**Kyiv** is the capital and the largest city of [Ukraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine), located in the north central part of the country on the [Dnipro River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dnieper_River). The population of Kiev consists almost 3 million making it at least [8th largest city in Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_cities_in_Europe). It is the largest Ukrainian-speaking city in the world.

Kiev is an important industrial, [scientific](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science), educational, and [cultural](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture) centre of Eastern Europe. It is home to many [high-tech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_tech) industries, higher education institutions and world-famous historical landmarks. The city has an extensive infrastructure and highly developed system of public transport, including the [Kiev Metro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Metro).

During [its history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Kiev), Kiev, one of the oldest cities in Eastern Europe, passed through several stages of great prominence and relative obscurity. The city probably existed as a commercial centre as early as the 5th century.

The city prospered during the [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire)'s [industrial revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution) in the late 19th century. In 1917, after the [Ukrainian National Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_National_Republic) declared independence from the Russian Empire, Kiev became its capital. From 1921 onwards Kiev was an important city of the [Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic), and, from 1934, its capital. During [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_%28World_War_II%29), the city again suffered significant damage, but quickly recovered in the post-war years, remaining the third largest city of the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union).

Following the [collapse of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse_of_the_Soviet_Union_%281985%E2%80%931991%29) and [Ukrainian independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ukraine) in 1991 and during the country's transformation to a [market economy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Market_economy) and [democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy), Kiev has continued to be Ukraine's largest and richest city.

Scientific research is conducted in many institutes of higher education and, additionally, in many [research institutes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_institute) affiliated with the [Ukrainian Academy of Sciences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Academy_of_Sciences_of_Ukraine). There are many libraries in the city with the [Vernadsky National Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernadsky_National_Library_of_Ukraine), which is Ukraine's main [academic library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_library) and scientific [information centre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_centre). Kiev hosts many universities, the major ones being [Kiev National Taras Shevchenko University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_University), the [National Technical University "Kiev Polytechnic Institute"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Polytechnic_Institute), and the [Kyiv-Mohyla Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_University_of_Kyiv-Mohyla_Academy).

Kiev is known as a green city with [two botanical gardens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M.M._Gryshko_National_Botanical_Garden) and numerous large and small parks. The [World War II Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum_of_the_Great_Patriotic_War,_Kiev) is located here, which offers both indoor and outdoor displays of military history and equipment.

The centre of Kiev ([Independence Square](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maidan_Nezalezhnosti) and [Khreschatyk Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khreshchatyk)) becomes a large outdoor party place at night for having a good time in nearby restaurants, clubs and outdoor cafes. The central streets are closed for auto traffic on weekends and holidays. [Andriyivskyy Descent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andriyivskyy_Descent) is one of the best known historic streets and a major tourist attraction in Kiev.

Kiev's most famous historical architecture complexes are the [St. Sophia Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Sophia%27s_Cathedral,_Kiev) and the [Kiev Pechersk Lavra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Pechersk_Lavra), which are recognized by [UNESCO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) as a [World Heritage Site](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site). Noteworthy historical architectural landmarks also include the [Mariyinsky Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariyinsky_Palace), several [Orthodox churches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Church) such as [St. Michael's Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Michael%27s_Golden-Domed_Monastery), [St. Andrew's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Andrew%27s_Church,_Kiev), [St. Vladimir's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Volodymyr%27s_Cathedral), the reconstructed [Golden Gate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Gate,_Kiev) and others.