



Ukraine

The largest country entirely in Europe: wide wheat fields and steppe, the great Dnipro river, golden-domed Kyiv, the old cafés of Lviv and the Black Sea port of Odesa.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Kyiv

POPULATION

**About 32 million (IMF estimate, 2026).
Exact figures are uncertain because of
the war**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Ukrainian

CURRENCY

Ukrainian hryvnia

AREA

**About 603,600 km², the largest country
entirely in Europe**

GOVERNMENT

Semi-presidential republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

**Hoverla, 2,061 m, in the Carpathian
Mountains**

LONGEST RIVER IN UKRAINE

**The Dnipro, about 1,095 km of its
roughly 2,200 km course, flowing
through Kyiv to the Black Sea**

NEIGHBOURS

**Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania,
Moldova, Belarus and Russia by land.
In the south it has coasts on the Black
Sea and the Sea of Azov**

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+380

A 45-minute trip to Ukraine

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Ukraine together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 4000 BC: Trypillia farmers; 1932: The Holodomor; 2022: The full-scale invasion. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Borscht and Varenyky. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Dobryi den" (Good day, hello), "Dobroho ranku" (Good morning), "Dobryi vechir" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/ukraine/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Ukraine and its cities



- Kyiv (City of Kyiv): Saint Sophia Cathedral and the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, Its very deep metro stations, The Dnipro river and its hills
- Kharkiv (Kharkiv Oblast): The Derzhprom building on Freedom Square, Its universities, Engineering and industry
- Odesa (Odesa Oblast): The Potemkin Stairs, Its opera house and grand boulevards, The Black Sea and its port
- Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast): Heavy industry and space technology, Its past as a closed Soviet city, The Dnipro river, which gives it its name
- Lviv (Lviv Oblast): Market Square and the old town, Coffeehouses from Austrian times, The Lviv Opera House
- Vinnytsia (Vinnytsia Oblast): The Southern Bug river, A regional centre of Podillia, Its reputation as one of the most comfortable Ukrainian cities to live in
- Chernivtsi (Chernivtsi Oblast): The Residence of the Metropolitans, now the university, Austrian-era streets, Its old German name, Czernowitz, and Romanian name, Cernui
- Ivano-Frankivsk (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast): Gateway to the Carpathian Mountains, Its past as the fortress town of Stanisawów, The writer Ivan Franko, after whom it is named
- Uzhhorod (Zakarpattia Oblast): Its embankment on the Uzh river, Its old Hungarian name, Ungvár, Its closeness to Slovakia and Hungary

- Kamianets-Podilskyi (Khmelnyskyi Oblast): Its castle on the canyon, The old town above the Smotrych river, Khotyn Fortress nearby
- Poltava (Poltava Oblast): The Battle of Poltava of 1709, Poltava-style halushky, Parks and greenery
- Chernihiv (Chernihiv Oblast): Churches from the time of Rus', Ukrainian Baroque buildings, One of the oldest cities in the country

A short history of Ukraine

Ukraine's story runs from some of Europe's largest prehistoric villages, through the golden age of Kyiv and the Cossack state, to the hard years of the 20th century, independence in 1991 and a war that is still going on.

4000 BC Trypillia farmers

Around 4000 BC, farmers of the Trypillia culture were living between the Carpathians and the Dniro. Some of their villages held thousands of houses and were among the largest settlements in Europe at the time.

AD 882 Kyiv becomes the capital of Rus

According to the medieval Primary Chronicle, Prince Oleg took Kyiv in 882 and made it his capital. Kyiv became the centre of Kyivan Rus', a large state of East Slavs that grew rich from the river trade between Scandinavia and Constantinople.

AD 988 Volodymyr adopts Christianity

Prince Volodymyr the Great was baptised, and by tradition the people of Kyiv were baptised in the river in 988, although historians debate the exact year. Christianity from Byzantium shaped the art, churches and writing of Rus'.

1240 The Mongols take Kyiv

In December 1240, after a siege, a Mongol army under Batu Khan captured and destroyed much of Kyiv. The city lost its leading role for centuries.

1648 The Khmelnytsky Uprising

The Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky led a great uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Out of it grew the Cossack Hetmanate, a Cossack state in central Ukraine.

1710 Orlyk's constitution

Hetman Pylyp Orlyk and the Cossack elders agreed a constitution in the town of Bender, in Moldavia. It divided power between legislative, executive and judicial branches, and is sometimes called the first constitution of Ukraine.

