

Planning to leave Kyiv in a crisis

A practical guide to relocation and departure by rail or road

Chris MacLeod | Free guide | Edition 1.0 | 1 October 2026

Prepare a departure option before you need it. If conditions deteriorate, transport, accommodation and communications may become harder to arrange.

This high-level guide is for foreign nationals in Kyiv and the organisations supporting them. It covers planning a move within Ukraine or across an international border if security conditions or essential services deteriorate, using rail, coach, self-drive or a driver service.

Missile and drone attacks can affect routes across Ukraine, including the west. Check your own government's travel advice, consular support limits and your organisation's arrangements before travelling.

During an air alert

Respond according to the reported threat, your location and access to shelter. If you choose to continue travelling during yellow, monitor official updates, minimise unnecessary exposure and be ready to shelter. On red, take shelter; aboard transport, follow crew instructions. Take protective action if danger is nearby, without waiting for a colour change. Follow local restrictions and your organisation's procedures. [1]

When to review your departure

Agree what would make you move. Review your arrangements when:

- You lose, or expect to lose, access to suitable shelter or medical care.
- Power, heating or water disruption exceeds what you can manage.
- Repeated disturbed nights or a health problem reduce your ability to cope or travel.
- Transport, accommodation or border options start to deteriorate.
- Your employer or the authorities issue new instructions.

The response may be different accommodation in Kyiv, relocation elsewhere in Ukraine, or departure from the country. Choose a destination that can meet your needs.

For organisations

Name the plan owner, the decision-maker and their deputy. Agree how staff are accounted for, how check-ins are handled and who can authorise additional spending outside office hours.

Use and limits

This guide assumes usable transport, an accessible route and a destination you can reach and enter. Reassess the plan if these assumptions no longer hold.

This free guide provides general information, not a tailored risk assessment or operational plan. It does not guarantee safety, departure or assistance and includes no monitoring or assistance service. Commissioned advice requires an agreed scope.

02 JOURNEY PLANNING

Choose a journey you can complete

Before booking, check exit eligibility and entry or transit requirements for everyone travelling. If you or a dependant holds, or may hold, Ukrainian citizenship, confirm how current Ukrainian rules apply with the authorities or a qualified adviser. A foreign passport alone may not establish exit eligibility.

Plan from your accommodation to a confirmed place to stay. Include the station or pickup point, border crossing and onward transfer.

Your transport options

Rail. Confirm the service and ticket with Ukrzaliznytsia. Arrange transport to the station and identify its shelter. Allow for delayed boarding, interrupted services and missed connections. Follow railway staff instructions during an alert.

Coach. Confirm the operator, exact pickup point, border route, any transfers, luggage allowance and accessibility. Keep the operator's contact details offline.

Self-drive. For your own car or a self-drive hire, check roadworthiness, fuel and weather equipment, documents, insurance, border permissions and recovery arrangements. Plan rest stops and a backup.

Driver service. Confirm pickup, passenger needs and whether the service covers the border crossing or requires a handover. Ask the provider to confirm the driver's exit eligibility and vehicle, insurance and recovery arrangements. During wider relocation or evacuation, services may be oversubscribed or prioritise other clients; drivers may relocate with their own families. Agree a backup before relying on the booking.

Staging in western Ukraine can provide rest and time to reassess. Use it when it helps the journey. Check accommodation and onward transport before relying on a stop.

Countries to consider

All five countries can be reached by road across a direct border with Ukraine. Rail services vary and may require changes or transit through another country.

Country	Road option	Rail and onward checks
Poland	Via western Ukraine to a Ukrainian-Polish road crossing.	UZ services to Przemyśl or Chełm; confirm seats and onward transfer.
Romania	Via Chernivtsi or Zakarpattia to a Ukrainian-Romanian crossing.	Kyiv-Bucharest transits Moldova. Check transit and entry requirements. [2]
Moldova	To a Ukrainian-Moldovan road crossing, avoiding Transnistria.	Outside Schengen; check entry rules. [6] Confirm rail availability and onward travel.
Slovakia and Hungary	Via Zakarpattia to the chosen country's road border.	Check the booked rail destination, any change of train and onward transport.

Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary apply Schengen entry rules. Check passport, visa or residence requirements and permitted length of stay. [3] Check whether EU Entry/Exit System (EES) biometric registration or an exemption applies, and allow time for border processing. Visa-free travellers should also check ETIAS travel authorisation launch status and requirements for their travel date. [4]

Choose a crossing that accepts your travel mode. A road crossing may not accept pedestrians or every vehicle type. Keep onward bookings flexible and allow for an overnight stop beyond the border.

