

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# U K R A I N E



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



September 2008



# A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your selection as a Peace Corps Volunteer. If you accept this invitation to serve, you'll soon be leaving for Ukraine to begin your personal journey into an old culture in profound transition. Following seven centuries of foreign domination, Ukrainians are transforming their country into an independent European nation. What is happening throughout Ukraine is truly historic, and you as a Peace Corps Volunteer will have a chance to work and live with people who are changing the nature of life in Eastern Europe.

Since 1992, more than 1,800 Peace Corps Volunteers have participated in Ukraine's transformation by sharing their skills with Ukrainians through teaching English, working with youth, and promoting community development. Volunteers have also had an important impact on Ukrainians simply by being Americans in Ukrainian schools, organizations, and communities. Ukrainians have benefited from knowing American Volunteers who model leadership, ask questions, challenge pessimism, promote the growth of civil society, and constantly find ways to make good practical uses of academic training. Peace Corps Volunteers work throughout Ukraine—from the western mountains to the eastern industrial metropolises, from the northern steppes to the Black Sea beaches. Volunteers serve in villages and towns where they work together with Ukrainian counterparts. Your most prized accomplishments will be what you learn from each other.

As you read this *Welcome Book*, please consider the commitment you are making to Peace Corps/Ukraine. Joining Peace Corps entails agreeing to accept a set of established policies for the duration of your Volunteer service. The policies can be found in the *Volunteer Handbook* included in your invitation kit, the *PC/Ukraine Volunteer*

*Handbook* you will receive upon arrival, and in the *Peace Corps Manual*. Your ability to abide by three key policies—namely requesting approval for all overnight absences from one’s assigned community, moderate use of alcohol, and a prohibition on illicit drug use—should be carefully considered. The policies are designed to help ensure your safety and security and facilitate productive Volunteer service. Successful completion of your service will require knowledge of, and adherence to, the policies of Peace Corps/Ukraine. Your acceptance to service in Ukraine will signify your understanding of this requirement.

Upon arrival, you will go to a central training site for a few days. While there, you will receive health and safety training and begin your language studies. Then, you and other trainees will travel to a village or town to live with Ukrainian families and work with Ukrainian teachers who will support your adjustment to a new language, culture, and work environment. Three months later, you will be sworn in and will move to your site to begin your work as a Volunteer.

All Ukraine Volunteers and staff are looking forward to welcoming you in Ukraine and to supporting you during your service.

Diana Schmidt, country director  
and the Peace Corps/Ukraine staff

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# PEACE CORPS/UKRAINE HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## **History of the Peace Corps in Ukraine**

The opening of Peace Corps programs in the Newly Independent States corresponded with the beginning of the end of decades of mistrust and hostility between the United States and the former communist governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In the 15 years that Peace Corps Volunteers have worked in Ukraine, they and their Ukrainian counterparts have faced and overcome a wide range of challenges. Suspicions harbored for years are difficult to overcome. Ambiguity and economic instability have been the norm in Ukraine during the difficult transition to integration with the West. Working and living in a country that is simultaneously deconstructing and reconstructing can often be confusing and frustrating. The Peace Corps has always prided itself on its ability to provide flexible and adaptable Volunteers, and the program in Ukraine truly tests this ability.

The formal agreement establishing Peace Corps/Ukraine was signed in May 1992 in Washington, D.C., by former Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and former U.S. President George Bush. Since the first group of Volunteers arrived in Ukraine in 1992, more than 1,800 Volunteers have worked in the areas of business development, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), environmental protection, youth development, and community development. Currently, more than 200 Volunteers work in more than 100 cities and towns throughout the country's 24 provinces and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

## **History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Ukraine**

Like conditions in Ukraine, Peace Corps programs here continue to evolve. Volunteers in all projects have defined their roles as agents of change, contributing in a variety of ways to the development of Ukraine into a modern European state. As this occurs, new opportunities for Peace Corps programming emerge.

Ukraine has committed to establishing a free market system and participating in the global economy. This marks a departure from the centrally planned economy of the Soviet past. Ukraine is also committed to establish functioning democratic institutions. The community development project was launched in 2006 as a pilot project seeking to support Ukraine in its efforts to promote ideals of the free-market system at the local level and to facilitate development of civil society. In practice, the project enhances local capacities in partnership building, business and management skills, and organizational development. Volunteers promote cooperation and partnerships among the three sectors of society—business, government, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—to facilitate local address of issues of interest to communities. They work with schools and universities, NGOs, and government structures at regional and municipal levels.

With a long history of valuing education for its citizens, the study of languages in Ukraine has been an integral component of the national curriculum. Throughout the history of conquests and various rulers, the citizens of Ukraine fought to maintain the right to study, learn, and publish in Ukrainian. In 1920, however, Russian was declared the official language, and all study, official documents, and most published materials were in Russian. Following independence in 1991, Ukrainian was declared the official language with the mandate that

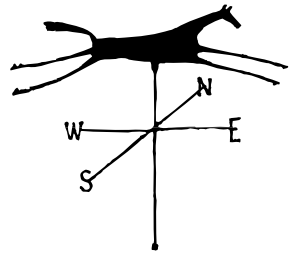
educational institutions switch to Ukrainian curricula and instruction. At a time when all components of the educational system are attempting to implement a Ukrainian medium of instruction, there is a growing demand from parents and students for increased instruction in English. These two developments place enormous strain upon an already stretched system.

In response to these initiatives, the Peace Corps launched a TEFL project in Ukraine in September 1993. The project was developed to respond to needs identified in the state's national program and a baseline survey of Ukrainian students, teachers, and ministry officials. Volunteers in the TEFL project work to expand and improve the quality of English instruction in schools and at teacher-training institutions. They also help develop new English teaching materials for primary and secondary schools.

The youth development project was created in 2005 at the request of the Ukrainian government to address the growing gap between the development levels of young people in most urban centers and those in rural and otherwise disadvantaged areas. As many urban Ukrainians are gaining the skills to succeed in the new post-Soviet social and economic framework that increasingly characterizes independent Ukraine, children in villages and other economically depressed parts of the country risk falling behind in acquiring the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed. Youth development Volunteers work with secondary schools, orphanages, and NGOs in small- and medium-sized towns to develop and administer youth programs on healthy lifestyles, civics, information technology (IT), environmental awareness, career building, and sports.



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: UKRAINE AT A GLANCE



## History

Ukrainians value and celebrate their country's long and colorful history. Over the centuries, successive civilizations have left their mark on Ukraine—the Scythian, Greek, Scandinavian, Slavic, and Turkic peoples have all had an influence on the culture. Ukraine gained its political independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The history of the establishment of the Slavic state is rooted in a legend of three brothers and a sister who founded a city along the Dnipro River at the end of the fifth century. Named after one of the brothers, the city Kyiv became the center of the city-state of Kyivan-Rus'. Kyiv flourished as a center of trade and culture a thousand years ago and is the wellspring of the eastern Slavic states that exist today.

The strength of Kyivan-Rus' was undermined by infighting between the city-state's princes, by the sacking of Constantinople by crusaders, and by changes in regional trading patterns. In 1240 the Mongols, led by the grandson of Genghis Khan, attacked Kyiv and subsequently controlled the region for nearly two centuries.

In the wake of Mongol domination, Ukraine was invaded and ruled by Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and others. Cossack armies were formed in response, each led by a *hetman* (military leader). One of the most famous hetmans in Ukraine's history was Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who inspired an uprising that led to the liberation of Ukraine from Poland in 1648. But he was considered a traitor by some after he signed the Treaty of

Pereyaslav in 1654, which joined Ukraine and Russia and led to Ukraine's subjugation by the Russian empire and ultimately the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin, in an effort to weaken Ukraine further, induced a famine in 1932–33 by forcibly collecting grain and deliberately starving to death as many as 10 million Ukrainians. In September 1941, Ukraine became one of the theaters of World War II when Nazi forces entered Kyiv. In November 1943, Soviet forces recaptured the city, retaining subsequent control of the Ukraine republic for almost 50 years.

The world's attention turned to Ukraine in the wake of the Chernobyl nuclear accident in April 1986. This incident, coupled with changes in the political philosophy of Soviet leaders, spurred Ukraine to proclaim its sovereignty in July 1990. Ukrainians formally realized their dream of independence following the failed coup of August 1991 in Moscow. In a national referendum held on December 1, 1991, Ukrainians endorsed independence and chose Leonid Kravchuk as the country's first democratically elected president.

## **Government**

Ukraine is governed by a constitution adopted in 1996. Under this constitution, executive power is vested in the president and the prime minister, while legislative power is the prerogative of the *Verkhovna Rada* (Supreme Council). The president is elected by direct, popular vote for a five-year term. In line with the constitutional reform that came into effect in 2006, the president maintains power as commander in chief and has an advisory role to the government—similar to many European countries. Before this reform took effect, the prime minister and the cabinet were nominated by the president and approved by the Parliament. After the reform

the Parliament had exclusive power in appointing the prime minister and most members of the Cabinet of Ministers. The *Verkhovna Rada* is a unicameral body of 450 members. The seats are allocated on a proportional basis to those parties that gain 3 percent or more of the national electoral vote. Suffrage is granted to all citizens 18 years and older.

Ukraine is divided into 24 *oblasts* (provinces), one autonomous republic (Crimea), and two cities with special administrative status (Kyiv and Sevastopol). The *oblasts*, in turn, are divided into 479 *raions* (divisions) and 415 cities. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is governed by a prime minister who heads a Cabinet of Ministers with considerable autonomy in its internal affairs.

## **Economy**

At 603,700 square kilometers (241,480 square miles), Ukraine is one of the largest European countries in land area. While its population of nearly 47 million ranks fifth in size in Europe, Ukraine's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) places it among the lower- to middle-income countries. Yet the country has a highly trained professional labor force, fertile agricultural land, and a wealth of raw materials, metals, and natural resources.

