

Eastern Ukraine

Східна Україна



Eastern Ukraine is the business end of the country. While the USSR still lived, this was the heart of the Soviet military-industrial complex. Monolithic socialist realist monuments dominate the horizon, Lenin lives in myriad statues, and communist disdain for nature endures, as chimney stacks heartily bellow out smoke. But these landmarks now happily coexist with neon signs, McDonald's restaurants, Benetton clothing stores and luxury goods, as cities such as Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and, to a lesser extent, Kharkiv are a lot wealthier than their counterparts in the west or south.

Many of Ukraine's 'got-rich-quick' businesspeople – as well as outright mafiosi – are based in the region, and far fewer independent travellers venture this way. However, it's an interesting detour for those looking for something different, plus a rich seam of history lies buried deep beneath the layers of money-making and industry. With the most famous band of Cossacks based at Zaporizhzhya in the 16th to 18th centuries – fighting off the Tatars to the south, Poles to the west and Russians to the north – the surrounding region was a crucible of Ukrainian nationalism. That's why many cruise ships now drop anchor in Zaporizhzhya and organised tours head for Poltava, the site of a famous battle.

Proud Ukrainian history aside, Russification following Moscow's 1775 rout of the Cossacks was so successful that many Eastern Ukrainians still look north, even in the 21st century. Russian continues to be the dominant language, and after Western-leaning Viktor Yushchenko was elected president in the 2004 election, parts of the region threatened to run home to Mother Russia. However, such threats have died down, as the region has prospered mightily since the Orange Revolution.

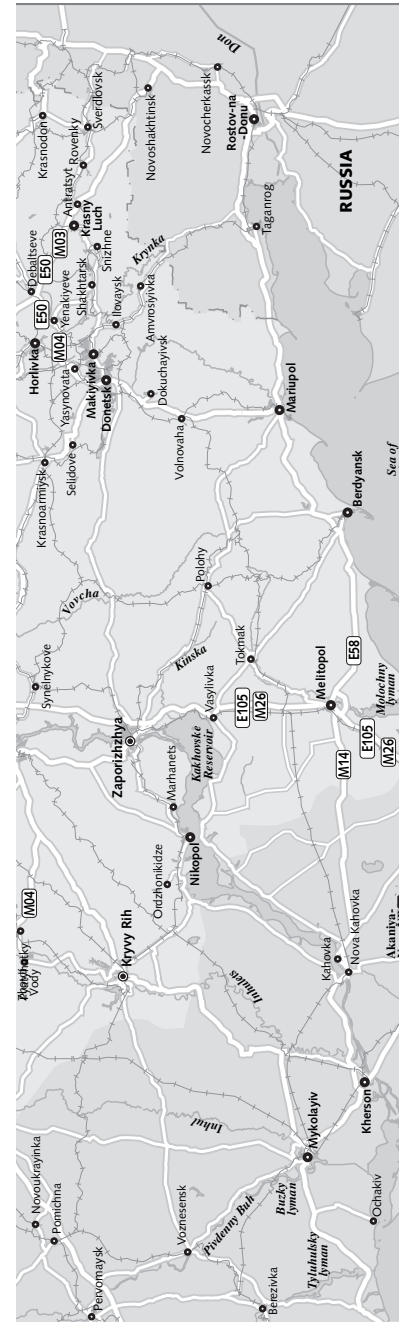
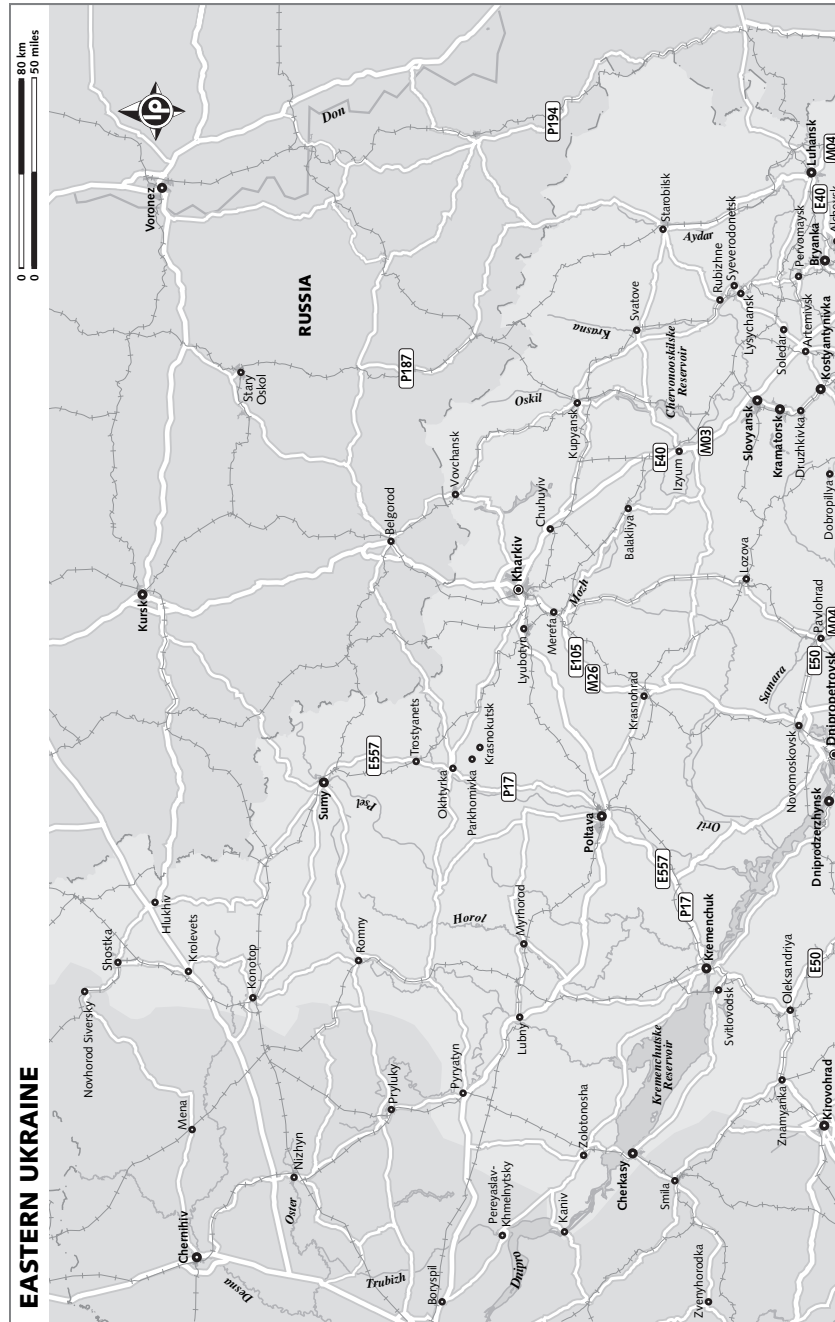
HIGHLIGHTS

- Gape in awe at the immensity of Kharkiv's cavernous **ploshcha Svobody** (p225)
- Admire fine art at the **Kharkiv Art Museum** (p226) or its branch in **Parkhomivka** (p223)
- Spend a night hopping among the raucous **clubs** (p231) of Dnipropetrovsk
- See where Peter the Great defeated Sweden and its Cossack allies outside **Poltava** (p223)
- Revel in Cossack culture on **Khortytsya Island** (p232), Zaporizhzhya, home of the Zaporizhsky Cossacks
- Cheer on Shakhtar Donetsk in view of slag heaps at Donetsk's new **football stadium** (p236)



■ POPULATION: 19.6 MILLION

■ HIGHEST POINT: NOTHING OVER 500M



KANIV КАНИВ

☎ 04736 / pop 26,700

When Taras Shevchenko died in 1861, his famous poem *Zapovit* (Testament) requested his fellow countryfolk bury him on a hill overlooking the great Dnipro River where, after rising up and liberating the land, they could 'freely, and with good intent, speak quietly of him'.

Kaniv, 162km down the Dnipro from Kyiv, is the spot. In 1925 the steep and scenic bluff overlooking the river called **Tarasova Hora** (Taras' Hill; admission 8 to 4pm Tue-Sun 1uah, other times free; ☀ sunrise-sunset), was designated a State Cultural Preserve. On a hill above the mothballed river pier you'll find the poet's tomb, which is crowned with a tremendous statue of the man himself. There is an observation point in front with great views of the river, and 15 hectares of parkland to explore behind the statue.

Behind the grave is the **Taras Shevchenko Museum**, which remained closed indefinitely for renovations when we visited. Behind the museum a path leads to the tomb of Yadlovsky, the man who guarded Shevchenko's body from 1883 to 1933.

Kaniv is doable as a long day trip from Kyiv. The most sensible option from Kyiv is to take the *marshrutky* departing hourly (until 8pm) from Podil Bus Station (20uah, 2½ hours). Tarasova Hora is about 7km south of the bus station. A taxi should only cost 35uah (round-trip with some wait time).

POLTAVA ПОЛТАВА

☎ 0532 (6-digit Nos), 05322 (5-digit Nos) / pop 318,000

Given that they erected a prominent victory column and built a neoclassical plaza reminiscent of St Petersburg here, it is hard not to think the Russians were rubbing salt into an open Ukrainian wound in Poltava. Outside this pretty, quaint city on the Vorskla River, Peter the Great's army defeated the Ukrainian Cossacks under Ivan Mazepa and their Swedish allies in 1709 (p222), dashing hopes of an independent Cossack state (see the boxed text, p28). What's Poltava's revenge? In the 19th century the city would become the birthplace of the modern Ukrainian language (although today the city, like most of the Russophile east, is mainly Russian speaking).

