

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

UKRAINE



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



April 2015

MAP OF UKRAINE



A WELCOME LETTER

Greetings, “Group 48” invitees:

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 experiencing a 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. You are going to be a part of the first new group to Ukraine following suspension of the program in early 2014. Despite the complicated regional political situation, we believe the Peace Corps is needed in Ukraine more than ever. You have an important opportunity to contribute to the development efforts in a democratizing Ukraine. At the same time, you will find challenges similar to any Peace Corps Volunteer.

Since 1992, more than 2,500 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Ukraine—sharing their skills with Ukrainians through teaching English, working with youth, and promoting community development. Volunteers have also had a visible 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 have worked throughout Ukraine—from the western mountains to the eastern industrial metropolises, from the northern steppes to the Black Sea beaches. Your group will be placed in the West and Central areas of the country where the Peace Corps has assessed the safety and security to be suitable for Volunteers.

As you read this welcome book, please consider the 27-month commitment you are making to Peace Corps/Ukraine. I encourage you to share this information with your family and close friends; they will remain an important part of your support network, and keeping them informed will be helpful to you in many ways. For those of you on Facebook, we encourage you to “like” our Facebook page at facebook.com/PeaceCorpsUkraine.

Joining the Peace Corps entails agreeing to accept a set of established policies for the duration of your Volunteer service. 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. Our Volunteer Policy and Procedures Handbook will be available to you soon.

There is a skilled, committed, and caring staff in Kyiv waiting for you, eager to support you through your initial 12-week training. We are looking forward to welcoming you in Ukraine.

Слава Україні! (Slava Ukraini!)

*Country Director Denny Robertson
RPCV/Philippines 1977–79 (no snickering, please)*

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CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to do the following:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived in your host country and community as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsively the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

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 23 years that Peace Corps Volunteers have worked in Ukraine, they and their Ukrainian counterparts have faced and overcome a wide range of challenges as Ukraine transitioned from its post-Soviet status and command economy to closer integration with the West. At the same time, these 23 years also resulted in many rewarding life-changing experiences and friendships.

The formal agreement establishing Peace Corps/Ukraine was signed in May 1992 in Washington, D.C., by then-Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and U.S. President George Bush. Since the first group of Volunteers arrived in Ukraine in 1992, more than 2,500 Volunteers have successfully worked in the areas of business development, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), environmental protection, youth development, and community development.

The dramatic events following the “Revolution of Dignity” (also referred to as Euromaidan) at the end of 2013 and early 2014 resulted in the evacuation of all Peace Corps Volunteers from Ukraine. Now the Peace Corps is returning to Ukraine and you will contribute in a variety of ways to the development of Ukraine into a modern European state. Perhaps at no time in its history has the Peace Corps been better positioned to play a critical development role in a nation so ready to change.

Peace Corps Programming in Ukraine

Like conditions in Ukraine, Peace Corps programs here continue to evolve. Today, we have three projects: Community Development, Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) and Youth Development.

Volunteers in the Community Development project enhance local capacities in partnership building, business and management skills, and organizational development. They promote cooperation among three sectors of society—business, government, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—to address local issues of interest to communities. Volunteers in the TEFL project work to expand and improve the quality of English instruction in schools, pedagogical colleges, and universities. The Youth Development project addresses the growing gap between the development levels of young people in urban centers and those in rural and otherwise disadvantaged areas who risk falling behind in acquiring the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed. The underlying democratic values of civic engagement, fair play, and optimism that one can create a positive future are the underpinnings of the Peace Corps in Ukraine.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: UKRAINE AT A GLANCE

History

Ukraine, a nation of 43 million people bridging Russia and Western Europe, has been deprived of statehood for most of its history—including 700 years as a colony of other Eastern and Central European states (Lithuania and Poland and later the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires) followed by 70 years of Soviet dictatorship. Today, 23 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine is still struggling to overcome its deep-seated colonial mentality and the authoritarian Soviet legacy based on fear, lack of trust, and repressed initiative.

Ukrainians value 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. 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, Kyiv became the center of the state of Kyivan-Rus. Kyiv flourished as a center of trade and culture over 1,000 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 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. However, the Treaty of Pereyaslav signed by him in 1654 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, resulting in the death as many as 10 million Ukrainians by starvation. 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.

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 their independence. Today Ukraine is at the most critical point in its modern history. The Revolution of Dignity resulted in the birth of a modern Ukrainian nation which is trying to build a free society with strong democratic values and rule of law and do away with pervasive corruption, massive economic inequality, and overcome deep-seated fatalism.

Government

Ukraine is governed by a constitution adopted in 1996 and revised in 2004. The president, who is the head of state, is elected by direct, popular vote for a five-year term and is eligible for a second term. The government is headed by the prime minister, who along with the cabinet is named by president. The unicameral legislature consists of the 450-seat Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada), whose members are elected to serve five-year terms. Suffrage is granted to all citizens 18 years and older. Administratively, Ukraine is divided into 24 provinces or oblasts and one autonomous republic (Crimea). The latter is currently occupied by Russia.

Following the Revolution of Dignity in late 2013—early 2014, Ukraine conducted free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in May and October 2014, respectively. As a result, for the first time in its modern history, Ukraine has a pro-Western government supported by the democratic majority in Parliament, which already signed an Association Agreement with the European Union and adopted an ambitious plan of reforms in all spheres.

Economy

Formerly a major component of the Soviet Union economy, Ukraine experienced a deep recession during the 1990s, including hyperinflation and a drastic fall in economic output. Today, Ukraine is an emerging free market, with a per capita gross domestic product of about US\$ 3,800 (2012), fertile agricultural land, and a wealth of raw materials, metals, and natural resources. However, economic freedom continues to be repressed in Ukraine. Previous reforms have failed to promote broad-based economic development or allow the emergence of a more dynamic private sector due to corruption, poor administration of laws, and deficiencies in contract enforcement and protection of property rights.

