



THE BEAUTY OF UKRAINE GOES UP FOR CHARITY

This past March my travels took me to Ukraine for two special events that opened my eyes to the enchanting beauty of the people, culture and passion of historical Kiev.

I was invited to work as a television presenter for the Miss Ukraine beauty pageant in the capital of Kiev, the birthplace of antique Russia. I arrived early for preparations and press events before the big show on March 31, settling into the newly-opened luxurious Fairmont Grand Hotel, which is nothing short of opulent. There I was constantly met with the almost supernatural beauty of the pageant contestants and of the Ukrainian women in general.

My hosting duties at Miss Ukraine were alongside a witty group of famous Russian comedians ProjektorPerisHilton. The show was so much fun to participate in, and it was an honor to be a part of such a major event. Notable guests of the spectacular contest were model Bar Refaeli and rapper Akon. Streamed on the main national channel Inter, Miss Ukraine was a great success with so much entertainment, beauty and sparkle for an amazing cause.

I was surrounded by exquisite physical beauty throughout my stay in Kiev, but what impressed me the most was beyond appearances. The kindheartedness of the people on the streets—from the taxi driver to the last-minute impromptu makeup artist—everyone is nice and ready to go the extra mile for someone, never accepting any money in return. The people of Kiev warm up the city's chilly gray weather.

This generosity and will to aid is also embodied in two of the most famous boxers and Ukrainians in the world: the world heavyweight champion brothers Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko. On March 29 they hosted a fundraising gala for their charity, Klitschko Brothers Foundation, which

raised \$1.7 million for the reconstruction of sports facilities and educational camps for orphans.

Many Ukrainian entrepreneurs and personalities attended the gala, including former president Leonid Kuchma, footballer Andriy Shevchenko and top model Snejana Onopka. Guests enjoyed an amazing show by the illusionist Voronin, a lovely ballet danced by the young Ksenia Zhiganshina and music by Eurovision singer Gaetana.

For me the highlight of the well-attended event was something unexpected. The Olympic medal won by Wladimir Klitschko in 1996, presented as a lot in the charity auction, was bought by an unknown bidder for \$1 million and subsequently returned to Klitschko as a sign of respect and honor.

With that, the absolute star of the evening was philanthropist Alexander Onishchenko, who is rumored to be one of the buyers of Klitschko's medal. Whether the rumors are fact or fiction, his organization TOP Ukraine helps to develop sports, art, culture and fashion in the country, promoting Ukraine all over the world. The organization also helmed the Miss Ukraine contest.

My trip to Kiev was filled with beauty and goodwill, and I hope to pass along those same sentiments back in New York City.

Love,
Xenia