1840

Shevchenko's Kobzar

Taras Shevchenko, a poet and painter born into a family of serfs, published his book of poems Kobzar, 'The Bard'. Shevchenko himself became known as the Kobzar, and the book became a symbol of the Ukrainian national and literary revival.

1918

The Ukrainian People's Republic

On 22 January 1918, after the Russian Revolution, the Ukrainian People's Republic declared its independence, with Kyiv as its capital. It was defeated in the wars that followed, and most of Ukraine became a Soviet republic.

1932

The Holodomor

In 1932 and 1933 a man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine, during Stalin's forced collectivisation of farming, killed around 3.5 to 5 million people. Ukraine and more than 30 other countries recognise the Holodomor as a genocide.

1941

The Second World War

Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and occupied Ukraine. Great battles and atrocities followed, and millions of civilians in Ukraine were killed, including most of Ukraine's Jews. At Babyn Yar in Kyiv, tens of thousands of Jews were murdered in September 1941.

1986

The Chernobyl disaster

On 26 April 1986 a reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, north of Kyiv, exploded. It is the most destructive nuclear accident in history, and the area around the plant became the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

1991

Independence

On 24 August 1991 the Ukrainian parliament declared independence as the Soviet Union fell apart. On 1 December 1991 more than 92% of voters approved it in a referendum.

1996

The constitution and the hryvnia

On 28 June 1996 parliament adopted the constitution of independent Ukraine. In September of the same year the hryvnia, named after an old measure of weight from Kyivan Rus', became the national currency.

2004

The Orange Revolution

After a disputed presidential election, huge peaceful protests filled Kyiv, with orange as their colour. The Supreme Court ordered the vote to be repeated, and the opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko won.

2014

The Revolution of Dignity

Months of protests on Kyiv's Independence Square, called the Maidan, ended in February 2014 with the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich. Russia then occupied and annexed Crimea, and fighting began in the Donbas region in the east.

2022

The full-scale invasion

On 24 February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Kyiv was not taken, and Ukraine won back large areas later that year. As of September 2026 the war continues, and Ukraine is a candidate for membership of the European Union.

What people eat in Ukraine

Ukrainian cooking grew out of village cooking based on grain, especially wheat and rye, with beetroot, cabbage, potatoes, onions, mushrooms, pork and plenty of sour cream. Many dishes are first fried or boiled and then stewed or baked. Soup, above all borscht, is an everyday favourite and is served with bread or garlic buns, while varenyky and cabbage rolls are national favourites for the main course. The most important meal of the year is the Christmas Eve supper of twelve meatless dishes, which begins with kutia.

Borscht)

All of Ukraine, in many regional versions

A sour soup of meat or bone stock with beetroot, which gives it its deep red colour, and cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes and tomatoes. It is served hot with a spoonful of sour cream and bread or garlic buns.

Varenyky

All of Ukraine

Half-moon dumplings of thin, soft dough filled with mashed potato, cabbage, curd cheese, meat or, in summer, sour cherries. They are boiled and served with fried onions and sour cream, or with sugar and sour cream when the filling is fruit.

Deruny (potato pancakes)

All of Ukraine

Crisp pancakes of grated raw potato and onion, fried in oil and served hot with sour cream.

Syrnyky (curd cheese pancakes)

All of Ukraine

Small, thick pancakes of soft curd cheese mixed with egg, a little flour and sugar, fried golden in butter or oil. They are eaten for breakfast or dessert with sour cream, jam or honey.

Holubtsi (cabbage rolls)

All of Ukraine

Cabbage leaves rolled around a filling of rice or millet, often mixed with minced meat, then baked or stewed with onions, tomato and sour cream.

Pampushky

All of Ukraine

Small, soft yeast buns. Savoury pampushky are seasoned with a garlic sauce and served with red borscht. Sweet ones are filled with fruit, jam or poppy seeds.

Salo

All of Ukraine

Salt-cured pork fat, sometimes with a thin layer of meat and flavoured with garlic or paprika. It is cut in thin slices and eaten on dark bread with onion, garlic or mustard.

Chicken Kyiv)

Popular across Ukraine; its exact origin is disputed

A chicken breast pounded thin, rolled around cold butter and herbs, coated in egg and breadcrumbs and fried or baked. When it is cut, the melted butter runs out.

