

Eastern Europe Big Farms Tour 2010

FIRST DRAFT ITINERARY

DATE	ACTIVITY	OVERNIGHT
Day 1 (meals on plane)	Afternoon flight to St Petersburg via Asia. Option to leave a day earlier and spend 24 hours in Singapore, Frankfurt or Istanbul, depending on our Star Alliance carrier.	On plane
Day 2 - (meals on plane, then Dinner)	Flight arrives in St Petersburg in the afternoon of July 23 (time depends on flight from either Frankfurt or Istanbul). Met at the airport by our guide and transferred to our downtown hotel with an introduction to St Petersburg on the way.	St Petersburg
Day 3 - (B, L)	Tour of this beautiful and historic city dubbed the 'Venice of the North' because of its palace-lined waterways. Miraculously, St Petersburg escaped the Stalinist architectural incursions (and perversions), and stands majestically on the Gulf of Finland and Neva River. Sights visited over the next two days will include the magnificent State Hermitage buildings and the Hidden Treasures (includes priceless artworks captured by the Red Army), Peter and Paul Fortress and Nevsky Prospekt. We can also arrange a visit to Catherine the Great's Summer Palace and the magnificent Amber Room. Today we will also visit the Vaviloff Seed Institute – the world's first seed bank. Nikolai Vavilov, a Russian biologist, botanist and geneticist, scoured five continents in the 1920s and 1930s for wild and cultivated corn, potato tubers, grains, beans, fodder, fruits and vegetable seeds. He was the foremost plant geographer of his time and took part in over 100 collecting missions to 64 countries. He is perhaps best known for having identified the 'centres of origin' of cultivated plants. He devoted his life to the study and improvement of wheat, corn, and other cereal crops that sustain the global population. Under Stalin, the Institute suffered repression since genetics was seen as a science that supports "inborn class differences". One of Stalin's victims was Vavilov himself and he was arrested in August 1940. One year later, Hitler's army blockaded Leningrad. Vaviloff Institute scientists burned everything they could find to keep the collection from freezing in the unheated, dark building. While guarding the collection, some scientists starved to death rather than eat the packets of rice, corn and other seeds in their desks.	St Petersburg
Day 4 - (B, D)	Free time for your own exploration of St Petersburg this morning, before we a 3 pm transfer to the train station to enjoy a 5 hour express train journey through magnificent forests, farmlands and small villages, to Moscow (all in daylight).	Moscow Train departs 4.00pm; arrives 9.00 pm
Day 5 - (B, L)	Guided city tour in the morning. There are some famous sights to visit while in Moscow including Red Square, Lenin's Tomb, the Kremlin, the Armory, the famous domes of St Basil, Moscow River boat cruise and so on. A ride on the architecturally magnificent metro system is a must while the Military museum is also highly recommended. This evening is free for various options including an evening at the Bolshoi Ballet. The Bolshoi Theatre is very near to our downtown hotel.	Moscow
Day 6 - (B, L, D)	This morning we have a breakfast meeting with Austrade officials before our lunchtime direct flight to Krasnodar in southern Russia. The population of Krasnodar is about 800,000 people, and is situated on the River Kuban, 1000 km south of Moscow, and 120 km north of the Black Sea, on the edge of the Caucasus. The city was founded by the Cossacks in 1793 to protect the southern borders of Russia. Krasnodar is a major industrial, agricultural, and cultural centre in the fastest growing region in Russia outside of Moscow. We are met by our local guide at the airport and transferred to the Class combine factory. The factory was opened in 2005. The production plant is designed to handle a capacity of 1000 machines a year. We enjoy a tour of the plant as well as a presentation on farming, on an enormous scale, in southern Russia. Brief tour of Krasnodar before checking into our hotel.	Krasnodar

