

Ukraine a hidden gem for enthusiasts

Sunday, February 25, 2007 - By Diarmaid Condon

As Europe's largest country and home to its largest mountain range, Ukraine is an obvious candidate for some ski-related traffic over the coming years. Three of the best known resorts in the country are Bukovel, Drahobrat and Slavsk.

Bukovel is a new, large ski resort in Ivano-Frankivsk, 30 kilometres to the west of Yaremcha.

It is the only European-level ski resort in Ukraine and has recently announced a significant expansion, courtesy of land donated by the Ukrainian government.

The resort hopes to bid for the 2018 Winter Olympics, and by 2009 it plans to have 278 kilometres of runs and 35 lifts, making it one of the twenty largest ski resorts in the world. Its base is at 900 metres with its highest lift at 1,370 metres.

Drahobrat in the Carpathians is Ukraine's highest ski resort, with a base elevation of 1,300 metres, and has the longest season in the country.

Poor weather can, however, keep you off the slopes for considerable amounts of time.

Slavsk is considered to be the gateway to the Carpathians, which end near the historic city of Lviv, the closest airport and rail link 120 kilometres away. Anyone wishing to fly there will need to fly through Kiev and on to Lviv.

Remarkably for a country that likes skiing so much, Ukraine has not to date provided accommodation typical of ski resorts in other locations.

Up to this time, hotels and private chalets have been the norm, but apartment development is now starting and is likely to pick up pace very quickly.

One of the earliest projects to come to the market is the Eagle Valley Mountain Resort in Slavsk, a community of 74 apartments with a luxury leisure and spa centre 350 metres from the ski lift.

There are wonderful views and the community is leasing the opposite side of the valley from the government for 49 years, turning the area in to a private park and picnic area.

There are a wide range of apartments, from studios up to 200 square metre four-bed penthouses, all with balconies.

The leisure centre and restaurant also have large south-facing terraces.

The development will feature a good-sized swimming pool, a large Ukrainian-style sauna, a fully equipped gymnasium, therapy rooms and a jacuzzi. Apartment owners and their guests will have free use of the facilities.