Shortly after independence in December 1991, the Ukrainian government liberalized most prices and created a legal framework for privatization. However, reform efforts were soon stalled, which led to eight years of sharp economic decline. As a result, the standard of living for most citizens has decreased by more than 50 percent since the early 1990s.

Ukrainian government officials eliminated most tax and customs privileges in 2005, bringing more economic activity out of Ukraine's large shadow economy. However, more

improvements are needed, including fighting corruption, developing capital markets, and improving the legal framework for businesses. Reforms in the more politically sensitive areas of structural reform and land privatization are still lagging. GDP growth was only 2.4 percent in 2005 and 7 percent in 2006 thanks to rising steel prices worldwide and increased domestic consumption.

In 2006, both the U.S. and the European Union (EU) granted Ukraine market economy status, which has helped to pave the way for its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which it joined in January 2008.

## **People and Culture**

The richness of Ukraine's culture reflects its history as a crossing point and meeting ground for European and Asian cultures and peoples. While 75 percent of the population is Ukrainian, more than 110 other ethnic groups are represented in the country. Among the numerous faiths practiced in Ukraine are Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Ukrainian Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, and Islam.

Ukrainian was declared the official language at independence in 1991, though Russian and Ukrainian are also official languages in Crimea. While Ukrainian is most often heard in western Ukraine and in smaller towns and villages, Russian is the primary language spoken by many people in large cities, particularly in the eastern and southern part of the country. In recent years, there have been tensions between the Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking segments of the population. Reflecting the diversity of the population, some Ukrainians also speak Romanian, Hungarian, or Polish.



Ukraine has wonderful folk arts, including embroidery, weaving, pottery, *pysanky* (painted eggs), and woodcarving. Its music has evolved with influences from a variety of cultures. Folk traditions are preserved in ritual songs, dances, and games.

## **Environment**

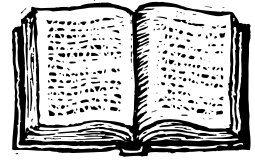
Ukraine is a beautiful country with a rich variety of natural resources, including about 70,000 species of flora and fauna (some of which are endangered). In addition, nearly 8,000 deposits of 94 minerals of commercial value are extracted in Ukraine.

A small part of the country is mountainous, with the highest peaks being Hoverla (2,061 meters) in the Carpathian Mountains and Roman-Kosh (1,542 meters) in the Crimean Mountains. Mixed forests cover the north. The middle of the country consists of a mosaic of forests and steppe, and the south consists of steppe, restricted forests, and wetlands. The north and northwest have an abundant water supply, including the Dnipro, Europe's third largest river, and smaller rivers. The southern part of the country has fewer water resources. The coasts of the Black and Azov seas make up a significant portion of Ukraine's southern border. With the biggest specific watershed in the world, the Black Sea receives some of the pollution generated by more than 1.7 billion people, of whom only 6.5 million live on Ukraine's coast.

Ukraine has significant environmental problems, especially resulting from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986 and from industrial pollution (see Health Issues in Ukraine, pp. 45-46 for more details).



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Ukraine and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

## **General Information About Ukraine**

### **[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)**

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Kyiv to how to convert from the dollar to the hryvnia. Just click on Ukraine and go from there.

### **[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)**

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

### **[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ukraine and learn more about its social and political history.

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

## **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, comprised of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

**<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>**

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

**[www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

**[www.pcukraine.org](http://www.pcukraine.org)**

This site was created and is maintained by Volunteers serving in Ukraine. It contains information about Peace Corps projects in Ukraine and other Volunteer activities.

**Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ukraine**

**[www.brama.com/news](http://www.brama.com/news)**

This site offers substantive and timely information about Ukraine and links to complementary services.

**<http://www.kyivpost.com/>**

The *Kyiv Post*, an informative source of English-language news on Ukraine, includes comprehensive statistics and weekly summaries of developments in key industries. Subscribers receive a daily email with summaries of what the local press is writing about.

**[www.ukraine-today.com](http://www.ukraine-today.com)**

Aimed at business travelers, this site offers interesting and useful information for visitors to Ukraine.

**International Development Sites About Ukraine**

**[www.usukraine.org](http://www.usukraine.org)**

U.S.-Ukraine Foundation

**[www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/countries/ua](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/ua)**

U.S. Agency for International Development in Ukraine

**<http://kiev.usembassy.gov>**

U.S. Embassy in Kyiv

**<http://www.un.org.ua/>**

United Nations in Kyiv

**[www.worldbank.org.ua](http://www.worldbank.org.ua)**

World Bank in Ukraine

## **Recommended Books**

1. Dolot, Miron. *Execution by Hunger: The Hidden Holocaust*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

A description of the forced collectivization of Russian agriculture in 1929-1931 and the ensuing famine in Ukraine.

2. Nebesky, Richard. *Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. London: Lonely Planet, 1996.

An excellent guidebook for travelers on history, culture, security, bureaucracy, transportation, hotels, and restaurants in the cities of Russia and Ukraine.

3. Reid, Anna. *Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000.

Combining historical research with travel and interviews with peasants and politicians, rabbis and racketeers, dissidents and paramilitaries, and survivors of Stalin's famine and of Nazi labor camps, Reid charts Ukraine's tragic past and explores its struggle to build a national future.

4. Wilson, Andrew. *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CO: Yale University Press, 2002.

A comprehensive source of information about Ukraine and its people. The author discusses relations between Ukraine and Russia and analyzes the issues of identity, culture, and religion in Ukraine since its independence in 1991.

### **Books About the History of the Peace Corps**

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

### **Books on the Volunteer Experience**

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.

4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



## NOTES



# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



## **Communications**

### ***Mail***

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service considered normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for some frustration. Mail takes a minimum of two weeks to arrive in Ukraine.

During training, mail for trainees received at the Peace Corps office in Kyiv will be forwarded to the training site once or twice each week. Only small, flat pieces of mail (no boxes or packages) can be delivered to trainees over the course of pre-service training. Because Peace Corps Ukraine cannot be responsible for property mailed to trainees, delivery of boxes and packages sent to this address will be declined. Therefore, it is important to remind family and friends that only letters will be delivered during training.

Your address during training will be:

U.S. Peace Corps/Ukraine  
PCV (Name of Volunteer)  
P.O. Box 298  
01030  
Kyiv, Ukraine

If a street address is required:

U.S. Peace Corps/Ukraine  
PCV (Name of Volunteer)  
111A Saksahanskoho Street  
01032  
Kyiv, Ukraine

Once you become a Volunteer and move to your permanent site, you will receive mail there, either at a post office box or at your office. Peace Corps/Ukraine uses the Ukrainian postal network to mail routine, nonurgent items, including a weekly packet sent to each Volunteer.

Family and friends should not send you valuable items through the mail, as mail sometimes arrives opened, with items missing, or does not arrive at all. We recommend the use of padded envelopes instead of boxes, as they usually arrive unopened. Airmail is more reliable, but more expensive, than surface mail.

A number of international mail services operate in Ukraine, including UPS and DHL. Volunteers report that the most reliable and inexpensive service is MEEEST, whose address in the United States is 609 Commerce Road, Linden, NJ 07036 (phone: 908.474.1100; website: [www.meest.net](http://www.meest.net)).

Ukrainian customs law has restrictions on shipments from/ to overseas. Make sure the following materials/things are not included in a parcel:

- 1) Money, credit cards, valuables/expensive objects, and any type of jewelry
- 2) Documents such as personal identifications, diplomas, and certificates
- 3) Any kind of medicine, food, plants, seeds, alcoholic beverages
- 4) DVDs, CDs, videotapes, audiotapes, any type of dictionaries. (You can ship CDs, DVDs and other media into Ukraine, but they cannot be returned to the U.S. unless you can prove that they originally came from in the U.S. Therefore, people shipping such items to Ukraine need an itemized list certified by the company

doing the shipping. There is a limit to how many pieces of media purchased in Ukraine can be shipped to America. The limit is 20 total pieces, and this can be a combination of tapes, videotapes, CDs and DVDs (20 pieces total—not 20 DVDs plus 20 CDs plus 20 videotapes, etc.)

- 5) Flammable, explosive devices, sharp objects (knives with large or multiple blades)

The total value of one parcel cannot exceed \$120 USD.

### ***Telephones***

Telecommunications in Ukraine lags far behind that in the United States. Phone lines are often busy, and connections can be poor. Many Ukrainians in small towns and villages do not have their own land lines, and it is possible that you will not have one. Not all cities have the capability to process calling card calls, and many Ukrainians, including Volunteers' host families, may be unaware of how such calls are billed. Although most host families during training will have phones, you may not be able to make international calls. Calls, however, can be made from the town post office for a per-minute charge. It is best to inform family members and friends that you'll need a few days to become acquainted with the telephone system before getting in touch with them. The Peace Corps will ensure that you have access to a phone once you are at your permanent site, through either your place of employment or a neighbor.

More and more Ukrainians use cellular phones. The Peace Corps staff uses cellphones to supplement land lines and ensure better contact with Volunteers. Peace Corps/Ukraine discourages you from bringing a cellphone from home because even though a few cellular companies operate in Ukraine, it is highly unlikely that a cellular plan in the United States

will cover Ukraine and the surrounding region. It is much cheaper to buy a cellphone here in Ukraine (around \$60) and then give the number to your family/friends to call you. All incoming calls are free of charge. About 90 percent of Volunteers in-country purchase cellphones.

### ***Computer, Internet, Email Access, and Blogs***

While Peace Corps/Ukraine makes no recommendation regarding whether to bring a personal computer, it could be useful during your service. Computers (as well as printers, paper, and peripheral devices) may not be generally available at your workplace, and many Volunteers find that having their own is helpful. Although some Volunteers have purchased laptops in Ukraine, the selection is limited and generally more expensive than in the U.S. If you decide to bring a computer (and perhaps a small printer), make sure you bring the necessary power converter, surge protection, and plug adapter. (Note that the small, inexpensive converters made for things like alarm clocks are not suitable, and are even dangerous, for computer equipment.) The Peace Corps encourages you to insure your computer against theft.