Orientation & Information

The bulk of the city lies between the two train stations, with Kyivska station 2km northwest

of the centre and the main Pivdenniy Vokzal (South Station) 3km southeast. The main drag is vul Zhovtneva, which heads southeast from Kyivska, through central Korpusny Park, and terminates at maydan Soborny. The battle site is about 5km northeast of Kyivska station.

There's internet access right off Korpusny Park at **Internet Klub** (pl Luhanskoho; per hr 5uah; ☎ 8am-11pm).

Euro-Tour (☎ 506 490, 8-097 695 0452; vul Gogolya 25; English tours per hr \$20) does excellent three-hour tours of the battlefield as well as city tours.

Sights

The focal point is the circular **Korpusny Park**, laid out in the early 19th century in an attempt to emulate the grand planning ideals of St Petersburg, particularly Palace Square. Eight streets radiate off the plaza, and in its centre is the **Iron Column of Glory**, topped by a golden eagle, erected on the 100th anniversary of Peter the Great's battle. Just east of the park is the **Poltava Art Gallery** (vul Frunze 5; admission 5uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which hosts modern-art exhibits as well as the not-so-modern collection of the recently closed Poltava Art Museum.

Southeast of Korpusny Park, vul Zhovtneva becomes a pedestrian precinct for a few blocks

leading down to leafy Zhovtnevy Park, with the **Poltava Regional Museum** (admission 2uah; ☎ Thu-Mon 9am-5pm) on its southeast edge. The museum's collection of random archaeological and cultural artefacts is almost overshadowed by its gorgeous Art Nouveau building (1903), adorned with the ceramic crests of each district capital in the Poltava oblast.

Continuing southeast, vul Zhovtneva terminates on a bluff at **maydan Soborny** (cathedral square), the prettiest little spot in Poltava, with sweeping views of Khrestovozdvyzhensky Monastery (see opposite) across the valley to the northeast. A footpath leading to the **Friendship Rotunda** at the end of the park is flanked by two quirky statues – a *halushky* monument on the left (*halushky* are the beloved local dumplings), and a monument to Igor Svyatoslavych (see p98) on the right. Nearby, surrounded by a lovely flower garden, the **Kotlyarevsky Museum** (admission 3uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is in the lovingly restored former home of Ivan Kotlyarevsky (1739–1838), one of the fathers of Ukrainian literature. The museum provides a glimpse into traditional Ukrainian life in the early 19th century. The newly rebuilt **Uspenska Church** is in the centre of maydan Soborny.

A block northwest of maydan Soborny up vul Paryzhkoyi Komuny is the quaint wooden **Spaska Church** (1705), with its newly rebuilt bell tower. It's faced by an odd monument to Tsar Peter I (Peter the Great) across the street on vul Paryzhkoyi Komuny.

About 3km east of Korpusny Park is the early 18th-century **Khrestovozdvyzhensky Monastery** (Elevation of the Cross). The main cathedral is one of only two in the country with seven cupolas, rather than five (the other is St Michael's Monastery in Kyiv, p73). The monastery is a long (30 minutes), straight walk east on vul Radyanska (Sovetskaya) from Korpusny Park.

BATTLEFIELD

The famous battle was fought over a large area around what's now vul Zinkivska, about 7km north of the centre. The best starting point is the **Poltava Battle Museum** (Shvedska mohyla 32; admission 5uah; ☎ 10am-5pm, box office until 4.20pm) by the Peter I statue. Inside are displays relating to the battle, including maps, paintings and Peter I's original uniform. There's nothing (beyond one paltry portrait) to document the

Cossack forces under hetman Ivan Mazepa. Aside from the museum, the battlefield contains numerous monuments and various re-doubts of the old fortress, many of which have been restored.

Buses 5 and 37 head here from vul Zinkivska near the Kievska train station. A taxi should cost 25uah one way from the centre.

Sleeping

Breakfast costs extra in the following establishments unless otherwise noted.

Hotel Turyst (☎ 220 921; vul Myru 2; budget d \$18, renovated s/d \$28/45; ☎) Some 500m west of the Pivdenniy Vokzal, across the bridge and to the left, this incredible Soviet hulk is unappetising and terribly located, but relatively friendly on the wallet.

Kyiv Hotel (☎ 224 286; vul Simena 2/49; r from \$35) This former ugly duckling has received a complete facelift and now touts stylishly 'remonted' rooms with blinding blonde-wood floors and polished bathroom fixtures. You could swaddle a newborn in the luxurious towels. Rooms are small though and it is a good 10-minute walk to the heart of the city.

BATTLE OF POLTAVA *Marc di Duca*

One of the most decisive battles in European history, the Battle of Poltava was the culmination of years of tension between Cossack Ukraine and Russian Tsar Peter I. Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709), the hetman (leader) of Ukraine from 1687–1709, thought Ukraine had come to an understanding with Russia through the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav. But when Peter I began to demand Cossack troops fight his wars in Lithuania and refused to send forces to defend Ukraine from the Polish – both violations of the treaty – Mazepa lost patience with the tsar. He switched sides and allied Ukraine with Russia's sworn enemy, King Charles XII of Sweden, under whom he hoped to win greater independence. The tsar defeated these unlikely allies at Poltava, kicking off 300 years of Russian domination in Ukraine. Arguably no other single event had a greater effect on the course of Ukraine's history, and the consequences of Mazepa's defeat still rumble on today.

The battle itself took place on 8 July 1709, some 7km north of Poltava. The allied forces of Mazepa and the Swedish king were outnumbered three to one by tsarist troops, but despite this disadvantage, the brave Cossacks and well-trained Swedes might have emerged victorious were it not for blunders on the part of some Swedish officers. The battle raged from 4am until 11am, when Charles XII ordered his forces to retreat and himself fled south. Mazepa escaped to Ottoman-ruled Moldova, where he died soon afterwards.

Mazepa still arouses friction between historians in Ukraine and Russia. For centuries tsars and communists alike portrayed him as a traitor who sided with Russia's enemies. However, since 1991 he has been rehabilitated in Ukraine and is now regarded as a hero for his stand against Russian imperialism. His stern, rather weary-looking face still stares out from the 10-hryvnia banknote.

Plans are being made in Poltava and Stockholm to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the battle with a re-enactment. As the date approaches, it will be fascinating to watch Moscow and Kiev twist historical fact into today's propaganda.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: WAITING FOR VAN GOGH

Possibly Ukraine's best collection of Western art isn't in Kyiv, Kharkiv or Odesa. Rather, it lies deep in rural Kharkivska oblast near the obscure town of Krasnokutsk. We say 'possibly' because it has not been verified that all of the works at the **Parkhomivka History & Arts Museum** (☎ 8-057 569 5369, 8-097 825 5877; vul Kontorska 1; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Sun) belong to the names they are ascribed to – names like Van Gogh, Gauguin, Manet, Rembrandt, Picasso and Renoir.

But if you think we've fallen for a classic Ukrainian scam, think again. Many of the works by big-name artists *have* been verified, and if you can avoid being star-struck there's also a fabulous collection of Chinese and Japanese etchings as well as a stunning Ukrainian collection. Pieces that are still in the process of being authenticated are clearly marked with a '?'. In all, the museum has more than 6,000 works, but only a fraction can be shown at once because of space constraints.

How did such a rich collection land here? The man responsible is one Afanasy Lunyov, a teacher and master networker who ran an art school here in the heart of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years. He used to take his students on field trips to art museums across the Soviet Union, in the process becoming close with artists, collectors and curators. Many of the works by Western artists here were surplus pieces that museums like the Hermitage donated to Lunyov's school, which he eventually turned into a museum. Many Ukrainian and Russian pieces were donated by the artists themselves.

If Lunyov, who ran the museum until his death in 2004, had marketing skills as good as his schmoozing skills, the Parkhomivka museum might be Ukraine's best-known art museum. One obstacle he faced is that the museum, a branch of the Kharkiv Art Museum (see p226), is state-owned – and thus poorly funded.

Parkhomivka is about 10km west of Krasnokutsk, about halfway between Poltava and Kharkiv (but well off the main road between the two). *Marshrutky* leave every hour or so from Kharkiv's Tsentralny Rynok (three hours). Connections are less frequent from Poltava.

Palazzo Hotel (☎ 611 205; www.palazzo.com.ua; vul Gogolya 33; s/d from \$60/80; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This new offering gives Gallery (below) a run for its money. The attractive king-sized beds have firm mattresses that will have your back feeling like butter after a lengthy snooze. That and the suave, tawny toned design almost make up for the small size of the allegedly smoke-free rooms. Wi-fi is ubiquitous and free.

Hotel Gallery (☎ 561 697; www.hotel.poltava.ua; vul Frunze 7; s/d \$78/115) This is the fanciest accommodation in town, albeit not quite as fancy as it thinks it is (lose the satin bedspreads already!). It's just a stumble away from central Korpusny Park. Breakfast is free.

Eating & Drinking

Be sure to sample the local delicacy, *halushky* – unfilled dumplings with various rich toppings. The Hotel Gallery's restaurant does a good rendition.

Poltavske Pivo (vul Zhovtneva) Their 2.50uah locally brewed draught beer might just be the cheapest in Ukraine, and they're right on Poltava's main pedestrian drag.

Café Retro (☎ 563 180; vul Komsomolska 30; mains 25-40uah) Sizeable portions of Central Asian-influenced Ukrainian and international dishes emerge from the kitchen at this refined eatery.

Ivana Horla (maydan Soborny; mains 30-50uah) The middle-of-the-road European food here is quite reasonably priced considering the jaw-dropping views of the Khrestovozdvyzhensky Monastery across the valley. Shorts are forbidden and it's often rented out for weddings.

