



Kiev - what to expect

Official language: Ukrainian

Majority of people in Kiev speak Russian as well as Ukrainian. At official places, however, only Ukrainian is used. Use of English is not yet widely spread in Ukraine. Both Russian and Ukrainian use Cyrillic alphabet.

City name:

Kiev in Russian and internationally
Kyiv in Ukrainian

Money: Hryvna

Local money is called Hryvna (also pronounced Gryvna). It is divided into 100 Kopecks. The currency symbol is UAH.

The average values of Hryvna are:

1 USD = 5 Hryvnas

1 EUR = 7 Hryvnas

1 GBP = 9 Hryvnas

Exchanging:

Apart from banks, there are exchange kiosks all over the city. They are marked with a sign ОБМЕН ВАЛЮТ and usually with a yellow poster showing the going exchange rates. Be careful about decimal points. Some exchange kiosks try their luck with tricks such as 1 USD = 5.005 Hryvnas (instead of 5.05)

Credit cards:

Major hotels, restaurants and shops (such as these in shopping malls) accept credit cards.

ATMs:

You can withdraw money at ATMs located at banks, shops or elsewhere around the city.

Documents:

You will need your passport to buy airline or long-distance bus tickets, checking into hotels, boarding a train or airline, making bank transactions and money exchange (but not at money exchange kiosks), entering into some government or business centers (to be given a pass). Make a copy of your passport with the visa and stamp from the last Ukraine border crossing for peace of mind. Otherwise, there is no reason to carry around a passport or driver's license all the time.

Safety:

Kiev is a relatively safe city. During daytime and in the city centre, you can get robbed (as anywhere else) or perhaps ran over by a car because traffic in Kiev is bad. But there is no particular danger of other harm. Avoid going to suburbs in the evening and night though - these areas are poorly lit, there are barely any police patrol cars and local mischiefs may take advantage of that.

Pickpockets:

Be careful in crowded places, for example on Kreshatyk or Independence Square, in metro etc. There are about as many pickpockets in Kiev as in any other European capital.

Taxi:

Official taxis can be flagged on the street. They should have a meter making the transaction easy. Prices are relatively low compared to Western Europe: expect to pay from 30 to 50 hryvnas around town.

Wild taxis:

The old system of 'wild' taxis is still in force – a person wanting a ride simply sticks his or hand out, and any driver wanting to moonlight as a taxi driver will stop, ask where they want to go, and how much they are willing to pay. You may not want to try this thrill your first time in Kiev, but at least you will know what is going on when you see this happening on the street.

▶ **Calling a taxi:**

It is the most reliable way to get a cab and fair price. On rainy days and at rush hour, it can happen the line is busy or there are no available cars.

▶ **Public transport:**

The metro is most efficient due to heavy traffic on the ground. The fare is 50 kopecks, you buy tokens at the metro stations. There are trolley buses, a few remaining tramways and buses, for the most part in a somewhat derelict condition. Schedules and routes are often a mystery.

▶ **The yellow minibuses:**

They are called marshutkas. These semi-private minibuses cover the whole city and stop both at regular spots and when someone flags them. The fare is between 1 and 2 Hryvnas. You pay the fare to the driver. If the bus is full and the driver far, pass your fare via other passengers to the driver (he will manage to give the right change back while driving). If you try to pay with a twenty or more, it's possible the driver will tell you off. Carry around small change.

▶ **Driving:**

If you plan to drive yourself in Kiev remember a few things:

- white lines are non existent or ignored
- stopping at red light is considered optional by many
- rush hour lasts most of the day in Kiev

▶ **Mobile phones:**

Just as popular as in Western Europe. There are several operators.

▶ **Internet:**

Not as developed as in Western Europe but increasingly available through broadband. Wi-Fi is available in many restaurants in the city center.

▶ **Health:**

There is no vaccination or other precautions necessary before entering Ukraine. Avoid tap water and old fashioned food stores to stay ok. For treatment visit one of Kiev's private clinics rather than state hospitals. If you have any dental problems, it is a good idea to solve them cheaply and well at one of Kiev's modern dental clinics.