

# Київ Київ



Your first impression of Kyiv is bound to be one of surprise. This cradle of all that is Russian, this receptacle of 'New Ukrainian' wealth, this paradise of crooked politicians and gangsters is so...beautiful. Especially if you arrive in the summer, Kyiv will entice you the moment you gaze upon its gold domes lighting up the leafy banks of the Dnipro.

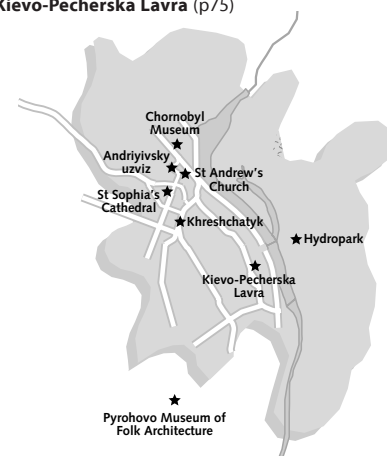
Kyiv's original settlers surely chose this spot 1500 years ago because of its natural beauty. Modern-day Kyiv is part Kyivan Rus, part Soviet, part Ukrainian-nationalist and part capitalist mayhem. Turn-of-the-20th-century architecture mixes with Soviet monumentalism and flashy office buildings; and statues glorify characters as diverse as Lesi Ukrainka, Lenin and Lobanovsky.

Of course there is a tinge of truth to those gangster stereotypes, as anybody who's anybody in the often shady world of Ukrainian business maintains a private apartment in the capital. Aggressive drivers and late-model BMWs are the norm. Smiles can seem in short supply.

But the churches and trees and architecture and parks and history have a way of making up for all that. By all means do the typical tourist stuff: check out the mummified monks of the Lavra or visit the charming street of Andriivsky uzviz. But also leave time to join the ever-present local crowds simply drinking in the atmosphere. Wander through hilltop parkland overlooking the Dnipro River and Soviet-built suburbs on the far bank. Or, in summer, set out your towel on the city beaches of Hydropark. Stroll along the main street of Khreshchatyk, eat well, have a beer, go clubbing – that's when this whirlwind of a city really sweeps you off your feet.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- See mummified monks by candlelight in the **Kievo-Pecherska Lavra** (p75)
- Walk up **Andriivsky uzviz** in the shadow of the magnificent **St Andrew's Church** (p73)
- Inspect **St Sophia's Cathedral** (p70) and any other major church that takes your fancy
- Visit the **Chornobyl Museum** (p75) or even the damaged **reactor** (p95) itself
- Take a stroll along **Khreshchatyk** (p67) and the leafy parks lining the river
- Join locals in pursuit of a dizzying array of activities in inimitable **Hydropark** (p81)
- Sample vodka, *salo* and other hearty Ukrainian dishes in the city's many excellent **restaurants** (p86)
- Enjoy a day in the 'countryside' at the excellent **Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture** (p79)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: (8-)044

■ POPULATION: 5.6 MILLION

■ HIGHEST POINT: 179M

## HISTORY

Legend has it that three Slavic brothers and their sister founded Kyiv. The eldest, Ky, gave the city its name. The names of brothers Shchek, Khoriv and sister Lybid now appear in its topography. An iconic statue of the four siblings – the Foundation of Kyiv Monument (Map p66) – stands on the banks of the Dnipro River.

Four hundred years later the city really started to prosper, after Vikings from Novgorod took control. In 879 Scandinavian King Oleh had sent two emissaries, Askold and Dir, to Kyiv to strike a deal with the ruling Magyars. But, wanting greater control himself, Oleh journeyed to Kyiv in 882, dispatched his emissaries and declared himself ruler. This was the beginning of Kyivan Rus ('Rus' being the Slavic name for the red-haired Scandinavians). The city thrived on river trade, sending furs, honey and slaves to pay for luxury goods from Constantinople. Within 100 years its empire stretched from the Volga to the Danube and to Novgorod.

In 989 Kyivan ruler Volodymyr decided to forge a closer alliance with Constantinople, marrying the emperor's daughter and adopting Orthodox Christianity. Kyiv's pagan idols were destroyed and its people driven into the Dnipro for a mass baptism – an event still commemorated during Epiphany (see p83).

Under Volodymyr's son, Yaroslav the Wise (1017–54), Kyiv became a cultural and political centre in the Byzantine mould. St Sophia's Cathedral (p70) was built to proclaim the glory of both God and city. However, by the 12th century, Kyiv's economic prowess had begun to wane, with power shifting successively to several breakaway principalities.

In 1240 Mongol raiders sacked Kyiv. Citizens fled or took refuge wherever they could, including the roof of the Desyatynna Church (see p74), which collapsed under the weight.

The city shrank to the riverside district of Podil, which remained its centre for centuries. Only when Ukraine formally passed into Russian hands at the end of the 18th century did Kyiv again grow in importance, as tsarist policies encouraged Russian immigration. The city went through an enormous boom at the turn of the 20th century because of an upsurge in nearby sugar milling. Many new mansions were erected at this time, including the remarkable House of Chimera (p80).

During the chaos following the Bolshevik Revolution, Kyiv was the site of frequent battles between Red and White Ukrainian forces. Acclaimed author Mikhail Bulgakov captured the era's uncertainty in his first novel, *The White Guard*. The home in which he wrote this book is now a museum (see p73).

In August 1941, German troops captured Kyiv and more than half a million Soviet soldiers were caught or killed. The entire city suffered terribly. Germans massacred about 100,000 at Babyn Yar (see p79) and 80% of the city's inhabitants were homeless by the time the Red Army retook Kyiv on 6 November 1943.

The post-war years saw rapid industrialisation and the construction of unsightly suburbs. During the late 1980s nationalistic and democratic movements from western Ukraine began to catch on in the capital. Throughout the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, Kyiv and its young population increasingly became a base of opposition politics. During the Orange Revolution of 2004, activists from around Ukraine poured into the capital to demonstrate on maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence square) and outside the parliament building.

## ORIENTATION

Kyiv's modern centre and old city are on the Dnipro River's west bank – called the 'right bank' because it's on the right as you travel down the river. If you were to sail downstream into Kyiv from the north, your first port of call on the right bank would be Podil, which sits below the rest of the city on the river plain. Continuing south, the woody, park-covered hills of the Pechersk district rise up from the river, extending south to Kyiv's main attraction, the Kievo-Pecherska Lavra.

The commercial heart of modern-day Kyiv – vul Khreshchatyk and maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence square) – is above Podil and the river, west of Pechersk's hills. The city's ancient centre, located around Zoloti Vorota and St Sophia's Cathedral, is perched on a long hill overlooking, and running parallel to, vul Khreshchatyk.

Kyiv's 'left bank' and the right-bank suburbs are endless sprawls of grey housing blocks. Between the city's left and right banks, in the middle of the Dnipro, there's a cluster of islands with beaches and parkland.

## Maps

All the underground malls have well-stocked map kiosks. Street plans of Kyiv can also be found at bookshops, and in magazine kiosks along vul Khreshchatyk and elsewhere. The handy *Kyiv Business Directory* comes with an excellent free map.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Babuin** (see p89) Popular boho bar-restaurant with a room full of second-hand English books for sale or exchange.

**Bukva** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 8197; Globus mall; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📄 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) Well stocked with English books, maps and travel guides.

**Dintner** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 248 4839; prov Muzeyny 2V; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; 📄 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) English-language book specialist, hidden through an archway on prov Muzeyny.

### Cultural Centres

The following all have extensive book libraries and DVDs, and often stage cultural events.

**American Library** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 417 3113; vul Voloska 8/5; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon & Fri, 2-5pm Tue & Thu, 2-8pm Wed; 📄 Kontraktova pl)

**British Council** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 5600; www.britishcouncil.org/ukraine; vul Skovorody 4/12; admission 5uah; ☎ 11am-7.30pm Tue-Thu, 11am-6pm Fri, 11am-5pm Sat; 📄 Kontraktova pl)

**French Cultural Centre** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 529 4157; www.ifu.com.ua; vul Horkoho 104; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat; 📄 Palats Ukraina)

**Goethe Institute** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 496 9785; www.goethe.de/ukraine; vul Voloska 12/4; admission free;

☎ 11am-3pm Tue, 3-7pm Wed & Thu, 3-8pm Fri, noon-5pm Sat; 📄 Kontraktova pl)

### Internet Access

See the Post section (p66) for more options.

**Bunker Computer Club** (Map pp68-9; vul Artema 11A; per hr 7uah) Space-age facility with cosy chairs and drinks.

**Orbita Computer Club** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 1693; 2nd fl, vul Khreshchatyk 29; per hr 6uah; ☎ 8am-1am; 📄 Teatralna)

**Oscar Internet Centre** (Map pp68-9; 2nd fl, vul Khreshchatyk 48; per hr 10uah; ☎ 24hr; 📄 Teatralna) Infuriatingly, charges 17uah for Skype (25uah with webcam). VOIP calls to Europe and the US cost 0.85uah per minute.

### Internet Resources

**Go2Kiev** (www.go2kiev.com) Usually up-to-date site with events listings and practical information for visitors.

### Medical Services

**American Medical Center** (Map p66; ☎ emergency hotline 907 600; http://amcenters.com; vul Berdychivska 1; ☎ 24hr; 📄 Lukyianivska) Western-run medical centre with English-speaking doctors.

**Gormonalnykh Preparatory** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 4035; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 36A; ☎ 8am-9pm; 📄 Universtyet) English-speaking pharmacist.

### Money

Both ATMs and exchange booths signposted 'обмін валют' (*obmin valyut*) are ubiquitous. Rates offered by exchange booths in hotels are not necessarily worse. Larger banks will cash travellers cheques and give cash advances on credit cards. See p247 for advice on using

## KYIV IN...

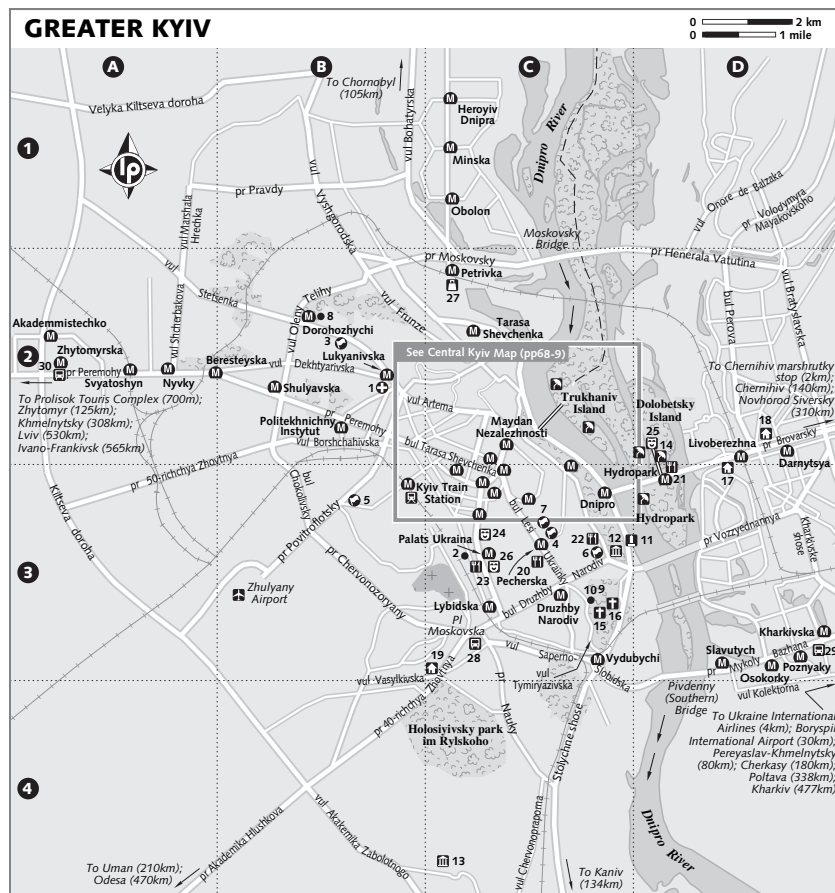
### Two days

Stroll down the main boulevard, vul Khreshchatyk, from **Bessarabsky Rynok** (market; p89) to **maydan Nezalezhnosti** (p67). Head up to **Zoloti Vorota** (p80) for a drink on the terrace before moving on to **St Sophia's Cathedral** (p70) and **St Michael's Monastery** (p73). Catch the funicular down to **Podil** (p74), visit the **Chornobyl Museum** (p75) and then walk up **Andriyivsky uzviz** (p73). Choose a good **Ukrainian restaurant** (p86) for dinner.

Arrive early on the second day at the **Lavra** (p75), before visiting **Rodina Mat** and the **Museum of the Great Patriotic War** (p78). Return to the centre on Kyiv's astonishingly deep **metro** (p94). Wander around Shevchenko Park and sample authentic Ukrainian *blyny* (crêpes) from the **O'Panasy blyny stand** (p87). Check out the **Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts** (p80) then rest up before hitting a few **bars** (p89) and **clubs** (p90).

### Four days

Follow the two-day itinerary and on the third day visit the **Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture** (p79). Check out **Babyn Yar** (p79) and a few more **museums** (p80). For some local flavour in summer, head to **Hydropark** (p81).



ATMs and credit cards. For a reliable, centrally located bank try **Raffaisen Bank Aval** (Map pp68-9; vul Khreshchatyk 46a; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; 🏠 Teatralna).

## Post

**Central post office** (Map pp68-9; vul Khreshchatyk 22; internet per hr 12uah; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, internet 24hr; 🏠 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The entrance is on maydan Nezalezhnosti.

**DHL International** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 2600; www.dhl.com.ua; vul Chervonoarmiyska 1; 🏠 Pl Lva Tolstoho)

## Telephone

Internet cafés (see p65) often offer VOIP calls or Skype.

**Central telephone centre** (Map pp68-9; vul Khreshchatyk 22; ☎ 24hr; 🏠 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) You can make international calls here or buy phonecards.

## Tourist Information

Kyiv lacks a tourist office but many hotels have an information bureau.

## Travel Agencies

**Chervona Ruta** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 293 6909; www.ruta-cruise.com; vul Lyuteranska 24; 🏠 Khreshchatyk) This is your only port of call if you're interested in Dnipro River and Black Sea cruises. The standard cruise is one week along the Kyiv-Sevastopol-Odesa route.

**New Logic** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 206 2200; www.newlogic.com.ua; Leonardo Business Center, vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 17; 🏠 Teatralna) Has great deals on Chernobyl

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Pyrhovo Museum of Folk Architecture	13 C4
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tours for individual tourists. English speakers should contact Olga Filimonova (filimonova@newlogic.com.ua). **Sam** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 238 6951; www.sam.ua; vul Ivana Franka 40B; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun; 🏠 Universytet) The leading inbound operator organises sightseeing excursions, hotel bookings and trips to Chernihiv, Chernobyl and Uman.

**SoloEast Travel** (☎ /fax 985 3115, 8-050 381 8656; www.tourkiev.com) Ukrainian-husband-and-Canadian-wife team offering tickets, apartments and tours, including to Chernobyl. Probably the most helpful, friendly travel service in Kyiv, with B & B accommodation just outside the city.

**Ukrainian Hostel Association** (☎ 331 0260; www.hhostels.com.ua) Backpackers should give Roman, the director, a call for advice. He speaks perfect English and can arrange various tours.

## SIGHTS

Some of Kyiv's main attractions are half-day adventures and not always terribly central. So, rather than plunging right in, it's highly recommended you warm up with an initial stroll. The walking tour on p81 provides a quick introduction to the city. Architecture buffs should pick up *The Streets of Kiev* booklet (90uah) at any of the main sights. It explores Kyiv's architectural history through riveting walking tours of the city centre's six major neighbourhoods.

## Maydan Nezalezhnosti

Fountain-filled maydan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square; Map pp68-9) is the city's most popular meeting place. This was

made plain on worldwide TV at the end of 2004 when the square became ground zero for Ukraine's Orange Revolution (p32) and makeshift tent city.

