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Visiting Chernobyl? Don't Miss Out On Kyiv, A True Gem Of Eastern Europe

Не варто ігнорувати Київ, мандруючи в Чорнобиль

Видання Forbes називає українську столицю справжньою перлиною Східної Європи. Чорнобиль минулого року привернув особливу увагу туристів з різних куточків світу. Але Київ заслуговує на це навіть більше. Це нескінченний вибір кухні з усього світу, неймовірна радянська архітектура в суміші з сучасним дизайном, а також досить приємні місцеві жителі», - пише на сторінках Forbes Т.Крістін. На відміну від інших міст, які викликають захват з першого ж погляду, Києву може знадобитися трохи часу, щоб його справжня краса розкрилася. Однак, він вартий часу й зусиль. У столиці України є приховані перли. Українців автор описує такими, що на перший погляд здаються замкненими. Але вони швидко знімають свій захист й готові тепло вітати гостей.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/theresachristine/2020/01/22/visiting-chernobyl-dont-miss-out-on-kyiv-a-true-gem-of-eastern-europe/#ee1c152440cf>

I traveled to Kyiv not to experience Ukraine's culture or to learn more about the history of Eastern Europe; no, I'm ashamed to admit that Kyiv was merely the bookend on an excursion into Chernobyl. But I quickly discovered the country's capital was a city worth more than just a passing glance—an endless choice of cuisine from around the world, striking Soviet architecture paired with hotspots for modern design and locals with enough kindness to go around.

The kind of charm you'll find in Kyiv isn't the same that you might encounter in an undoubtedly romantic city like Paris or Venice, but it's still there in its own special way. Kyiv has a sad beauty to it, but you'll find that the enduring strength of the people and the city will make you love this Eastern European gem even more.

It's impossible to summarize the history of Ukraine in only a few sentences, but understanding where the country is currently coming from adds depth to a visit to the capital city. In Russian, the word "ukraina" is most commonly interpreted as "borderland," and for ages Ukraine has acted as the middle ground between east and west. As a result it has a long history of being treated as a pawn in a larger game (for instance, the Ukrainian Famine). Only since 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, has the country been an independent state, and even in recent years Ukraine has still dealt with corrupt leaders and Russia's presence in Crimea.

Travelers who want to explore more history in Kyiv should visit the Holodomor Genocide Museum and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine. The massive Motherland Monument and ever-busy Independence Square are also must-sees.

The Podil district (or Podol) has a lot of character—it's the oldest district in the city, but this history is juxtaposed by hip cafes and a contemporary creative scene. As such, this neighborhood offers some unique local flavor, and it's a laid-back breather from the bustle along Kyiv's main street, Khreshchatyk. Simply wandering the cobblestone streets that lead to the giant ferris wheel in Kantroktova Square, admiring the architecture of the area's many churches and popping into a cozy cafe (try the trendy Kachorovska Store & Cafe on Borychiv Tik Street) gives you a sense of what life is

like for residents. You'll also find design-forward restaurants and hotels, like BURSA Hotel where warm colors pop against the clean lines in the rooms and public spaces.

The Cuisine Of Kyiv

Borscht—a chunky soup made of beetroot—may be the first thing you think of when envisioning Ukrainian food, but you'll find much more than that in Kyiv. Craving something traditional with a modern twist? Dine at SHO to enjoy items like their savory nalysnyky (Ukrainian crepes) or make a reservation at the popular Ostannia Barykada. Want something a little lighter? Make your way to Hum:Hum for their falafel and hummus or make a quick stop at Soup Culture for their fresh and energizing soups. And if it's dessert you're after, you'll enjoy the café and rich sweets at Lviv Handmade Chocolate.

A Diamond In The Rough

Unlike other cities you visit which immediately hook you, Kyiv might require a little time before you can really appreciate its true beauty. It's worth the time and effort, though. The city has little gems hidden throughout it, and the curious are rewarded by exploring courtyards which often have adorable little boutiques, restaurants or bars. Plus, the hospitality of the people is abundant, and while they may seem reserved at first they quickly put down their defenses and will welcome you warmly.

Theresa Christine is a freelance travel writer based in Los Angeles, CA. You can follow along with her adventures by subscribing to her newsletter [Delve](#) here.