2014 was an extremely difficult year for Ukraine, and resulted in industrial output decrease by 10.7 percent, inflation of almost 25 percent, and more than twofold devaluation of Hryvnya, Ukraine's national currency. Ukraine has been supported by the U.S. and the E.U. and is currently negotiating a new agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The economic situation remains critical, and the risk of the country going into default remains high. Ukrainians still remember the 1990s, when the norm was hyperinflation of 10,000 percent, power outages, and shortages of basic goods.

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. 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. However, you can hear both Russian and Ukrainian in all parts of the country and the majority of Ukrainians are bilingual. Reflecting the diversity of the population, some Ukrainians also speak Romanian, Hungarian, or Polish.

Environment

Ukraine is a beautiful country with a rich variety of natural resources, including about 70,000 species of flora and fauna and nearly 8,000 deposits of 94 minerals of commercial value. A small part of the country is mountainous, with the highest peak being Hoverla (2,061 meters) in the Carpathian 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.

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 the Peace Corps tries to make sure all these links are active and current, the Peace Corps cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

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 experiences, 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 please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Ukraine

State.gov

The Department of State's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ukraine and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

The U.S. Government Publishing Office publishes country studies intermittently.

lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

The Library of Congress provides historical and sociological data on numerous countries.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

United Nations site with links to data from U.N. member countries

Wikipedia.org

Search for Ukraine to find encyclopedia-type information. Note: As Wikipedia content is user-generated, information may be biased and/or not verified.

Worldbank.org

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding development.

Data.worldbank.org/country

Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

RPCV.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up 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, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

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

<https://www.facebook.com/PeaceCorpsUkraine>

Peace Corps/Ukraine’s Facebook Page

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ukraine

UN.org/News/

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

VOAnews.com

Voice of America, the U.S. government’s multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

www.brama.com

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

<http://ukrainianweek.com/>

This site of the Ukrainian Weekly Magazine has both daily news and analytical articles in English.

<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.

International Development Sites About Ukraine

<http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/europe-and-eurasia/ukraine>

U.S. Agency for International Development in Ukraine.

<http://www.usukraine.org>

U.S.-Ukraine Foundation

<http://ukraine.usembassy.gov>

U.S. Embassy in Kyiv

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

United Nations in Ukraine

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine>

World Bank in Ukraine

Recommended Books

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 1960s." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. "The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps." Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. "Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver." Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. "When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years." Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

Books About Ukraine

1. Dolot, Miron. "Execution by Hunger: The Hidden Holocaust." New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.
2. Subtelny, Orest. "Ukraine: A History." Fourth Edition. University of Toronto Press, 2009.
3. Snyder, Timothy. "Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin." New York: Basic Books, 2012.
4. Reid, Anna. "Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine." Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000. "
5. Wilson, Andrew. "The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation" Second Edition. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002.

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Only small, flat envelopes (no boxes, pouches, 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. Mail takes a minimum of two weeks to arrive in Ukraine.

Your address during training will be
U.S. Peace Corps/Ukraine
PCT (Name of trainee)
P.O. Box 204 01032 Kyiv, Ukraine

Once you become a Volunteer and move to your permanent site, you may receive mail there, either at a post office box or at your office. Family and friends should not mail you valuable items, as mail sometimes arrives opened, with items missing, or does not arrive at all. Airmail is more reliable, but more expensive, than surface mail. A number of international mail services operate in Ukraine, including UPS and DHL.

Telecommunications in Ukraine lags far behind that in the United States. Many Ukrainians do not have their own land lines, and it is possible that you will not have one. Nearly all Ukrainians use cellular phones. Peace Corps/Ukraine discourages you from bringing a cellphone from home because it is highly unlikely that a cellular plan in the United States will cover Ukraine. You will receive a special allowance of about \$30 to buy an inexpensive cellphone in Ukraine. All incoming calls are free of charge.

As computers may not be available at your workplace, bringing your own laptop would be very 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 laptop or a tablet, make sure you bring the necessary power converter, surge protection, and plug adapter. The Peace Corps encourages you to insure your computer against theft.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to high standards of discretion when expressing their impressions and opinions about the countries where they serve. Blogs are easily accessible to anyone with an Internet connection and, thus, any content that is posted on a blog can be accessed by your host country colleagues, friends, and general public. Given the current political environment in Ukraine and taking into account Peace Corps guidance regarding blogs, including safety considerations, you should be sensitive when posting. In addition to ensuring that the content is appropriate and culturally sensitive, Volunteers are urged to password protect their blogs to guarantee that the blog is accessed only by the audience intended by the Volunteer. Additional information about blogs will be given during pre-service training (PST).

Housing and Site Location

Your living conditions in Ukraine will require some adjustments to your lifestyle.

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

During training, you will stay with a host family to enhance your language learning, cultural integration, and safety. For many Volunteers, homestays will extend beyond training and last throughout their two-year assignments. Independent housing is scarce and not guaranteed. Other housing options include a dormitory or a modest apartment provided by your worksite.

You will be provided with most of the furnishings you need, along with a settling-in allowance for additional items. Your regional manager will work with you and your Ukrainian counterpart to ensure that you can obtain necessities.

Many towns have to ration water and electricity, and hot water may not be available. 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. In some communities Volunteers are expected to heat their houses using a wood or coal-burning stove.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Hryvnya (Ukrainian currency) that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

If you are asked by the Peace Corps to travel for official, medical, or programmatic reasons, you will be reimbursed for transportation and receive lodging and meals allowance. Volunteers are also reimbursed monthly for continuing language study, after they submit a completed tutor reimbursement form.

You will also receive a monthly leave allowance of \$24. Finally, when you move into your permanent housing at site, you will receive a one-time settling-in allowance to buy basic household items.

The Peace Corps helps Volunteers set up bank accounts in local currency and deposits all allowances.

Food and Diet

During training, your host family will provide you with most meals, so you will have plenty of opportunities to become familiar with Ukrainian food. As in many countries, the availability of certain foods depends 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 (mostly pork and chicken), potatoes, beets, onions, and cabbage 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. 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 Europe.

Grocery stores similar to those in the U.S. are appearing all over Ukraine, but most PCVs shop in open-air markets and small shops that sell produce and all the other necessities of life, from wonderful black bread and vegetables to live chickens and clothing. These bazaars allow you to taste many items before purchasing them. It is unlikely you will find fresher products anywhere else and they open early so you can shop before you go to work for the day.

