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**NOTE TO READERS :** Since not all of you may be familiar with flipping through the pages of an Electronic Book like this one, you may want to have a look first at [Navigating through this E-Book](#) for a few explanations.

**"MEN OF THE WEST, WOMEN FROM THE EAST"**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Since time immemorial, men and women have sought out each other in order to establish mutual relationships of various kinds, from brief sexual encounters to life-long commitments.

The Internet has introduced a totally new mode for these eternal human endeavors, i.e. 'virtual' meeting and dating, initially involving Western men seeking women from their same cities/countries, but subsequently expanding across international borders, and a significant part now involves women from the various states of the former Soviet Union (**FSU**), the **East** referred to in the title of this Electronic Book.

This book summarizes the experiences and opinions accumulated over the years by the members of **Russian Women Discussion (RWD)**, an Internet Forum devoted specifically to this particular subject:



Our book differs from others available on the same subject in that:

- It is based on the true stories, both the good and the bad, reported by dozens of RWD members of their real-life, on-the-ground experiences - dating from several years ago up to April 2009
- It paints neither a rosy nor a black picture - we use colors as close to reality as permitted by our experiences, perceptions and common sense
- RWD has no hidden agenda - we wish neither to promote, nor discourage, relationships with FSU women, and derive no revenues from this book other than its cover price

We hope that our direct experiences and opinions may benefit those of you Readers who intend to follow the same path, full of surprises, potential joys, and possible grief for the unwary.

For reasons of convenience and brevity, this book contains, at the end of each Chapter, a list of references (*links*) to those RWD Forum threads that are particularly relevant to the topic(s) being discussed and which were, in most cases, the sources for our conclusions - you can read them in total freedom simply by clicking them when connected to the Internet (see [Russian Women Discussion - RWD](#) in the Appendix for more details).

Also in the Appendix is another source of relevant data, the [Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) conducted by RWD in late 2008.

Our conclusions and advice obviously imply some unavoidable generalizations, and you should always be aware of their inherent limitations - this is **NOT** 'A *Shopping Guide to the FSU Mail-Order-Bride Supermarket*' 🙄.

Along with descriptions and explanations of the various aspects of this venture, we also try to offer you some sensible suggestions on each topic. We are equally well aware that for any single piece of advice - however based on experience and/or common sense - there are a multitude of possible exceptions to the rule that may work equally well, though usually under exceptional circumstances. No rule fits all.

Our aim is to make you aware of what favorable - or unfavorable - odds you may be facing while following a particular course of action or line of thought in this endeavor, and to this end we interspersed the book text with some colored signal flags as *stop-pause-go* suggestion markers:



(Danger - Warning - OK)

We are also including a few historical, geographical, psychological and socio-economical considerations concerning the FSU and its population - doing our best NOT to be too tedious, and also injecting some occasional humor 😊.

**The ultimate decision on the best course to follow should be based on your own independent and, we hope, well-pondered and carefully considered judgment.**

Start with Chapter 1, have a good read, and good luck in your pursuit of a suitable EW!



Your RWD Editor,  
and the [RWD Editorial Panel](#)



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## CHAPTER 1 - WHY?

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*Why are men and women from such different parts of the world seeking, meeting and even marrying each other?*

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Basically, this is the result of the different social, cultural and economical developments that came to pass in Western countries and in the former Soviet Union (**FSU**) nations in the past century.

### Western Men

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Starting in the early 1960s, Western societies underwent profound changes as a result of at least two movements: the Sexual Revolution and Feminism.

The Feminist movement justly clamored for more equality between the sexes, and gradually obtained a fairer treatment. As often happens in history, when a movement is eventually successful and most of its demands have been accepted, it may start pushing for yet more successes and become increasingly radical - and at times even ludicrous - in its demands.

Many Western men (**WM**), particularly those in the USA, have been negatively impacted by the radical side of the feminist movement, and blame Western women for becoming less and less women, and increasingly masculine like the men they want to avoid. Subconscious comparisons with women of previous generations make them feel that Western women have taken on a different - and increasingly disagreeable - role in their inter-sexual relationships.

WM often complain about these perceived traits in Western women:

- Appearance:
  - Lack of taste in dress/make-up
  - Overweight bodies
- Attitude:
  - Excessive sense of entitlement
  - Lack of social graces
  - Aggressive sexuality
- Life goals/priorities:
  - Career before family

It can be summed up as an attitude of **selfishness** causing **disaffection** in WM.

Of course, not all Western women correspond to such a bleak description, and some WM may even use the above stereotypes as excuses to justify their lack of dating successes, at times the result of a chauvinistic male attitude no longer much tolerated nowadays.

However, rightly or wrongly, these stereotypes have taken widespread hold in WM's minds, and therefore it is not surprising that an increasing number of WM, hopefully not suffering from the same problems 😊, have been steadily turning their attention elsewhere when seeking a lifetime mate and companion. See also [Be Honest: Why Are You Looking for a Woman in the FSU?](#) in the Appendix.

Needless to say, no one is perfect and WM have their own shortcomings, too. But we shall explore this in more detail later.

## Eastern Women

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The Eastern European world has also undergone profound changes, as a result of a longer series of much more dramatic upheavals:

- 1917: Soviet Revolution
- 1930s: Stalin's purges
- 1941-45: World War II (some 10 million dead among the military, i.e. mostly men)
- 1985: Gorbachev's reform attempts
- 1991: Dissolution of the Soviet Union
- 1991-99: Yeltsin's chaotic management of the economy

For many years, particularly after Stalin's death, Communism had given Russian people an often hard life, coupled however with a strong sense of national pride and a measure of stability and security - free education and health care, jobs, cheap though often communal housing - the "*from-the-cradle-to-the-grave*" supervision of the Party.

The economic turmoil of the 1990s shattered all that, causing widespread existential and economic insecurity. Putin's regime has partially corrected this in Russia, thanks mostly to its raw-material resources, but current and former Russians have a long memory, and many look at their future with skepticism, adopting a general attitude of worrying only about today's needs - because "*Who knows what tomorrow may bring...*"

Eastern women (**EW**) often complain about these perceived traits in their male compatriots:

- Attitude:
  - Excessive sense of entitlement
  - Infidelity
  - Inclination towards heavy drinking, or worse intoxications
  - Domestic violence
- Life goals/priorities:
  - Caring more about themselves than their family
  - Little concern for the future

It can be summed up as an attitude of **selfishness** causing **insecurity** in EW, and a consequent aspiration to **stability**, both emotional and economic.

As in the case of WM's complaints, again these stereotypes obviously do not apply to **all** Eastern men - see [In Defense of Russian Men](#) in the Appendix.

However, an increasing number of EW have been steadily turning their attention elsewhere, when seeking a lifetime mate and companion - see in the Appendix:

- [Why EW May Want to Leave the FSU](#)
- [Why Would EW Look for WM Mates?](#)
- [Why Do EW Prefer WM?](#)

Needless to say, no one is perfect and EW have their own shortcomings, too. We shall explore this in more detail later.

## Conclusions

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Whether the complaints of WM and EW towards their local opposite sex are exaggerated, or they both fail to come to terms with their respective realities, is really irrelevant at this point of our discussion.

The fact remains that, for real or imagined reasons, both seem to be mutually attracted, and seek each other out, regardless of the obvious inconveniences and difficulties of international dating.

Now it's time to consider **WHOM** to look for in our next Chapter 2.



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**NOTE - For more on the topics of this Chapter, see the following RWD Forum threads:**

- The WM's perspective:
  - [Just another example of why I am no longer interested in AW ...](#)
  - [Be honest: Why are you looking for a woman in Russia and other countries of FSU](#)
  - [Do FSU women have stronger morals?](#)
- The EW's perspective:
  - [Ladies, why did you decide to search for a mate abroad?](#)
  - [Ladies, can you help us understand a "Traditional Woman"?](#)
  - [Why Are The Russian Girls Looking For A Husband Abroad?](#)
  - [What's in it for them?](#)
  - [Questions from a newbie - HELP!](#)



## CHAPTER 2 - WHOM?

### *How do WM select EW?*

The criteria usually employed by WM in their quest for EW, and the latter's differences based on age and consequent life-experiences.

### Western Men

Possibly because sight carries farther than hearing, most men's primary selection criteria are based on women's **looks**.

Apparently, looks strike a very sensitive ancestral chord in men, and the FSU offers some of the most beautiful women in the world of all types, from gorgeous blondes to stunning brunettes to ravishing redheads, as you can see from a few examples below, where their ages and their preferences for a WM partner's age are indicated.

#### Some EW Lookers



18 y.o. (seeks 20-45)



21 y.o. (seeks 30-45)



26 y.o. (seeks 25-50)



28 y.o. (seeks 30-60)



32 y.o. (seeks 30-54)



35 y.o. (seeks 40-50)



37 y.o. (seeks 45-55)



43 y.o. (seeks 45-60)

This may create the problem of the 'child in a toy/candy shop' syndrome - you'll be seeing some of these EW again in the following Chapters, as proof of the possible dangers inherent in becoming fixated on looks alone - always remember that '*if it looks too good to be true*', it often is 😊.

## Eastern Women

Most scientist agree that our personalities are the result of the interaction of our genes and the environment in which we grow up. This is not a 50-50 combination and varies with each individual, but the effects of our family and society on our personal development are often decisive and apparent.

One of the first aspects to consider is that EW **are not** homogeneous in their general views and attitudes, despite the myths propagated by International Marriage Broker agencies (referred to as **IMBs** from now on, see their **definition** in Chapter 3), and may differ markedly based on age groups - they have experienced different stages of the FSU's historical, educational and social changes, and therefore have formed a different basic mentality. The following table is a gross generalization, but may serve as a rough indicator of some basic differences.

Age Group	Leadership	Period
35+ y.o.	Soviet times (USSR)	1917-1985
30-35 y.o.	Gorbachev (USSR)	1985-1991
25-30 y.o.	Yeltsin (CIS)	1991-1999
18-25 y.o.	Putin/Medvedev (Russia)	1999-present day

Obviously, early influences can be reduced and even replaced by others from later life experiences. However, depending on the individual EW, traces may still be discernible to a greater or lesser extent, and help explain some EW's traits and attitudes.

### **The Soviet Era**

World War II - the Great Patriotic War, as they call it there - left for a long time a legacy of an unbalanced gender ratio in the FSU population, with much fewer men than women due to war casualties.

Although this unbalance was mostly redressed in the more recent years, it may have left some lingering cultural effects in the **EW's family education and influence**, such as a rush to get married at an early age (late teens to early twenties, and being considered spinsters if not 'settled' by 30), producing equally early divorces - comparatively easy to obtain - often with children to be raised by a single parent, the FSU divorce laws



Joseph Stalin

being more 'lenient' towards men than in the West.

The total dependence on the Communist Party for almost all life-affecting acts generated two attitudes:

- Trust only in the circle of immediate family and close friends
- Reliance on *connections* and *gifts* to circumvent bureaucratic obstacles



The hammer & sickle

### ***Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's Years***

This period saw the gradual dissolution of the Soviet Union and its ruling Communist Party - with any knowledge of both obtained by the EW of this age group (25-35 y.o.) mostly through hearsay from parents/older relatives rather than direct experience - and an opening to the West and market economy (Gorbachev introduced *Perestroika* in 1986 and *Glasnost* in 1988, first free elections in 1989), managed however in a chaotic fashion under Yeltsin with disastrous results in his attempts to introduce Western-style capitalism, particularly for the then slowly-emerging middle class.



Mikhail Gorbachev

To quote what an RWD member recollects hearing from his local EW guide in 2001 about those times:

*"Before there was only one type of bread in the store, you had to stand in line for 2 hours to get it, but everyone got their bread.*

*Afterwards, there were 20 different types of bread in the store, and there were no lines because nobody could afford it."*



Boris Yeltsin

Many banks where people had deposited their life savings, attracted by generous interest rates, defaulted ruining their depositors (except for the wealthy *oligarchs* and mafia bosses) and engendering in many a subsequent tendency to:

- Alternatively:
  - Put any savings under the mattress, preferably in foreign currencies like \$ and €
  - Spend extra money whenever available, rather than saving it, or, if affordable, invest it in more 'tangible' and secure assets like gold and real estate, or durable items like quality furniture and clothing
- Mistrust credit institutions, credit cards, etc.

In EW from the previous age group (35+), this has often also fostered some heavy doubts about the Western approach to economy - and about democracy, too - to the point of nostalgia for the quieter, albeit more somber, Soviet times, particularly

in those EW engaged in party-protected/sponsored fields of activity such as science, sports, arts, etc.

### ***Putin's Years***

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These have influenced only the younger generations of EW, who are mostly still studying and not overly concerned with getting married - particularly to foreign men - regardless of whether they reside in Russia or in other FSU states.

Thanks to its revenues from energy exports, the economic situation of Russia steadily improved, and money again flowed down slowly to middle-class levels, along with inflation: Moscow is considered one of the most expensive cities in the world.



Vladimir Putin

Real affluence is mostly limited to a small circle of Russian men, who use it to enjoy an opulent lifestyle often involving a fast rotation of young, attractive EW.

Putin's autocratic policies were seen as more in keeping with Russian traditions going all the way back to the Tsars, restoring a shaken national pride and returning Russia to a deserved level of international prestige and power.

This also means that Russian EW from the previous age groups (30+ y.o.) may have recently felt less insecure about their life conditions than was previously the case.

A different picture is presented by those FSU states not engaged in lucrative energy exports like Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, etc. The situation in Ukraine is further complicated by the inhabitants of its Eastern part considering themselves more Russian than Ukrainian.

### ***Medvedev's Year***

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Dmitry Medvedev won the presidential election held in March, 2008 with about 70% of the vote, his candidacy supported by his predecessor Vladimir Putin. Most political analysts consider this Putin's *protegé* - and former Chairman of the giant *Gazprom* energy conglomerate - an expedient transitory solution until the *Duma* (Russian Parliament) approves a constitutional reform that will allow Putin to become Russia's President again after Medvedev's term in office is over.



Dmitry Medvedev

Understandably, Medvedev has not done much to change Putin's previous policies.

However, a factor that will have influence on his time as Russia's President - and the EW living in it - is the **recent**

**economic crisis** that started in the USA in September 2008 and is now affecting FSU countries, too - possibly producing a partial return to the previous climate of insecurity.

Not all face this crisis in gloom and doom, however - see [Tips on How to Punch Out the Crisis](#) in the Appendix 😊.

## Are You Really up to the Challenge?

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An obvious but important point that must be mentioned is that EW are first and foremost **women**, therefore they cannot and should not be considered a heaven-sent opportunity for socially inept WM with dating difficulties in their own home environments.

Gone are the days - if they ever existed at all - when waving a Western passport and a wad of Western currency could get you the attention - and affection - of a young, sexy EW to be rescued from her pitiful living conditions by a Knight in apparently shining armor, as many IMBs still proclaim to this day.

Therefore, before you embark on this quest, you should perform a thorough self-analysis, and ask yourself if you possess the minimum personal, emotional, and financial resources to be successful - courting an EW is in many ways the same as courting a woman in your own country with the added complications and costs of long distance and a very different cultural background.

If you suffer from psychological or physical problems, probably you had best direct your attention elsewhere 😊.

## Conclusions

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WM seeking an attractive EW partner still have a large pool of good candidates to choose from, although not in the same numbers as were available until 5-10 years ago due to a slowly improving FSU economy. EW still seek a level of security not yet universally available in their home countries, a partner to lead their family responsibly and to treat them with the respect they deserve **as women**.

In other words, the once 'abundant' supply of EW interested in uprooting themselves, and in some cases their children, too, seems to be slowly but gradually dwindling.

Therefore, nowadays it may take a higher-quality WM than before - in terms of social skills, status and capability to adequately support a family - to successfully convince an EW to take the momentous step of leaving her country, family, friends and career for a new and hopefully happier life elsewhere.

In our next Chapter 3, we shall examine **HOW** to contact EW.



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**NOTE - For more on the topics of this Chapter, see the following RWD Forum threads:**

- IMBs:
  - [Hello all -- can agencies deliver a true 'stunner?'](#)
- Changes in the FSU:
  - [Wind of Change...](#)
  - [That was then, this is now](#)
  - [Materialism](#)

## CHAPTER 3 - HOW?

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### *How can WM contact EW?*

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How does one go about dating? Usually by tapping different 'reservoirs', sequentially or simultaneously depending on one's age and circumstances, such as:

1. Play mates (no allusions to *Playboy* intended here 😊)
2. Neighbors
3. School mates
4. Work mates
5. Clubs/associations/events
6. Friends/acquaintances of friends/acquaintances
7. Chance encounters
8. Ads in newspapers/magazines
9. Dating/marriage agencies

Most of the above are not available in the case of international dating, except for the last item, the contemporary equivalent of the traditional marriage agencies and paper-based photo catalogs of old: **Internet** has made available a potentially world-wide reservoir, which can be both:

- An advantage, in terms of available numbers and therefore statistical chances of success
- A disadvantage, in terms of differences in culture/mentality/language, associated costs, difficult direct contact, etc.

A few of our successfully married members were lucky enough to stumble inadvertently upon items 6 and 7 above, i.e. they met their now spouses almost by chance while on business trips or vacations, others through introductions by mutual friends/acquaintances, and were thus able **to both see and at the same time communicate face-to-face immediately** with their future partners-to-be. In some cases it was 'love at first sight', in most others it was the possibility of getting a reasonably accurate 'feeling' for them that justified further pursuit.

A similar opportunity may present itself to people working in such fields as education and the military, who can participate occasionally in exchange programs that involve FSU countries. If you fall into this category, **do** take advantage of the situation, you will also incur into much lower expenses compared to going there on your own as a visitor or a tourist.

Incidentally, if you happen to be visiting the FSU for whatever reason, item 5 above could become a real possibility - i.e. you could take that opportunity to meet those many EW who have a propensity for culture and related events (see [Visiting the FSU](#) in the Appendix).

relying on **International Marriage Brokers (IMBs)** - to use for convenience a term defined in the US **IMBRA** legislation (for which see **Chapter 4**). The results of **RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey** in the Appendix show that about 60% of the EW who married WM used this type of resource.



From the  
IMBRA US Federal  
statute:

"**International Marriage Broker:** any corporation, individual, or legal entity, whether or not existing under the laws of the US, who charges fees for providing dating, matrimonial, matchmaking or social referrals or is otherwise facilitating communication between individuals."

Although we shall lump them all together - free sites included - in our following discussions for reasons of brevity, there is a subtle distinction between the various categories undescored in the above definition, as far as contacts between WM and EW are concerned.

