

Imogen Evans (MML) - Language course in Kiev, Ukraine

Over the Easter vacation I went to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, for two weeks to take part in a Russian language course. This involved about three hours of teaching per day, the majority of which was a combination of grammatical revision and speaking practice. I found this element of my stay incredibly useful, not only for practical speaking skills, but also for the opportunity it gave me to boost my confidence in being able to communicate in Russian, something which I was lacking, considering that the extent of my speaking practice this year had been only one hour of (exam-orientated) speaking per week in term-time. Thus, when I came back to Cambridge for my oral exams, I was much more prepared than I otherwise would have been. The other main element of my trip was that I stayed with a (Russian-speaking!) Ukrainian woman, and I must say that I think I was very lucky, because she was an extremely hospitable woman (some of my friends in other places did not have the same experience...) and this gave me an excellent opportunity to use my Russian in a practical and more familiar setting: lots of cups of rosehip tea, and midnight snacks of bread and butter. I felt very at home with Valentina Alekseievna...even when she sold my bed: but she gave me prior warning about this, and it turned out that the sofa was more comfortable anyway.

All in all, I really enjoyed my trip to Kiev. It was a very interesting cultural experience, not least because, having been to St.Petersburg in September, it was interesting to compare these different Eastern European cities. The director of our school also helped us to learn a little bit about swindling and the relative value of different currencies.... the receipts I procured for my grant were hard won!