Transportation

Ukraine has a very well-developed public transportation system. Every large city and regional capital is connected to the extensive national railway network. Buses and minibuses operate between shorter distances. Many of the trains are overnight trains, so Volunteers can leave their sites at night and arrive at their destinations in the morning. An alternative that is gaining popularity is a luxury bus network, which also provides service to many cities.

Most cities and towns in Ukraine have a comprehensive public transportation system of buses, trolleys, and trams; Kyiv and several other cities have subways. Public transportation is efficient and inexpensive, but vehicles can be very old and very crowded. In addition to taxi services, most cities have direct-route taxis that look like vans. In towns and villages without public transportation, people get around by bicycles and on foot.

Roads in Ukraine are in generally poor condition. Given the state of roads and the weather conditions, travel between cities by buses and vans at night and in the winter can be particularly treacherous.

The Peace Corps prohibits all Volunteers from owning or driving vehicles of any type, including scooters, mopeds, and motorcycles. Volunteers who ride bicycles must wear a helmet. *Violation of this policy may result in termination of your Volunteer service.*

During pre-service training you will have an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the public transportation system in Ukraine and learn how to navigate in your training community. In Kyiv, you will learn where to buy tickets and how to choose the safest and reliable travel option.

Geography and Climate

Ukraine is situated between 44 and 52 degrees latitude in the continental temperate zone in Eastern Europe and covers 603,000 km². It borders Belarus on the north, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova on the west, and Russia on the east. Ukraine's time zone is two hours ahead of London, seven hours ahead of New York City and 10 hours ahead of Los Angeles.

Ukraine is a mostly flat country with mountains only on the Crimean peninsula and in the west. Ukraine has many rivers—the Dnipro (Dniepr), Pivdenny Buh (“Southern Buh”), Dnister, Siversky Donets, Desna, Dunay (Danube), and many others—and its southern border is washed by the Black Sea, which connects to the Mediterranean Sea through Turkey.

Ukraine has mostly a continental climate. 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 to be 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 teaching a class or seminar. Social activities vary depending on where you are located and may include taking part in festivals, weddings, funerals, parties, and local celebrations. Ukrainians are very hospitable people and will welcome you into their social circle. Many regional centers have cinemas or theaters. Most towns and cities have cafes and restaurants for evenings out, however, it is more typical of Ukrainians to socialize at

home with their family and friends. In smaller towns and villages, activities tend to focus on spending time with extended family, neighbors, and friends. Socializing typically includes lots of tea drinking.

Chess, basketball, soccer, tennis, badminton, and Ping-Pong are popular sports activities, as well as hiking and exploring local historical sites.

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.

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 training. Peace Corps Volunteers serve at the invitation of the host country, and must be respectful of and sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of our hosts. Inappropriate behavior, such as public drunkenness, excessive drinking, or other actions that compromise the safety and security of you and others, is not acceptable. 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.

During pre-service training, you will participate in a detailed discussion of Peace Corps policies with which all trainees and Volunteers must abide. These include prohibitions against intelligence gathering, involvement in host country political affairs, religious proselytizing, and illegal drug use. You should arrive fully prepared to comply with all Peace Corps policies and procedures. Peace Corps/Ukraine, as well as all other Peace Corps posts, has policies requiring trainees and Volunteers to keep the post apprised of their whereabouts at all times, particularly when they are away from their sites. There are also policies on Volunteer conduct and ethics. These policies are in place to ensure your safety and security, and to ensure that Volunteers carry out all aspects of their service responsibly and professionally.

Personal appearance is very important in Ukraine, and dressing professionally helps PCVs gain trust and credibility. For women, professional attire includes dress pants or skirts paired with blouses or sweaters, or dresses, with dress shoes. Although the majority of Ukrainian women wear high heels, flats are also appropriate. For men, dress slacks or khakis paired with sweaters or polo or button-down shirts are appropriate. A jacket and tie are usually not required for daily wear, however they are important to have for more formal occasions. It is also important that clothes be clean and ironed, and that shoes are kept clean and polished. Ukraine styles are somewhat different than in the United States, but clothing acceptable as business or professional dress in the U.S. will be accepted as such in Ukraine.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, 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 incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Ukraine. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her 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. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and safety. There is a section titled Safety and Security in Depth. Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Volunteers will only be serving in those parts of Ukraine where the security situation is stable and deemed safe. There are areas where volunteers will not be allowed to serve or to travel to, a buffer zone where volunteers will not be serving and where volunteer travel restrictions will be in place, and a zone where volunteers will be serving and allowed to travel. Besides significant travel restrictions for Volunteers, there will be an additional focus on safety and security during training. The safety and security of Volunteers are of paramount importance and every precaution will be taken to ensure your safe service in Ukraine.

Rewards and Frustrations

You can expect 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 colleagues develop their capacity to continue to perform similar work after your departure.

You may be frustrated at times by not being proficient in the local language, even after the pre-service training. While your counterpart may have some 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.

To have a successful experience as a Volunteer, you must be motivated, flexible, and willing to work hard. You will need to identify local resources and institutions with which you can cooperate. To be effective, you might need to unlearn practices 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 Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach throughout the continuum of learning, supporting you from arrival in Ukraine to your departure. Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within this continuum of learning and ensures that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform your job. Pre-service training is conducted in Ukraine by Peace Corps staff, most of whom are locally hired trainers. Peace Corps staff measure achievement of learning and determine if you have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps training incorporates widely accepted principles of adult learning and is structured around the experiential learning cycle. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

Integrating into the community is one of the core competencies you will strive to achieve both in PST and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the relationships you build by respectfully integrating into the host country community and culture.

You will be prepared for this through a homestay experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during PST. Integration into the community fosters language and cross-cultural learning and ensures your health, safety, and security.

Peace Corps/Ukraine uses a community-based model of PST. Your entire training group will meet only for the initial orientation (Arrival Retreat), for several days in the middle of PST (PST University), and then at the end of PST (Transition to Service Conference). For most of the PST however, groups of four to five trainees will live in towns and villages located within two-to three-hour ride from Kyiv. Each group will have a language and cross-cultural facilitator and a technical and cultural facilitator (the latter will be shared by between two groups).