Basically, they fall under two types:

- Dating agencies - they put WM and EW in contact with each other, with no concern for the results of such contacts
- Marriage agencies - they tend to prolong initial contacts to continued correspondence, gifts, trips, etc.

This has definite consequences on their respective *modus operandi*.

## International Marriage Broker Agencies and Websites

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Most international, as well as local, dating/marriage agencies are not philanthropic societies but **business ventures**: they will help you contact whomever strikes your fancy for a **monetary consideration**, and in many cases **client service** and **client satisfaction** do not occupy top places in their business model, regardless of their oft-repeated assurances to the contrary - if these assurances are expressed at all.

There are more than **500** IMB websites, totalling over **1.5 million** EW profiles. It's not a cottage industry by any standard and, unfortunately as it often happens where money is involved, it is an **industry** where all sorts of types may be encountered, both shiny and shady. Always bear in mind that any business activity costs money to maintain, and in some way it must therefore generate revenue - and preferably profits - to survive.





The basic problem is how and where to address your inquiries with a moderate certainty of receiving **fair service for a fair fee**. While it is not the purpose of this book to provide a list of reliable IMBs, nevertheless we can offer a few **general guidelines** resulting from prolonged experience and basic common sense.

IMB websites operate in various ways, but with most:

- WM and EW can join for free on a basic membership scheme, and publish their profile, photo(s) and mate preferences
- Various named 'feelers' - winks, teases, etc. - may be sent to test agreeability to further contact
- Correspondence can be exchanged (WM often can read a first EW's letter for free, but thereafter either a higher type of membership, a pay-per-period subscription or a pay-per-letter fee is required)
- Newsletters are sent periodically for free to subscribers, listing newly joined members

Many also provide a text-based or video chat service, usually for a fee.

Totally free IMB websites also exist, usually relying on advertisements for their revenue, but the EW represented there may be of VERY mixed type (and **scammers** often abound, a category on which more **below**). They should be used with EXTREME caution and discrimination, if at all. However, "*a gem can be found even among the dirt*" too, as the saying goes.

In our opinion, you had best avoid IMBs where:

- Profiles offer scant/insufficient information, such as:
  - No indication of a screening/identity confirmation process before acceptance of registration
  - No indication of or vagueness about EW marital status/children/known foreign languages/occupation, etc.
  - Age rather than birth date (EW never age there, despite passing time)
- Too many EW profiles (say, 50,000+) are mentioned as a distinct advantage - these mega IMB sites often collect profiles from smaller, local 'feeder' agencies, and therefore cannot have any effective screening control in place
- EW are touted exaggeratedly, e.g. as romantic wife material with ideal virtues, totally dissimilar in fundamental values from their Western sisters, etc. - which is mostly IMB self-serving **hype**
- Communications are received from EW not meeting WM's profile-stated

preferences - a possible sign of IMB **automated** letter-writing

In general, **the more information, the better**, as is always the case when 'buying' anything, MOBs included 😊.

Many IMBs also offer guided **tours** to the FSU cities they operate in, and stage **socials** at local restaurants/clubs where participating WM will meet a number of EW who, in most cases, are just interested in a free night out rather than in meeting, marrying and relocating to a different country with a WM 😊 (see **Prodaters further down**).

Our consensus is: if you must use an IMB, let it be a **reputable** and therefore trustworthy one, preferably where **direct contact information** such as e-mail/postal addresses and phone numbers **may be obtained for a reasonable fee** (i.e. most dating agencies), thereby freeing yourself of the interested middleman (i.e. most marriage agencies) once you have discovered a promising candidate.

RWD has a sub-board devoted specifically to the discussion of this topic.

See [Scammers and Suspect Agencies](#)

Choose your IMB *reservoir(s)* with care - although even a dubious one may turn out to be fruitful eventually, because:



There are bad EW in good IMB websites, as well as good EW in bad IMB websites



## Western Men

The term **mail-order bride** (MOB) was coined in the 1800s, when men fared afar in search of better life opportunities, and eventually their need for a companion - preferably from their original countries - resulted in a wife being shipped over, with advance information often consisting at best in a blurred monochrome, sepia-tinted photograph supporting the recommendations of distant relatives and matchmakers.



Mail-order bride from the 1800s

Needless to say, the term is strongly resented as offensive by EW embarking on this enterprise - often these women face the disapproval of friends and relations for simply putting themselves on display on a local dating/marriage site or a newspaper, and the

international variant may be further frowned upon as unpatriotic, disloyal, etc., so don't make the mistake of using it when referring to them.

As we have noted above, nowadays the alternative available to most for finding a MOB-candidate EW is using the services of IMBs, which can be done in either or both of two ways, usually for free:

1. Navigating their websites - and using their search engines, where available - to examine and select profiles of possibly interesting EW
2. Posting your own profile on one or more of their websites, to let EW examine and perhaps select **your** profile as possibly interesting

### **Selecting EW's Profiles**

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Some points to consider while examining EW's profiles on IMB websites.

#### **EW's Photos**

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We have already remarked how EW's **looks** may be one of the primary selection criteria for WM which means, at this initial stage, the **photos** that EW attach to their IMB profiles. In general, it is advisable to bypass altogether profiles with:

- Photos showing EW in **scant/revealing clothing** - EW, particularly if over 30, are usually modest about revealing themselves to total strangers - remember, it's the Internet, who knows who may be lurking there and why?



*Smokinghotkova in Red*

Professional-looking photos, obviously taken in a studio with judicious lighting, fancy backdrops and careful make-up/attire, may have been taken:

- At the IMB premises or at their urging, for free or for a fee
- At the EW's initiative, at a cost that not many can easily afford

These photos deserve same thoughtful consideration, since they may imply a self-marketing attitude, albeit not necessarily dishonest. Ask yourself: "*Does she seem to be trying TOO hard?*" Also, if this type of photos has required a substantial investment, some EW may tend to use and re-use them for as long as it takes to finally attract a desired suitor - which may even mean years - and thus show a

likeness that has actually changed in the meantime - as in the case of the 43 year-old EW at right.

In any case, profiles showing **natural** photos, even if poorly made and not totally flattering, preferably portraying EW in different situations/locations, usually deserve more trust as better revealing an EW's true nature, personality and life circumstances than professional-studio glamour shots. Most RWD members who have gone on to meet EW in person, have reported that in cases where candid, natural profile photos were used, the women were far more attractive in real life than their photos initially suggested, while the opposite was often true for those who were using studio shots.



Is this really a 43 y.o. EW?  
She admitted that the photo had been taken a few years earlier.

Last but not least, it pays to make sure that those profile photos **really** belong to the EW in question, for instance by asking for additional photos in subsequent correspondence or, better yet, by arranging a video-chat session.

Many FSU flower-delivery services offer the extra option of taking photos of an EW receiving your gift of flowers - remember, flowers should always be given in an **odd** number, even numbers are for funerals 😊 - so this can also be a way to check what your EW looks like in a usually unexpected situation. Some IMBs also offer this service, but may be less trustworthy and/or their EW may have been forewarned of the impending delivery. Also be aware that EW who have been searching for an extended period of time are probably well aware of why the flower-deliverer insists to take her picture, and may even take offence when it occurs.

And if those photos are indeed hers, by all means **don't** fall in love with her photos **yet**, you may not realize what is really behind that pretty face - or other attractive body parts 😊.

### EW's Age

Apart from looks, possibly the second major criteria that WM usually apply when selecting an EW is her age, which brings us to the hotly debated and as-yet-unresolved issue of **age differences** or **age gaps**.

Many IMBs blithely assert that EW accept, and even deliberately seek, **substantial** age differences in their foreign mates because they trust mature men more than less-experienced youths, perpetrating the myth of the old man happily marrying a much

younger girl depicted in a famous Russian painting from almost 150 years ago.

Some married RWD members are as much as 30-40 older than their EW spouses, so no rule fits all. However, in cases like these, careful consideration should be given by both members of the couple to the statistical probability of the EW remaining alone at a certain future age, and to preparing for the consequences of such an event.

Also remember that with a visibly significant age gap, you should always be prepared for possible awkward moments and embarrassing remarks by friends, relatives, associates or chance encounters - "*Your daughter looks really nice in that outfit!*". The joy of having a much younger woman hanging from your arm may be soured by how she is initially perceived, or by the unexpected appearance of a queue of envious male 'admirers' 😏.



Vasily Pukirev's *The Unequal Marriage* (1862)



Is there an *ideal* age difference? A formula has even been proposed to calculate it:

$$\text{Woman's Age} = (\text{Man's Age}/2) + 7 \text{ years}$$

which means, for instance, that a 30 y.o. man should seek a 22 y.o. woman.

Another approach considers the **percentual** age difference more significant than that expressed by an absolute number - a 10 year difference between a 30 y.o. man and a 20 y.o. girl (+50% of her age for the girl, -33% of his age for the man) is clearly not the same thing as between a 50 y.o. man and a 40 y.o. woman (+25% for the woman, -20% for the man).

The results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that a 9-year age difference is often observed in WM-EW marriages.

We cannot really offer any conclusive advice in this connection, save for suggesting that you should have discussed all possible implications and be **both** comfortable with whatever combination you find yourselves in.

### EW's Children

Many EW with profiles on IMB websites have one or more children, whom they may have raised on their own after a divorce or having been abandoned by/having left a former mate - the results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that half of the EW who married a WM had had a previous local

marriage, and a third of them had children from a previous local marriage.

Remember that EW are usually fiercely possessive and defensive of their progeny, and often will place their interests above all else, so be prepared to receive less attention from them than in the case of a still-childless EW.

However, this is often counterbalanced by their delight when discovering that a WM can be genuinely fond of and warm to her children from a previous relationship, contrary to the general attitude of her male compatriots, who often do not consider their personal problem/responsibility any children not of their own.

### EW's Occupation

An important but often underestimated factor that may influence your selection is your candidate EW's current occupation or profession. You should find out, before she arrives in your country, if:

- She has a career that she intends to continue pursuing
- Re-qualifying for her current profession is a realistic proposition
- She is interested in changing to a different profession

You must remember that FSU school diplomas and academic titles are not automatically recognized in most Western countries, and may require a long period of re-schooling and exams - in her occupational field as well as in language proficiency - before she is allowed to operate again as she did in her home country.

The results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that about 70% of the EW who married a WM possessed a university-level education

In general, the higher her professional title, the more demanding the requirements for requalifying - the practice of law and medicine are typical examples of this problem.

### EW's Religion

When going through EW's profiles, you will notice that if 'Religion' is among their biographical data, their answer will usually be **Christian**, meaning **Orthodox Christian**. You should remember that for more than 30 years during Soviet times, religion was discouraged, discriminated against and even persecuted. However, during the worst years of WWII, Stalin saw it as a useful tool to bolster country unity in the face of the successful German



Orthodox liturgy - worshippers stand up for its whole 3-hour duration (no pews/seats available)

advances, and relented the official atheist stance somewhat - even seeking the support of Moscow's Patriarch - only to resume the previous official attitude after WWII was victoriously finished. Whatever places of cult were still left open to religious practice, their attendance consisted mostly of ***babushkas*** (grandmothers, i.e. old Russian women) still clinging to habits from pre-Revolutionary times.

The Orthodox religion has shown a marked resurgence in the past 20 years or so - its churches and cathedrals have been restored throughout the FSU, and enjoy increasing popular attendance. To cite just one example, Moscow's *Cathedral of Christ the Savior* - a temple dedicated to Russia's 1812 victory over Napoleon, built over a period of 40 years (1839-1883) and blown up at Stalin's orders in 1931 - was rebuilt from rubble in 2000.



Destroyed, 1931



Reconstructed, 2000

Considering the long gap in FSU religious worship, you cannot expect most EW to be as profoundly devout as the members of certain Western Christian sects - they may be surprised at your attending religious services regularly.

### One or Many?

Another hotly debated and as-yet-unresolved issue is whether one should concentrate on one EW only or more, i.e. whether the approach should be '**Write One, Visit One**' or '**Write Many, Visit Many**' (WOVO vs. WMVM for short), both having advantages and disadvantages:

- WOVO
  - Advantages:
    - Having more 'face' time together to get to know each other
  - Disadvantages:
    - If your eventual meeting goes sour for whatever reason/whomever's fault, having put all of your eggs in the wrong basket may leave you stranded alone in a foreign city, with no friends and in a seriously disappointed mood from having wasted your time and money
- WMVM
  - Advantages:
    - More EW to choose from, thereby 'spreading' the risk of possible rejections/failures

- Disadvantages:
  - More complicated logistics and time management
  - Having to decide whether to tell your candidates that they are not your **one and only** candidate - a matter of honesty that should be given careful thought, as well as a question of expediency - you might bump inadvertently into your Candidate #2 while strolling/dining/dancing with your Candidate #3 😊
  - Being eventually unable to decide which candidate should be worth a further pursuit - too many pretty eggs in your basket 😊

The choice of either method must really suit your personality: some are more comfortable with one than the other, and should follow their natural inclinations rather than look for a mythically foolproof rational solution - more on this in [Chapter 5](#).

### ***Interpreting EW's Profiles***

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Assuming you have followed a WM's standard operating procedure, i.e. your attention was captured by the photo(s) of an EW on some IMB website, your next natural step would be to read her other profile information beside the basic data on her age and children we mentioned above, to try and guess what is behind/beneath her attractive image, agreeable age and status.

Another very important item to consider is **her level of fluency in your own language** - unless you are fluent in Russian yourself - since good communications are **essential** to determine if an acceptable minimum of character compatibility exists between you two.

EW often tend to **overrate** their proficiency in a foreign language, but this should be apparent from her profile data, particularly from those free-text sections with titles like *Personal Description*, *Favorite Hobbies/Activities*, *Looking For*, etc. **unless** these were compiled by IMB staff rather than directly by the EW herself.

If she wrote her profile texts herself, be aware that you may come across some quaint/puzzling expressions that are due to her imperfect grasp of the language she is using - in most cases English, for which we have accumulated a number of examples and explanations in our [Russglish Glossary](#) in the Appendix.

### ***Posting Your Profile***

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If you decide to post your biographical data on IMB websites, you should, in your self-description:

- Use **simple** language and refrain from slang/colloquial expressions that may not be understood by your EW readers
- Be as honest, sincere and accurate as possible - so as not to engender unrealistic expectations
- Be reasonably concise - always better to state a bit less than more



- Specify clearly your selection criteria (social, moral, physical, etc.) and state anything that you may consider essential and/or unacceptable in those areas - apart from letting your character/personality be known, this also serves the purpose of culling the chaff from your respondents, and explain implicitly your possible lack of reaction to some of them
- Specify your main interests/hobbies - this may catch the attention of equally minded EW, as well as discourage incompatible ones
- Attach **recent** photos showing you in natural situations and surroundings - again, this may permit EW to get an idea of the who/what/where they might be letting themselves in for 😊
- Not flaunt your material possessions in your text or photos - besides appearing gross, this may also attract *treasure-hunters* 😞
- Possibly inject a minimum of tasteful humor - most EW usually appreciate it 😊

It may also be a good idea to present the narrative parts of your profile ALSO in Russian - preferably translated by a professional - to ensure that their basic message may be understood even by the less foreign-fluent EW.

Some RWD members have also been successful in their quest for an EW after placing an advertisement in an **FSU newspaper/magazine** - you should either know Russian to do this adequately, or enlist the assistance of some native Russian speaker, also to help you read and 'interpret' the replies you may receive.

You may also consider placing your profile on *social networks* such as **Facebook** and its Russian equivalent **Odnoklassniki** - although conceived initially for finding and contacting former schoolmates, they are fast becoming alternative venues to meet and socialize with people from all over the world.

## Eastern Women

If you posted your profile on an IMB website - or an ad in an FSU newspaper/magazine - chances are that **you** may be selected by an EW rather than the other way round, i.e. you may receive a 'feeler' or a letter inviting you to further communications.

Some RWD members met and were eventually happily married to EW who took the initiative of contacting them first.

If you did **not** post any profile but nevertheless receive **e-mails** directly in your Inbox, it may mean that your address was sold by some unscrupulous operator to some unscrupulous IMB engaged in mass-mailing, or acquired by some savvy EW, usually young, who monitors chat groups.

On this subject, the deductions from experience of an RWD member are worth reading in the Appendix:



[Introductory Letters from EW](#)

However, these enterprising EW and their IMBs should be considered carefully before replying enthusiastically, since this flattering technique is typically used by **scammers** and **dishonest IMBs**.

### ***Scammers and Other Perils***

*Scammers* are female con-artists who entice men to send them money using scarcely credible motivations - a famous example being the so-called *Nigerian* scammers, purporting to be the widows/daughters of a formerly important but deceased African personality with millions of \$ stashed away in some bank, a situation requiring the well-to-be-rewarded cooperation of a foreigner to free that deposit from its deplorable legal constrictions - this requiring however a small advance expenditure 😊.

RWD has a sub-board devoted specifically to the discussion of this topic.

See [Scammers and Suspect Agencies](#)

EW scammers are less 'ambitious' than their Nigerian sisters, and rely on the gullibility of those WM who will believe that a usually young and good-looking girl may fall desperately in love with them after the exchange of a few letters, which will justify her asking for some money in order to fly soonest to her dream man, get a visa, pay for correspondence translations or sudden medical emergencies befalling her or her dear mother - just to mention a few of the typical excuses offered to separate you from your money.

Over the years, RWD has developed a list of recommendations - based on experience and common sense - known as the [Ten Commandments](#) and included in the Appendix, the very first of which reads:



You will probably realize that most of the other Commandments have already been included in our previous Chapters, one way or the other 😊.

Experience and common sense were also the basis for our [Scammer Scorecard](#) in the Appendix, a tool that poses 29 questions about an EW's behavior and calculates the rough probability of her being a scammer. Rather than for its resulting numerical score, we suggest you to use it for its questions and hints, which will alert you to what you might not have noticed/thought of, and possibly raise some *red flags* about your candidate EW, i.e. circumstances which deserve further investigation/clarification.

A useful technique for checking whether an EW has already been reported as a scammer consists in using a search engine like Google, and feeding it some distinctive information about your EW, like:

- Her FULL name
- Her e-mail address
- Significant bits from her e-mails

Your search may turn up a number of links to **anti-scam** websites where she is listed along with her photos and letters. Use this information with a grain of salt, since there are cases of WM falsely accusing the EW who have rejected them of being a scammer.



