choose to join a local guide with a trip down to the world's largest network of underground catacombs and learn of their fascinating history through the ages.



Accommodation: Uno Design Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Chance to explore wetlands by boat; overnight train to Lviv

Today is free for you to enjoy the city and to relax on one of its popular sandy beaches. Alternatively there are a number of different excursions that you might like to join.

You could visit Coastal Defence Number 411, which is now an open air museum and a Memorial for the Heroic Defence of Odessa during World War II. Here you can see an armoured train, artillery guns, an Odessa tank (armoured tractor) and a post-war submarine.

You may like to join a day trip to Dniester National Park, which is around 50 kilometres drive from the city. During the days of the Soviet Union the Dnieper River was in a poor state. It was over fished, used for irrigation and hydropower, dredged for sand and in 1983 it suffered one of the worst environmental disasters in recent history when a liquid-waste reservoir collapsed and over 4.5 million cubic metres of toxic brine was released into the river - killing wildlife and polluted drinking water. It took years to recover, but now the river estuary is protected. You can take a boat trip across the wetlands to see some of the 1,500 species of flora and fauna found in the delta. The national park is best known for its birdlife with 254 species found here, including 11 on the endangered list. You may spot pelicans, spoonbills, egrets and glossy ibises among others.

For food lovers and bargain hunters you could go to three of Odessa's most famous markets. The Flea Market selling many old Soviet items; Privoz the bustling food market best known for its fresh fish or the Seventh Kilometre Market, which is Europe's largest outdoor market and built out of a maze of shipping containers, which sell everything you could possibly imagine from wedding dresses to leather goods and from ceramics to telescopes.

If you enjoy a glass of wine then there's the chance to visit the Shabo Winery, which is around 75 kilometres outside the city. Here you can try seven varieties of the local tittle and take a tour of the winery.


This evening we will drive to Odessa railway station to board our overnight train to Lviv. We will use sleeper carriages with four bunk beds (two beds at floor level and two above) per compartment. Bedding will be provided and there is a shared toilet and wash basin in each carriage.



Accommodation: Overnight Train Odessa to Lviv



Simple Overnight Train

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Arrive in the elegant city of Lviv; afternoon walking tour

Our train arrives in Lviv this morning and we drive to our hotel for breakfast and to check-in. Later this morning we will discover the history and stunning architecture of the old quarter on a guided walking tour. Along the way we will see the old market square of Ploshcha Rynok, the ornately carved exterior of Boyim Chapel, the Dominican Church and Monastery and the Citadel Inn. The inn was originally built in 1850 as a circular red fort that during World War II became a Nazi concentration camp and was known as the 'tower of death', but today it has remarkably been turned into a five star hotel! We also see the Old Rus Quarter of the city and the High Castle, which affords great views over the city below. Lviv is home to not just one, but three different cathedrals; there's the Latin Cathedral, Armenian Cathedral and Saint George's Cathedral and they all vary greatly in style.

This evening is free for you to have dinner and Lviv is the perfect spot for relaxing. Among the cobbled streets with their pretty red roofed buildings and tucked away courtyards you will find a variety of good cafes, bars and restaurants. One dining option is the Dim Legend Restaurant that is spread over seven small floors and a roof terrace and each floor is decorated with a different theme telling the city's history through the ages.



Accommodation: George Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Opportunity to visit Lviv Brewing Museum or to make chocolate

Today is free in Lviv for you to further discover the city. Lviv is well known for both its beer and chocolate, so you may choose to visit the Brewery Museum or join a chocolate making masterclass.

The Brewery Museum takes you on a journey through Ukraine and the World's beer making history and explains the differences. There will of course be the chance to try an assortment of locally brewed beers too. Next to the museum is the Robert Doms Beer House, which is a large medieval style beer hall and restaurant where you can sample more of the local brew and perhaps their speciality dish of pork ribs in beer marinade.

At the chocolate making masterclass you can learn all about how chocolate is made and try your hand at making your own chocolate master pieces with advice from a professional chocolatier. Apparently chocolate has been produced in the city since the Middle Ages and in the 19th century it was exported to aristocracy throughout Europe. Today there is a huge variety of different flavoured chocolates, ice cream, milkshakes, cakes and more to tempt you.