03 PREPARATION

Prepare for disruption

Air alerts and local instructions

Kyiv uses yellow for drone threats and red for missiles, massed drones or combined threats. These colours describe the reported threat type, not its distance from you. Yellow is not an all-clear. Use the response on page 1 and follow current local and operator instructions. [1]

Some areas still use sirens that do not distinguish threat types. Check Kyiv Digital or the official city channel for current details. Confirm the shelter's entrance and accessibility before travel or a station wait. [1, 8]

- **Restrictions and checks.** Check curfews and movement restrictions along your route. Carry your passport and expect document checks. Do not photograph near government or military sites.
- **Stops.** Avoid night driving and unnecessary stops beside military, energy, fuel or rail facilities.
- **Debris.** Do not approach or touch missile or drone debris or suspicious objects. Follow official instructions. [7]

Contact and navigation

- **Check-ins.** Give a trusted contact your route, destination and timings. Agree check-in times and what each of you will do if contact is lost or a check-in is missed. Update them when plans change and on arrival.
- **Offline information.** Save tickets, documents, contacts and maps offline. For road travel, carry a printed route with road names and key junctions. Check your position against signs and landmarks.
- **Phone time.** GPS interference can affect automatic phone time. Check the clock and time zone against reliable local time; use manual settings if needed. Keep an independent watch as a backup. [5]
- **Power and roaming.** Charge your phone and power banks. Check roaming for your destination. Calls or SMS may work if apps fail, but still need a mobile connection. Test satellite devices before relying on them.

Check the support behind the phone number

Confirm cover for your route and relevant war risks directly with your insurer, including how government travel advice affects the policy. Ask what assistance the provider can arrange, where and how payment works. Have another option if help is unavailable. A policy or membership alone does not guarantee evacuation.

Carry what you need for delays

Prepare for long waits, an unplanned overnight stop and a change of transport. Keep essential items in a bag you can lift and take with you.

- Original passport and required documents, plus offline copies.
- Regular medication, prescriptions and enough supplies for delays.
- Drinking water and ready-to-eat food, with a plan to replenish them.
- Warm layers, weather protection, a torch and a basic first-aid kit.
- Phone, chargers, power banks, cash and more than one way to pay.

Keep accessible funds for replacement transport, extra accommodation and essential costs.

Plan for each person's needs. Check stairs, walking distance, luggage, child travel documents and pet requirements before choosing transport. Do not rely on emergency exceptions at the border.

04 FINAL CHECKS

Departure checks

Adapt these checks to your plan. Missing non-essential items must not delay immediate protective action.

- ☐ I have checked my exit eligibility and the entry or transit requirements for everyone travelling.
- ☐ My first leg, onward transfer and destination are arranged. I know my backup option.
- ☐ For self-drive, I have checked vehicle and border requirements. For a driver service, I have confirmed coverage, availability and a backup.
- ☐ I have checked alerts, local restrictions, transport information and access to shelter.
- ☐ My contact has the plan and we have agreed what to do if we lose contact or I miss a check-in.
- ☐ Documents, medication, essential supplies and offline information are accessible.
- ☐ I have allowed for delay, an overnight stop and the needs of dependants or pets.
- ☐ I can pay for the journey and disruption costs, including outside office hours.

If the plan changes

Transport fails or is delayed. Contact your agreed person and the operator. Confirm a workable alternative or a suitable place to wait. Do not rush into an unfamiliar journey simply to protect an onward booking.

Exit or entry is refused. Ask for the reason in writing. Contact your organisation, consulate or a qualified adviser. Another crossing may not resolve a document or eligibility problem.

Conditions deteriorate. Reassess both the journey and your current location. Staying requires usable shelter and supplies; moving requires a viable route and destination.

Sources and current checks

Sources checked 1 October 2026. Recheck rules, alert arrangements, routes and services before travel. Timetable dates do not guarantee that a particular service will run.

- [1] [Kyiv City authorities](#) · Alert types and local arrangements (Ukrainian)
- [2] [CFR Călători](#) · 2025-26 timetable and Kyiv-Bucharest connection
- [3] [Your Europe](#) · Travel documents and entry requirements
- [4] [European Commission](#) · EES exemptions· EES and ETIAS
- [5] [Armed Forces of Ukraine](#) · GPS interference and phone time (2024; Ukrainian)
- [6] [Moldova MFA](#) · Entry and visa requirements
- [7] [State Emergency Service](#) · Missile debris warning (Ukrainian)
- [8] [Kyiv City authorities](#) · Shelter guidance and map (includes English)

Useful links for online and printed copies

Kyiv Digital: kyiv.digital/start (app supports English; webpage Ukrainian)
 City alerts (Ukrainian): t.me/KyivCityOfficial | Shelter map: gis.kyivcity.gov.ua/shelter/
 UZ tickets: booking.uz.gov.ua | Rail options (Ukrainian): uz-vezemo.uz.gov.ua
 Crossings (Ukrainian): customs.gov.ua/posts/ | Queues (unofficial): kordon.live/index_en.html

Planning support from Risk Recce

I have worked in Ukraine since 2022, supporting organisations with security risk management and contingency planning.

I support relocation and departure planning from Kyiv and other locations across Ukraine. I can help you assess route options, agree decision triggers and responsibilities, and review an existing plan. Contact me to discuss your location and requirements.

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