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Day 7 - (B, L)	<p>The Krasnodar territory is unique in its diverse natural resources. The soils of the plains are mainly chernozems (black earths), and mountain-forest and mountain-meadow soils predominate in the mountains. Minerals produced here include oil, fuel gas, salt, hard coking coal, manganese ores, nickel, tin, copper ores, cement marl, volcanic muds, refractory clays, and lithographic stone. There are also huge deposits of construction and road-building materials, such as facing stone, shell rock, limestone, granite and marble. The fuel and energy complex accounts for more than 20% of the territory's industrial output. Oil has been produced here since 1864.</p> <p>With the highest quality soils and a favourable climate the Krasnodar region has always been the principal 'breadbasket' of the Russian Federation. The region produces 10% of all grain, 60% of oilseeds, 30% of fruit, 6% of meat and dairy, 90% of rice and 97% of Russian wine production. The agricultural significance of the region has been underlined with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the loss of large agricultural belts of Ukraine and Kazakhstan.</p> <p>Today we will have corporate farm visits around Krasnodar as well as a visit to local machinery manufacturers and dealers. We also meet with researchers at Russia's only specialised agricultural university – The National University of Agriculture. Free evening.</p>	Krasnodar
Day 8 - (B, L, D)	<p>Board our coach this morning to travel north through the fertile plains to Rostov on Don. Along the way we visit another large farm and meet with the farm managers. We will also have some cultural and scenic stops along the way. The mouth of the Don River has been of great commercial and cultural importance since ancient times. The Don is a major shipping lane connecting southwestern Russia with regions to the north. With its strategic location and wealth, Rostov on Don was a bone of contention between the Whites and the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War and it was again thrown back in time by the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in recent years, this city of more than 1 million inhabitants, has experienced considerable economic growth to be transformed into a modern, industrial and technology-rich hub. City tour on arrival.</p>	Rostov on Don
Day 9 - (B, L, D)	<p>This morning we board our coach and travel west to cross the border into Ukraine's southeastern corner. Agriculture in Ukraine has been evolving since it achieved independence in 1991, following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Farm property was divided among the farm workers – most of whom leased their land back to newly-formed private agricultural associations. The sudden loss of State agricultural subsidies had an enormous effect on every aspect of Ukrainian agriculture. In some cases, grain production fell by 50% and livestock numbers plummeted. Farms were forced to cope with fleets of aging, inefficient machinery because no funds were available for capital investment. Difficulty in obtaining credit, especially large, long-term loans, remains a significant problem for many farms. This has also caused a run-down in the fertility of some soils with fertiliser cut-backs. Over the next few days we meet with Ukrainian farm managers and consultants battling these challenges.</p>	Donetsk or Mariupol region
Day 10 - (B, L, D)	<p>Today we continue onto the Dnepropetrovsk area with farm visits on the way. Dnepropetrovsk is on the mighty Dneiper River and is Ukraine's third largest city. Over 60% (42 million hectares) of Ukraine's total land area is considered arable. Many consider the steppe of this area as some of the most fertile soils in the world. The famous humus-rich black soil of southern Ukraine accounts for one-third of the world's total black soil reserves. Winter wheat, spring barley, and corn are the country's main grain crops. Sunflowers and sugar beets are the main industrial crops. National winter wheat yields are erratic and average around 3 tonnes per hectare. We visit large farms in the area.</p>	Dnepropetrovsk
Day 11 - (B, L, D)	<p>Today we travel southwest to the Kirovograd region. Kirovograd is home to several Ukrainian planter (JSC Chervona Zirka) and combine (Avtoshtamp) factories. We also meet with Eastern BioFarms, a Norwegian company actively buying, developing and farming agricultural land in Ukraine. EBF is currently purchasing land in the Kirovograd region for the purpose of large-scale grain and oilseed farming using modern techniques and machinery.</p>	Kirovograd
Day 12 - (B, L)	<p>Today we travel south through the vast and fertile farmland steppes of southern Ukraine and onto the Black Sea port of Odessa. Referred to as the 'Pearl of the Black Sea', Odessa is the largest city along the Black Sea, and the most important city of Ukraine for trade. Built by order of Catherine the Great with the vision of creating a St Petersburg of the south, its architecture owes much to French influence. The old centre of the city is about 215 years old, built to a grid plan. It includes many tree-lined, cobbled boulevards, ornate facades and fountains which add an air of intimacy to the city centre. Odessa's mild climate, warm waters and sunlit beaches attract thousands of people year round. We enjoy a guided tour to get your bearings before free time this evening to do your own exploration of the city.</p>	Odessa

