MY UKRAINE

by Vitaliy Malyshchak
Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe. It borders Russia to the east, Belarus to the north, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary to the west, Romania, Moldova to the southwest, and the Black Sea and Sea of Azov to the south. The city of Kyiv is both the capital and the largest city of Ukraine.
Ukrainian national coat of arms and flag
Background:

- Ukraine was the center of the first eastern Slavic state, Kyivan Rus, which during the 10th and 11th centuries was the largest and most powerful state in Europe. Weakened by internecine quarrels and Mongol invasions, Kyivan Rus was incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and eventually into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
A new Ukrainian state, the Cossack Hetmanate, was established during the mid-17th century after an uprising against the Poles.
Despite continuous Muscovite pressure, the Hetmanate managed to remain autonomous for well over 100 years.
• Ukraine was forced to endure a brutal Soviet rule that engineered two artificial famines (1921-22 and 1932-33) in which over 8 million died. In World War II, German and Soviet armies were responsible for some 7 to 8 million more deaths.
Nazi German leader Adolf Hitler had great plans for Ukraine, the rich breadbasket of Europe, as a Lebensträum (living space) for the German nation. He planned to empty Ukraine of 40 million Ukrainians, leaving only some as slave laborers for German colonists. He planned that Ukraine and Ukrainians would “disappear”
Soviet Russian dictator Joseph Stalin was a terrible enemy of the Ukrainian nation. He killed eight million Ukrainians in the 1933 famine.
Modern government and politics

- Ukraine is a republic under a mixed semi-parliamentary semi-presidential system with separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and is the formal head of state.
Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko was poisoned with dioxin that could have been put in his food, but he should be able to work normally and his dramatic facial disfigurement should heal, doctors said.
Ukrainian culture

- The Culture of Ukraine is a result of influence over millennia from the West and East, with an assortment of strong culturally-identified ethnic groups. Like most Western countries, Ukrainian customs are heavily influenced by Christianity.
Social customs

- Ukrainians generally carry themselves in a very polite, civilized manner. Men often hold the door open for a woman when she enters a building, stand up when a woman enters the room, and, if there is a shortage of seats, men will give up their seats to the women. In rural areas, men will sometimes kiss a woman's hand, but this is starting to go out of fashion.

- According to convention, when standing at a threshold (doorsill), do not shake hands or offer anything to be taken by the person on the other side. A young unmarried man or woman should not be seated at a table's corner. Always buy an odd number of flowers as a gift, unless it is a funeral. In that case, it is appropriate to buy an even number. When passing through the aisles in a theater or elsewhere, it is polite to face the people sitting down.
Kids in traditional Ukrainian dress on National Dress Day
My son Andriychyk
My family
My wife Oksana
Cuisine

- Food is an important part to the Ukrainian culture. Special foods are used at Easter as well as Christmas, that are not made at any other time of the year. At Christmas time, for example, kutia - a mixture of cooked buckwheat groats, poppy seeds, and honey, and special sweet breads - is prepared.

- An average Ukrainian diet consists of fish, cheeses and a variety of sausages. Head cheese is also quite popular in Ukraine as well as Kovbasa, a type of sausage. Typically bread is a core part of every meal, and must be included for the meal to be "complete." At Christmas time, for example, it is tradition to have a twelve-course meal. Included at Easter are the famous pysanky (colored and patterned eggs). Making these eggs is a long process, and they are not actually eaten, but displayed in the centre of the table (usually around the bread).