Alternatively you might like to visit Lychakiv Cemetery. This burial ground is a protected historical monument and believe it or not is one of the most popular attractions in the city. Established in 1786 by the Austro-Hungarians, there are grave markers here written in Ukrainian, Russian, German, Polish, Armenian and Latin, which show how the city's rulers have changed throughout its history. In among the elaborately carved tombs there are also communal graves for soldiers and freedom fighters, and simple communist graves. Sadly during the Soviet-era the graveyard was used as a dumping ground and only reopened in 2005 after being restored.



Accommodation: George Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Full day spent at Lake Synevyr in the Carpathian Mountains

We will leave early this morning at around 7am and drive into the wilderness of the Carpathian Mountains and the Synevyr National Park. Our drive will take us around 4.5 hours each way, but we'll get to see some great scenery along the way as we head out of the city and into the rolling countryside. Lake Synevyr is the largest lake found in the Carpathians and because of this it has earned the nickname 'the sea eye'. The lake is at 989 metres above sea level and the waters are crystal clear and surrounded by dense pine forests. We will take a gentle walk (over about two kilometres and taking us around 1 hour) to Pylypets village to see the tumbling waters of the Shypit Waterfall. Next we take a chair lift up Gemba Mountain to 1,491 metres above sea level to admire the panoramic views back over the rolling tree covered hills and jagged mountain peaks of the Carpathians. Along the way they'll be the opportunity to have lunch in a local restaurant beside the Synevyr Meadow.

We'll leave the mountains this evening and on the way back to our hotel in Lviv we will stop in the city of Stryi where we have the option to have dinner. We'll arrive back into the city at around midnight.



Accommodation: George Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive to Zhytomyr via the pretty town of Lutsk and the Tunnel of Love

This morning we will begin our drive to Zhytomyr where we spend the night. Along the way we visit the town of Lutsk and our Explore Leader will take us on a walking tour of the main highlights. Competing with Lviv, on the beauty front, Lutsk is definitely worth exploring. The Soviet architecture of the modern town actually works here with its large squares and wide avenues, but of course the main attraction is the town's preserved historic centre. The maze of cobbled streets are lined with carved churches and town houses showcasing Lutsk's Polish, Russian and Lithuanian architectural history. Here we'll also see Lutsk's very well preserved 14th century castle. After spending a few hours here we drive on to Klevan to visit the Tunnel of Love. Along a three kilometre stretch of railway track leading to a factory the trees have all grown up around it forming a green corridor that has gained the name of the Tunnel of Love due to the lovers that come here and make a wish for their future that is said to then come true.

We drive on to Zhytomyr, where our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation tour. The city has a number of picturesque churches including the majestic Cathedral of the Transfiguration, but it is also in touch with its Soviet past with rickety old trolley buses rattling past tower blocks, war memorials and numerous parks and public gardens including Gagarin Park. The city is one of the greenest in Ukraine and lies on the banks of the Teterev River and is surrounded by rocky hills and dense ancient forests.



Accommodation: Reikartz Zhytomyr (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Visit the Museum of Astronautics; free afternoon in Kiev

This morning before leaving Zhytomyr we will visit its most famous attraction, the Sergei Korolev Museum of Astronautics. Sergei Korolev was a scientist and engineer who helped found the Soviet space and rocket programme and he was born here in Zhytomyr. The museum is in two sections, the first of which is a memorial to Sergei and tells the story of his life and work. The main section of the museum tracks the history of the cosmonautics development and it has a number of exhibits about space travel, including a capsule that was donated by NASA that still has soil on it from where it landed on the moon.

We then drive back to Kiev and the afternoon is free for you to explore. You might like to visit the Museum of the Great Patriotic War, which is one of the largest museums in Ukraine and tells the story of the German-Soviet War in iconic and Brutalist style. It has over 300,000 items on display and the memorials here are spread over 25 acres.

