

Ukraine Україна

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Kyiv** Get down and dirty with the capital's nightlife, and repent in the morning at one of many glorious churches (p1177)
- **Lviv** Sip a cappuccino or a beer beneath the Gothic eaves of this haunting city (p1181)
- **Best journey** Board a night train in the awesome capital, Kyiv (p1177), and wake up in lovely Lviv (p1181), a totally different Ukrainian world

FAST FACTS

- **Area** The biggest in Europe, at 603,700 sq km
- **ATMs** Widespread
- **Budget** At least 250hry per day
- **Capital** Kyiv
- **Country code** ☎ 380
- **Famous for** The Orange Revolution; Chernobyl
- **Head of State** President Viktor Yushchenko
- **Languages** Ukrainian (official), Russian
- **Money** Ukrainian hryvnia (hry); A\$1 = 3.75hry, CA\$1 = 4.55hry, ¥100 = 4.46hry, NZ\$1 = 3.15hry, €1 = 6.44hry, UK£1 = 9.37hry, US\$1 = 5.02hry
- **Phrases** *doh-brih dyen* (hello),



ya nih rah-zoo-mee-yu (I don't understand),
dya-koo-yoo (thanks)

- **Population** 48.4 million
- **Time** GMT/UTC +2
- **Visas** Required for Australians and New Zealanders; arrange in advance

TRAVEL HINTS

Watch out for the heavy entrance doors to the Kyiv metro stations – they really pack a punch. And if you're diving into your chicken Kiev for the first time, cut into it carefully; inside is a ball of hot melted butter that can spray like a geyser if you're not careful...

ROAMING UKRAINE

Kick around Kyiv for at least three days, and give Lviv your lovin' for two or more.

The spirit of rebellion still sizzles in Ukraine, where the Orange Revolution rocked the government walls, and the world at large, with its peaceful, successful protest against corrupt elections. Finally, democracy has taken a foothold, as the glamorous fashionistas, hip cafés and clubs, and speeding, expensive cars with tinted windows make clear: Ukraine is on the move – and it's tough to keep up.

The capital is awesome, with grand, ancient religious sites and more nightclubs than you can shake a Polaroid picture at. And just a train ride away is super nationalistic, Old World Lviv, where the purest strains of the Ukrainian language are spoken with pride under the Gothic eaves of fragrant cafés.

Since the revolution, visa restrictions have loosened, and most travellers don't need one anymore. With the recent opening of youth hostels, there's no good reason you shouldn't explore to the very edges of Eastern Europe.

HISTORY

Before the 13th century, Ukraine was yanked back and forth by nogoodniks such as the Huns and Mongols before settling in the hands of Russian princes. By the 15th century, groups of fierce, wild fighters calling themselves Cossacks (sort of like punks on horseback) fought anyone who encroached upon their borders or belief system (Orthodoxy).

In 1932 and 1933, Stalin engineered a famine, killing millions in Ukraine. In WWII, an estimated six million Ukrainians died.

Ukraine declared independence from the USSR in August 1991, and Leonid Kuchma was the scheming president until recently. He knew he wouldn't be able to run in the October 2004 presidential elections, so his crony Viktor Yanukovich ran instead. But the international press and Ukrainian public were all about Viktor Yushchenko, who was poisoned a week before the elections, allegedly by political foes, turning his ruggedly handsome face...just rugged.

Because no one carried more than 50% of the votes in the first round, there was a run-off, which showed Yanukovich as the winner. But people didn't buy it, and the next day 500,000 people gathered on Kyiv's maydan Nezalezhnosti with tents and orange flags. They stayed on in the snow, sometimes numbering over a million, until 26 December 2004, when a new run-off took place. Yushchenko won and was inaugurated in January 2005.

He chose lovely, powerful and crafty Yuliya Tymoshenko (also known as 'the Gas Princess' and 'Glamour Girl of the Orange Revolution') as his prime minister – a real 'beauty and the beast' story. But as the saying goes, revolutions eat their children. Since Yushchenko's victory, his popularity has declined, with allegations of corruption, bad press about his obnoxious son

and a Russian oil crisis. Near-daily protests in Kyiv have been a reflection of the citizens' impatience at the sluggish pace of reform. In September 2005, the president fired Tymoshenko under political pressure. And ironically, in August 2006, possibly in an attempt to patch up relations with powerful Russia-backed interests, Yushchenko named his former foe, Viktor Yanukovich, as prime minister.