- Ukrainians often toast to good health, linger over their meal, and engage in lively conversation with family and friends. Often they will drink tea, wine, or coffee afterwards with a simple dessert, such as a fruit pastry.
A performance of a traditional Ukrainian dance by Virskyi dance ensemble
Weddings

- Weddings traditionally take place in churches, the bride in white and the groom in black. Wedding celebrations are known to continue for days, even a week. They are accompanied by lively music and dancing, drinking and eating, and fellowship. Some particular wedding customs include:
  - Before the wedding, the groom goes with his friends to the bride's house and bargains with "money' to get a bride from her family.
  - When leaving the church, the bride carries a basket of candies or sweets to throw to children and the crowd.
  - The groom carries her down any stairs.
  - At the reception, the bride dances with each of the unmarried women present, and places a special veil on each of them. This veil symbolizes that they are still pure, but that the bride hopes they will get married soon. She also throws a bunch of flowers and the girl who catches it first will likely be the next to marry.
07/28/07 Ternopil city, West Ukraine wedding day of my younger brother
Good places to visit: Kyiv

- St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery
- Spring in Kyiv
- Bohdan Khmelnytsky Square
Good places to visit: Lviv

- View of the Old Town of Lviv
- The Church of the Assumption
Good places to visit: Crimea

- Ai-Todor Cape, Black side (Crimea). It is located about 7 miles west of Yalta. Built in 1911 by Architect A. Sherwood on Aurora Cliff. MEASUREMENTS: highest tower - 45ft, length of base - 90ft. Also called "The Castle of Love" or "Lastivchyne Hnizdo"! Survived an earthquake in 1927. Held the 1945 "Big 3" conference. It is an architectural symbol of the Crimea.
Ukrainian educational system

- The Ukrainian educational system is organized into four levels: primary, secondary, higher and postgraduate education.

- **School level:** Primary and secondary education is divided into "younger", "middle" and "senior" schools. Younger school comprises grades 1 to 4. Grades 5-9 are usually referred to as "middle school", while 10-11 are "senior school". Despite the names, students usually study in the same school building throughout their primary and secondary education.

- **University level:** Higher education is either state funded or private. There are two degrees conferred by Ukrainian universities: the Bachelor's Degree (4 years) and the Master's Degree (5-6 years).

- **Postgraduate level:** The first level of postgraduate education is *aspirantura* that usually results in the Kandydat Nauk degree (Candidate of Sciences). Candidates must pass three qualifying exams (in the field of specialty, in a foreign language of their choice and in philosophy), publish at least three scientific articles, write a dissertation and defend it. This degree is roughly equivalent to the PhD in the United States.
Ukrainian educational system

- Ukraine produces the fourth largest number of academic graduates in Europe

National University of Kyiv

Ivan Franko National University of L'viv
Chart 2. Graduates in tertiary* education, thousand

* tertiary = International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 5+6; level 5: first stage of tertiary education (not leading directly to an advanced research qualification), level 6: second stage of tertiary education (leading to an advanced research qualification)

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UniCredit New Europe Research Network
Famous Ukrainians: Ilya Mechnikov

- Ilya Mechnikov (16 May 1845 – 15 July 1916) was a Ukrainian microbiologist best remembered for his pioneering research into the immune system. Mechnikov received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1908, for his work on phagocytosis.
Ihor Sikorsky (25 May 1889 – 26 October 1972) Sikorsky was a Ukrainian-American pioneer of aviation who designed and flew the world's first multi-engine fixed-wing aircraft, developed the first of Pan American Airways' ocean-conquering flying boats in the 1930s, and developed the first successful helicopter.
Famous Ukrainians: Olga Kurylenko

- Olga Kurylenko (born November 14, 1979) is a Ukrainian model and actress. She is best known for being the Bond girl in the 22nd James Bond film, Quantum of Solace.

- Press conference on the set of Quantum of Solace at Pinewood Studio. Left to right: Olga Kurylenko, Daniel Craig and Gemma Arterton.
Famous Ukrainians: Barack Hussein Obama II

- Barack Hussein Obama II (born August 4, 1961) is the President of the United States of America
Famous Ukrainians: Vitaliy Malyshchak

- Vitaliy Malyshchak (born November 26, 1974) is best known for being MSC Nursing School student.
Murray State College, located in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, provides exceptional opportunities for educational programs in a small town atmosphere where everyone is considered family.