Perhaps you'll also want to visit the Chernobyl Museum with exhibits that are designed to teach us the scope of the nuclear disaster and to ensure that the lessons learnt from this terrible accident aren't forgotten. This is a good introduction to the history of the event before we visit Chernobyl itself tomorrow.

Or you could visit Mezhyhirya, which consists of a very large park and houses that all formerly belonged to President Viktor Yanukovich. After the revolution this park was opened to the public and the Museum of Corruption is now housed in his former home.

Outside the city you could join an excursion to Pirogov Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture, which is about 40 minutes' drive from the city. Set on the banks of Lake Myachino you will be able see a variety of old Ukrainian village houses, chapels and churches that have been preserved to display how people used to live.



Accommodation: Hotel Rus (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Exciting trip into the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone

This morning we set off on our exciting explorations to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, which is about two hours' drive from the city and close to the Belarusian border. Back on the 26th April 1986 the Number 4 nuclear reactor at Chernobyl exploded with catastrophic consequences. Since then an Exclusion Zone has been in place around the plant and nature has reclaimed the towns and vehicles left within this. The accident was the result of a flawed Soviet reactor, operated by inadequately trained staff that had been ordered to carry out a poorly planned test.

There were four reactors and a further two being constructed when Reactor 4 exploded twice, killing two workers and releasing at least 5% of its radioactive core into the atmosphere. A further 28 fire fighters died of radiation poisoning following the accident. At the time this was the largest uncontrolled radioactive release recorded.

The city of Pripyat was built three kilometres from the site to house the plant's workers and their families and, at the time, it had 49,000 inhabitants. Within a 30 kilometre radius of the power plant, there was a population of up to 135,000 people. All were evacuated after the accident and most of these towns and villages including Pripyat are now ghost towns.

Surprisingly after the accident the other reactors at Chernobyl were restarted. Their safety was improved but due to energy shortages the last reactor wasn't turned off until December 2000. In 2011 Chernobyl was declared safe enough to be recognised as a tourist attraction.

Reactor 4 was enclosed in a large concrete shelter which was erected quickly after the incident and contained around 200 tonnes of highly radioactive material. The old shelter only had a shelf life of 30 years and at the end of 2016 a huge 'New Safe Confinement' structure was built on the site and moved into place over the old shelter. It is the world's largest movable structure and inside a team of robotic cranes is taking the old shelter and radioactive core apart in an effort to make the area safe again.

On our first day of discovery with a local guide we will explore Pripyat including the fairground, hospital, hotel, bus station, fire station, football stadium, sports centre, elementary school, kindergarten, police station, Palace of Culture, church and the 'bridge of death'. We'll also see the Red Forest and the structure around Reactor 4. The attractions seen in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone may vary depending on local conditions and restrictions, but we'll see the most possible during our two days spent here.

This evening we will have the unique experience of staying within the Exclusion Zone in a small hotel within the town of Chernobyl. The bedrooms are simply decorated and there are three bathrooms shared between every five bedrooms. There is a restaurant and bar where we will enjoy a traditional Ukrainian meal this evening.

Please note that it is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking and that you check this is accurate on your booking confirmation/the online customer information gateway, as this will be required in order to request the permissions needed to enter the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Corrections and amendments may incur additional charges at your own expense or result in you being denied entrance to the Exclusion Zone. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and ensure that you have your new passport no later than 10 weeks prior to travel.



Accommodation: Desyatka Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 12 - Further explorations of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone

Today we will most likely see Pripyat's swimming pool, grammar school and music school and visit the secret Soviet Duga Radar Facility. The radar military base was named Chernobyl 2 and didn't appear on any civilian maps and the trees were strategically planted to block the view from the neighbouring towns. There are two radars here that were constructed as part of a Soviet early missile detection system. The bigger of the two is almost 500 metres long and around 150 metres high. Also on the site are an abandoned fire station, small power plant, hospital and apartment buildings where the military personnel stationed here and their families would have lived.