28 y.o. (seeks 30-60)



32 y.o. (seeks 30-54)

You may remember the faces at right from Chapter 2: both these beautiful girls were reported as scammers, and the photos are probably not theirs either, but of some professional model - attractive bait for the unwary: for instance, can you seriously believe that a pretty 28 y.o. like the one at left would not have a long queue of young and not-so-young local suitors, and would be happy to settle down with a 60 y.o. WM 😊?

Furthermore, who is behind those pretty EW's photo and loving letters may not even be woman, but someone we 'affectionately' call **Fat Yuri**, i.e. a con-man who, after pocketing your money, will also have a great laugh at the gullibility of some WM.

Over the years, we have made a note of his many inventive business practices, and have included them in a definition in our RWD Glossary:



Fat Yuri & staff

## FAT YURI

DEFINITION: dubious owner/administrator of a dubious IMB site/agency, whose objective is to make a lot of money from his unsuspecting WM customers.

His activities include, but are not limited to, any of the following :

- Hiring help to write fake EW letters
- Writing fake EW letters himself, when no other help is available (his personnel-management policies encourage a high staff turnover - eagerly accepted due to his starvation salaries)
- Stealing women's profiles/photos from other sites - of any type, anywhere
- Arranging fake phone calls to/from EW, which are actually done by his staff/helpers - or himself, he can produce a very high-pitched voice if necessary
- Arranging encounters with gorgeous EW who never show up, due to unforeseen/unavoidable last-minute impediments
- Renting to foreign visitors apartments in Chernobyl-like environments, or elsewhere but with furniture acquired there at bargain prices - affording him to save on lighting fixtures, since it glows warmly in the dark
- Running a translation service staffed by illiterates
- Offering interpreters who know only enough English to tell you that YOUR English has too strong a regional accent for their comprehension
- Providing a limousine rental service based on a fleet of decrepit Zhigulis and Trabants - and farm tractors for 4-wheel drive, off-the-road enthusiasts
- Arranging social events where attending EW are either hookers or babushkas (best-case scenario), or possess both qualifications simultaneously (worst-case scenario)

All the above for a substantial fee, of course - how else could poor **Yuri** keep himself **Fat**? 😊

### Double Dealers

A particular category of scammers, or rather identity frauds, is represented by what we call **double dealers**: these are full-time or part-time FSU prostitutes who also keep profiles on IMB websites, posing as marriage material but under different names and with different biographical data 🇷🇺 🇷🇺.

You may remember also the face at right from Chapter 2: it actually belongs to Czech porn star Jana Cova, and is a favorite source of 'borrowed' photos for both prostitutes (using the more 'explicit' ones) and scammers (using the more modest but still alluring variants, like the one shown here).



26 y.o. (seeks 25-50)

Fortunately, this fraud is rather limited - we have discovered about 60 so far - nevertheless it is another possible 'peril' one should be aware of.

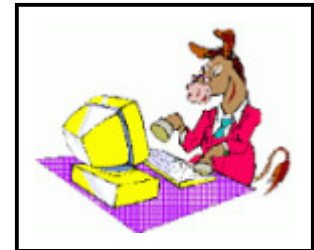
### Others

Just to put your mind at ease 😊, you should know that the zoology of EW scammers and frauds also includes some interesting *sub-species*:

- 🚩 **Pro-daters:** comparatively modest expectations - one free dinner may satisfy them, then on to the next willing WM, as in the case of agency socials
- 🚩🚩 **Gold Diggers:** women wanting to enjoy a temporarily much higher lifestyle by being entertained at expensive restaurants/night clubs/resorts/etc. - often expecting/requesting costly gifts in exchange for their not-totally enjoyable company
- 🚩🚩 **Green-Card Girls:** they will marry you, wait until they are granted their permanent residency/citizenship, then divorce you and leave/live happily ever after - thanks to a substantial part of your now ex-properties and assets

In order to prosper, these infesting *sub-species* need a willing host - known technically as a **mule**. Do not become one of these sad 'qua-dupeds' 😞.

It's rather typical of WM mules to whine about their sorry fate and play the innocent, trusting victim of mischievous EW beauties, while a minimum of early rational thought could have saved them a lot of later trouble. See a rejoinder to the complaints of two WM Green Card Girl victims in [Wake up, Delusional WM!](#) in the Appendix.



## From Theory to Practice - A Condensed Case History

Theoretical advice may become eventually boring and hard to remember in its details, so a recent true-life experience can perhaps bring home the same points more vividly.

The Appendix contains a condensed version of what one RWD member - whom we'll call John - did: read [John and Olga's Story](#).

## Conclusions

This is an area at times resembling a jungle, and should be trodden with caution and alertness. Watch out for possible scammers - after a little practice, they are easy enough to smell out.

Assuming you have survived the dangers of this jungle and selected one - or more - EW candidate(s), now is the time for you to start communications with 'the other side'.

In our next Chapter 4, we shall consider **WHAT** to say to your selected EW.



[Back to Chapter 2](#)



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**NOTE - For more on the topics of this Chapter, see the following RWD Forum threads:**

- Agency profiles:
  - [Ads, agencies or free websites?!?](#)
  - [Never thought I'd write one](#)
- EW's English:
  - [Funny things your RW/UW says](#)
- Age gaps:
  - [Huge age gaps myth debunked - A few points of view](#)
  - [Can age-gap relationships really work? - New article](#)
- EW's Religion:
  - [Religion and RW/UW](#)
- Scammers:
  - [Scammers and Suspect Agencies](#)
  - [Scam agency or just dishonest practice](#)
  - [Double Dealers](#)
- [RWD Glossary](#)

## CHAPTER 4 - WHAT?

### *Communicating with your selected EW*

Now that you have at least one possible EW candidate in sight, the time is ripe to verify if she may share your interest in a mutual acquaintance, and maybe more.

We have already stressed that good communication is essential to form an opinion on someone's qualities, goals and personality, which is in turn an essential step in deciding whether a mutually satisfying relationship may follow.

If you have your profile on her IMB website and the latter offers 'feelers', use them to check if your EW is agreeable to further communications. If she is, or if no means of 'testing the waters' beforehand are available, sooner or later you'll have to write her **your first letter**



WM who are **US citizens** should be aware of the existence of **IMBRA** (the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act approved in 2005), a US Federal Statute approved in 2005 that has a number of important effects on the approval of petitions for US visas - see [IMBRA](#) in the Appendix.

## General Guidelines

RWD developed recently a **Men's Code of Conduct** aimed at offering suggestions of appropriate behavior to WM approaching and courting EW.

See RWD's [Men's Code of Conduct](#)

Many of its guidelines are also offered in what follows.

RWD also has a [thread](#) devoted to further discussion of this topic.

## Your First Letter

Both your and her profile should provide a decent source of inspiration for your first letter:



- Your profile: be consistent with what you have stated there
- Her profile: use her statements as a guide to the points you should make and the subjects you should cover

Your first letter should be brief and not too long - typically a third to a half page is enough - and state concisely:

- Why you are interested in communicating with her - preferably without declarations of attraction/love that you may later regret, in case she should turn out NOT to be as you hoped/expected 😊

- What aspect(s) of her personality you find interesting
- What aspect(s) of your personality she might find interesting
- What you may have in common

The impressions you should convey that relate to traits that most EW appreciate are:

- **Decisiveness:** state what you want/need - and what you don't - in unequivocal terms
- **Openness/honesty:** add any significant information that you may not have included in your IMB profile for whatever reason
- **Clarity:** always consider her level of fluency in the - to her - **foreign** language you are using, and try to keep your sentences within her capabilities of comprehension, avoiding slang terms or colloquial/idiomatic expressions she may not understand or, worse yet, misunderstand. Also remember that misspellings and faulty grammar make your message hard - or even impossible - to read by someone with limited familiarity with your language.
- **Levity:** if her profile indicates a propensity for humor, a lighthearted tone and some gentle self-irony might not be amiss

You should also take the opportunity to ask her **one or two** questions on any important points not clear in or omitted from her profile - without however sounding like a detective interviewing a crime suspect 😏.

## Her First Letter

Regardless of whether the first contact was initiated by your or her, her first letter is often the most significant piece in your mutual communications puzzle. She may:



- Not reply: consider if she warrants a second attempt with a better-written letter (she could have been unimpressed by your first attempt) or if her silence should be interpreted as her lack of interest.
- Reply vaguely: consider if she may be simply shy/reserved/cautious, or only mildly interested but wishing to keep you 'on the back burner' for possible use later on
- Reply positively and give you the 'green light' to proceed 🟢

Apart from confirming her language fluency or not - if she wrote it herself - the general **tone** of her first letter may give you helpful insights into her major personality aspects - reserved vs. outgoing, thoughtful vs. carefree, broody vs. cheerful, etc. - which, depending on your own personal preferences, may by themselves mean whether she is someone with whom you wish to consider having further correspondence.



Her replies, or lack of them, to your questions are also significant in more ways than one - as you may have noticed in our [Scammer Scorecard](#) in the Appendix, scammers seldom bother to answer questions since they generally use pre-written letters where only the addressee's name/address needs to be changed.

In this connection, it is also worth noting that EW's first letters may be a sign of an IMB's mass-mailing campaign, all the worse if WM are required to pay in order to read them, as related by the experience of an RWD member in his post on [Introductory Letters from EW](#) in the Appendix.

## Moving On to More Direct Communications

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Assuming your initial exchange of letters was mutually satisfactory, and that you followed our advice of joining an IMB where direct contact information can be obtained - although there are ways to circumvent the obstacles posed by other IMBs 😊 - it is now the time to obtain such information and move your communications to a more direct level.

### Phone Calls

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Beside what is explicitly said, a voice conversation carries a wealth of additional information about the personality and mood of the speaker - tone, pauses, laughs, etc. are often emotionally more revealing than actual words. It is generally agreed that EW have a captivatingly **cute accent**, particularly when speaking English - due to their rolled Rs and 'dark' Os.



Before your first call, you should ask what days and times may be convenient to your EW - this will also provide you with clues on her daily habits, schedule, etc.



Most EW possess a cell/mobile phone, although not all may have a home phone depending on their residential location and local telecommunications companies. Cell phones have the additional advantage of sending/receiving **SMSs** for shorter, more informal messages - try not to be too cryptic with your abbreviated words, you can easily run into miscommunications due to language differences.

Many alternatives are available for cheap phone calls to/from FSU countries - names of providers like Skype come to mind. You should check what alternatives are available at your EW's location, and work out the most favorable plan for her.

### Chats

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Chats are another alternative for maintaining contact, but require a

computer or other Internet device which could be:

- At your EW's home - not many have it, although a PC is on most EW's wish list to spend extra money on
- At your EW's workplace - availability depends on her job/boss 😊
- At an Internet Café - availability and **costs** depend on her location



As was the case for voice in phone calls, **video** chats - such as those available with MS Instant Messenger, Yahoo, ICQ, etc. - provide another valuable source of information: **body language**, the messages emitted subconsciously through her facial expressions, posture, movements, etc. (more to follow on this in [Chapter 5](#)).

### ***Traditional Mail***

Hand-written letters and postcards sent by mail may seem old-fashioned nowadays - and their delivery in the FSU takes about a couple of weeks after posting them in the West - but if your selected EW has a romantic bent (and many of them have this trait) - she may appreciate them as more *personal* than their modern variants.



Letters also allow you to include unobtrusive reminders in their envelopes - for instance, an RWD member used to sprinkle inside them a few drops of his favorite after-shave, which made a lasting impression on his now EW wife.

To speed up delivery, it is helpful to write her name/address on the envelope in **both** Latin and Cyrillic characters, as in the following example:

Elena N. Smokinhotkova 12 Lenin Street Apt. # 47 Dumpsk Nizhniy Novgorod region RUSSIA, 606412	РОССИЯ 606412 нижгородская обл. думпск 12 Ул. Ленина \ № 47 Смокинхоткова И.Н.
---	---

Notice how the information in the central, more traditional version is written in an **inverse** sequence to ours which, if you think about it, rather makes sense: it follows the *path* that the letter takes on its journey - first country, then ZIP, region, city, street, block, apartment, and lastly the intended recipient. The version at right is more modern and also usable. FSU addresses often also include a street-block number, which appears to be an efficient system - however, see [Locating an FSU Street Address](#) in the Appendix 😊.

Incidentally, the above address is fictitious and **not** that of the 'Smokinhotkova in Red' whose photo you saw in the previous Chapter 😊. And since a *Lenin Street* exists/existed in almost all FSU cities, remember that it is an address often favored by scammers 🚩.

Use this method of communication only if you can write in a legible and preferably attractive script though, particularly if she listed *graphology* (the art of interpreting personality from hand-writing) among her interests/hobbies - it might be a dead giveaway to something you'd rather keep to yourself for the time being, or forever 😊.

## For How Long?

Our general consensus is that the *virtual* phase of communications should not last more than **2-3 months**. After that period, you should already be making definite plans about **meeting** your EW in person.



Take the opportunity of this waiting period to acquire as much information as you can about the *pros* and *cons* of international dating, as suggested by [While You Wait](#) in the Appendix, and about the culture and environment of the EW you have selected.

Many EW on the international dating scene have complained about WM being good *keyboard Romeos* 😊 who eventually fail to *deliver* 😞, i.e. to show their serious intentions by finally jumping on a plane - or whatever other means of transportation is suitable - to go and meet them: see [EW's Complaints about WM Courting Them](#) in the Appendix.

If some well-founded reason (work, family, etc.) prevents you from doing so, share your difficulties and disappointment with her, and try to keep the flame alive by frequent direct communications. You might also consider some thoughtful gestures like sending her/her family flowers/simple gifts/mementos on meaningful occasions - FSU countries have some festivities that are not in our Western calendars.

## Conclusions

Now the fateful, potentially life-changing moment has arrived ... it's time to **meet** your selected EW!

In our next Chapter 5, we shall consider **WHERE** to meet your selected EW.



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**NOTE - For more on the topics of this Chapter, see the following RWD Forum threads:**

- Agencies:
  - [How I Beat the Biggest Scam](#)

- [Circumventing Agency Censorship - A Survival Guide](#)
- Contacts:
  - [For Married / Divorced - Who Contacted First and How \(Poll\)](#)
- Phone and mail:
  - [Free Phone Calls and SMS](#)
  - [Communication with RW](#)
  - [Help with calling cell phone in Ukraine](#)
  - [Making A Telephone Call to Ukraine](#)
  - [Another cheap way to make calls](#)
  - [VOIP Ukraine](#)
  - [Mail and packages](#)

## CHAPTER 5 - WHERE?

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*Going "over there" to meet your selected EW.*

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Still with us, after all our previous horror stories? You're not easily discouraged then, and may therefore possess the courage, determination and resilience - or some might say *blind recklessness* - that are necessary for this extraordinary adventure 😊.

After 2-3 months of continuing contacts with your selected EW, you should **both** by now have come to the conclusion that your **so-far-virtual** friendship has reasonable chances of developing into something more solid, and therefore have **both** agreed that the best move would be to meet in person and verify those chances personally with a face to face meeting . If not, either of you should consider whether a longer period would be really worth the trouble 😞.

You have basically 3 alternatives for your first meeting:

1. Your EW visiting you in your country
2. Meeting your EW in a third country
3. Your visiting your EW in her country

Let's consider each alternative in turn.

### Your EW Visiting You in Your Country

---

This is the most difficult alternative of all to arrange, due to the fact that most Western countries require FSU visitors to apply for and obtain a tourist - or student - **visa** to admit them.

Western countries have different regulations for the acceptance of visa requests at their Consular offices abroad - basically aimed at discouraging attempts at illegal immigration - and this is not the place to go into specific details.

RWD has a sub-board devoted specifically to the discussion of this topic.

See [Immigration and Visas](#)

However, in general terms:

- The USA is usually the most reluctant in granting visas 😞
- Schengen countries - which include most of the European Union countries except the UK, for instance - are more lenient in this respect, e.g. a tour package bought at an FSU travel agency usually satisfies their requirements (pre-paid return ticket, subsistence expenses, medical insurance, etc.), and the visa request is often handled directly by the travel agency itself.

Depending on **your** location, this may or not be a viable option. It presents the advantage of letting your selected EW get a foretaste of what living with you in your environment might be like - and for you a foretaste of how well she could adapt to both a new mate and a new life situation 😊.

However, this experience can always be arranged at a later date if warranted, i.e. when potentially misleading initial emotions would be less likely to cloud both of your abilities to show good judgement 🇵🇸, and the actual possibility of a life together is realistically more in the cards.

### Meeting Your EW in a Third Country

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Certain countries - notably Turkey, Egypt, Thailand and some Caribbean islands, like Cuba and the Dominican Republic - either do not require a visa from visiting FSU citizens, or grant it upon arrival for a small fee as a mere formality.

Nowadays many EW have developed a taste for foreign travel, particularly to warmer climates, and the improved FSU economy allows a number of them to indulge in this recently discovered luxury. Therefore, an EW may suggest this alternative for various reasons, such as the fact that she may:

- Be a reserved person, and not want her social environment to know yet of you and the fact that she is meeting with a foreigner - to avoid local gossip, possible prejudice and criticism, etc.
- Want to savor this experience without local distractions
- Be a **gold digger** preferring not to operate in her own home environment 🇷🇺

You should try to understand what her real motivations are for such a preference.

## Your Visiting Your EW in Her Country

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Most FSU countries - except Ukraine - also require a visa from visiting Western men, but these are comparatively easy to obtain although times may vary - check beforehand with their Consular authorities in your country 😊.