As a trainee, you will play an active role in self-education. The success of your learning will be enhanced by your own effort to take responsibility for your learning and through sharing experiences with others.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Ukraine by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Ukraine 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 and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and objectives and will meet with the Ukraine agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities, report your progress, and serve as a productive member of your community.

Most of your technical training will be facilitated by your technical/cross-cultural facilitators (TCFs) who will not only conduct sessions, but also observe your activities, help you reflect on your experiences, and provide regular feedback and support.

Starting from the first week, you will participate in ongoing PST internship activities:

- **Youth Development:** You will be assigned to secondary schools or centers of social services for youth and will observe and teach healthy life styles and civics classes, assist English teachers, and prepare and facilitate youth club meetings. You will visit departments of youth and sport, children's creativity centers, orphanages, and other partner organizations. Finally, together with your community partners, you will organize and run a three-day youth camp and design and implement a community project to address local needs.
- **Community Development:** You will meet with the local government administrations, NGO leaders, and other community partners. You will be involved in activities similar to what you will do at your sites, such as community mapping, needs assessment, professional meetings, and trainings. Finally, together with community members, you will design and implement community projects to address community needs.
- **TEFL:** You will be assigned to schools and universities and will be involved in lesson observations and analysis, designing lesson plans, teaching, working with Ukrainian teachers, devising strategies for classroom management, and organizing extracurricular activities, including an English language club for your students and a community/school project.

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, help you integrate into your community, and can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Ukraine language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of 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 develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

You will have language classes conducted by your language/cultural facilitator (LCF) Monday through Friday, four to five hours a day, including classroom instruction, language field trips, self-directed learning activities, technical language, and tutoring. The daily schedule of your language classes should be agreed upon by your group and your LCF, taking into account your technical training and internship activities. Classes will generally take place at your LCF's residence.

During PST, you will be focusing on Ukrainian and introduced to Russian, as both languages are spoken in Ukraine. While the official state language is Ukrainian, you may hear a lot of Russian in many cities and towns of southern, eastern, and northern Ukraine.

Language is crucial to your success as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Due to the complexity of Ukrainian and Russian, a strong commitment to language learning will be very helpful both in PST and throughout your two-year service. We strongly encourage you to continue language learning after PST by taking tutoring classes at your site and participating in Peace Corps language refreshers and camps.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own cultural values and how they influence your behavior in Ukraine. You will also discuss the questions you have about the behaviors and practices you observe in Ukraine, exploring the underlying reasons for these behaviors and practices.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and 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 PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Ukraine. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

For some of you, this is your first experience with cross-cultural training. For others, it may be reinforcement. To make the best use of your time, PST will focus on the essential information necessary for understanding Ukraine and Ukrainians and the skills you need for successful cultural adjustment to your new environment and productive intercultural interactions.

You will learn that culture is a generalization about groups of people's behaviors and, consequently, cross-cultural training is a generalized solution. And when we deal with generalizations there are always exceptions. The secret of cross-cultural success is awareness. If you are aware of how culture influences thought and behavior, how people from other cultures may see you, and how your cultural background may influence how you see them, then deeper understanding comes easier.

Both your LCF and TCF will facilitate your adjustment to the new culture and realities of life in Ukraine. Your patience and your ability to stay positive and open to new experiences, as well as an ability to laugh at yourself, will be crucial to your success.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be trained in health prevention, basic first aid, and treatment of medical illnesses found in Ukraine. You will be expected to practice preventive health and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. Health education topics will include nutrition, food and water preparation, emotional health, dealing with alcohol, prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and common illnesses in Ukraine.

The health of the trainees and Volunteers is of paramount importance. There are several Peace Corps medical officers (PCMOs) in Ukraine. They are responsible for informing trainees about ways to stay healthy, giving inoculations, discussing medical issues, routine diagnoses, and arranging for your health care in Ukraine.

During the Arrival Retreat you will have an interview with one of our PCMOs and discuss any personal health concerns you might have.

During PST, PCMOs will travel to your training communities to conduct two personal health days (with a focus on physical and mental health).

Safety and Security Training

During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps' emergency response and support systems.

The safety and security of trainees and Volunteers is the number one priority of all Peace Corps staff. Peace Corps/Ukraine's safety and security manager is responsible for developing safety and security related materials, presenting information, tracking safety incidents, reacting to emergency issues, dealing with the local police, and other safety and security related tasks.

Personal safety training will be facilitated both by the safety and security manager and language/cross-cultural facilitators. During personal safety training, you will gain an understanding of how Ukrainians interpret signals, and how you can apply your sound judgment and safety skills to Ukrainian realities. You will learn how not to put yourself in danger and how to get out of potentially unsafe situations. Remember: Safety training is not only about avoiding criminal situations; it's about your lifestyle and cultural adjustment.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

The Peace Corps' training system provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- **In-service training:** Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- **Mid-service training** (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- **Close-of-service conference:** Prepares Volunteers for their future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective 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 IN UKRAINE

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Ukraine maintains a clinic with full-time medical officers who take care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Ukraine at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Ukraine, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Ukraine

- **Radiation and nuclear safety:** The U.S. Department of Energy and the Ukrainian Nuclear Regulatory Commission collaborate in monitoring and ensuring safety at all operating nuclear power plants in Ukraine. Volunteers are not placed within 30 kilometers of such facilities. The effects of the 1986 Chernobyl accident continue to be monitored. No Volunteers are placed at any site with higher-than-normal levels of radiation. The Ukrainian government monitors the level of radiation in fresh foods and meats sold in Ukraine.
- **Industrial and air pollution:** During the Soviet era, the central and eastern regions of Ukraine were heavily industrialized, resulting in air, ground, and water pollution. Volunteers are not placed in sites with unacceptable levels of pollution. While smog in cities may be no worse than in the United States, Volunteers with asthma may find their condition exacerbated.
- **Insufficient infrastructure:** Water supply systems in some communities do not guarantee potable water. In other locations, availability of water is limited to several hours. Hot water and heating are often not available and residents may 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 inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Prior to your arrival in Ukraine, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. At the beginning of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, 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 physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Ukraine will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Ukraine, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and 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:

- Limit your consumption of alcohol as it can damage your health and decrease immunity. PCVs are often in social situations that involve alcohol and should be prepared to deal with the pressure to drink.
- Be aware of the emotional health challenges that exist during the dark winter months in Ukraine. PCVs who have a history of seasonal affective disorder or depression should be aware and take measures to prepare.
- Be prepared to be actively aware of the food you eat to reduce exposure to food-borne maladies, including watching what you eat and drink, making sure raw food is cleaned, and regularly washing your hands.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Ukraine during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent 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 host country citizen, 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 officer.