Palazzo (vul Gogolya 33; mains 30-70uah) Attached to the hotel of the same name, it offers Poltava's finest Italian dishes.

Getting There & Around

Most services stop at **Pivdennyi Vokzal**, including the slow night trains to Kyiv (88uah, seven hours, two nightly), Kharkiv (7uah, three to four hours, at least 15 daily) and Odesa (85uah, 13 hours, four daily). To get to the centre from Pivdennyi Vokzal, take trolleybus 1, 2, 4, 6 or 11.

Crucially, however, the two daily Kyiv–Kharkiv express trains (Kyiv 56uah, 3½ hours; Kharkiv 42uah, two hours) stop only at **Kyivska station** (Stepana Kondratenka 12). Almost all the transport from this train station heads into town. Just check by asking 'do tsentr?'

Buses go pretty much everywhere from distant **Avtovokzal No 1** (Bus station No 1, vul Velikotirnovska),

about 7km east of the centre. The most useful are to Kharkiv (13uah, 2½ to three hours, eight daily) and Dnipropetrovsk (15uah, three to four hours, eight daily).

KHARKIV ХАРКІВ

☎ 057 / pop 1.45 million

If Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhya are the strong-arm muscle of Ukrainian industry, then the more northerly city of Kharkiv is its nerve centre and brain. It's a leafy university town that makes the unusual boast of being the birthplace of the Soviet nuclear industry. And it combines vast, agoraphobia-inducing plazas – particularly its unforgettably enormous pl Svobody – with charming early-20th-century buildings on more compact streets. With more than 100,000 enrolled at the university, including many foreign students, there's a distinct multicultural feel to Kharkiv's lively streets. The city empties during summer, so visit at other times to get a proper feel for the place.

History

Modern Ukraine's second-largest city was founded in 1654 as a Cossack outpost. Lying just 40km south of the Russian border, it was quickly absorbed into the Russian sphere of influence in the following century.

Kharkiv (Kharkov in Russian) was the capital of Soviet Ukraine from 1917 to 1934, a period in which Ukrainian nationalists and intelligentsia were repressed. The city was heavily damaged in WWII but is now a major research centre, which also manufactures transformers, turbines and engines.

Orientation

Central Kharkiv has three main squares that form a straight line running south to north through the heart of the city. The southernmost square is pl Rozy Lyuxemburg, with the Lopan River running along its western end. Not far north of here is pl Konstytutsiyi, around which Kharkiv's modest array of tourist attractions are clustered. From here, vul Sumska heads north past sprawling pl Svobody.

Jutting due north off pl Svobody is the wide avenue pr Slobody, still determinedly referred to by locals as 'pr Lenina'. Due east of pl Svobody is the hip, bustling university district, clustered around Pushkinska metro and vul Petrovskoho.

Information

Vul Sumska is full of 24-hour currency exchanges and ATMs, especially around the corner of pr Pravdy.

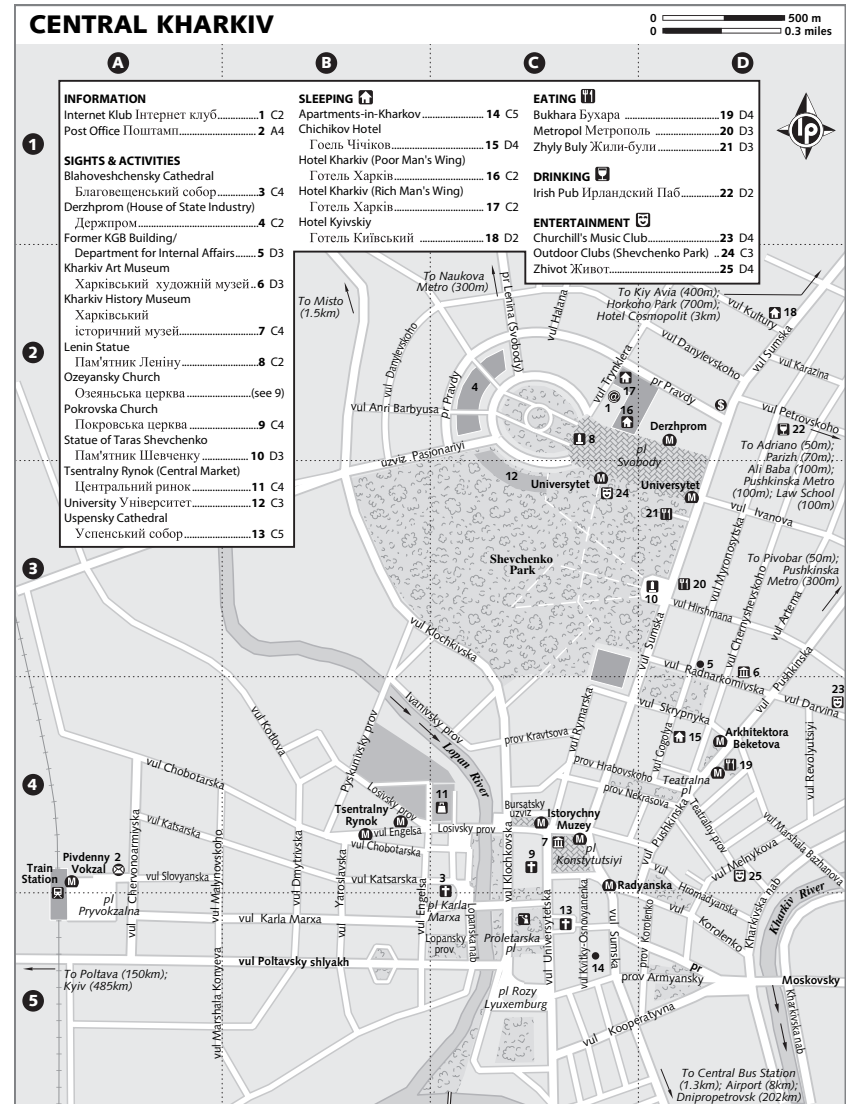
Internet Klub (pl Svobody 7; pr hr 8uah; M) Derzhprom/Univrsytet) The Internet Klub provides modern equipment and avoids those annoying per-megabyte charges.

Post office (pl Pryvokzalna; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-4pm Sun) Also has a 24-hour telephone centre.

Sights

PLOSHCHA SVOBODY

Locals claim that this huge square is the second-largest in the world after Beijing's Tiananmen Square (although Moscow's Red Square might



have something to say about that). Whatever, at 750m long it's indisputably huge and is certainly Kharkiv's most unique sight.

Planned as an ensemble of Ukrainian government buildings when Kharkiv was the republican capital, it was built between 1925 and 1935. (Damaged during WWII, it was largely rebuilt by German POWs.) The late-1920s **Derzhprom** (House of State Industry) at its western end was the first Soviet skyscraper – a geometric series of concrete and glass blocks and bridges. On the southern side of the square is the **university** (early 1930s), formerly the House of Planning, which displays classic Soviet aesthetics. **Lenin** still proudly stands in the midst of it all, his hand outstretched across the vast open space.

Central **Shevchenko Park**, just south of here, is a great place to observe Kharkivites in their element – or win a stuffed animal in one of the myriad arcade games. From the Lenin statue it's a pleasant walk through the park to the **statue of Taras Shevchenko** (vul Sumska), of which locals are perhaps overly proud. Yes, it's big and it does portray the heroic poet surrounded by 16 peasants, Cossacks and other Ukrainians representing the national history. However, it's also rather brutalist and is only softened by the park.

PLOSHCHA KONSTYTUTSIYI

Just west of pl Konstytutsiyi, the gleaming domes of the **Pokrovsky Monastery** (Intercession of the Virgin) are visible from miles away. The predictably peaceful grounds (enter from pl Konstytutsiyi) have two attractive churches. The smaller and more important of the two is the blue, three-domed **Pokrovska Church** (1689). As in all Orthodox churches, the altar is under the east-pointing dome, and there's another altar hidden in the basement, which the attendant may show you if you ask. The church is almost always open for services. The yellow church next to it is the **Ozelyansky Church**.

Back on the square you can't miss the large granite sculptural ensemble commemorating Kharkiv's designation as the first capital of Soviet Ukraine on 24 December 1917. Nearby are several anti-aircraft guns and tanks. These are associated with the **Kharkiv History Museum** (☎ 222 8123; pl Konstytutsiyi; admission per exhibit 1-1.50uah; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which occupies the big red-brick building that dominates the square. This has an OK guns exhibit for WWII buffs but can otherwise be skipped.

South of the square on vul Universytetskaya is the **Uspensky** (Assumption) **Cathedral** with its landmark, 19th-century bell tower (89.5m tall). This church is now used only as a concert hall; ask your hotel about tickets. The park across the street offers the best vantage point of the striking red-and-cream striped **Blahoveshchensky Cathedral** (1881–1901) down in the valley on pl Karla Marksa. Based on Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, the cathedral has a beautifully proportioned bell tower resembling a stick of candy.

KHARKIV ART MUSEUM & AROUND

Kharkiv's most famous **museum** (permanent collection vul Radnarkomivska 11, exhibit hall vul Radnarkomivska 9; admission per building 2uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun, 10am-4.30pm Mon) owns one of many versions of Ilya Repin's *Zaporizhsky Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan*, which is found in a room full of Repin paintings in the museum's permanent collection. The entire collection of romantic paintings here is of a high standard for Ukraine but the neighbouring exhibit hall is hit-or-miss. The museum also curates the little-known Parkhomivka History & Arts Museum (see p223).

While you're here check out the **former KGB building** a block west of the museum. Now the Department for Internal Affairs, it has a bust of Felyx Edmundovych, a high-ranking KGB member, on one wall.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Like Moscow's, Kharkiv's **metro** is something of an attraction in its own right, featuring high ceilings and space-age chandeliers. Check out the stained-glass portraits of Yuri Gagarin above the stairs to the platforms at the pr Gagarina station.

