



# Essential Ukraine 2020



photo: Peter Sukonik



## Essential Ukraine

Lviv, Kiev and Odessa

### Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

Your choice of dates, suggested start day: Tuesday

*Ukraine is the borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack hetmen, Turkish khans, Russian communists, and Ukrainian poets and nationalists. The cradle of Slavic civilization, Ukraine offers an abundance of cultural treasures, a richness of detail and a largeness of spirit that can make a devotee out of even the most seasoned traveler. On this compact journey, explore Western Ukraine's Lviv with its European feel before flying to the glittering capital, Kiev, and then on to the historic port city of Odessa.*

## Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Tuesday	Arrive Lviv, Ukraine
Day 2, Wednesday	Lviv
Day 3, Thursday	Lviv
Day 4, Friday	Lviv • fly to Kiev
Day 5, Saturday	Kiev
Day 6, Sunday	Kiev • fly to Odessa
Day 7, Monday	Odessa
Day 8, Tuesday	Depart Odessa



## Tour Highlights

Lviv	Old Town (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Ploshcha Rynok (Market Square), Town Hall, Pharmacy Museum, High Castle Hill, Lychakiv Cemetery, Shevchenko Monument, Museum of Folk Architecture and Crafts, Potocki Palace
Kiev	Old Kiev Hill, Tara Shevchenko Park, St. Sophia Cathedral and Pecherskaya Lavra, or Caves Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage site), St. Andrews Church, Andreevsky Street, Chernobyl Museum, Podil District, Kiev-Mohyla Academy, Independence Square, Yanukovych's former mansion
Odessa	Potemkin Steps, Opera House, City Hall, Vorontsov Palace, Partisan Catacombs

## Daily Itinerary

### Day One, Tuesday Arrive Lviv, Ukraine

Following immigration and customs, transfer to the centrally located hotel. Relax for the rest of the afternoon, or explore the neighborhood around your hotel. This evening, meet your guide to discuss the program.

Meals: Independent/en route – *Astoria Hotel or similar*

### Day Two, Wednesday Lviv



This morning, begin a full day's exploration of **Lviv**. Lviv is one of the the most beautiful cities in Ukraine, having escaped both the devastation of World War II and the Soviet influences prevalent in Eastern Ukraine. Well-preserved buildings from the 16th to the 19th centuries grace the central square of the **Old Town**, **added in its entirety to the UNESCO World Heritage List** in 1998. The bulk of Lviv's Old Town architecture, built during the 16th and 17th centuries, is heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance.

Founded in the 13th century by the prince of Galicia on a hill along the east-west trade routes, Lviv was a much-envied strategic center, especially for its control of the Carpathian passes. Conquered by the Poles in 1349, Lviv seems more European than Russian. The city came under Moscow's rule for the first time in 1939. Occupied by Germany from 1941 to 1944, and again by the Soviets following World War II, Lviv's ethnic heritage was severely repressed.

Begin exploring on **Prospekt Svobody** ("Freedom"), a wide, tree-lined boulevard near **Ploshcha Rynok**, the Market Square. This old, cobbled square, surrounded by 16th-18th century merchant dwellings, was the center of



social and economic life for hundreds of years. Key attractions on the square are the **19th century Town Hall** and the oldest working pharmacy in the country. Founded in 1735 when it was called an apothecary, this shop is fronted with two bas-reliefs – one of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, and one of his daughter Hygieia, the Greek goddess of health. Inside is the **Pharmacy Museum**, its walls lined with old shelves stacked with little boxes, antique bottles, vessels, scales and other instruments from years gone by when medicine was more art than science. Opened in 1966, the museum exhibits over 2,000 items relating to the search for potions, herbs and concoctions that might cure humankind's ills.

This afternoon's touring continues with a visit to the **Lychakiv Cemetery**, containing almost 100 acres of monuments, some crowned with sculptures by Ukraine's prominent artists. Some of the country's most renowned citizens, such as poet Ivan Franko, are buried here. For the best view of the city, continue to **High Castle Hill**, home to the 14th century remains of a stone castle that replaced the original 13th century wooden fortress.

