

Poland and Ukraine

Departs
6th September, 2021

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different





\$13,490 pp

Twin share including economy
flights ex Sydney or Melb.
Single supp \$2,150

POLAND AND UKRAINE

Poland, about half the size of France, has 7 bordering countries and the Baltic Sea on her north. Her borders have changed many times over the years, however, the original state started in 966AD when a Slavic tribe called the Polans, established rule. In 1939 Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany and suffered greatly when millions were killed. After the War, Poland remained a communist Eastern Block state with close ties to Russia. The solidarity movement which ended with Lech Walesa becoming president, means that today, Poland is a democratic nation. It is considered one of the most ethnically homogeneous nations on the planet with 97% of the population being and speaking Polish. It's known for beautiful towns and villages, cosmopolitan cities, green rolling hills and freezing winters. Thankfully summers and shoulder seasons are very pleasant.

The Ukraine also has 7 bordering countries and is a land-locked nation. Her landscape is mainly fertile plains which is the main reason that other powers over the years have coveted the region. In medieval times, the region fell under the Lithuanian and Polish rule. Like Poland, her borders have also changed dramatically over time. Cossacks established the state in the mid 17th Century and allied strongly with Russia. After WWI and the Russian Revolution, Ukraine eventually became part of the Soviet Union. Parliament declared independence in 1991. Ukraine has been left off the traveller's list for too long. There are many reasons to visit including her beautiful cities, towns and villages and her culture of writers, painters, song and dance, food (it's not just chicken Kiev), architecture and religion. You'll love the scenery, rolling green hills and mountains, as you drive and train through stunning sections of the countryside.



Day 1, Monday 6th September
Depart Australia

Depart Sydney or Melbourne for our flight to Warsaw. All flights are to be advised. The rest of the day is at leisure given the long flight. *Meals in flight*

Day 2, Tuesday 7th September
Warsaw

Warsaw is Poland's largest city and its capital. It is also the country's major cultural, political and economic hub. Once described as the "Paris of the North", Warsaw was generally regarded as one of Europe's most beautiful cities until the German Invasion in 1939. By the end of WWII, it was 85% demolished, however, it was meticulously restored and the old town, now UNESCO-listed, is back to its former glory. Our tour over the next few days will take in the palaces, museums and other sights of this wonderful city. On arrival at the airport, we'll be met by our guide and transferred to the hotel for check-in where we'll stay for 3 nights. We'll enjoy a tour of the Old Town before heading back to the hotel to freshen up before the official welcome dinner, planned at a local restaurant. *D*

Day 3, Wednesday 8th September
Warsaw

After breakfast we have a full day tour visiting Warsaw's main Palaces including the viewing deck of The Palace of Culture and Science, the Royal Baths and Wilanow's

Palace. Lunch is included today at the Royal Baths. Dinner is at your leisure. *B/L*

Day 4, Thursday 9th September
Warsaw

Today we will have the opportunity to visit some of Warsaw's best museums. You can choose from all or some of the following – POLIN (Jewish History Museum), Warsaw Rising Museum (WWII history) and the Chopin Museum. Seeing these in detail will take most of the day, however, there should be some free time to roam the old city should you wish to. A special dinner is planned tonight at the famous themed Czerwony Wieprz restaurant. *B/D*

Day 5, Friday 10th September
Warsaw - Gdansk

After breakfast, the group will head north and drive for around 4 hours to the beautiful city of Gdansk – a port city on the Baltic Sea. It's famous for several historical attractions including medieval cathedrals, the grand facades of the King's Royal Way plus its ports but also the many cafes and restaurants lining the main streets of the old town. The city at night is extra special with its stunning lighting. Today, we'll enjoy a tour of the Old Town, a short cruise on the harbour and then dinner in one of the many Old Town restaurants. *B/D*

Day 6, Saturday 11th September Gdansk – Sopot – Gdansk

Today we'll take a short road trip to the resort town of Sopot. This small seaside town is where locals come to relax along promenade or stroll the longest wooden pier in Europe. We'll do the same, stopping for lunch on the Pier, before heading back to Gdansk to visit the stunningly designed Solidarity Museum. Dinner at your leisure (there are many choices). *B/L*



