

Kitchen

Eastern Europeans enjoy tea (as do Brits!) but drink it a bit differently. A common choice is black tea with lemon, and sugar or honey. Another option is black tea with jam. Tea with milk is not very popular. Ukrainians love bread, especially loaf bread: sourdough, wholemeal etc. They prefer real butter on bread, as opposed to a spread. Sour cream is used widely to add to soup.

Mealtimes tend to be a bit different. Ukrainians start the day with breakfast, sometimes followed by a second breakfast (more of a snack) and then the biggest meal of the day comes at lunchtime. This is often a two or three course meal: soup followed by a main course, and maybe dessert. Supper, eaten in the evening, is again a smaller meal - a bit like eating a sandwich at lunchtime. It might be a good idea to keep this in mind at the start.

Comfort

Eastern European houses tend to be very, very warm in winter. Many people live in blocks of flats and those are often heated by the council, so heating is very hot. It is surprising how cold British houses are to most Eastern Europeans when they visit their British friends. Maybe consider providing your guests with an extra blanket or hot water bottle while they adapt to their new home.

Slippers are very important and are worn in most houses. It is very likely that your guests will either bring slippers with them or wish to purchase a pair quickly. Some people insist on changing into 'loungewear' as soon as they come into the house. Many were told by the older generation that wearing 'out of the house' clothes inside brings in dust and dirt from the street, and will insist on wearing two different outfits throughout the day, depending on whether they are in or out.

Children

Children in Eastern Europe are definitely dressed more warmly than children in the UK - it's colder there, plus there is a deeply ingrained belief that a child will catch a cold if underdressed. Don't be surprised if your guests insist that a small child must wear a hat well into spring, if not all year round, to protect them from the cold or the sun.

Ukrainian children are given homework every day, which may be different from their British school. They also go to school for different numbers of hours per day. Depending on their age, they tend to be in school for anywhere between 4 to 9 hours a day. It will take time to get used to the regularity of English schools.

Getting Along

Eastern Europeans tend to be more blunt than British people. A Ukrainian might ask, 'Can you pass the salt?', which is considered very polite. Typically a 'please' wouldn't be necessary. Manners are often expressed by phrasing something as a question. It's worth keeping in mind that your guests will not be accustomed to saying

please and thank you with every request. They might also not understand subtle requests such as 'would you mind doing x?', which could be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' response. Instead, use simpler phrases such as 'please do x' while you are finding a common tongue with your guest.

Working hours tend to be different. In Ukraine, it is normal to start work at 7am and finish around 3pm. While your guests probably won't be looking for jobs immediately, it might be a good idea to specify to them what your working hours are, so they know when to expect you home or when you might be in meetings.

Health

It is much more common in Eastern Europe to visit a doctor with mild symptoms. It is also much more common to be prescribed antibiotics and to take a range of different medicines and over-the-counter medicines. While there are home-remedies that are passed down the generations (e.g. vodka in tea, or milk with honey) it may come as a shock to your guests that they will be told to take paracetamol and to rest, rather than be prescribed something specific.

Some foods that will make your Ukrainian guests feel at home

You may find some of these items in a local Polish shop, or the Polish section of a larger supermarket.

Good rye bread (especially with coriander and caraway)

Toasted Buckwheat

Millet

Porridge Oats

Sunflower seeds

White flour

Some fluffy white bread or sourdough

Basmati rice

Full fat milk

Full-fat creme fraiche, sour cream or plain yogurt

Cottage cheese or Tvarog

Glazed sweet curd cheese snacks

Good butter

Emmental or gouda cheese

Kefir or ryazhanka (baked milk yogurt)

Mince (pork and beef)

Good chicken

Eggs

Chipolata or other plain sausages

Kabanas sausages

Lard, pancetta or bacon

Frozen varenyky or pierogi dumplings

Unrefined sunflower oil

Good honey

Sauerkraut

Fermented cucumbers

Red kidney beans

Fresh dill

Beetroot

Potatoes

Cabbage

Carrots

Onions

Garlic

Spring onions

Cucumbers

Tomatoes

Mushrooms (fresh & dry)

Frozen sour cherries

Apples

Clementines

Lemons (especially to put in tea!)

Apricot, strawberry or Raspberry jam/preserve

Some English biscuits