While almost all Volunteers in Ukraine have email addresses, many of them have only limited access to email via an Internet cafe at their site or in a nearby city. In all cases, Volunteers should be prepared for poor phone lines that result in slow connection speeds and unpredictable interruptions.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to high standards of discretion when expressing their impressions and opinions about their lives as Volunteers, and when reporting on the conditions of the countries where they have been invited to serve. Blogs are universal in reach and easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Computer use is widespread in Ukraine and, more probable than not, any

offensive content that is posted on a blog can be accessed by your host country colleagues, friends, and general public. Therefore, in addition to ensuring that the content is appropriate and not perceived by locals as being detrimental to the image of their country, Volunteers are urged to place password protection on their blogs in order to guarantee that the blog is accessed only by the specific audience intended by the Volunteer. Additional information about blogs will be given during pre-service training (PST).

## **Housing and Site Location**

Although you will find a Western-looking environment in Ukraine, living conditions are not the same as in the United States, and you will have to make some adjustments in your lifestyle.

Volunteers in Ukraine live in a wide range of sites, from medium-sized cities (up to 20 percent of the Volunteer population), to small towns or villages with few modern amenities (up to 80 percent of the Volunteer population). You will be assigned a site during training and will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site assignment process, including the needs of the host community, and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be.

For your first three months as a trainee, you will live with a host family. This homestay is a part of pre-service training and will help you to learn about the Ukrainian culture, improve your language skills, and enhance your safety. Generally, housing is in short supply; space is at a premium and accommodations will be cramped.

For the first month after swearing in as a Volunteer, you will also live with a host family. This homestay will help you integrate into your new community, improve safety while you are learning to live in Ukraine, and provide maximum opportunity for ongoing language learning. For many Volunteers, homstays will extend beyond training and last throughout the duration of their two-year assignments. Independent housing is scarce and not guaranteed. If independent living is available and meets Peace Corps' safety and security standards in the community, it may be possible for you to move into a dormitory or apartment provided by your worksite.

If you choose to move to a modest apartment or very basic dormitory at that time, you will be provided with most of the furnishings you need, along with a settling-in allowance for additional necessary items. Should household necessities not be immediately available, your regional manager will work with you and your Ukrainian coordinator to ensure that you can obtain any necessities.

Note that many towns have to ration water and electricity, and hot water may not be available where you live. Ukrainians usually keep buckets of water and candles available. Heat in towns and cities is centrally controlled and is turned on and off according to finances and the calendar, not the weather. Volunteers are issued space heaters when they move to their sites. There are some communities where Volunteers are expected to heat their houses using a wood or coal-burning stove.

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Older people in Ukraine are generally respected and seen as sources of wisdom. They often have a greater degree of credibility upon arrival at their sites. The slow pace of change in a developing country, however, may prove challenging for



some individuals. In addition, certain conditions in Ukraine—uneven pavement, a lack of disability accessible structures or modifications that are used to in the U.S., multistory buildings without elevators, tobacco smoke and other air pollutants, and lack of amenities—combine to make life more demanding than in the United States. Senior Volunteers should also consider the possibility of harsh winters, which may involve walking on ice.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

As a Volunteer in Ukraine, you will receive three types of allowances. The first, a monthly living allowance, is intended to cover your basic living expenses; that is, food, household supplies, clothing, official travel, recreation and entertainment, transportation, reading material, and other incidentals. This allowance is reviewed at least once a year through a market survey to ensure that it is adequate. At the time of this writing, the living allowance was roughly equivalent to \$200, which is transferred via direct deposit into each Volunteer's local bank account at the beginning of each month. You will probably find that you receive more remuneration than your Ukrainian coordinator, supervisor or other colleagues.

The second allowance, a vacation allowance of \$24 per month, is added to your living allowance and paid in U.S. dollars. Finally, when you move into your apartment or house following your three-month homestay at site, you will receive a one-time settling-in allowance, paid in local currency, to buy basic household items.

Although most Volunteers find they can live comfortably in Ukraine with these allowances, some bring money from home for out-of-country travel. The Peace Corps strongly discourages you from supplementing your income with money

brought from home while you are in Ukraine. The living allowance is adequate and Volunteers are expected to live at the same economic level as their neighbors and colleagues.

Traveler's checks are virtually unknown in Ukraine, and because of the high rate of credit card fraud, it is inadvisable to use credit cards or any of the few ATMs that exist in the country. If you bring cash, be advised that bills that have writing on them may not be accepted and older, wrinkled or torn bills will be hard to exchange for local currency outside of Kyiv. ATM cards may be helpful for use during vacation travel outside of Ukraine or for transfer of funds from the U.S., but they should be kept in a safe place for limited use.

## **Food and Diet**

Your host families will provide you with most meals, so you will have plenty of opportunities to become familiar with eating (and cooking) Ukrainian food. As in many countries, the availability of certain foods is dependent on the season, with a wider range of vegetables and fruits available in the spring and summer. Many Volunteers enjoy learning how to preserve and can food for the winter, as do many Ukrainians. The Ukrainian diet relies heavily on meat, potatoes, beets, onions, and cabbages in the winter.

The traditional diet can be high in fat and cholesterol. Vegetarians may find it challenging to maintain their usual diet because of the lack of fruits and vegetables at certain times of the year. Although your host families may be able to cook vegetarian foods for you, a soup described as "vegetarian" may be made with a meat-based stock. Still, there are many types of Ukrainian salads, consisting of cabbage, beets, carrots, and other seasonal and year-round vegetables. In addition, an increasing number of soy products are being imported from Poland.

## **Transportation**

Most cities in Ukraine have a comprehensive public transportation system of buses and trolleys. Some cities have trams, and Kyiv and Kharkov have subways. In addition to official and unofficial taxi services, most cities have direct-route taxis that look like vans. In cities and towns without public transportation, people get around on foot.

An extensive train network connects cities throughout Ukraine, with buses operating between shorter distances. Many of the trains are overnight trains, so Volunteers can leave their site at night and arrive at their destination in the morning. An alternative that is gaining popularity is a luxury bus network, which also provides overnight service to many cities.

## **Geography and Climate**

Ukraine has a continental climate, with the exception of the southern coast of Crimea, which is in a subtropical zone. Although many people imagine Ukraine as a country of snow and ice, it has four distinct seasons, with summer temperatures averaging in the 70s and 80s.

Winters in Ukraine are long and cold, and as a result of its northern latitude, daylight in the winter is limited. Some Volunteers with a history of seasonal affective disorder or depression have found the limited exposure to sunlight an added challenge of service in Ukraine.

## **Social Activities**

The life of a Volunteer is filled with learning and networking 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Having a cup of tea with a Ukrainian neighbor is as much a part of the Volunteer

experience as is teaching a class or seminar. Social activities will vary depending on where you live and might include taking part in local festivals, parties, and dances. In addition, although the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to remain at their sites as an essential strategy for integrating into their communities, some Volunteers occasionally visit nearby Volunteers on weekends. Most towns and cities have cafes and restaurants for evenings out, and many Volunteers have televisions and VCRs in their apartments.

### **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

The Peace Corps expects you to behave in a way that will foster respect toward you in your community and reflect well on the Peace Corps and on the United States. You will receive an orientation to appropriate behavior and cultural sensitivity during pre-service training. As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest and thus must be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your Ukrainian hosts. You need to be aware that behavior that jeopardizes the Peace Corps' mission in Ukraine or your personal safety will not be tolerated and could lead to administrative separation, a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service.

As you have been invited to serve in Ukraine in a professional capacity, we expect you will bring with you professional attire. This attire should be appropriate for your work setting and for walking through town.

For women, appropriate attire consists of slacks and a blouse or sweater or a mid-length or long skirt and blouse or sweater. Of course, in the winter, you will need warmer clothes and a warm coat and hat. Your choice of apparel should be conservative in cut. Plunging necklines, bare midriffs, and miniskirts are inappropriate.

Although many women wear high heels, it is appropriate to wear low-heeled shoes if you find them more comfortable. Nylons are not often worn in the summer.

Appropriate attire for men includes slacks and an Oxford shirt or, less formally, chinos and a polo shirt. During more formal occasions at work it may be appropriate to wear a tie and jacket.

A less formal option for both men and women on weekends might consist of chinos or jeans and a polo shirt or sweater.

Attire such as shorts, tank tops, T-shirts and “utility” or sweatpants are appropriate only for summer camps or other sporting activities. While you are sure to see young people in such attire, how *you* are dressed will greatly impact how you are perceived and your credibility in your community. As in America, not only the first impression, but ongoing assumptions as to one’s competence, dedication, and professionalism are directly tied to one’s appearance and attire. Living life in a fish bowl is not easy, and can be very frustrating – by dressing appropriately in public, you can help yourself by ending some speculation/gossip about you and your character. You will also potentially be meeting with local authorities, officials, organizations, and community members as a part of your projects, and are expected to dress appropriately.

If you find that your current wardrobe is lacking in the recommended apparel, please do your shopping before you arrive in Ukraine. Clothing and size selection in Ukraine tends to be limited and generally is more expensive than can be found in the U.S.

## **Personal Safety**

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Ukraine Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. You will learn about these procedures and policies during safety training in Ukraine. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security Information on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/safety](http://www.peacecorps.gov/safety).

## **Rewards and Frustrations**

It may take time for your Ukrainian counterparts to understand your role as a Volunteer and for you to determine your appropriate responsibilities. You may not be stepping into a well-defined situation. You will need to remember that

you are part of a long-term development project. A challenge throughout your assignment will be to help your counterparts develop their capacity to continue to perform similar work after your departure.

You may be frustrated at times by not being able to communicate easily in the local language, even after the preparation provided during pre-service training. While your coordinator may have a fairly strong command of English, most of your colleagues will not. Learning Ukrainian or Russian will make a major difference in your work, in your ability to adapt to living in Ukraine, and in your appreciation of Ukrainian society and culture.