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

Women’s Health Information

Feminine hygiene products are available for purchase on the local market. The Peace Corps medical officer in Ukraine will not provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer chooses to remain in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps’ medical standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

The Peace Corps follows the 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for screening PAP smears, which recommend women aged 21–29 receive screening PAPs every three years and women aged 30–65 receive screening PAPs every five years. As such, most Volunteers will not receive a PAP during their service, but can use Peace Corps supplied health insurance after service to have an exam.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit containing basic items to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook	Decongestant
Ace bandages	Dental floss
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Gloves
Adhesive tape	Hydrocortisone cream
Antacid tablets	Ibuprofen
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Insect repellent
Antibiotic ointment	Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Antifungal cream	Lip balm
Antihistamine	Oral rehydration salts
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Scissors
Band-Aids	Sore throat lozenges
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)	Sterile eye drops
Butterfly closures	Sterile gauze pads
Calagel anti-itch gel	Sunscreen
Condoms	Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Cough lozenges	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 Health Services (OHS). 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 OHS 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 Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations (other than yellow fever vaccination as directed by OHS) 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, either at your pre-departure orientation or during your first six months in Ukraine. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. There is no malaria in Ukraine, so you do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

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 order refills 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.

Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications (including birth control pills).

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 (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

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 IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. 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 theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

Beyond knowing that the Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. The Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. The Peace Corps depends on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk and impact of burglary—follows:

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria.
- The Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country counterparts or other community leaders in your new community.
- The Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise.
- You lock your doors and windows.
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live.
- You get to know your neighbors.
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you.
- You don't change residences before being authorized by the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

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. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Ukraine there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Ukraine, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Ukraine learn to do the following:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Ukraine. You can reduce the risks by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in Ukraine of which you should be aware:

- **Harassment:** Volunteers have reported varying levels of harassment, such as having objects thrown at them by teenagers, being called derogatory names, and being subjected to overt sexual comments. Strategies for coping with harassment will be discussed during pre-service training.
- **Thefts:** Property theft, including pickpocketing in crowded public areas, such as markets or minibuses do occur. Again strategies to mitigate these risks will be discussed during pre-service training.
- **Traffic accidents:** Using local transportation and crossing the street safely are the greatest safety risks in Ukraine. Volunteers are discouraged from traveling at night and when road conditions are bad, especially in the winter. Public transportation is usually by minivans, many of which are old and in poor condition. Seat belts in vans and buses are nonexistent. Pedestrians in cities have to be especially cautious; although crosswalks exist, they are not usually recognized by drivers.
- **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 U.S. bank-issued 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.

While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Ukraine may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: 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 will 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 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.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety and security 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 the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include 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 support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to Volunteers who are victims of crime, including sexual assault and stalking. Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help Volunteers understand their emotional, medical, and legal options so they may make informed decisions to meet their specific needs. The OVA provides a compassionate, coordinated, and supportive response to Volunteers who wish to access Peace Corps support services.

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)
Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Ukraine

Crime data and statistics for Ukraine, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link:
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/Ukraine>

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

Volunteer Safety Support in Ukraine

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service. The plan includes 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 provided in Volunteer newsletters 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. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part to ensure that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on 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 aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

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; different 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 or a natural disaster. The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) contains detailed guidelines, instructions, and information for Volunteers' preparedness and response to any emergency or crisis and it is regularly updated.

The Warden system is an important component of the EAP. The wardens receive a special training twice a year and are able to oversee and assist their team during an emergency. To ensure durable communication, all wardens will be additionally provided with satellite phones.

Peace Corps/Ukraine's communication system is tested at least two times a year.

When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a 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 safety and security incidents to the Peace Corps office. 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 current and future Volunteers.

The police in Ukraine are familiar with the Peace Corps and its programs. They are an important resource for Volunteers' safety and security. In order to deal with adverse situations at Volunteers' sites, the Peace Corps maintains an effective cooperation with the local police departments.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship and to improve people’s lives in the communities where Volunteers serve. Instituting policies and practices to support a diverse and inclusive work and Volunteer environment is essential to achieving this mission.

Through inclusive recruitment and retention of staff and Volunteers, the Peace Corps seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the United States and bring diverse perspectives and solutions to development issues. Additionally, ensuring diversity among staff and Volunteers enriches interpersonal relations and communications for the staff work environment, the Volunteer experience, and the communities in which Volunteers serve.

The Peace Corps defines diversity as a “collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. Diversity also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences.”

We define inclusion as a “culture that connects each [staff member and Volunteer] to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.” The Peace Corps promotes inclusion throughout the lifecycle of Volunteers and staff. When staff and Volunteers are able to share their rich diversity in an inclusive work environment, the Peace Corps mission is better fulfilled. More information about diversity and inclusion can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

An inclusive agency is one that seeks input from everyone in an effort to find the best ideas and strategies possible to execute its objectives. When input is solicited, heard, and considered from a rich multitude of individuals the best course of action usually emerges. The Peace Corps seeks to improve its operations and effectiveness by ensuring that all voices and ideas are heard and that all Volunteers and staff feel welcome and appreciated. When each person’s voice is heard, the agency is stronger and the impact of Volunteers is strengthened.

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

Once Volunteers arrive at their sites, diversity and inclusion principles remain the same but take on a different shape, in which your host community may share a common culture and you—the Volunteer—are the outsider. You may be in the minority, if not the sole American like you, at your site. You will begin to notice diversity in perspectives, ethnicity, age, depth of conversation, and degree of support you may receive. For example, elders, youth, and middle-aged individuals all have unique points of views on topics you may discuss, from perspectives on work, new projects, and social engagements to the way community issues are addressed.