We will also hopefully get the chance today to speak with people still living within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, who are known as

self-settlers. A year after the accident over one thousand people returned to their homes and despite efforts from the authorities they kept returning until eventually being allowed to stay and they have been living off grid ever since. Many of the people who choose to return were retired at the time and since it has been over 30 years since the disaster many of these people have sadly now passed away, so many of the towns and villages in the Exclusion Zone now only have one or two people living there. We should be able to meet with a couple of the self-settlers to hear their stories of what their lives were like before, during and after the explosion.

Late this afternoon we drive back to Kiev for our final free evening in the city.



Accommodation: Hotel Rus (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 13 - Trip ends in Kiev

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Kiev.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

Ukraine is a huge country with a fascinating history, mouth-watering food and a huge variety of sights to see and on this trip we aim to give you a taste of everything it has to offer. Relax beside the Black Sea, discover cobbled city streets and Soviet architecture, walk in the Carpathian Mountains, visit a former missile base and spend two days in Chernobyl - it's not often that in one trip you can experience such diversity as this.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

10 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple hotel
1 nights simple overnight train

Trip information

Country information

Ukraine

Climate

Ukraine has a temperate continental climate. Summers in are generally hot, sunny and less humid than in Central Europe, with temperatures normally between 18 to 25°C. In fact, the early autumn period is often compared with an Indian summer, dry and sunny. Winters are cold and snowy with temperatures averaging between -8 to -12°C. The wettest area in Ukraine is the Carpathian Mountains where it can rain at any time of year.

Time difference to GMT

+2

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox Christian

Language

Ukrainian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Kiev:

Chernobyl Museum entrance is 20 Ukrainian Hryvnia (UAH) and a guided tour 520 UAH per group (for 1-10 passengers).

Tour to Mezhygiria including transport, local guide and entrance fee from 840 UAH per person (minimum 4 passengers).

Tour to Pyrohiv Open Air Museum including transport, local guide and entrance fee 700 UAH per person.

Museum of the Great Patriotic War 50 UAH per person plus 315 UAH per museum guide.

Odessa:

Odessa Catacombs including local guide 700 UAH per person (minimum 4 passengers, duration approximately 2.5 hours).

Number 411 Coastal Defence 700 UAH per person (minimum 4 passengers, duration approximately 3 hours).

Day trip to the Dniester National Park including 3-4 hour boat trip, local guide, transport and entrance fee 1,260 UAH per person (minimum 6 passengers).

Odessa markets tour including local guide and transport 935 UAH per person (duration approximately 6 hours).

Seventh Kilometre Market including local guide and transport 700 UAH per person (duration approximately 3-4 hours).

Shabo Winery tour including transport, tour and tasting 1,400 UAH per person (minimum 4 passengers, duration approximately 6 hours).

Privoz and Dacha Restaurant gastronomic tour including transport, local guide and master class 1,120 UAH per person (duration approximately 4 hours).

Lviv:

Brewing Museum including local guide 700 UAH per person (duration approximately 2 hours).

Chocolate Master Class including local guide 420 UAH per person (minimum 5 passengers, duration approximately 1.5 hours).

Lytschkiv Cemetery including local guide 420 UAH per person (minimum 5 passengers, duration approximately 2 hours).

Please note that in most museums in Ukraine there is an additional charge for taking photographs, so allow approximately an additional £10-15.00 for this.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, so pack layers. Rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings. During winter you should be prepared for snow and very cold temperatures, so it's advisable to dress in warm layers of breathable fabrics. You'll need waterproofs and plenty of warm clothing including a warm waterproof jacket (such as a ski jacket), jumper, fleece, gaiters or ski trousers, thick socks (including spare pairs in case your feet get wet) and thermal underwear.

All visitors to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone must wear full length trousers (not shorts or skirts) and long-sleeve shirts/jackets and please avoid clothing with lots of zips or metal poppers. It's advisable to wash your clothes and to shower after your visit. We also recommend that you take old clothes that can be easily washed or even thrown away if necessary and a plastic bag to keep them separate from the rest of your clothing following the visit. Upon leaving the Exclusion Zone you will go through a monitor to check the radiation level on you, occasionally this reading may come back too high, and in which case, you may have to leave an item of clothing behind, as you won't be able to take anything that gives too higher reading outside of the zone.

