



Ukraine is known for its vast sunflower fields. They are the national flower and a symbol of resilience, hope and resistance.



The Ukrainian flag was adopted in 1992. Blue is symbolic of the sky and a bright future, while yellow symbolizes the country's fertile fields.

Early days

Modern human settlements in the area date back to 32,000 B.C. The early migration and settlements of the region may be divided into three geographic zones. **The Black Sea coast** was, for centuries, part of the Mediterranean maritime powers. **The open steppe** formed a natural gateway to Europe for waves of nomadic horsemen from Central Asia. **The mixed forest-steppe** and marshes of north-central and western Ukraine supported an agricultural population.

Culture and tradition

Ukrainian folk songs and dances are based on peasant life. They celebrate important life events. Girls perform circle dances (**hahiky**) at Easter, while Cossack dances represent battle victories.

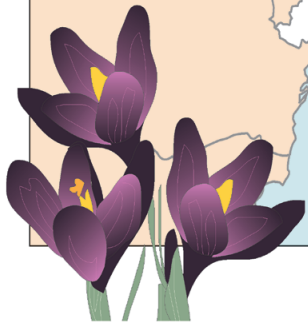
Ukrainians love intricate designs, which they expertly apply to embroidery, weaving, ceramics, eggs and bread.

Bread plays an important role in many Ukrainian traditions. Every major holiday and event has its own special bread. Bread reaches its highest artistic level in the form of **korovai**, a heavily decorated sweet, round wedding bread.

Guests in Ukraine are given bread and salt as a greeting and welcome gesture. Bread is symbolic of hospitality, and the salt represents friendships that will never go bad.

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Ukraine is the second-largest country in Europe. Despite centuries of occupation and control by many groups, including Poland and Russia, Ukraine has maintained its strong cultural identity, and the people are proud of their traditions and history. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and began a war, which was ongoing at the time of this writing.



Flora and fauna

Ukraine's fragile ecosystems include forests, steppes and wetlands, each with unique plant and animal life. Boars, wildcats, moose, deer, wolves and foxes are native to the country. Eagles, cranes and the endangered black stork also make a home here. Many migratory birds also visit the region. Fish species include perch, pike and sturgeon.

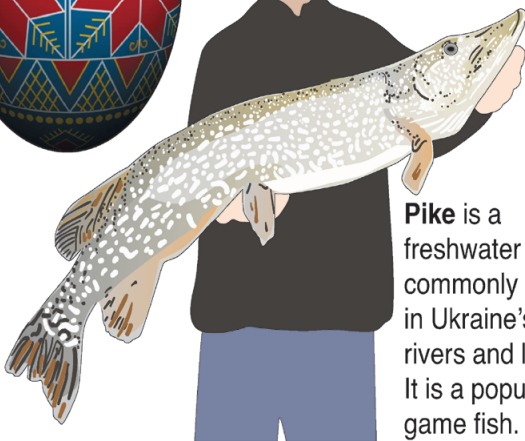
Key native trees include pine, oak, birch and hornbeam, with pine being the most dominant forest species. Other significant plants include the sunflower, spring primrose, snowdrop, crocus and various wildflowers.



Pysanki
Easter eggs



Korovai
wedding bread



Pike is a freshwater fish commonly found in Ukraine's rivers and lakes. It is a popular game fish.



The **white stork** is widely considered to be the national bird of Ukraine. It is seen as a symbol of family, loyalty and patriotism.



The wild **moose** population of Ukraine has been increasing due to a ban on hunting them.

Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv was built in the early half of the 11th century.



Girl in traditional costume

The land

The word **Ukraine** means "borderland." Ukraine is at a crossroads between Europe and Asia and is an important trade route between the Baltic and Black Seas.

The rich soil makes it one of the most fertile regions of the world. It was known as the breadbasket of the former USSR.

A large portion of Ukraine is covered by grassy plains known as the **steppes**.



Notice the intricate pattern on the sleeves. Embroidered clothing, known as **vyschyvanka**, is deeply rooted in Ukrainian culture, a symbol of national identity, heritage and resilience.

Just the facts

Population: 33 million

Capital: Kyiv (population 3 million)

Government: Semi-presidential federation

President: Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Official Language: Ukrainian

Literacy: More than 99% of all adults can read and write

Currency: 1 hryvnia = 100 kopykas

National Holiday: August 24 (Independence Day)

The war today

Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union from 1922 until the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, and Ukraine became independent.

On February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an invasion of Ukraine. He declared his goal was to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine (despite the fact that Ukraine's president is Jewish). Today, about a fifth of Ukrainian territory is under Russian control.

The U.S. and other countries have tried to stop the war by supplying Ukrainian forces with weapons and imposing sanctions (economic punishments) on Russia.

Sadly, the fighting continues.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://en.wikipedia.org>; <https://www.britannica.com>; <https://visitukraine.today>; <https://www.kids-world-travel-guide.com>; <https://www.timeforkids.com>; <https://www.globetrottingkids.com>

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