It is our consensus that this should be your preferred alternative, because:

- You will see your EW in her natural environment
- You may meet her family, relatives and friends
- She may request a leave of absence from her job for just a few days - probably easier to obtain than 1 or 2 weeks
- You will get a taste of the culture and history of her country

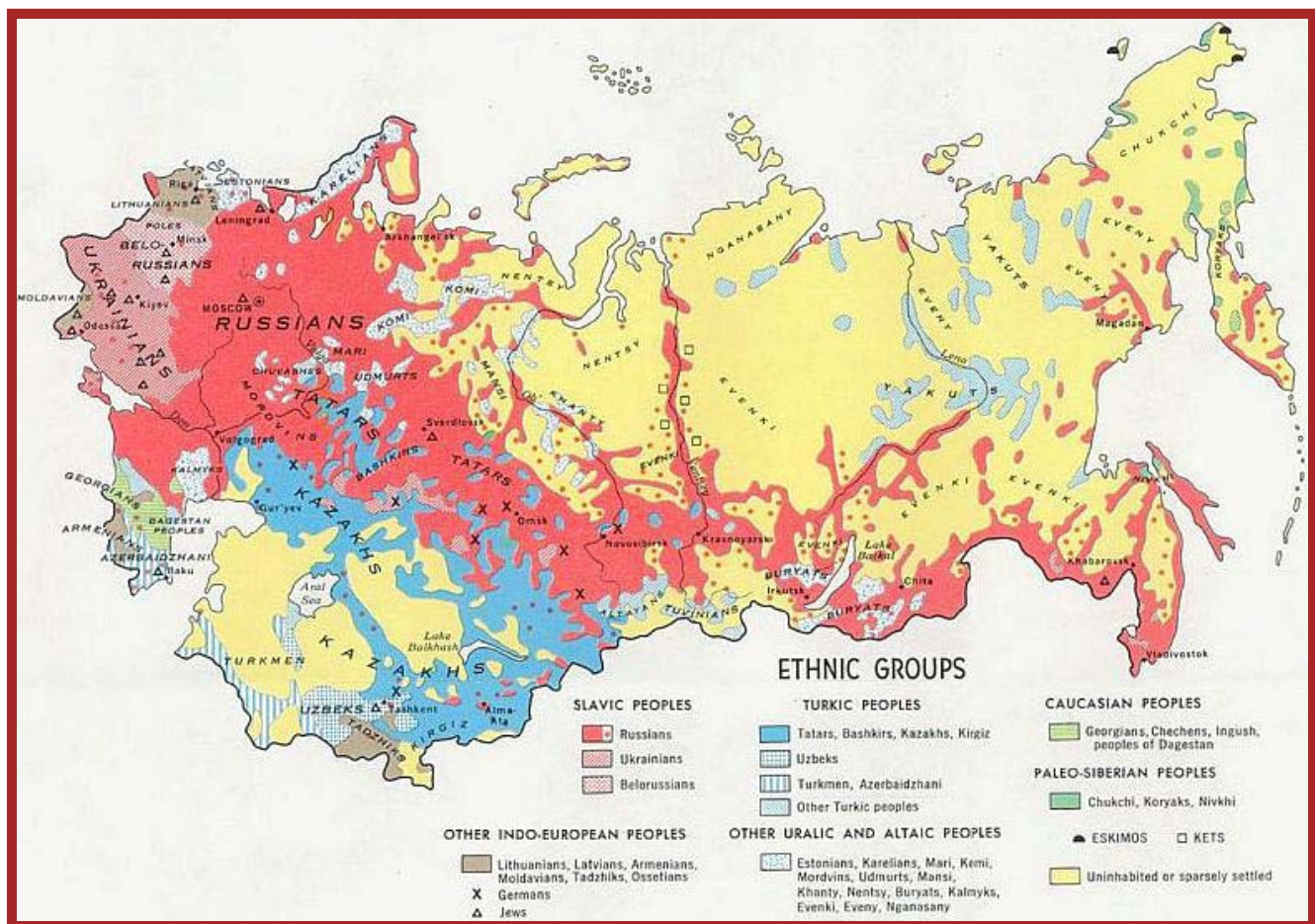
All the above will give you a better appreciation of her real nature and personality, even from simple, day-to-day situations like how she treats a waiter or a shop clerk.

Is travel **within** an FSU country easy? Yes and no, as you will see from [Visiting the FSU](#) in the Appendix, where we offer some practical tips and reminders. Obviously, it is going to be easier if you already have:

- Some experience in foreign travel (the FSU may appear **very** foreign at first 😊)
- Some knowledge of the Russian culture and language
- Will be staying in a large metropolitan city such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg or Kiev - where life is closer to Western habits

If you do not possess the above qualifications, we strongly recommend you to consult some of the **Trip Reports** listed at the end of this Chapter, which were submitted by RWD members - both seasoned veterans and new travellers - with their direct field experiences, from which you may glean some valuable inspirations and pointers for your own venture.

Remember, the FSU covers a **huge** territory and hosts a wide variety of nationalities, cultures and languages - although **Russian** was the language officially taught in **all** USSR schools, and is still widely spoken and understood in all FSU countries..



USSR ethnic situation in 1974

Some typical FSU sights are shown in [An FSU Photo Gallery](#) in the Appendix.

### ***Her Home Town or Elsewhere?***

Your selected EW may request that you two do not meet in her home town but elsewhere, for instance a larger city or a local tourist resort. In a way, this is similar to suggesting a meeting in a Third Country as explained above, and the same considerations apply.

### **Actually Meeting, at Last!**

The time has finally come, and you are **physically** meeting your EW for the first time ever!

If your interest has grown progressively with your mutual, virtual communications until you decided that the time had come to see her in **real life**, this is probably going to be one of the most unforgettable moments of your life, hopefully positive.

Your emotions will probably be in a turmoil, you will be elated, nervous and possibly also drained out by travel fatigue and jet lag, the stress of a hitherto-unfamiliar environment, maybe a lost piece of luggage or two, and all those little, irritating mishaps that may befall any international traveller.

Calm down and watch how your EW approaches you or reacts as you get nearer to her. A lot can be learned by her initial reactions, some even say that you will notice almost immediately if an EW is 'into you' or not.

## Her Body Language

All animal species use a number of body signals to express their emotional state, and all the more so for some basic extremes like aggressiveness/hostility vs. subservience/acceptance.

These are less overt and noticeable in us humans - and are therefore classified as subconscious - because we rely on **language** as our basic medium of communications. Nevertheless, they can be 'read' by an observer with a minimum of detachment, alertness and psychological insight, admittedly hard to maintain under these circumstances 😊. Some experts in communications psychology maintain that the impression we get of someone we meet comes through:

- Body language - **55%**
- Tone, speed and inflection of voice - 38%
- What is actually being said - a mere 7%

So let's suppose you are meeting somewhere - which in itself is significant:

- At your arrival airport/station (she's come to welcome you 🇩🇪🇩🇪🇩🇪)
- At a pre-agreed public place (a café or restaurant - neutral but encouraging)
- At her IMB's premises (she feels that she needs some 3rd-party support)

What you should observe is her reactions as she first sees you, i.e. look for her initial 'messages' of acceptance/pleasure or rejection/disappointment:

- She smiles at you - not just with her mouth, but her whole face lights up
- She walks towards you - rather than wait for you to reach her
- She opens her arms in greeting
- She is grateful/pleased by your gift/flower(s) - supposing you thought to bring any 😊

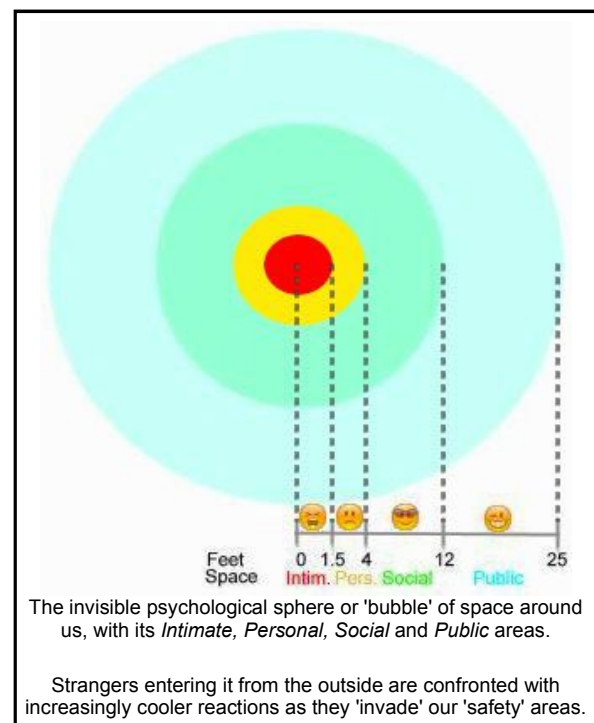
These are all positive messages, meaning she does not reject/fear you but is ready to let you 'enter her space' - we all have an invisible sphere of space around us, the width of which is culture-dependent, where we only allow 'trusted' others to enter.

Now you agree to go sit somewhere and spend some quiet time together. While going there, a few points of *etiquette* may be worth remembering, for EW usually DO notice them:

- Did she accept your proffered arm while walking?
- Did she appreciate your letting her be seated first, or helping her out of her coat?
- Do you walk on the street side, keeping her away from any possible splashes or dirt from passing vehicles?

When you are finally seated and having your quiet time together:

- Does she often maintain eye contact (she is truthful and not afraid)?





- Does she lean towards you (she wants to get closer)?
- Does she touch her hair/straighten her dress occasionally (she wants to make sure her appearance is in order)?
- Does she keep her arms/legs mostly open (she accepts your presence)?
- Does her posture appear relaxed (she feels no threat)?
- Do her pupils often look dilated (she's devoting her attention/concentration to you)?

As you can see, there are a lot of little tell-tale messages that may be conveyed by her movements/postures which you should try to 'tune in' into, and base your subsequent conduct accordingly.

### ***Is a Knowledge of Russian Necessary?***

Russian is the language spoken by the majority of people in the FSU country you may be visiting. Its knowledge is not necessary, but **helpful** for various reasons, unless you have secured the services of a **guide/interpreter** - or your EW can act as one for you 😊.

It is **advisable** to possess **at least** an understanding of the **Cyrillic alphabet** - which can be acquired without a major effort - for such day-to-day, mundane necessities like deciphering the names of metro stations, streets, restaurants, products sold in shops/markets, etc.

You **cannot** count on the general population to help you if you ask them questions in your language rather than theirs - except maybe for some of the younger people who have more exposure to things Western, and American in particular.

Russian is a difficult language for most Westerners, but if you can spare the extra effort, **do learn a few basic words/sentences** and you will reap **rich dividends** with your EW, her family and friends - even if you mangle it badly, they will appreciate your unexpected attempt at communicating with them in their native language, since not many foreigners can be bothered with it. To quote the words of an RWD member:

*"I found that the response to me speaking some Russian was fantastic and allowed me to see a different side to the people. I advise anyone going to Russia or Ukraine to at least learn a few basic sentences in Russian. This is mainly to show respect for the people in the country they are visiting, but it also has the effect of making the people want to help. If you go shouting English at someone who does not understand, they will never respect you or want help you.*

*Maybe this was the key to meeting some of the wonderful people I met during my time in Ukraine?"*



The 32 letters of the Cyrillic alphabet, **printed** and *cursive*

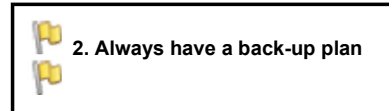
## What if Things Go Wrong?

Your so-far **virtual** communications had led you both to conclude that there was enough 'chemistry' to justify a long-awaited face-to-face meeting.

However, even "*The best-laid plans ...*" - as Robert Burns wrote and John Steinbeck repeated - "*often go awry*" 🙄 and what is technically know as a **train wreck** is an unfortunate event that may always happen, as reported in [Tom's Train Wreck](#) in the Appendix.



It is wise always to consider the possibility of such an unfortunate turn of events, and have some contingency plans for it, just in case. The RWD [Ten Commandments](#) in the Appendix include:



Depending on your personal preferences, this may consists in having:

- Organized beforehand a **WMVM rather than WOVO** trip
- A list of local IMBs - to set up other meetings on an emergency basis
- A guide on local attractions of possible interest, to convert your failed sentimental trip at least to a tourist excursion, and avoid being stranded alone - probably angry and depressed - in an unfamiliar environment

Anyway, you'll have to start the process (*Selecting, Contacting, Meeting*) all over again 🙄 if you have been bitten by the *EW bug*, until you finally find what you are looking for.

## If Things Go Well

Let us be optimistic, however, and assume that your first meeting was mutually satisfactory. There was *chemistry* between you as shown by the various signs mentioned above, and preferably also some signs of affection, such as holding hands, walking arm-in-arm and even a few kisses 😊.

Therefore, you have **both** come to the conclusion that further time together is needed to continue your mutual probing, and find out if things really work well between you two, preferably also with the approval of/without a serious opposition from her family, who, remember, are facing the prospect of 'losing' a daughter, and maybe grandchildren as well, to a foreign man who lives far away - we have already stressed how strong FSU family ties may be, and severing them a hard decision for an EW to make.

If you are already sharing an apartment, things may even progress much further: an EW who suddenly says that she has to take a shower usually means that she wants to prepare for some form of deeper intimacy 😊🍷🍷🍷.

And, strange though this advice may seem, should a **heated discussion** or even a **row** develop between you, let it happen - it will be immensely instructive for both of you as regards personal

compatibility 😊. See [Have A Good Row!](#) in the Appendix.

Eventually, you'll have to leave and return to your country. At this point, developments vary depending on individual circumstances, such as occupational requirements, vacation time and funds available, family duties, etc.

You **must** return for further visits and time together in the following weeks or months - best not to let too long a time pass 😊.

However, don't let your enthusiasm overcome you and rush you into an immediate decision to marry: the results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that marriages preceded by a courtship of only 4 months or less are more likely to end in a subsequent divorce than those that were more pondered.

Spend the intervening 'dead' periods inbetween visits to consolidate your mutual bond using all the means of communication you both became familiar with during your earlier contacts, and 'keep the flame alive' if no second thoughts occur to either of you - unfortunately, we have witnessed some cases of *cold feet* developing when things had proceeded to the level of final commitment.

Consider also that leaving a job/profession in the FSU - and finding one again in case the foreign 'dream' crashes - has additional complications for EW compared to what happens in the West.



Also use this period to consider what practical steps you should take to make her adaptation a success once she moves to your country, by examining the differences between her current life circumstances and those awaiting her in the future (more on this in the next Chapter).

At some point along this path, **both of you** should arrive at the conclusion that **a life together** is what you really want, and proceed accordingly.

## Conclusions

Embark upon your adventure with a song in your heart but also some insurance in your back pocket, and while there it is imperative to try to think with the **big** head on your shoulders - and not the smaller one located far below 😊.

Assuming that your expectations were met and possibly even exceeded, in our next Chapter 6 we shall consider what to do **THEN** with your successfully selected and responsive EW.

[← Back to Chapter 4](#)

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[Forward to Chapter 6 →](#)

**NOTE:** for more on this topic, see the following RWD Forum threads:

- Visas for EW:
  - [Immigration and Visas](#)
  - [Tourist Visa - Why not try or bad idea?](#)
- Leaving an FSU Job:
  - [Ladies and their jobs](#)
- Impressions of the FSU:
  - [Top 5 Best/Worst Things about your Trip to FSU](#)
- Trip Reports:
  - Triple Trip Report:
    - [Teaching moment, learn from another's missteps Part 1](#)
    - [Once Upon A Time...](#)

- [Excellent Ukrainian Adventure!](#)
  - [Vladivostok Trip Report and Follow-Up](#)
  - [The train came off the tracks](#)
  - [My Trip to Kazan](#)
- RWDpedia:
  - [Learn Russian](#)
  - [Russian Terms of Endearment](#)

## CHAPTER 6 - THEN?

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### *Marrying and settling down with your EW*

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So, you've found the woman of your dreams, and everything has been wonderful so far. All that is about to change 😞 - as difficult as it may have seemed to find and win the heart of your Princess from the East, you are about to find out that this was, after all, the easy part.

You have three possible alternatives on where to marry, depending on your specific situation:

1. Your country
2. Her country
3. A third country

If you decide for or have to adopt the last choice, read [Marrying in Her Country](#) below - the logistics and mechanics are similar, only you'll have to follow the laws and requirements of that third country.

### **Marrying in Your Country**

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An important aspect that you should thoroughly clarify with your local authorities concerns the **documentation** that your EW should bring along to fulfill their civil, legal and immigration-related requirements.

Most WM seeking a foreign spouse have almost no clue about their country's immigration policy. Before bringing your bride-to-be home, you are going to have to learn more than you ever wanted to know about immigration law. With the notable exception of Canada, virtually all Western countries have some variation of what is called the *K-1 Fiancée Visa* in the USA, originally devised at the end of WWII to allow US military personnel to bring home the women they had become attached to during their service overseas.

The basic idea of this visa type is that **your fiancée will be granted entry into your country for the purpose of marrying you.**

For a summary of the regulations and procedures applicable to **US** visas, see [USA Visa Legislation](#) in the Appendix.

### ***Pre-Nuptial Agreements***

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In most Western countries the possibility exists of stipulating a *Pre-Nuptial Agreement* with the intent of safeguarding pre-nuptial assets in case of a subsequent divorce settlement.

There are those who argue that no one should enter into a marriage without a pre-nuptial agreement in place, while those of the opposite opinion argue just as vehemently against the need for this document, stating that if it is needed, the man does not know the woman well enough to marry her. In the end, it is really up to each individual whether they wish to have a pre-nuptial agreement in place.



The effectiveness of this legal instrument varies widely dependant upon local legislation. There are several schools of thought on pre-nups, but it is generally agreed that if you have substantial assets, they are worth protecting.

Unlike standard pre-nuptial agreements between two citizens of the **same** country and language, great care must be exercised in drafting an agreement between two parties who do not share knowledge of each others' culture, language, and legal system.

It is usually advised that YOU pay the fees for a lawyer of her choice who is fluent in both languages to protect her interests - as well as retaining a separate lawyer of your choice to protect yours. If you decide that this expense is unjustifiable, you may risk an exposure, since a judge - should you divorce - will likely throw the agreement out, if you cannot demonstrate that she fully understood the ramifications of what she was agreeing to sign.

## Marrying in Her Country

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For various reasons - personal preferences, convenience, visa requirements, etc. - you may have considered and preferred the alternative of marrying your EW in her country, before bringing her over to yours.

Welcome to the wonderful world of post-Soviet bureaucracy! Getting married abroad can be a wonderful and magical experience steeped in old-world tradition, with the festivities usually lasting for days. But before you plan the wedding, you must understand what is required to make it **official** in your own country - for an example of US requirements, see [Getting Married in Russia and Ukraine](#) in the Appendix.

Incidentally, one of the differences in tradition that we mentioned earlier is that married EW wear wedding bands on their **right** hand. Discuss with your EW on which hand to wear your wedding rings - it is another way to show that you respect and honor her traditions and culture, and she may reciprocate by embracing your home country traditions and decide to wear the ring on her left hand 😊.

Marriage in the FSU is a **civil** ceremony performed at a local Registry office called **ZAGS** in Russia - acronym for *Zapis Aktov Grazhdanskogo Sostoyaniya* - and

**RAGS** in Ukraine, after filling out an application form and having had a date booked for it. See [A Day at RAGS, Simferopol](#) in the Appendix for an actual Ukrainian experience.

Since marriage in a ZAGS/RAGS office can be a rather unromantic ceremony, you may wish to have also a traditional Russian celebration and marriage at a local Orthodox church later - see [A Traditional FSU Marriage Ritual](#) in the Appendix - or in a church in your country.

