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UKRAINE

CENTRE. SOUTH

The Guide

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Cycle 1: Southwest of Kyiv (January)

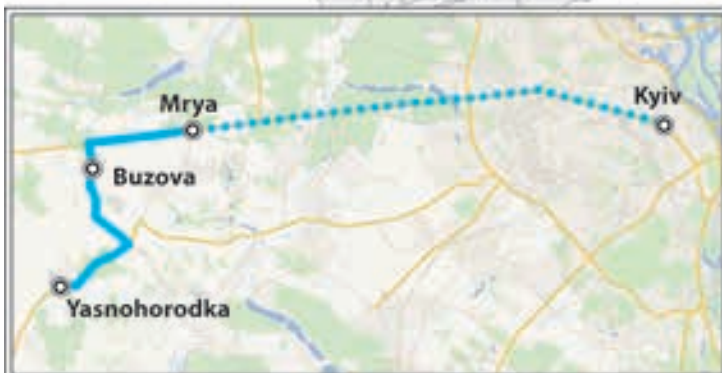
Between Mriya and Mila

A real escape from Kyiv for an extraordinary and tasty Pancake (Carnival) Week.

The Route: Mriya — Buzova — Yasnohorodka

Maslyana, or Masnytsia, or Kolodiya — the words are different but they all mean the same. A farewell to winter, delicious pancakes or varenyky, the feast for both body and soul before the Lent. In Kyiv celebrations are

usually held at the VDNKh and in Kyivan Rus park. However, it is better to leave the city via Zhytomyr motorway to seek alternatives as it is somewhat silly to celebrate a folk festival in the megalopolis.





Restaurant "Babusyn sad"

The road:

It is easy to get to the suburban villages of Mriya and Buzova by international motorway M-06 (E-40), though in the morning and at weekends there may be congestions in the city outskirts. There is a direct local road from Buzova to Yasnohorodka, but in winter time it is better to make a small loop to go through Mriya and Lychanka.y.

Pancake marketing

A folk band singing songs and dancing, as well as a special pancake menu comprising



Pancakes with chicken

seven items form a traditional Masnytsia programme of the country restaurant *Babusyn Sad*. The place is located in an apple orchard between the villages with romantic names of Mriya and Mila. Every year it is ready to celebrate the farewell to the winter, like many other competitors on Zhytomyr motorway. They are fewer than on Obukhov motorway, but the variety for those who appreciate comfortable leisure in the country is sufficient. Competing for guests, restaurants try to use any festivals and other occasions for feasts, let alone such a festival of hospitality as a Pancake week, or Masnytsia. In addition to the special menu, many places prepare thematic entertaining programmes

"Babusyn Sad focuses on the contemporary interpretation of Ukrainian folk traditions. The interior is also made in the nostalgic country house style which is closer to Provence, than to a Ukrainian settlement: elegant tables, striped settees, and a white cupboard. Besides traditional Masnytsia

pancakes and pies with various fillings, the restaurant serves shashlik made on the charcoal grill in the open air and today's trendy hot mulled wine. The folklore band dressed in bright Ukrainian traditional costumes are responsible for the ethnic atmosphere and festivities. Thanks to the band, big city dwellers will have at least some understanding of many rural festive rites, like singing Christmas carols and partying on Christmas Eve. And for the country restaurants the growing interest of city citizens in Masnytsia festivities is an excellent opportunity to make money on hot cakes”.

“Babusyn sad”

2 Sadova Street, Mriy

Fair pear and a sour apple

Probably the best place in Kyiv region to learn absolutely everything about Ukrainian traditions is Buzova. It is somewhat farther

along the motorway. Icy and snow-drifted but still passable local road turns from the Zhytomyr motorway and leads to housing community Buzok at the end of the forest. Between freshly snow-covered pine branches one can see a dome of the wooden rotunda of St. Dmitro Solunsky church. Cottages and different-shaped smaller buildings are scattered around it. Ducks are quacking on the lake, sheep are baaing and the smith is hammering in his smithy. It may seem that if the snowfall suddenly cuts this place off the civilization, it will be self-sufficient to last the whole winter: water from the well, its own sewage, fuel grows around by itself. The food stock is enough for a long time, which you may be sure of when dropping into a deliciously smelling *kolyba*.

The ethnic restaurant and hotel houses are just a part of a large ethnographic facility called Ukrainian village that



Khata with slanting walls and a thatched roof, depicted on the facility logo.

appeared here about 10 years ago. At first the church was built. It was followed by Hutsul and Poltava cottages, symbolizing the unity of the country. And now the complex shows authentic architecture of six Ukrainian regions: Carpathians, Polissia, Podillia, Slobozhanshchyna, Dnipro region and South of Ukraine. All the houses have unique design features, construction materials and decoration.