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Day 13 - (B, D)	Free morning in Odessa and time to take in the city at your own pace. Odessa's long history as a thriving enterprise has left the city with some classic, stately architecture. As early as the first half of the 19th century, the numerous landowners who had moved to Odessa attracted by the profitable grain trade, started constructing their private residences. They would build palace compounds – two-storied mansions with forecourts, wrought iron grilles, porticos and opulent formal halls. The Opera and Ballet Theatre is a grand building, worth seeing inside and out. Picturesque streets surround the Opera Theatre and walking along tree-lined Primorsky Boulevard will take you to Potemkin Steps. Catherine's Square and City Gardens are great places to relax. For a taste of 'real' Ukrainian life, you can venture to Privoz, the large city food market. At 1.00 pm we board our fast Black Sea ferry to Constanta, Romania, arriving at 7 pm.	Constanta, Romania
Day 14 - (B)	Constanta is a beautiful and historic Black Sea town. Originally named after Emperor Constantine's sister, Constanta is the third largest city in Romania and is known for its ancient ruins, open-air restaurants and museums. We have a morning guided tour of the sights and then free time to enjoy the shops and beaches.	Constanta
Day 15 - (B, L, D)	This morning we visit a large farm inland from Constanta before traveling northwest through fertile farmlands to the Slobezia area. This is in the Danube Delta and the region is called Dobrogea. Romania's agricultural sector accounts for a substantial part of Romania's national economy. There are 15 million arable hectares of generally very fertile soils with a favourable climate. Dobrogea has some of the highest dryland grain yields in Romania and it is where many larger corporate farms are concentrated.	Slobezia
Day 16 - (B, L, D)	This morning we travel north to visit a large privately-run irrigation farm situated on an island (Braila) in the middle of the Danube. The 'island' farm grows a variety of crops, grown across thousands of hectares.	Braila
Day 17 - (B, L) Tuesday, August 11	Another large farm visit this morning before heading west to the magnificent city of Brasov. Fringed by the peaks of the Southern Carpathian Mountains and resplendent with Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance architecture, as well as a wealth of historical attractions, Brasov is one of the most visited places in Romania. As one of the medieval Saxon's seven walled citadels built in the 12th century – and its location at the intersection of the trade routes linking the Ottoman Empire and western Europe – Brasov has obviously been a popular destination throughout the ages. Guided tour of Brasov on arrival and then a free evening.	Brasov
Day 18 - (B, L)	A leisurely start this morning before continuing into the heart of the Transylvanian region – Sighisoara. Transylvania is the geographic centre of Romania and is surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains. Transylvania (literally meaning 'land over the forests') is home for a diversity of people including Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Armenians and Jews. The resulting architecture in this region is a mosaic of Byzantine, Romanian, Renaissance, Barocco, Gothic and Neo-Gothic styles. Sighisoara is also where Vlad Tepes (Dracula) called home, and it's one of the most beautiful towns in Europe. On arrival, we enjoy a tour of this World Heritage site to help get your bearings and then free time to do your own exploring.	Sighisoara
Day 19 - (B, L)	This morning we have a short drive south onto Sibiu in time for lunch and an afternoon guided tour of yet another beautiful medieval town. This was the largest and wealthiest of the seven walled citadels built in the 12th century by German settlers known as Transylvanian Saxons. The riches amassed by the guilds of Sibiu paid for the construction of the impressive buildings and the fortifications required to protect them. Sibiu's Old Town retains the grandeur of its earlier days. Free time this evening.	Sibiu
Day 20 - (B, L, D)	This morning we board our coach for our journey through the spectacular southern Carpathians and onto Romania's capital, Bucharest, in time for lunch and then a guided tour to take in the magnificent architecture of one of Europe's most enchanting cities. Informal meeting with Austrade officials and a chance for a 'debrief' of the Eastern European agriculture our study tour has explored. Farewell dinner this evening.	Bucharest
Day 21 - (B)	Free time for last minute souvenir shopping before catching our flight to Asia and home. Option to extend your stay in Bucharest or fly onto Vienna (Austria) or maybe Turkey (tour to Gallipoli) or other European or Asian destinations. We can make sure any options – before or after the main tour – mesh in well with this itinerary.	On plane