## Settling Down

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Regardless of whether as a fiancée or spouse, she has finally arrived ! You have gone to the airport where she was scheduled to land, waited impatiently as she completed her Immigration formalities and collected her baggage, and greeted her affectionately when she finally exited those fateful doors, preferably with **a nice bouquet of flowers** to make her feel welcome and appreciated 🥰 - the occasion requires a celebration !



Remember, always an odd number!

Many RWD members have found that having their freshly arrived EW find a bathroom with the tub filled with warm, scented, foamy water, a few lighted candles and some nice background music helped a lot in letting them unwind after their long travel ordeal 😊.

While meeting her in her home environment, you should have devoted some thoughtful attention to how she lived there - **the more different her previous environment from this current environment (yours) is, the more effort, time and patience you should devote to helping her adjust to her new life with you.**

Once you've filed your application, paid your fees and waited for what seemed to be a lifetime, made it through her Embassy interview, and the visa has been affixed in her passport, you are now well on your way to starting your new life **TOGETHER.**

This is going to require some enormous adjustments on your part as well as hers: the results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that most divorces occur after the first 3 years of marriage.

### *Your Very First Few Days Together*

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You should consider postponing any of your normal

Now begins a <b>very</b>
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engagements - work included - and give her your **full time** and attention for a week or so, to help her familiarize with and transition to the new environment. Remember, she has temporarily severed all of her previous-life connections to be with you, and such an act of love deserves the fullest help and cooperation.

**delicate** period of time, which is **crucial** in laying solid foundations for a future happy life together!



Simple things like your household appliances, temperatures in Fahrenheit instead of Celsius, measurements in cups and ounces instead of liters and milliliters, distances in miles instead of kilometers are just a few of the things to keep in mind and may be a novelty/mystery to her. She may have habits/convictions that seem strange to you - for instance, many EW harbor a deep suspicion that air conditioning and ice-cold drinks are harmful to health 😊.

You must find a way to explain all of these new things as simply as possible, without talking down to her. In many ways, she will be like a small child in an adult body, but one thing no woman wants to be regarded as, is stupid. You can do serious damage in these crucial first days of her adjustment by talking to her like a parent would to a 5 year old. In this connection, ["Handle with Care!"](#) in the Appendix may be a relevant read.

She may also display some curious rituals that you may consider superstitious, such as removing shoes upon entering the house, not re-entering it in case you forgot something, etc. Don't treat such apparently silly quirks with excessive criticism or irony, she will eventually outgrow them if handled properly - or you may even grow to consider them as harmlessly exotic but charming traits of her personality.

Something she may set upon immediately is a rearrangement/restyling of your now **common** home: this process is commonly referred to as *building her own nest* - she has to feel that her new habitat bears something of her personality to be comfortable in it 🚩.

She could also insist on replacing the mattresses/pillows/sheets you previously slept on with some other woman - even if no other woman existed during the life of these items - and incidentally, it is usually preferable **not** to dwell on your previous love life, unless explicitly questioned on the subject 🗣️😊.

Your aim now should be to make her **reasonably independent, self-reliant** and **self-assured** as soon as practically possible.

Failure to do this may induce moodiness, a feeling of helplessness, bad temper and a host of other symptoms of insecurity and uneasiness that are detrimental to the happiness of a couple just adjusting to a life together 🗣️🚩.



Be forewarned that any or all of these behaviors may emerge regardless, even if you do everything right. This syndrome is usually referred to as **Culture Shock** - there are a host of excellent articles available on the Internet that you can find by searching for that term - though this usually occurs later on, after she has lived in your country for a period of time.

### ***Independence***

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Since you will probably resume your normal working life after a few days, a key to her gaining confidence and therefore independence is generally based on a number of important aspects, namely her capabilities of :

- Communications
- Starting an activity
- Moving around
- Making local friends

### ***Communications***

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Her level of fluency in your language is obviously **fundamental** in this connection, and you had the opportunity of determining this level already during your courtship.

One of the most critical barriers she will face is **your language**, and even if she has been studying abroad and her fluency seems pretty good - to you - she is going to be absolutely overwhelmed, even if she tries not to let it show. See [A Different Language Environment](#) in the Appendix.

If her fluency is limited, you must find her a suitable school to attend - many Western countries arrange low-cost or even free classes for new immigrants, check their availability in your area. For example, **ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes are offered in nearly every US community. Some are free and staged at local high schools and community colleges, for others tuition is charged and are offered by universities and private language academies. Whatever your budget allows, look into investing in your wife's future as early as practical.

If she already has her own children along, their progress in picking up a foreign language is faster the younger they are, often astonishingly so: their desire to play with other kids is usually a very powerful motivation.

In addition, if she has specific hobbies or interests, you should encourage her to read about them in your language - her interest in the subject matter will motivate her more than educational texts, and require less recourse to a dictionary since she will probably be able to guess the meaning of many foreign words from a familiar context.

Look into getting her a **cell phone** soon after her arrival for **her safety** - if she wanders out alone to explore her new surroundings while you're at work, she may get lost and she'll need to speak with YOU: you understand her and you know how to speak so that she understands you - no matter how good her language skills are, she will be extremely self-conscious about speaking with strangers in her first days and weeks.



### Starting an Activity

We have already seen how work may not be an immediate option, depending on her qualifications/skills. In addition, she may be more inclined to be a housewife, particularly if she has a young child to take care of.



However, bear in mind that, as an RWD EW member succinctly put it:

*"For a Russian woman, a job is her major social determinant: in Russian society, you are what you do."*

It is important that she have **something** to occupy her time - be that children, education, hobbies, work, etc.

If she is not an already experienced driver, her initial car had probably best be a low-cost/second-hand model that she can 'work her way into' at not ruinous costs for any necessary repairs, particularly to its bodywork 😊.

### Moving Around

In both the preceding situations, her **mobility** is another important consideration.

If your location does not possess an acceptably efficient public transportation system - similar to what she was used to in her country - and for instance shopping for groceries involves driving miles to the nearest shopping center, after a while you may tire of driving her there at mutually convenient times, and should consider the advantages of her having **her own driving license** and **car** - preferably equipped with a GPS navigation system to reduce the number of those frantic "*Where am I?*" phone calls 😊.



A pair of shapely EW's legs

EW are used to walking long distances - and that is why they often have shapely legs 😊 - but you cannot reasonably expect her to run a marathon for a quart of milk - a brand-new bicycle could also be a temporary solution (depending on local distances) or

a scooter (depending on your local license requirements).

The process of learning to drive can be incredibly stressful for both student and teacher - even when they share the same language, as you may probably recall from your own early experiences.

If you are not up to the formidable task of teaching her, do yourself and her a favor and find a qualified instructor/school for that.



A Smart two-seater city car

### **Making Local Friends**

Having a job or attending language and driving classes helps in meeting new people - some even in similar situations - and possibly making new friends.

A none-too-advisable source of *virtual* friends are the Internet websites of local immigrant EW communities - their regular membership tends to consist mostly of EW having serious adjustment problems, and blaming anybody and anything but themselves for it



### **Keeping Her Ties**

It is very natural, human and understandable that she should wish to have frequent communications with her family and former friends, particularly if she has strong ties to them. It is imperative that you provide for free-flowing communication between her and her family abroad - with the low cost and availability of phone cards, there's really no reason not to.

Initially, she may call them on the phone daily and have long conversations, again understandable since they are probably curious, and possibly concerned, about her new life in a foreign country with a foreign man.

The same methods you used to keep in touch with her while apart could represent a convenient way to let her do the same with her former social environment.

It is also typical that she should want to visit them - this often happens within six months to a year of her arrival.



Usually, these needs tend to decrease gradually as she settles satisfactorily into her new life.

**This is in itself a significant sign of how well she is adapting to her new situation.**



## ***Managing Family Finances***

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We mentioned in [Chapter 2](#) that EW may view money and finances differently compared to their Western, and particularly US, counterparts - things like taxes, mortgages, loans, etc. may be alien to some.



Even if she has some experience with credit and debit cards, it may be a good idea to take her to your bank and open a new joint account - so that she understands the process and can ask any pertinent questions.

Some argue that all family finances should be shared immediately. However, a new account with a reasonable amount of funds will give her the peace of mind of not having to ask for money every time she leaves the house, and you can have the peace of mind of avoiding possible "mistakes" for thousands in your currency.

Furthermore, this will teach her quickly that managing her own money and living within a budget - that you decide **together** - is appropriate and advisable.

## **Conclusions**

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As you will have realized, this is **NOT AT ALL** a simple process: it requires time, patience, dedication and, most of all, **LOVE** from **both** parties to make it a success - see the results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix for the factors which may have a negative impact.

Therefore, you may well wonder: "*Is it worth all the trouble ?*". In our next Chapter 7, we'll let our EW-married RWD members answer this fundamental question.



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**NOTE - For more on the topics of this Chapter, see the following RWD Forum threads:**

- Marrying:
  - [Wedding Budget](#)
  - [Engagement rings](#)
  - [Getting married in Ukraine](#)
  - [Marriage in Moldova?](#)
  - [Uzbekistan ZAGS Trip Report](#)
  - [PreNups, Trusts, Offshore Accounts & Protecting Yourself](#)
  - [Converting to Russian Orthodox](#)
- Settling down:
  - [Which Documents Should You Never Leave Russia Without](#)
  - [Want to Make Your Wife Feel at Home in the USA ?](#)

- EW's adaptation:
  - [Culture shock](#)
  - [Do western men who are married to Russian women become Russianized ?](#)
  - [You know you're married to a Russian woman when...](#)
  - [Any other men run around the house turning lights off ?](#)
  - [Funny things your RW/UW says](#)
  - [Notes, quotes and anecdotes](#)
  - [Superstition](#)
  - [Intimate conversations](#)
  - [Who sleeps more? Americans or people of the FSU ?](#)
  - [Now I'm a newbie - living with her "kid"!](#)
  - Jealousy
    - [Does Your RW Get Jealous ??](#)
    - [Ex-wife jealousy? Animosity?](#)
  - Communications:
    - [Thoughts on your wife's English situation](#)
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    - [Some ideas for AugustD](#)
  - Starting an activity:
    - [Any advice on preparing for being a Professor in USA?](#)
    - [Foreign credential evaluation](#)
  - Moving around:
    - [Traveling with RW in the USA](#)
    - [Baby You Can Drive...?](#)
    - [How long for Driver's Licence ?](#)
    - [Car shopping with your wife](#)
- WM's adaptation:
  - [How are some of the ways you have integrated FSU culture?](#)
- Keeping her ties:
  - [Married RW: What do you miss in your new country ?](#)
  - [Dealing with the in-laws](#)
  - [Involving her family](#)
  - [How Often Do You and the Wife Visit the Inlaws?](#)
  - [Immigration of RW's parents](#)
  - [FSU Internet costs](#)
- Managing family finances:
  - [Hard work -- How can I explain this to my Russian wife?](#)
  - [Explaining US income taxes to the new Ukrainian wife \(which is taxing in itself\)](#)
  - [Grocery Shopping with your FSUW](#)

## CHAPTER 7 - FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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### *Is This Worth All The Trouble ?*

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Dear Reader, you've followed us a long way along this process, discovering what is implied in selecting, corresponding with, meeting and eventually bringing an EW to your country for a life together.

Now you could understandably expect this book to end with a eulogy of this blissful state, and/or a dissertation on its possible pitfalls.

However, rather than offering you a discussion about the inherent *pros* and *cons*, we think that some excerpts from a **long** and still ongoing [RWD thread](#) may best appraise you of what you can expect to get yourself into, as was reported by several of our members who went through the whole experience before you, and are still happily alive to tell 😊.

### You know you're married to an EW when...

#### COMMUNICATIONS

- ...You begin to smile when it's ALWAYS your fault
- ...She answers your question with "Yes", and you're still confused...
- ...Instead of hearing "I told you to...", you get "Do you remember YOU wanted to..."
- ...The simple acknowledgment of something she wants or wants to do, is later referred to as "But...you promised!"
- ...You get told "Everyone knows" about some particular thing you know to be completely wrong, or "Everyone has" something that you know with certainty only a small number of people actually do have
- ...You go to sleep at night vaguely aware of someone talking next to you, you wake up an hour later and that voice is still talking, then about an hour before you wake up in the morning you again become aware of someone talking
- ...You ask her to read the name of the hotel from your reservation confirmation as you exit the freeway and she says "Blueberry Inn". You say "That cannot be correct, please give me the paper...It's not 'Blueberry', it's 'Bradbury'". And she says "What's the difference ?"

#### HOUSE ETIQUETTE

- ...You realize you now own a set of "house clothes"
- ...You polish your shoes EVERY day
- ...You have more shoes at your front door than in your closet
- ...You have to add shoe-organizers to THREE closets
- ...You knock on your own door when re-entering your house to retrieve something you forgot
- ...You're in bed running a 102°F fever and the doorbell is ringing, ringing, ringing so you must hobble down the stairs to answer: it's she, who started out to the store, but forgot something and can't return inside because it's bad luck

#### HOUSE MANAGEMENT

- ...The temperature in the house is always set 50°F above liveable
- ...The heat or A/C is running with doors and windows still wide open
- ...Every light in the house is on for no reason at all
- ...House-cleaning includes the ceilings
- ...House-cleaning could be a serious Olympic sport
- ...You are constantly reminded of the next home project that NEEDS to be started
- ...You get told there is only ONE right way to do any particular household task... and that way DEFINITELY isn't yours
- ...Her discovery of zip-lock bags is a life-changing experience
- ...Yesterday's dinner left-overs are still on the counter the next morning

...You find half-eaten slices of bread all over the kitchen

#### **FAMILY-FINANCE MANAGEMENT**

...You find stashes of cash hidden in strange places around the house  
 ...You find yourself repeating the reasons why you "Pay too much tax"

#### **FOOD**

...You eat salad with every meal  
 ...You catch yourself complaining about tasteless tomatoes  
 ...You find 35 different types of mayonnaise in your fridge  
 ...Being out of mayonnaise constitutes an emergency that requires a midnight run to the grocery store  
 ...Running out of "sweet milk" for coffee is considered a family crisis  
 ...You're buying more watermelon than you ever thought possible  
 ...There is just enough food in the house to live through the day - and no more  
 ...Having soup for breakfast seems normal  
 ...You begin to believe that *borscht* is actually edible  
 ...You have conversations about how tasty that duck swimming in the park pond could be  
 ...Pretty much anything is considered edible, or at least the possibility exists that it "might" be tasty  
 ...You eat a whole meal of delicious food, and have NO IDEA what you are eating  
 ...She can tell you if the fish was frozen the day BEFORE we ate it in a restaurant

#### **CLOTHES**

...You notice that you recently started checking the stitching on clothing before buying it  
 ...Your clothes are washed more often than you wear them

#### **SHOPPING**

...Shopping lists are never used, and you end up going back later to the same store at least once  
 ...You wait while she squeezes every loaf of bread in the store to find the freshest one, then watch it sit in your fridge for 3 days before eating any of it  
 ...You have the fitting-room attendant knock on the door after 45 minutes, to make sure she is okay  
 ...You receive warm, personal thank-you cards from various neighborhood shops  
 ...You're back at the car dealer's explaining that the "leather package" you bought for the seats isn't really leather except on the front, and therefore you paid too much for it and should get a rebate - and you get it

#### **LOOKS**

...The hottest woman in any room is her  
 ...Victoria's Secret doesn't really have anything as sexy as she was hoping to find  
 ...Any pair of women's underwear more substantial than a thong is sneered at and claimed "It's for *babushkas*"  
 ...You notice a cute arse and she simply laughs and says..."Mine's better" - and she's right  
 ...She looks hotter in her "domestic gown" than 85% of the women who dress up to go out  
 ...You get an appreciative wink from old men in shopping centers  
 ...She wants to be reassured that she doesn't look fat in her size-2 jeans  
 ...The other women at her gym want to copy her workout

#### **HEALTH, HYGIENE & FITNESS**

...You are told that iced tea kills  
 ...The air-conditioners are blamed for a bout of bad health, yet they have been switched OFF ever since she arrived  
 ...The ceiling fan is going to make her sick  
 ...You are told "I have a headache, maybe we should stop at the ice-cream parlor to make it go away"  
 ...You learn everyday new things about how to lead a healthy life  
 ...You discover new marvels of medicine, such as putting dog fur rather than ice on an inflamed lower back, or your 23-y.o. son is told to pee on his sunburned legs  
 ...Your sunburn is smeared with sour cream  
 ...Your water bill has more than trebled since her arrival  
 ...The sound of running water in the bathroom brings on erotic thoughts  
 ...You hear she telling you that sex is 'good for organism'

#### **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

...You open presents on December 25th, January 1st, and January 7th  
...You see Christmas wreaths on peoples' houses and she asks you who died there  
...You see the numbers on ticket stubs checked to determine if they're lucky  
...You realize that the precision of digital time is of no further use to you  
...You are always late wherever you go  
...You start lying that the movie begins 30 minutes before it really does  
...You discuss enrolling your as-yet-unborn son in self-defense classes since "You never know when he'll have to defend himself at school"  
...You are told that a heated argument actually strengthens your marriage  
...You discover that, after an argument, having sex is still a viable option  
...Going to bed isn't simply for sleeping anymore

### **SPORTS**

...You realize that a 'little walk' actually means half a marathon  
...You can justify the time you spend fishing...only as long as you bring home some fish  
...You are asked "Are you planning to watch your football all evening?" and your answer is "Actually, that is baseball."