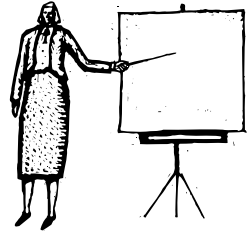
Attitudes about racial differences and public expression of racism are generally different in Ukraine from those typically found in the United States. Incidents involving disrespect for, and harassment against, minority Volunteers occur and it is important for people to consider this fact and how this might affect them.

To have a successful experience as a Volunteer, you must be motivated, flexible, and willing to work hard. You will need to take the initiative to identify local resources and institutions with which you can cooperate. To be effective in your work, you might need to “unlearn” practices and principles that you have developed on the basis of prior experiences. Despite these challenges—or perhaps because of them—Volunteers in Ukraine find satisfaction in demonstrating to their colleagues that every individual can make a difference in the creation of a civil society. As it has in the past, Ukraine is poised to play a pivotal role in the future of Europe and the world. Volunteers have a unique opportunity to impact the nature of that role.





# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

The overall goal of pre-service training (PST) is to prepare you for safe and successful service in your future assignments and communities. The emphasis during training is on both adapting your existing skills and experience to the Ukrainian environment and developing new knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable you to care for your own health and safety, work effectively at your sites, and successfully integrate into your new communities. The program has five major components: technical training, language training, cross-cultural training, health training, and safety and security training. The homestay experience (living with a Ukrainian family throughout PST) is one of the most valuable aspects of training.

The training program recognizes that trainees come with a unique set of skills and experiences, along with a well-developed sense of curiosity, independence, and the ability to adapt to new situations. Thus, training is designed to provide trainees with strategies for taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Peace Corps/Ukraine uses a community-based model of training. Your entire training group will meet in the training hub only for the initial PST orientation (called an Arrival Retreat), for several days in the middle of PST (called PST University), and then at the end of PST (called Swearing-In Retreat). For most of the training period, however, trainees will live in clusters (in towns and villages located within a two- to three-hour ride of the Peace Corps office in Kyiv) with three or four other trainees, a language and cross-cultural

facilitator, and a technical and cultural facilitator (the latter will be shared by every two clusters). You will study either Ukrainian or Russian, depending on your future assignment. In addition, you will be given various assignments in the community that will enable you to develop and apply your skills and experience. About midway through training, you will get your site assignment and have an opportunity to visit your future site and meet with your Ukrainian counterparts.

Our training program is competency based, and you will be regularly evaluated, on your ability to acquire and demonstrate the capacity building, community entry/integration, and personal health and safety competencies needed to become an effective Volunteer and a productive member of your community.

### ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in Ukraine by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Ukrainian experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Ukraine, the Ukrainian system of education, and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's purpose, goals, and objectives and receive track-specific on-the-job training by participating in the technical sessions and performing your internship assignments.

## ***Language Training***

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer.

We advise you to start your ongoing language learning prior to departure. Online pre-departure Ukrainian audio files (available on your *My Toolkit* profile at [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) and [www.pcukraine.org](http://www.pcukraine.org)) and the invitee CD-ROM that contains 30 “Survival” Ukrainian video lessons will help you get a head start in language learning. You will receive the CD-ROM from the country desk after you accept your invitation to Ukraine.

During PST, your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to complete outside the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies for continuing language studies during your service.

## ***Cross-Cultural Training***

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Ukrainian host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the

purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Ukraine. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, cultural values, and political structures.

### ***Health Training***

During pre-service training you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health maintenance and minor and major medical issues that you may encounter while in Ukraine. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living environment, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also covered.

### ***Safety Training***

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during travel. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

## **Additional Training During Volunteer Service**

The Peace Corps implements a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to enhance their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, you will have at least two training events. The titles and objectives for those events are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences. In-service events in Ukraine include language refreshers, regional meetings, and professional workshops and conferences. Ongoing language learning is a top priority of training and expanded language materials, tutor training, and individual help are available for Volunteers.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN UKRAINE



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of each Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the importance of health maintenance behaviors. The Peace Corps in Ukraine maintains a clinic with four full-time medical officers who take care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are available in Ukraine at carefully screened local facilities. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## **Health Issues in Ukraine**

Health issues vary according to the social, economic, and environmental conditions of each region in Ukraine. Some health issues that pose challenges for all Ukrainians follow.

**Radiation and nuclear safety.** Forty percent of Ukraine's electricity is provided by nuclear power. The U.S. Department of Energy and the Ukrainian State Nuclear Regulatory Commission collaborate in monitoring and improving safety at all operating facilities in Ukraine. Volunteers are not placed within 30 kilometers of an operating power station. All currently operating stations meet Western safety standards.

The last reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut down in December 2000. The effects of the 1986 accident at that plant on areas surrounding Chernobyl continue to be monitored by the international community.

No Volunteers are placed at any site with higher-than-normal levels of radiation. The Ukrainian government monitors fresh foods and meats sold in central markets to ensure that no food that exceeds European norms for radiation is sold in Ukrainian markets.

**Industrial pollution.** During the Soviet era, the central and eastern regions of Ukraine were highly productive and heavily industrialized, resulting in air pollution and ground and water table contamination. Volunteers are not placed at sites with unacceptable levels of air and ground pollution.

**Air pollution.** Vehicle exhaust is unregulated, so joggers in larger towns and cities should avoid running during peak traffic hours. While smog in cities may be no worse than in the United States, Volunteers with a history of asthma may find their condition exacerbated. In addition, cigarette smoking is common in Ukraine, and public areas are seldom designated as “no smoking” areas.

**Insufficient infrastructure.** The economic challenges of becoming an independent country have had a negative impact on the ability of Ukraine’s cities and towns to provide basic services to residents. For example, water supply systems in some cities and towns do not guarantee potable water. In other locations, availability of water is limited to peak use hours. Hot water, which was generated centrally in cities during the Soviet era, is often not available. In cities with heating plants, the availability of heat in winter is determined by each city’s financial resources. If the local government lacks sufficient resources, residents must use space heaters, coal- or wood-burning stoves, or other means to heat their homes. In general, living quarters in the winter are cooler than what Americans are accustomed to.



## **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary immunizations, medications, and information needed to help you stay healthy. Upon arrival in Ukraine, you will receive a medical handbook and instructions that cover health challenges in Ukraine in more detail. You will also receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of this kit are listed later in this chapter and the medical office will replenish items as needed throughout your service.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officers. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have dental and physical examinations at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officers in Ukraine will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Ukraine, you may be sent out of the country for further care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes

extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Ukraine is to take the following preventive measures:

Social isolation and the stress of coping with a new culture can be overwhelming at times, particularly in one's first few months in-country. Ukrainian winters are quite cold, and short days and long nights prevail from early December to early March. Seasonal changes in the amount of sunlight can affect one's emotional health. Peace Corps medical officers provide support for mental health issues, and a variety of peer support workshops help defuse the stress associated with adjustment issues. Your proactive commitment to regular exercise, a good diet, and sufficient hydration will also help.

Alcohol consumption is common at social events in Ukraine, and the subtleties of appropriate alcohol use can be difficult to understand. Alcoholism is not commonly recognized as a disease in Ukraine, and support networks for abstinence and treatment are not extensively developed. Volunteers with a history of alcohol abuse may feel challenged by the pervasive use of alcohol in the culture. Nevertheless, those who choose not to drink have found that maintaining that choice does not interfere with developing positive relationships with Ukrainians.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, and dysentery. Proper food preparation and storage decrease the incidence of bacterial and viral gastroenteritis, and avoiding raw milk products decreases the likelihood of contracting bacterial illness associated with nonpasteurized milk. The medical officers will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Ukraine during pre-service training.

Sanitation facilities in Ukraine run the gamut: Western-style toilets and “Turkish” squat toilets are present in equal numbers, and in smaller villages and towns outhouses are common. The level of cleanliness in public facilities and on public transportation varies greatly.

Because of the heavy metal content and possible microbial contamination of most of the water supply in Ukraine, Volunteers are discouraged from drinking tap water. Inexpensive bottled water is readily available in kiosks and stores, and the Peace Corps will provide funds for purchasing it.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STIs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a Ukrainian, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical office.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

## **Women’s Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention, but also has programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible

for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

Feminine hygiene products are available in local markets. If you require a specific product that may not be available in Ukraine, you will have to either bring a supply with you or make arrangements to have the product sent to you.

## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

### ***Medical Kit Contents***

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)  
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade  
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)  
Scissors  
Sterile gauze pads  
Tetrahydrozaline eye drops (Visine)  
Tinactin (antifungal cream)  
Tweezers

### **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure staging orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment shortly after you arrive in Ukraine.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will provide refills for all personal medications during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply.

The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements. If you need custom orthopedic devices, such as splints, braces, or compression stockings, bring them with you. (Note that attachable shoe crampons can help in negotiating ice- and snow-covered cobbled streets.)

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer survey said they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Risk factors can vary within countries throughout the world that are served by the Peace Corps. A Volunteer in Ukraine may face risks specific to this country in addition to risks associated with living in a developing country.

### ***Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk***

*There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.*

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings).
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend between 5 p.m. and 2 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 11 p.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 73 percent of the sexual assaults, and in 48 percent of physical assaults, the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.



## ***Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk***

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

### ***Support from Staff***

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an associate director for safety and security who reports to the Peace Corps director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer’s worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect

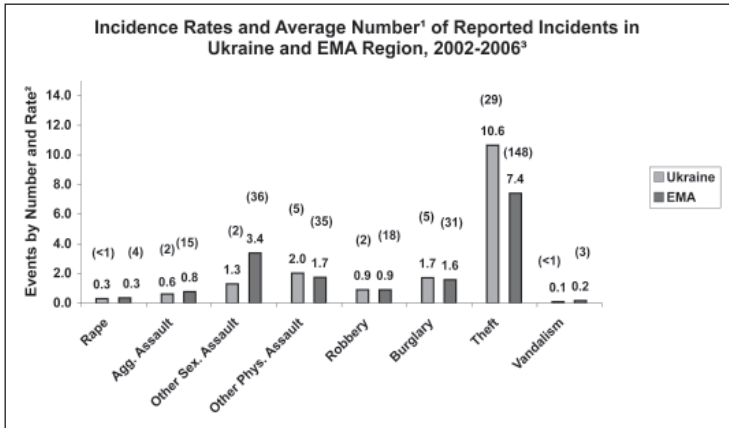
their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant(s), this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event was not preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Ukraine as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); other physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).