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognize the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-service training, a session will be held to discuss diversity and inclusion and how you can serve as an ally for your peers, honoring diversity, seeking inclusion, challenging prejudice and exclusion, exploring your own biases, and learning mechanisms to cope with these adjustment issues. The Peace Corps looks forward to having Volunteers from varied backgrounds that include a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. The agency expects you to work collaboratively to create an inclusive environment that transcends differences and finds common ground.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

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

As a Volunteer and representative of the United States, you are responsible not only for sharing the diversity of U.S. culture (to include your individual culture and the culture of other Americans) with your host country national counterparts, but also for learning from the diversity of your host country. An important aspect of this cultural exchange will be to demonstrate inclusiveness within your community in a sensitive manner. Additionally, you will share the responsibility of learning about the diversity of your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and exploring how best to respect differences while serving as supportive allies as you go through this challenging new experience.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in your host country, 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 they have in the United States; male Volunteers may be expected to not perform chores or other tasks ascribed to women; 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 and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead a diversity, inclusion, and sensitivity discussion during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support. This training covers how to adapt personal choices and behavior to be respectful of the host country culture, which can have a direct impact on how Volunteers are viewed and treated by their new communities. The Peace Corps emphasizes professional behavior and cross-cultural sensitivity among volunteers and within their communities to help integrate and be successful during service.

An ideal way to view the pursuit of cross-cultural adaptation and/or cultural integration is to recognize that everything done in your host country has both a specific reason for why it is done and an expected outcome. Trust that your host country counterparts are acting with positive intentions and work to mutually seek understanding and commonality. Language differences may add a communication barrier and lead to misunderstandings. Listen more than you speak and seek clarity. Remember that having the ability to laugh at yourself and at life's little surprises goes a long way—laughter is universal.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them.

They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

Gender roles in Ukraine can be difficult to understand and accept. Ukrainian culture may appear to be discriminatory. 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. These gender differences 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 to women.”

“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. 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

Volunteers of color sometimes, but not always, have a different Peace Corps experience than white Volunteers. Because of limited exposure, some foreign nationals will expect to see U.S. citizens who are white. Cultures of the world do not typically envision the States as a place of rich diversity with various culturally acceptable perspectives, personalities, and characteristics. Thus, a Volunteer of color may be questioned as about their U.S. citizenship.

In places where American stereotypes and/or caste system dynamics influence perception, Volunteers of color should be mindful of the reasons for these views without creating contentious environments. All too often, host country nationals are simply unaware of the diversity of the United States and require additional information and dialogue. Direct interactions with someone new or something different can take time to get used to, but those who take the time tend to be better off. Although host country nationals may assert that the United States is made up of predominately one race, we know that is not true. If a member of your community knows of compatriots living in the United States or of notable U.S. citizens of color, you can build on this knowledge as a point of reference for discussing diversity within the States.

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African and Latin American countries, host country nationals may say “welcome home” to African Americans or Hispanic Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be “welcomed home” but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a “sell

out” because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues. These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

Racial and ethnic minorities in Ukraine—primarily Poles, Hungarians, Crimean Tatars, and Greeks—make up about 5 percent of the total population. 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, they may be stopped to show their identification papers more frequently than other Volunteers, particularly in larger cities where they are not known. On its website, the U.S. State Department now warns prospective travelers to Ukraine of hate crimes directed at ethnic minorities. In addition, a number of international human rights groups have expressed concern with the rise in skinhead activity in big cities in Ukraine.

Volunteer Comments

“As a female African-American serving in the Peace Corps/Ukraine community 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.”

“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.”

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers

For LGBTQ Volunteers: Given Ukraine’s traditional values, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities might not be discussed openly. In some cases, the LGBTQ community may be stigmatized. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Many LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Some LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQ Volunteers. You may find that Ukraine is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQ Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbrcpv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps’ LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

For Ally Volunteers: Peace Corps staff intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments. As an agency, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to serve as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues in order to create a safe environment.

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Ukraine and have very fond memories of their community and service. LGBTQ support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQ community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

Homosexual acts were decriminalized in Ukraine in 1991. However, gays face much discrimination and civil rights abuses related to sexual orientation. Ukrainian society generally views being gay, lesbian, or bisexual as abnormal. While networks of gays and lesbians have formed 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. Peace Corps Ukraine staff is there to support gay and lesbian volunteers with any issues they may face.

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 products of an environment that does not allow people to express themselves freely.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Health Services determined you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without additional medical support, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Ukraine without a significant risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Ukraine staff will work with disabled Volunteers to support them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

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.

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and difference societal pressures. One partner may learn the language faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

Couples often face pressure from host country nationals to change their roles to conform better with traditional Ukrainian relationships. Ukrainian men and women alike will often not understand American relationship dynamics and may be outwardly critical of relationships that do not adhere to traditional gender roles. It is also helpful to think about how pressures to conform to Ukraine culture can be challenging to men and women in very different ways. Considering how your partner is being affected and discussing what, if any, aspects of your relationship should be changed can help reduce stress for you both.

Volunteer couples face a unique set of benefits and challenges during their service in Ukraine. Volunteer couples often benefit from having a companion and friend at their site whom they trust. At the same time, it can be more difficult for Volunteer couples to integrate into a community, as community members believe they are more independent and need more space. Volunteer couples should come to Ukraine prepared to reach out to their community to overcome any such perceptions.

Volunteer Comment

“It is harder to get involved in people’s lives and families, I believe, when one is older and married. 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.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Many Ukrainians have little knowledge of non-Christian faiths. There are Polish and Greek Catholic churches and Ukrainian Orthodox churches in most communities. Most big cities have large numbers of Christian missionaries. Volunteers are sometimes mistaken for missionaries, and the Peace Corps is careful to maintain a separation from such groups. Please note that 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, Uman, and many more were once home to primarily Jewish inhabitants, and their influence on the culture and food exists to this day. Since then, large numbers of Jews have left the country. 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 planning to serve in Ukraine. 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.”

