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July 2010



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THE PREMIER PALACE

/ By Thorsten Buehrmann / A Seven Stars & Stripes Review



The Lufthansa crew advised us that we would soon be able to see the Dnieper River from the windows of our comfortable business class seats. We were within minutes of landing in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. Kiev is located on both sides of the Dnieper River, which flows south through the city toward the Black Sea. Kiev has a continental, humid climate with the warmest months being June, July, and August. Temperatures in August sometimes reach 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Founded in the fifth century, Kiev is world renowned for its priceless historic landmarks and recognized as a cultural center of Eastern Europe.

At the gate we were received by airport security personnel who guided us to a private airport bus and accompanied us to the VIP terminal. We were met with a welcome sign identifying us as guests of the Premier Palace, Kiev's first house. Miss Anna and Mr. Ivan, both in crisp butler uniforms, welcomed us graciously and escorted us to a shiny Mercedes S AMG for our ride to the hotel.

When we arrived at the main entrance of the Premier Palace, a blend of art nouveau and art deco, three people welcomed us

dressed in bold, colorful, traditional costumes. Modern Kiev seems to be a tasteful merger of the old and the new, precious, incredibly interesting, and not just for history buffs. Executive Assistant Manager Rodderich Leffler greeted us with a smile and a drink. According to Ukraine tradition, when everyone's glass is full, somebody must propose a toast. Mr. Leffler did the honors: "Hopefully, it's not the last time we drink together, with God's help."

In May of 2009, the Premier Palace Hotel kicked off a yearlong celebration of the 100 years since ground was first broken on the original hotel. As we looked around the magnificent entrance hall, it became evident that the history of the Premier Palace Hotel is the history of Kiev itself. One of the original two buildings that today make up the Premier Palace Hotel originally belonged to Prince Dimitri Zhevakhov, a colonel in the cavalry, whose family roots went back to the legendary Kartlos. He was a hero from the Caucasus region, leader of the Georgian people and the great grandson of the biblical Japheth, the third son of Noah.



Our accommodations on the seventh and eighth executive floors granted us not only plenty of privacy, but also access to butler service and a splendid view over the distinctive golden domes of Kiev.

We dined at the Sumosan Restaurant on the first floor and thoroughly enjoyed our meal. The Sumosan Restaurant itself and Volkov's Japanese cuisine seem to be intentionally eclectic. Presenting a fabulously bold menu, it seems Alexander Volkov has done a fine job in bringing his cuisine to Kiev, returning to his Ukrainian roots.


After dinner came deep and dreamless sleep in an extremely comfortable bed. My wake-up call was punctual and breakfast was served on the executive floor. The service was fantastic and omelets and waffles divine. After breakfast we toured the hotel and viewed the meeting and banquet complex. After about an hour we discovered the spa facilities, replete with dramatic waterfalls. We looked forward to a swim in the turquoise blue sparkling pool. But first, we were scheduled for a business lunch at Terracotta Restaurant at the hotel.

Our lunch at Terracotta turned out to be a brunch symphony. The display was created by Executive Chef Igal Kovriga and his team. Rodderich Leffler, former F&B director of the Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, has put his personal stamp on Terracotta, from architectural details like the exotic aquarium at the main entrance to the new panoramic windows that allow one to admire the golden domes of Kiev. The brunch offered culinary delights such as smoked duck breast stuffed with foie gras, delicate French crepes with salmon roe and sour cream, whole stuffed pike, tenderly baked pork, ham and kovbasa. Desserts included mousse au chocolate, mini tiramisus, lemon tarts and apple strudel. Later in the afternoon we enjoyed expertly performed massages at the gorgeous spa and got to enjoy a swim in the amazing pool under a raised glass dome. It was an experience we will long savor.

It was then time to have our tour guide take us to some of Kiev's historic sites.

St. Sophia's Cathedral is the oldest existing church in Kiev, dating back to the first half of the 11th century and its beauty had a tremendous impact on us. The cathedral is renowned worldwide for its mosaics and frescoes by Byzantine masters and more than 300 irreplaceable notes and images on the walls, known as "Sophia's graffiti." Another fascinating site is the National Museum of History of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), located in the southern outskirts of the Pechersk district of Kiev. The actual museum complex is centered around the famous 62-meter-tall Motherland statue, which is one of the best recognized landmarks of Kiev today. Open for visitors from all over the globe, destination Kiev celebrated its 1,500th anniversary in 1982.

We went back to the hotel for dinner at the Roof Top Café followed by a restful night's sleep. In the morning my butler opened the drapes and presented me with a tray of freshly brewed, strong coffee, orange juice and Danishes. After an opulent breakfast at Terracotta we left for an excursion on the Dnieper River. We were taken aboard the sleek yacht of Mr. Lytvyn, general director of the Premier Palace Hotel. We slowly passed white sandy bathing beaches and the homes of the wealthy overlooking the river. We waved as other boats passed by.

Nothing quite prepares you for the moment you get close to the Motherland statue, majestic and silent like the Dnieper River itself. Seven Stars and Stripes lauds a management team and staff that have demonstrated superior professionalism in operating the Premier Palace Hotel in Kiev, the premier hotel of the city. 

For more information, please visit www.premier-palace.com