After an independent dinner, explore Lviv's walkable Old Town on your own.

Meals: B – *Hotel Astoria or similar*

### Day Three, Thursday Lviv

After breakfast at the hotel, head out to Lviv's fascinating open-air ethnographic museum. The Shevchenko Hai **Museum of Folk Architecture and Crafts** is a 123-acre forested park outside of Lviv dotted with original wooden buildings from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Grouped into little villages, the houses, churches, barns and mills are furnished with period Ukrainian furniture, clothing, implements and crafts. One of the oldest buildings, the 1763 Church of St. Nikolas, was re-erected here in 1930 and the outdoor museum grew around it.



Next, visit the lavish **Potocki Palace**, built in the 1880s for Alfred Jozef Potocki, the former Minister-President of the Austrian Empire. Much of its original beaux-arts design and architectural details, from the glass chandeliers to the ornamental stucco molding, have been preserved and beautifully restored. Today, the palace is a part of the Lviv National Art Gallery, housing its collection of European art from the 14th to 18th

centuries, which includes works by Sofonisba Anguissola, Jan van Skorel, and Georges de la Tour.

Return to Lviv for an independent dinner. Overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B, L – *Hotel Astoria or similar*



## Day Four, Friday

### Lviv • fly to Kiev

Rise early this morning for your flight to **Kiev**, the mother city of all Eastern Slavic peoples. Kievan Rus', the state from which Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are all descended, was originally established here in the ninth century by Slavicized Scandinavians from Novgorod. Today, this modern capital on the Dnipro River is a city of three million, encompassing countless surviving architectural and artistic treasures.

Touring today begins with the city highlights, including Kiev's oldest Church, St. Sophia Cathedral. The **UNESCO-listed St. Sophia Cathedral and Monastery** houses the historic church-turned-museum,

Sofiysky Sobor. It is the site of the first school and library in Kievan Rus'. The church's location near the Royal Palace and the seat of the metropolitan made St. Sophia the site for royal ceremonies and the signing of treaties. The rich Byzantine interior is decorated with frescoes and mosaics. Its Orthodox symbology initiated a pattern that was followed by Eastern Slavic churches for 900 years.

The gleaming golden cupolas and clear blue color of **Mikhailovsky Cathedral** shine from a bluff overlooking the Dnipro River in Kiev, where the monastery has been since the Middle Ages. Razed by the Soviets in the 1930s, the cherished

cathedral was reconstructed after independence and consecrated in 1999. Legend says that it was in this monastery – originally founded in the 12th century – where Grigori Rasputin first made the acquaintance of the Romanovs. Its full name, Mikhailovsky Zlatoverhy, makes reference to its golden domes.

Continue by exploring beautiful blue **St. Andrews Church** and **Andreevsky Street**, connecting the upper and lower parts of Kiev. The cobbled descent down Andreevsky Street is perhaps Kiev's most charming area. It is a wonderful place to stroll and shop – the main street is filled with galleries, gift shops, restaurants, cafés, and artists' co-ops and studios. Legend says that St. Andrew climbed this hill and planted a cross at the spot where St. Andrew's Church is now. When Kiev adopted Christianity, the new Christians dragged the pagan idol Perun down Andrew's Descent and pushed it into the Dnipro.

After an independent lunch, touring continues with a stop at the **Golden Gates**, the original city gates of Kiev. Finish the day in leafy **Taras Shevchenko Park**, located directly across from the university that now bears his name. The monument to Ukraine's greatest poet that stands in the park replaced one of Czar Nicholas I in 1939, an historic irony because he had persecuted Shevchenko during his lifetime.

After returning to the hotel for check-in this afternoon, the rest of the day is free to explore Kiev's broad boulevards and medieval streets. Dinner tonight is independent, with overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B – *Lybid Hotel or similar*



After breakfast at the hotel, drive to **Mezhyhira**, the former mansion compound of **ousted President Viktor Yanukovich**, complete with a full-size galleon floating on a man-made lake, a classic car collection, private zoo and golden bathroom fixtures. Many of those living in a country with a per capita income of approximately \$7,300 take a dim view of these excesses.