### **DRIVING**

...You notice the garage door has been bashed in front of where she parks her car and she knows not who might have done it, except that it was most certainly NOT her  
...You get to know the bodyshop repair guy on a first-name basis  
...You get stopped by the police for a random breath test, and she asks if she can have a go, too  
...A police officer stopped a RW for speeding and asked her very nicely if he could see her driver's license. She replied in a huff "I wish you guys could get your act together. Just yesterday you take away my driver's license, then today you expect me to show it to you." 😏

## **Finally, and MOST importantly...** 😊

...You find yourself looking at her and wondering how the heck you could have ever got so lucky  
...You look forward to going home from work each day  
...You wake up everyday with a smile, and fall asleep with a smile  
...You completely trust the woman in your life  
...You actually have a partner in life - not an adversary  
...You realize that she truly, deeply loves you just the way you are



[Back to Chapter 6](#)



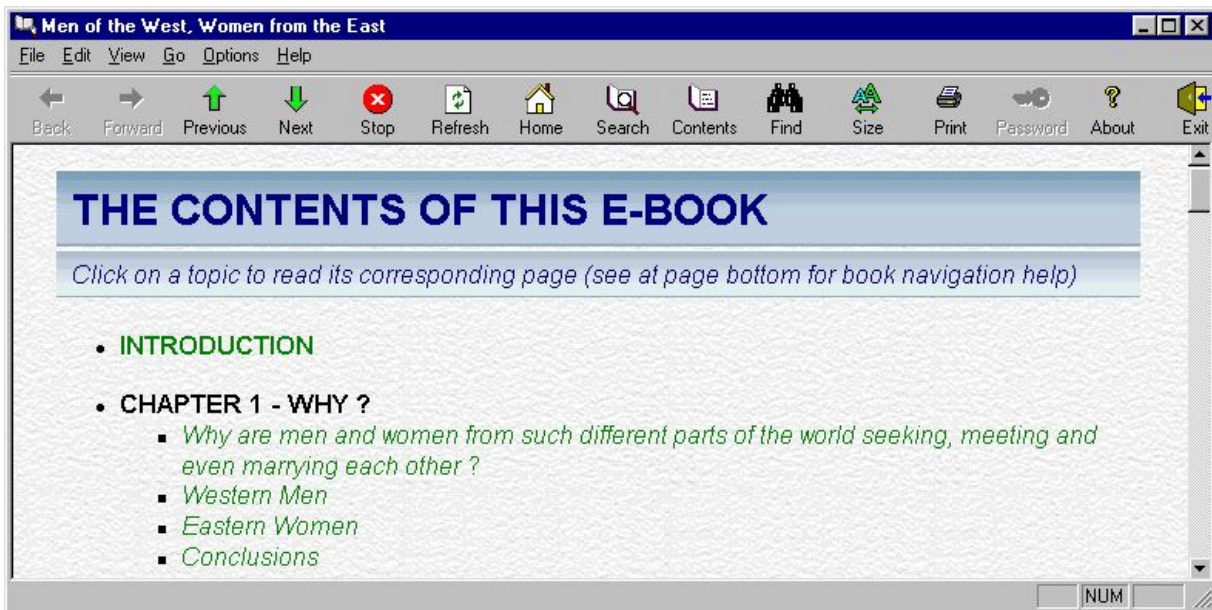
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## APPENDIX

### Navigating through this E-Book

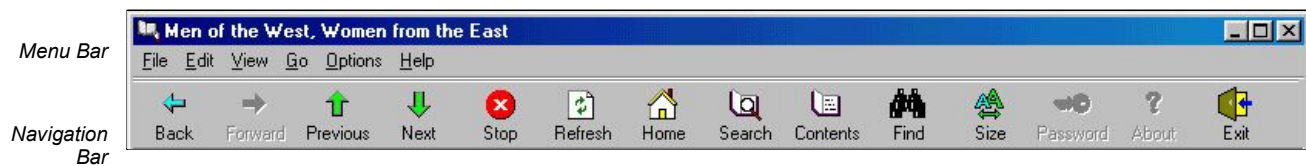


Since not all of you may be familiar with flipping through the pages of an Electronic Book like this one, here are a few tips about its 'navigation'.

When you started reading this book, you were first shown its cover, then brought to its **Contents** page. Like all the other book pages that follow, it shows at the top a **Tool Bar** containing:

- A **Menu Bar** with *textual* options (*File, Edit, View, Go, Options, Help*) that will open *pull-down menus* with further textual options
- A **Navigation Bar** with *icon* options

#### TOOL BAR




Your most useful navigation aids are the *icons* in the **Navigation Bar**.




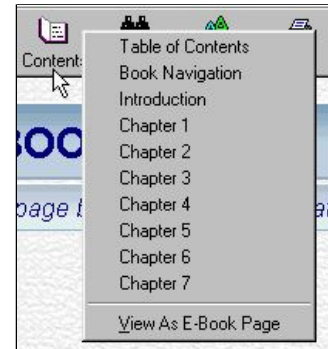
Clicks on *navigation arrows* - when highlighted (full color, rather than greyed out as is now *Forward* above) - will cycle you through the book pages:

- **Previous/Next**: in their sequence as listed in the **Contents** page.
- **Back/Forward**: in the sequence of the pages you have **already viewed**.

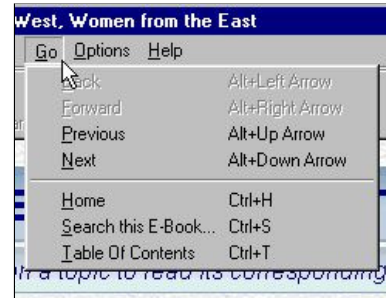
You may return to the **Contents** page either by:

- Using the navigation arrows mentioned above.
- Clicking on the **Home** icon 

- Clicking on the **Contents** icon  - which will open a pull-down menu showing a list of the main book pages, which you can access through a further click
- Using the **Go** option in the **Menu Bar** - which will show all the above options as a textual list, rather than *icons*

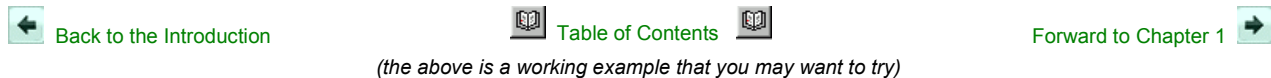


Contents pull-down menu



Go option from Menu bar



In addition to the above browser navigation aids, at the bottom of each book page is also a bar leading to previous, next and Table of Contents pages:



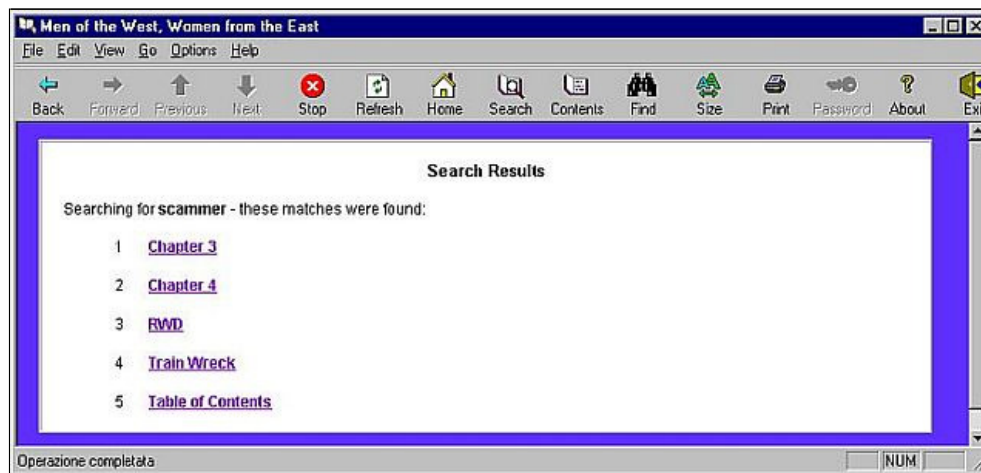
(the above is a working example that you may want to try)

### Looking for Specific Information

Besides reading pages in whatever sequence you prefer, you may also want to locate quickly some specific item of information. You can do this through two other aids. If the item is present:

- **Within your current page**, the **Find** icon  in the Navigation Bar - as well as **Find** in the *Edit* option of the Menu Bar - will find it and highlight it
- **Anywhere in the book**, the **Search** icon  in the Navigation Bar will find it and produce a list of the pages that contain it






## Link Colors

The book text contains a number of **links** written in varying styles and colors to differentiate their types:

- **Blue, bold, underlined**: links leading to other pages inside the book (unread yet)
- **Green, bold, underlined**: links leading to other pages inside/outside the book (already read)
- **Brown, bold, underlined**: links leading to **definitions** in other pages inside the book
- **Navy Blue, normal, underlined**: links leading to threads in the **RWD Forum**, outside the book and opening up a new window within the book browser (provided an Internet connection is active)
- **Red, bold, underlined**: all links, when the mouse cursor is passed over them, indicating they are active, i.e. clickable (you can visualize the effect on some items above)

## Printing Your E-Book

The Menu and Navigation bars also contain a **Print** option  that allows you to produce a page-by-page hard copy of this E-book on your printer.



## APPENDIX

### Russian Women Discussion (RWD)

**Russian Women Discussion (RWD)** is an Internet Forum established in 2005 and hosting a lively community of international members, interested in acquiring and sharing information about **EW** - where you'll find this general acronym usually replaced by the more specific **FSUW** (Former Soviet Union Women), **RW** (Russian Women), **UW** (Ukrainian Women), etc.



The **RWD** Forum is freely readable by any and all - access is available to:

- **Guests**, who:
  - Are not required to register
  - Are not required to log on with a User ID/Password
  - Are completely anonymous
  - Can read Forum posts, but cannot write them
  - Cannot see posted images/pictures, reviews and other non-Forum parts of RWD
- **Members**, who:
  - Register for free
  - Log on with their chosen, unique User ID/Password
  - Are recognized by their chosen *nickname*, but may elect to remain invisible on a session-by-session basis
  - Can read/write Forum posts, post and see images/pictures, etc. - in short, they enjoy full-membership rights

**RWD** is part of **International Relationships**, a group also responsible for these other Internet Fora/Websites:

- **Planet Love** ([www.planet-love.com](http://www.planet-love.com)) - discussing Latin and Asian women
- **Good Wife** ([www.goodwife.com](http://www.goodwife.com)) - a portal to RWD and Planet Love
- **Certified Marriage Agencies** ([www.certifiedmarriageagencies.org](http://www.certifiedmarriageagencies.org)) - a project to provide a stringent certification process for IMBs

### The RWD Vision

The guiding policies of RWD:

- RWD enjoys active and vibrant participation from diverse members across the globe
- RWD stresses inclusivity and self-moderation amongst the members who join our site
- RWD promotes spirited, even heated, discourse and exchange - within the confines of civil behavior and with a focus on increasing our collective knowledge and understanding of these international unions
- RWD acts as a member of the International Relations organization to promote and encourage honest and ethical behaviors among all participants in the international dating community
- Topics at RWD range from politics to sexuality, religion, culture, history and beyond - all within the overall context of international relationships with women from the FSU
- RWD practices tolerance of diversity in opinions expressed and experiences shared, and promotes the notion of individual choice wherever and whenever possible
- RWD is an unbiased and independent 'voice' in the international dating/marriage community, free of commercial leverage. We promote no group or organization (except our own) over any other

### The RWD Membership

The **numbers** from Forum statistics as of January 1, 2009 offer an objective picture of the *vibrant membership activity* referred to in the **RWD Vision**

above:

- Members: 4,421
- Posts: 161,969 on 8,659 topics
- Blogs: 11
- Browsed pages: 9,486,309

The gender composition of RWD's membership is:

- Males: 85%
- Females: 15%

RWD's female members are for the most part **single** and **married EW**, some living in the FSU and others abroad, who contribute their unique viewpoints to an otherwise predominantly male audience 😊.

Also living in the FSU are some RWD WM members, who add a realistic, on-the-spot perspective to Forum discussions.

Site Stats	
<b>161969 Posts:</b>	8659 Topics 153310 Replies
<b>11 Blog:</b>	Created by Members
<b>390 Images:</b>	Inside the Image Gallery
<b>38 Sites:</b>	Inside the Top Site List
<b>49 Reviews:</b>	Inside the Reviews Area
<b>4221 Reg. Members:</b>	Last: michman48
<b>Browsed Pages:</b>	9 4 8 6 3 0 9

Average registrations per day:	3.31
Average posts per day:	129.71
Average topics per day:	6.06
Total Boards:	54
Average online per day:	119.61
Male to Female Ratio:	6.8:1
Average page views per day:	9325.53

## The RWD Discussion Groups

The RWD Forum includes a number of **Discussion Groups**, with a total of 8,000+ topics or *threads*, covering all the various aspects of finding, courting, marrying and living with EW:

- [Introductions and Ice-Breaker](#) Welcome one and all to RWD! This board is so that we may all get to know one another a little better. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance!
- [Starting Out](#) For the new folks among us who are just getting started and need direction. Theme: the only dumb question is the one NOT asked.
- [Questions to Russian Ladies](#) Here you can obtain first-hand opinions of EW women on your issues of interest.
- [Scammers and Suspect Agencies](#) Do NOT be overly paranoid, but arm yourself with information and be prepared.
- [Trip Reports and Photos](#) Reports of trips to the FSU, as well as photos taken while on trips, are welcome in this section.
- [Experienced](#) For those guys with a bit of 'seasoning', this board offers the opportunity to reminisce, trade 'war stories,' and keep abreast of developments.
- [Immigration and Visas](#) Immigrating to the US - and other countries - can be a daunting task. Draw on the experience of others in this section of the board.
- [Married](#) This section is for those guys who are, or were, married to women from the FSU.
- [Local Groups](#) This forum is for RWD members to locate and communicate with one another in their local areas. Sub-forums are established for local groups.
- [Cultural and Political Events](#) Recent events in Ukraine have captured the interest of the world. This section is available to discuss all such matters, especially as they bear on the women from the FSU.
- [Odds and Ends](#) Can't find another 'home' for your topic of interest? Put it right here.

The above Discussion Groups represent the major source of information for the material in this Electronic Book. Read them too, if you wish to see more specific details about what was summarized here.

## The RWDpedia

Similarly to the **Wikipedia** and thanks to our membership, RWD has accumulated over these years a wealth of practical information for people involved with EW and the FSU.

Some **RWDpedia** article titles may give you an idea of the topics covered there:

RESOURCES	REFERENCE MATERIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Accommodation, Food &amp; Entertainment :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Apartments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For Rent</li> <li>■ For Sale</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Hotels</li> <li>■ Restaurants</li> <li>■ Cafés</li> <li>■ Entertainment</li> <li>■ Sports</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>News &amp; Communications :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Newspapers and Magazines</li> <li>■ Radio</li> <li>■ TV</li> <li>■ Telephone Calls</li> <li>■ Telephone Directories</li> <li>■ Humor</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>Travel &amp; Transportation :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ General Advice</li> <li>■ Agencies</li> <li>■ Visas and Related Documents</li> <li>■ Weather</li> <li>■ Time Zones</li> <li>■ Holidays</li> <li>■ Flight Timetables</li> <li>■ Airports (FSU, EU, USA)</li> <li>■ Customs</li> <li>■ Car Rentals</li> <li>■ Cries</li> <li>■ Maps</li> <li>■ City Transport Routes</li> <li>■ Bus and Train Timetables</li> <li>■ Things To Take Along</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>Services :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Embassies and Consulates</li> <li>■ Translators</li> <li>■ Legal</li> <li>■ FSU Police Certificates</li> <li>■ Education/Credentials Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>Gifts :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Flowers</li> <li>■ Rings, Precious Stones</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>Stores</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ RWD Glossary</li> <li>■ Russglish Glossary</li> <li>■ Anglussian Dangers</li> <li>■ Learn Russian           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cyrillic Alphabet(s)</li> <li>■ Declensions of Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Russian Terms of Endearment</li> <li>■ Russian History</li> <li>■ Learn English (for FSU people)</li> <li>■ Driving A Car</li> <li>■ Demographic Data from the CIA Factbook</li> <li>■ Conversions:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Units of Measure Conversions</li> <li>■ Clothing, Ring Conversion Charts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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[To the RWD Forum](#) 

## APPENDIX

### Tips on How to Punch Out the Crisis

Cover story from the December 4-10, 2008 issue of *What's On*, a Kiev English-language weekly.

An approach to facing the current economic crisis that evidences the wry humor of many FSU people.



It's a stressful time in Ukraine. The hryvnia's dropping against the dollar (again!), politicians can't seem to get their act together, companies are shedding jobs, the markets are in freefall, loan payments are skyrocketing, Ukraine's NATO chances are freshly in doubt and Russia's threatening to raise gas prices on Ukraine. Feeling the pressure? Don't sweat it: What's On's got a list of tips sure to ease even the most worried minds.

1. If you're a shop-till-you-drop type, it might be time to hang up the heels and dig through the closet for a new outfit. All that old stuff - your mom's skates, your dad's military uniform, that ancient chequered shirt - might just be the thing to spice up your wardrobe even as your savings evaporate. Or you could just sell it second-hand: a kilo of the junk could fetch you 20 hrv. That's not much, but it's something.
2. If you're worried about getting sacked, you might try to impress your boss with improved work performance. Think up some brilliant ideas, be gung-ho and wear a smile. You can try flattery too: bring him tea. And if you want to shed unwanted competition, point out job openings to your co-workers. Hey, you're just trying to help, right?
3. If you get sacked anyway, you need a Plan B. Consider mastering a new field: you could become one of the tough grandmothers down in the metro peddling dried fish off a cardboard box, or, if you're burly enough, one of the solid-looking guards. These jobs tend to be government gigs, so while they don't pay much, they're not going anywhere either. If spending all day in the metro doesn't appeal to you (and we don't blame you), try becoming a cop. Given the new fines for driving violations, you could make a pretty penny. You might even be able to buy back the car the bank repo'd when you missed your loan payments.
4. To save money, give up going to cafés and restaurants. To pull through, you'll need to return to an ancient Slavic tradition: the black bread and vodka lunch. The bread will keep you alive, and the vodka relaxed.
5. You should probably give up the taxi too. And as the metro gets more crowded and marshrutkas fall into further disrepair, you might have to fall back on your own two feet. That's right, start walking. If you're a jogger, the walk to work could become your new morning constitutional. You might even gain a few winks out of the deal. (Maybe this crisis thing isn't so bad, after all.)
6. This one's obvious: start saving. Avoid unnecessary purchases and squirrel away as much as you can for the murky future. Maybe the day the crisis ends, you'll discover you have enough for the shiny Beamer you've always wanted, or enough to buy the place you live in.
7. Maybe you're one of the canny folks who's been saving while everyone else has been living high on the hog. It might be a good time to get away from all the depressed people with loads of debt. Pack a bag and take the train out to the Karpaty, or, if you really saved, the Himalayas. Try not to think about the word 'crisis' and admire the rugged peaks and wildlife. Besides, it's the fashionably green thing to do.

8. Think positively. In gloomy December, that might be difficult. Still, try. Drink. Then drink some more. Then drink yet again.

9. Exercise. Take up boxing, or yoga, or swimming, or jogging. Endorphins are the cheapest form of happiness. (Next is vodka, at least here in Eastern Europe.)

10. Find some sucker to support you. If you're a good-looking woman, this might be the time to keep your eyes open for a sugar daddy. Practice that come-hither smile. Ex-pat men might be going home as their companies roll up Ukraine operations, but there's probably still a nice middle-aged guy out there for you, ready to take you home to the cosmopolitan pleasures of suburban Abilene, Texas or Saskatoon.