<sup>1</sup>The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

<sup>2</sup>Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup>Data collection for Romania began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 08/01/07.

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

### ***What if you become a victim of a violent crime?***

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, local prosecutors, and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and, second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors, medical officers, and safety and security coordinator are

required to report all violent crimes to the OIG and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers, regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by email at [violentcrimehotline@peacecorps.gov](mailto:violentcrimehotline@peacecorps.gov).

## **Security Issues in Ukraine**

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Ukraine. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns, for instance, are favorite worksites for pickpockets. Some safety concerns in Ukraine of which you should be aware follow.

**Robbery and burglary.** Volunteers in Ukraine have been burglarized in the past, so you will need to take the same precautions you would take in the United States to deter such incidents. The Peace Corps will cover the cost of installing new locks, security doors with peepholes, and window security devices if required.

**Alcohol.** Unfortunately, some Volunteers in Ukraine have been robbed or assaulted while intoxicated. Intoxication decreases awareness and reaction time, leaving the intoxicated individual more vulnerable to predators. In addition, it is not uncommon to encounter intoxicated individuals while traveling on public transportation. During pre-service training, you will practice skills that are useful for identifying and avoiding situations related to alcohol use that can pose a threat to your personal safety.

**Scams and fraud.** Because of the high incidence of credit card and ATM fraud, the U.S. embassy strongly discourages the use of credit cards and ATMs in Ukraine. Volunteers should exchange money at a bank and not with money exchanges near the bank, on the street, or with strangers. Volunteers have experienced various scams, and you will receive more information about potential scams during training and throughout your service.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Ukraine, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Ukraine may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While stares are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. And always walk with a companion at night. Female Volunteers should always ask someone they trust to walk them home. Having a male escort does not make you less independent, it makes you safer.

### **Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Ukraine**

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Ukraine’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Ukraine office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be offered in the Volunteer newsletter and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

**Volunteer training** will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Ukraine. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle



and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Ukraine's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest, a natural or technological disaster or terrorism. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit an emergency contact and site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Ukraine at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps safety and security coordinator. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

Peace Corps, however, believes there is a discrepancy between the number of reported incidents and the actual numbers of incidents. The discrepancy may be attributed to under-reporting by Volunteers who may not want to report having been under the influence of alcohol when the incident occurred, or having been absent from site without notifying Peace Corps, or simply thinking the incident was too insignificant to report. Therefore, the Safety and Security Council (SSC) was created so trainees and Volunteers could speak to their peers regarding these incidents and, in turn, the incidents would be anonymously reported to SSC so Peace Corps staff will have more accurate statistics to report and can better meet trainees' and Volunteers' safety and security needs.

## NOTES



# DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Ukraine, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Ukraine.

Outside of Ukraine's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may also be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Ukraine are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Ukraine, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental, compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these types of challenges. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in Ukraine**

During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

The comments in this section, which come from a cross-section of Volunteers who have served in Ukraine, are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They reflect the fact that each person's experience of Peace Corps service is unique.

### ***Possible Issues for Female Volunteers***

At first, gender roles in Ukraine can be difficult to understand and accept. Ukrainian culture may appear to be discriminatory. Ukrainian women constitute more than half of the total population, and working women outnumber nonworking women. Although men and women may receive equal pay for equal work, women are underrepresented in positions of power and often are not promoted as readily as men to managerial positions. These gender differences, sometimes overt and sometimes subtle, can present problems for Volunteers in job situations.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“An issue for women in Ukraine is the overfriendliness of men under the influence of alcohol. Rather than attempting to be polite, women should simply walk away without giving them any attention. Other than Ukrainian men being more traditional in their views of a woman’s ‘place’ in society, which results in chivalrous behavior, men in Ukraine are quite respectful of women. This said, domestic violence is a matter that, unfortunately, is not recognized as the problem it is, especially as it relates to the abuse of alcohol in the family.”

“Ukrainians will try to protect you, and it’s usually in your best interest to let them. They’ll walk you home, call you a taxi, or even let you spend the night with their family, rather than have you walk home alone at night. Ukrainian streets are often unlit, as are stairwells and corridors, and in winter it gets dark before 5 p.m. I recommend that Volunteers always carry a flashlight and the personal alarm that the Peace Corps issues. Try not to be out alone after dark or, when that’s impossible (e.g., in the winter), be home by

the time most people come home from work. Get to know your neighbors at least on a ‘hello and good day’ basis. The old women sitting in front of the apartment buildings aren’t just gossiping—they’re unofficial door guards and they’re watching out for you, too.”

“For women, it is rare to see a Ukrainian female without makeup on, even when hiking! But they will know you are a foreigner anyway, so do what you normally would in terms of your style.”

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color***

Racial and ethnic minorities in Ukraine—primarily Poles, Hungarians, Crimean Tatars, and Greeks—make up about 5 percent of the total population. They are not always well-organized and are not usually recognized as separate communities. Crimean Tatars are the exception, as they are becoming a more significant facet of the population in Crimea.

In spite of the racial diversity of the former Soviet Union and Ukraine’s close contacts with former socialist countries in Asia and Africa, most Ukrainians have not had personal interactions with people of other races. They often assume that African-American or Asian-American Volunteers are university students from Africa or Asia rather than Americans. Thus, minority Volunteers may be stopped to show their identification papers more frequently than other Volunteers, particularly in larger cities where they are not known. The U.S. State Department now warns prospective travelers to Ukraine of “increasing incidents of racially motivated violence” on its website. In addition, a number of international human rights groups have expressed concern with the rise in “skinhead” activity in Ukraine, and with the increasing number of attacks and fatalities targeting individuals of African, Asian, Hispanic or Middle Eastern heritage.



## Volunteer Comments

“As a female African-American serving in the Peace Corps/ Ukraine economic development program, my overall experience as a minority in Ukraine has been rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling. Nevertheless, every single person in cities other than Kyiv is likely to stare at you. And, as in any other country around the globe, you may encounter some racism in Ukraine. I have many Ukrainian friends and business acquaintances who treat me with respect and share the wonderful roots of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainians really get a kick out of an African-American woman speaking Ukrainian. People are amazed, and they love it.”

“Most Ukrainians view foreigners more in terms of nationality than in terms of race, the exception being the local police, who tend to stop and request IDs from people who look like foreigners. During my 17 months in Kyiv, I have been stopped for identification 15 times. I think many Ukrainians view Americans as people who have more options available to them, and I’ve been told that some even view Americans with jealousy.”

“You do not have to advertise that you are a foreigner. Ukrainians will figure that out from the fact that you do not have the physical features and the behavior they are used to seeing. I have not been treated differently by the general public or merchants because of my color. Nor can I recall any acts of discriminatory treatment related to the color of my skin.”

“The issue of skin color did not enter into my decision to join the Peace Corps, and it has not affected my duties as a Volunteer. Being a Volunteer has been a valuable experience for me. One of my goals in joining the Peace Corps was to

learn about another culture and to find out what motivated people of that culture to live the way they live. I have learned a lot and continue to learn.”

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Older people in Ukraine are generally respected and seen as sources of wisdom. They often have a greater degree of credibility upon arrival at their sites. The slow pace of change in a developing country, however, may prove challenging for some individuals. In addition, certain conditions in Ukraine—uneven pavement, multistory buildings without elevators, tobacco smoke and other air pollutants, and lack of amenities—combine to make life more demanding than in the United States.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“It is harder to get involved in people’s lives and families, I believe, when one is ‘older’ and married for several reasons. People think we are self-sufficient (although we have the same language problems as a single Volunteer), and hosting two people is very difficult for many Ukrainians because of space limitations. Also, our Ukrainian colleagues are sometimes a bit intimidated, I am told, by our age. And many are just struggling to survive, so they can’t indulge in befriending foreigners.”

“Senior Volunteers are very well-respected, as are the Ukrainian seniors. Younger people offer me a seat on the trolley buses. The community respects my opinions partly because I am an American, but partly because I am over 55. Interaction among Volunteers of all ages is very acceptable.”

“First, it might be nice to mention that, as a 60-year-old female Volunteer, I’ve got it better than anyone else in Ukraine. I don’t have young folks’ concerns and constraints; I don’t face the issues that males face here; and, unlike many Ukrainians my age, I can eat properly and am in good health. I feel safe on the street, except for the potholes. So far, a dirty look from under my graying hair has been enough to avoid potential problems with other people. If I’m pooped and my backpack’s fully loaded, I can, in good conscience, ask a kid on the tram to give up his seat for me. Women my age can pretty well rely on respect from strangers, along with their curiosity, so random conversations can be fun. And developing friendships with Ukrainians of all ages has been an interesting and enjoyable process.”

“As a senior American woman with grandchildren, I have been asked frequently why I am here and not home with my family. Apparently, the senior women in Ukraine tend to be the caregivers for their grandchildren while their parents work, and they often live with their children.”

### ***Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Volunteers***

Homosexuality was decriminalized in Ukraine in 1991. However, gays meet with much discrimination and civil rights related to sexual orientation are limited or not applied. Society generally views being gay, lesbian or bisexual as abnormal. While networks of gays and lesbians are forming in some of the larger cities, gay life is hidden from the public and kept very discreet. Some gay and lesbian Volunteers in Ukraine have found that being open about their sexual orientation at their sites has had a negative impact on their effectiveness.