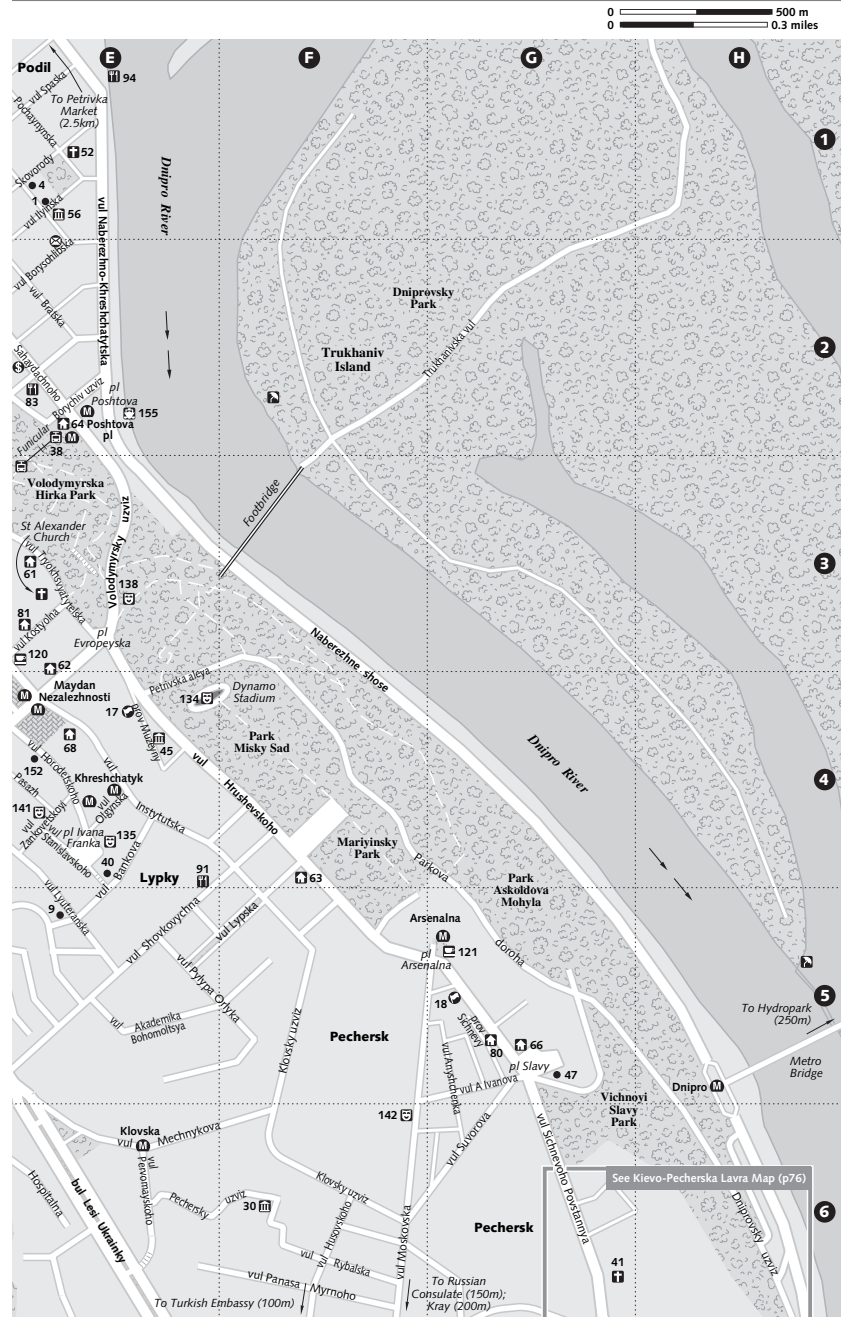
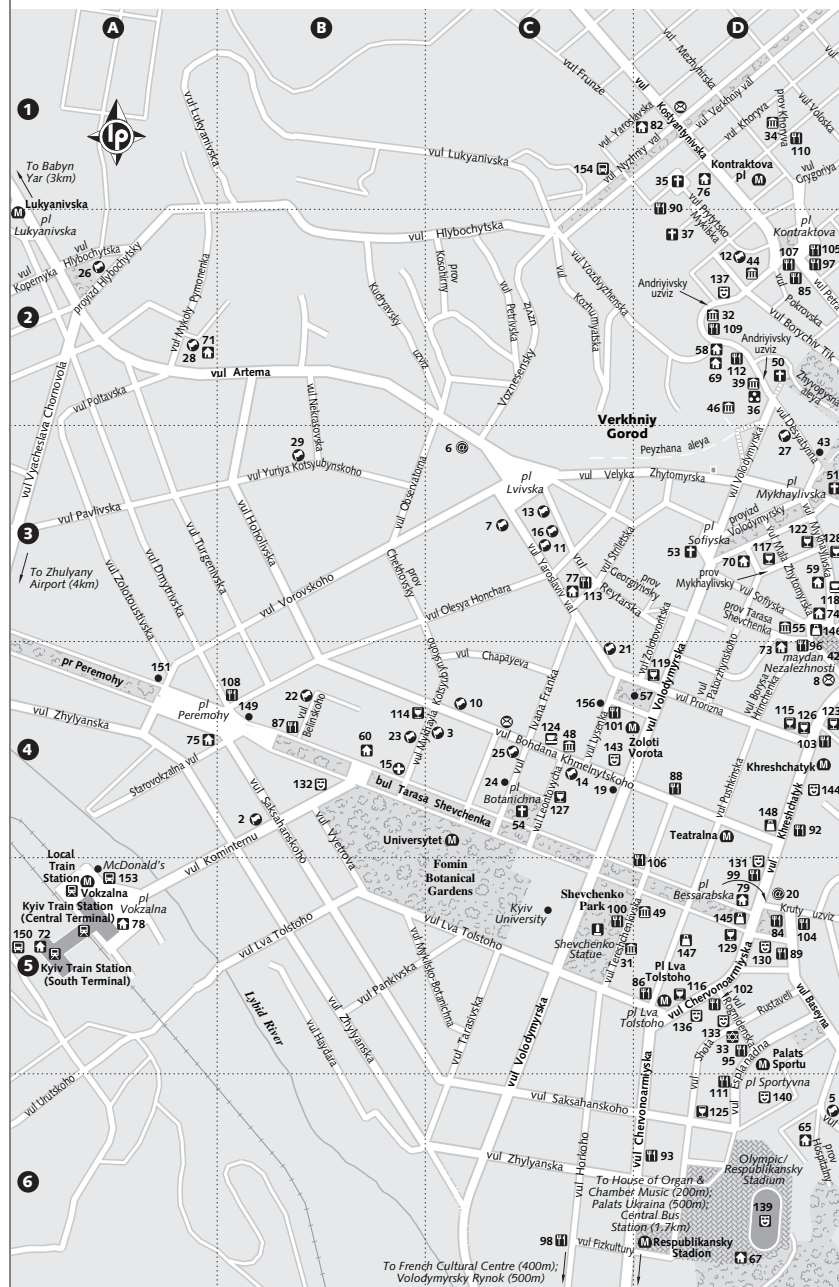
The square has held protests since the Orange Revolution and will probably see many more. But 'Maydan' does not require political strife to affirm its place as Kyiv's loudly thumping heart. All streets in the centre seem to spill into maydan Nezalezhnosti, and with them spills a cross-section of Kyiv life: vendors selling food and souvenirs, teenagers carousing under the watchful gaze of winged angel statues, skate rats and snake charmers, lovers and bums.

Maydan Nezalezhnosti lies on **vul Khreshchatyk**, Kyiv's broad, 1.5km-long main street. During WWII the retreating Soviet army mined the buildings here, turning them into deadly booby traps for any German soldiers setting foot inside. Most places exploded or caught fire, which is why the rebuilt boulevard is in such an imposing Stalinist style.

Khreshchatyk is at its best on weekends, when it's closed to traffic and becomes a giant pedestrian zone. Getting gussied up and strolling Khreshchatyk is Kyivans' number-one pastime. To truly get a feel for the city you should get out and join them for a few laps, pausing occasionally at one of the street-side cafés lining the boulevard.

Maydan and both ends of Khreshchatyk (pl Bessarabska to the south and pl Evropeyska to the north) host frequent free

### CENTRAL KYIV



## CENTRAL KYIV (pp68-9)

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concerts in the summer, often involving big Ukrainian bands and sometimes big Western acts (Elton John played a free concert when we were there).

## St Sophia's Cathedral

The interior is the most astounding aspect of Kyiv's oldest standing church, **St Sophia's Cathedral** (Sofiysky Sobor; Map pp68-9 ☎ 278 2083; pl Sofiyska; grounds 2uah, cathedral 22uah, bell tower 5uah; ☎ grounds 9am-7pm daily, cathedral 10am-6pm Thu-Tue,

10am-5pm Wed). Many of the mosaics and frescoes are original, dating back to 1017-31, when the cathedral was built to celebrate Prince Yaroslav's victory in protecting Kyiv from the Pechenegs, tribal raiders.

While equally attractive, the building's gold domes and 76m-tall wedding-cake bell tower are 18th-century baroque additions.

Named after the great Hagia Sofia (Holy Wisdom) Cathedral in Istanbul, St Sophia's Byzantine architecture announced the new

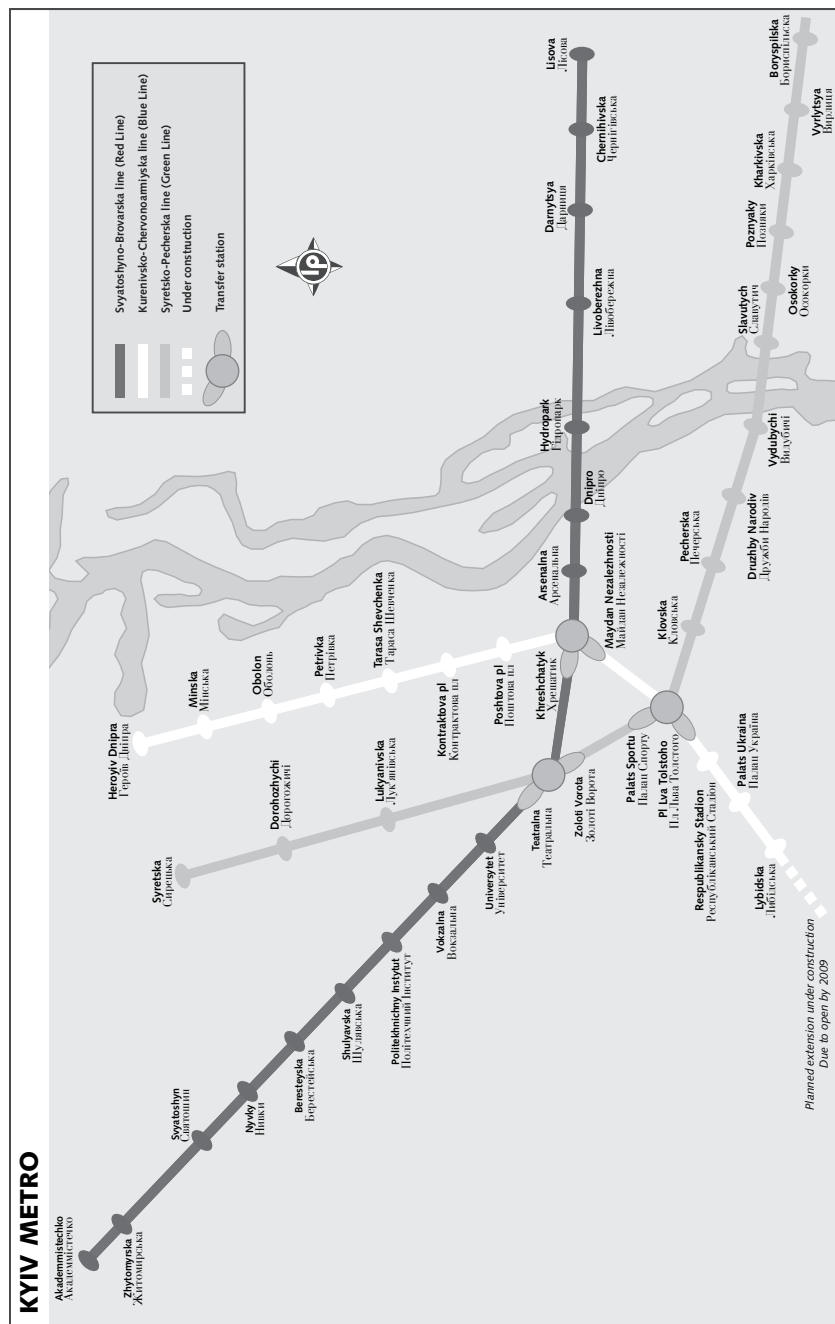
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religious and political authority of Kyiv. It was a centre of learning and culture, housing the first school and library in Kyivan Rus. Adjacent to the Royal Palace, it was also where coronations and other royal ceremonies were staged, treaties signed and foreign dignitaries received. Prince Yaroslav himself is buried here.

Each mosaic and fresco had its allotted position according to Byzantine decorative schemes, turning the church into a giant

three-dimensional symbol of the Orthodox world order. There are explanations in English of individual mosaics, but the one that immediately strikes you is the 6m-high **Virgin Orans** dominating the central apse. The Virgin Orans is a peculiarly Orthodox concept of the Virgin as a symbol of the earthly church interceding for the salvation of humanity. Having survived this long, this particular Orans is now thought indestructible by Orthodox believers. (Unesco was slightly less certain,



adding the cathedral to its protective World Heritage List in 1990.)

Less obvious, but worth seeking out, are fragments in the central nave and the north stairwell of two group portraits of Yaroslav and family. The prince's tomb is found on the ground floor, in the far left corner from the main entrance.

Visitors need to pay to enter the grounds, before heading to the ticket booth inside the entrance to buy a joint ticket to the cathedral, refectory, consistory and museum. Only the cathedral is worth visiting.

In front of the cathedral complex on pl Sofiyska is a statue of Cossack hero Bohdan Khmelnytsky. Just before the bell tower lies the ornate tomb of Kyiv Patriarch Volodymyr Romanyuk. Religious disputes prevented him from being buried within the complex (see p40).

### St Michael's & Around

Looking from St Sophia's past the Bohdan Khmelnytsky statue it's impossible to ignore the gold-domed blue church at the other end of proyzid Volodymyrska. This is **St Michael's Gold-Domed Monastery** (Mykhaylivska Zolotoverkhyi Monastery; Map pp68-9; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm), named after Kyiv's patron saint. As the impossibly shiny cupolas imply, this is a fresh (2001) copy of the original St Michael's (1108), which was torn down by the Soviets in 1937.

The church's fascinating history is explained in great detail (in Ukrainian and English placards) in a **museum** (☎ 278 6268; 5uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, ticket office 10am-5pm) located in the monastery's bell tower. The museum also explains the sad history of the neighbouring Tryokhsvyatytska Church, destroyed by the Soviets in 1934. They then added insult to injury by building the gargantuan **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (Map pp68-9; pl Mykhaylivska 1) on the site.

Left of the St Michael's entrance is a moving **monument to the victims of the great famine** (Map pp68-9; pl Mykhaylivska). English placards above the monument tell the dark story of Ukraine's holodomor (see p30 for more information).

Heading around the left of the church to the rear, you'll find the quaint **funicular** (Map pp68-9; 50 kopecks; ☎ 6.30am-11pm) that runs down a steep hillside to the river terminal in the mercantile district of Podil. Although in the summer trees partially obscure your view, this is still the most fun public-transport ride in town.

### Andriyivsky Uzviz

It says a lot for **Andriyivsky uzviz** (Andrew's Descent; Map pp68-9) that it has retained its charm despite the souvenir stalls overflowing on its cobblestones. Historically this curving incline linked the high ground of the administrative centre, or Upper Town, to Podil. Nowadays it's frequented by purveyors of Ukrainian crafts, Soviet memorabilia, Osama bin Laden *matryoshky* (stacking dolls), Yuri Gagarin T-shirts and the occasional stunning photo of Kyiv. Yet the quaint houses and crooked pavements still give the place plenty of atmosphere.

The street is named after Kyiv's first Christian preacher, Andriy, who is said to have climbed the hill here, affixed a cross to its summit and returned via this path. That blue, beautiful piece of baroque dominating the view as you walk up 'the *uzviz*' is **St Andrew's Church** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 278 5861; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Thu-Tue). Built in 1754 by Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, who also designed the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, this is a magnificent interpretation of the traditional Ukrainian five-domed, cross-shaped church. Entry to the rich interior, where English placards explain the history of the church, is free during frequent services and 6uah at other times.

There are diversions galore along Andriyivsky uzviz, including a few wonderful cafés, restaurants, galleries, craft shops and museums. At the foot of the *uzviz*, the individual histories of the descent's buildings are laid out in the **Museum of One Street** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 0398; Andriyivsky uzviz 2B; admission 10uah; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Sun). The sheer jumble-sale eclecticism of the collection – showcasing the lives of dressmakers, soldiers, a rabbi and more – exudes bags of charm.

A little way up on the left, the early home of the much-loved author of *The Master and Margarita* has become the memorable **Bulgakov Museum** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 3188; Andriyivsky uzviz 13; admission 5uah, English guide 20uah; ☎ 10am-4pm Thu-Tue). Mikhail Bulgakov lived here long before writing it, between 1906 and 1919 but this building was the model for the Turbin family home in *The White Guard*, his first full-length novel. You may want to take a guide to explain who's who in the family photos. A restaurant just down the street has a bolder reference to *The Master and Margarita* with the figure of a smug, fat black cat – the devil's mischievous sidekick, Behemoth – adorning its façade.