For example, a cottage (*khata*) with slanting walls and a thatched roof, depicted on the facility logo, is typical of southern regions with their lack of wood. Here they use the technology of wooden log and support clay-plastered structure. Inside the building of 1823 all the structural parts have been preserved. And nearby there are log houses, cut in Polissia. After the engagement of the couple co-parents-in-law would get together, cut wood and build a living part of a traditional three-part

khata: four walls, floor, doors and a stove. But the side lid would not be closed. Within a year the young couple had to finish building the anteroom and the chamber, complete roofing and show a baby to the parents — then the family was considered successful.

Anyone can see the Ukrainian rural architecture and household traditions here absolutely free of charge. When paying a small fee, you can get a tour, attend a workshop involving all the skills related to building a traditional Ukrainian family. Except for conceiving a baby, naturally.

By the way, in the Ukrainian village it is believed that *Masnytsia* is a Russian tradition: pancakes, troika, and a balalaika, whereas we have *Kolodiya* festival, finishing the winter cycle. *Koloda* is a symbol of winter cold, boredom, stagnation and uncertainty. It is tied with a rope to single lads and girls to demand a ransom for not



Ethnographic facility "Ukrainian village"

being married. Festive rites are recreated by Rozhanitsa folk music performers. In the comfortable decorated cottage kulesh and other delicious dishes are served, including, certainly, pancakes and varenyky with 12 different fillings according to the annual cycle principle. At first they are served with meat and giblets, followed by cabbage, potatoes, salt cottage cheese and in the end sweet ones are offered with sweet cottage cheese, poppy seeds and berries. They are paired with golden Cossack home-distilled varenuvka made of six ingredients: wild pears, wild sour apples, hawthorn, black thorn, prunes and rose hips, as well as seven other varieties of home-made liqueurs.

Ukrainian Village (Ukrainske Selo)

1 Dmytrivska street, Buzova
Free entrance

Mega-Pancake with mega-chicken

You may not know but the distance from Ukraine to Africa is just 15 kilometres. This is the way to cover from Buzova to Yasnohorodka to meet native Africans — ostriches. The owners of Yasnohorodka poultry farm have long understood that an ostrich is not only precious leather and dietary meat, but also 3-4 hours of excellent country family entertainment. Every year new tourist attractions are invented here.

One dweller of this eco-complex *Dolyna Strausiv* (Valley of Ostriches) is called Tantsor (Dancer). Being stout and bug-eyed, it walks around a spacious aviary in its black feather dinner jacket with dignity. These are the birds for tourists to ride.

Eight years ago the new masters of an ordinary poultry farm decided to turn it into an entertaining complex with a restaurant, a wine cellar, a tasting room, a playground



"Dolyna Strausiv" farm

and a mini zoo. They started holding wine festivals and thematic events. A simple idea that an ostrich may be used not only as food but also as a means of transport to ride was brought from Tenerife. So the farm has been offering this service for the fourth year already. In addition, during a wine festival in September real ostrich races are organized as well.

But it is impossible to evade inevitable: these feathered giants end up on the restaurant table in any case. In the eco-complex Dolyna Strausiv (Valley of Ostriches) lamps are made of ostrich egg shells, installations on walls are made of ostrich leather, and the menu is abundant in ostrich meat. In South Africa these huge hens have been used for food from times immemorial. Their meat is very dietary with merely 2% fat. The taste is something between veal and

game. It is a good basis for the delicious raw smoked sausage and unrivalled Pastrami. During Masnytsia week pancakes with ostrich are a house specialty.

The farewell to winter at the eco farm has been a long tradition that has been preserved from the previous farm owners. In the square a pole with a wheel on top is installed, prizes are tied to the pole. Children can ride a pony or a camel. Guests are offered to make pancakes by themselves on charcoal. Yasnohorodka elderly ladies in embroidered blouses sing folk songs. Craftswomen make the straw dummy of a Moreno to be burnt at the end of the festival.

If the weather is good, there may be over a thousand guests here to celebrate the occasion. The thing is that people miss nature during the long winter period and it is worth going to the country for Masnytsia.



You can ride this ostrich

Wherever you celebrate it — in an authentic village, at an exotic farm or in an elite restaurant, with varenyky or pancakes — this is the best festival to understand why Ukraine is always considered generous

«Dolyna Strausiv»

32 Pidlisna street, Yasnohorodka

A Painted Egg

One scrambled ostrich egg is enough for 10—15 people.

The shell is not broken but used to make souvenirs — applying decoupage to paint and carve it. A souvenir egg price varies depending on the complexity of work.



The painted eggs of ostriches are a great souvenir

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