

# Go East

What pops into your head when you hear about Ukraine? Perhaps that it used to be a part of the USSR and the western part, Zakarpattia, belonged to Czechoslovakia before the Second World War. I've been holidaying in Ukraine every summer and here are some of the memorable sights I've encountered there.

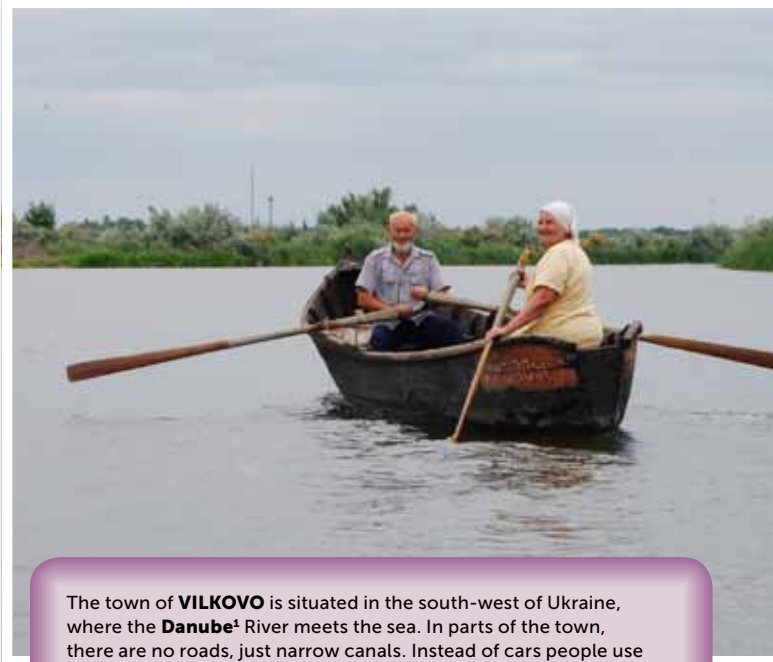
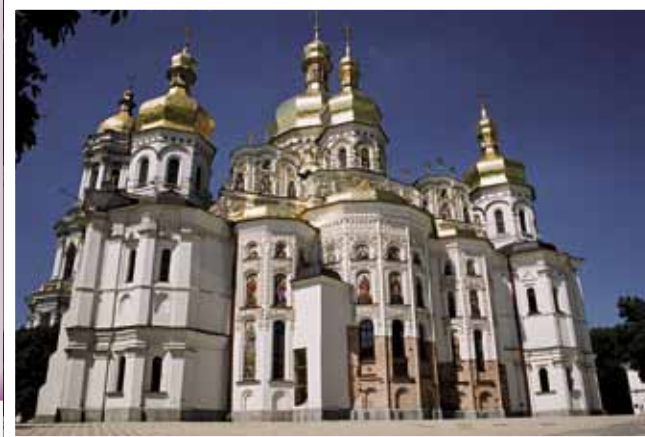
Zuzana Pernicová (CR)



The **HOUSE WITH CHIMERAS** in the centre of Kiev looks like a madman's dream – decorated with **mermaids**<sup>4</sup>, frogs, elephants, snakes, eagles and all kinds of weird creatures. It was built in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Kiev architect Gorodetsky. He was also co-director of a cement factory and **allegedly**<sup>5</sup> wanted to demonstrate what fantastic things could be made from **concrete**<sup>6</sup> – so the house served as something like a huge advertisement. Now it is used as a presidential residence where official meetings take place. One can only speculate what crazy ideas such a place gives to the politicians.

**KIEV PECHERSK LAVRA (Monastery**<sup>7</sup> of the Caves) is a large Orthodox Christian monastery, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The **golden-domed**<sup>8</sup> churches look like something from a fairy tale, and a strange world lies underground: You can buy a long thin candle and enter the caves, where **monks**<sup>9</sup> used to live and were buried. It's a labyrinth of dark narrow passages, lit only by the candles in the hands of the visitors. The mummified bodies of dead monks line the way. The atmosphere is **eerie**<sup>10</sup>, and one can't help wondering whether it would be possible to find the way out if somebody **blew out**<sup>11</sup> all the candles.



The town of **VILKOVO** is situated in the south-west of Ukraine, where the **Danube**<sup>1</sup> River meets the sea. In parts of the town, there are no roads, just narrow canals. Instead of cars people use boats, and instead of pavements they walk on wooden boardwalks raised above the water. That's why the place got the nickname "The Ukrainian **Venice**"<sup>2</sup>. Wine-growing is very popular there – some family houses are so overgrown with grapes that it is a wonder people can see out of the windows. Vilkovo is also the centre of "Old Believers" practicing an old form of Orthodox Christianity. If you are a girl and would like to visit any of their churches, even just as a tourist, be ready – you have to cover your head with a **scarf**<sup>3</sup> and wear a long skirt (trousers are forbidden).