Women should bring a headscarf for religious site visits.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing. If travelling in winter then your walking shoes/boots should have sufficient grip for icy conditions and be waterproof in case of snow. You may wish to bring a spare pair in case your feet get wet and your boots don't dry out overnight.

In the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone you must wear closed toed shoes (not sandals or flip flops). We recommend using older shoes that can be easily washed or thrown away if necessary. In the Exclusion Zone there is often broken glass on the floor, so it is important to have shoes with sturdy tread.

You may also want to bring a pair of slippers for your stay at the Chernobyl Hotel and on the overnight train, for going to and from the bathroom at night.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a day pack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We advise taking a water bottle for our included walks, sun glasses, sunscreen and a sun hat are all essential. An umbrella may also be useful at anytime of year and gloves, a woolly hat and scarf if you are travelling in autumn or winter.

Whilst in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone we recommend carrying wet wipes, hand sanitiser, toilet roll and mosquito spray. We would also recommend buying any bottled water required before entering the Exclusion Zone. Please remember that you must keep your passport with you at all times, so you may find keeping it in a sealed plastic bag useful. For the overnight stay in Chernobyl it is best to take a small overnight bag with you and to leave your main bag padlocked in the luggage storage facility at our hotel in Kiev.

During autumn and winter especially, the evenings can be cold and the heating at the hotel in Chernobyl is limited, so we'd recommend bringing warm nightwear and perhaps a blanket and hot water bottle.

In case of emergency we also recommend that you carry a torch with spare batteries and sufficient medical supplies including a first aid kit and several days extra supply of any specific prescription medications that you require. You may find a head torch handy for on the overnight train journey.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £25.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Ukraine

Food and drink

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 price

£5.5

Dinner price

£10-15

Beer price

£1.3

Water price

£0.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Hryvnia

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pound Sterling, US Dollars (USD) and Euro cash can all be exchanged for the local currency. You can only leave Ukraine with a maximum of USD 10,000. Anything over this amount will be confiscated. If you are taking Pound Sterling, please note that currency exchange offices in Ukraine will only accept the new plastic notes. Banks will still accept the paper notes but typically provide a lower exchange rate.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns and cities - your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival. Only exchange money at reputable places like banks, ATM's and official Forex Offices.

ATM Availability

Major towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal.

Credit Card Acceptance

In the main towns and cities credit cards are accepted in most restaurants, hotels and larger shops.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are very difficult to change in the Ukraine.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

For the overnight train journey we will use sleeper carriages with four bunk beds and bedding provided (two beds at floor level and two above) per compartment and with a shared toilet and wash basin in each carriage. There are no shower facilities on board. Luggage is stored under the bottom bunk beds and above the cabin door for the top bunks. There is the possibility that you will be sharing with non-Explore customers in the same cabin. Cabin allocations are mixed sex, so you could be sharing with both male and female passengers. There is no air-conditioning on board and it's not always possible to open the windows, so we recommend light weight bed clothes. You can experience authentic rail travel with the local people and it's a great way of getting from place to place during the night, so you maximise on the amount of time you have in each city during the day. Take snacks, drinks, toilet roll, hand sanitiser and an open mind with you for maximum enjoyment.

We spend one night within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone at a simple hotel with three bathrooms shared between every five bedrooms. Bathrooms are equipped with a sink, shower and toilet. Bedrooms are simply decorated. The food served here will be traditional Ukrainian cuisine and there is a bar within the restaurant. In the evening the doors of the hotel will be locked at around 22.30 and we are not permitted to venture out into the Exclusion Zone without our guide being with us at all times. The television service here includes no English speaking channels, so you might like to bring a tablet computer, electronic reading device, MP3 player or pack of playing cards with you for evening entertainment.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Ukraine: UK, Canadian and US citizens do not require a visa. Australian and New Zealand citizens do need a visa to enter Ukraine. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. In addition you will be required to carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times in Ukraine for ID purposes.