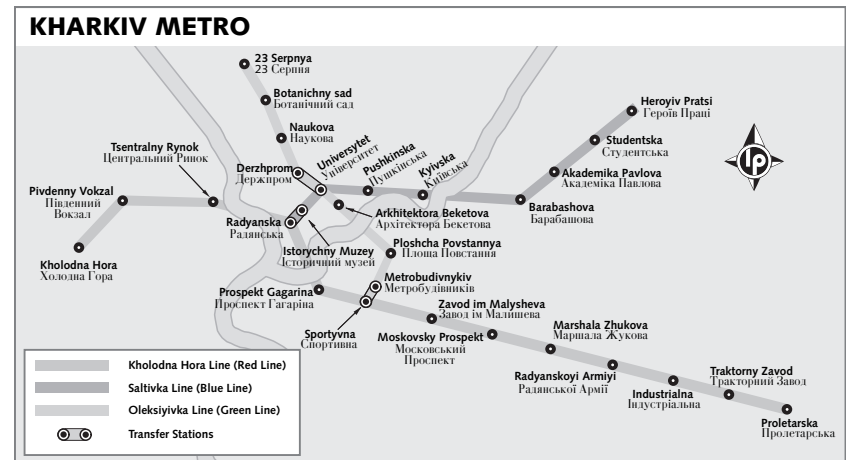
The city's **Tsentralny Rynok** (Central Market, also called Blahoveshchensky Rynok; vul Engelsa 33; ☎ Tsentralny Rynok) is well worth a browse for its eclectic collection of everything from fur *shapky* (hats) to vegetables and used car parts.

About 2km to the north of pl Svobody, vul Sumska runs along **Horkoho Park**, where you'll find plenty of tree-lined paths, a funfair, cinema, summertime chairlift and children's locomotive, as well as hills for wintertime sledding.

Sleeping

APARTMENTS

You might find a few babushkas renting out rooms (from 20uah) or apartments (from 50uah) at the train station, but they mostly hang



out in front of the Law School (Yuridicheskaya Akademiya; vul Pushkinska), 25m north of Pushkinska metro. As always, check the location vigilantly so you don't end up in Russia.

Apartments-in-Kharkov (☎ 719 0879; 8-067 577 3758; http://apartments.inkharkov.com; pl Konstytutsiyi 1, Palats Truda, entrance No 7; apts from \$20; ☎ Istorychny Muzei) Proprietor Dima offers outstanding service and lets clients use the office internet.

Kharkov Apartment (☎ 755 0367, 8-067 572 7867; www.kharkovapartment.com) Ask for Anna.

HOTELS

All the following accept credit cards and serve free breakfast; some offer weekend discounts.

Hotel Kharkiv (www.hotel.kharkov.com; ☎ Derzhprom/Universytet) Kharkiv's textbook Soviet behemoth looms over pr Svobody, providing a dizzying array of rooms to suit all wallet sizes. Budget travellers need look no further than the **'poor man's wing'** (☎ 758 0058; pl Svobody 7; s/d with shared bathroom \$16/32; ☎ ☎), with perfectly acceptable, albeit unrenovated, Brezhnev-era rooms. Staff here may only check in insistent Westerners. The **'rich man's wing'** (☎ 758 0008; cnr vul Trynklera & pr Pravdy; s/d from \$50/95; ☎ ☎ ☎) has only partially shed its Soviet skin, but does have some smartly renovated luxury rooms and suites.

Hotel Kyivskiy (☎ 714 3101; www.hotel-kyivskiy.com; vul Kultury 4; s/d from \$60/90; ☎ ☎ ☎) This hotel encompasses the good (fastidiously cared-for bathrooms, humungous bathtubs), the bad (needle-thin single beds) and the ugly (tacky furniture) of the retro-Soviet genre. It is, however, ideally located.

Chichikov Hotel (☎ 752 2300; www.chichikov-hotel.com.ua; vul Gogolya 6/8; s/d from \$120/160; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) **Arkhitektora Beketova** We'd like to see more space in the singles in this relatively new (2006) property, but it is elegantly furnished and the location is better than that of its only competitor in this class, the Cosmopolit.

Hotel Cosmopolit (☎ 754 4777; www.cosmopolit-hotel.com; vul Akademika Proskuryi 1; r from \$200; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This sets the standard for contemporary design in Kharkiv, with flat-screen TVs and loads of extras like plush robes and 24-hour room service. The theme is Italian and breakfast in swanky Da Vinci restaurant is divine. The huge 'king' rooms are worth the splurge (\$300). If you're here on business, this is your top choice even if it is a short taxi ride from the centre.

Eating

Zhuly Buly (Shevchenko Park, vul Sumska; dishes 5-8uah; ☎ 9am-10pm; ☎ Universytet) 'Once Upon a Time' is an upscale *stolova* (self-service cafeteria), immensely popular with students for its cheap food and beer. It's reminiscent of popular national chain Puzata Khata.

Bukhara (☎ 716 2045; vul Pushkinska 32; mains 30-50uah; ☎ Arkhitektora Beketova) The chef here fries up a mean *plov* (pilaf) and other Uzbeki treats, and of course there are hookah pipes to help settle all that lamb. Also has a prime summer terrace.

Metropol (☎ 719 4040; vul Sumska 50; mains on terrace 30-75uah, mains in restaurant 60-155uah; ☎ Universytet) Exclusive and expensive Metropol has a sumptuous indoor space dedicated to

quality European cuisine, and a popular outdoor terrace that brings you eye-to-eye with the Taras Shevchenko monument across the street. The terrace menu is scaled-down but you can still drive a fork into delicacies like baked salmon with asparagus.

Kharkiv's 'restaurant row' of sorts is vul Petrovskoho (M Pushkinska), where you'll find all brands of cuisine, including Italian at marvellously affordable **Adriano** (☎ 750 7360; vul Pushkinska 79/1; mains & pizzas 15-30uah) and French in funky **Parizh** (☎ 714 3963; vul Petrovskoho 30/32; mains 30-50uah).

At the east end of vul Petrovskoho, near the metro, some of the best shawarmas in Ukraine are at outdoor stand **Ali Baba** (shawarmas 7uah).

Drinking

Irish Pub (vul Myronosytska 46; M Derzhprom/Universytet) It offers exactly what you'd expect: plenty of beer (both fine imports and inexpensive domestic lagers), sports on TV, a few strange Irish dishes and the chance to hobnob with Kharkiv expats.

Pivobar (vul Frunze 3; M Pushkinska) This place actually has a better beer selection than Irish Pub, including beloved English ales like Owd Rodger and Riggwelter, as well as an encyclopedic food menu.

Entertainment

Check Russian-language *Afisha* magazine or <http://kharkov.nezabarom.com.ua> for entertainment listings. For downmarket dancing action in the summer try the **outdoor clubs** (admission about 5uah) in Shevchenko Park near the pl Svobody entrance.

Churchill's Music Pub (☎ 267 6963; vul Darvyna 9; admission 15-140uah; ☒ closed summer; M Pushkinska) has the city's best live music and an eager, bohemian crowd.

Misto (☎ 758 1702; www.mistoclub.com; vul Klochkovska 190A; admission 20-100uah; M Naukova) A popular old-school club where Russian pop trumps Euro beats.

Zhivot (☎ 717 4183; vul Melnykova 6; admission 20-80uah; M Radyanska) Best option for serious elektronika-loving clubbers.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kharkiv airport (☎ 775 5343) is served by domestic and international flights. AeroSvit Airlines

(see p252) flies to Kyiv. **Kiy Avia** (☎ 732 8441; vul Sum'ska 77/79) can sort you out with schedules and tickets.

BUS

Buses go to numerous destinations from the **central bus station** (tsentralny avtovokzal; ☎ 732 6502; pr Gagarina 22; M pr Gagarina). The most useful are to Poltava (11uah, 2½ hours, at least eight a day), Dnipropetrovsk (18uah, 4½ hours, 20 a day) and Zaporizhzhya (24uah, 6½ hours, at least two a day).

Autolux (☎ 732 5471; www.autolux.com.ua) and **Gunsel** (☎ 719 9719; www.gunsel.com.ua) have overnight trips to Kyiv.

TRAIN

The main station is **Pivdenny Vokzal** (South Station; ☎ 724 4183; M Pivdenny Vokzal).

The fast Stolichny Express to Kyiv (72uah, six hours) departs at 7.05am and 4.27pm and goes via Poltava (42uah, two hours). There is also a direct overnight train service (87uah, 8½ to 10 hours) including a few more transit trains.

There are six regular passenger trains to Donetsk (70uah, 6½ to eight hours) and one so-called 'fast *elektrychka*' (electric train) with airplane-style seating (38uah, 5½ hours). There's also a fast *elektrychka* to Dnipropetrovsk (25uah, 4½ hours) along with a host of regular trains (35uah, six hours).

Other popular destinations are Moscow (270uah, 11½ hours, several daily), Odesa (100uah, 14 hours, two daily) and Simferopol (95uah, 16 to 17 hours, at least daily).

There's a handy 24-hour service centre with an English-speaking ticket agent that all foreigners must use – be thankful because the lines are usually shorter here. Look for the sign in English on the right as you walk from the main hall to the ticket booths. The English-speaking agent is on duty during standard working hours.

Getting Around

The airport is 8km south of the centre, off pr Gagarina. Trolleybus 5 from the pr Gagarina metro stop terminates at the airport. Bus 119T runs between pr Lenina and the airport.

The train station has its own metro stop, 'Pivdenny Vokzal'. Metro tokens cost 75 kopecks.