11. Think of falling in love. We're told it helps. For instance, take this old Russian proverb: "*Love doesn't mind a poor hut as long there's a loving heart.*" Or something like that.

12. Now that you're an expert in techniques for easing crisis-related stress, you could start charging admission for a new course: *How to Knock Out the Crisis*. Just remember to hand out a bunch of copies of **What's On**. Credit where credit's due, after all.

## And the personal experience of an RWD member:

### Ukrainian Humor

Well, there is a lot to this one and I do not believe you know a culture until you can make people laugh in their native tongue. Mind you, I am not well versed in Russian, but with some pantomime you can get them rolling, I assure you.

Yes, the Ukrainians have two personas in my opinion. The first is that outward gruff look the outside world sees, and the other is when with friends and family. I have noticed that one must separate friends and family, too.

Family is an interesting dynamic and it does not always lead to the beautiful inside persona. Friends seem to be fewer than in western culture, but with a much stronger bond. I am sure there must be some influence in Ukrainian culture about being careful who your friends are and who you trust.

Well, my first attempt at humor in Russian was with her mother. Her mother kept bringing me more and more food. I was having flashbacks of the movie "7" where they made the guy eat himself to death. *Ya yell* (I eat), *Ya yell, Ya yell, YA polon* I say (I am full) then say *Oy!* and puff out the tummy and say *Ya kartoshka* (I am a potato) that one had everyone laughing.

One important cultural difference to note. I was raised to finish everything on my plate. In Ukraine leave just a little bit of food to show your hosts that you are full. I wish I had known that one earlier, and it was just chance that I did figure it out.

### Mother-In-Law

Very much part of their humor. The mother-in-law is in the middle of everything to do with your life. Very funny if you can say to the men *Mama zalozhnik* (hostage) and point to yourself.

I joke with her Papa and have my fiancée ask if her mother has nagged him enough today. He laughs about that one every time and says *DA!*

Also it is very funny if when asked why you are going to marry an Ukrainian woman? You answer, so my MIL is 9,000 KM away. I win them over each time with that one. I cannot say it in Russian, but my fiance is in on the joke by now.



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## APPENDIX

### RWD's Ten Commandments



1. Never send money to someone you have never met.
2. Always have a back-up plan
3. Work to eliminate any agency from your communications.
4. Always get the lady's home address and home phone number as early as possible.
5. Verify the ladies you are writing to are real.
6. Do not fall in love with photos !!
7. Always be yourself. Show the ladies the real you. Be truthful. Use current photos.
8. Do not rush into this! Take your time and be methodical, not impulsive, about this process.
9. Treat international dating the same as dating someone from your home country. The biggest difference is the cost - travel, phone, etc. This is an expensive process, don't believe anyone that tells you otherwise.
10. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A MAIL-ORDER BRIDE !** They do not exist



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# APPENDIX

## Russglish Glossary

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EW with limited English fluency often use quaint expressions in their e-mails and agency profiles, probably due to their picking up a wrong translation in their Russian-English dictionaries or using some electronic text-translation program.

**Active rest:** Physical exercise, sports activities.  
**Attitude:** Intention.

**Bad habits:** Heavy drinking, smoking, drugs.  
**Balanced, well-balanced, counter-balanced:** Even-tempered, calm, stable, sensible.  
**Beautiful man:** Good, nice man.  
**Blunt:** Stupid.  
**Book-keeper:** see Economist.

**Careful:** Caring.  
**Communicable, communicative:** sociable.  
**Considered:** Caring, understanding.  
**Coziness and comfort at home:** Home improvements, homemaking.  
**Create a family:** Get married.

**Director:** Equivalent of a Western manager.

**Economist:** Some accounting job.

**Favourite man:** Loved man.  
**Financially secure:** Able to support a family of 3 or 4 people comfortably.  
**Formed:** Possessing a higher education (see).

**Gay:** Cheerful, fun-loving.  
**Generous:** Giving, supportive, noble-minded.  
**Greedy:** Stingy, cheap, tight-fisted.  
**Growth:** Height.

**Higher:** Taller.  
**High/higher/highest education:** College or university degree.  
**High social position:** A position giving social status, such as top manager, business owner, professional.  
**Honourable:** Confident, independent.

**Intelligent:** Well-educated, well-mannered, clever, considerate, gentle, decent, faithful.  
**Intercourse:** Acquaintance.

**Lusty:** Affectionate, expansive.

**Manager:** Equivalent of a Western higher-level office worker, often just a glorified clerk.  
**Manly:** The traditional role of man as the family's head, defender and provider.  
**Middle (medium) education:** high school/professional education.

**Native person:** Soul mate.  
**Noodles on one's ears:** Gullible.

**Persistent:** Steady.  
**Proud:** Confident, independent.

**Provided, materially-provided:** Financially secure (see).  
**Purposeful:** Goal-oriented, achiever.

**Real man:** Manly (see).

**Responsive:** Responsible.

**Rest on (the) nature:** Relaxing in the countryside.

**Sensual:** Affectionate, passionate.

**Sexual:** Sexy.

**Strong family:** A good, "quality" family,

**Structure:** Profile (on IMB website).

**Survey:** Profile (on IMB website).

**Tactful:** Considerate.

**Temperamental:** Passionate.

**Well-to-do:** Middle/upper-middle class.

**Without material problems:** Financially secure (see).

**Womanly:** Feminine.



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## APPENDIX

### IMBRA

The **International Marriage Broker Regulation Act (IMBRA)** is a US Federal Statute approved in 2005 that requires background checks for all marriage visa sponsors, to address issues of domestic violence and abuse against non-citizens married or engaged to US citizens who have petitioned for them to immigrate to the US, including those who met through an International Marriage Broker (IMB).

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued in August, 2008 a report to Congressional Committees (freely downloadable as a [PDF file](#)) relating the extent to which US Government entities like the USCIS, the US Department of State and the US Department of Justice have implemented IMBRA - and evidencing that not all IMBRA regulations have been completely followed by all such entities involved.

However, we shall present the IMBRA regulations here and elsewhere as officially enacted, regardless of their current state of enforcement. Obviously, the term **WM** as used in what follows means **US citizen**.

IMBRA provides that an IMB must acquire certain background information - through direct documentation or an attestation from its WM client - before disclosing for a fee an EW client's personal contact information.

This distinction therefore excludes free-dating sites/operators from the category of IMBs, and therefore their obligation to comply with IMBRA regulations 😊.

The flowchart at right summarizes the interactions that IMBRA determines between WMs, EWs, IMBs and the US Government. □

A WM's decision to contact an EW through an IMB derives from having examined her profile on some IMB publication.

At this point, IMBRA requires the IMB to:

- Obtain from the WM information on his:
  - Marital history
  - Convictions for violence and abuse crimes
- Search the National Sex Offender Public Registry using the WM's name

Such WM information - collectively termed *IMBRA Disclosures* - must be communicated to the EW in question, along with the fact that he is interested in contacting her. If agreeable to be contacted, the EW must notify her

acceptance to the IMB in **writing**.

Only after this formality is observed can the IMB divulge contact her information to the WM - or act as communications go-between, depending on its business model.

Positive communications are normally followed by one or more face-to-face meetings, until a mutual decision is reached about the possibility of marriage.

If the WM and the EW decide to marry, they must also decide where and when, considering the alternatives afforded by the various types of US visas - see [US Visa Legislation](#).

The USCIS review of a I-129F visa petition includes using the WM's name and birthdate to search a number of databases on:

- Convicted sexual offenders
- Foreign fugitives
- Immigration violators
- Violent gang and terrorist organization members
- Wanted Persons

If anything comes up, the WM petitioner is asked to submit certified criminal conviction information - failure to do so entails denying his petition.

The USCIS also checks the WM petitioner's history of previous visa petitions.

The USCIS then sends all this information - along with the approved petition - to the US Department of State, where it is in turn sent to the US Embassy involved, to be both:

- Included in the pre-interview

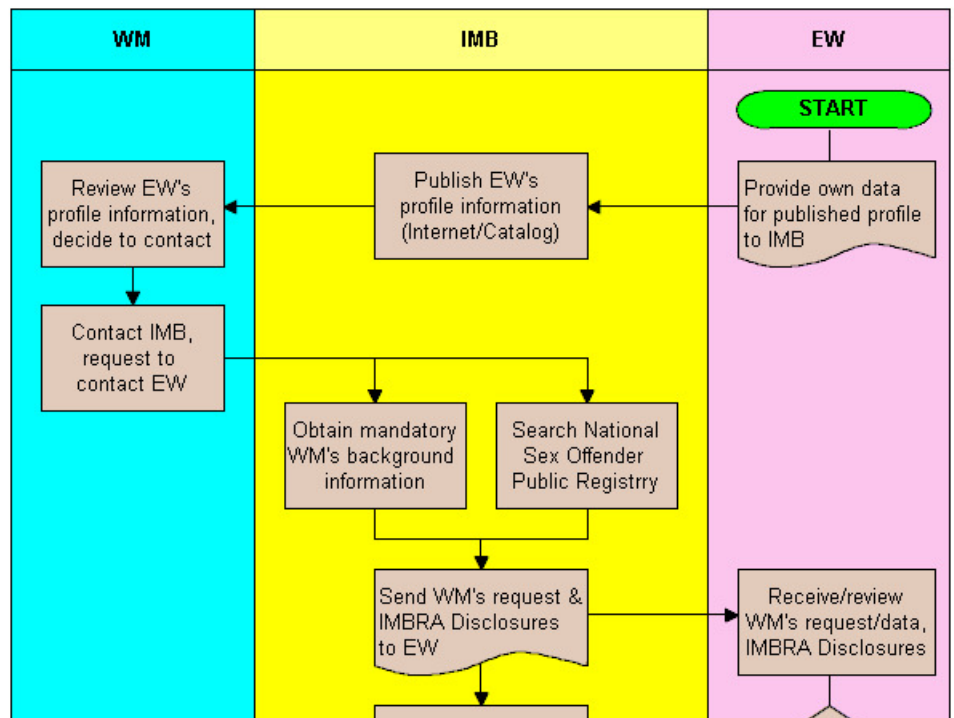
information sent to the Beneficiary EW

- Disclosed to the Beneficiary EW during the interview

In any case, a crucial point is reached with the EW's interview at her local US Embassy, where the petition for her visa is unarguably approved or rejected.

During the interview, the EW will also be asked to identify the IMB that the WM used to contact her, and whether it sent her the required *IMBRA Disclosures*.

A more detailed version of the flowchart at right is available at [RWD](#).



IMBRA compliance is among the many factors considered during the US Embassy interview, as well as the WM's history of any previous visa petitions. Therefore, an WM's and his IMB's compliance with IMBRA regulations are very important for success in this already pitfall-strewn venture 😊.

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## APPENDIX

### RWD's Scammer Scorecard


















This tool is **NOT** intended as a fail-safe method for detecting scammers, but only as an aid to noticing SUSPICIOUS aspects in a relationship with an EW, particularly for people with little or no experience in this area. The higher the resulting score, the more careful you should be in your dealings with her.

**The final decision if she is really a scammer or not can ONLY be YOURS !**

OUR QUESTIONS (click on question mark for a brief explanation and a tip)	Explanation & Tip	YOUR ANSWERS Blue=OK, Orange=questionable, Red=bad (do not answer if not applicable)
<b>GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>		
1. She initiated the first contact		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
2. She is younger than you by		<input type="radio"/> 0-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-20 years <input type="radio"/> 20+ years
<b>HER LETTERS</b>		
3. Acknowledge your remarks		<input type="radio"/> Always/mostly <input type="radio"/> Occasionally <input type="radio"/> Never
4. Answer your queries		<input type="radio"/> Always/mostly <input type="radio"/> Occasionally <input type="radio"/> Never
5. Say she is falling in love with you after		<input type="radio"/> 1-2 <input type="radio"/> 3-4 <input type="radio"/> 4+ letters
6. Contain explicitly your name		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
7. Show SUBJECT:'s/Re:'s corresponding to those in your preceding letters		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
8. Consist of long texts, speaking only of herself		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
9. Are only sent through an agency/site		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
10. Portions of their text can be found on anti-scam sites		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<b>HER PROFILE</b>		
11. Appears on more than 1 dating site under the SAME name on		<input type="radio"/> 2-3 <input type="radio"/> 4-5 <input type="radio"/> 5+ dating sites
12. Appears on more than 1 dating site under DIFFERENT names on		<input type="radio"/> 2-3 <input type="radio"/> 4-5 <input type="radio"/> 5+ dating sites
13. Appears on anti-scam site(s)/forum(s)		<input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 2+ site(s)/forum(s)
<b>HER PHOTOS</b>		
14. Show her in revealing clothing (e.g. mini bikini, transparent lingerie, etc.)		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No



15. Show her in very little clothing, or none at all		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<b>HER CONTACT INFORMATION</b>		
16. Her email nickname contains part(s) of her name(s).		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
17. On request, she gives her phone number willingly		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
18. Her phone number is valid		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
19. Having no personal phone, she arranges for alternative ways to talk to you		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
20. On request, she gives her postal address willingly		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
21. Her postal address is valid		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<b>HER PARTNER/RELATIONSHIP PRE-REQUISITES</b>		
22. Her partner's max desired age range is above her age by		<input type="radio"/> 0-10 <input type="radio"/> 11-20 <input type="radio"/> 20+ years
23. Her partner should be well off, financially secure, successful, etc.		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
24. The type of relationship she offers is: intimate, sex, etc.		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
25. The type of relationship she offers is: any		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<b>HER NEEDS/REQUESTS</b>		
26. She complains about her current living conditions		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
27. She hints at her need for generic help		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
28. She hints that a gift/gift(s) would be welcome		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
29. She asks for money		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<input type="button" value="Calculate her score"/> <input type="button" value="Reset choices"/>	Score <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	based on your <input type="text"/> answers	

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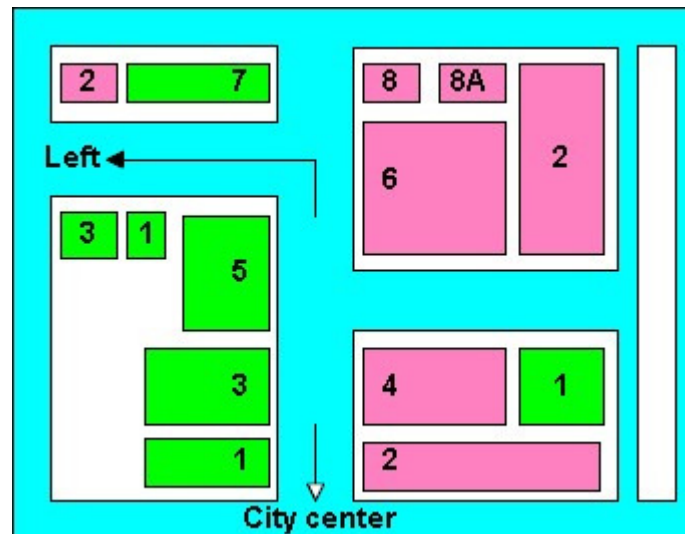
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## APPENDIX

### Locating an FSU Street Address

In most Western cities, the numbering of street houses follows a scheme that makes locating an address a rather easy task.

- Proceeding outwards from a city center, houses on the left side of a street are assigned consecutive odd numbers, those on the right side even numbers
- Cross streets follow the same



A typical house-numbering scheme for European streets

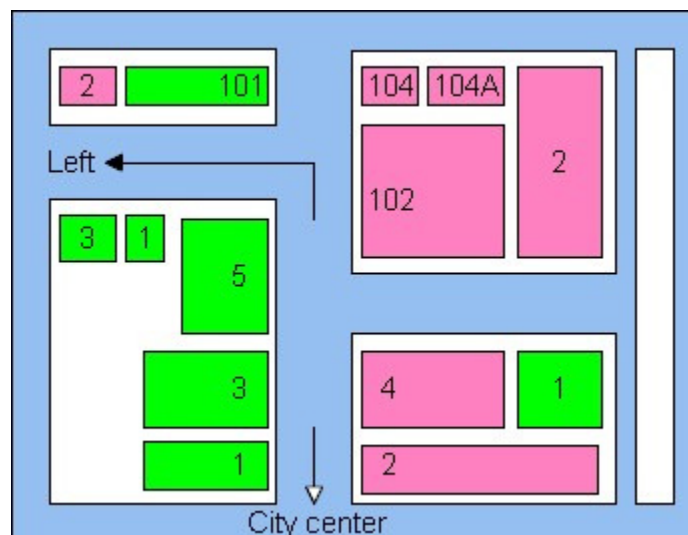
- pattern  
in a  
clockwise  
direction  
(left  
turn)
- Array  
houses  
add a  
letter to  
the  
number  
of the  
house  
directly  
on the  
street

The concept  
of  
numbering  
based on  
street  
**blocks** is  
not  
universal.

In the USA, it usually affects  
house numbers - houses in the  
first block are given numbers 0-99,  
those in the second block  
numbers 100-199, and so on,  
which means that the numbers  
from one block to the next have  
'gaps' in them, jumping for  
instance from 4 to 106 across an  
intervening side street.

In the FSU, it could be any mixture  
of the above, with interesting local  
variations.

Therefore, when looking for an  
FSU address, you had better enlist  
the help of a local, for instance a  
taxi driver, until you gain enough



A typical house-numbering scheme for US streets

experience to navigate its poorly charted waters independently 😊.

See below the 'explanation' by an RWD member living in Moscow.

A lot of the misnumbering occurred when cities like Moscow experienced housing "infill" - as urban planners of Khrushchev times began to infill empty spaces and, instead of relying on a logical mapping system, they simply filled the space and assigned numbers as they were available.

If I were to give you our Moscow address for example it might look something like this: Somewherevskaya Avenue, 23-7-311. You would understand the need to find 23 first, as this is the "house".

Next you'd have to find the "korpus", and a house can have many which in this case would be 7 (and A, B, C, etc. i.e. multiple entrances to the same house). It's confusing because a "house" can have more than one "building". Several buildings could be house #23, but the buildings themselves will be numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, for example.

Having finally found the correct entrance, you'd proceed up using the lift or stairs to apartment #311. It could be up on the 8th floor and as you can see from the address of 23-7-311, nothing in the address speaks to the 8th floor.

In Moscow, most people speak of where they live in terms of a nearby Metro station.