**KURKOV'S KYIV** Sarah Johnstone

Andrey Kurkov is author of cult classic *Death and the Penguin* (1996) and a long-term resident of Kyiv. *The President's Last Love* (2004) is the latest of his novels translated into English.

**When you're away from Kyiv, what do you miss?** Most of all I miss the hill-side street of Andriyivsky spusk (Andriyivsky uzviz, p73). A friend of mine owns some nice art galleries there. My favourite is Gallery-36 (p80). It's even mentioned in two of my books.

**Ah yes, Andriyivsky uzviz. Are you with those who prefer to walk up it or those who walk down?** I usually walk down to Podil and then back up the *spusk*. But the word *spusk* means 'descent' or 'going down'. If you're being really lazy you can always walk down, then catch the funicular up to St Michael's Monastery.

**Where do you go to clear writer's block?** Usually I head for the cosy cellar-café Kvinta on vul Velyka Zhytomyrska, 30m from the corner of vul Volodymyrska. It has the steepest steps down. When the weather's good I also stroll along Zhyvopysna Aleya, on the edge of the Upper Town overlooking Podil, the former Jewish part of the city.

**Misha the penguin, your most famous character, is given away by Kyiv Zoo. Worth seeing, this zoo?** You know, Kyiv Zoo only got its first penguins four years ago! Nowadays it's a good place to take my three kids. There's an open corner where children can feed pigs, goats and other animals.

**And where would you take a fellow writer for a bite to eat?** To Hydropark (p81), the island in the Dnipro River. Of all the places to eat there, my favourite is Jungle Cat. It serves Georgian food almost on the beach, overlooking the Lavra on the other bank. It's beautiful in the evening. Actually, it's open all winter and they have outdoor tables until the end of October. I once took my friend, a writer from Finland, there. It was December, and we swam a bit and then drank some cognac in Jungle Cat.

About three-quarters of the way up on the left, just before you get to St Andrew's Church, is **Zhyvopysna aleya** (Artists' Alley), which turns into a giant outdoor art gallery on weekends. We can't say much for the art (anyone for an air-brushed portrait of a semi-clad vixen in front of St Andrew's Cathedral?), but the leafy path leading southeast from here to Volodymyrska Hirka Park makes for a pleasant walk or jog.

Continuing up Andriyivsky uzviz past St Andrew's Church, look for a dense cluster of vendors selling Dynamo Kyiv and other sports paraphernalia on the right. The fenced-off archaeological site behind them covers the foundations of the **Desyatynna Church ruins**. Prince Volodymyr ordered the church built in 989 and devoted 10% of his income to it, hence the name (*desyatyn* means 'one-tenth'). The church collapsed under the weight of the people who took refuge on its roof during the Mongol sacking of Kyiv in 1240. Today the Moscow and Kyiv patriarchates of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are fighting over the fate of the site – the latter wants to rebuild the church.

The huge Stalinist building behind that, with a wonderful view of Podil and Kyiv's

northern suburbs, is the **National Museum of Ukrainian History** (☎ 278 2924; vul Volodymyrska 2, ☹ 10am-5pm Thu-Tue). It has exhibits of archaeological and recent historical interest, including books and currencies.

**Podil**

The funicular and Andriyivsky uzviz both lead down to the riverside mercantile quarter of **Podil** (Map pp68-9). An appealing grid of streets lined with quaint lanterns and eclectic turn-of-the-20th-century buildings, it's the antidote to all those Soviet façades that dominate vul Khreshchatyk. Dating back to the earliest settlements, the area grew quickly around the port. Podil was last rebuilt in 1811 after a devastating fire and emerged largely unscathed from WWII. Today it's a buzzing restaurant district.

Church lovers will find several attractive and historic specimens in Podil. Right on the river is **St Nicholas Naberezhny** (vul Pochaynynska 4), dedicated to Nicholas Naberezhny (Nicholas by the River), the patron saint of sailors and others journeying along the river to do business.

**Florivsky Monastery** (vul Prytytsko Mykilska) is a 15th-century women's convent that defi-

antly remained open during the communist era. Pass through the bell tower to the grounds, which contain several attractive churches; there are great views from here of St Andrew's Church. Dress appropriately to enter the grounds.

The nearby **Church of Mykola Prytytsko** (Map pp68-9; vul Prytytsko Mykilska) survived the 1811 fire that destroyed much of Podil. This 1631 church is the oldest structure in the district and is surrounded by several pastel-coloured brick buildings exhibiting the eclectic style in vogue in Kyiv at the end of the 19th century.

**CHORNOBYL MUSEUM**

It's hard to convey the full horror of the world's worst nuclear accident, but the **Chornobyl Museum** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 470 5422; prov Khoryva 1; admission 5uah, Ukrainian/English tours 10/50uah; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed last Mon of month) makes a valiant attempt. Displaying the identity cards and photos of those killed in the aftermath of the explosion of Chornobyl power plant reactor No 4, on 26 April 1986, it's a shrine to their heroism. The photos of the area afterwards and graphs of radiation contamination stand as a terrible reminder and stark warning: 'Never again'.

The exhibits are mainly in Russian and Ukrainian but there's plenty here of interest for English speakers, including several videos, distressing photos of the sorts of deformities – in animals and humans – the accident caused, and a few jarred specimens of mutant animals such as an eight-legged baby pig. Front pages of the *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* from the days immediately following the accident are on display, and the largest hall contains poignant anti-nuclear posters sent in by artists from around the world on the 20th anniversary of the accident.

The signs above the stairs as you enter represent the 'ghost' cities evacuated from the Chornobyl area in the wake of the disaster. If you wish to see for yourself, it's possible to take a tour to the Chornobyl exclusion zone (see p95).

**The Lavra**

Tourists and Orthodox pilgrims alike flock to the **Kievo-Pecherska Lavra** (Map p76; Caves Monastery; ☎ 290 3071; www.lavra.kiev.ua; vul Sichnevoho Povstannya 21; admission upper lavra 10uah, lower lavra free; ☹ upper lavra 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-Mar, lower lavra sunrise-sunset, caves 8.30am-4.30pm). It's easy to see why

the tourists come. Set on 28 hectares of grassy hills above the Dnipro River, the monastery's tight cluster of gold-domed churches is a feast for the eyes, the hoard of Scythian gold rivals that of the Hermitage in St Petersburg, and the underground labyrinths lined with mummified monks are exotic and intriguing.

For pilgrims the rationale is much simpler. To them, this is the holiest ground in the country.

A *lavra* is a senior monastery, while *pecherska* means 'of the caves'. The Greek St Antony founded this *lavra* in 1051, after Orthodoxy was adopted as Kyivan Rus' official religion. He and his follower Feodosiy progressively dug out a series of caves, where they and other reclusive monks worshipped, studied and lived. When they died their bodies were naturally preserved, without embalming, by the caves' cool temperature and dry atmosphere. The mummies survive even today, confirmation for believers that these were true holy men.

The monastery prospered above ground as well. The Dormition Cathedral was built from 1073 to 1089 as Kyiv's second great Byzantine-inspired church, and the monastery became Kyivan Rus' intellectual centre, producing chronicles and icons and training builders and artists.

Wrecked by the Tatars in 1240, the Lavra went through a series of revivals and disastrous fires before being mostly rebuilt, with its prevailing baroque influences, in the 18th century. It was made a museum in 1926, but partly returned to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarch) in 1988.

The complex is divided into the upper *lavra* (owned by the government) and the lower *lavra* (which belongs to the church and contains the caves).

**VISITING THE LAVRA**

As this is the city's single most fascinating and extensive tourist site, you will need at least half a day to get a decent introduction. Try to avoid the Lavra on weekends, when it gets extremely busy. If you must go then, visit early and head for the caves first.

Entrance to the lower *lavra* and the caves is free of charge. Entrance to the upper *lavra* is free from 6am to 9am, and for a couple of hours after closing (until sunset). Fees are also charged at the main entrance to the upper *lavra* for still (12uah) and video (20uah) photography.



Admission to the upper *lavra* allows access to the churches, but several museums on site levy additional fees. For a list of those worth visiting, see opposite. Unless you have a burning interest in a particular subject, such as Ukrainian books or Soviet film, you can forget the other museums.

The **excursion bureau** (☎ 280 3071; www.kp-lavra.jev.ua in Ukrainian), just to the left past the main entrance to the upper *lavra*, sells two-hour guided tours in various languages (180uah per tour). Book in advance during peak periods. The excursion bureau also runs regularly scheduled group tours in Russian and/or Ukrainian every 30 minutes (16uah per person).

To enter the caves, women must wear a headscarf and either a skirt that extends

below their knees or, at a pinch, trousers. (Trousers are officially forbidden but nowadays a blind eye is frequently turned.) Men are obliged to remove their hats, and wearing shorts and T-shirts is forbidden. Men and women will also feel more comfortable donning scarves and doffing hats in the monastery's churches.

#### UPPER LAVRA

The main entrance to the upper *lavra* is through the striking **Trinity Gate Church** (Troitska Nadbramna Tserkva), a rather well-preserved piece of early-12th-century Rus architecture. Rebuilt in the 18th century, it once doubled as a watchtower and as part of the monastery fortifications. It's well worth going inside to

INFORMATION		SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Excursion Bureau Екскурсійне бюро.....	1 B2	Bell Tower of Farther Caves Дзвіниця на Дальніх печерах.....	6 D4
Farther Caves Entrance Вхід у Дальні печери.....	(see 7)	Church of the Conception of St Ann Аннотчачівська церква.....	7 D4
Lower Entrance to the Lower Lavra Нижній вхід до Нижньої Лаври.....	2 D4	Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Різдва Богородиці церква.....	8 D4
Main Entrance to Lower Lavra (free) Вхід до Нижньої лаври (безкоштовно).....	3 B3	Church of the Raising of the Cross Хрестовоздвиженська церква.....	9 C3
Nearer Caves Entrance Вхід у Ближні печери.....	(see 9)	Dormition Cathedral Успенський собор.....	10 B2
Southern Gate of Upper Lavra & Ticket Booth Південна брама Верхньої Лаври та каса.....	4 C2	Fragment of Original Dormition Cathedral.....	11 B2
		Great Bell Tower Дзвіниця.....	12 B2
		Historical Treasures Museum Музей історичних коштовностей України.....	13 B2
		Museum of Microminiature Музей мікрмініатюр.....	14 B2
		Museum of Ukrainian Folk and Decorative Arts Музей українського фольклору та прикладного мистецтва.....	15 B2
		Refectory Church of St Antony & St Feodosiy Трапезна церква Св Антонія та Феодосія.....	16 B2
		Refectory Трапезна палата.....	17 B2
		St Nicholas' Church Церква Св Миколая.....	18 A2
		Trinity Gate Church Троїцька надбрамна церква.....	19 B2

observe its rich frescoes and lavish gilded altar. To access the church turn left immediately after entering through the main gate. Also in this northwest section of the grounds is the small, late-17th-century **St Nicholas' Church**, its unique blue dome adorned with golden stars. It's now an administrative building.

Back out on the main path, you can't miss the seven gleaming gold domes of the **Dormition Cathedral** (Uspensky Sobor), a year-2000 replica of the famous and sacred original. To this day historians are unsure whether the Nazis or the Soviets were responsible for blowing up the original. You can enter the church only during services, typically held Saturday afternoons at 5pm and Sunday mornings at 7am. The big rock in the square between the cathedral and the bell tower is a **fragment** of the original cathedral.

Towering over the cathedral is the 96.5m-tall **Great Bell Tower**. Climbing the 174 steps to the top is an essential experience, however, the tower was shut down for renovations in 2005 and is unlikely to reopen before 2009.

Beneath the bell tower on the south side, the **Museum of Microminiature** (admission 5uah; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Wed-Mon) provides something even for atheists within this holiest of holies – and, boy, is it popular! Possibly the most orderly queues in unruly Kyiv form in front of Russian artist N Siadristy's tiny creations. The world's smallest book (with some verses of Shevchenko), a balalaika with strings one-fourth the width of a human hair and a flea fitted with golden horseshoes are just some of his works of whimsy. Each is so small that microscopes are needed to view them, but you can occupy yourself with the brief English explanations while you wait. The museum

also bears one of Kyiv's great *Everything is Illuminated*-style creative English translations: 'At the time of atmospheric precipitates exhibit is not function'.

The cluster of buildings just south of the Assumption Cathedral includes the mildly interesting **Museum of Ukrainian Folk and Decorative Arts** (admission 5uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 10am-8pm Fri & Sat) and also the **Refectory Church of St Antony & St Feodosiy**, sporting the monastery's most famous gold-striped dome (1885–1905). The main domed space is slightly reminiscent of Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, with its ring of small narrow windows along the base of the drum. The interior is beautifully painted with biblical scenes, saints and Art Nouveau patterns. The generously frescoed **refectory** attached to the church is a sight in itself.

The **Historical Treasures Museum** (admission 12uah; ☎ 10am-6.45pm Tue-Sun), behind the Dormition Cathedral, has an astounding collection of precious stones and metal found or made in Ukraine. The highlight is the fabulous hoard of gold jewellery worked for the Scythians by Greek Black Sea colonists. Much of the treasures come from two 4th-century BC burial mounds: the Tolstaya grave in the Dnipropetrovsk region and the Gaimana grave in the Zaporizhzhya region.

To get to the lower *lavra* from the upper *lavra*, find the path behind the Refectory Church of St Antony & St Feodosiy and head downhill under the flying buttress.

#### LOWER LAVRA

The entrance to the **Nearer Caves** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm) is inside the **Church of the Raising**



of the **Cross** (1700). Before the stairs head downwards there's a table selling candles (3uah) to light your way through the dark passages. The use of cameras is forbidden in the caves.

Underground, the mummified monks' bodies, preserved in glass cases, are clothed and you only see the occasional protruding toe or finger. The coffins are arranged in niches in the tunnels, underground dining hall and three **subterranean churches**. Antony, the monastery's founder, and Nestor the Chronicler are just two of the 123 bodies down here.

Tourists are only allowed into the first section of the caves, as many areas are cordoned off for Orthodox pilgrims and clergy. Monks frequently guard the entrance to restricted tunnels and are expert at spotting foreigners and nonbelievers.

Visiting the caves when they're not crowded can be a very moving experience. However, their low, narrow passageways are not for the seriously claustrophobic. If you visit on a busy day it's total chaos down there. The monks' bodies are believed to have healing powers and pilgrims will bow to kiss the feet of one, before quickly diving to the other side of the tunnel to kiss the hand of another. Lost in religious ecstasy or sheer novelty, people wave their lit candles dangerously close to your back and face. Particularly if you're a woman wearing a flammable headscarf you will, frankly, feel more vulnerable than in the mosh pit of a punk rock concert. It's an experience you will never forget, but if you like to take things calmly, chose a weekday visit. Really.

The **Farther Caves** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm) were the original caves built by Antony and Feodosiy. Their entrance is in the **Church of the Conception of St Ann** (1679), from where you wend your way through a shorter but even tighter stretch of tunnels. This cave system is also lined with ornamented mummified monks and contains three underground churches. Uphill from the Church of the Conception of St Ann is the seven-domed **Church of the Nativity of the Virgin** (1696). Rising to the right is the unusual high-baroque **Bell Tower of Farther Caves** (1761).

From the Farther Caves it's a long walk back up the hill to the **main entrance** on vul Sichnevoho Povstannya, or you can exit (or enter) at the nearby **lower entrance**. There may be taxis waiting at the lower entrance, or you can walk 15 minutes north along busy Naberezhne shose to the Dnipro metro station.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The Lavra is a pleasant 15-minute walk south through Vichnoyi Slavy park from Arsenalna metro station. Or take trolleybus 38 or *marshrutka* 520 or 406 up vul Sichnevoho Povstannya from the metro station.

### Rodina Mat & Museum of the Great Patriotic War

There's not much to say about **Rodina Mat** (Map p66; literally 'Nation's Mother', but formally called the Defence of the Motherland Monument). However, from certain parts of Kyiv it's highly visible and so requires a high-profile explanation. Especially when you're approaching from the left (or east) bank, this 62m-tall statue of a female warrior is liable to loom on the horizon and make you wonder, 'What the hell is that?'

What the hell, indeed. It's the icing on top of the **Museum of the Great Patriotic War** (Map p66; ☎ 285 9452; www.warmuseum.kiev.ua; vul Sichnevoho Povstannya 44; adult/child 4/1uah; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun). The statue has been nicknamed 'the Iron Lady' and 'Tin Tits'. Even if you don't like such Soviet pomposity, don't say too much; you'd be taking on a titanium woman carrying 12 tonnes of shield and sword. You can get right into her head – literally, via an elevator in the museum.