READING UP

Everything Is Illuminated, by Jonathan Safran Foer, is the unforgettable, mostly fictional story of the author's trip to western Ukraine to find the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis.

THE CULTURE

The Ukrainian population is 78% Ukrainian and 17% Russian. The remainder includes Belarusians, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Tatars and Jews. Almost all of the country's Tatar population (about 250,000) lives in Crimea.

Although most Ukrainians speak Russian, many people in Lviv will not use the language, and the number of English-language speakers is growing.

RELIGION

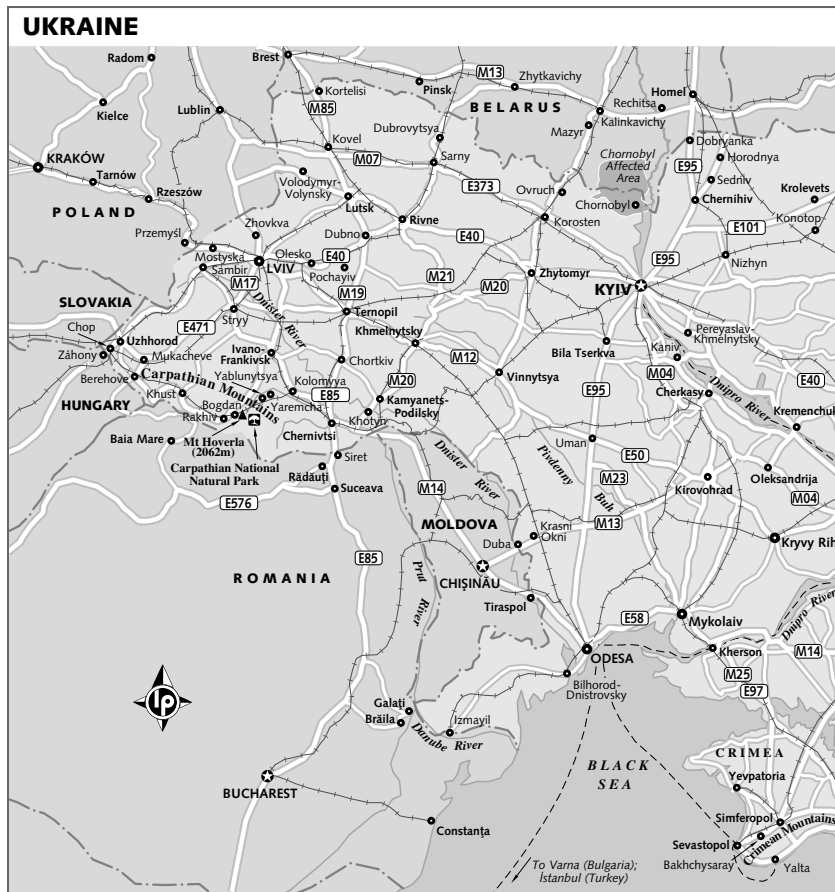
Nearly 97% of Ukrainian believers are Christian. Central and southern Ukraine mostly follow the Moscow-based Ukrainian Orthodox Church, while the rest of the country follows either the Kyiv-based Uniate Church (also known as the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and under the jurisdiction of the Vatican). There are some small Jewish minorities in cities. Muslim communities, primarily Tatars, live in Crimea.

ENVIRONMENT

On 26 April 1986, reactor No 4 at Chernobyl (Chernobyl in Russian) nuclear power station, 100km north of Kyiv, exploded and almost 9 tonnes of radioactive matter spewed into the sky. Roughly 4.9 million people living in northern Ukraine, southern Belarus and southwestern Russia were affected. Western

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 03
- Fire ☎ 01
- Police ☎ 02



monitors now figure that radioactivity levels at Chernobyl are negligible, so organised tours of the site and surrounding 'ghost' villages occur, if you dare. A Web search will reveal agencies offering tours.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

AeroSvit, Ukrainian International Airlines and major European airlines fly to and from Kyiv's airports:

Boryspil Airport (☎ 490 7777; www.airport-boryspil.kiev.ua) International flights, some domestic; 35km from centre.

