

VOLHYNIAN ADVENTURE TOURS

Orientation Guide

Compiled by Donald N. Miller

DATE

May 12 – 26, 2008. This is a two-week tour from beginning to end. It is one of the best times of the year to visit Ukraine as the weather is beautiful and the villagers are available for interaction.

PRIMARY PACKAGE

The primary package includes visiting the villages of your ancestry within the area known as Volhynia, roughly from Zhitomir to Rozyszcze. It is guaranteed that you will be able to visit all of your primary villages and most of your secondary villages. Obviously, the smaller the group, the greater the chances of spending all the time you need or want in your villages. In addition, you will have the opportunity of sightseeing in the beautiful city of Kiev, doing research in the State Archives in Zhitomir, including the former Party archives, visiting historic Bolshevik sites in Zhitomir, interacting with villagers, enjoying the Ukrainian culture, and sharing a farewell dinner together. For those of you who are interested, there will also be opportunity attend church on Sunday in an Orthodox or other church and to see some of the work done by *Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine*, the international charitable humanitarian organization, which I founded in 1993.

All of our daily activities will follow a pre-determined itinerary and will be accompanied by national English-speaking guides and interpreters. However, our schedule should probably carry the old line from the RR schedules, “**Subject to change without notice,**” as many things in Ukraine are not as readily accessible or available as they are in the US or Canada. Or the group itself may decide to do something different than what was on the schedule for the day, or they may choose to change the schedule entirely. The final schedule will not be made up until within two weeks of departure.. As you may know, the infra system in Ukraine is woefully lacking, which sometimes makes definite planning a little hazardness. But be assured that we will do everything within our ability to keep the tour as “hassle free” as possible. During our last half dozen tours, we have not had a single hitch.

The tour is “all-inclusive” as far as cost is concerned, but there are **some additional options with possible expenditures**: For example, you may rent a car with an interpreter to re-visit any villages, do additional archival research, visit relatives or friends, continue on to Poland for research or make a stop over in other parts of Europe. Any departure from the regular tour itinerary to pursue these activities, however, will be at your own expense. Also the gratuity for our liaison in Ukraine, the person responsible for the land arrangements, is not included. We suggest a gratuity of \$4-5./day/person based on 13 days in Ukraine.

LAND ARRANGEMENTS

Accommodations, including board and room, are included in the package. In Kiev we usually stay together in a downtown apartment within walking distance of Independence Square where the *Orange Revolution* took place. In Zhitomir (or Rovno and Lutsk, if applicable) we stay in a hotel or rent a home in the center of town where all the action is. You need to understand that the hotel rooms are quite small and very Spartan. There are no Four or Five Star hotels in the smaller cities. That's just the way it is in the former Soviet countries, but be assured we will get the best there is within our budget.

Land arrangements also include experienced Ukrainian English speaking guides and interpreters, travel by a modern, comfortable van, maps and myself as an experienced resource leader. I have been to Ukraine some 25 times, done extensive research in the archives, made numerous friends, acquaintances and contacts and written a number of books about the Germans in Volhynia, and so I have considerable experience.

The cost for the land arrangements is a flat fee of \$165./day/person (based on 13 days) in US funds is due approximately four months in advance of the trip. This may seem high, but the cost of living in Ukraine has risen very dramatically in the last several years. Airline tickets are in addition to this. All airline flight schedules must be cleared with me prior to finalization in order to coordinate our schedules, minimize problems and maximize our time and enjoyment. Not included in the above package are passport, travel/health insurance, and overnight hotel accommodations in Frankfurt, if needed, and gratuities. Anyone needing hotel accommodations in Frankfurt may want to consider staying at the Frankfurt Airport Ibis Hotel for around 75 euros (about \$100. based on current exchange rates). Its only about 10 minutes by shuttle from the airport and the accommodations are nice. Telephone: +49 (0) 61 07/98/ 70 or go on line at www.ibishotel.com (<http://www.ibishotel.com>).