While the museum was built belatedly in 1981 to honour Kyiv's defenders during the 'great patriotic war' of WWII, it seems to be straight out of the 1950s, with gloomy lighting and huge display halls covered in creaky parquet flooring. This is a sombre and sometimes even macabre exhibition, such as in Hall No 6 where you find yourself looking at a pair of gloves made from human skin. The overall effect is as moving as it is shocking. Westerners often don't appreciate how much Ukraine suffered as Nazi troops moved eastwards towards Moscow. Here you get a better idea.

The grounds around Rodina Mat are popular for strolling and contain a number of intriguing relics of the communist era, including an eternal flame in memory of WWII victims; various old tanks, helicopters and anti-aircraft guns; and a veritable garden of Soviet realist sculpture in and around the underpass leading toward the Lavra.

### Botanical Gardens & Vydubtsky Monastery

The long, steep hill running along the Dnipro river from Dynamo Stadium and Mariyivsky

Palace (see p82) to Rodina Mat continues south for several kilometres, eventually becoming the **Central Botanical Gardens** (Map p66; ☎ 285 4527; vul Tymiriazivska 1; admission free). The gardens' fastidiously manicured grounds are crisscrossed by a network of paths leading to hidden viewpoints and churches frozen in time.

Few churches appear more frozen in time than those of the **Vydubtsky Monastery** (Map p66; vul Vydubtska 40; ☎ Druzhby Narodiv), nestled into the hill's dense foliage beneath the botanical gardens. If you found the crowds at the Lavra a little too much to bear – or if you're just into intense serenity – you should not hesitate to come here. The monastery, which is thought to be at least as old as Kyiv, is looking in fine fettle today after centuries of catastrophes followed by years of Soviet neglect. The monastery is home to a small community of monks who, quite frankly, have chosen a much more monk-friendly place to practise their faith than the increasingly touristy Lavra.

The bucolic church looking down on the monastery from the crest of the hill is the recently restored **Trinity Cathedral**.

The botanical gardens are tricky to reach by public transport. Take a taxi or pick up bus 14 anywhere along bul Lesi Ukrainky.

### Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture

Ukraine is dotted with 'open-air' museums like this, full of life-size models of different rustic buildings. However, the **Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture** (Map p66; ☎ 526 2416; vul Chervonopraporna; admission 10uah; ☎ museum 10am-5pm, grounds sunrise-sunset), 12km south of Kyiv, is one of the most fun and best maintained.

Two things make it stand out. Firstly, the quaint 17th- to 20th-century wooden churches, cottages, farmsteads and windmills are divided into seven 'villages' representing regional areas of Ukraine. So in just one long afternoon you can journey from the architecture of eastern to western to southern Ukraine.

Secondly, in summer, workers enact different village roles, carving wood, pottering, doing embroidery and driving horses and carts. There are restaurants, pubs and stalls selling barbecued *shashlyk*. The place is perfect for kids.

Arsonists claimed three of the old dwellings in 2006, but the character of the museum remains intact. Throughout the year

Pyrohovo hosts various festivals – the biggest is during the countrywide Ivana Kupala festival (see p40). Ukrainian musicians play at weekends.

The museum is near Pyrohovo village. To get here, take bus 27, trolleybus 11 or *marshrutka* 172 from the Lybidska metro station; the museum entrance is hard to miss. A taxi will cost about 60uah one way.

### Jewish Sites

#### BABYN YAR

On 29 September 1941, Nazi troops rounded up Kyiv's 34,000-strong Jewish population, marched them to the Babyn Yar ravine (Map p66), and massacred them all in the following 48 hours. Victims were shot and buried in the ravine. Over the next two years, many thousands more lost their lives at Babyn Yar when it was turned into a concentration camp, called Syrets after the Kyivan suburb it was in. Romany people, partisans and even footballers (see boxed text, p92) would be among those killed.

The place's dreadful history only came to light after the war, and three monuments have been erected over time. The first was a colossal Soviet effort dating from 1976, which is found in the southern sector of the park. Typical of Soviet Holocaust memorials it makes no mention of Jews. It's also in the wrong spot; the massacre took place north from here.

Follow the path from vul Melnykova 44, past a TV station, to the secluded spot where you'll find the 1991 Jewish memorial, a menorah, which better marks the spot. From here several paths lead to points overlooking the ravine itself. Another monument was erected in 2001 beside metro Dorohozhychi to commemorate the Jewish children who perished at Babyn Yar.

Babyn Yar is easily reached from metro Dorohozhychi.

#### CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE

Kyiv has an active Jewish community numbering about 60,000. The largest synagogue is the **Central Synagogue** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 9082; www.greatsynagogue.kiev.ua; vul Shota Rustaveli 13; ☎ Palats Sportu)

### Other Sights

#### ST VOLODYMYR'S CATHEDRAL

Although not one of Kyiv's most important churches, **St Volodymyr's Cathedral** (Map pp68-9; bul

Tarasa Shevchenka 20; (M) Universytet) arguably has the prettiest interior. Built in the late 19th century to mark 900 years of Orthodox Christianity in the city, its yellow exterior and seven blue domes conform to standard Byzantine style. However, inside it breaks new ground by displaying Art Nouveau influences.

Huge murals, flecked with golden accents, include a painting of Volodymyr the Great's baptism into Orthodox Christianity in Chersonesus (see p64) and of Kyiv's citizens being herded into the Dnipro River for a mass baptism soon afterwards.

### ZOLOTI VOROTA

Part of Kyiv's fortifications during the rule of Yaroslav the Wise, the famous **Zoloti Vorota** (Golden Gate; Map pp68-9; vul Volodymyrska; (M) Zoloti Vorota) sounds much better than it looks, but the summer patio around the fountain out front is a great place to have a drink. Erected in 1037 and modelled on Constantinople's Golden Gate, this was the main entrance into the ancient city, with ramparts stretching out from both sides. However, the gate was largely destroyed in the 1240 Mongol sacking of Kyiv, and what you see today is a 1982 reconstruction. The statue to the side is of Yaroslav.

### HOUSE OF CHIMERAS

With its demonic-looking animals and gargoyles, the **House of Chimeras** (Map pp68-9; vul Bankova 10; (M) Khreshchatyk) is Kyiv's weirdest building. Built at the start of the 20th century by architect Vladislav Horodetsky, it's been more recently used as a presidential administration office. There are plenty of other interesting old mansions in this district, known as **Lypky** – see the Walking Tour, opposite.

### Other Museums

Overall, the standard of museums in Kyiv is lower than in comparable European cities, but there are a few gems. As a rule museums stop selling tickets 30 minutes to one hour before closing.

Kyiv's most impressive collection of European art is at the sumptuous **Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 0206; vul Tereshchenkivska 15/17; admission per wing 7.50uah, free last Wednesday of month; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Wed-Sun, 10.30am-2pm last Wed of month; (M) Pl Lva Tolstoho). Bosch, Velazquez and Rubens are among the many masters represented, but they are only part of the attraction. The house, with its frescoed ceilings and intricately carved woodwork, alone is worth the price of admission. All the better that it's packed with priceless antique furniture, ancient Greek sculptures, porcelain ceramics and dazzling paintings, such as a version of Hieronymus Bosch's *Temptation of St Anthony*. The museum's climax is on the top floor: four rare religious icons from the 6th and 7th centuries. Even if icons aren't your thing, it's hard not to be moved by these primitive Byzantine treasures. And we've only described the 'Western' wing. The 'Eastern' wing has Buddhist, Chinese and Islamic art.

The rotating exhibits at the world-class **PinchukArtCentre** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 590 0858; http://pinchukartcentre.org; Arena City complex, vul Baseyna 2A; admission free; ☎ noon-9pm Tue-Sun; (M) Pl Lva Tolstoho/Teatralna) feature elite names in the world of European contemporary art and design, all financed by billionaire mogul Viktor Pinchuk. British giants Antony Gormley and Damian Hirst were among those whose works were on display when we visited.

The **Russian Art Museum** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 6218; vul Tereshchenkivska 9; admission 7uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, Fri & Sun, 11am-6pm Mon, noon-8pm Sat, closed last Mon of month; (M) Teatralna/Pl Lva Tolstoho) has 2000 paintings that comprise the largest collection of Russian artwork outside Moscow and St Petersburg.

The **National Art Museum** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 278 7454; vul Hrushevskoho 6; admission 6uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, closed last Fri of month; (M) Maydan Nezalezhnosti) displays early Ukrainian icons, and paintings from the 14th to the 19th centuries, including some by polymath national poet Tarasa Shevchenko.

The **Tarasa Shevchenko Memorial House Museum** (Map pp68-9; prov Tarasa Shevchenka 8A; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun, noon-8pm Tue; (M) Maydan Nezalezhnosti) is in a beautifully restored, 19th-century wooden house where the great man once lived.

### ACTIVITIES

Contact details for organisers of regular football, cricket and Ultimate Frisbee games are in the *Kyiv Post* community listings. For lists of bowling alleys, fitness centres, swimming pools, tennis courts and golf ranges, consult *In Your Pocket* or the *Kyiv Business Directory*.

### Beaches & Hydropark

City beaches are a hot talking point these days, thanks to Paris' *plage*, but Kyiv had them long before sand along the Seine was even a grain of an idea. Thanks to a dam a few kilometres downstream, the Dnipro around Kyiv is full of islands and beaches, which are packed with sunbathers in summer. Water sports like wake-boarding and sailing are popular summer pursuits, while in the winter ice fishers descend on the frozen river en masse and intrepid 'walrus' swimmers take to the frigid bouillabaisse.

It's better to merely sunbathe than to spend much time in the river, which isn't the cleanest – although that doesn't deter thousands of locals from diving right in. The most central beaches are found on Trukhaniv Island or in the two-island recreation zone of **Hydropark** ((M) Hydropark). Hydropark is the best place in the city to observe Kyivans in their element. It's also the best place to observe the Kievo-Pecherska Lavra, which looms majestically just across the river, from afar.

Kyiv's quirkiest sight might just be Hydropark's giant, makeshift **outdoor gym** (Map p66; admission free). The machines here are cobbled together from used truck parts and salvaged scrap metal. It's a testosterone-

fueled affair, although you'll usually see one or two women amid the muscle. On weekends and summer evenings the gym is packed. Beware: the sight of hundreds of sweaty dudes in Speedos pumping primitive iron could be a little off-putting. To get here, cross the footbridge and bear right. Next to the outdoor gym is a gymnastics zone that sees surprisingly competent amateurs swinging from horizontal bars.

Explore Hydropark and you'll find gay, straight, clothed and nude beaches. Entertainment complex **Sun City** (Map p66; ☎ 451 6585; admission 50uah) is a private beach with a swimming pool that rents out jet skis. When the sun goes down it turns into a fashionable nightclub (see p91). Other popular activities in Hydropark include beach volleyball, beach football, basketball, bungee jumping from a giant crane near the footbridge and – most popular – drinking vodka. In the winter you can hire cross-country skis.

Hydropark has its own metro stop so getting there's a snap. To get to Trukhaniv island take the footbridge directly below the rainbow arch (see p82).

### Ice Skating

**Pioneer Ice Club** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 496 5353; pl Slavy; admission per 2½hr session 20-40uah, skate rental Sep-May 10uah, free Jun-Aug; ☎ sessions 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm; (M) Arsenalna) Escape the rain – or summer heat – on a frozen indoor oval overlooking the mighty Dnipro.

### WALKING TOUR

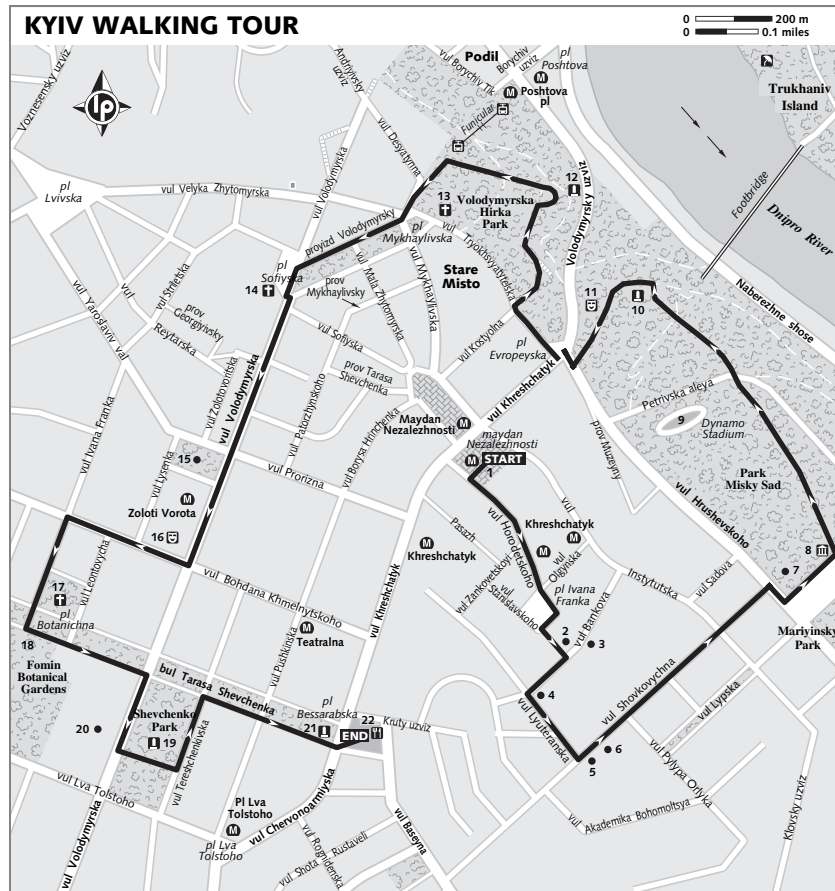
Setting out on foot is a good way to orientate yourself in the Ukrainian capital before plunging into some of its more time-consuming highlights.

Set out from **maydan Nezalezhnosti** (1; p67), walking south along cobbled vul Horodetskoho to pl Ivana Franka. Set your sights on the bizarre **House of Chimeras** (2; opposite) on the hill behind the square. Ascend this hill via a path to the right of the House of Chimeras. At the top you'll be face-to-face with the huge **Presidential Administration building** (3) on vul Bankova. Take a right, proceed to the corner of vul Lyuteranska and turn left again, pausing to glance at the Art Nouveau façade of the **Weeping Widow House** (4) at vul Lyuteranska 23.

Continue straight and take a left at the next corner onto vul Shovkovychna. Many of Kyiv's aristocrats built mansions in this area, known

### TOP FIVE ART GALLERIES

- **Berezniyskiy Gallery** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 280 0782; vul Rybalska 22; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) Doesn't settle for anything less than the best Ukrainian artists.
- **Da Vinci Gallery** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 499 1376; Arena City complex, vul Chervonoarmiyska 5; ☎ 10am-8pm) Kyiv's best sculpture gallery.
- **Gallery-36** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 228 2985; www.gallery36.org.ua; Andriyivsky uzviz 36; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) Arguably Kyiv's most beloved gallery, on Kyiv's most beloved street.
- **Ra Gallery** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 3619; www.ragallery.net; vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 32; ☎ 11am-7pm) Long-running favourite; also runs a prestigious art school.
- **Tsekh** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 531 9904; vul Ilyinska 16; ☎ 1-7pm Tue-Sun) Refuge for underground artists; can be either spectacular or substandard.



### WALK FACTS

**Start** Maydan Nezalezhnosti  
**Finish** Bessarabsky Rynok  
**Distance** 6km  
**Duration** three hours

as Lypky, at the turn of the 20th century. Examples include the neo-Gothic mansion (5) at vul Shovkovychna 19 and the Chocolate House (6) next door. Follow vul Shovkovychna until it terminates at the Verkhovna Rada (7; Parliament Building). Cross the street and walk through Park Misky Sad to the right of the Verkhovna Rada. The blue baroque building on your left is Mariyivsky Palace (8), based on a design by

Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, who built St Andrew's Church (p73) and much of St Petersburg.

Behind the palace, follow a path leading northwest (left) through the park. Eventually you'll spy Dynamo Stadium (9; p92), just before crossing a high footbridge over a busy road. Continue straight until you come to a giant, dull, metal parabola. This is the inappropriately named Rainbow Arch, part of the Friendship of Nations Monument (10) celebrating the 1654 'unification' of Russia and Ukraine. Beneath the arch stand two 'brothers' – Russia and Ukraine – with fists raised in textbook Soviet-realist style. With Ukraine now independent, the monument has been joined recently by a more politically correct statue of Cossacks and other

Ukrainian patriots. There are stunning views here of the Dnipro and Trukhaniv Island.

Descend the hill via a path leading by the National Philharmonic (11; p91), and cross pl Evropeyska. On the other side, follow vul Tryokhsvyatyetska uphill, turning right into Volodymyrska Hirka Park beyond the intersection of vul Kostyolna. All trails in here lead to the viewpoint looking down on the statue of Volodymyr the Great (12) – who brought Christianity to the eastern Slavs in 989 – and out across the Dnipro and the monolithic suburbs beyond.