Banosh

The Carpathian Mountains, among the Hutsuls

A thick cornmeal porridge cooked with sour cream, topped with pork rind, mushrooms and salty sheep's cheese called bryndza.

Kutia

All of Ukraine, at Christmas

Boiled wheat berries mixed with ground poppy seeds, honey, nuts and sometimes raisins. Together with uzvar, it is one of the two essential ritual dishes of the Christmas Eve supper.

Uzvar

All of Ukraine, especially at Christmas

A sweet drink made by simmering dried fruit, usually apples, pears and prunes, in water. It is traditionally served at Christmas.

Nalysnyky

All of Ukraine

Thin pancakes, called mlyntsi, rolled around a sweet or savoury filling such as curd cheese, meat, cabbage or fruit, and served with sour cream.

Kyiv cake

Kyiv

Two layers of crisp meringue with hazelnuts, filled with a buttercream-like cream and covered in chocolate glaze. Its box shows a horse chestnut leaf.

Horilka

All of Ukraine

A strong spirit, usually distilled from wheat or rye and around 40% alcohol. A popular version, pertsivka, is flavoured with chilli peppers. Home-distilled horilka is called samohon.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Before eating, people wish each other 'Smachnoho!' (enjoy your meal).
- When glasses are raised, a common Ukrainian toast is 'Budmo!', meaning 'let us be', used like 'cheers'.
- Borscht is seen as an expression of hospitality that brings people of all ages together at the table, and it is served with bread or garlic buns.
- The Christmas Eve supper has twelve meatless dishes, without meat, eggs or milk, and begins with kutia.
- At the Christmas Eve supper, the head of the family traditionally takes the first spoonful of kutia.

Borscht

A sour soup of meat or bone stock with beetroot, which gives it its deep red colour, and cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes and tomatoes. It is served hot with a spoonful of sour cream and bread or garlic buns.

Ingredients

- 500 g beef on the bone, or 1.5 litres good meat stock
- 2 medium beetroots, peeled and cut in thin strips
- 2 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 onion and 1 carrot, finely chopped
- A quarter of a white cabbage, finely shredded
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste and 1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed, and a handful of chopped dill
- Sunflower oil, salt, pepper, 2 bay leaves
- Sour cream to serve

Method

1. If using beef, cover it with 2 litres of cold water, bring to the boil, skim, add the bay leaves and simmer for about 1 hour. Lift out the meat and cut it into pieces.
2. Fry the onion and carrot in a little oil for 5 minutes. Add the beetroot, the tomato paste and the vinegar and cook gently for 10 minutes, stirring now and then. The vinegar helps keep the red colour.
3. Bring the stock back to the boil, add the potatoes and cook for 10 minutes. Add the cabbage and cook for 5 minutes more.
4. Stir in the beetroot mixture and the meat, season with salt and pepper and simmer for 10 minutes. Take off the heat, add the garlic and dill, cover and leave to rest for 15 minutes.
5. Serve hot with a spoonful of sour cream and dark bread or garlic buns.

Varenyky

Half-moon dumplings of thin, soft dough filled with mashed potato, cabbage, curd cheese, meat or, in summer, sour cherries. They are boiled and served with fried onions and sour cream, or with sugar and sour cream when the filling is fruit.

Ingredients

- For the dough: 300 g plain flour, 150 ml warm water, 1 tablespoon sunflower oil and a pinch of salt
- For the filling: 500 g floury potatoes, peeled
- 2 onions, finely chopped, and 40 g butter
- Salt and pepper
- Sour cream to serve

Method

1. Mix the flour, water, oil and salt into a soft, smooth dough. Knead for 5 minutes, cover and rest for 30 minutes.
2. Boil the potatoes in salted water until soft and mash them. Fry the onions in the butter until golden, stir half into the potatoes and season well. Keep the rest of the onions for serving.
3. Roll the dough out thinly on a floured table and cut circles about 7 cm across with a glass.
4. Put a teaspoon of filling on each circle, fold it in half and pinch the edges firmly together.
5. Boil the varenyky in a large pan of salted water in batches. When they float to the top, cook for 2 to 3 minutes more, lift out and serve with the fried onions and sour cream.

Deruny (potato pancakes)

Crisp pancakes of grated raw potato and onion, fried in oil and served hot with sour cream.