DNIPROPETROVSK ДНІПРОПЕТРОВСЬК

☎ 056 (7-digit Nos), 0562 (6-digit Nos) / pop 1.08 million

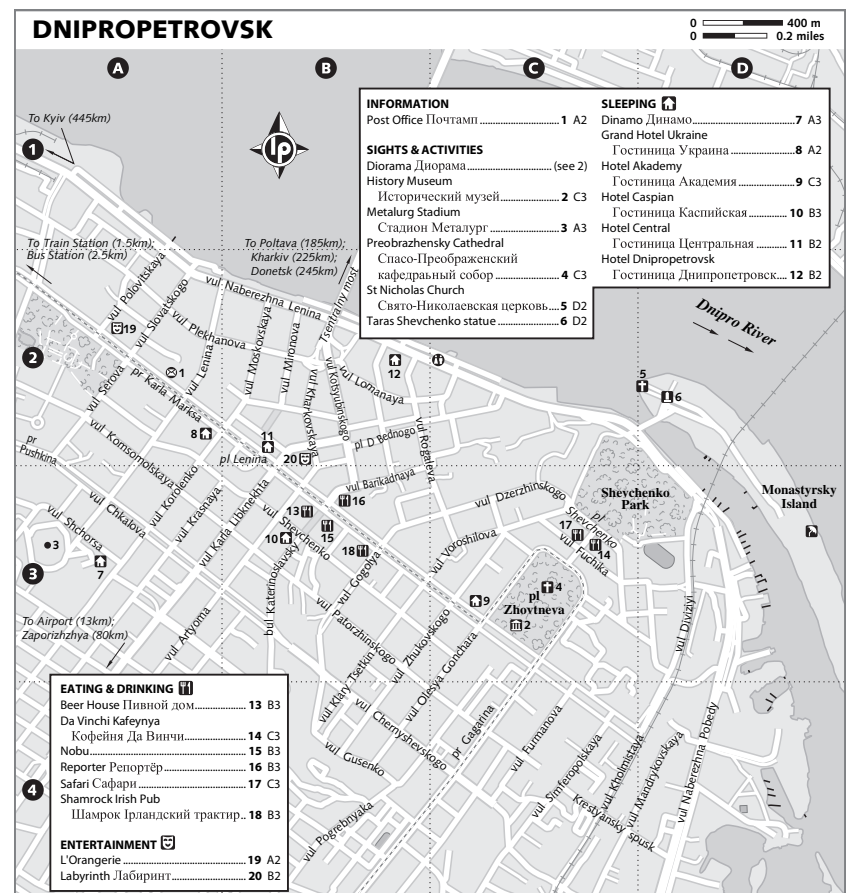
You don't have to be a rocket scientist to come to Dnipropetrovsk these days, but at one time you practically did. As the USSR's leading missile production base, it manufactured ICBMs and was closed to all outside the industry. However, that era is long past. Soon after Ukrainian independence the city gates opened, Europe's largest missile factory turned to making space hardware instead and its director, Leonid Kuchma, packed his bags and headed for Kyiv as national president.

Nowadays, local oligarchs have ensured that Dnipropetrovsk – known as Yekaterinaslav

in tsarist times – is one of the ritziest cities in Ukraine outside Kyiv. Its broad main thoroughfare, pr Karla Marksa, is awash with shops selling Swiss watches, Scandinavian furniture, French cosmetics and Italian fashion. The city's modern, palatial nightclubs, which trump even those in Kyiv, are the city's other big draw. And Dnipropetrovsk ('DP') will be one of the host cities for the 2012 European Football Championship.

Orientation & Information

Almost everything in Dnipropetrovsk happens along or near pr Karla Marksa, which runs the length of the centre from the train station in the west to pl Zhovtneva at the far east side of town. In the middle of it all is pl Lenina. The



Dnipro River, flanked by a promenade and busy vul Naberezhna Lenina (nab Lenina), parallels pr Karla Marksa to the north.

Handle both your snail-mail and email needs at the **post office** (pr Karla Marksa 62; internet per hr 5.50uah; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm Sat). Check out <http://gorod.dp.ua> for the latest hotel, restaurant and club news.

Sights & Activities

Window shopping is one pleasant Dnipropetrovsk experience. Tree-lined pr Karla Marksa has plenty of retail therapy, but the latest shopping hot spot is pedestrian vul Mironova, where two state-of-the-art shopping plazas recently sprouted. Another favourite activity is wandering the two riverfront promenades – along nab Lenina and nab Pobedy.

At the eastern end of nab Lenina is **Monastyrsky Island**, the site of the area's first human settlement. Crossing the bridge to the island you immediately come face-to-face with a **Taras Shevchenko statue**, the immense size of which would put most Lenin statues to shame. Turing left (west) you'll come to the beautiful, fortress-style **St Nicholas Church**. Nearby, a cross depicting the site of the island's original monastery sits in a fragrant, lovingly cared-for garden. The southeast portion of the island is dominated by sandy **beaches**, popular among locals in the warm months.

Back on the mainland, walking up the hill from the bridge's southern terminus brings you to **Shevchenko Park**, where you can watch old men playing chess. South of here is pl Zhovtneva (pl Oktyabrskaya), site of the **History Museum** (☎ 463 422; pr Karla Marksa 16; admission 7uah; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Adjoining the museum is a **diorama** (admission 4uah), an 840-sq-metre painted canvas depicting the WWII Battle of the Dnipro, fought near here. Even if you don't understand the 20-minute sound-and-light presentation in Russian, the authentic Soviet anthems give you an idea of its slant. Outside, anti-aircraft batteries are aimed towards the glistening gold spire and dome of **Preobrazhensky Cathedral** (Transfiguration), a classical structure dating from 1830 to 1835. This is Dnipropetrovsk's holiest church so don't barge in wearing beach clothes.

Metalurg Stadium (vul Shchorsa), about a 10-minute walk uphill southwest from pl Lenina, is in the process of getting a major overhaul in preparation for the Euro 2012 tournament. The

blighted area around the stadium should improve markedly once the project is completed. The stadium is home to DP's second-tier club, Metalurg. The top-tier club, Dnipro, plays in a stadium well outside the centre.

Sleeping

Of the following, only Dinamo refuses credit cards.

Dinamo (☎ 374 6007; vul Shchorsa 8; s/d \$34/44, tr with shared bathroom per person \$16) The saggy beds are decades old at this rusty Soviet monster overlooking the football stadium, but a friendly price tag makes it DP's only backpacker option. It's slated for a major renovation before the Euro 2012 tournament. No free breakfast here.

Hotel Dnipropetrovsk (☎ 745 5327; www.hotel.dp.ua; nab Lenina 33; s/d from \$53/58; ☎) Located on the river about a 15-minute walk from the centre, this renovated 11-storey concrete block is the best value in town. Look past its Soviet husk and the loud furniture and you'll find surprises like toothbrushes, colourful soaps, minibars and comfy foam mattresses, even in the economy rooms. Air-con is by request.

Hotel Central (☎ 745 0347; fax 744 4330; pr Karla Marksa 50; r with fan/air-con \$70/92; ☎) This is a great deal considering the humungous size of even the cheapest rooms. The bathrooms alone are big enough for a small party. Beyond that, the design is odd, service awful and TVs too small, but if you're a space hog on a midrange budget this is your obvious choice. Breakfast costs extra.

Grand Hotel Ukraine (☎ 341 010; vul Korolenko 2; www.grand-hotel-ukraine.dp.ua; r/ste from \$120/265; ☎) It's known as *the business hotel* in town, and has the fitness centre, business centre, conference facilities and free wi-fi to back it up. However, the standard rooms are surprisingly small and lame; upgrade to a suite if you want more space. Breakfast costs (a lot) extra.

Hotel Academy (☎ 370 0505; www.academya.dp.ua; pr Karla Marksa 20; r from \$140; ☎) Fans of Soviet realist art need look no further than this museum-like hotel. The walls in the lobby and corridors are covered in brilliant paintings epitomising the best of the genre. While the service is outstanding, the rooms (which, curiously, bear Cézanne prints) are simply average. Breakfast in Deja Vu restaurant downstairs is a highlight.

Hotel Caspian (☎ 371 0002; www.kaspiy.com.ua; vul Shevchenko 53A; r from \$170; ☎) Beautiful Turkish carpets, expensive Italian furniture and sumptuous king-sized beds are among the many highlights of this lavish boutique. Service is friendly, rooms are huge and the location is ideal. Arguably tops among Dnipropetrovsk's many luxury hotels.

Eating & Drinking

For a pleasant dining experience, there are a number of restaurants and outdoor food stands on the riverside promenade across from the Hotel Dnipropetrovsk. For economy eats and beer try the *shashlyk* stands to either side of the bridge to Monastyrsky Island. The following are all in the centre.

Shamrock Irish Pub (☎ 362 335; pr Karla Marksa 41; fish 'n' chips 28uah; ☎ 10am-11pm) For a casual feed, or a shot of vodka, beer or whisky, come to this quiet venue, which actually feels not at all like an Irish pub. Despite its slogan 'Open til the client's last breath', it has an annoying tendency to close early, as if it actually *were* in Ireland.

Beer House (☎ 372 3065; bul Katerinoslavsky 2; mains 30-50uah; ☎ 11am-midnight) Beer House must have a versatile chef – there are separate European, Russian and, of course, sushi menus in the downstairs restaurant. Be warned: those juicy looking steak prices are 'per 100g'. Personal 3L kegs are the speciality of the beer room upstairs.