## **Volunteer Comment**

“Although Ukrainians are becoming more open to discussing areas of sexuality, homosexuality is largely considered a deviation from the ‘norm.’ Though gay and bisexual singers and performers are currently in vogue, this is not indicative of the general opinion of the Ukrainian public. There are gay clubs and bars in at least two cities, including the capital, but these places are seedy products of an environment that does not allow people to express themselves freely.”

## ***Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers***

Many Ukrainians have little knowledge or understanding of non-Christian faiths. Religious observances are prevalent in schools and communities, particularly in western Ukraine. There are Polish and Greek Catholic churches and Ukrainian Orthodox churches in most communities. Most big cities have large numbers of Christian missionaries, particularly from evangelical denominations. Volunteers are sometimes mistaken for missionaries, and the Peace Corps is careful to maintain a separation from such groups. If you do not attend church, Ukrainians may demand that you explain why, but it is possible to politely decline when invited to attend someone’s church if you choose not to. Please note, Volunteers cannot be placed in sites according to their religious beliefs.

## **Volunteer Comments**

“Ask your rabbi about Ukraine and more than likely you will be told that some of the greatest scholars in Jewish history once lived here. Cities like Berdychiv, Zhytomyr, Chernigov, Uman, and many more were once home to primarily Jewish inhabitants, and their influence on the culture and food exists to this day. From time to time, you will see some of these influences and even hear people speak of them. Since

Ukraine's independence, large numbers of Jews have left the country, immigrating mostly to Israel and, to a lesser extent, to Germany, Canada, and America. There are a number of reasons for this, but it appears that most are looking for better economic opportunities or are reuniting with family."

"The question of anti-Semitism is raised by many Jewish Volunteers (as well as their parents) planning to serve in Ukraine. Of course, as in all parts of the world where Jews live, there are instances of anti-Semitism in Ukraine, but they are not common. Be assured that you can be open about your Jewish identity with Ukrainians; in almost all cases, they will be very accepting. The fact that you are American is much more intriguing to them than your being Jewish."

"There is no guarantee that the town in which you will serve will have a Jewish community. Those communities are more likely to exist in a larger city. It is difficult to classify Jews here as from a particular branch of Judaism, except maybe in very large cities like Kyiv and Odessa. In many cases the Jewish community is a mix of people sharing one synagogue."

"If there is a synagogue in your town, stop by and introduce yourself (in Russian the word *Yevrey* means Jew; for a woman it is *Yevreyka*). You are sure to receive a very warm welcome and, perhaps, even an invitation to join the rabbi in his home for a Shabbat meal. Besides regular services, many synagogues have other activities and programs in which you can participate."

"Aside from the prevalent Orthodox and Catholic churches, there is a large Mormon presence in Ukraine and a fairly large Baptist presence. I have been told that many medium-

sized cities have Jewish temples. For other faiths or denominations, the presence of churches drops significantly. Services are usually in Ukrainian or Russian, but occasionally you might find a church led by a missionary, usually American, who speaks English.”

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities***

As a disabled Volunteer in Ukraine, you may face a special set of challenges. In Ukraine, as in other parts of the world, some people hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. Also, there is very little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States.

That being said, as part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodation, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Ukraine without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Ukraine staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in their training, housing, jobsites, or in other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

## NOTES





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Ukraine?**

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The current authorized allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total, with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

## **What is the electric current in Ukraine?**

The current is 220 volts, 50 cycles. Plugs and sockets are of the European two-pin type. If you bring 110-volt appliances, be sure to bring the appropriate transformers and adapters, which are not always easily available in Ukraine. Since hair dryers, cassette recorders, irons, clocks, etc. are available here (some of which can be switched between 220 and 110 volts), you may want to leave your American appliances at

home. However, the prices of name-brand items are generally higher than in the United States because of customs and import taxes. Electricity is sometimes rationed, so it is a good idea to bring items that can also run on batteries if necessary.

### **How much money should I bring?**

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Often, Volunteers bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

### **When can I take vacation and have people visit me?**

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

### **Will my belongings be covered by insurance?**

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase such insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should

not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

**Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in Ukraine do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and a lot of walking.

**What should I bring as gifts for Ukrainian friends and my host family?**

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; decals and stickers; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away. Many Volunteers bring sports equipment (e.g., basketballs), games, crafts or other hobbies to share with their Ukrainian friends and local youth.

**Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?**

You will be assigned a site during the first half of training and will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site assignment process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be.

**How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States,

instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The 24/7 telephone number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk officer at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2422, or emailing [Ukraine@peacecorps.gov](mailto:Ukraine@peacecorps.gov).

### **Can I call home from Ukraine?**

Ukraine has good telephone connections with the United States, although service is most consistent from the capital and other large cities. Because international calls are very expensive, most Volunteers call home collect, establish a time to receive a call from home, or use international calling cards. Cards from companies like AT&T, MCI, and Sprint can be used in Ukraine via an international operator. In some of the larger cities, it is possible to buy calling cards to call home from Ukraine.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

Ukraine has cellular phone service, and Peace Corps staff members are equipped with cellphones for emergencies. Differences in technology make most U.S. cellphones incompatible with Ukrainian systems. Although local methods of communication are sufficiently reliable and are more compatible with the Peace Corps' belief that Volunteers should live modestly at the level of their local colleagues, many Volunteers do purchase a cellphone in Ukraine.

### **Will there be email and Internet access?**

#### **Should I bring my computer?**

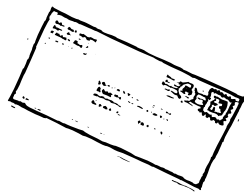
Most Volunteers in Ukraine have access to email, though access is not as consistent or as fast as in the United States. Depending on where you live and work, you will be able to

access email at a local Internet cafe, at your place of work, from home (if you have a computer), or at the nearest regional center. Volunteers generally find the Internet to be the fastest and most affordable way to communicate with friends and family in the United States.

Many Volunteers bring laptop computers, but they are responsible for insuring and maintaining them. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance.



# WELCOME LETTERS FROM UKRAINE VOLUNTEERS



I hardly know where to begin in attempting to convey the multifaceted and enriching experiences I have had as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine. When I first arrived as a trainee, I was full of hope and excitement. At the same time, I questioned if I had made the right decision in accepting my invitation to serve as a Volunteer teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in a country I knew so little about. I wondered what kind of impact I could make as a young American with no prior knowledge of Ukrainian or Russian. One year and seven months later, there is no doubt in my mind that joining the amazing network of over 300 PCVs in Ukraine was the right choice. In addition to finding a wide range of meaningful ways in which to serve and impact members of my community, my Ukrainian colleagues and friends have taught me invaluable lessons and helped me develop into a stronger, more knowledgeable member of the world community.

Before my departure for Peace Corps service, I tried to learn as much as I could about Ukraine via online research and by contacting currently serving Volunteers. The information and advice I obtained was helpful in packing and preparing mentally. For example, according to advice from PCVs, I decided to bring my laptop; it has proved invaluable. However, remember to take all facts and guidance with a grain of salt. Ukraine is a very large country that differs significantly from east to west and from city to small village. Furthermore, as the pace of development increases, especially in large, metropolitan areas, everyday life continues to change. Not long ago, cellphones were a rarity; now at least half of the students at my school carry them to class and almost all PCVs purchase one not long after arrival.

As a TEFL Volunteer at a secondary school, one of my primary responsibilities is to teach conversational English.

In addition to these lessons, I have also taught business English, organized an English club, helped teach beginning English to kindergartners, and conducted teacher training for Ukrainian English teachers. This summer, my colleagues and I will conduct an English language day camp at my school focused on social issues and cultural diversity. Of course, these are just a few examples of the various ways in which Volunteers in Ukraine serve and become more involved members of their communities. With support from fellow PCVs and Peace Corps employees, the possibilities for impacting the course of development in Ukraine are endless.

While striving to make a positive contribution in Ukraine, I have found that my Ukrainian colleagues and the citizens of Ukraine, as a whole, have given me much more than I will ever be able to give back. They have taught me their language, culture, traditions, and history. They have supported and assisted me as a teacher, welcomed me into their communities, and provided inspiration in my work and everyday life. Each day of my service presents an opportunity to learn something new about my surroundings, myself, and the world. I can't imagine my life without Ukraine, and I am confident that my experience and the relationships I have built here will forever affect my outlook and the course of my life.

—Jessica Fisher

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To be considering an invitation to Ukraine in the Peace Corps says a lot about what a fantastic and special person you are. It's not an easy decision to leave friends and family for over two years, but the benefits of living in Ukraine more than make up for being so far from home. The friendships you develop not only with fellow Peace Corps Volunteers, but also with the Ukrainian people, will be friendships for life.

I remember when I left my first host family for my site there were tears in all our eyes. I still go and visit them and it feels like I am coming home when I do. But I can still remember



that first night in their home. A strange bed in a strange country—all I could think of was: What did I do? I talked with the other PCVs in my training group and learned we all felt the same way. And we all quickly adapted to our new lives by helping each other and making sure we all communicated.

My site is a small town in southern Ukraine where I am the first Volunteer and the first American most of the townspeople have ever seen. I still get stared at when I walk through town, but it doesn't bother me anymore. There is so much to get used to when you settle in at your site. My second host family did a good job by introducing me to many of the shopkeepers, the post office lady, people at the phone company, etc., but there is so much they can't prepare you for—like living through one of the coldest winters in Ukraine without heat. You just keep adding layers, and when you go to sleep at night you roll yourself up in blankets like a tortilla. Even though the water pipes froze for five days and I was without running water, I had enough water stored in bottles to last for seven days. I still keep my backup water ready because the water is so inconsistent. It might sound shocking to you to live this way, but this is my world and right now I wouldn't trade it for anything. Just when I get to the point of wanting to scream, one of my students comes up and gives me a hug, or a flower, or a chocolate, or just says thank you, and I am ready to keep going.