SIGHTSEEING IN KIEV

Kiev, with a population of over two million, is a very old historical city. It was founded around 400 AD. Some sites we may visit include Kiev-Pecherskaya Lavra (a complex of Orthodox temples), St. Sophia's Cathedral, an outstanding architectural monument dating back to 1037, Chernobyl's Museum, depicting the nuclear explosion, Andrei's Descent (a great place to buy souvenirs), Babi Yar Monument, the site of mass extermination of Jews during II World War and Prince Vladimir's Monument on the Dneiper River, commemorating the beginning of Christianity in Russia. We may even take a two-hour boat cruise down the Dneiper River, depending on time and availability, and of course, it is always interesting just to walk the streets and enjoy an evening out on the town.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Archival research is an important part of this tour. We usually begin with an all-day visit to the **Zhitomir State Archives**. Each of you (person or couple) will have the benefit of

an English-speaking national to assist you in your research. The cost of the first day is included in the tour package. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the tour member. Here you will find index cards with family names. The materials may include civil and church records (birth, marriage and death) records, land records, citizenship papers and other information. The findings are often astounding, but there are no guarantees. Ordinarily important information is found in about 50 to 60% of the time. Sometimes it has been substantially higher than this. On the other hand, some people have found nothing.

There are also index cards for most of the villages. These often include census information, with the listing of names and historical data. Newspapers are also available, which contain information about land that was expropriated in 1915, put up for auction and sold, as well as general articles about important happenings during the 1920 and 1930s. Copies of documents can be made at the archives, but it is important to check on the cost requesting that it be done. Permission to work in the archives is required prior to arrival. Hand scanners are not permitted in the archives.

For those of you who have family members who were repressed, you will want to visit the former **Party Archives** to access available files. Here the success rate of finding a file on a family member who was arrested or disappeared during the 1930s is much higher than in the State Archives. Again each tour member or couple will have the benefit of their own person interpreter/translator as part of the package benefit.

Resettlement records are housed in the Archives of the *Ministry of Internal Affairs*, however, the research can only be done by an authorized employee of the State Archives. We have the services of such a person available for ca \$15-20./day, which I can arrange, but I will need to know prior to the trip. We have all the names on database in Zhitomir, so if you want me to check if there is a file on your person of interest, let me know.

In addition, **ZAGS** (Bureau of Vital Statistics) can be a good source of information. A few years ago, I found the death records there for my grandmother. Also, the local **Police Department** sometimes has records that can be useful. Beyond that, there are **District Offices** that often contain B/M/D records. These are located in the larger towns and cities, such as Korosten, Wolodarsk, Novograd-Volynskiy, Pulin and Barashow.

If you need/want the use of your own interpreter/translator beyond the group package deal, either for archival research, sight seeing or cultural enrichment, the cost is ca \$25./day.

STOP OVER IN EUROPE

The tour allows you to make a stop over in Europe at a nominal fee, usually \$100, charged by the airlines. No visa is required for Poland if your stay is less than three months.

PASSPORT

You must have a valid passport to travel to Ukraine. A passport is valid only if it does not expire within six months of the date of departure. Be sure to check your passport carefully for this information. It normally takes four to six weeks to process an application in the US. To get a passport you must have a certified birth certificate (with raised seal) and two passport pictures. The current cost is around a \$100. It is valid for ten years. The cost to renew your current passport is about \$50. Canadian requirements and costs may vary. Applications can normally be obtained from your local county and/or the post office. If you do not presently have a valid passport, you are advised to apply immediately. Space on the tour is not guaranteed unless you have a passport in hand.

VISA

A visa is no longer required to enter Ukraine.

PREPARATION

You are encouraged to gather as much information as possible about your ancestry and village(s) before the trip. Many of you, of course, will already have done extensive research, but for those just starting out, here are some obvious sources:

- Family and friends (personal interviews, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, backs of photos, inside of old books, including records in the family Bible, birth, marriage, baptism, military, school and death certificates, baby books, obituary notices, school year books, business and financial papers, announcements and invitations, newspaper clippings, awards and certificates, immigration and naturalization papers, deeds, family artifacts, tomb stones, etc.)
- County and State records (birth, marriage, divorce, death).
- Funeral homes, church records, genealogical societies, census records, passenger lists, LDS library, Social Security Death Index.
- Recent arrival of German relatives from Siberia, Kazakhstan, etc.
- Old telephone directories, various archives, AHSGR Obituary files
- Genealogical researchers, EWZ records (forms completed by refugees retreating with the German Army).
- Maps of Volhynia and Poland to identify your villages. The names of the villages should also be submitted to me, as well as your family names, so that I can help you make this a meaningful tour.
- Read articles of general interest giving historical perspective. If you have Baptist roots, consider reading my book entitled, *In the Midst of Wolves* (A History of German Baptists in Volhynia, 1863 – 1943), and if a family member was arrested during the repression of the 1930s, my book *Under Arrest* is a must. For general information about the times in which the people lived, you may want to get my latest book *The Old Country*. Also you can go to my web site: **Volhynia.org** for additional information.