“Aside from the prevalent Orthodox and Catholic churches, there is a large Mormon presence in Ukraine and a fairly large Baptist presence. Many medium-sized cities have Jewish temples. For other faiths or denominations, the presence of churches drops significantly.”

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

Older Volunteers may find their age an asset in Ukraine. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored.

Older Volunteers are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps’ program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be

particularly stressful for older trainees, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A 50+ individual may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older Volunteer for advice and support; some find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some 50+ Volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

More than younger Volunteers, older Volunteers may have challenges in maintaining lifelong friendships and dealing with financial matters from afar. They may want to consider assigning power of attorney to someone in the States.

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 Ukraine, however, may prove challenging for some individuals. In addition, certain conditions—uneven pavement, multistory buildings without elevators, and lack of amenities—combine to make life more demanding than in the United States.

Volunteer Comments

“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.”

“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.”

“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 direct look from under my graying hair has been enough to avoid potential problems with other people. And developing friendships with Ukrainians of all ages has been an enjoyable process.”

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 Peace Corps' 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.

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, irons, clocks, etc., are available here (some of which can be switched between 220 and 110 volts), you may want to leave 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. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. 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 personal property insurance before you leave (contact your insurance company). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, 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 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, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

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; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are frequently within a couple of hours from another Volunteer. Some sites require traveling 10-12 hour travel to reach the Peace Corps/Ukraine office.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

How easy is it to 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 communicate via Skype or Viber. Please note that all incoming calls are free in Ukraine.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

Ukraine has excellent cellular phone service, and Peace Corps staff members are equipped with cellphones for daily operations. All Volunteers in Ukraine have cellphones. Differences in technology make most U.S. cellphones incompatible with Ukrainian systems, but tri-band phones should work in Ukraine. You will need to have your cellphone company unlock your phone in the U.S. and, when you get to Ukraine, purchase a local SIM card. Cellphones are available for purchase virtually everywhere, even in villages. The Peace Corps will give you a special one-time allowance (about \$30) to buy an inexpensive cellphone locally. Having a cellphone is both useful for safety reasons (especially when in remote areas) and to keep in touch with fellow Volunteers, site colleagues, and Peace Corps staff while away from your site.

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 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. Nearly all Volunteers bring their laptops and find it very helpful.

The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance.

Is it safe to serve in Ukraine, given the ongoing conflict in the east?

Following the safety and security assessments of Ukraine in July 2014 and January 2015 and analysis of the risks in the political, economic, security environments, and mitigation strategies, the Peace Corps is returning Volunteers to Ukraine. Although the conflict is likely to continue, it has a very limited geographical area, while life in other areas of Ukraine remains normal. Volunteers will be placed in Western and Central Ukraine, with a buffer zone between these areas and the conflict zone, which significantly decreases the risk. During the pre-service training, special focus will be made on the safety and security training, including risk mitigation strategies. The Peace Corps expects you to comply with the travel restrictions and whereabouts policy, which helps us to safeguard your personal safety.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM UKRAINE VOLUNTEERS

Dear Invitee,

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in Ukraine! I arrived in Ukraine in 2012 with no knowledge of Russian or Ukrainian. More than two years later, I can say with emphasis that it has been a great ride. The highlight has definitely been the people that I met. This includes Peace Corps staff, American Volunteers, my local colleagues, and friends.

When I first arrived, I was made to feel at home right away by the Ukrainian Peace Corps staff. They made us feel welcome and comfortable, interested not in statistics or quotas but in actually making a connection on a human level. I specifically remember watching the initial anxiety of our group subside within a few days of landing in Kyiv. Right away I found myself among like-minded people with shared goals.

After pre-service training with other Americans, I was sent to live alone at my new site in southern Ukraine. I quickly realized that I was not alone at all. I was surrounded by intrigued colleagues and kids with big smiles. I felt a sense of hospitality and people were very excited to interact. If I wanted, there were potential friends who could speak English all the time. There were plenty of others who knew no English at all. Regardless of the circumstance, whether it was formal or informal, with colleagues or complete strangers, some things were consistent. People everywhere had a great sense of humor. Just being open and positive seemed to lead to strong relationships.

Thanks to the Peace Corps, I had all of the tools, including language, to interact with whomever I wanted and effectively manage my new environment. If I pushed myself, I could succeed. However, no matter how much effort I put in, I was always rewarded with way more than I could ever give. Other people let me into their lives and gave me everything. There were many moments where I was left speechless by people I had only known for a year or two. The great benefit of service was spending time with and working alongside these people.

My friend Brendan and I had the opportunity to return on our own accord a few months after the evacuation. Even as conflict unfolded in the east of the country, the situation in my service region hadn't changed. People were going about their everyday lives. I felt a strong sense of safety and security thanks to my host community. I was unable to keep track of the number of people who were reaching out to me, offering that I could stay in their homes and assuring me that they cooked the best borscht around. I travelled around the central and western portions of the country and I felt the same sense of safety and security that I had experienced in my own community. Through all of these moments I came to know a very different Ukraine than what I saw on the news.

I may have started out with no specific direction but I now see a clear and steady path upwards. I hope that you too will meet people who are well worthy of your hard work and commitment and feel the great pleasure that is living and serving as a guest in Ukraine.

—*Daven Karp*

Dear Invitee:

My name is Brendan and I was a Peace Corps/Ukraine TEFL Volunteer in Western Ukraine from September 2012 to April 2014. And, although you may not fully know it yet, I can honestly say you are about to be warmly and lovingly welcomed into a country that is home to some of the most generous and caring people I have ever encountered.

Don't be mistaken, the Peace Corps is hard work and you may struggle at times. However, the loving hug of a Ukrainian babushka, the attempts of giggling Ukrainian little ones practicing their "Hello's!" with their heavy Ukrainian accents, or you laughing with a kind Ukrainian store clerk over your struggles to understand each other can all remind you that humans connect in many other ways than a language or a culture. These moments often rejuvenated and reminded me that what people have in common is always greater than what divides them.

