

Sept. 13th, 2009 - Kiev, Ukraine  
"Das Vadanya"

I have come to the realization that **timing** is the controlling factor of all things in life. I had planned on taking my flight in the [Skyeton Swift](#) upon the return to Kiev, from our Dnieper River cruise this morning. However, a change in our Air France departure schedule time from 4:10 PM to Noon left precious little time to do anything else but pack and grab a cab to the airport upon our arrival at the Kiev Seaport. I quickly e-mailed Sergey informing him of this change of plans and conveyed the hope that I might get to make the flight when back in the US, now that the Swift K-10 has received its **U.S.** FAA certification. While I would have liked to have added a logbook entry showing flight in the Ukraine, I am satisfied that I, at least, had the chance to see the airplanes under assembly while at their factory.

My previous posting may have conveyed the impression that the Ukraine is a "third world country". This is definitely not the case. It is a vibrant emerging nation, leaving the vestiges of Communism far behind, as it progresses toward a Capitalistic future. Having left the dominance of the Soviet Union less than 2 decades ago, it is still has to deal with the effects of the damage that 50 years under control of the "nanny state" has wrought. The most obvious, to me at least, is the decay of the infrastructure and the base construction techniques employed under the Soviet State. To be blunt, their construction quality does not appear to have been the best. The surface fascia of the "Kruscheff Apartments" (hundreds of really ugly five story box-like buildings with austere architecture and shoddy construction) is literally coming apart. Decorative panels are falling, like winter snowflakes in Siberia, off of the buildings and onto the sidewalks below. And, those same sidewalks are decaying with large and sometimes deep holes along these pedestrian paths, which require constant vigilance while traversing. Their roadways are buckling and heaving, and the bridges are spalling and crumbling. Interestingly enough, those remaining original 19th Century era buildings that came through the destructive bombings of WWII, still appear to holding up well.

Even more interesting are the 3-10 million dollar homes being constructed alongside the banks of the Dnieper River, just south of Kiev. They would make even the most jaded of the Palm Beachers proud. This is certainly a country of paradoxes that has earned it the reputation of being the most politically corrupt of all those in Europe.



Me, checking out the Skyeton Swift K-10's panel



Having a brew together, after the factory tour



These new apartment condos start at \$350,000



\$3-10 Million dollar homes on the Dnieper River



And, while I didn't have the chance to fly, I did get to experience this country up close and personal on our 600 mile cruise up the Dnieper, on the Viking Lomonosov. The nice thing about a river cruise is that these boats are capable of docking at many smaller ports of call. This gives passengers the opportunity to visit the villages of the common people that make up this part of the world. I have always felt that a visit, say to just New York City, does not represent what the US is all about, just as London does not adequately show off the flavor of Great Britain, with its myriad of family farms, moors, lakes, rivers and small towns. The only way to really experience a country is get out and explore its countryside, and speak to its people. River cruising gives one the opportunity to do some of that. On our journey we did get to see the charm and learn the history of old European Ukraine. In its capital city of Kiev we experienced its many museums, cathedrals, and historic buildings, along with the natural beauty and exclusiveness of seaside resorts such as Odessa, Yalta and Sevastopol. But we also made stops in the very small fishing village of Kherson, located on the Dnieper Delta, (where the locals had many of their hand-crafts out for display and sale), as well as some industrial and commercial port cities of Dnepropetrovsk and Kremenchuk. At one of the historical museums that we visited, one of our fellow travelers, who was born in Kiev, but who now lived in upstate NY, unexpectedly ran across a photo of a group of Soviet WWII military, and recognized his war killed father, in the picture. A very poignant and moving moment for our group.

Of special enjoyment was the Cossack horse show demonstration that we got to experience while in Zaporozhye. [\(click here for a movie\)](#) These are just a few of the memories that I will take away from this very different, yet interesting and informative vacation.

Weather for our entire 12 days was truly fantastic! Every day was bright, sunny and cool, with daytime temperatures mainly in the mid-70's. This alone made the vacation, when compared to the mid 90's in hot and humid Florida, a worthwhile escape. And while we are looking forward to next years Viking river cruise along Germany's Elbe, for now I plan to get back into my fall routine with a trip up into West Virginia to again experience the beauty of the Autumn leaf change, before heading West with the motor home, trailer and plane. I will keep you all posted.

Meanwhile on the next page are a few more of the photos that we captured on this extraordinary vacation.



Local peasant women trying to "close the sale"



Crowded Black Sea Beach, in Yalta, on a Sunday



A Cossack horseman shows off his "stuff"



Our ship, sailing up the Ukraine's Dnieper River





Two beauties posing at a park side waterfall



Is it a miracle or just the sun's reflection?



Miriam and me at the Cossack horse Museum



Our ship, passing through 1 of 8 locks traversed



Miriam and bronze friend, on a park bench



Believe it or not, this is inside a shopping mall



Us, at one of the many fountains around town



Soviet missiles aimed at an Orthodox Church?