Day 7, Sunday 12th September Gdansk - Torun

After breakfast the group will head south to take tour of the medieval Malbork and Kwizden Castles. The Castle

fortress of the Teutonic Order in Malbork, is a UNESCO-listed 13th century castle and based on land area, it is the largest castle in the world. The Kwizden Castle is a large gothic style building and just as impressive. Then we will head to Torun on the Vistula River. Torun, another of Poland's UNESCO-listed destinations and dating back to the 8th century, is stunningly picturesque and rated amongst Europe's most beautiful cities. Check into the hotel for overnight stay before heading out to dinner at Piwniczka Restaurant. *B/D*

Day 8, Monday 13th September Torun – Poznan

After sightseeing in Torun, we will make our way to Poznan, a 2.5-hour drive south west. The city is packed with beautiful buildings, in particular, the colourful and picturesque town houses. On arrival, we'll check into the hotel and then visit the cathedral and market square. Dinner is in the Old Town. *B/D*

Day 9, Tuesday 14th September Poznan - Wroclaw

After breakfast we'll head to Wroclaw which is about 2.5 hours further south. Wroclaw has a long history combining many of the religions and cultures of Europe. Today, it is primarily a university city with a young population. In 2016 it was awarded the European Capital of Culture. On arrival late in the afternoon, check in to the hotel where we'll stay for three nights. Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 10, Wednesday 15th September Wroclaw

This morning the we'll see the main sights of the city including the Wroclaw Panorama – a painting over 100 metres long depicting Poland's win over Russia during the Battle of Wraclawice, the city's Old Town, the UNESCO-listed Centennial Hall built when the city was part of Germany and the Japanese Garden. Dinner at a local restaurant. *B/D*

Day 11, Thursday 16th September Wroclaw

After breakfast we'll take a day trip including a visit to Ksiaz Castle, the peace churches of Swidnica and UNESCO-listed Jawor – with some of the largest religious timber framed buildings in Europe. Our guide will tell you all about Ksiaz, this magnificent building that is the largest in the

region. Sections of the Ksiaz Castle date back to the 13th Century but little is known about the early days. The Castle changed hands often, belonged to various states, and was destroyed during the numerous wars that were waged there. Drive back to Wroclaw late in the afternoon in time for dinner. *B/D*



Day 12, Friday 17th September Wroclaw - Czestochowa – Krakow

Today we'll drive to Krakow via Czestochowa and the Jasna Gora monastery. Czestochowa is known as the spiritual heartland of Poland, and attracts millions of visitors from around the world, who come to fall at the feet of the Black Madonna. We'll explore the Old Town by foot before visiting the monastery which hosts the famous shrine to the Virgin Mary. We'll continue on to Krakow, where we'll check into the hotel for a three-night stay. Dinner is at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 13, Saturday 18th September Krakow

Today you will have three choices. A day tour to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp (highly emotional and may be traumatic for some, but certainly worth visiting), the Salt Mines of Wieliczka, or to spend time strolling around on your own in Krakow. Time permitted, you could visit the Kazimierz district and visit the old synagogue. This is the Jewish quarter which has become a trendy place to live and work. (Note, your guide will be joining the tour of the Salt mines as the Auschwitz visit has local guides). Dinner is at your leisure tonight. *B*

Day 14, Sunday 19th September Krakow – Dunajec River – Krakow

Today is a more leisurely day where we'll drive to the Dunajec River for a gentle boat/raft to see the Niedzica castle and dam. Drive back to Krakow for dinner and live music at Morskie Oko restaurant with its classic regional Polish cuisine. *B/D*

Day 15, Monday 20th September Krakow to Lvov

WELCOME TO UKRAINE

Today your Polish driver and guide will take you all the way to Lviv in the Ukraine where we will meet our new guide and driver. (The border crossing is seamless). Check in to the hotel for two nights and enjoy a Ukrainian welcome dinner. *B/D*



Day 16, Tuesday 21st September Lvov

Lviv (or Lvov as it is known locally) is an open-air city museum with the central pedestrian area of the city listed as a UNESCO

World Heritage Site. This morning we'll take a guided tour of the city visiting the Opera House, the Museum of



Ethnography with its "Statue of Liberty", the birthplace of Masoch and the Temples of Lvov. You'll also walk along the streets which the Austrian emperors and the kings of Poland, Russian Tsar Peter I and Nicholas II walked. Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant. **B/D**

Day 17, Wednesday 22nd September Lvov – Synevir National Park

Today we drive south about 4 hours to the Synevir National Park, overnighing in Arnika. We'll visit the pristine park to see the Brown Bear Rehabilitation Centre and the Synevir Lake. Check into the lodge for dinner. **B/L/D**