After a tour of the compound and an independent lunch back in Kiev, continue on to the **Podil District**, the historic mercantile and trading quarter of Kiev, with its original buildings from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Near the harbor is the single-domed **St. Elias Church**, said to have been built on the site of Kiev's first wooden church. The first higher education institution in Ukraine, the **Kiev-Mohyla Academy** was established in 1615. A hotbed of Ukrainian nationalism, it was closed by the czars and only reopened in 1992, following the independence of Ukraine. Today, it is a modern university, with online scientific libraries and international language programs.

Next, pay a visit to the **Chernobyl Museum**. The Chernobyl Museum illustrates the combination of human error and design flaws responsible for the 1986 explosion and fire at Reactor #4, only 62 miles from Kiev. The reactor, put into commission only three years before, exploded and burned during a shutdown, blowing tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere. This small, compelling museum offers a modern re-creation of the events of that day, and shows the path of the radiation and the mass evacuations that eventually relocated over 300,000 people from Ukraine and Belarus. The nuclear accident and its subsequent cover-up marked the beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Following the museum, take a ride back to the hotel on the **Kiev Metro**. A metro system for Kiev was first suggested by a Russian-American trading company in 1916. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, Kiev's status was reduced to a secondary city and therefore the metro project was set aside. In 1934, Kiev became the capital city of the Ukrainian SSR, and two years later, funds were allocated for the construction of Kiev's metro system. However, World War II caused the project to be further delayed. During the war, much of Kiev was destroyed, and the reconstruction plan included funds to build the system.

In 1960, the first metro line opened, running from the Vokzalna to the Dnipro. The early stations are decorated with colorful mosaics, ornaments and bas-reliefs, while the floor plans demonstrate the functionality and restraint of Khrushchev-era buildings. Today, the system has over 50 stops, transports an estimated 1.38 million people per day, and is celebrated for having **one of the deepest stations in the world, Arsenalna**, which requires more than a six-minute escalator ride.

On the way back to the hotel, walk through Kiev's **Khreshchatyk Street**. This is Kiev's main street, lined with neoclassical public buildings, cafés and lots of upscale shopping. On weekends and holidays, Khreshchatyk becomes a pedestrian thoroughfare, dedicated to shopping, strolling, people-watching and street performers. Kiev's central square on Khreshchatyk Street is filled with fountains and glass domes. Known as the Maidan, its full name has been Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or **Independence Square**, since independence in 1991. This is where the populace camped and demonstrated during the Orange Revolution and again in February of 2014, when President Viktor Yanukovich was deposed.

Dinner is independent tonight, with overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B – *Lybid Hotel or similar*



## Day Six, Sunday

### Kiev • fly to Odessa

After breakfast at the hotel this morning, start with a visit to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pecherskaya Lavra**, or the Caves Monastery, Kievan Rus' first monastery which was founded in 1051. The monks dug caves and underground labyrinths, living and studying in them; their mummified bodies still line the walls. Here the historian-monk Nestor compiled much of the earliest known history of the Slavs, "*The Tale of Bygone Days*," and passed on the crafts of icon-painting and building. The **Dormition (or Ascension) Cathedral** was built from 1073 to 1089 on the monastery grounds. Kiev's second great Byzantine church, the Dormition Cathedral was the model for the early 12th century churches of Russia's Golden Ring towns.

After an independent lunch, head to the **War Memorial and Army Museum**. Overlooking the Dnipro near the Caves Monastery is the 330-foot stainless steel statue, Rodina Mat' ("Mother of the Nation"), holding aloft a sword and shield. The 35-acre park where she can be found is part of a memorial to those who fought in the Second World War, or the "Great Patriotic War," as it is called in the former Soviet republics.