Whenever I get down, and believe me it happens to everyone, I use my cellphone to text another PCV. A cellphone here is a necessity for your mental stability! My town feels so isolated, and that is the hardest part about living in Ukraine. Transportation is very difficult here, but you learn to adapt and make sure you get on the bus! Every few months, I travel to the Oblast capital of Kherson to take part in “retail therapy,” and that refreshes and restores me. I ask myself after living here and going through the hardships, would I do it again? My answer is: in a heartbeat! Being a senior Volunteer I thought I knew myself well, but I have uncovered parts of me I never knew existed. My mantra is

whatever doesn't kill me only makes me stronger and I plan on leaving Ukraine an extremely strong person!

—Denice Dunkerley

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I can recall a time in the not-so-distant past when I learned of my invitation to serve in Peace Corps/Ukraine. I immediately jumped at the opportunity, only vaguely aware of the country's recent history as it lurched through its transition to a market-based economy. I suddenly found myself with an insatiable curiosity to absorb as much as possible about the culture, the history, and the people that make Ukraine so unique, consuming as much information as I could locate. In spite of my enthusiasm and best intentions, no amount of research could actually prepare me for what I would witness and experience in Ukraine during the next two years.

I viewed everything at first with bewildered awe, with eyes wide open at the novelty of my surroundings. It seemed so exotic. The Cyrillic alphabet itself was a curiosity, providing little moments of satisfaction when I was able to successfully decode a word on a billboard or storefront. The challenges posed by my new surroundings heightened my sense of self-awareness as well as an acute awareness of the cultural differences between Americans and Ukrainians. Through my host family, and numerous other Ukrainians who accepted us into their community during training, I experienced a feeling of hospitality and warmth that I would later come to understand as one of the defining aspects of Slavic culture. My experiences during training underscored the importance Ukrainians placed on community, and how vital it would be for my success and happiness over the next two years to discover my own sense of community.

I began building relationships with the people who would come to mean so much to me immediately upon arriving at my site. My colleagues at the small business development center in rural Crimea were not only eager to welcome me into their workplace, but also into their hearts and minds. What I received over the next two years was an

up-close-and-personal look at the culture of the Crimean Tatars, the descendants of the original inhabitants of the peninsula. Living and working among an ethnic minority in a largely homogenous Slavic culture provided innumerable opportunities to see and experience a very unique side of Ukraine. At times, it felt as though I was serving in Peace Corps/Uzbekistan—the nuances of tradition, language, food, religion, and history all very divergent from the rest of the country. Every Volunteer’s experience is something uniquely personal to the individual, and I came to appreciate what a tremendous opportunity I had been given to understand more about human diversity. In the process, I came to learn so much more about myself.

Sure, the work was not without its challenges, with many false starts and ideas that never quite came to fruition. Such shortcomings only make the successes feel that much sweeter when they ultimately do arrive. I feel accomplished in having worked with members of a small community to adopt a planning mindset and begin taking steps to bettering their own livelihoods.

The best piece of advice I received during my service was also the most simple. Early on, I was told by my country director, “Ukraine is going to happen.” It took nearly half of my service until the true meaning of this statement became deeply understood. The top-level forces at work are so powerful and dynamic, and the rapid changes they bring with them are almost beyond comprehension for us and many Ukrainians. There is only so much one individual can influence. Finally understanding this, I arrived at a point where I simply let go—where I stopped grasping, and where I allowed everything in my surroundings to flow through me. Suddenly, things out of everyday life that once seemed to cause great anxiety ceased to be a disturbance. I found myself no longer translating what was said to me, but really being able to communicate in a meaningful way. In the end, it is people that make Peace Corps go. Learning how to open ourselves up and truly appreciate our human likenesses—our hopes, desires, fears—and not our differences is perhaps the

most crucial take-away point from my entire Peace Corps experience.

Ukraine is going to happen. It is a fascinating country rich with history, culture, and tradition, and is well along on its own unique trajectory of development. I feel incredibly fortunate to have served here during a time of such great political, economic, and social transition. It is important to understand the paradoxical goal of international development—to put ourselves out of a job. Realize that Peace Corps will not always be here, and seize the moment that is provided to you.

—Michael Kreidler

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My husband and I serve as economic development educators in Vinnytsia. We are older Volunteers. It was our desire when we were young to join the Peace Corps, but jobs, family, mortgages, etc. got in our way. So now we are living our dream here in Ukraine. If you choose to join the Peace Corps, you will embark on the adventure of a lifetime. It comes with a mix of emotions that are exciting, scary, wonderful, depressing, rewarding, confusing, and more.

During Peace Corps training, which was the hardest part for us, you will be given lots of good advice and encouragement, as well as useful information. Training will provide you with the knowledge to live and carry out your responsibilities while in Ukraine. Every day will bring a new experience that you know friends back home just would not believe or be able to understand. You will return to America a better American. You will learn what a great country we have, and how we must strive each day to defend the rights our Constitution provides.

Freedom of speech will take on a new meaning. You will realize that you are no longer in Kansas, Dorothy, but are in a different culture with different ways of life and of doing things. You will learn that they are not wrong, but just different. You will learn just how America is viewed from afar and be proud. You will learn that life can be simpler and just

as great. We learned from our host family of five that you can survive with two knives, one sharp and one for spreading. You will learn to trust yourself to be entertained. There will be days during which you will cry because you miss home and family. You will learn to deal with loneliness and to make friends with people who do not share your culture. You will learn to handle your frustrations and anger when there is no one else to listen. This and many more lessons are waiting for you if you choose this path. Sometimes it is a hurry-up-and-wait kind of situation with the Peace Corps, but you will never meet such great people as your new friends in the Peace Corps. We know that some of the people we have met here will be part of our lives from now on.

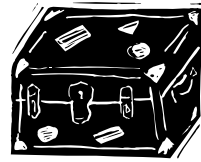
We always thought of Peace Corps Volunteers being in Africa, South America, Pacific countries, and Latin America, but not part of the former Soviet Union. We never dreamed that we would be here in Ukraine teaching. We never dreamed we would even travel to this part of the world. We cannot wait for you to experience the architecture of the onion domes, the flocks of geese, the horse-drawn carts, the bazaar in summer when all the vegetables are in and the smell is incredible, meeting people who have never met an American before, and many other adventures. The most important thing is the real American inside of you that is just waiting to come out.

The decision is yours and you must give consideration to your family, your relationships, your financial situation, your career, your health—but also your dreams.

—Elene Hertweck



# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ukraine and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound (two 50-pound bags) weight limit on baggage. The most important things to bring are yourself, a sense of humor, and a sense of adventure! And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Ukraine.

Before you move to your site, the Peace Corps will provide you with a space heater, fire extinguisher, smoke detector, many technical resources and language manuals, and a medical kit (described in an earlier section of this book).

Your living allowance should not be considered a source of funding for major clothing purchases, although replacement clothing is factored into the living allowance. The Peace Corps does not provide reimbursement for winter clothing purchased in the United States. However Peace Corps/Ukraine does provide a settling-in/winterization allowance that covers the purchase of some winter clothing and supplies in-country. The hard water and strong detergent, not to mention hand-washing, will be harsh on your clothing, so make sure that whatever you bring can stand up to this treatment. Most Volunteers wear their clothes for several days before washing them, so dark colors are a good idea. It gets cold in the winter, so pack for any winter weather. Jeans, khakis, and slacks offer very little value in terms of

warmth, so men and women alike should bring a few pairs of thermal underwear. Bring clothes that do not require frequent and special care (i.e., dry cleaning). Blazers, suits, sport coats, and sweaters should be in dark colors to disguise the toil of frequent use. Remember, too, that you will likely be laundering your clothes by hand – jeans, light-colored clothing, and other fabrics can prove difficult to wash, dry, and keep their color in these conditions.

A wide variety of clothes is available here, but quality can be lacking. If you have a hard time finding your size in the United States, you won't find it here, and genuine "high-tech" fibers are not readily available. Very warm, locally-made winter clothes can be purchased in-country. Walking will be your main mode of transportation around town, and the terrain here is rather rugged, so you need footwear that can take a lot of abuse.

Dress is very important in Ukraine. The popular image of a Peace Corps Volunteer in sandals and a T-shirt with a university logo is not appropriate in this country (nor is military-style clothing or accessories). Fair or not, people are judged by the way they dress in Ukraine, more so than what you may be used to in the United States. Your colleagues will dress as professionals and for you to do otherwise will be considered disrespectful. If you come to work inappropriately dressed, your colleagues, students, and others in the community will probably not say anything to you directly but may talk unfavorably about you to others. Following the lead of your co-workers will help you gain acceptance and respect in your community. This does not mean that you need to spend a lot of money on new clothing. Rather, be selective in what you bring, and consider buying some of your professional clothing in Ukraine. The quality and style may not be equal to that found in American brands, but they are the same clothes your local colleagues will be wearing. Luggage should be



lightweight, durable, lockable, and easy to carry. Duffel bags and backpacks without frames are best because you will be hauling your luggage around on foot—there are no redcaps or luggage carts in this part of the world.

## **General Clothing**

Bring comfortable, professional-looking clothes that are appropriate for many occasions and can be layered according to the weather. (Note that you are expected to dress professionally during training.) Because you may be wearing the same clothes for two years, quality is more important than quantity. It is culturally acceptable in Ukraine to have a small wardrobe, so do not over-pack. Clothes should be wrinkle-free (polyester-cotton blends are recommended), easy to clean, and dark colored (you are likely to be washing your clothes by hand and cleaning whites is a chore. Likewise, wringing out clothes in the washing process, such as jeans, can be very tedious!). It is possible to buy clothes in Ukraine, but selection and sizes are limited. One option is to have clothes custom-made, which is not as costly as it is in the United States.