Continue round the elevated riverbank, past a children's playground to the blue and gold St Michael's Monastery (13; p73). From pl Mykhaylivska you can see the tall bell tower and gold domes of St Sophia's Cathedral (14; p70), which you should now head towards. Turn left into vul Volodymyrska, and two long blocks along, on your right, you'll pass Zoloti Vorota (15; p80), before shortly coming to the Taras Shevchenko National Opera Theatre (16; p91).

Turn right into vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho and, two blocks later, left into vul Ivana Franka. At the end of this road, on the left, stands St Volodymyr's Cathedral (17; p79). Across the road, you'll see the beginning of the Fomin Botanical Gardens (18), named after 1920s botanist Alexander Fomin.

Turning left, you're on bul Tarasa Shevchenka, named after the Ukrainian national poet, Taras Shevchenko (see p43). On the right is his statue (19) in Shevchenko Park. A quick detour will give you a look at Kyiv University (20). In 1901 Tsar Nicholas I ordered this building to be painted blood red in response to student protests against army conscription. When the building was reconstructed after WWII it was kept the same shade of red.

At the end of the street stands Kyiv's last remaining Lenin statue (21), a fairly modest affair. Lenin is looking straight at the last stop on your tour, the wonderfully atmospheric Bessarabsky Rynok (22) p89) on the other side of pl Bessarabska.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Some of the most important annual events in Kyiv:

**Epiphany** Come January, scores of the faithful leap into the Dnipro River in Hydropark and elsewhere to celebrate the arrival of Christianity in Kyivan Rus.

**Kraina Mriy Festival** ([www.krainamriy.com](http://www.krainamriy.com)) VV front-man Oleg Skrypka (see p44) organises a free three-day festival of ethnic music from Ukraine and elsewhere in July during the countrywide Ivana Kupala festival (see p40).

**Kyiv Days** This celebration of spring brings musicians and street performers to Andriyivsky uzviz, maydan Nezalezhnosti and other streets of the capital on the last weekend of May.

**Kyiv International Film Festival Molodist** ([www.molodist.com](http://www.molodist.com)) An annual event that takes place during the last week of October.

### SLEEPING

Kyiv's budget and midrange hotels tend to be both poor quality and poor value, while top-end accommodation is priced well outside the range of most mortals. The best way around this problem – particularly if you wish to spend less than \$75 a night – is to bypass hotels altogether and rent an apartment. This cannot be overemphasised and applies even for short stays. Apartments are available in all budget categories and offer substantial savings – up to 40% – on the same level of hotel accommodation.

Many hotels have different room categories, with everything from budget to luxury accommodation under one roof. In these instances, the hotel has been placed in the category where it offers the best value.

### Apartments

Babushkas at the train station offer rooms for as little as \$10, and entire one-bedroom Soviet-style apartments for \$25 and up. Unfortunately, they are becoming an increasingly rare breed; those who still do business hang out near the McDonald's in front of the station, offering *kimnaty* or *komnaty* (rooms) verbally. Sometimes they will have discreet signs advertising 'кімнати' or 'комнати'. These rooms tend to be well outside the centre; bring a map so you can check the location.

Kyiv has dozens of apartment agencies and sorting through them all can be a chore. Most reputable agencies have websites where you can browse their apartments. Booking is best done online or via phone or text message; only a few firms have offices. If you want an apartment for one night only, companies may not guarantee a specific apartment (but will at least guarantee price, size and general location).

See p241 for more tips on apartment rental. All of the following have English-speaking representatives and accept credit cards.

**UKR Apartments** (☎ 234 5637, 8-050 311 0309; www.ukr-apartments.kiev.ua) Has a wide selection and some of the cheapest apartments.

**Gрата Apartments** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 468 0757, 8-044 251 2806; www.accommodation.kiev.ua; vul Mykhaylivska 9a; apt from \$55) Service-oriented firm has nice range of apartments. Ask for Kate.

**Teren Plus** (☎ 428 1010; www.teren.kiev.ua; apt from \$60) Tried and true.

**Best Kiev Apartment** (☎ 8-050 330 4587, 8-067 231 4009; www.bestkievapartment.com; apt from \$65) Smartly renovated apartments.

**Absolut** (☎ 530 1310, 8-067 209 3264; www.hotelservice.kiev.ua) Slightly more upscale, with reasonable, if not great, service.

**Kiev Hotel Luxe** (☎ 490 7309, 8-066 236 2470, www.kyivhotel-luxe.com) Aimed at wealthier travellers, but with some singles from \$70.

**UARent** (☎ 278 8363, 496 0257; www.urent.com) Trends toward more expensive apartments with superb locations. Ask for Alexey.

## Budget

You have two choices in the budget range: basic hostels or nonrenovated Soviet hotels. The hostels listed below take plastic, but the hotels don't unless otherwise indicated. Check www.hihostels.com.ua for new hostel openings.

Or there's Kyiv's train station, which offers a range of lodging options (reviewed here as 'Kimnaty Vidpochynku' and 'Service Centre', below) if you're departing early in the morning or pulling in on a late-night service – or if you simply want a good-value room close to the centre.

**Prolisok Tourist Complex** (Map p66; ☎ 424 1293; pr Peremohy 139; camping per person \$7, r from \$65) This camping ground is 12km west of the centre and virtually impossible to reach by public transport, so it's really only practical if you have your own wheels. It has a couple of hundred campsites and a block of musty old rooms. From Svyatoshyn metro station, take trolleybus 7, get off when it turns off pr Peremohy and walk the rest of the way (20 minutes).

**Kimnaty Vidpochynku** (Resting Rooms; Map pp68-9; ☎ 239 8962; Kyiv Train Station; shared d/tr/q per person \$20/18/16; ☎) The 3rd floor of the station's new Southern Terminal has two resting rooms. One is for families (up the escalator to the right as you enter the southern wing), and one for people without kids (up the escalator to the left). Both contain spacious, immaculate rooms and shared bathrooms.

**Service Centre** (☎ 465 2080; Kyiv Train Station; shared d or tr per person with/without private bathroom \$18/24, ste \$64; ☎ ☎) Located in the station's older Central Terminal, this has a comfortable wi-fi-enabled lounge and clean bright rooms. You can also just hang out here (admission is 30uah per hour) and shower (10uah). Head to the right as you exit the Central Terminal. Neither this nor the Kimnaty Vidpochynku requires guests to show onward train tickets, and neither accepts reservations.

**Kozatsky Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 4914; vul Mykhaylivska 1/3; shared tr in annex per person \$17, standard r from \$77; ☎ ☎) Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This hotel on maydan Nezalezhnosti has a small annex nearby (Map pp68-9; prov Tarasa Shevchenka 5), which is easily the best value in Kyiv. It consists of two spacious, generously furnished triples that share a bathroom and a fridge. And it comes with a free breakfast. The receptionists will not let foreigners in on the secret; you have to specifically ask for rooms in the *fligel*. A deal like this can't last long, so enjoy it while you can. The Kozatsky proper is standard Soviet fare – stale and very 1970s, but they are planning a major renovation soon.

**Kiev Youth Hostel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ hostel 481 3838, bookings 331 0260; www.hihostels.com.ua; shared d or tr per person \$22; ☎ ☎) Lukyanivska) Ignore the lack of common room, kitchen and services and concentrate on what this hostel does have: basic doubles and triples that you don't have to share with 10 people. Every two rooms share a bathroom/shower. It occupies the 4th and 5th floors of an apartment building off Artema, two trolleybus stops south of Lukyanivska metro station. Look for the (old) IYH signs – HI cardholders get a discount between \$1 and \$2.

**Yaroslav Youth Hostel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ hostel 417 3189, bookings 331 0260; www.hihostels.com.ua; vul Yaroslavska 10; shared d or tr per person \$22; ☎ ☎) Kontraktova pl) Another no-frills hostel, it has the same pricing scheme as its sister Kyiv Youth Hostel. The difference is it's much smaller and cosier – just three rooms in a converted apartment.

**St Petersburg Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 7364; www.s-peter.com.ua; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 4; s/d with shared bathroom \$20/40, with private bathroom \$68/96; ☎ ☎) Pl Lva Tolstoho) If you're pinching pennies, this once-grand old classic is a fine option. The rooms are worn and simple, but some even have remodelled bathrooms. The shared showers and toilets are clean and turn the place into a

bargain, considering the central location. The cheapest rooms are not on the website.

**Hotel Express** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 503 3045; www.expresskiev.com; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 38/40; s/d from \$53/85; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Universytet) The Soviet-style Express has a mix of renovated and non-refurbished rooms. The cheapest have tiny beds and lack showers. Prices increase proportionally as amenities and coats of paint are added. Air-con rooms don't cost extra but you must request them. Its website also hides the existence of the cheapest rooms.

**Hotel Bratislava** (Map p66; ☎ 537 3980; vul Malyska 1; www.bratislava.com.ua; s/d \$51/89; renovated s/d \$110/170; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Darnytsya) Over on the left bank, the Bratislava sets new standards of ugliness on the outside but on the inside it's actually decent value. It's a tale of two halves, with renovated air-con rooms on some floors and unreconstructed accommodation, including basic bathrooms, on others. It's a 10- to 15-minute metro ride into town.

**Hotel Mir** (Map p66; ☎ 520 2616; www.hotelmir.kiev.ua; pr 40-richchya Zhovtnya 70; r \$60-200; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) If all budget rooms in the centre are full, this is a last-ditch resort out of Holosiyvsky Park, 10 minutes from Lybidska metro on Bus 80, 507, 726 or 444. The cheapest rooms are nonrenovated and lack air-con. Service is surprisingly professional.

## Midrange

With the exception of the Sunflower and the Sherborne, the following are all renovated Soviet hotels. Breakfast is free and credit cards accepted unless otherwise noted.

**Andrew's Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 8730; andrews-hotel@hotmail.com; vul Vozdvyzhenska 60; s/d \$72/94; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Kontraktova pl) It offers the standard Soviet diet of musty rooms, creaky fixtures and loud wallpaper but you can't argue with the location, less than a half-beer walk from Andriyivsky uzviz. Rooms can be smoky and hot, and there's no breakfast available.

**Hotel Salute** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 494 1420; www.salute.kiev.ua; vul Sichnevoho Povstannya 11b; economy/standard r \$100/130; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Arsenalna) Affectionately dubbed 'the grenade', the Salute features psychedelic '70s furniture and a few rooms with exceptional views of the Dnipro. For a converted Soviet hotel it has surprising benefits, like smiley receptionists, internet-enabled rooms and a 24-hour business centre.

**Hotel Kyiv** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 253 3090; www.htk.kiev.ua; vul Hrushevskoho 26/1; old/new d from \$84/180; ☎ ☎)

(☎ ☎) (Arsenalna) This concrete monster overlooking parliament is a great deal for couples who don't care for air-con. Alas, individuals get zero discount on old rooms, and the new 'Euro remont' rooms are grossly overpriced. We actually prefer the older rooms, with their massive bathtubs and other retro-Soviet touches. Breakfast costs extra and credit cards are not accepted.

**Hotel Ukraina** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 0347; www.ukraine-hotel.kiev.ua; vul Instyutyska 4; s/d from \$66/110; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This monstrosity presiding over maydan Nezalezhnosti offers the best view of future revolutions, orange or otherwise. The receptionists, formerly hostile, are now merely indifferent. There's the typical mix of rooms; the higher-priced doubles are downright pleasant. However, the lack of air-con in most rooms stings in the summer. Reservations cost \$5.

**our pick Sherborne Guest House** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 9693; www.sherbornehotel.com.ua; prov Sichnevy 9 (1st entrance); s/d from \$75/125; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Arsenalna) A rare Ukrainian apartment-hotel, this is very salubrious both on the inside and out, with 12 internet-enabled apartments where you can cook for yourself and go about your business unhindered. The company also has another dozen apartments dotted throughout the centre. The reception area is open round-the-clock, and there's laptop hire and a zillion other services. Book well in advance as this place is justifiably popular.

**Hotel Rus** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 256 4000; www.hotelrus.kiev.ua; vul Hospitalna 4; s/d from \$120/140; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Palats Sportu) The Hotel Rus is not a bad deal – hallways are well lit, rooms are only slightly tacky, and the views can be great. It's perched above Olympic Stadium, so it's a bit of an uphill grunt to walk here. But it's perfect if you're in town for a football match.

**Lybid Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 236 0063; www.hotellybid.com.ua; pl Peremohy 1; s/d from \$127/148, ste from \$200; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Universytet) When you're one of several dozen Soviet monoliths in town it's hard to stand out from the rest, but the Lybid manages to do so with friendly service. The rooms are virtually identical to the cheaper Bratislava hotel on the Left Bank, but the location here is much better.

**Sunflower B&B Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 3846; www.sunflowerhotel.kiev.ua; vul Kostolna 9/41; r/ste \$145/155; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎; ☎ ☎) (Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The name is an oxymoron – it's more B & B than hotel – but we're not complaining. The highlight is the

continental breakfast (with a warm pastry) delivered to your room, on request, by English-speaking staff. It's centrally located but nearly impossible to find – calling for a pick-up is not bad idea.

Also recommended:

**Hotel Khreshchatik** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 7339; www.khreshchatik.kiev.ua; vul Khreshchatyk 14; s/d from \$98/110; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) Location and ludicrously friendly service will make it a player once renovation is complete.

**Hotel Sport** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 289 0252; www.h-sport.kiev.ua; vul Chervonoarmyiska 55a; s/d from \$87/99; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) Musty monstrosity next to Olympic Stadium. Breakfast extra.

**Hotel Adria** (Map p66; ☎ 568 457; www.adria.kiev.ua; vul Rayisy Okypnoyi 2; s/d \$100/120; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) A Polish outfit occupies several floors of the lower-quality Hotel Tourist on the left bank. Breakfast extra.

## Top End

Independent Kyiv waited 15 long years for its first international hotels to arrive, and when they did only oligarchs and oil barrens could afford them. That will, we hope, change as more open up.

**Hotel Vozdvyzhensky** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 531 9900; www.vozdvzyzhensky.com; vul Vozdvyzhenska 60; standard s/d \$154/206, superior \$280/368; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) Tucked away in a nook just off Andriyivsky uzviz, the Vozdvyzhensky is one of Kyiv's few true boutique hotels. The 29 rooms are all individually designed and boast fine art. The highlight is the rooftop summer terrace with views overlooking Podil. Our main gripes are the small standard rooms and the difficulty pronouncing 'Vozdvyzhensky'.

**Hotel Gintama** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 278 5092; www.gintama.com.ua; vul Tryokhsyvatytska 9; s/d \$190/215; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) This friendly family-run hotel has an understated style, with mallish, individually decorated rooms tending towards the traditional, but with cleaner lines and fewer florals than usual. It's in a quiet spot just a three-minute walk from maydan Nezalezhnosti.

**Radisson SAS** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 492 2200; www.radisson.com; vul Yaroslaviv Val 22; r from \$500; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) The city's first international hotel is well established as the city's best (although the 2007 Hyatt opening jeopardises that title). The sumptuous rooms have fluffy beds that invite entry via flying leap, and the Asian spa is a nice touch. But for \$500 we expect bigger

rooms. Indeed, for \$500 we expect things that can't be printed here.

**Hyatt Regency Kyiv** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 581 1234; http://kiev.regency.hyatt.com; vul Tarasova 5; r from \$500; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) (M) Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This and the Donbas Palace in Donetsk are supposedly the only true five-star hotels in Ukraine. Frankly the Donbas Palace can only dream of having the Hyatt's view of duelling 11th-century churches. It had just opened when we visited and all hairs looked to be firmly in place, from the fabulous gym to the spacious and eminently comfortable rooms, to its popular panorama bar and Grill Asia restaurant.

Top-end boutique hotels are popping up all over Kyiv's Podil district. The latest and greatest are the intimate **Podol Plaza Hotel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 503 9292; www.podolplazahotel.com.ua; vul Kostyantynivska 7a; s/d from \$200/250; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) (M) Kontraktova pl) and the attractive but overpriced **Hotel Riviera** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 581 2828; www.rivierahotel.com.ua; vul Sahaydachnoho 15; from \$340; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) (M) Poshtova pl).

## EATING

Most of the high-profile restaurants you see advertised are pricey – think \$15 and up for a main course. But if you know where to look, there are great deals to be had, and self-caterers will revel in remarkably cheap prices for staples like bread, cheese and beer. Most of the places listed under Drinking (p89) also make fine places to eat, especially if you can't bear to be more than two feet away from a keg at any given time. For further options, see the *Kyiv Post*, *What's On Kiev* or the oddly spelled www.chiken.kiev.ua. Reservations are recommended at the more popular restaurants.

## Budget

**Domashnya Kukhnya** (Map pp68-9; vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 16/22; dishes 5-10uah; ☎ 8am-11pm; 📍 Teatralna) This was the first of the now-ubiquitous fast-food *stolovy* (cafeterias) to grace the city, and it's still the largest and second only to Puzata Khata in terms of quality. Heap a few dishes and a 4.50uah beer on your tray and skedaddle out to the huge patio.