Ingredients

- 1 kg floury potatoes, peeled
- 1 onion
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- Salt and pepper
- Sunflower oil for frying
- Sour cream to serve

Method

1. Grate the potatoes and the onion finely into a bowl. Tip into a sieve and press out as much liquid as you can.
2. Mix in the egg, flour, salt and pepper.
3. Heat a thin layer of oil in a wide frying pan over a medium heat.
4. Put spoonfuls of the mixture in the pan and flatten them a little. Fry for 3 to 4 minutes on each side until deep golden and cooked through.
5. Drain on kitchen paper and serve hot with sour cream.

Syrnyky (curd cheese pancakes)

Small, thick pancakes of soft curd cheese mixed with egg, a little flour and sugar, fried golden in butter or oil. They are eaten for breakfast or dessert with sour cream, jam or honey.

Ingredients

- 500 g curd cheese, quark or farmer's cheese, well drained
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons plain flour, plus more for shaping
- 2 tablespoons sugar and a pinch of salt
- A few drops of vanilla extract and a handful of raisins (optional)
- Butter or sunflower oil for frying
- Sour cream, jam or honey to serve

Method

1. Mash the cheese with a fork until smooth. Mix in the egg, flour, sugar, salt, vanilla and raisins.
2. With floured hands, shape the mixture into small round cakes about 1.5 cm thick and dust them with flour.
3. Heat butter or oil in a frying pan over a medium heat.
4. Fry the syrnyky for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden brown and cooked through.
5. Serve warm with sour cream, jam or honey.

Useful phrases

Dobryi den

DOH-brihy DEHN · Good day, hello

Dobroho ranku

DOH-broh-hoh RAHN-koo · Good morning

Dobryi vechir

DOH-brihy VEH-cheer · Good evening

Dobranich

doh-BRAH-neechee · Good night

Pryvit

prih-VEET · Hi

Do pobachennia

doh poh-BAH-cheh-nyah · Goodbye

Yak spravy?

yahk SPRAH-vih · How are you?

Dobre, dyakuyu

DOH-breh, DYAH-koo-yoo · Fine, thank you

Mene zvaty...

meh-NEH ZVAH-tih · My name is...

Duzhe pryiemno

DOO-zheh prih-YEHM-noh · Nice to meet you

Vy hovoryte anhliiskoiu?

vih hoh-voh-RIH-teh ahn-HLEEY-skoh-yoo · Do you speak English?

Ya ne rozumiiu

yah neh roh-zoo-MEE-yoo · I don't understand

Skilky tse koshtuie?

SKEEL-kih tseh KOHSH-too-yeh · How much is it?

Rakhunok, bud laska

rah-KHOO-nohk, bood LAHS-kah · The bill, please

De tut tualet?

deh toot too-ah-LEHT · Where is the toilet?

Smachnoho!

smahch-NOH-hoh · Enjoy your meal!

Budmo!

BOOD-moh · Cheers!

Bulo duzhe smachno

boo-LOH DOO-zeh SMAHCH-noh · It was delicious

Dopomozhit!

doh-poh-moh-ZHEET · Help!

Things you might not know

1. The Christmas song 'Carol of the Bells' is based on 'Shchedryk', a Ukrainian New Year folk song arranged by the composer Mykola Leontovych. Ukraine's national chorus sang it at Carnegie Hall in New York on 5 October 1922.
2. As of 2026, Arsenalna station on the Kyiv Metro, 105.5 metres below ground, is the second-deepest metro station in the world. It lost first place to Hongyancun station in Chongqing, China, which opened in 2022.
3. Igor Sikorsky, the helicopter pioneer, was born in Kyiv in 1889. In 1939, in the United States, he designed and flew the VS-300, the first viable American helicopter.
4. The Ukrainian Antonov An-225 Mriya was the heaviest aircraft ever built. Only one was ever completed, and it was destroyed at Antonov Airport near Kyiv in February 2022.
5. Ukrainian decorated Easter eggs, called pysanky, were added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage in 2024.
6. Petrykivka painting, a traditional decorative folk painting style from the village of Petrykivka in the Dnipropetrovsk region, has been on UNESCO's intangible heritage list since 2013.
7. The Ukrainian alphabet is written in Cyrillic and has 33 letters. It includes letters such as *Ґ*, *ґ*, and *ґґ* that the Russian alphabet does not have.
8. The spelling 'Kyiv' comes from the Ukrainian name *Київ*, while the older English spelling 'Kiev' comes from Russian. An online campaign, KyivNotKiev, has persuaded many English-language media and organisations to use 'Kyiv'.
9. Vyshyvanka Day, when people wear the embroidered Ukrainian shirt, is held on the third Thursday of May. It was started in 2006 by a student at Chernivtsi University.
10. The bandura, a Ukrainian plucked-string folk instrument, had 5 to 12 strings around 1700. Modern concert banduras have 56 to 68 strings.
11. Ukraine's national anthem, known by its first words 'Ukraine's glory has not yet perished', has words written by Pavlo Chubynskyi in 1862 and music by Mykhailo Verbytskyi from 1863.