Reporter (☎ 337 575; cnr pr Karla Marksa & vul Barikadnaya; varenyky 30uah, mains 30-60uah) Reporter has three wings: a ground-floor coffee shop serving breakfasts and possibly the plumpiest, tastiest homemade *varenyky* (dumplings) in the land; a chichi restaurant upstairs; and a superb basement 'warm-up bar' with a great in-house DJ getting the city's hipsters fired up for a night on the town.

Safari (☎ 398 595; vul Fuchikaya 126; mains 22-150uah) A suave and sophisticated restaurant near Shevchenko Park, this establishment specialises in exotic dishes like king crab, bluefin tuna and marble beef carpaccio. The heat lamps on the patio are a nice touch when the air gets nippy.

Also recommended:

Da Vinci Kofeynya (☎ 373 7008; vul Yavorinskoho 6) Desserts, coffee and hookah pipes in an exquisitely designed space.

Nobu (☎ 744 6055; pr Karla Marksa 49; meals 100-200uah) The best sushi in a sushi-mad city.

Entertainment

Dnipropetrovsk's nightclubs are fast attaining legendary status in Ukraine. Two smallish but excellent nightclubs in the centre are **Labyrinth** (cnr vul Kharkovskaya & vul Hopner; admission Sun-Thu free, Fri & Sat 100uah) and **L'Orangerie** (☎ 778 3778; vul Polovitskaya 2; admission Sun-Thu free, Fri & Sat 100uah). People also come to the latter by day to sit outside in wicker chairs, sip cosmopolitans and look cool. Women usually get in free to these places.

Getting There & Away

AIR

International carriers Austrian Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Aeroflot (see p252 for airline contact information) all have flights to **Dnipropetrovsk International Airport** (☎ 395 209), which is about 15km southeast of the city towards Zaporizhzhya (the airport is also convenient for that city). Local carrier **Dniproavia** (www.dniproavia.com) flies to Kyiv, Odesa, Simferopol (summer only) and a few international destinations. Aerosvit also flies to/from Kyiv.

BUS

Dnipropetrovsk has the country's largest and most sophisticated **bus station** (☎ 008, 778 4090; vul Kurchatova 10), located west of the centre about a 10-minute walk from the train station. To save time take *marshrutky*, not buses, to Donetsk (38uah, 4½ hours, hourly) and Zaporizhzhya (15uah, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes). 'Luxury' bus operators **Autolux** (☎ 371 0353) and **Gunsel** (☎ 778 3935) have overnight trips to Kyiv (80uah, seven to eight hours), and you'll find plenty of buses to Poltava, Kharkiv, Odesa and Simferopol.

TRAIN

From the **central train station** (☎ 005, 395 209; pr Karla Marksa 108) the fast *Stolichny Express* (85uah, six hours) to Kyiv runs early morning and late evening, plus there are other services to Kyiv (100uah, 10 hours). Trains also rumble to Odesa (85uah, 11½ hours, at least daily), Simferopol (40uah, 7 hours, five daily), and all other major cities.

There are daily fast *elektrychky* to Kharkiv (25uah, 4½ hours) and Donetsk (31uah, 4½ hours) plus a few slower passenger trains to both destinations. Some slow trains pass through nearby Zaporizhzhya but it's much easier and quicker by *marshrutka*.

Getting Around

From the airport, take bus 60 or 109 to the train station and tram 1 into the centre from there. A taxi should cost about 50uah to 60uah.

Tram 1 runs the length of pr Karla Marksa, originating at the train station. DP's metro is useless to the average visitor, as it does not go near the centre.

ZAPORIZHZHYA ЗАПОРІЖЖЯ

☎ 0612 / pop 815,000

Zaporizhzhya (Beyond the Rapids) is a long streak of a city, concentrated along one endless street. At the north end lie the two main attractions: Khortytsya Island, the 16th-century base of the famous Zaporizhsky Cossacks, and Dniproges, a massive dam. The 40km stretch of difficult-to-navigate rapids in the Dniro here, from which the city takes its name, was submerged in this dam in the 1930s and the resulting hydroelectricity was used to power massive industry.

Despite being not an especially charming destination, Zaporizhzhya's Cossack links keep it firmly on the tourist map. And while it's still a little grimy, the only upside of economic downturn and factory closures is that the air quality is much improved. (Really, it used to be worse.)

Orientation

The main street, pr Lenina, stretches for 10km from Zaporizhzhya-1 train station at its southeastern end to pl Lenina overlooking the Dniproges Dam. Halfway down there's a

centre of activity around pl Festyvalna, where you'll find both listed hotels. Three to four bus stops further northwest is bul Shevchenka. Khortytsya Island lies in the Dniro, 2km southwest of the Dniroges Dam wall.

Information

Just about every service you need is found around pl Festyvalna – many inside Hotel Intourist (opposite), which has a travel agency among myriad other services.

Post office (pr Lenina 133; internet per hr 1.50uah;

✉ post office 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun; internet 8am-9pm; telephone centre 24hr) Besides postal services, an internet and telephone centre, there is also an ATM.

Sights

KHORTYTSYA ISLAND

The Zaporizhska Sich on Khortytsya Island was the most important cradle of Ukrainian Cossackdom, where hetman (leader) Dmytro Baida united disparate groups of Cossacks in the construction of a *sich* (fort) in 1553–54. The island was perfect: strategically located below the Dniro rapids and beyond the control of Polish or Russian authority. Any man could come to join the Cossack brotherhood, irrespective of social background, and like Galicia under self-rule in the 14th century (see p113), the *sich* is revered as a leading forerunner of an independent Ukraine.

At the height of its power the community numbered some 20,000 fighters, under the authority of one hetman. On the battlefield they were formidable opponents; off it, formidable vodka drinkers. However, there was some code of discipline, and no women were allowed on Khortytsya. Even Russian empress Catherine the Great was prohibited from setting foot on the island and was reduced to spying on it from a nearby rock. Some laughingly suggest that this, as well as the threat the Cossacks posed to Russian imperial ambitions, was why she had the *sich* destroyed in 1775.

Since 1965 the 2690-hectare island has been a reserve, although it's tough to imagine the Cossack revelry of the past with a massive bridge to the mainland and the Dniroges Dam in plain view, and nary a rapid in sight. Nevertheless, you can visit the informative **Historical Museum of Zaporizhsky Cossacks** (admission 5uah, English tours 40uah, weekdays only; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which includes painted dioramas and various Cossack weaponry and bric-a-brac excavated from the island and nearby Baida

Island. Also interesting are the photographs of the island surrounded by rapids before the dam was built.

The museum grounds sprawl across the island's rocky northern end, offering prime views of the Dniroges Dam. Scrambling around this area you will come across various Scythian ruins and burial mounds thought to be more than 3000 years old. Cossack haunts on the island include the Cossacks' jetty and the Hadyucha Peshchera (Snake Cave). Also here is the Chyorna Skala (Black Cliff), where the Kyivan Rus King Svyatoslav was reportedly killed by the Pechenegs in 972 (there's a diorama of this battle inside the museum).

In 2007 they recreated the *sich*, complete with wooden churches and about a dozen thatched-roof *khaty* (dwellings), for the epic movie *Taras Bulba*; the set may remain in place as a tourist attraction.

There's an amphitheatre on the southern portion of the island where highly entertaining horse shows and mock fights are put on periodically by Cossack descendants; check with the travel agency at the Hotel Intourist for details.

Public transport can get you to the island but not to the museum (see p234).

DNIROGES DAM

Here's a quick quiz. What's missing from the following list? The Eiffel Tower, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Empire State Building, the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal, the Alaska Highway... Perhaps the Sydney Opera House? Nope. Try again. Apparently, until 2007, when the list was refreshed, the seventh declared wonder of the modern world was Zaporizhzhya's Dniroges Dam.

At 760m – two and a half times longer than the famous Hoover Dam – the wall of the USSR's first dam certainly represented a monumental engineering feat when constructed under US supervision in 1927–32. In some ways, it's still impressive, but it's not especially tall and you have to reflect that its concrete walls, stained by years of local pollution, are really rather less appealing than the Sydney Opera House. Little known in the West, it was not considered for inclusion on the 'New Seven Wonders' list unveiled in 2007.

Sleeping

Hotel Ukraina (☎ 289 0404; www.ukraine.zp.ua; pr Lenina 162A; s/d from \$45/52, shared q per person \$24; P)

The Intourist across the street is a tough act to follow, but the Ukraina fights the good fight with OK service, attractive carpeting and details like notepads and wall-mounted reading lights. The maids do exceptional handiwork, and the bathrooms are even bigger than those in the Intourist. Ludicrously, reservations set you back \$20.

Hotel Intourist-Zaporizhzhya (☎ 330 554, 332 5564; www.intourist.com.ua; pr Lenina 135; s/d without air-con \$48/60, with air-con \$72/84; P ☎ ☎) This frog-turnd-prince might very well have replaced the Dniroges Dam as one of the world's seven wonders. Snarling babushkas have been replaced by smiling young receptionists who mete out four-star service; stale *kasha* (buckwheat) has yielded to a grand breakfast buffet; and saggy twin box-springs and peeling wallpaper have given way to firm double mattresses and lovingly hung photographs. Wi-fi is free in the lobby.

Eating & Drinking

Apart from the following, bul Shevchenka has a good assortment of restaurants. There are also some touristy eateries near the museum on Khortytsya Island, open in the warm months.

Pau Vau Pizza (☎ 220 0476; vul Tsentralna 4; mains 10-40uah) The food here exceeds any expectations you might have based on the antiseptic, family-restaurant atmosphere. Pizzas are thick and tasty, and there's a good line in Ukrainian, Russian and Georgian staples.

Potato Khata (pr Lenina 143; mains 15-25uah) This popular Kyiv-based chain reliably slakes the thirst and slays the hunger of budget travellers. There's chilli, ribs and other surprises on the menu besides potatoes.