Zhulyany Airport (☎ 242 2308; Povitroflotskii prasppekt 92) Domestic and short international flights; 4km from Kyiv.

Boat

See www.ukrferry.com, www.lst.com.ua or www.eugeniatours.com.ua for details on boat travel on the Black Sea.

Bus

Apart from **Autolux** (www.autolux.ua) – a private company with comfortable domestic buses – train travel is far preferable.

Train

Passports are required for ticket purchases in Kyiv. Kyiv is a good hub, with daily trains to all surrounding countries and Ukrainian cities.



GETTING AROUND

Car rentals (Avis, Hertz and Europcar) are available in Kyiv and Lviv, but sometimes only allow driving in the city.

KYIV КИЇВ

☎ 044 / pop 2.66 million

The new Kyiv is flashy, fast and ready for action. Ukraine's capital has as much to offer as its more high-maintenance sister, Moscow – but with a gentler touch and lower price tag. Explore the Caves Monastery, where mummified monks still receive the prayers and kisses of believers. Do some souvenir shopping on steep, winding Andriyivsky

uzviz. Catch an awe-inspiring glimpse of the gargantuan steel Soviet woman on the banks of the gentle Dnipro River. Take a leisurely stroll down vulitsa Khreshchatyk to maydan Nezalezhnosti, the nerve centre of the Orange Revolution, and celebrate the country's victory with a Ukrainian beer at one of the city's many happening nightclubs. This is Kyiv. *Vive la revolución!*

ORIENTATION

The main street, closed to motor traffic on Saturday and Sunday, is vulitsa Khreshchatyk. The Dnipro River flows north–south just east of the centre. Although there are some nice sandy beach areas along the east side of the river (called the Left Bank), the area is generally devoid of interest and somewhat dangerous at night.

Get a metro map in front of the post office.

INFORMATION

There are no tourist information centres in Kyiv.

Just next to the post office's main entrance is a 24-hour internet centre charging 10hry per hour.

Hotel maids will do laundry for a reasonable rate. Many apartment rentals offer a washing machine.

Left-luggage offices are at the train and bus stations; hotels will hold luggage for free.

ATMs and currency-exchange booths are ubiquitous. Rates offered by hotels are not necessarily worse. Larger banks will cash travellers cheques and give cash advances on credit cards.

American Medical Centre (☎ 490 7600, emergency 461 9595; www.amcenters.com; vulitsa Berdychivtsya 1) English-speaking dental and medical services at American standards. West of the centre.