- Consider bringing a small hand battery powered recorder. It's a great time saver and memory jogger. A camcorder or digital camera is also nice.

LUGGAGE

1. Ordinarily, you are entitled to two 50 lb. suitcases and one carry-on bag not to exceed 22 X 14 X 9 inches, depending on the airlines you're using. Be sure to check with your airline. Airlines vary so watch the size of your carry-on bag. In any case, do not take more luggage than you can personally carry and be responsible for. Try to get all your personal items into one suitcase. In other words, travel light, unless you want to bring in some good used clothing, especially shoes, to give to some needy people in your villages. The people in the villages are very poor. Because the collective farms have gone "belly-up," the unemployment rate is about 80%. In that case bring as much good used clothing along for distribution in your villages as you can.
2. Bring along a small padlock for your luggage. Most airline carriers do not allow you to lock your luggage when you check in, but there may be occasions when you may want to keep your suitcases locked.

PACKING HINTS

1. Roll sweaters, shirts and blouses rather than folding them. This causes fewer wrinkles and saves space.
2. Place heavy items, such as shoes and appliances along the back of your suitcase. This will keep them from wrinkling your clothes.
3. Stuff socks and underwear inside your shoes to utilize space.
4. Pack a small flashlight. Keep in mind that there are no operative streetlights in Zhitomir. Also, often light bulbs are missing in the hallway or restrooms of the Archives and other public buildings.
5. Put your shampoo, lotion, mouthwash, etc. in small bottles to conserve space.
6. Bring a small hand mirror. That way you can shave, fix your hair or apply make-up while the other person is using the bathroom.
7. Avoid clothes that need ironing.
8. Make a checklist prior to departure, i.e. of passport, tickets, cash, maps, genealogy records, notebook, suitcases, etc.
9. Couples should split their clothing, putting some of each ones clothing in each other's luggage, in the event one piece is lost or does not arrive on time. But it's not a big deal. In many trips I have made only once has anyone's luggage been delayed.
10. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes for village exploration and adventure.

APPLIANCES- ADAPTERS

1. Go with an easy-care hairstyle. If you need a hair dryer, get a small travel size or share one with a tour member. Do not bring curling irons.
2. You must purchase an international converter and plug adapter if you plan on taking any electronic appliances, such as shavers (if not a dual system), hair dryers, video cameras that do not have a built in converter, as the electrical current is 220 volts

A.C. 50 cycles. If your appliance has a built in converter, you will only need a plug adapter. These items can be purchased for a small cost at most K-Mart, AAA or luggage stores.

CURRENCY

1. The local currency in Ukraine is called **grivnas**. The current rate of exchange is approximately five to one in our favor, i.e. five grivnas to \$1. USD.
2. Bring enough US cash (Canadian cash or Euros can be used, but American bills are generally preferred) to cover any additional on-location costs, such as for shopping, as Ukraine does not readily accept credit cards, except at major stores and hotels. Traveler's checks are not accepted at all. The exchange is best done in a bank or exchange stand once we get there. Major credit cards and ATM cards are accepted at the Zhitomir Hotel and at select locations in downtown Kiev.
3. It is best to have clean 100., \$50. or \$20. bills for exchange. The money changers are suspicious of old dirty, marked or torn bills. Order ahead of time at your bank. The maximum you can take into the country is \$10,000., which I am sure is not a problem for any of us. It is also good to take some single dollar bills along for tipping.
4. It is generally best to carry your money and passport with you at all times in a money belt or neck pouch. **Do not carry your passport or cash on your back as in a backpack or rump sack, but around your neck or in a money belt.**
5. Other valuables should be kept in a locked suitcase, Pick pocketing and petty theft is probably the single most common crime foreigners encounter, but it shouldn't be a problem where we're going or staying.