Ironically, many join the Peace Corps to change the world on a large scale and, as a Ukrainian RPCV, I can tell you that you will, but it will be on a much more intimate scale. You may not teach all of your students fluent English, but you will spur on one or two to pursue and maybe even win a study abroad program in the U.S. You might not end HIV/AIDS in Ukraine, but you will have reduced its stigma to countless hundreds by merely discussing it.

Regarding Ukraine's current situation: What you see on the news is not all of Ukraine. It is a very small part of Ukraine and, though difficult as it is, leaves the rest of Ukraine—the part that campaigned fiercely for Peace Corps to return, that is seeking to improve its citizens' lives —terribly underrepresented. You will be plenty safe in your service by exercising plain common sense and listening to Peace Corps/Ukraine's legendary security officer, "Papa" Serghiy.

I even returned to Ukraine on my own as an RPCV in July 2014 to finish an English summer camp in Western Ukraine that I had been planning with my Ukrainian colleagues prior to our leaving. I found that something has clicked in many Ukrainians' minds: Many previously reluctant to embrace new ideas of teaching and democracy were now overflowing with questions to me for new volunteer service projects they were working on.

In Ukraine you will find a loving people, ready to give you the shirt of their backs, with hearts and minds open and eager for you. At the very least, your presence is enough to make Ukrainians feel personally connected to and understood by you, a symbol of America, at one of the most difficult times in their history. At the very most, the possibilities for growth and change are endless!

Before I end this letter, I'd like to share with you a quote from UCLA basketball coach John Wooden on success. It has helped me in my service and maybe it will help you in yours:

"Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you were capable of becoming."

I truly am excited for your adventure to begin!

—Brendan Cahill

Dear Invitee:

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. More than a year 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 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 carried 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. 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*

Dear Invitee:

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 last a lifetime.

When I left my first host family for my site there were tears in all our eyes. When I was at my permanent site, I visited them and it felt like I was coming home. 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 have I done? 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 was a small town in southern Ukraine where I was the first Volunteer and the first American most of the townspeople have ever seen. I often got stared at when I walked through town, but eventually it didn't bother me. 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. After that, I kept my backup water ready because the water was so inconsistent. It might sound shocking to you to live this way, but that was my world and I wouldn't trade it for anything. Just when I would get to the point of wanting to

scream, one of my students would come up and give me a hug, or a flower, or a chocolate, or just say thank you, and I was ready to keep going.

Whenever I got down—and believe me it happens to everyone—I would use my cellphone to text another PCV. A cellphone here is a necessity for your mental stability! My town felt 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 traveled to the Oblast capital of Kherson to take part in retail therapy, and that refreshed and restored 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 planned on leaving Ukraine an extremely strong person!

—Denice Dunkerley

Dear Invitee,

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. 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 place 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 a different country—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 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 the Peace Corps will not always be here, and seize the moment that is provided to you.

—*Michael Kreidler*

Dear Invitee:

My husband and I served as Community Development Volunteers 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 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 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. 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 on the list, 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 weight limit on baggage. 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. 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. 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 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.

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 overpack. Clothes should be wrinkle-free (polyester-cotton blends are recommended), easy to clean, and dark-colored as you are likely to be

washing your clothes by hand. 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.

Specific recommendations:

- Long coat for spring and fall and possibly a light jacket
- Full-length winter coat or parka with lining (down is recommended)
- Mix-and-match clothes for layering, such as solid-color turtlenecks
- Lightweight and heavyweight sweaters
- Gloves or mittens, preferably wool; glove liners (available locally)
- Hats
- 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 suit for professional occasions
- Slacks for business casual wear; khakis or cords with a blazer and tie are acceptable in schools and universities
- Shirts for professional wear
- Jackets
- Ties

For Women

- One suit for professional occasions
- Variety of slacks for different seasons
- Blouses/button-down shirts
- Durable stockings/tights (available in Ukraine, though not in all sizes)
- Your usual accessories

Shoes

- Comfortable and durable work shoes (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., Tevas or Chacos)
- Athletic shoes
- Slippers (you will wear these a lot, as Ukrainians remove their shoes as soon as they walk in the door)
- Lightweight ice grips that can be worn over shoes or boots, when walking on snow and ice

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, vitamins, or supplements 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)
- Hand cream (also available in Ukraine)
- Hand sanitizer that does not require water (also available in Ukraine)
- Foot aids such as pads for corns, if you have tender feet
- Spot remover or Woolite (for clothes that need special care)
- Fabric refresher or odor remover (e.g., Febreze)
- Tweezers
- Nail clipper, emery boards
- Dental floss (also available in Ukraine)

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, taco spices, cumin, cayenne pepper, and chili powder (many basic spices are available locally)
- Favorite foods, such as chocolate chips, peanut butter, maple syrup, popcorn, and gravy and salad dressing mixes

Electronics

- MP3 player, thumb drive
- Laptop computer or a tablet with a good surge protector; if you bring one, be sure to insure it
- Digital camera
- 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)
- Favorite music, movies, and workout videos
- Appliances—buying them locally may eliminate the need to bring a voltage converter; items such as irons, blow dryers, and stereos are available at reasonable prices

Miscellaneous

- Medium-sized daypack for weekend travel
- Sturdy water bottle
- Umbrella (available in Ukraine)
- Neck wallet 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)
- Copies of all financial and personal documents, such as a power of attorney, university transcripts and/or diplomas, birth certificates, passport, and credit cards
- Books and/or e-readers (i.e. Kindle or iPad)
- 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
- Duct tape
- Photos of home to show your host family, students, friends, and colleagues (These provide a great introduction for your host family.)
- Games such as Scrabble, cards, Frisbee, Uno, Nerf football
- Quick-drying travel towel (available at www.rei.com) and washcloths
- Day planner
- Graduate study materials (e.g., GRE, LSAT), as applicable
- Suntan lotion (selection of brands here is limited)
- Note and greeting cards

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 are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps On the Home Front handbook.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your 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 service; 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 abroad, 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 in 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

- Keep a bank account in your name in the United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. Information about loan deferment is at peacecorps.gov/loans/.
- 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 the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961 ext. 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

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (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
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Douglas Knight Desk Officer	ext. 2422 DKnight@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2422
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.818.8772
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704