

Ukraine

Facts and Statistics

Location: Eastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea, between Poland, Romania, and Moldova in the west and Russia in the east

Capital: Kyiv (Kiev)

Climate: temperate continental; Mediterranean only on the southern Crimean coast; precipitation disproportionately distributed, highest in west and north, lesser in east and southeast; winters vary from cool along the Black Sea to cold farther inland; summers are warm across the greater part of the country, hot in the south

Population: 46,299,862 (July 2007 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Belarusian 0.6%, Moldovan 0.5%, Crimean Tatar 0.5%, Bulgarian 0.4%, Hungarian 0.3%, Romanian 0.3%, Polish 0.3%, Jewish 0.2%, other 1.8% (2001 census)

Religions: Ukrainian Orthodox - Kyiv Patriarchate 19%, Orthodox (no particular jurisdiction) 16%, Ukrainian Orthodox - Moscow Patriarchate 9%, Ukrainian Greek Catholic 6%, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox 1.7%, Protestant, Jewish, none 38% (2004 est.)

Language in Ukraine

Ukrainian is the official state language; it is a language of the East Slavic subgroup of the Slavic languages. The language shares some vocabulary with the languages of the neighboring Slavic nations, most notably with Belarusian, Polish, Russian and Slovak.

The Ukrainian language traces its origins to the Old East Slavic language of early medieval state of Kievan Rus'. In its earlier stages it was called Ruthenian. The language has persisted despite several periods of bans and/or discouragement throughout centuries as it has always nevertheless maintained a sufficient base among the people of Ukraine, its folklore songs, itinerant musicians, and prominent authors.

Ukrainian Society and Culture

The People

Ukrainians are of Slavic origin. About 75% of the population is ethnic Ukrainian. The largest minority group is the Russians at about 20%. Belarussians, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians and Romanians make up the other major minority groups.

Religion

Approximately 40% of the population in the Ukraine describe themselves as atheist. Of those that do adhere to some form of religion, 37% belong to one of the three major orthodox denominations present in the country. There are also a significant and growing number of Jews, Protestants and Muslims.

Despite the large numbers describing themselves as atheist, Ukrainians are extremely superstitious. If you do something that they believe can cause harm such as sitting on stone steps, someone will undoubtedly tell you that you risk doing great harm to yourself as a result of your actions. Superstitions are derived from folk wisdom in rural communities.

Fatalistic

Ukrainians live in a country where everyday life is often unpredictable and unstable and they have learned to adapt to constantly changing rules and laws. The influences of the Russian Orthodox Church plus a long history of turbulent economic times, unstable governments, and adverse climatic conditions produce a rather fatalistic approach towards life.

Generosity

Ukrainians are extremely generous and hospitable. All social occasions include food. Visitors are always offered something to eat as well as a beverage. It is considered the height of rudeness to eat in front of another person and not offer them something.