VILLAGE GIFTS

As previously indicated, the people in the villages are very poor. It can be a very beautiful thing to give a villager who helps you a small gift. I have found that a pack of needles, a pair of gloves or socks, a bottle of aspirin or Tylenol, vitamins or Ben gay make great gifts and are always appreciated. This can be supplemented with something from your state/province or country, such as postcards of your city and pictures of your family. **You are requested not to give money to street beggars or needy people in the villages, except through our national director of Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine or myself, as we have learned from experience that it is not always safe and often the money is used for alcoholism and drugs.** (A few years ago one of our tour members gave a Gypsy boy a \$1. in the market place and before he knew it about 30 adult gypsies adults boxed him in and bombarded him with requests. He was lucky he didn't lose his wallet, passport and camera).

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

1. Even if the Ukrainians smile at your attempts to speak a few words of their language, they'll appreciate it. Get a small Ukrainian-English dictionary and learn a few basic words and phrases. I will send you some common Ukrainian/Russian words to practice, if you like.

2. Guard what you say around the nationals about their culture or country.

BOTTLED WATER

DO NOT DRINK WATER FROM THE TAP in Ukraine. Drink only bottled water or distilled water, which we will provide. Any other water is unsafe. Coffee and tea made in restaurants is safe. In addition, it is not wise to drink cold beverages with ice or brush your teeth with anything other than boiled or bottled water. If affected by the parasite in their water, you will suffer diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fatigue, nausea and vomiting. Because we will be traveling in villages where there may not be any restaurants, we will carry a packed lunch for our noon meal. This will also maximize our time.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS

1. Do not buy foodstuffs from vendors on the street.
- 2 DO NOT GO OUT FOR A WALK ALONE, BUT ALWAYS TRAVEL IN PAIRS OR GROUPS. Women should always be accompanied by a man. It is safe in Ukraine, especially when we are with nationals we know, but it may not be prudent to venture out by your self.

WEATHER

1. The weather in Ukraine at this time of the year is continental, which means that spring and fall can still be a bit cool, so you are advised to bring along a sweater and/or light jacket.
2. A hat (cap) is also a good idea.

EMERGENCIES

For all practical purposes, it is best not to think in terms of your family or friends contacting you during your trip. However, if there is an emergency, they can contact you through Alex Brzheztskyy, the national director for Samaritan Ministries in Ukraine. His e-mail is guaki@mail.ru or samaritan_ministries@rambler.ru. His cell phone number is 011 38 0 67 9635905. Family members can always reach him at that number day or night. When needing to reach Alex while in the Ukraine, dial 8, wait for a signal, then dial 067 9635905. It is a good idea to keep this number in your wallet or with your passport/papers in the event of emergency.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND HEALTH CARE

1. There are no immunizations required for visiting Ukraine, but it is advisable that your tetanus and diphtheria shots are up to date.
2. Since medical facilities and supplies are limited, good health is a requirement. If you are over 70 years of age, you are required to send me a statement from your doctor that you are fit to make the trip.
3. Take along an adequate supply of all prescriptions, vitamins and other medications.

4. Also consider taking aspirin, cold tablets, gauze pads, toilet tissue, Kleenex, moist towelettes and other personal hygiene and first aid items. Put in zip lock bags.

TOTE BAG

1. Take a tote bag along which you can carry on the trip each day.
2. Important things to carry in your tote bag are your camera, film (plus an extra battery for your camera), pictures of your home and family, business cards, pen and notebook, snacks, bottled water, breath mints, small gifts, tissue, medication, bottle opener, toilet paper, Kleenex, hand wipes, sun glasses, laxative, Imodium and other necessary items for quick accessibility. Be sure to identify your bag with your name and home address and while in Ukraine with a second tag bearing the name of Alex and his telephone numbers on it.