Dinner today will be independent. Transfer to the Kiev airport for your evening flight to Odessa. Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel for overnight.  
Meals: B – Duke Hotel or similar

## Day Seven, Monday

### Odessa

Begin your exploration of this sunny port city with a **walking tour of Odessa**. After southern Ukraine and its coveted Black Sea coast was ceded to Russia by the Ottoman Turks in 1792, Catherine the Great founded a naval base and strategic fort here, naming it Odessa after an ancient Greek city believed to be in the area. Odessa quickly grew into a thriving

merchant port, shipping the abundant Ukrainian grain around the world.

Always considered a cultural center, Odessa has produced some of the world's finest classical performers, and may be best known for its **Potemkin Steps**, immortalized in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin*. Built in 1837 as a monument to the Duke de Richelieu, they are the best place to view Odessa's busy harbor and waterfront.

Admire the exterior of the **Odessa Opera and Ballet Theater**; with its warm Black Sea backdrop, it is a recognizable symbol of the city. Designed by Austrian architects in 1887, its baroque style and Renaissance features make it one of the most beautiful theaters in Europe today. The small **Vorontsov**



**Palace** at one end of Primorsky Boulevard was built in 1826 in the neoclassical style, and once housed the governor of Odessa. In 1917, the city's first Workers' Collective, or *soviet*, met here.

You'll pass the **Mother of God's Assumption Cathedral**, which was built in three stages. Lviv's Armenian merchants paid for construction of the sanctuary in 1363, modeling it after an ancient Armenian church in Ani and covering the walls with frescoes. Additions were built in the 17th and the 20th centuries.

After an independent lunch, continue to the edge of town for a tour of the **Odessa Partisan Catacombs**. The catacombs were formed as quarrymen with horses cut and dragged blocks of limestone from beneath the city to build most of Odessa's palaces and government buildings. The tunnels, possibly 500 miles of them, can be found everywhere under the city and its suburbs. Odessa's upper class citizens found that the temperature and humidity of the tunnels were perfect for storing wine, and its smugglers discovered they were perfect for storing and moving contraband. The most well-known of their uses, however, was during World War II, when Axis forces overran the city and the Ukrainian partisans took their resistance movement literally underground.

Return to the centrally located hotel this afternoon and enjoy your last evening in Ukraine. Dinner tonight is independent.

Meals: B – *Duke Hotel or similar*

*Day Eight, Tuesday*  
**Depart Odessa**

Following breakfast at the hotel, the trip ends with a transfer to the airport.

Meals: B

## **Tour Days of Operation**

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Tuesday of your choice in 2020. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

## **Private Journey Prices**

Three to four star hotels as listed:

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,295 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement, from \$595

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,295 plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)



## Hotel Upgrade Prices

*Hotel upgrade prices depend on the dates/days of travel, and are subject to change based on availability and other factors. Hotel upgrade is based on using the five-star Hotel Premier Palace in Kiev. In Lviv and in Odessa the standard hotels will be used at the upgrade level, with a room category level upgrade by one level - from a standard to a superior room for example.*

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,695 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement, from \$895

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,995 plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

*This program pricing is dependent on the day of the week of your tour start date among other factors. Starting on a different day will impact the pricing. Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*

## Your Private Journey Includes

- Accommodations per the itinerary. **Please see above** for upgrade rates. All room types, even in upgraded properties, are standard entry-level doubles or twins; please call for room category upgrade pricing and information.
- 7 breakfasts and 1 lunch, per the itinerary. Other meals are left free to allow independent exploration.
- One arrival and one departure airport transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers available at additional cost.) MIR will arrange for travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure, whether we make your air arrangements or not.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private vehicle (size of vehicle depends on number of travelers in your group).
- Evening cultural performances per the itinerary.
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers and other staff.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

## Not Included

- Internal airfare (internal airfare is quoted separately and is subject to change by airlines).
- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Baggage handling.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.



### Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp) or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

## Start Planning Next Year Now

### 2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

*Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Thursday of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.*

#### Private Journey Prices – 2021

Three to four star hotels as listed:

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,395 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement, from \$625

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$5,395 plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

#### Hotel Upgrade Prices

*Hotel upgrade prices depend on the dates/days of travel, and are subject to change based on availability and other factors. Hotel upgrade is based on using the five-star Hotel Premier Palace in Kiev. In Lviv and in Odessa the standard hotels will be used at the upgrade level, with a room category level upgrade by one level - from a standard to a superior room for example.*

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,795 per person, twin share

Plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

Single supplement, from \$925

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement: \$6,095 plus internal air \$400 per person (economy class, subject to change)

*This program pricing is dependent on the day of the week of your tour start date among other factors. Starting on a different day will impact the pricing. Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*

## Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy, pre-designed program.



## Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

While the accommodations we utilize are superior tourist class, please keep in mind that some aspects of the tourism infrastructure in Ukraine are not up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, and availability and quality of public restrooms. You are traveling in some areas which, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed.

While this program is designed to be the most comfortable possible for travel in this region, it is rated as **rigorous touring** because of the daily walking involved, and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets are of cobblestone, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases; museums rarely have elevators.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We will do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Ukraine this may not always be possible. Only those willing to accept these conditions should consider joining this program.

To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of your trip.

## Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp)

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Ukraine here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/ukraine-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

We recommend that you read the U.S. State Department's Consular Information Sheet and travel warning regarding travel to Ukraine. Check <http://travel.state.gov/> for up-to-date travel information.

## Weather

Ukraine enjoys a continental climate with warm summers and fairly mild winters. Depending on individual preferences, the best times to visit fall between May and September. May temperatures usually see a low around 50 degrees Fahrenheit and highs in the mid-60s to 70s. August heats up, with highs around 80 degrees Fahrenheit and up, while the averages in early fall drop back to the 60s. In general, in the early spring and in the fall, evenings cool down substantially and can be in the mid-30 to 40 degree range. Rain is also possible.

**Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable.** This information comes from [www.weatherbase.com](http://www.weatherbase.com) and is based on data from previous temperatures on



record. It is always advisable to check with [www.weatherbase.com](http://www.weatherbase.com) closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

## International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa, Aeroflot, Turkish Airlines, Czech Air and AeroSvit, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Ukraine.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

## Visas

A Ukrainian visa is not required for U.S. passport holders. For non-U.S. passport holders a visa may be required. Please contact MIR for additional information. Visa requirements and prices are always subject to change.

## Pre- and Post- Tours

MIR can arrange for an extended program in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novgorod, the Baltics or Central Europe prior to or at the conclusion of the tour. Contact us for more information.

## Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

## Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

**Essential Russia**, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia's political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

**Essential St. Petersburg**, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the "White Nights" of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

**Essential Poland**, 6 days. On this focused tour, visit four Polish UNESCO sites in six days – Warsaw's Old Town, Krakow's Historic Center, the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp and the Wieliczka Salt Mine.

**Essential Balkans**, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.



**Essential Caucasus**, 10 days. Armenia's intricate stone *khachkar* crosses, the bounteous wines of Georgia and the ancient petroglyphs of Azerbaijan are icons of these three intertwined Caucasus countries, where you can experience five UNESCO masterpieces in 10 days.

### Small Group Tours

**Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova**, 14 days. Traverse a little known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are three of the least frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of World War II, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.

**Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages**, 11 days. Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad's wooden crafts and Fedoskino's glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia's Golden Ring.

**Kaliningrad & The Baltics**, 13 days. This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

**Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses**, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses, and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town.

### Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

### Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary):

#### *Flexible Essential Trips*

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.



## References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please call 1-800-424-7289 to request a list of references.

## Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

## Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).



## 30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

## Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the "Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.


## More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

MIR Corporation  
85 South Washington Street, Suite 210  
Seattle, WA 98104  
800-424-7289, 206-624-7289  
Fax 206-624-7360  
info@mircorp.com  
www.mircorp.com

Sellers of Travel: Washington#601-099-932, California# 2082306-40

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