

POLITICAL TOURS

Travel beyond the headlines

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Ukraine: After the Revolution

Dates: **June 2020, Saturday 13th to Saturday 20th**

Ukraine has been living through turbulent times. Following the 2014 revolution it was invaded by Russia occupying the Crimean peninsula and igniting the conflict in the eastern region of Donbas.

With the conflict still simmering, the country has just entered a new political cycle; the election of a young standup comedian Volodymyr Zelensky as its president.

Prior to his political career, Zelensky starred in a comedy series (available on Netflix) about a schoolteacher who accidentally becomes a president. Largely comprised of political novices, Zelensky's party has secured a constitutional majority in the parliament and embarked on sweeping reforms, raising a huge amount of controversy.

Our tour traces how the conflict came about and explores prospects for a peaceful resolution as well as the long-term impact on East-West relations.

The 8 day journey starts and ends in **Kiev** where we look at the origins of the Maidan Revolution and the fall of former President Viktor Yanukovich from power. We meet with analysts, diplomats and senior government officials.

We head east to **Kharkiv**, a Russian populated city that remains under Ukrainian control despite attempts by separatists to take it over. We also visit **Sloviansk** in the Donetsk region.

Beyond the politics Ukraine's rich architectural heritage, abundance of good food and warm hospitality make it a fascinating and deeply rewarding place to visit.

Leonid Ragozin, a former BBC correspondent from the region, leads the tour. He now contributes to Bloomberg, The New Republic, The Guardian, Time, Politico, Al Jazeera, Slon.ru, and Morgenbladet, as well as BBC WS, ABC (Australia) and several other radio stations. He is the author of the Lonely Planet guides to Moscow, the Baltics, Greece and Ukraine.

Price: £3940.00

Single Supplement: £500.00

Price of optional 1 day extension – Chernobyl (TBC)

For obvious safety reasons this tour will not include any area affected by military conflict.

Political Tours Limited Bloxham Mill, Barford Road, Bloxham OX15 4FF, UK.

Like all our tours the itinerary is focused on current affairs. Events on the ground may change and the final schedule may be adjusted accordingly.

Itinerary

Day One: Sat 13 June Kiev

Dinner with Political Tours expert Leonid Ragozin. We discuss Ukraine's recent political history, the aftermath of Ukraine's Maidan revolution, Russia's intervention and the spectacular rise of Volodymir Zelensky, a standup comedian turned president. Kanapa restaurant on Kiev's oldest street. *Overnight Kiev.*

Day Two: Sun 14 June Kiev to Kharkiv

We explore Kiev's Independence Square and the government district, the former battleground between pro-Yanukovich forces and protestors during the Maidan Revolution. Visit Mezhyhirya, the residence of the ousted president Viktor Yanukovich. His opulently decorated dacha is seen as emblematic of the corruption associated with his government. Evening flight to Kharkiv. (Please contact us and we will let you know which flight to book that best fits the itinerary.) *Overnight Kharkiv.*

Day Three: Mon 15 June Kharkiv

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, located 40km away from the Russian border is heavily influenced by Russia. It was a major technological and educational centre in Soviet times and is now a hi-tech hub. We meet with the head of a successful IT company and talk to traders about the impact of the current crisis. After narrowly avoiding a takeover by Russian backed gangs in the spring of 2014, Kharkiv became a staging ground for groups fighting Russian forces further south. We meet with politicians, and an academic from the competing pro-Russian and 'pro-Maidan' forces in the city. We look at how Kiev has sought to retain control in the region and the long-term impact of the conflict on this ethnic Russian area. *Overnight Kharkiv.*

Day Four: Tues 16 June Sloviansk

An early start and a 2.5 hr drive to Sloviansk in the Donetsk region. It was the first to bear the brunt of the Donbas war when a ragtag band led by the rogue Russian soldier of fortune Igor Girkin occupied it in April 2014. Russian-backed forces abandoned it after heavy fighting later that year and it is now a safe distance from the frontline, providing a glimpse into this conflict, and local sentiments regarding both Ukraine and Russia. We return to Kharkiv. *Overnight Kharkiv.*

Day Five: Wed 17 June Kiev

After breakfast we head to the airport for a late morning flight to Kiev. (Please contact us and we will let you know which flight to book that best fits the itinerary.) We look at the dispute and schism within the Orthodox church: the Orthodox church of Ukraine has recently been granted independence marking a historic split from the Russian Orthodox church. *Overnight Kiev.*

Day Six: Thurs 18 June Kiev

Back in the capital we get assessments from diplomats and members of the international community on the future of the region; meeting government officials, Ukrainian politicians from the ruling Servant of the People party as well as from the nationalist opposition. Discussions include talks with an economist about Ukraine's debt crisis. *Overnight Kiev.*

Day Seven: Fri 19 June Kiev

Visit the local newspaper for their take on the current situation. A leading journalist gives their take on corruption, the economy and prospects of closer ties with the EU. After lunch we have free time to explore the city centre, followed by a farewell dinner and review of the week gone by.

Day Eight : Sat 20 June Tour ends

Departures for the airport after breakfast.

Optional extension – Visit to Chernobyl*. On Sat 20 June we are offering an optional extension to visit Chernobyl. This is a full day tour. Your departure would be on Sunday 21 June. *Contact us for further details**.