Day 18, Thursday 23rd September Synevir National Park – Uzhhorod

After breakfast we'll head west to the city of Uzhhorod. On the way, we'll stop for a tour of Saint Miklos Castle,

have a lunch break and then take an excursion to Palanok Castle. Uzhhorod is famous for its castle housing a museum with regional artefacts dating back to the 15th century. It is a city with a cosmopolitan feel given that Hungarians, Slovaks, Poles and Romanians all live there. We'll arrive late in the afternoon for a one night stay. **B/L/D**

Day 19, Friday 24th September Uzhhorod – Overnight train to Kiev

After breakfast we'll drive about 1.5 hours to Chizay Winery for a vineyard tour and some tasting. There's more sight-seeing after lunch before driving back to Uzhhorod and heading to a local restaurant for dinner. A few hours free time in the evening, before transferring to the train station for the 14 hour (approximate) overnight train trip to Kiev, the country's capital city. **B/L/D**

*Note, the train is a sleeper/luxury class but don't think 5-star. It's comfortable, two people to a room. Single supplement travellers need to share for this trip. There are light snacks on board.



Day 20, Saturday 25th September Kiev

On arrival into Kiev, we'll enjoy brunch, then a city tour. Travel back more than 1,500 years to and discover the landmarks that represent Kiev (Kyiv) through the ages. We'll begin at Old Kyiv Hill, the site where Kyiv city was founded, and home to a 500-year-old oak tree - it's a considerable walk, but worth the views. Visit St Volodymyr Cathedral, the masterpiece of neo-Byzantine style and the main temple of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. We'll walk through the Pechersk district, with its aristocratic mansions, the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery, and the Temples of Podil. Then we'll drive to Starokyivskaya mountain (prepare to make a wish!) and walk the Andriyivskyy descent, often called the "Montmartre of Kiev". In the afternoon we'll enjoy a traditional Ukrainian dance performance; you'll be amazed by the dancer's athletic and artistic abilities! After dinner at a local restaurant along the river, we'll check into the hotel for a three-night stay. **B/D**

Day 21, Sunday 26th September Kiev – Mezhyhirya – Kiev

Today is a little slower paced involving a half-day sightseeing drive and tour of the Mezhyhorya Residence.

This is now a museum showing the lifestyle lived by Viktor Yanukovich while he was president of Ukraine before being thrown out of government in the revolution of 2014. Your afternoon is free to relax or explore the surrounds. **B/D**

Day 22, Monday 27th September Kiev – Chernobyl – Kiev

An early start today to beat the crowds visiting, what has become a popular tourist sight – thanks to the recent TV series - the Chernobyl nuclear plant. Departing around 6.00am, we'll head north for about 3 hours before stopping to register for check-in at the site. On your guided tour, you'll learn all about this man-made disaster and how it was covered up for days. Visit the sites that have sat untouched for 35 years including the eerie looking theme park. Return to Kiev late in the afternoon for dinner. **B/D**

Day 23, Tuesday 28th September Kiev – Uman – Odessa

Today we have a long day's drive south to Odessa on the Black Sea. We'll stop at Sofiivka Park – where there's an abatorium and scientific research facility near the town of Uman. You'll also visit the new "Little Jerusalem" which is an authentic small-town honouring Hasidic Pilgrims and holocaust victims. The group will arrive in time for dinner at the hotel where we stay for three nights. **B/L/D**



Day 24, Wednesday 29th September Odessa

After breakfast we'll take a walking tour of Odessa. Known for its 19th century architecture, including its opera house and ballet theatre, Odessa is a popular city for local's summer holidays. The Primorsky Boulevard is a lovely stroll along the Black Sea coastline and a popular past time for locals and visitors. There'll be some free time for a stroll at leisure before taking a boat trip where lunch will be provided. Later we'll tour the Shustov Cognac museum, with a tasting of course! Dinner is planned at a local restaurant. **B/L/D**

Day 25, Thursday 30th September Odessa – Vylkove – Odessa

We'll take a scenic day trip to Vylkove and the Danube river estuary today (approx 3.5 hours each direction). On the border with Romania, the small town of Vylkove lies on the mighty Danube delta. This wild, marshy area is amidst Europe's largest wetlands, and home to a myriad of birds and wildlife; a truly special place to explore. Dinner is back at the Hotel in Odessa. **B/L/D**

Day 26, Friday 1st October Odessa – Homeward bound

After breakfast, some free in Odessa before we depart to the airport for the journey home. All flights are to be confirmed. **B/Meals in flight**

Day 27, Saturday 2nd October

In transit.



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section**. Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.