Park Avenue (pr Lenina 87A; skovorodky 30uah) This pleasant café is famous for its scrumptious *skovorodky* (frying pans) – meat casseroles, essentially. It's in a pleasant park near one of the city's minor markets, about halfway between the Intourist and the bus station.

Mustang (☎ 334 317; pr Lenina 143; mains 50-150uah) It's a theme restaurant dedicated to the legendary WWII fighter plane, not the car. There are hundreds of black-and-white photos, model airplanes, various guns and a huge menu of overpriced food. Fondue and steaks are the house specialities.

Crow Bar (pr Lenina 135; admission 20-50uah) This club may be in the same building as the Hotel Intourist, but it's head and shoulders above

LOSE THE BOWL CUT!

The Zaporizhsky Cossacks had a bit of a Samson fetish about their locks. Fully-fledged warriors sported *oseledtsi*, a long ponytail growing from the middle of an otherwise shaved head. Trainee Cossacks weren't allowed to grow their hair and during their seven-year apprenticeship had to resign themselves to having it cut *pid makitru* – aka in a bowl cut. Tests had to be passed to finally enter the Cossack ranks. It's fun to surmise that, as they furiously rowed upstream through the treacherous Dniro rapids, the trainees' desire to be rid of such a sartorial embarrassment might have provided an extra incentive to succeed.

your ordinary hotel nightclub. We promise. It has plenty of local flavour and draws top DJs.

Getting There & Away

Zaporizhzhya-1 train station (☎ 005, pr Lenynaya 2) is at the southeastern end of pr Lenynaya. Trains trundle to Kyiv (85uah, 10 hours), Kharkiv (70uah, 4½ hours), Lviv (140uah, 20 hours), Odesa (85uah, 17 hours) and Simferopol (70uah, five hours).

Many trains going north stop in Dnipropetrovsk (25uah, 2½ hours), but you're much better off on a *marshrutka* (15uah, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes) from the bus station or from pl Lenynaya near the dam.

The **bus station** (☎ 642 657; pr Lenynaya 20) is near Zaporizhzhya-1 train station. **Autolux** (☎ 642 558) has four buses per day to Kyiv (9½ hours, 90uah). The Kyiv–Simferopol bus stops through here, and all major cities in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, such as Odesa (12 hours), are well-served.

You can buy train tickets at booths in the lobby of the Hotel Intourist.

Getting Around

Most trolleybuses and *marshrutky* run the length of pr Lenina between Zaporizhzhya-1 train station and pl Lenynaya, but you can bank on trolleybus 3.

To get to Khortytsya Island and the Cossack Museum, take public transport north up pr Lenina to pl Lenina. Walk across the wall of the Dniproges Dam, bear left (west) and left again onto the north bridge of Khortytsya Island, which goes to the museum (about 5km total walk).

Bus 50 goes up vul Pobedy (parallel to pr Lenina along the river) and crosses the more southern Preobrazhenksa bridge to Khortytsya Island, getting you within a short walk of the museum. Tell the driver to let you off at the *'muzei'*. Otherwise, take a taxi (25uah to 30uah from the centre).

Khortytsya Island is a cyclist's haven but we did not find any bikes for rent.

DONETSK ДОНЕЦЬК

☎ 062 (7-digit Nos), 0622 (6-digit Nos) / pop 1.03 million

Making international headlines only with fatal mine collapses or explosions, or when it's threatening to secede from Ukraine, the capital of the coal-rich Donbas (Donetsky Basin)

region sounds miserable. So it's a surprise to arrive in its Soviet environs to find that, despite the sci-fi sounding *terakony* (slag heaps) dotted around, it even won a Unesco award once for its relative cleanliness. Equally surprising, the people here seem friendlier and the drivers less arrogant than in Kyiv.

The secret is that, as in Dnipropetrovsk, local oligarchs have injected funds into the centre. Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, is based here and the talk of the town is the brand-new \$200 million stadium he has built for Dynamo Kyiv's main football rival, Shakhtar Donetsk.

That aside, there's almost nothing to lure the casual visitor, but if you're always wanted to visit a mine, now's your chance (see p237).

History

Donetsk was originally called Yuzovka after Welshman John Hughes, who established the first metallurgical plant here in 1872 to exploit the region's coal. In 1924 the city was rechristened Stalino, and only in 1961 did it gain its current name. In true Full Monty style, it's twinned with Sheffield in the UK (since 1956).

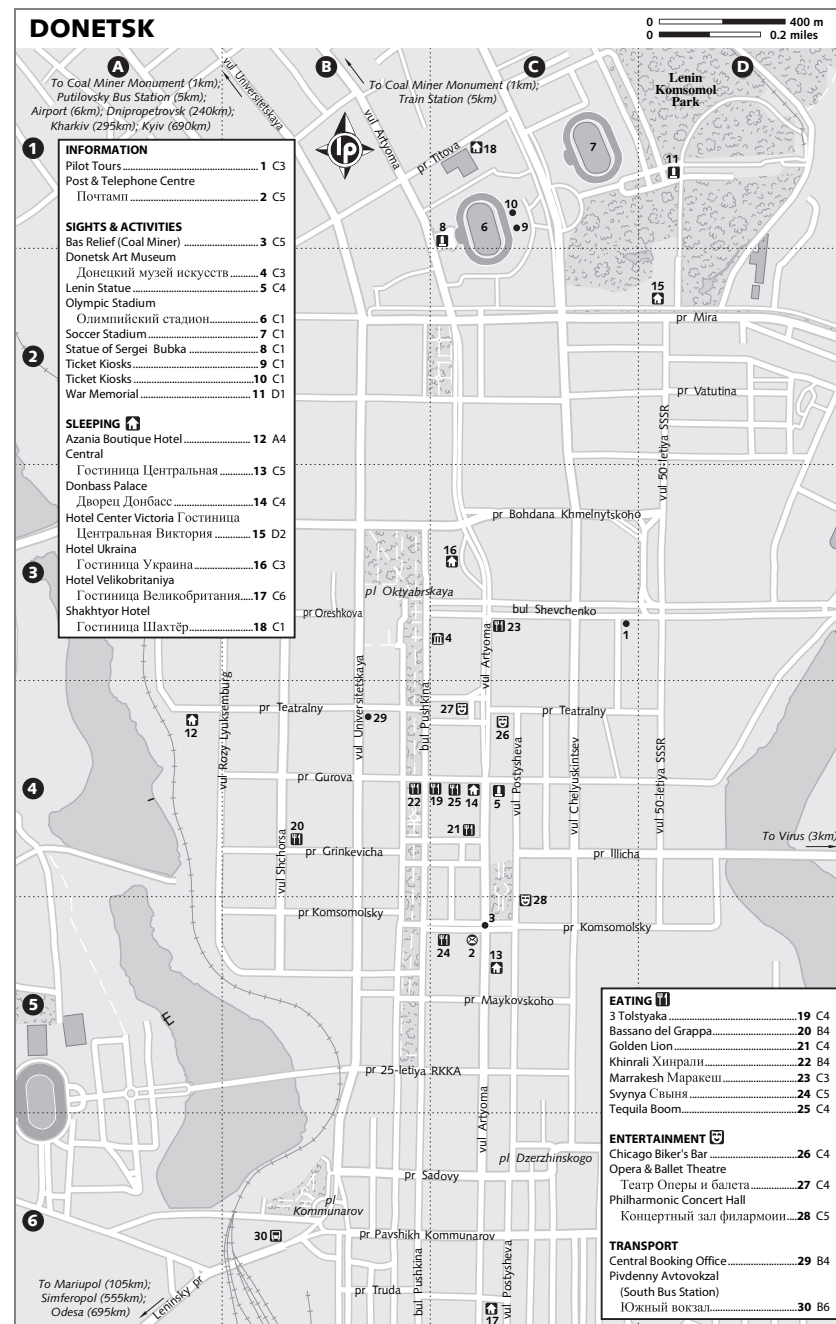
After the collapse of the USSR, Donetsk found itself in a precarious situation. Many of its 40-odd mines were unprofitable, as well as unsafe, and miners had to fight closures in the 1990s. The regional governor, Viktor Yanukovich, intervened, arranging subsidies, raising wages and saving jobs – as well as winning himself a loyal electoral base that has allowed him to remain a major player in Ukrainian politics despite his failed attempt to steal the 2004 presidential election (see p32).

Orientation & Information

Vul Artyoma is 10km long and links the train station, at its northwest end, with the centre. Central Donetsk is laid out in a Soviet grid system: restaurant row is bul Pushkina, the park-lined street running parallel (north-south) to vul Artyoma; and another block west is commercial vul Universytetskaya.

Pilot Tours (☎ 345 2117; bul Shevchenko 13A) Offers various tours and advice on visiting the Azov Sea beaches or the Soledar Salt Mine.

Post & Telephone Centre (vul Artyoma 72; internet per hr 3uah, calls per min to US/UK 1.50/2.50uah; ☎ office 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, internet & phone 24hr).



Sights & Activities

Believe it or not, the *terakony* are Donetsk's most interesting tourist attraction: 'Quite beautiful,' as one resident put it. 'They change colours with the climate, the seasons and the years.' The best place to observe these heaps o' slag is out by the new stadium in **Lenin Komsomol Park**, where chiselled socialist realist sculptures dot a sprawling **war memorial**.

Donetsk's new **soccer stadium** entertains Shakhtar Donetsk's European visitors and will host the Euro 2012 games. Domestic games are still held in the older **Olympic Stadium** (vul Artyoma 88), fronted by a tall **statue** of pole-vault great and hometown hero Sergei Bubka. Tickets to Shakhtar's domestic games can easily be purchased at the **ticket kiosks** (vul Chelyuskintsev; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) in front of Olympic Stadium for about 15uah. Tickets for European contests are harder to come by. The masses gather to watch Shakhtar's away matches on a giant screen near the **Lenin Statue** (vul Artyoma) in the centre of town.