**KRAINA MRIY** (The Land of Dreams) folk festival is held in Kiev each summer. Folk, folk-rock and world-music bands perform on several stages and the site is full of **vendors**<sup>12</sup> selling traditional crafts, **embroidered**<sup>13</sup> shirts, **pottery**<sup>14</sup> and paintings. Among the crowds of teenagers you can see old women in traditional costumes, looking like they came straight from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But sometimes they are armed with unexpected objects...



The Crimean city of **YALTA** was **founded**<sup>15</sup> at the site of an ancient Greek colony, and nowadays is a famous holiday resort. It offers a mix of luxury and picturesque street life: It takes just a few minutes to get from a seaside promenade with palm trees and **posh**<sup>16</sup> cafés to an open-air market, where artists sketch quick portraits and **fortune-tellers**<sup>17</sup> sit on their chairs, **foretelling**<sup>18</sup> the future. And where else could you see a statue of Lenin overlooking McDonald's?

On the green hills above the Dnieper river in Kiev is the **MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR** (the local name for the Second World War). It includes exhibitions of military equipment, including such absurd sights as tanks painted with colourful flowers. It is dominated by the huge "Mother Motherland" figure – something like the Kiev equivalent of the Statue of Liberty. She holds a **sword**<sup>19</sup> in her raised hand, but the sword is strangely short. Why? There is an old legend saying that no building in Kiev should be higher than the **bell tower**<sup>20</sup> in Pechersk Lavra. When people found out that the statue would be higher, they demanded it was shortened – and that's why the sword looks more like a big knife. Adventurous visitors can climb all the way up to the top of the statue's other hand and enjoy a bird's-eye view of the city.



The Black Sea coast on the **CRIMEAN PENINSULA**<sup>21</sup> is great for swimming and sunbathing as long as you avoid overcrowded city beaches. The sea is full of **jellyfish**<sup>22</sup>, and dolphins sometimes come close enough to be visible from the shore. You can also go on a boat ride along the shore. Sometimes the methods of hunting for customers are truly original – once I heard a voice coming from the **loudspeakers**<sup>23</sup> on a boat repeating over and over: "Come aboard, take a sea ride with us... It's so nice, it's so healthy... and it's cheaper than a bottle of vodka."



The name **LVIV** brings to mind images of lions, and indeed the lion is the traditional symbol of the west-Ukrainian city. The local king who founded the city in the 13<sup>th</sup> century named it after his son, Lev. Lviv belonged to Poland in the past and offers a mix of western and eastern heritages. The historical centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is packed with lovely Renaissance and baroque houses and magnificent churches. Narrow streets **wind**<sup>24</sup> between buildings decorated with statues, sculptures and tiny balconies. One could spend long days there, just exploring all the little hidden corners and details. And Czech patriots may be pleased to find a street named after the Hussite warrior Jan Žižka – though it is more of a short sleepy back **alley**<sup>25</sup>.



## VOCABULARY

<sup>1</sup> **Danube** ['dænju:b] – Dunaj

<sup>2</sup> **Venice** – Benátky

<sup>3</sup> **scarf** [skɑ:f] – šátek

<sup>4</sup> **mermaid** ['mɜ:mɛɪd] – mořská panna

<sup>5</sup> **allegedly** [ə'ledʒɪdli] – údajně

<sup>6</sup> **concrete** ['kɒŋkri:t] – beton

<sup>7</sup> **monastery** ['mɒnəst(ə)rɪ] – klášter

<sup>8</sup> **golden-domed** – se zlatými kupolemi

<sup>9</sup> **monk** – mnich

<sup>10</sup> **eerie** ['ɪəri] – tajemný

<sup>11</sup> **to blow out** – sfouknout

<sup>12</sup> **vendor** ['vɛndə] – pouliční prodejce

<sup>13</sup> **embroidered** [ɪm'brɔɪdəd] – vyšívavý

<sup>14</sup> **pottery** ['pɒt(ə)rɪ] – keramika

<sup>15</sup> **to found** [faʊnd] – založit

<sup>16</sup> **posh** [pɒʃ] – luxusní, nóbl

<sup>17</sup> **fortune-teller** – věštec

<sup>18</sup> **to foretell** [fɔ:'tɛl] – předpovědět

<sup>19</sup> **sword** [sɔ:d] – meč

<sup>20</sup> **bell tower** – zvonice

<sup>21</sup> **Crimean peninsula** [kraɪ'mi:ən prɪ'nɪnsjələ] – Krymský poloostrov

<sup>22</sup> **jellyfish** ['dʒɛlɪfɪʃ] – medúza

<sup>23</sup> **loudspeakers** – reproduktory

<sup>24</sup> **to wind** [waɪnd] – vinout se

<sup>25</sup> **alley** ['æli] – ulička