It is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to pre-book train tickets and to gain Chernobyl Exclusion Zone permissions. Corrections and amendments will incur additional charges, so please double check that the information we have for you is up-to-date and correct, this includes your passport number, full name as per passport (including middle names), date of birth and place of birth; if customers renew or reissue their passports from the details initially given to Explore, train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in customers being in differing train carriages to the rest of the group. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and please ensure that you have the new passport no later than 10 weeks prior to travel.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

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.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

We'll be using a range of public transport as well as charter buses to get around and we will do most of our exploring on foot in each place visited. Please pack light to ensure you can lift and store your bag on the overnight train and bring comfy walking shoes.

Whilst in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone there are a number of rules in place to ensure your safety and it's very important that you follow all instructions given to you by your local guide. Every visitor must have a valid passport with them at all times and in order to be permitted entry to the Exclusion Zone you must be at least 18 years old. This restriction is due to the fact that the human body is still growing below this age and it's therefore more vulnerable to the effects of radiation.

During the two days we spend in the Exclusion Zone you'll receive a dose of radiation comparable to a small dose from an X-ray scan or to several hours spent in an airplane at altitude. In numbers, you will receive 5-7 micro Sieverts of gamma radiation, which is a non-harmful dose of radiation. To put this into context most nuclear power plants around the world set a safety limit for their employees of 50-100 micro Sieverts per day.

Whilst in the Exclusion Zone all our meals will be included to ensure they're from a safe source. You are not allowed to smoke, eat or drink in open spaces whilst here. You are not allowed to eat any berries or drink water from open sources such as wells (tap water or bottled water is fine).

In the Exclusion Zone you are allowed to take photographs and videos of everything and can take tripods with you. The only exceptions are restrictions at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the guarded checkpoints. You are allowed to take pictures and video in front of Reactor Number 4 from a safe distance. Your guide will advise us of any places where photos aren't permitted.

In the Exclusion Zone there may be rubble underfoot and not all stairs will have banisters, so you need to be steady on your feet. Please wear shoes with good grip and that support your ankles.

We've been notified that the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is occasionally being closed to tourists in order to be used as a training area by the Ukrainian military. Whilst this has only occurred three times in the past three months and hasn't yet affected any of our departures, we felt it was important to notify you of the small possibility that this could happen on your trip.

In the majority of cases we will be notified two months in advance by the military of their intent to close off the Exclusion Zone. If we know this far in advance then we will endeavour to change the date of the trip or to alter the itinerary, so that we are still able to visit the site, as we understand that for most visitors this is the highlight of their holiday. Of course if we do need to change the departure date once you have booked your trip then we'll inform you as quickly as possible. Should you decide that you're no longer be able to travel on the new departure date or any alternative trip date, then you'll be entitled to cancel your trip and receive a full refund of the monies paid to Explore, though we hope that you will not find this necessary.

Should the military not notify us of their intent to close the area within a reasonable time frame for us to amend your itinerary as per above - then we'll stay in Kiev for an additional night rather than overnighing in the hotel in Chernobyl. During the two days that we'd normally be in the Exclusion Zone, as an alternative we'll go to visit the Mezhyhirya Residence Museum - the lavish property where Ukraine's controversial former president, Yanukovich resided before the 2014 uprising. It now houses the Museum of Corruption. We'll then get to participate in a varenyky making master-class. These dumplings are a Ukrainian speciality and come with a range of different fillings such as mutton, cabbage or sweeter varieties like cherry. On the second day we'll then visit the Museum of the Great Patriotic War, which tells the story of the German-Soviet War in iconic Brutalist style. There are over 300,000 items on display and the memorials here are spread over 25 acres. We'll also visit the Pirogov Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture, which is about 40 minutes' drive from the city. Set on the banks of Lake Myachino we'll be able see a variety of old Ukrainian village houses, chapels and churches that have been preserved to display how people used to live.

Non refundable permits

Ukraine

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against hepatitis A and diphtheria. Check that your polio and tetanus vaccinations are up-to-date before travel. The UK Foreign Office currently recommends that you should consider whether to immunise against tickborne encephalitis and rabies. Consult your travel clinic for further advice. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