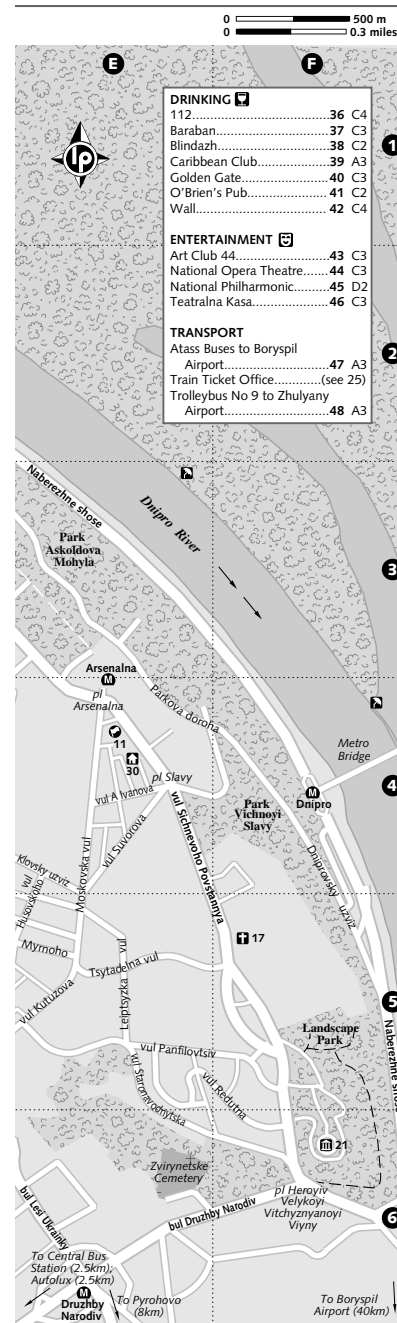
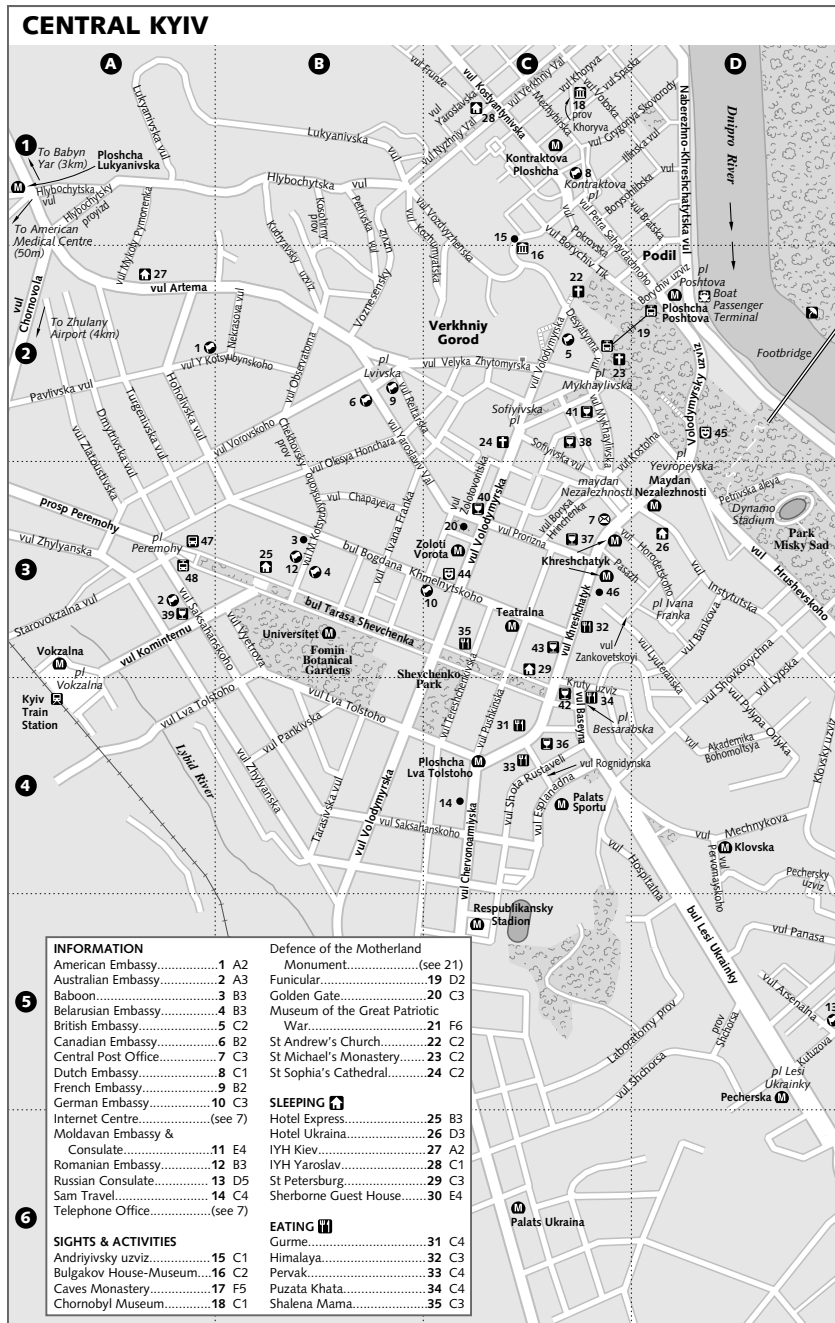
Baboon (☎ 234 1503; vulitsa Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 39) A hip bookstore-restaurant-performance venue.

Central post office (☎ 065; vulitsa Khreshchatyk 22) Has a 24-hour phone office.

Sam Travel (☎ 287 5019; vulitsa Chervonoarmiytska 34) City tours and popular Chernobyl tours.