**Puzata Khata** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 246 7245; vul Baseyna 1/2; mains 10-15uah; ☎ 8am-11pm; 📍 Teatralna) 'Hut of the Pot Belly' is an upscale *stolova* and an excellent place for budget travellers to sample traditional Ukrainian cuisine. There are cheap veggie options, delicious pastries and beer,

and even hard booze. Other branches are on vul Sahaydachnoho 24 and Pasazh.

**Krym** (Map pp68-9; prov Tarasa Shevchenka 1; dishes 10-15uah; 📍 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This dirt-cheap Crimean Tatar basement restaurant spills right out onto sunny maydan Nezalezhnosti in the summer months. There's a compact menu of Central Asian favourites such as *plov* (pilaf), *manty* (dumplings) and *laghman* (meat stew), plus reasonably priced Chernihivske beer.

**Kartoplyana Khata** (Map pp68-9; vul Chervonoarmyiska 49; dishes 10-25uah; ☎ 9am-11pm; 📍 📞 📺 📺 📺) (M) Respublikansky Stadion) 'Potato Hut' has exploded into a national chain, but this smoke-free original location remains its flagship. The ribs, dripping in grease, have attained legendary status, and burritos are its other speciality. Despite its moniker, the potato is but a minor player here.

**Yapona Khata** (Map pp68-9; Globus mall food court; sushi per piece 4-9uah; 📍 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The most reliable of Kyiv's many quick-and-easy sushi outfits is in the Globus mall basement food court. If fast fish isn't your thing, there are also plenty of other dining options down here.

**Celentano** (Map pp68-9; vul Sahaydachnoho 41; pizzas 15-25uah; 📍 Poshtova pl) This is where it all started for the country's most popular chain restaurant. Its (dare we say revolutionary?) design-your-own-pizza formula remains as wildly popular today as ever. There are about 15 more Celentanos in the city if you miss this one.

**King David** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 7418; vul Esplanadna 24; wraps 15uah, mains 35-90uah; 📍 Palats Sportu) This certified kosher restaurant behind Kyiv's main synagogue has a small café-bar area in front where you can find affordable falafel and pita wraps, and hamburgers for 35uah.

**our pick Svytlytsa** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 3586; Andriyivsky uzviz 136; crêpes 15-25uah, mains 15-85uah; 📍 Poshtova pl/Kontraktova pl) This little French eatery in the middle of Andriyivsky uzviz is wonderful and wonderfully affordable. Its famous stuffed crêpes have been curing hungover expats for years, while its summer terrace is one of the best places in Kyiv to watch the world go by. French staples like frog legs and steak tartare liven up the menu, and peckish backpackers can revel in omelettes and pasta dishes for under 20uah.

**Alaverde** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 0156; vul Sahaydachnoho 23/4; mains 20-25uah; 📍 Poshtova pl) Of Kyiv's many Georgian restaurants this unpretentious little affair is the best value. There's no English

menu; if you're stuck order some *suluguni* (Georgian cheese) and anything from the 'hot dishes' (Гарячі Страви) section – it's all good (unless you're vegetarian).

Also recommended:

**O'Panasy blyny stand** (Map pp68-9; Shevchenko Park; blyny 3-5uah; ☎ 9am-9pm 📍 Pl Lva Tolstoho) City's best blyny come from a shack in front of Ukrainian eatery O'Panasy.

**Dio Long** (Map pp68-9; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 48A; dishes 5-10uah; 📍 Universtyet) Cafeteria-style Chinese resto. Not pretty but works if you have no money and are tired of greasy Ukrainian *stolovy*.

## Midrange

**Vesuvio Pizza** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 6681; vul Reytsaroka 25; pasta 25-30uah, large pizzas 25-32uah; 📍 Zoloti Vorota) Vesuvio serves delicious pizza and sensibly priced Italian food in a quiet, no-frills space near Zoloti Vorota. Long one of Kyiv's most popular pizzerias, it now has a second location on bul Tarasa Shevchenka, near the St Petersburg Hotel. Both restaurants deliver.

**Kray** (Map p66; ☎ 285 6887; vul Kutuzova 12; mains 25-40uah; 📍 Pecherska) The Chinese chef at this well-kept secret in Pechersk cooks a mean broccoli with garlic sauce, spicy 'chicken panic' and various other dishes for vegetarians and omnivores alike. Grazing is best done on the outdoor patio, weather permitting.

**Shalena Mama** (Crazy Mama; Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 1751; vul Tereshchenkivska 4-A; mains 25-50uah; ☎ 24hr; 📍 Teatralna) This diner-like shrine to the Rolling Stones is a great place to slay the late-night munchies. The Asian-influenced food is named after Stones' tunes. Try the 'She Said Yeah' (sautéed glass noodles with white cabbage and chicken) and follow it with their massive apple strudel.

**Garbuzyk** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 3586; vul Khoryva 2B; mains 20-40uah; 📍 Kontraktova pl) This fun, if slightly hokey, eatery offers a great introduction to Ukrainian food without breaking the bank. Appetisers like *deruny* (potato cakes) and *borshch* cost less than 20uah, and even salmon *shashlyk* is only 45uah. Wash it down with *horilka* (vodka; 5uah per shot).

**Himalaya** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 462 0437; vul Khreshchatyk 23; mains 25-55uah; 📍 Teatralna) Himalaya has occupied a prime perch overlooking Khreshchatyk for some time, and somehow it just gets better with age. The Indian food is spicier than you expect in these parts and there are many veggie options.

**Vernisazh** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 2403; Andriyivsky uzviz 30; mains 30-70uah; 📍 Poshtova pl/Kontraktova pl) The

atmosphere is arty-farty and the menu eclectic. Dishes exhibit Ukrainian, Thai and French influences and, yes, the chef is talented enough to pull it off. If it's raining you can kill time admiring the art or thumbing through their colourful coffee-table books.

**Entresol** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 8347; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 2; mains 35-60uah; ☎ 8am-midnight; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho) It's owned by the same people who run Babuin (opposite), which means funky design, hip music and snail-slow service. Like Babuin it doubles as a bookshop/library and contemporary art gallery. But the main reason to come (besides free wi-fi) is the vegetarian-friendly European food and (pricier) fresh juices.

**Varenichnaya #1** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 227 1539; vul Esplanadna 28; varenyky 35uah, mains 40-70uah; ☎ 24hr; 🍷 Palats Sportu) Specialising in *varenyky* (Ukrainian dumplings), this mimics the homy interior of an early-20th-century private apartment. Nearly 25 different *varenyky* fillings are offered. Surely, though, the live piglet in the basket near the door (so cute!) must deter anyone from ordering pork? Careful – beer is obnoxiously expensive here.

**Tsarske Selo** (Map p66; ☎ 288 9775, 573 9775; vul Sichnevoho Povstannya 42/1; mains 35-130uah; ☎ 11am-1am; 🍷 Arsenalna) This is Kyiv's quintessential Ukrainian theme restaurant, decorated in rustic 18th-century style and filled with tour groups. Ukrainian staples are superbly done, but the most famous dish is the dessert of *salo* (cured pig fat) in chocolate – only for the most adventurous.

**our pick Pervak** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 0952; vul Rognidenska 2; mains 50-80uah; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho) Kyiv's best Ukrainian restaurant masterfully creates old Kyiv (c 1900) without falling into the schmaltz trap that dogs many a Ukrainian theme resto. The chefs boldly prepare original takes on Ukrainian classics, which are adroitly delivered to tables by waitresses in frilly, cleavage-bearing country outfits. There's nightly live music and black-and-white silent movies playing on old Soviet TVs.

**Marrakesh** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 494 0494; vul Petra Sahaydachnoho 24; couscous dishes 50-100uah; 🍷 Posh-tova pl/Kontraktova pl) This showcases three things Ukrainians apparently love – '1001 Nights' Arabian design, couscous and hookah pipes. The food is good but perhaps too bland for true connoisseurs of Moroccan cuisine.

Also recommended:

**Muka** (Flour; Map pp68-9; ☎ 227 8943; vul Khreshchatyk; mains 35-100uah; ☎ noon-midnight; 🍷 Teat-

ralna) This new Italian restaurant is proof that exceptional food in Kyiv doesn't have to cost a fortune.

**Kazbek** (Map p66; ☎ 285 4805; vul Lesi Ukrainky 30a; mains 40-120; 🍷 Pecherska) Don't be misled by the flashing neon lights and adjoining casino – this place is quality. Our favourite Georgian restaurant.

Hydropark and Trukhaniv Island are both full of fun outdoor restaurants where the emphasis is on eating *shashlyk*, drinking vodka and dancing to synthesized Russian tunes. You can't say you've been to Kyiv until you've had a long, boozy afternoon or evening in one of these places. Our fave is **Myslyvyts** (Map p66; pork shashlyk 30uah, roasted half-chicken 40uah; 🍷 Hydropark), a two-minute walk east of the walking bridge in Hydropark. Just go up to the window and order. Right next door is the much more upscale **Mlyn** (☎ 516 5728; chicken/pork/catfish shashlyk 38/49/85uah), a waterfront restaurant housed in an old wooden mill. Both are open year-round.

## Top End

**Osteria Pantagruel** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 278 8142; vul Lysenka 1; mains 50-150uah; 🍷 Zoloti Vorota) Homemade pasta, risotto and bruschetta is turned out at this whitewashed cellar restaurant by Zoloti Vorota. The warm months see tables and chairs spill onto the square out front – probably the best place in Kyiv for a beer on a summer evening.

**Gorchitsa** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 253 3008; vul Shovkovychna 10; breakfasts 30uah, mains 60-125uah; ☎ 8am-11pm; 🍷 Khreshchatyk) Gorchitsa is a tale of two restaurants, one rather stuffy and expensive, the other a frivolous café with an outdoor patio and great breakfasts. Both are French and draw plenty of deputies from the nearby parliament.

**Khutorok** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 460 7019; Berth 1, vul Naberezhno-Khreshchatytska; mains 60-140uah; 🍷 Kontraktova pl) This wooden paddle-steamer moored on the Dnipro has a cosy Carpathian-style interior. Sit on the deck in summer, or huddle up to the fire in winter, while partaking of delicious *shashlyk*, green *borshch*, *khreshchenky* (beef roulades) or vegetarian options. Watch out for the wandering musicians though.

**our pick Concord** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 229 5512; 8th fl, vul Pushkinska 42/4; mains 75-200uah; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho) Concord delivers the entire package: incredible Euro-Asian fusion food, effortlessly slick interior design and impeccable service. The DJ spins tunes that everybody else will be playing three months from now. The mouth-watering salads here are like temples to the

sultan of saffras, like shrines to the Raman of radicchio. The views from atop the Donbas Centre are just dressing on the salad.

**Le Grand Café** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 278 7208; prov Muzeyny 4; mains 130-400uah; 🍷 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The height of opulence, this French eatery is the place to take a date if you're out to impress and money is no object. Naturally you'll spot plenty of politicians, many of them just here to have a snifter of Hennessy in the extravagant piano bar. If you're wondering what costs 400uah, it's the Dover sole.

Also recommended:

**Tequila House** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 417 0358; vul Spaska 8A; dishes 50-80uah; 🍷 Kontraktova pl) Food not spicy enough to be considered serious Mexican food, but the blue cacao margarita is very serious.

**Arena Beer House** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 492 0000; Arena Entertainment Complex, vul Baseyna 2A; steaks 100-190uah; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho/Teatralna) Wash down the best steaks in Kyiv with home-brewed beer.

**Grill Asia** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 581 1234; Hyatt Regency, vul Tarasova 5; mains from 100uah; 🍷 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The Hyatt's swanky signature restaurant; some consider it tops in Kyiv.

## Self-Catering

**Bessarabsky Rynok** (Map pp68-9; pl Bessarabska; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sun, 8am-5pm Mon; 🍷 Teatralna) The arrangements of colourful fruit, vegetables, meat and flowers in this light-filled hall are works of art and it almost seems a shame to disturb them by buying them – almost, but not quite. The market was built from 1910 to 12 for traders coming to Kyiv from Bessarabia (see p183). Some imported produce is on sale (at a high price).

**Volodymyrsky Rynok** (Map p66; vul Horkoho 115; 8am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🍷 Palats Ukraina) One block west of Palats Ukraina metro station, this market has more local, and hence less expensive produce, than Bessarabsky. Its wave-like roof is architecturally impressive.

**Furshet Gourmet** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 230 9522; basement, Mandarin Plaza Shopping Centre, vul Baseyna 4; ☎ 24hr; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho) An upscale supermarket with imported foods, pre-prepared meals and – what else? – a sushi bar.

**Megamarket** (Map pp68-9; vul Horkoho 50; ☎ 8.30am-11.30pm; 🍷 Respublikansky Stadion) A little further out but worth it if size and selection are what you seek.

**Silpo Podil** (Map pp68-9; vul Sahaydachnoho 41; ☎ 24hr; 🍷 Kontraktova pl) pl Peremohy (Map pp68-9; vul Olesya Honchara 96; ☎ 8am-10pm) The Podil location is beneath San Tori restaurant.

## DRINKING

Smoky basement bars dominate the action in Kyiv until late spring, when the drinking masses move outside to summer terraces. You'll save money by doing as the locals do and buying beverages from street kiosks and drinking them as you stroll.

## Pubs & Bars

**Baraban** (The Drum; Map pp68-9; vul Prorizna 4a; ☎ 11am-11pm; 🍷 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This popular journo hangout is hard to find but a colourful cast of regulars manages to do so on a nightly basis. This is *the* place to talk politics and plot revolutions, and it also has decent food at good prices – including burgers in the 35uah range.

**Babuin** (Baboon; Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 5980; vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 39; ☎ 9am-2am; 🍷 Universytet) This funky and fun venue is actually three entities in one: bar (by night), café (by day) and bookshop (all the time). We put it here because come 5pm the main activity is most definitely drinking alcoholic beverages, often to a live-music accompaniment. It's a perennial winner of the slowest-service-in-Kyiv award.

**Sunduk Pub** (The Chest; Map pp68-9; vul Leontovycha 7; 🍷 Zoloti Vorota/Universytet) Although the motif here is old movies, it still has a fairly traditional pub feel and a wide selection of imported and local beer. Still, most people come for the relatively cheap Ukrainian eats and outdoor patio. There's a smokier, much less appealing version on vul Mykhaylivska 16.

**Bierstube** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 9472; vul Chervonoarmyjska 20; ☎ 8am-2am; 🍷 Pl Lva Tolstoho) The German-influenced menu (all dishes served with charming mugs o' ketchup and mustard), smoky basement air and chummy environment persist post-Eric (for this place's sad story, see the boxed text, p90). However, the service has taken a nosedive. Go through the archway and hug the right.

**Viola's Bierstube** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 3751; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 1a; ☎ 8am-2am; 🍷 Teatralna/Pl Lva Tolstoho) The Bierstube's former sister bar is still run by Eric's ex-wife, Viola. It's similar to the Bierstube (down to the mugs o' mustard), but the service is friendlier and better. The hard-to-find dark wooden door is on the left under the archway leading to the courtyard (it's under a vent).

**Blindazh** (Bunker; Map pp68-9; ☎ 228 1511; vul Mala Zhytomyrska 15; ☎ 8am-2am; 🍷 Maydan Nezalezhnosti) This textbook dive bar, done up like a Red

## THE BEER HALL HETMAN

Although his fortunes fluctuate like a stock market, German bar and club entrepreneur Eric Aigner is a legend in the arena of Kyiv bars and clubs. Half the bars listed here are either formerly managed by Eric or imitations of Eric's former bars. But partnerships sour readily in Kyiv, and just before we arrived Eric had (not for the first time) been forced out of all of his business interests, including his flagships Eric's Bierstube (now just 'Bierstube'; see p89) and Art Club 44 (see right). As we went to print, news reached us that Eric was being sued by a former partner in Kyiv and had moved his act to Odesa. Eric's days in Ukraine appear to be numbered but his legacy lives on.

Army bunker, has old Kalashnikovs, grenades and other weaponry behind the bar for you to fondle. Order a 'Boromirovka' – Burn energy drink and tonic mixed with 14 shots of vodka and served in an old metal pail (130uah).

**Shakalad** (Map pp68-9; Chocolate; ☎ 289 0194; vul Shota Rustaveli 39/41; ☎ 9am till last client) An uberhip student crowd gathers here to take advantage of affordable eats (mains 30uah to 55uah) and swap digits (and occasionally saliva) in the co-ed bathrooms. The outdoor patio is a fun place to warm up for big summer nights out – indeed many people never make it beyond here.

**Shato** (Map pp68-9; vul Khreshchatyk 24; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Maydan Nezalezhnosti) Mainstream by location and comfortably so by nature, this popular brewpub has large picture windows overlooking Kyiv's main drag. Order a Slavutych beer; it's brewed on the premises.