12. Three Ukrainian World Heritage Sites, in Kyiv, Lviv and Odesa, were placed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger in 2023 because of the war.
13. Ukraine is one of the world's biggest grain exporters. In the 2020/21 season it supplied about 9% of all the wheat traded in the world, which is why it is often called the breadbasket of Europe.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Ukraine, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Borscht or Varenyky? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Independence (1991). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The constitution and the hryvnia (1996). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Saint Sophia Cathedral, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Ukraine, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Ukraine?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. What is a normal tip in a Ukrainian restaurant?

- A) A fixed service charge of 30%
- B) Nothing, tipping is forbidden
- C) About 6 to 10%, or rounding up
- D) Always 25%

2. According to the medieval Primary Chronicle, which prince took Kyiv in 882 and made it his capital?

- A) Danylo
- B) Volodymyr
- C) Oleg
- D) Yaroslav

3. In which city are the Potemkin Stairs?

- A) Kharkiv
- B) Lviv
- C) Odesa
- D) Kyiv

4. What does 'dyakuyu' mean?

- A) Goodbye
- B) Please
- C) Hello
- D) Thank you

5. As of 2026, what is special about Arsenalna station on the Kyiv Metro?

- A) It has no escalators
- B) It is the second-deepest metro station in the world
- C) It is the only metro station in Ukraine
- D) It is the oldest metro station in Europe

6. The English spelling 'Kyiv' comes from the city's name in which language?

- A) Polish
- B) Russian
- C) Latin
- D) Ukrainian

7. Which small garlic buns are often served with red borscht?

- A) Pampushky
- B) Varenyky
- C) Nalysnyky
- D) Syrnyky

8. Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine from 1919 to 1934.

- A) True
- B) False

9. What is the name of Ukraine's currency?

- A) Hryvnia
- B) Leu
- C) Zloty
- D) Forint

10. What does 'Budmo!' mean when glasses are raised?

- A) Cheers!
- B) Good night!
- C) Help!
- D) Thank you!

11. Where should you not take photographs in Ukraine?

- A) At markets
- B) Near government or military buildings
- C) In parks
- D) In restaurants

12. As of September 2026, Ukraine's airspace is closed to passenger flights.

- A) True

B) False

Quiz answers

1. C) About 6 to 10%, or rounding up

About 6 to 10%, or rounding up, is normal in restaurants. Tipping has become more common in recent years.

2. C) Oleg

According to the Primary Chronicle, Prince Oleg took Kyiv in 882 and made it the capital of Rus.

3. C) Odesa

The Potemkin Stairs, built between 1837 and 1841, lead down towards the harbour in Odesa.

4. D) Thank you

Dyakuyu means thank you. Please is 'bud laska'.

5. B) It is the second-deepest metro station in the world

It is the second-deepest metro station in the world. Arsenalna lies 105.5 metres below ground and was the deepest until Hongyancun station in Chongqing, China, opened in 2022. Its escalators are the deepest descent in Kyiv.

6. D) Ukrainian

'Kyiv' comes from the Ukrainian . The older spelling 'Kiev' comes from Russian.

7. A) Pampushky

Savoury pampushky are seasoned with garlic sauce and served with borscht. Syrnyky are curd cheese pancakes and nalysnyky filled thin pancakes.

8. True

True. Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine from December 1919 to January 1934, before the capital moved to Kyiv.

9. A) Hryvnia

The hryvnia has been Ukraine's currency since 1996. The zloty is Polish, the forint Hungarian and the leu Romanian and Moldovan.

10. A) Cheers!

Budmo, 'let us be', is a common Ukrainian toast used like 'cheers'.

11. B) Near government or military buildings

Official travel advice says not to take photographs near government or military buildings.

12. True

True. Visitors arrive overland, for example by train from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova or Austria.

Ukraine visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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<https://worldstroll.com/countries/ukraine>