SIGHTS

With its underground labyrinths lined with mummified monks, the **Caves Monastery** (☎ 290 3071; vulitsa Sichnevoho Povstannya 21; adult/child 16/8hry; ☎ 9.30am–6pm upper lavra, sunrise-sunset lower lavra, 8.30am–4.30pm caves) is the spiritual heart of the Ukrainian people.



as central (linked by buses), but it's open year-round. See www.hihostels.com.ua for booking and other Lviv hostel options.

Hotel George (☎ 72 59 52; www.georgehotel.com.ua; ploshcha Mitskevycha 1; s/tw with private bathroom 319/388hry, s/tw with shared bathroom 154/187hry) The George has a weary grandeur that's very charming. The rooms with shared bathroom are a superduper deal. Staff speak some English and are good-humoured.

EATING & DRINKING

In addition to these listings, there are several good outdoor cafés on the east side of prospekt Svobody.

Puzata Khata (☎ 240 3265; vulitsa Sichovykh Striltsiv, mains 5-15hry) This popular café/terrace-style chain serves up Ukrainian staples.

Europa (☎ 72 58 62; prospekt Shevchenka 14; mains 12-30hry) Small, cosy and relatively quiet, Europa is a good place for a filling meal of Ukrainian food.

Dryzga (vulitsya Virmenska 35) Caffeine and alcohol are both served at this bohemian café/arts centre.

Korzo Pub (☎ 296 7092; vulitsa Brativ Rohatyntsiiv 10) Expats and locals both enjoy this Irish-style pub; eat elsewhere.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Lviv airport** (☎ 69 21 12; www.avia.lviv.ua) is 9km west of the centre. There are flights Monday to Friday only to/from Kyiv.

The **train station** (☎ 35 33 60, 26 19 06; ploshcha Dvirtsya) is 1.75km west of the centre. Get tickets at the **train ticket office** (☎ 748 20 68; vulitsa Hnatyuka 20); be prepared to stand in line a while. There are four daily trains to Kyiv.

The **long-distance bus terminal** (☎ 63 24 73; vulitsa Stryjska 271) is 8km south of the centre. Advance tickets for public buses to Kyiv (three daily) and international destinations are sold at the **bus ticket office** (☎ 97 11 08; vulitsa Teatralna 26) – look for the kaca sign. Privately run **Autolux** (www.autolux.com.ua) operates from the long-distance terminal, sending nice, modern buses to Kyiv and other cities; see the website for details.

GETTING AROUND

Walking is the best option around central Lviv. There are multitudes of *marshrutki* (minivans that run as private buses) marked Центр (Center); any of these should traverse the main part of prospekt Svobody.

UKRAINE DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Book travel and accommodation well in advance during the 1 May holidays. Hostels are just starting up in Ukraine; check www.hihostels.com.ua/en for details.

Most budget hotels are unsightly Soviet monstrosities built in the '60s and '70s. Rooms are often well-worn with outdated furniture, but are reasonably comfortable.

Midrange hotels or more expensive rooms in budget hotels may have more polite staff and remodelled, Western-style bathrooms.

BUSINESS HOURS

Official working hours are 9am (or 10am) to 5pm (or 6pm) Monday to Friday, with an hour-long break anywhere between noon and 3pm. Shops often open until about 8pm Monday to Friday and all day Saturday. Most bars and restaurants tend to open from 10am until 11pm or midnight; clubs stay open later.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Ukrainian Embassies & Consulates

Australia (☎ 02-6230 5789; www.ukremb.info; Level 12, George Centre, 60 Marcus Clarke St, Canberra)

Canada **Ottawa** (☎ 613-230 8015; www.ukremb.ca; 311 Metcalfe St); **Toronto** (☎ 416-763 3114; fax 416-763 2323; 2120 Bloor St West)

France (☎ 331 43 06 07 37; fax 331 43 06 02 94; 21 ave de Saxe, Paris)

Germany (☎ 4930 2888 71 16; www.botschaft-ukraine.de; Albrechtstrasse 26, Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-668 5189; emb_ie@mfa.gov.au; 16 Eglin Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin)

Netherlands (☎ 3170-362 60 95; www.oekraine.com/core/embassy; 76 Zeestraat, The Hague)

