
Iowa State University students reflect on visit to Ukraine

by Sherry Pogranichniy and Barbara McBreen

AMES, Iowa - Iowa State University students who visited Ukraine have returned to campus for the fall session and are reflecting on last spring's three-week international experience.

"My favorite part of the trip was seeing the agricultural systems. Being able to compare and contrast their systems to those of the United States was very interesting. The climate and land of Ukraine is in many ways similar to Iowa's, so we had a good reference point," said Ann Rossi, a junior majoring in agronomy at Iowa State University.

Ms. Rossi was one of 24 students who traveled to Ukraine in May to study the agriculture, history, economy and culture of the country.

When the group arrived in Ukraine they were based in Kyiv at the National Agricultural University. The students had the opportunity to visit with Ukrainian students with similar majors, meet with faculty and tour the university's facilities, which included laboratories, classrooms and research farms.

"I realized on this trip that Ukrainians are not much different from us," said Leslie Westgate, a senior agronomy student at Iowa State.

Students were assigned projects related to their majors, so they spent some of their time collecting information. Sherry Pogranichniy, an Iowa State student services specialist who accompanied the students, said the group had the opportunity to visit different parts of Ukraine.

"We wanted students to experience the differences in culture, language, industry and agriculture that exist from east to west and north to south in Ukraine," Ms. Pogranichniy said.

Students also did some sightseeing during the trip and visited the Shevchenko National Theater, the Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the Central Botanical Garden, the Chernobyl Museum, Pecherska Lavra, the Outdoor Museum of Folk Architecture and Lifestyle, Independence Square and many other sites in Kyiv.

The trip included visits to historical and cultural sites in Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk and Crimea. In Lviv, the group was hosted by Lviv State Agricultural University. In addition to exploring the university's facilities and museums, the group spent three days in the Lviv area visiting a farm, two castles, Lychakiv Cemetery, Lviv's Rynok Square, museums, churches and the Vysoky Zamok (High Castle) hill.

Dnipropetrovsk State Agricultural University hosted students when they arrived in that eastern Ukrainian city where students stayed in a resort located on the Dnipro River. While in the city the group visited several large farms, mining sites, mining reclamation locations and a food-processing plant for McDonald's.

A side trip to Crimea started and ended in Symferopol, from there the group took a bus to the southern coast. Along the way students visited sites around Bakhchysarai, including the Khan Palace, Uspenskii

Cave Monastery and Chufut Kale cave city. Students also spent time in the greater Yalta area visiting St. Peter Mountain, the Nikita Botanical Garden, the Massandra Winery, palaces and other sites. Some of the students even braved the chilly water to swim in the Black Sea.

"Before the trip, we participated in a class introducing us to Ukraine. The trip was still full of surprises and was an amazing learning experience for me. Actually seeing what we discussed in class was exciting, and I was better able to understand what the group leaders had explained to us. Seeing the country and talking to Ukrainians helped me to appreciate their history and culture," Ms. Rossi said.

The travel course is part of a student exchange program between Iowa State University and Ukraine. A donation from Ukrainian Americans Stefan and Kateryna Dwojak of Venice, Fla., helped make the trip more affordable for students.

The Dwojaks announced a challenge gift of \$350,000 to Iowa State University's Global Agriculture Programs in November 2003. The goal is to raise \$1 million to support future student exchanges between Ukraine and Iowa State University. For more information about the study abroad program call (515) 294-8454 or e-mail gap@iastate.edu.

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