AIRPORT CHECK-IN AND FLIGHT

1. Check your luggage all the way through to Kiev, even if you are staying overnight in Frankfurt. If you are leaving on another flight within 24 hours, the airlines will hold your baggage overnight and see that it gets on the flight in the morning.
2. Keep your boarding pass stub and ticket stubs for ID and for frequent flyer records. If you have not applied for a frequent flyer card, you may want to do so, or you can get a card at the counter.
3. Wear comfortable traveling clothes.
4. Bring your cosmetics, including toothbrush, on the plane with you in your carry-on or tote bag. You will want to freshen up on the plane before we land.
5. Take some reading material along, which you can pass on to someone in Ukraine.
6. Bring all medication with you on the plane.
7. If you tend to get motion sickness, bring *Dramamine*.
8. Leave a copy of the front page of your passport at home with a family member, also make an extra copy and bring it with you (including a couple of passport pictures), in the event that your passport is lost or stolen. Keep these separate from your passport.
9. Get a small pouch with a zipper, like a bank pouch used to carry cash, to store your passport, tickets, schedule, etc. That way your important documents are always easy to reach and find.
10. To help combat jet lag, if you don't overnight, don't go to sleep until you get to your destination. Even if you end up staying up 24 hours, after the first night you'll be right on schedule.
11. If you tip for baggage assistance, it is customary to give \$1./bag, but you may prefer to handle your own stuff.
12. If this is a charitable trip, remember you can write off the entire trip when you complete your income tax forms next year.

ARRIVAL IN KIEV

Upon arrival at the airport in Kiev, the first thing you will be required to do is go through the passport control line. Before you go through the line, you will want to pick up an

entry form and complete it in detail before you get to the line. The passport people there tend to be fussy. You will need to indicate the person you are staying with. Indicate Alex Brzhezitsky, Admiral Stchastnogo 11, Apt. 4, Zhitomir, Ukraine 10000. You will be required to fill out a declaration form, pick up your luggage and go through customs. At this point it is good to get a cart for your luggage. There is no cost. When declaring the amount of money you are bringing in, if it is under \$1,000., you will be able to go through the **GREEN LINE** with a minimum amount of questions. If carrying more than \$1,000, you will be required to go through the **RED LINE** line. That's more of a hassle, but not a problem. If you bring in some humanitarian items, do not identify it as such, otherwise customs will charge you 37% of the value. If anyone asks you the purpose of your visit, just say "**Tourist.**" When asked where you are staying, say "With friends," unless advised otherwise prior to departure. Also, if they ask you if you have any gifts, say "No, just my own stuff."

RESERVATION AND CANCELLATION

The \$100. reservation fee for this trip is non-refundable. It is in addition to your land costs. Land arrangements and airline reservations must be finalized no less than 60 days prior to departure. Cancellations after booking (actual payment of land arrangements and airline tickets) may be subject to a penalty of \$300., In the event that you must cancel for medical reasons, the entire amount will be refunded to you as a courtesy, except the reservation fee. We're not hard-nosed about this. Also in the event that the tour does not materialize for some reason, all of the money paid for land arrangements will be refunded. Airline tickets may be subject to a penalty. That's up to you and your carrier. **That's why trip cancellation/interruption and travel insurance is recommended.**

LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT

You will required to sign a liability release agreement when final arrangements are made. A copy will be mailed to you at a later date.

WHAT TO TAKE (Final Check List)

1. Passport
2. Tickets
3. Cash
4. Money Belt or Pouch
5. Credit Card (one only)
6. Genealogy records
7. Small Lock
8. Camera and Film (Extra Battery)
9. Village Gifts
10. Pictures of Family/Home/America
11. Medications
12. Snacks (Trail Mix, Granola Bars, Nuts)
13. Toilet Paper (most toilets in villages do not provide toilet paper).
14. Kleenex

15. Hand wipes
16. Aspirin/Cold Tablets/Pepso Bismol/Alka Seltzer
17. Travel Alarm
18. Hygienic soap/ washcloth/Small Towel
19. Laundry Soap (small zip lock bag)
20. Bottle Opener
21. Toiletry Items
22. Pen and Notebook
23. Business Cards
24. Feminine Supplies
25. Small mirror
26. Flashlight
27. Clothes
28. Converter/Adapter

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Donald N. Miller
12814 NW Bishop Road
Hillsboro, OR 97124
1 (503) 647-5858
E-Mail: dnmiller@whiz.to