UK (☎ 044-7243 8923; www.ukremb.org.uk; 78 Kensington Park Rd, London)

USA **Washington** (☎ 202-333 7507/08/09; www.ukraineinfo.us; 3350 M St NW, Washington, DC); **New York** (☎ 212-371 5690; www.ukrainesf.com; 240 E 49th St); **Chicago** (☎ 312-642 4388; www.ukrchicago.com; 10 E Huron St); **San Francisco** (☎ 415-398 0240; www.ukrainesf.com; 530 Bush St, Ste 402)

Embassies & Consulates in Ukraine

The following are in Kyiv unless otherwise noted:

Australia (☎ /fax 235 7586; vulitsa Kominternu 18)

Belarus (☎ 537 5200; ukraine@belembassy.org; vulitsa M Kotsyubynskoho 3)

Canada (☎ 270 7144; www.kyiv.gc.ca; vulitsa Yaroslaviv Val 31)

France (☎ 278 8728; www.ambafrance.kiev.ua; vulitsa Reitarska 39)

Germany (☎ 247 6800; www.german-embassy.kiev.ua; vulitsa Bogdana Khmelnytskoho 25)

Moldova (☎ 280 7721; moldoukr@sovamua.com; vulitsa Sichnevoho Povstannya 6; (M) Arsenalna)

Netherlands (☎ 490 8200; nlambkie@ukrpack.net; Kontraktova ploshcha 7)

Romania (☎ 234 5261; romania@iptelecom.net.ua; vulitsa M Kotsyubynskoho 8)

Russia **Kyiv** (☎ 294 7936; embrus@public.icyb.kiev.ua; vulitsa Kutuzova 8); **Lviv** (☎ 69 20 36; consrus@lviv.gu.net; vulitsa Patona 7a)

UK (☎ 490 3600; www.britemb-ukraine.net; vulitsa Desyatynna 9)

USA (☎ 490 0000; www.usemb.kiev.ua; vulitsa Y Kotsyubynskoho 10)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

International Labour Day (1 May) is always a big deal. On the last weekend of May, the capital celebrates **Kyiv Days**.

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Orthodox Christmas 7 January

International Women's Day 8 March

Orthodox Easter (Paskha) April

Labour Day 1-2 May

Victory Day 9 May

Constitution Day 28 June

Independence Day 24 August

Catholic Christmas 25 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

Try the huge www.brama.com; click on TravelBB for a traveller's forum about Ukraine.

MONEY

One hryvnia equals 100 kopeks. The only things you can legally pay for in US dollars are international flights and foreign visas. ATMs, currency exchanges and Western Unions will never be hard to find.

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POST

Normal-sized letters or postcards cost 3hry to anywhere outside Ukraine by 'ordinary mail' or a bit more for 'express' service. Domestic services take three days to a week; international services take a week to 10 days.

TELEPHONE

Every city and large town has a telephone centre (many open 24 hours), usually near the central post office. Pay in advance (you will get change for unused time). Public phones are a hassle. Operator assistance can be reached 24 hours a day at ☎ 8-191/2/3/4; it's possible but problematic to speak in English to an operator.

When dialling Ukraine from abroad, dial ☎ 380, the city code (without the first zero) and then the number. To call overseas from Ukraine, dial ☎ 8 (wait for a tone), then 10, followed by the country code, city code and number. You can reach an AT&T operator by dialling ☎ 8-100-11, and an MCI operator at ☎ 8-100-13.

For interstate calls within Ukraine, dial ☎ 8, wait for a tone, then the city code (with its first zero) and number – there should always be a 10-digit combination. If a telephone number has seven digits, use the first two digits of the area code, but if the telephone number has five/six digits use the first four/three digits of the area code.

To dial a local mobile phone within Ukraine, you must always prefix it with an 8, as if calling another town. Common codes for mobiles include 050 and 067.

VISAS

For stays of up to 90 days, visas are no longer required for EU, US, Swiss, Canadian and Japanese citizens. Australians and New Zealanders still need visas (and the visas should be obtained before you leave home; not in a neighbouring country). Point-of-entry visas are not issued. Comprehensive information about application and fees can be found at www.ukremb.info.