There are some peculiar monuments glorifying coal around town, including an amazing one of an oversized miner proffering a precious black lump to the heavens. Look for it on the trolleybus ride into the centre from the train station. A similar, albeit more subtle, **bas relief** is on the underpass at the corner of vul Artyoma and pr Komsomolsky, near the Lenin Statue.

It's surprising that Donetsk lacks a world-class art museum given that it counts several billionaires among its patrons. However, the **Donetsk Art Museum** (☎ 305 3723; bul Pushkina 35; admission 3uah; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Sun) does have a large collection spanning the last three centuries, including a notable Soviet realist collection.

Sleeping

Expect to pay more in Donetsk than you would elsewhere, but it's generally worth it as Donetsk's hotels are second to none in Ukraine. Unfortunately, pickings at the budget end of the spectrum are slim. The higher-end properties include breakfast in their rates.

Hotel Velikobritaniya (☎ 305 1951; vul Postysheva 20; s/d with shared bathroom \$23/34, r with private bathroom \$50) Donetsk's budget accommodation begins and ends at this charming late-19th-century classic. Despite its unquestionable character, the location is crummy and it gets stifling hot in the summer. Trolleybus 2 gets you here, tram 1 gets you away.

Hotel Ukraina (☎ 304 4535; vul Artyoma 88; r with shared/private bathroom \$40/80) Don't be turned off by the common showers, which are huge and sparkling clean. The rooms, while nothing fancy, also fit that description. Those that lack toilets/showers at least contain sinks. It occupies two floors of a large building right in the centre.

ourpick Azania Boutique Hotel (☎ 349 3314; www.azaniahotel.com; pr Teatralny 3; ste \$100-120; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Seeing that this boutique is probably the most extraordinary hotel in the country, we can't imagine the prices will stay this low. But we can dream – preferably whilst sleeping on one of their body-swallowing California king beds. It only gets better: two flat-screen TVs in each cavernous suite, a DVD collection, kitchen, furniture worthy of a *Home & Design* cover, Jacuzzi etc. Planning your honeymoon in Donetsk? Look no further, but book well ahead of time because there are only 10 rooms.

Hotel Center Victoria (☎ 381 4700; www.victoria.ua; pr Mira 24a; s/d from \$145/210; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) If this lags behind Donbass Palace in any respect, we failed to notice. Frankly the rooms best the Palace's and are equally capacious. The location out by the new soccer stadium isn't great, but means there's plenty of spare real estate for the four tennis courts, bowling alley and luxury gym (with TVs attached to every treadmill!). The early favourite for Euro 2012.

Donbass Palace (☎ 343 4123; www.donbasspalace.com; vul Artyoma 80; r from \$400; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) The country's first five-star property when it opened in the mid-1990s, the Donbass Palace has a lot more competition of late, but it remains the number one choice among well-heeled *biznesmeny*. It boasts four superb restaurants if you're entertaining, and a casino if you're feeling lucky (well are you, punk?).

Also recommended:
Shakhtyor (☎ 381 2451; pr Titova 15; s/d from \$36/42; ☎) Unrenovated Soviet hulk by the stadium pushes boundaries of comfort; will go under the knife before Euro 2012.

Central (☎ 332 3875; www.hotel-central.com.ua; vul Artyoma 87; s/d from \$75/115; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒) Midrange corporate-orientated establishment with prime location.

Eating & Drinking

Elaborate theme restaurants – some of them extremely well done – are the

norm in Donetsk. For fine dining hit the Donbass Palace.

3 Tolstyaka (3 Fat Guys; ☎ 381 0401; pr Gurova; mains 20-30uah) The 3 Tolstyaka is enormously popular for a reason: authentic Russian food at awesome prices. Its popularity is also proof that average Donetsk denizens can't afford the gaudy prices at all those top-end restaurants.

Svynya (Pig; ☎ 345 6949; bul Pushkina 13; mains 30-50uah) It's known as an agreeable basement bar where you can hobnob with the resident Vietnamese minipig. What's less known is that the food – Russian with original touches – is exceptional.

Golden Lion (☎ 381 7676; vul Artyoma 76a; mains 30-55uah) Far from your run-of-the-mill Irish pub, and not just because it's spacious enough to hold a rugby game and is open round the clock. Here you'll also encounter 5uah Sarmat beer to go along with the standard selection of imported brew.

Bassano del Grappa (☎ 381 0858; pr Grinkevicha 8; 3-course meal 200uah) This bright Italian restaurant has a great wine list and an inviting street side patio for sipping that wine. It's a perfect spot for a three-course lunch. If you just order pasta you can escape for less than

50uah – a bargain given the quality of the food and service.

Also recommended:

Khinrali (☎ 381 7202; bul Pushkina 20A; mains 30-55uah) Good place to try meaty Georgian food.

Tequila Boom (☎ 381 7575; bul Pushkina 25; mains 30-70uah) Fajitas and margaritas are the specialties here.

Marrakesh (☎ 381 7474; vul Artyoma 127; mains 30-70uah; ☎ 11am-1.30am) Brilliantly done Moroccan restaurant.

Entertainment

Listings in Russian can be found at <http://donetsk.afisha.ua>.

Chicago Biker's Bar (☎ 345 0538; vul Artyoma 113; ☎ 10am-2am) Soviet chic to the core, it features a pellet-gun gallery, KGB prison cell-like private rooms, and beer taps on the tables. There's live music nightly and Shakhtar Donetsk games are shown on televisions embedded in oil barrels. It's part of the multifunctional Chicago nightclub and entertainment complex.

Virus (☎ 223 1550; vul Polotska 20; admission 35-75uah) A 15-minute taxi ride east of the centre is Donetsk's hottest club, with a simmering crowd dancing in multiple chambers. This is not the place to chill out.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: SYMPHONY IN A SALT MINE

The title of 'tourism officer' doesn't exactly provoke envy in the gritty Donbas region. In the 1990s the Donbas was known among foreigners for four things: mines, mafia, football and women. That odd combination – along with a sort of virtual-Soviet-museum quality – actually drew a lot of visitors, albeit visitors of various (and sometimes nefarious) stripes.

These days the mafia has moved to Kyiv, the marriage agencies have moved to Southern Ukraine, and smiling locals flush with cash belie illusions of Sovietisation. That leaves mines and football. While the latter has been an enormous success (witness the rise of Shakhtar Donetsk), efforts to turn mines into tourist attractions have failed utterly. Even if the tourist masses did want to come, how to keep the mine from collapsing on their heads?

In stepped somebody with a novel concept: turn a salt mine into a symphony hall. The first concert of the Donbas Symphony Orchestra in the mammoth chamber of the **Soledar Salt Mine** took place in 2004. Some 350 people ventured 288m under the earth to witness the spectacle. Everybody had a good time, nobody was killed and the acoustics were lauded.

Since then the October concert has become an annual tradition, but getting tickets is difficult as it has become one of Ukraine's big social events. Try asking at the Donbass Palace Hotel (opposite). The infrequency of the concerts is due to the remoteness of the location and logistical problems associated with transporting 350 audience members and an orchestra 60 storeys underground in a 20-person elevator.

However, you can visit the **mine** (☎ 8-062 744 2001; admission 25uah; ☎ Wed-Sun 10am-3pm), 13km from Artemivsk (Artemovsk), all year round. From Artemivsk take a taxi or a 'Soledar' *marshrutka* from the bus station (10uah, 35 minutes) and ask for the *shakhta* (mine). There are plenty of trains from Donetsk to Artemivsk. Going with a tour agency from Donetsk (p234) makes things easier but costs a couple hundred dollars.

Culture vultures can catch Swan Lake in its original language at the Donetsk **Opera & Ballet Theatre** (☎ 922 348; vul Artyoma 82; tickets from 15uah) or soak up classical sounds at the **Philharmonic Concert Hall** (☎ 304 5031; bul Postysheva; tickets from 15uah).

Getting There & Away

Donbassaero (www.donbass.aero) flies to **Donetsk airport** (☎ 344 7322; http://airport.dn.ua) from Kyiv, Moscow, Athens and a host of other international destinations. Turkish Airlines, Austrian Airlines and Aerosvit also serve Donetsk (contact details on p252).

Trains from the **train station** (☎ 319 0005; pl Pryvokzalno) include two overnight services to Kyiv (125uah, 12 hours) and one to Odesa (80uah) via Zaporizhzhya (45uah). A fast train to Dnipropetrovsk departs daily at 5.32pm (31uah, 4½ hours), or there are several slower trains. To Kharkiv there's one 'fast *elektrychka*' (38uah, 5½ hours) and about six slower trains.

Catch buses to points north and west at the **Putilovsky bus station** (☎ 312 0509; vul Vzletnaya 1) north of the centre.

To head toward Crimea, Odesa and the Azov Sea use the more centrally located **Pivdenniy Avtovokzal** (☎ 665 119; South bus station; pl Kommunarov).

Handle all your ticketing needs at the **central booking office** (vul Universytetskaya 35; ☎ 7am-7pm), where there's an advance train-ticket window and Donbassaero and Kiy Avia plane-ticket booths.

Getting Around

The airport is about 8km north of the centre, about 1km beyond Putilovsky bus station. Both are accessible by trolleybus 9 or 10 heading up vul Universytetskaya.

A little further south is the train station, a straight shunt down one-way vul Artyoma (or up opposite-direction vul Universytetskaya) on trolleybus 2 or *marshrutka* 72.