

Travel

We do not travel as much as Oksana would like. As far as I'm concerned, I have seen the world enough to recognize paradise when I find it, and we live in paradise. The house is just the right size, the lawn is not too big to manage, and the neighborhood is quiet. We are only a quarter-mile from a beautiful quiet lake where I can swim and half a mile from a sandy river beach. We are 15 minutes by bus from all the shopping we need, and the buses run every 20 minutes. I have not driven regularly for 10 years now and don't miss it whatsoever.

The last time I drove it all was three years ago when Oksana and I went to Ternopol and rented a car to drive to Ukraine's number two attraction as far as religious sites go, the Pochaevsky Lavra. I found that I had not lost the touch of driving – I didn't do anything stupid or dangerous – but I didn't especially like driving on two-lane roads through the rain. Why would I want to do that? My driver's license expired December 2016 and I have not made any effort to get it renewed.

We talk about taking a train trip to Germany once the baby is old enough to travel. We have friends in Berlin and Cologne, and Oksana would dearly love to get to Salzburg, the home of the Orff movement. The train is not quick, but it's interesting for children and it does not subject you to the same kind of abuse as the boarding process on airplanes. It's convenient that the children can go to the bathroom anytime they want and have a place to walk around.

Oksana would like to see the United States sometime. She has been turned down twice for a tourist visa to the United States. Both when we were engaged in after we were married they simply said no. They don't give a reason, but other people tell us that the State Department assumes that a person and Oksana's position is going to fall madly in love with the United States and never leave once they set foot on those hallowed shores. Therefore, the only visa that they will issue is an immigrant visa. The immigrant visa is a lot of work, and in our case it would involve making claims that simply aren't true. We would not intend to live there.

Traveling to the United States would also pose logistical questions. It is so big! Where would we go? How would we get around? Public transportation in the United States is slow, spotty, and often dangerous. If you don't drive, you're out of luck.

Perhaps the solution would be to take a package tour, and let some tour operator show us what should be seen in the United States. But that begs the question, why the USA? Other countries are so much more interesting.

That's where things stand when it comes to travel. Meanwhile, more and more people are visiting us here in Kyiv. We welcome visitors. As I write, our friend Mark Taylor is visiting from Germany, staying in the best hotel in the area for about \$30 a night. The weather is perfect, the restaurants are good, and the people are charming. Another friend, Chris, is coming later this month to spend about a month here. Friends from Germany visit periodically. So – let us extend the invitation the other way.