- Trench coat for spring and fall and possibly a light jacket
- Full-length winter coat or parka with lining (down is recommended)
- Mix-or-match clothes for layering, such as solid-color turtlenecks
- Lightweight and heavyweight sweaters
- Gloves or mittens, preferably wool; glove liners are nice, too (and available locally)
- Hats (even if your head isn't cold, the babushkas will make you wear a hat)
- Long thermal underwear (cotton or silk)
- Wool or Lycra-wool blend socks

- Casual clothes: jeans, walking shorts, T-shirts, turtlenecks
- Bathing suit
- Sports and fitness clothing, such as jogging pants (shorts are inappropriate in most places but can be worn in a gym or when running in a stadium)

### ***For Men***

- One or two suits for professional occasions
- Slacks for business casual wear; in most cases, khakis or cords with a blazer and tie are acceptable in schools and universities
- Shirts for professional wear
- Jackets
- Ties

### ***For Women***

- One or two suits for professional occasions
- Variety of slacks for different seasons
- Blouses
- Durable stockings (available in Ukraine, though not in all sizes)
- Your usual accessories

### ***Shoes***

- Comfortable and durable shoes for work (you will be doing a lot of walking), which are not easy to find in Ukraine
- Warm, waterproof boots that are dressy enough to wear with work clothes and large enough to wear with warm socks (although boots are available in Ukraine, large sizes for women may be difficult to find)
- Heavy-duty sandals (e.g., Texas)
- Athletic shoes

- Slippers (you will wear these a lot, as Ukrainians remove their shoes as soon as they walk in the door)
- Traction aids (e.g., Yaktrax); useful because walking on slippery roads in winter may be challenging, as it increases risk of falls and traumatic injuries when walking on ice; traction aids will help you feel confident and safe when walking on ice
- Extra shoelaces

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

Unless you have to have specific brands, you can get almost everything you need—e.g., shampoo, conditioner, lotion, shaving cream, toothpaste, antiperspirant, hair spray, coloring products, razors—in Ukraine. Things to consider bringing:

- Two pairs of eyeglasses, if you wear them; also consider bringing a repair kit
- Two-year supply of contact lens solutions (the Peace Corps does not provide supplies for contacts)
- Three-month supply of any prescription medication you take
- Makeup (also available in Ukraine if you are not particular about brands)
- Start-up supply of feminine hygiene products (widely available in stores, bazaars, and kiosks, but it may take some time to determine where to get what you want)
- Moisturizing hand cream
- Hand sanitizer that does not require water
- Foot aids such as pads for corns, if you have tender feet
- Spot remover or Woolite (for clothes that need special care)
- Fabric refreshener or odor remover (e.g., Febreze)
- Tweezers

- Nail clipper or emery boards
- Dental floss
- Special vitamins or supplements (the Peace Corps provides multivitamins)

## **Kitchen**

You can easily buy most kitchen supplies in Ukraine. There are a few items, however, that you might consider bringing:

- Basic cookbook (bring a vegetarian cookbook if you prefer vegetarian dishes); a cookbook of dishes that can be prepared from locally available products will be provided to you
- Favorite recipes
- Measuring cups and spoons with both metric and nonmetric markings
- Oven thermometer
- Good vegetable peeler
- Artificial sweetener (sugar and honey are available)
- Twist ties
- Plastic storage bags (one-quart and one-gallon freezer bags are best)
- Favorite seasonings, such as Tabasco sauce, vanilla, Old Bay, cloves, spices, cumin, cayenne pepper, chili powder, and basil (many basic spices are available locally)
- Favorite foods such as chocolate chips, peanut butter, maple syrup, popcorn, and gravy and salad dressing mixes

## **Miscellaneous**

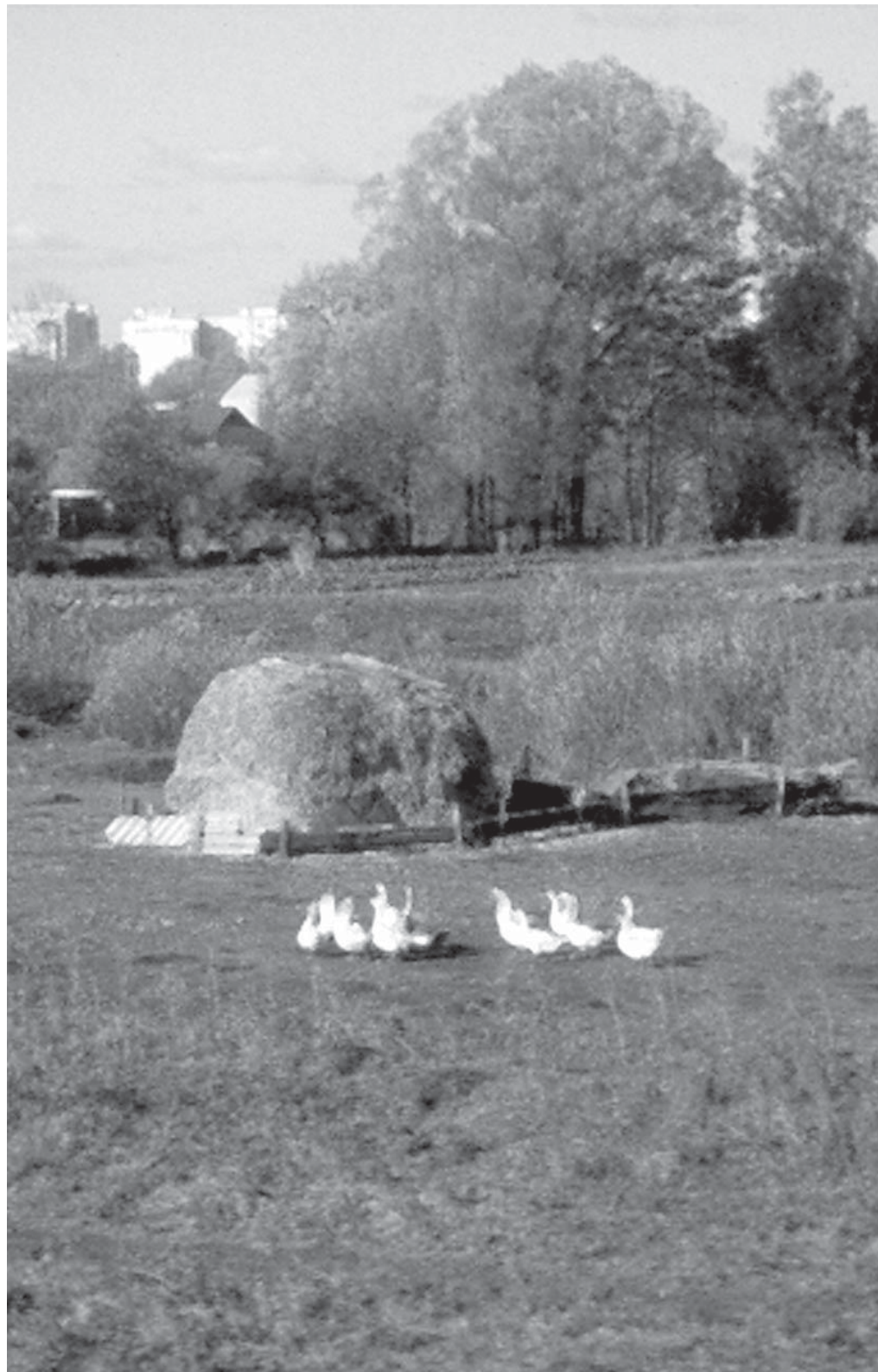
- Favorite tapes, CDs or movies, including workout videos (Please refer to Volunteer Living Conditions and

Volunteer Lifestyle pp. 26-27 for details on importing and exporting CDs, movies, CD-ROMs, etc.)

- Shortwave radio for international news
- iPod, MP3 player, thumb drive
- Laptop computer with a good surge protector; if you bring one, be sure to insure it
- Digital camera (useful for emailing and posting photos on the Web) or 35 mm camera with replacement batteries (film and processing are available in Ukraine)
- Medium-sized daypack for weekend travel
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Umbrella (available in Ukraine)
- Durable, water-resistant, and inexpensive watch, with an alarm if possible; an extra battery is also useful
- Reliable alarm clock that runs without electricity
- Small but powerful flashlight, perhaps one that attaches to a key chain (can be bought in Ukraine)
- Neck safe or money belt (it is safest to carry your money and passport on your person)
- Sewing kit (with safety pins)
- Sleeping bag with stuff sack for traveling in cold weather
- Fleece throw/lap blanket for cold nights
- Musical instruments (if you play)
- Bring copies of all financial and personal documents such as a Power of Attorney, university transcripts and/or diplomas, birth certificates, passport and credit cards
- Graduate study materials (e.g., GRE, LSAT)
- A few books by your favorite authors
- Appliances—buying them locally may eliminate the need to bring a voltage converter; items such as irons, blow dryers, and “boomboxes” are available at reasonable prices

- Teaching materials (for education Volunteers), such as markers, chalk, erasers, magazines, simple children's books and American music; you can also pack items for someone to ship to you later
- Interesting wall decorations (maps, posters, etc.)
- Swiss Army knife with corkscrew or Leatherman tool (very useful)
- Duct tape (can be used for all sorts of things)
- Photos of home to show your host family, students, friends, and colleagues
- Games such as Scrabble, cards, Frisbee, Uno, Nerf football
- Quick-drying travel towel (available at [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)) and washcloths
- Travel books (e.g., *Lonely Planet* and *Let's Go: Eastern Europe*) and other books to read
- Day planner
- U.S. and world maps
- Compact sleeping bag (for traveling on trains and visiting Peace Corps friends)
- Dictionary
- Suntan lotion (selection of brands here is limited)
- Note cards and greeting cards

## NOTES





# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



Please use the following list of numbers to help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

**Peace Corps Headquarters**

**Toll-free Number:**

800.424.8580, Press 2, then  
Ext. # (see below)

**Peace Corps' Mailing Address:**

Peace Corps  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement, Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Stephanie Paul Desk Officer E-mail: <a href="mailto:ukraine@peacecorps.gov">ukraine@peacecorps.gov</a>	Ext. 2422	202.692.2422

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

# PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) · 1-800-424-8580