Kyiv's two main Irish pubs are bitter rivals, but relative equals in terms of service, atmosphere and beer selection. For sports nuts, both venues have multiple large screens, accommodate match requests and stay open late for big games. For whatever reason **Golden Gate** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 235 5188; vul Zolotovoritska 15; ☎ 11am-1am; ☎ Zoloti Vorota) tends to draw the American and German expat crowd, while **O'Brien's** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 1584, vul Mykhaylivska 17A; ☎ 8am-2am; ☎ Maydan Nezalezhnosti; ☎ 8am-2pm) attracts English, Irish and Scottish elements. O'Brien's is slightly more affordable and is renowned for its breakfasts.

## Cafés

Dozens of coffee shops, most of them chains, have sprung up in Kyiv, making it easy to find a cup of real brewed coffee anytime, anywhere.

**Kaffa** (Map pp68-9; prov Tarasa Shevchenka 3; ☎; ☎ Maydan Nezalezhnosti) The recent onslaught of coffee houses has not changed one thing: long-standing Kaffa still serves the most heart-pumping, rich-tasting brew in town. Coffees and teas from all over the world are served in a pot sufficient for two or three punters in a blissfully smoke-free, whitewashed African-inspired interior – all ethnic masks, beads and leather.

**Repriza** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 502 2346; vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 40/25; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Zoloti Vorota) Not only does it have good coffee and delectable pastries and cakes, but it also makes a fine, affordable lunch stop.

**Pasazh** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 229 1209; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-11pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Khreshchatyk) This Austrian-style coffee house is one of several cafés found on and around Pasazh, a hip street accessed through an ornate archway off vul Khreshchatyk. Great for people-watching as you tuck into some of its delicious cakes.

Of the chains, our favourites are **Double Coffee** (Map pp68-9; vul Mykhaylivska 6; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Maydan Nezalezhnosti) for its breakfasts and **Kofiy** (Map pp68-9; Maydan Nezalezhnosti vul Kostyolna 4; Pechersk vul Sichnevoho Povstannya 1/3; ☎ 8am-10pm) for its general bohemian ambience.

## ENTERTAINMENT CLUBS

The following are well-established clubs that avoid the worst excesses of Kyiv nightlife (ie strip shows and prostitutes). The club scene is constantly in flux, so check *What's On Kyiv* and the *Kyiv Post* for the latest big thing. Women usually get a substantial discount off admission prices listed here.

**Art Club 44** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 229 4137; vul Khreshchatyk 44; admission 30-70uah; ☎ 10am-2am; ☎ Teatralna) This former Eric venue (see left) has suffered a big drop in the quality of its music. Still, it has a great atmosphere for watching live local bands – even if the thuggish bouncers now demand the hefty cover charge several hours before the music starts. Through the courtyard at 44, the unmarked entrance is on your left.

**Shooters** (☎ 254 2024; vul Moskovska 22; admission 50-70uah; ☎ Arsenalna) A classic pick-up joint where hordes of expats and pretty young things flock

night after night to dance to the same tired soundtrack until way past bedtime.

**Caribbean Club** (☎ 288 1290; vul Kominternu 4; admission 50-80uah; ☎ Universytet) Sort of a Latin version of Shooters, complete with sleazy Wednesday 'Ladies' Night'. It's been around forever, which tells you something.

**Pomada** (Lipstick; ☎ 279 5552; cnr vul Zankovetskyoi & vul Pasazh; admission varies; ☎ 6pm-6am) You know Kyiv's come a long way when we can actually publish the names of gay clubs (they used to all be underground). This is lively and centrally located, but it's the one place in town where women pay *more* to get in.

**Dnipro Party Boats** (☎ 462 5019; admission 25uah; ☎ about every 20min from 10am-midnight May-Aug, less frequent Apr, Sep & Oct;) To really go local take one of these 1½-hour 'disco' river cruises. They're cheap, they're cheesy, and they're unpredictable. Just buy a ticket, board the boat (they leave when full) and start drinking. Didn't think you'd get caught dead dancing to Russian pop? Think again. Catch the boats at pier 11, south of the *richnoy vokzal* (river boat terminal).

At the top end, new clubs are constantly trying to outdo each other in terms of price, decadence and beauty of clientele. **Decadence House** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 206 4920; vul Shota Rustaveli 16; admission 100-200uah; ☎ Pl Lva Tolstoho) was the original VIP club, soon followed by **Arena Night Club** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 492 0000; Arena Entertainment Complex, vul Baseyna 2A; admission 100-150uah; ☎ Pl Lva Tolstoho/Teatralna). But the talk of the town when we were there was newly opened **Barsky** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 8-066 562 1277; Arena City complex, vul Chernovoarmyiska 5; admission 200uah; ☎ Pl Lva Tolstoho/Teatralna). To enter any of these you'll have to pass through some of the strictest *feis kontrol* (face control, ie door policy) in the city, so dress the part.

Two popular summer venues are in Hydropark: **Sun City** (see p81; nightclub admission 50-100uah) and **Jeans Beach Club by Opium** (Map p66; ☎ 561 8228; admission 50-100uah). Hydropark also has a clutch of more downmarket clubs on the south side of the metro tracks that can get decidedly ugly as the evening wears on.

## Rock

Olympic Stadium (p92) hosts a few large outdoor rock concerts and festivals every summer. The main venues for big rock and pop concerts:

**Palats Sportu** (Sports Palace; Map pp68-9; ☎ schedule 246 7405/06; reservations 501 2520; pl Sportyvna 1; ☎ Palats Sportu)

**Palats Ukraina** (Ukraine Palace; Map p66; ☎ 247 2476, vul Chervonoarmyiska 103; ☎ Palats Ukraina)

## Classical Music & Opera

Tickets to classical music and opera performances are significantly cheaper than in the West. To get a decent seat will usually only set you back about 20uah. Advance tickets and schedules are available at the theatres or at *teatralna kasa* (theatre box offices) scattered throughout the city. Handy ones are at the entrance to **Globus Mall** (p92) and at vul Khreshchatyk 21 (near Khreshchatyk metro).

**Taras Shevchenko National Opera Theatre** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 7165, www.opera.com.ua; vul Volodymyrska 50; tickets 20-300uah; ☎ Zoloti Vorota) This is a lavish theatre (1899–1901) and a performance here is a grandiose affair. True imbibers of Ukrainian culture should not miss a performance of *Zaporozhets za Dunaem* (Zaporizhzhians Beyond the Danube), a sort of operatic, purely Ukrainian version of *Fiddler on the Roof*. It tells the story of a group of Zaporizhzhyan Cossacks exiled by Catherine the Great to the Danube river basin in present-day Romania. The opera, which plays roughly twice a month, is in Ukrainian, but has plenty of music, dance and colourful costumes to entertain all. For more on the Danube Cossacks see the boxed text, p183.

**National Philharmonic** (Map pp68-9; ☎ tickets 278 1697, information 278 6291; www.filarmonia.com.ua; Volodymyrsky uzviz 2; ☎ box office 10am-2pm & 3-7pm; ☎ Maydan Nezalezhnosti) Originally the Kyiv Merchants' Assembly headquarters, this beautiful building is now home to the national orchestra.

**House of Organ & Chamber Music** (Map p66; ☎ 526 3186; vul Chervonoarmyiska 75; tickets from 10uah; ☎ shows 7.30pm; ☎ Respublikansky Stadion/Palats Ukraina) Housed in neo-Gothic St Nicholas' Cathedral.

## Cinema

**Kinoteatr Kyiv** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 7381; www.kievkino.com.ua in Russian; vul Chervonoarmyiska 19; ☎ Pl Lva Tolstoho) Usually has one nightly showing in English.

## Theatre

Theatre-going is a major part of Kyiv life, but most performances are in Ukrainian or Russian. The following may be of borderline interest if you're not schooled in Slavic tongues.

## LOSE OR DIE

During WWII, when Kyiv was occupied by Nazi Germany, the members of the talented Dynamo football team were challenged to a public match with a team of German soldiers. The Ukrainians formed a team called Start, and despite physical weakness brought on by the occupation, they were soon ahead in their first match. At half-time, German officers came into the dressing room and commanded them to let up. Nevertheless, Start continued to play hard, and before the game finished the referee blew the whistle and called it off (with a score of four to one).

The Germans reshuffled their players, and Start was offered another chance to lose. Instead they won. Next, Start was pitted against a Hungarian team – and won again. Finally, the enraged Germans challenged Start to a match against their finest, undefeated team, Flakelf. When the *Übermensch* of Flakelf lost, the Nazis gave up – and proceeded to arrest most of the Start players, several of whom were executed at Babyn Yar (p79). A monument to them still stands in Dynamo Stadium in Kyiv. Their story inspired the movie *Victory*, starring Sylvester Stallone and soccer legend Pele. Andy Dougan's *Defending the Honour of Kyiv* (2001) is a readable, well-researched account of the incident.

**Koleso Kafe-Theatre** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 425 0527; Andriyivsky uzviz 8A; **M** Kontraktova pl) This semi-avant-garde theatre has an informal, café-like environment. Performances involve much song and dance as well as food, so understanding the language is not essential.

**Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 279 5991; www.franko-theatre.kiev.ua in Ukrainian; pl Ivana Franka 3; **M** Khreshchatyk) Kyiv's most respected theatre has been going strong since 1888.

## Sport

Dynamo Kyiv is one of the most recognisable names in European football and **Dynamo Stadium** (Map pp68-9; vul Hrushevskoho 3; tickets from 15uah; **M** Maydan Nezalezhnosti) is the team's modestly sized home. Ticket booths are out front near the statue of a young Valery Lobanovsky, the late, legendary coach of Dynamo Kyiv and the Ukrainian national team. There's also a memorial to WWII team Start (see boxed text, above).

All Ukrainian national team matches, as well as most of Dynamo's European matches, kick off at the larger **Olympic/Respublikansky Stadium** (Map pp68-9; vul Chervonoarmiytska 55; tickets from 30uah; **M** Respublikansky Stadion). Tickets for the stadium's 100,000 seats are sold at kiosks in front of the entrance gates. This is also the scheduled venue for the final match of the Euro 2012 football championships.

Palats Sportu (see p91) hosts Ukraine's international basketball and hockey games.

## SHOPPING Souvenirs

Apart from *horilka*, which is available everywhere, something to look out for is Kyivsky

Tort, a nutty, layered sponge cake sold in circular cardboard cartons. Stalls around the train stations have huge stockpiles. Popular nonedible souvenirs include traditional embroidered shirts, *pysanky* (painted eggs), *matryoshka* dolls, Dynamo Kyiv kits and USSR hockey jerseys. All of these can be found in droves along Andriyivsky uzviz (p73).

**Original Ukrainian Souvenirs** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 2277; vul Pushkinska 31a; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat; **M** Pl Lva Tolstoho) has a great selection of high-quality embroidered shirts and skirts, *bulavy* (spiked clubs carried by Cossack hetmans), and *pysanky*.

## Shopping Centres & Markets

Clothing outlets line Khreshchatyk and fill the enormous underground **Metrograd mall** (Map pp68-9) and the **Globus mall** (Map pp68-9; **M** maydan Nezalezhnosti). However, prices aren't always cheap and some of the fashions (including fur) might not appeal to Western tastes.

**TsUM** (Map pp68-9; vul Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 2; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; **M** Khreshchatyk) With a little nod to Harrods, and a huge bow to the dusty 1970s department store in *Are You Being Served?*, this purely Soviet monolith is where you should head when replacing any lost or damaged essentials.

**Bessarabsky Rynok** (Map pp68-9; pl Bessarabska; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sun, 8am-5pm Mon; **M** Teatralna) Grocery shopping is rarely such an aesthetically pleasing experience, so this market full of colourful fruit and veg should definitely not be missed (see p89).

**Petrivka Market** (Map p66; pr Moskovsky; ☎ 8am-6pm; **M** Petrivka) Locals call it the 'book market'

but you can get a vast array of junk here. It's also Kyiv's main receptacle of DVDs, CDs and software of questionable legitimacy.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY Air

Most international flights (except a handful to/from Georgia) use **Boryspil International Airport** (KBP; ☎ 490 4777; www.airport-boryspil.kiev.ua), about 35km east of the city. Many domestic flights use **Zhulyany airport** (Map p66; ☎ 242 2308; www.airport.kiev.ua in Ukrainian), about 7km southwest of the centre. For more details and a list of airlines flying to/from Kyiv, see p252.

**Ukraine International Airlines** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 234 4528; www.ukraine-international.com; vul Lysenka 4; **M** maydan Nezalezhnosti) and **Aerosvit** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 3490; www.aerosvit.com; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 58A; **M** Universytet) are the two main national airlines.

Plane tickets are also sold at **Kiy Avia** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 4902; www.kiyavia.com; pr Peremohy 2; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun). It has another branch at vul Horodetskoho 4 (☎ 490 4949).

## Boat

Kyiv is the most northerly passenger port on the Dnipro and the usual starting or finishing point of river cruises between May and mid-October (contact Chervona Ruta; see p66). There are no longer any passenger ferries from Kyiv to points south on the Dnipro.

## Bus

There are seven bus terminals, but the most useful for long-distance trips is the **Central Bus Station** (Tsentralny Avtovokzal; Map p66; ☎ 525 5774; pl Moskovska 3), one stop from Lybidska metro station on trolleybus 4 or 11, or *marshrutky* 507, 726 or 444 (among others).

Long-distance express carriers **Autolux** (☎ 451 8628; www.autolux.com.ua) and **Gunsel** (☎ 525 4505; www.gunsel.com.ua) run by far the fastest and most comfortable buses in the business. They have frequent trips to most large regional centres; most go via, or continue to, Boryspil airport. You can book on their websites or buy tickets at the Central Bus Station or Boryspil airport.

See p254 for info on buses to international destinations.

## Marshrutka

Destinations near Kyiv are best reached by private *marshrutky* that gather at metro stations on the outskirts of town. *Marshrutky* to Zhytomyr

leave every 20 minutes until 8.30pm from the north exit of the Zhytomyrska metro stop (20uah, 1½ hours). *Marshrutky* to Berdychev (25uah, 2¼ hours, every 1½ hours), gather on the other (south) side of pr Peremohy.

For Chernihiv, *marshrutky* leave from both Chernihivska and Lisova metro stations (20uah, 1¾ hours, every 15 minutes).

Kharkivska metro station is the point of departure for *marshrutky* to Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky (10uah, one hour, every 20 minutes) and Cherkasy (30uah, 2½ hours). *Marshrutky* to Kaniv (20uah, 2½ hours) depart hourly from **Podil Bus Station** (Map pp68-9; nr Nizhny hor & pr Yaroslavytsk).

If time and flexibility are of the essence, you might consider *marshrutky* to more distant destinations. These can be found outside Kyiv's train station near the McDonald's. Destinations served include Lutsk (45uah, five hours, hourly), Rivne (35uah, four hours, hourly) and Khmelnytsky (40uah, 4½ hours, hourly). The latter is handy if trains to Lviv or Kamyanets-Podilsky are sold out, as Khmelnytsky is a convenient jump-off point to both destinations.

All of the *marshrutky* listed here are 15-seat minivans. They leave when full and do not accept standing passengers.

## Train

Although trains are rarely the quickest option, you can get pretty much everywhere in the country from Kyiv's modern **train station** (Vokzal; Map pp68-9; ☎ 005 503 7005; pl Vokzalna 2), conveniently located near the centre at Vokzalna metro station. For international train information, see p254. For Russia, see p257.

Heading west, the quickest way to Lviv is on the express day train (70uah, 6½ hours, one or two daily except Mondays), or there are several overnight passenger trains (100uah, nine to 11 hours). Other popular western destinations include Uzhhorod (110uah, 17 hours, four daily), Ivano-Frankivsk (95uah, 12 hours, daily) and Chernivtsi (85uah, 15 hours, two daily). There's both an overnight and an express train to Kamyanets-Podilsky (see p111 for details).

Heading south, there are about five (mostly night) services to Odesa (110uah, nine to 12 hours) and two daily services to Sevastopol (120uah, 17 hours). These and two additional trains per day go to Simferopol (110uah to 145uah, 15 hours).



The handiest eastbound trains are the two daily Stolichny Express to Kharkiv (72uah, six hours) via Poltava (56uah, 3½ hours), departing at 6.33am and 5.30pm. Several overnight trains also serve Kharkiv (87uah, 8½ to 10 hours). There are two daily express trains to Dnipropetrovsk (72uah, six hours), along with a host of slower trains. Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and all other big eastern cities are also well served by train.

You can buy tickets at virtually any of the myriad ticket booths in both the **Central Terminal** (Tsentralny Vokzal) and the new, adjacent **South Terminal** (Pivdenniy Vokzal), or at the **advance train ticket office** (Map pp68-9; bul Tarasa Shevchenka 38/40; ☎ 7am-10pm; M) Universytet), a five-minute walk from the station, next to Hotel Express. You can also buy train tickets from Kiy Avia (p93).

## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

Catching an Atass bus is the usual way to Boryspil airport (22uah, 45 minutes to one hour). Buses (marked 'Aracc') depart from behind the train station's South Terminal every 15 to 30 minutes between 4.40am and 1.20am. Shared taxis to the airport also leave from here; these should cost 30uah per passenger but they will try to get more out of foreigners. At Boryspil, buses arrive/depart from in front of the international terminal.

One way to save a few hryvnia – and considerable time on the way to the airport during rush hour – is to take the metro out to Kharkivska station. Atass buses all stop under the bridge here to collect passengers (16uah, 20 minutes). Make sure the bus says 'Аеропорт' as buses marked simply 'Boryspil' (Вориспiл) go to Boryspil town. The same trick works leaving the airport, as all departing Atass buses stop at Kharkivska metro on their way to the South Terminal.

Good negotiators will pay 100uah to 125uah to the airport from the centre for a taxi; bad negotiators might pay twice that. Avoid taking metered cabs from the centre as they are much pricier. Taking a taxi from Kharkivska metro station avoids rush hour in the centre and costs only 60uah to 75uah. Taxis into town from the airport cost 130uah if arranged at the airport taxi desk. Use that as a benchmark for negotiating with the myriad freelance drivers.

To get to Zhulyany airport, take trolleybus 9 from the train station's South Terminal (40 minutes).

### To/From the Train Station

The taxi drivers hanging out by the train station can be the biggest rip-off artists in Kyiv, typically charging 60uah to 100uah for what should be a 20uah ride into the centre. Avoid them by walking five minutes to bul Tarasa Shevchenka, or better yet, save money by taking the metro.

### Car

All the major car rental players and various minor ones are represented in Kyiv. The following had the cheapest weekly rentals when we came a-calling.

**Sixt** (Map pp68-9; ☎ 490 8158; www.sixt.ua; vul

Mytrivska 46)

**Smart** (☎ 491 8424, 8-067 230 3888; www.smart-car-rent.kiev.ua) Call for free delivery.

**Sun Service** (☎ 8-067 470 5596) Call for delivery.

### Public Transport

Kyiv's metro is clean, efficient, reliable and easy to use if you read Cyrillic (see the metro map, p72). Many of the stations are several dozen stories underground, requiring escalator rides of seven to eight minutes! Trains run frequently between around 6am and midnight on all three lines. Blue-green plastic tokens (*zhetony*) costing 50 kopecks (good for one ride) are sold at kiosks at metro station entrances.

Buses, trolleybuses, trams and many quicker *marshrutky* serve most routes. Tickets for buses, trams and trolleybuses cost 60 kopecks and are sold at street kiosks or directly from the driver/conductor. *Marshrutky* rides cost from 1uah to 2uah.

### Taxi

Taxi prices in Kyiv have quadrupled in recent years but remain cheap by world standards. Expect to pay 20uah to 30uah for short (less than 5km) trips within the centre. Very important: always agree on the price before going anywhere.

Taking standing taxis from outside hotels inevitably incurs a much higher price, so have your hotel call a metered taxi or try to flag one down on the street (although this is getting more and more difficult). Unofficial 'cabs' are still pretty common in Kyiv and are the cheapest option if you speak a little Ukrainian or Russian. Try calling or texting **Shanson** (☎ 588 2828, 8-067 920 2424) or **Radio Taxi** (☎ 249 6249, 8-067 405 6249).

## AROUND KYIV

Kyiv lies in the heart of the woodsy Polissya region. Outdoor types can have a field day camping, canoeing, fishing and *shashlykyng* (picnicking) in the forests that roll north-west and northeast of Kyiv along the Desna and Teteriv Rivers. Life isn't complicated in these parts; people work the land and fish the streams and when it's time to relax they head to the woods or, in the winter, the *banya* (bathhouse). Some say this region epitomises the 'real Ukraine' and, frankly, it would be hard to argue that.

Only the section of Polissya northeast of Kyiv, centred around Chernihiv, is covered in this section, as Chernihiv makes a popular and convenient day trip from Kyiv. Chornobyl, which has fast become the most popular day trip out of Kyiv, is also covered here. The western half of Polissya is covered in the Central Ukraine chapter (p100).

### CHORNOBYL ЧОРНОБИЛЬ

It's the world's weirdest day trip; one for extreme tourists and a once-in-a-lifetime experience you probably *won't* want to repeat. A package tour to the Chornobyl exclusion zone will take you to the heart of an apocalypse and sear itself into your memory.

Tours to the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster (see p61) were launched in 2001 as niche experiences for the well-heeled and morbidly curious. But in the last few years they have exploded in popularity thanks to heaps of international publicity, much of it generated by **Elena Filatova** (www.kiddofspeed.com), who claimed that she drove her motorcycle through the zone in 2004. Actually, all she did was ride to the gates before taking an official tour with a travel agent. Still, at the time it was a relative novelty.

So what's the deal? Well, first you have to decide whether to risk it. By all accounts, the risks are minimal. Most scientists agree that you receive no more radiation on your three hours or so in the zone than you would on a New York-London flight. If you're worried you can wear your own radiation exposure strip (used by X-ray technicians and easily purchased from medical suppliers back home).

Rather than fretting about radiation, you'll probably find yourself following your guide,

complete with Geiger counter, around in search of radiation hot spots, most likely caused by buried pieces of radioactive something. Guides know just where to find them, and when they do the entire tour group gathers around to gawk as the Geiger counter beeps its way up to 7000 or 8000 micro-roentgens (normal background radiation is 14).

Of course you should take normal precautions: keep off the particularly radioactive moss, watch where you put your hands, don't go wandering off into open fields and stay away from food grown in the zone. There are a few heart-stopping moments when you're checked for radiation when entering working buildings and leaving the zone. Reportedly, only one tourist has ever set off the alarm – a Dutch photographer who foolishly spent too much time wandering around in the woods.

The first stop on the tour is the monument to the 29 firefighters – the 'initial liquidators' – who died in the weeks after the disaster. You'll then visit a river with some giant catfish (giant because of a lack of predators and competitors, rather than through mutation) before visiting infamous reactor No 4, where the disaster



occurred (you can't go inside without special permission and a special protective suit).

The largest chunk of the tour is spent wandering around the ghost town of **Prypyat**. At the end of the tour you may drop in on one of the 350 zone residents or *samosels* (you should request this in advance), before having a late lunch at an authentic old Soviet-style *stolova* in Chernobyl town – a highlight in itself for first-time visitors to the former Soviet Union (don't worry, the foo Charlotte Lindstrom d is brought in from outside the zone). The much-photographed graveyard of helicopters, fire trucks and other rescue vehicles used in the clean-up operation is now off limits; its contents destined for sale as scrap metal.

Different people react to Chernobyl in different ways. You don't see anything remotely gruesome, but for many the experience is unbalancing and discomfiting. You might come away feeling like a voyeur and morally ambivalent. Some are most moved by the sight of reactor No 4 and its familiar, prehistoric-looking sarcophagus. For others, the most chilling part is the eerie walk through the deserted playgrounds and edifices of Prypyat. Between the right-on stilted conversation and outbreaks of gallows humour, don't be utterly surprised to catch yourself thinking, 'What am I doing here?'

Tours have become much easier to arrange and a little cheaper as they have become more popular. For a list of recommended tour operators, see p66. If you're travelling alone or in a small group you'll save a lot of money by latching onto another group. SoloEast has a space on its website for individual travellers looking to hook up with other travellers. It charges \$135 per person as long as there are at least 10 people. A tour for one person is \$480; for two people it's \$520. Most other travel agencies will also let you join up with other groups. Rates vary widely among travel agencies, so get several quotes.

## CHERNIHIV ЧЕРНІГІВ

☎ (8-)0462 / pop 305,000

You'd never guess it today but in the 11th century Chernihiv was one of the three great cities of the Kyivan Rus, along with Kyiv and Novgorod (near St Petersburg). Inside the Boryso-Hlibsky Cathedral, looking at a plan of the old 10th- to 12th-century town on the wall, you'll see it must have really been something. As a raised bluff of land, it formed its

own natural fortress and commanded trade routes south to Kyiv. Today, the main reasons to visit are the Antonyi Caves, kayaking on the Desna River and a tight cluster of churches, which rise up from the plain as you approach town. Otherwise, Chernihiv makes a relaxing, rather than exciting, retreat.

## Sights

Life in Chernihiv revolves around **pl Chervona** (Red Square), which locals still call by its Russian name, *Krasnaya ploshchad*. In the park extending southeast of the square along vul Shevchenko is the **St Pareskevy Pyatnytsi Church**, named after the patroness of the large outdoor market that once occupied pl Chervona. Despite its sturdy, fortress-like appearance only about one-third of the church survived WWII. With its imposing brick walls and single cupola, it reflects the style popular when it was built in the 12th century – a style epitomised by the Nereditsa Church in Novgorod.

From pl Chervona it's a three-minute walk southeast along vul Myra to the historic core, known as **Dytnets** ('citadel' in old Russian) or simply 'Val' (ramparts), because it was the site of the raised natural strategic fortress. Today it's a leafy park dotted with domed churches overlooking the Desna River. The 12th-century **Boryso-Hlibsky Cathedral** (admission 3uah; ☎ 9am-5pm) is in the same short, squat style as the Pareskevy Pyatnytsi Church. It's worth visiting for the stunning silver **Royal Doors**, commissioned by the famous Cossack leader Ivan Mazepa. The gorgeous building next to it is the 18th-century **collegium**, built in a style known as Ukrainian baroque.

Nearby is the **Spaso-Preobrazhensky Cathedral** (Transfiguration of the Saviour; 1017) with its two distinctive missile-like corner bell towers. Within its dark interior are the tombs of several Kyivan Rus royalty, including the younger brother of Yaroslav the Wise. Lining the southwestern edge of the Val is a row of 18th-century **cannons**, from where you get a prime view of the five sparkling golden domes of **St Catherine's Church** in the immediate foreground. This is the church you see from several kilometres away if you drive into town from Kyiv.

## ANTONIY CAVES, ILLINSKY CHURCH & TRINITY MONASTERY

About 2km southwest of St Catherine's Church you'll spot the 58m bell tower of the

**Troytsko-Ilynsky Monastery** (Trinity Monastery). The **Antonyi Caves**, Chernihiv's answer to Kyiv's Kievo-Pecherska Lavra (p75), lurk beneath the ground a short walk north of this monastery, under the early 11th-century **Illinsky Church** (admission church & caves 4uah; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri). The caves consist of 315m of passageways, galleries and chapels constructed from the 11th to 13th centuries. These are very different from those in Kyiv in that they lack both dead mummies and, for the most part, live tourists. The conditions here were too cold and humid to support mummification. Instead, the bones of monks killed during the Mongol invasion are preserved in a windowed sarcophagus; touching the sarcophagus is considered good luck. The cave's benefactor and namesake, St Antonyi of Pechersk, also helped burrow the Lavra caves.

While you're out here it's worth checking out the monastery and climbing the **bell tower** (admission 2uah; ☎ 10am-7.30pm), which looks right down on the 17th-century **Trinity Church**, an important pilgrimage site that is often mobbed with worshippers.

It's about a 3km walk to the monastery from the Dytnets, or you can jump on trolleybus 8. To get to Illinsky Church get off at the stop before the bell tower and follow the dirt path downhill through the park across the street from the bus stop.

## Tours

Dima of the **Centre for Green Tourism** (☎ 8-050 321 0845; www.explorechernigov.narod.ru; 2-/3-day canoe trip per person \$50/70) runs canoe trips on the Desna with overnight homestays or camping in rural villages. A good route is the three-day trip from Novhorod Siversky to Chernihiv.

The efficient Klaudia Petrivna runs the show at the Prydesnyasky Hotel **travel agency** (☎ 954 828, 8-050 313 5175; tourcenter@chernigivhotel.com.ua). She personally guides city tours in English.

## Sleeping & Eating

Most people do Chernihiv as a day trip from Kyiv but there are plenty of places to lay your head should you wish.

**Prydesnyasky Hotel** (☎ 954 802; www.chernigivhotel.com.ua; vul Shevchenko 99a; s/d from \$24/48; (P)) This quiet option is located slightly northeast of the centre. Rooms are moderately renovated Soviet, but not too bad. A three-minute walk from here is a cluster of restaurants and some

primitive beach facilities on the Desna River. To get here take any bus heading down vul Shevchenko from the corner of pr Myra.

**Hotel Slovyansky** (☎ 698 344; pr Myra 33; s/d \$42/80; (P) (B)) Still known by its former name, the Ukraina, its recent renovations have remarkably transformed it into Chernihiv's swankiest hotel. It's also the most centrally located.

For some rural flavour call Sergei and Tanya, a hospitable couple who run a log cabin-style **B & B** (☎ 668 961, 8-050 352 1899; cabins for couples/large groups \$25/100) on a lake in the ancient village of Andriyivka, about 25km southwest of Chernihiv.

## Getting There & Around

The best way here from Kyiv is on a *marshrutka* from Lisova metro station (20uah, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes until midevening), which will drop you off anywhere in Chernihiv centre. The departure point to return to Kyiv is in front of the Hotel Slovyansky on pr Pobedy. There are a few trains to Kyiv, including a daily *elektrychka* (electric train) that takes about three hours.

The train and bus stations are right next to each other 2km west of pl Chervona, on pl Vokzalna. Take trolleybus 3 or 11, or just about any *marshrutka* to the 'Hotel Ukraina' (Slovyansky) stop in the centre.

## PEREYASLAV-KHMEЛNYTSKY ПЕРЕЯСЛАВ-ХМЕЛНИЦЬКИЙ

☎ (8-)04467 / pop 37,000

The 'museum city' of Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky was the hometown and stronghold of Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky, and also where he signed the infamous agreement accepting Russia's overlordship of Ukraine on 18 January 1654 (p28).

Today the whole town, with its 23 museums, has been declared a historical preserve. The highlight is the outdoor, 32-hectare **Folk Architecture Museum** (admission 3uah; ☎ 10am-5pm). Annoyingly, you must pay about 2uah extra to view each of the traditional houses on display. The park is a 15-minute walk from the Lenin Statue (turn right at the monument if walking from the bus station), or a roundabout 8km taxi ride.

The churches and museums in the town centre are clustered on central pl Vozvednannya, which lies off the main street, vul Khmelnytsky. Here you'll find the **Ascension Monastery**, with two prominent churches, and nearby the 17th-century **St Michael's Church**, where an

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: NOVHOROD SIVERSKY**

Travelling back in time to the days of the Kyivan Rus can be an elusive goal. Kyiv? Too big and flashy. Chernihiv? Too Soviet (Red Square? *Puh-leeeze*).

But there's at least one small town that hasn't quite lost that Kyivan Rus feeling – Novhorod Siversky, 180km east of Chernihiv. In the 12th century this was the realm of Igor Svyatoslavych, a brave prince whose exploits were immortalised in *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, a famous 12th-century Russian prose poem later made into an opera.

Today it's the site of the idyllic **Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery** (Transfiguration of the Saviour; admission free; ☞ sunrise-sunset) a complex of wood-shingled buildings and golden-domed churches surrounded by charming 19th-century country homes and perched over the leafy banks of the Desna River. The monastery dates back to Igor's era, although it has been rebuilt several times. Its last facelift was in 2004, on the occasion of a summit between presidents Kuchma, Lukashenko and Putin (Kuchma was born about 30km from here).

Strolling around the quiet grounds picking fruit off the monastery trees, you'll definitely feel like you're in another era. A wooden walkway atop the monastery fence provides prime views of the forested Desna valley, and it's an easy walk down to the river bank should you care for a swim or a picnic. The monastery grounds house a **museum** (admission 2uah; ☞ 9am-6pm daily) dedicated to Igor.

A two-minute walk from the monastery is the incongruous sight of a top-end hotel, built for the 2004 summit. The **Hotel Slovyansky** (☎ 8-046 583 1801; vul Lunacharskoho 2; r from \$60; 📞 📺) is a remarkable deal considering what you get – four-star comforts, albeit without the four-star service. In the town centre is the perfectly comfortable **Pasvyrda Hotel** (☎ 8-046 582 1225; vul Karla Marksa 3; r per person \$8).

To/from Chernihiv there are about six *marshrutky* per day (25uah, 3½ hours), or a taxi can get you here in under two hours (return \$70 to \$80). This is one trip where renting a car from Kyiv might make sense because the road out here is scenic, in good shape and lightly travelled.

Orthodox church stood even before the Kyivan Rus converted to Christianity in 988. Today it's a museum of Ukrainian dress, although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), is controversially clamouring to take it back.

Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky is 90km southeast of Kyiv and makes an easy day trip – just catch one of the *marshrutky* that depart for Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky every 20 minutes from outside Kharkivska metro (10uah, one hour).