- "Where do you live?"
- "Oh, I live at Stanza Kievskaya"
- "What is your address?"
- "31 Akademika....just call me at my mobile number, and I'll walk out to the bus stop and escort you to my apartment. It's #7, apt. 311"

For example, we live in a large street in Northwest Moscow. Going to a city map, I can see where my street begins. The first numbered house is 2. We live at 6. You'd think it to be just slightly north. Well it's north all right, but about 2.5 miles north and in a heavily populated area of Northwest Moscow. There are lots of spaces/houses between 2 and 6. Its just that, years ago, there were only a few where today there are hundreds.

Hundreds of these buildings don't even have numbers. The sequence goes like this:

**2-4**-(a 1/2 mile of buildings without numbers)-

**5-6-7-8-10** etc. then

**26-28-30-26** (yep, another 26) -

**24-30** (yikes, another 30) -

**32** (across from 32 is 11) -

**34** (across street from 34 is 59) -

**36-38**, and so on up.

Proper Russian etiquette indicates that you "receive" your guest, i.e. you go meet them at the nearby bus stop if they're local or you meet them at the Metro station if they're from out of town. We live a 15+ minute bus ride from our Metro.

When your guests leave, you return them to the spot where you picked them up. For children, female or an elderly guest, in the evening you walk them back home if they're from your general neighborhood.



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## APPENDIX

### Visiting the FSU

As we mentioned in [Chapter 5](#), the FSU countries may indeed feel initially **foreign**, owing to surviving legacies from Soviet times as well as to often poorly maintained infrastructures.

However, most of the rumors you hear about conditions there may be outdated nowadays - but some of them have acquired the status of oft-repeated *urban legends* over time, and are being kept alive by the sensationalism that motivates many Western media, some even with a political agenda for doing so.

We shall try to debunk some of them - and confirm a few others 😊.

### Holidays

Russia used the **Julian** calendar until the Soviet takeover, when the Western **Gregorian** calendar was adopted in 1918, which explains why a revolution started on November 7th, 1917 is referred to as the October Revolution (October 25th Julian, a difference of about two weeks).

The Orthodox Church of Russia still uses the Julian calendar. As a consequence, a number of traditional religious festivities are celebrated on the *old* dates in most FSU countries:

- Christmas: January 7th
- New Year: January 14th

In the countries where Eastern Orthodoxy predominates, many celebrate **both** the Gregorian and Julian New Year holidays, with the Gregorian day as a civil holiday and the Julian date as the *Old New Year*, a religious holiday - see also [Celebrating Christmas and the New Year in Ukraine/Russia](#).

In practice, this means that the December 23rd-January 15th period is mostly festive.

Other festivities of Soviet origin are still celebrated in some FSU countries, notably Russia:

- Defender of the Fatherland Day: February 23rd
- International Women's Day: March 8th
- Spring and Labor Day: May 1st
- Victory Day: May 9th
- Russia Day: June 12th
- Unity Day: November 4th

### Crime

The crime rate in FSU countries is not significantly worse - nor better - than in Western countries.

However, a significant aspect is that, since the private possession of weapons - and firearms in particular - is **illegal**, there are far fewer gun-related crimes than, say, in the USA - not that being attacked by a knife-wielding hoodlum can be any pleasanter there, though 😊.

Can you be pick-pocketed while riding on Moscow's Metro ? Sure, as you can on the New York Subway or the London Underground.

Can you be mugged by a group of drunken youths shaking broken beer bottles at you in a dark, run-down Kiev neighborhood at night ? Sure, as you can in a Parisian *banlieu* or in a Roman *sobborgo*.

In essence, apply the same common-sense rules you normally adopt at home:

- Avoid dubious city areas and seedy joints after dark
- Do not flaunt your material possession - wads of money, expensive-looking watches and jewelry, etc. - for all and sundry to notice, and possibly become covetous of
- Don't go out of your way to make yourself noticed in public places

However, if you consider yourself already *street-smart* in your own environment, the sobering comparisons made

by a transplanted EW may be worth reading - see [Street-Smart Here and There](#) in the Appendix.  
Should you worry about the infamous Russian **mafia**?

Not really - unless you intend to establish a business activity in some major city there, for which they might solicitously invite you to provide it with their protective *roof* - as 'insurance' against possible mishaps and Acts not of God. As a passing visitor, you're too small a fish to interest them - they have much more rewarding affairs to occupy their time 😊.



## Alcohol

The consumption of alcohol - *vodka* in particular - is a problem in the FSU as in many other cold-weather countries: alcohol is a vaso-dilator that gives that pleasant warm feeling - similar to blushing - to a skin where cold has caused capillary constriction, our defensive mechanism to preserve body heat. The problem is that this pleasant effect is only temporary, and further drinking is necessary to maintain it.

The first major reform program introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 concerned alcohol and was aimed at curbing widespread alcoholism in the URSS. Prices of vodka, wine and beer were raised, and their sales were restricted, people caught drunk at work were prosecuted, drinking on long-distance trains and in public places was banned, scenes of alcohol consumption were cut out from movies.



Vodka

The reform did not have any significant effect on alcoholism in the country - but economically was a hard blow to the state budget after alcohol production migrated to the black market - and was quietly abandoned after Gorbachev was ousted from power in 1991 by Boris Yeltsin, himself a serious vodka drinker.

However, alcoholism and drunkenness seem to be mostly restricted to certain age and social groups - see [In Defense of Russian Men](#) in the Appendix.

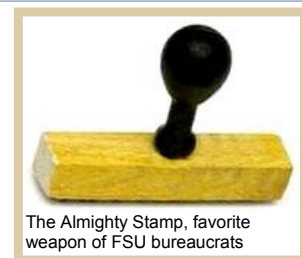
## Documents

FSU bureaucracy has inherited from Soviet times an inordinate passion and respect for official documents and stamps - the latter not the postage variety but what is affixed to documents by heavily pounding them with a rubber-tipped implement inked from a suitable pad, thereby **really** making them *official* 😊.

You should **always** have your passport with you - your only official form of identification there, which local police may require you to produce. As a precaution, you should also keep separately a photocopy of its most significant pages, which will aid you greatly in case you lose your original and must request a duplicate from your Consular authorities abroad.

Most FSU countries require their visitors to fill out a form in duplicate, giving information about place and length of stay, foreign cash carried, and a multitude of other details. One copy of this form is handed over to border-control officers upon arrival, the other must be kept handy until departure, equally subject to possible checks by the local police.

In **Russia**, you also have to **register within 3 days of your arrival** at the local **UVIR** (Office of Foreign Visa Registration), unless this formality was already taken care of by your travel agency or will be performed directly by the hotel that you have booked for your stay.



The Almighty Stamp, favorite weapon of FSU bureaucrats



An official, stamped document

## Money, Cash and Cards

You will need money to spend while 'over there'. This can be a mix of cash and card money.

For some obscure reason, FSU banks are highly suspicious of banknotes not in pristine conditions, and will often refuse to change them into local currency unless so - therefore if you are carrying cash along, remember to obtain it from your bank as per FSU requirements, and check out bank opening times/days in the area you are visiting beforehand.

It has been found that, in a dire emergency, you can often 'restore' a crumpled bill to crispness simply by ironing it carefully on a smooth surface - maybe it would be wise to refresh your ironing skills before departure 😊.

Horror stories have circulated for years about credit/debit cards being easily cloned in FSU countries. The current situation appears much less dramatic than before, so the normal cautions that you use back home - such as not letting your card disappear from your sight - should be sufficient to protect you from possible risks in this area.



A recommended method to 'revive' crumpled currency

## Accommodation

### Lodgings - Hotel or Apartment ?

Choosing either alternative obviously depends on your budget possibilities. For longer stays, a rented apartment is decidedly a more convenient solution, also allowing you more privacy. There are several real-estate agencies renting flats in all major FSU cities, and many have their own Internet website where you can explore their offers for price, location, services, appliances, furnishing, etc.

Many rented apartments feature reinforced steel doors with several locks, so it may be wise to let their representatives show you the appropriate procedures for opening/closing them upon your arrival - fumbling with them in a dimly lit corridor after having disembarked tired from a long flight may sorely try your patience.

One item worth checking is whether hot water is assured as independently available 24/7, since the water-distribution system may not be 100% reliable at all times in some FSU areas.

### Public Toilets

Other horror stories concern public lavatories in the FSU and, unfortunately, are mostly still true.

Public toilets usually have no seat, and often are of the squat-down type, their use not easy to master by the non-initiated or gymnastically inept.

Also, the availability of toilet paper is seldom guaranteed 😞.

If it may console you, what is no longer true is the sandpaper softness of FSU shop-sold toilet rolls, now mostly up to Western standards of sensibility.

Water quality varies widely from place to place, so it is probably safer to use tap water only for washing and cooking, and drink bottled water.



Typical FSU public toilets, seatless (left) and squat (right)



Water may be a bit rusty, too

### Electricity

Electricity throughout the FSU is **220 Volt / 50 Hz** A/C current. Most of the sockets are standard European-size for double round-pin plugs. Electrical appliances from the US, Canada, Britain will need **adapters/current converters**

- you had better procure them in your own country before departure, they are difficult to find there.

Do not be surprised by occasional power outages, and have a portable flashlight and/or candles available for possible emergencies.



FSU plug and wall socket

## Urban Transportation

In addition to traditional public means of large-scale city transport like metros, tramways, buses, etc. the FSU countries also offer some peculiar local varieties, like *marshrutkas* and 'private' taxis.

- A *marshrutka* - from *marshrutnoye taksi* (literally 'routed taxi') and originally the French *marcheroute* - is a privately owned minivan operating as minibus over a licensed route, allowing passengers to stand as well as sit down, a not exceedingly comfortable arrangement particularly in hot weather, since its windows are always kept rigorously closed 😞.
- You can also flag down a passing private car, ask the driver if he/she can take you to your intended destination, and negotiate a 'fare' for the service - obviously, some fluency in Russian is helpful for this 😊.



Marshrutka

## Driving a Car in the FSU

Depending on your travel plans, you may have to rent a car for your whole stay or part of it. If so, you should remember that:

- Most FSU male drivers are rather reckless - some bordering on the apparently suicidal 😞
- Many FSU roads and streets are in a bad state of repair



An FSU country road.  
Foreign visitors have malignly commented that what the signs on the pole at right really mean is:

- TOP: a foreign driver is buried here 😞
- BOTTOM: the depth in **meters** of the potholes, not an impossible-to-achieve 70 **Km/h** speed limit

Remember that traffic accidents are often handled by FSU police forces in a decidedly nationalistic fashion - see [Westerners Driving in the FSU](#).

By the way, being a pedestrian may be even **more** hazardous to health: having a green traffic light for crossing over to the other side of an FSU street is **not** an absolute guarantee that approaching cars and trucks will stop to let you pass unscathed.

Look around carefully before stepping down from the curb, and be wary of oncoming motorists with evil glints in their eyes 😊!



*Why waste a new pneumatic hammer, when good old pick and shovel are still available?*

Some claim that the poor state of maintenance of FSU roads is attributable to a legacy from Soviet times, i.e. a top-heavy work organization where the controllers heavily outnumber the controlled

## Dealing with FSU Police (Militsia)



FSU Police may be lurking at hidden speed traps and stop you - even when you are not overspeeding - to ask for your documents (passport, driving license, etc.). If you see a car approaching from the opposite direction flashing its headlights, this is a warning sign from a fellow motorist who noticed their ambush lair 😊.



Militsia car

Militsia men are poorly paid, particularly the lower ranks, and some may try to supplement their meager official income by accusing drivers of infringing local traffic laws/regulations, real or imaginary - no vehicle in the FSU conforms to all of them 😊.

Our members have found from experience that the best reactions to their possible extortion attempts usually consists in:

- Maintaining a stern and unsmiling countenance - under these circumstances, smiles are considered as cringing and an implicit sign of weakness/guilt
- Not uttering a single word you may know in Russian - use sign language instead if necessary - and alternatively:
  - Hand over your documents with a bill of foreign currency (say, \$10) unobtrusively placed inside one of them - which will have magically disappeared when your documents are handed back to you
  - Play dumb over your alleged 'crime' until they let you go in frustration - if there is other traffic and possible targets out there, they are less inclined to waste their time on an awkward-to-handle case like yours

In crowded public places like metro stations and city centers, *Militsia* often pick out and check the identity of people who look 'alien' and/or are poorly dressed, as possible illegal immigrants.

Remember this if you venture outside alone on your own. However, WM are seldom bothered when in the company of their EW, who will probably bawl the policemen out loudly for their effrontery if they dare harass you longer than normally acceptable 😊 😊.



FSU policemen spot-checking passers-by's documents

## Public Health Services

Public health care in the FSU is usually of acceptable quality by Western standards - and much cheaper. However, FSU doctors may not be up-to-date with the most recent Western techniques - and their equipment usually is not.

The various FSU governments appear to have underestimated the dangers of HIV diffusion, and recent statistics paint a preoccupying picture - unprotected sex is best avoided, unless you can fully trust your partner 😊.

## Cultural and Recreational Activities

Culture has a long and revered tradition in the FSU countries, from the times of Imperial Russia through the Soviet era to the present day.

The results of [RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey](#) in the Appendix show that almost 70% of EW who married WM possessed a university-level education.

You may find that your EW likes attending certain cultural events - comparatively cheaper than in the West and therefore more widely affordable - such as:

- Theaters, concerts, operas and ballets
- Shows, exhibitions and museums
- Public poetry readings and book discussions

If you had little or no previous exposure to them, you may well find that they will open entirely new and previously unsuspected horizons in your life:



The Bolshoi theater (1776), Moscow

culture can become quite addictive - and beneficially so - in our stress-filled times 😊.

In addition to the above, other forms of recreation have a devoted following quite unlike in the West.



The Mariinsky theater (1860), St. Petersburg

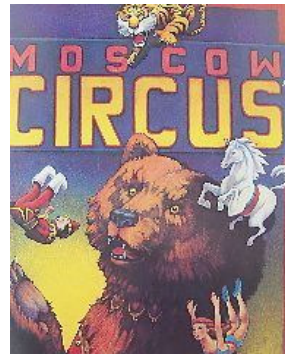
### The Circus

The FSU circus is a **serious** business 😊.

Many circus performers are graduates of Moscow's famous **Russian Academy of Theatrical Arts** (established in 1878), and Moscow also hosts the world's oldest permanent circus building.



Moscow's Russian Academy of Theatrical Arts (GITIS)



Moscow Circus poster



Moscow Circus on Tsvetnoi Boulevard, opened in 1880

### Banyas

An experience most consider worth trying - not for the faint of heart, medically speaking 😊 - is a visit to a *banya* steam bath, the Russian equivalent of a Scandinavian *sauna*.

*Banyas* can range from luxurious commercial establishments in major cities to a cabin attached to a private *dacha* (cottage) in a village.

A *banya* usually includes a changing room, a washing room, and the steam room where high, dry heat is made by a wood-fired stove. After the first good sweat is induced, it is customary to cool off in the breeze outdoors, or splash around in cold water in a lake, river or swimming pool.

*Chapkas* (conical felt hats) are used to protect the hair and tolerate higher temperatures without feeling light-headed or faint, and patrons often hit themselves or others with birch *venik* to stimulate blood circulation.



Boris Kustodiev's *Russian Venus* (1926), relaxing in a *banya*

### Chess

Chess is another favorite national pastime, with hundreds of thousands - if not millions - of devoted players and followers throughout all strata of society, from worldwide celebrities to old-age pensioners.



Violinist David Oistrakh and composer Sergei Prokofiev

### ***Shops, Street Markets and Street Vendors***

Many FSU cities have in the recent past opened Western-style department stores, shopping centers and shops, and Moscow's famous GUM is no longer a one-of-its-kind, except for its old-style uniqueness.

Make sure to check opening days/times.

Also mostly gone, at least in major FSU cities, are the shops where buying something entailed the elaborate ritual of:

1. Approaching a sales counter and placing your order
2. Receiving a paper slip showing the cost of your purchase
3. Taking the paper slip over to the cash desk and paying
4. Returning to the sales counter to finally pick up your purchase

This ritual having to be repeated at each sales counter - of course 😊.

The tradition of street markets and street vendors of food and beverages (**kvass** is a mildly alcoholic, fermented beverage made from black or rye bread) still persists in many FSU cities.

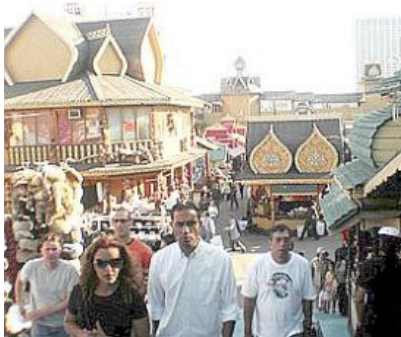
Street kiosks may sell anything from fresh fruit to grilled meats.



Moscow's historic GUM department store (1893)



FSU food market



The *Vernisazh* flea market at Izmailovo, Moscow



Food kiosk, and a McDonald's in the background



Street vendor of *kvass*



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## APPENDIX

### Celebrating Christmas and the New Year in Ukraine/Russia

A description by an EW member of RWD from Ukraine.

Some useful information on how Christmas and New Year are celebrated here in Ukraine versus Western countries. Of course, if you are married to a Russian/Ukrainian lady, then you will be already familiar with most/all of what I am about to say...

To begin with, New Year is a much more important holiday for Ukrainian/Russian people than Christmas.

We celebrate New Year on December 31st - January 1st. We even have a New Year tree rather than a Christmas tree. Usually our people celebrate New Year for three or more days, but for the majority of older people, Christmas is a more important holiday and of course this is a big holiday for religious people.

For younger people, especially those in their twenties, celebrating New Year on New Year's Eve makes them feel part of the international community and less isolated from the rest of the world. We start to say "Happy New Year" at midnight of December 31st and usually 2-3 days before, people start greeting each other with a phrase that is very common for us: "WITH THE COMING HOLIDAY!".

To my mind, all the preparations for celebrating the New Year are the same all over the world, that's why there is no special local sense to describe. But I would like to mention what kind of tradition we have at midnight of December 31st. Usually when the clock starts chiming 12, people try to think of a treasured wish and we all believe that this wish will certainly come true. Then we toast with champagne and say each other: "Happy New Year!". Lots of people go outdoors and light fireworks.

But it is not appropriate in our country to grab the nearest person and start kissing him/her; so, be careful please, as it may have not very good consequences - you may only kiss your wife or girlfriend.

Well, what about presents? I think it depends on your imagination; so I can only mention that there are no forbidden gifts on New Year and Christmas holidays. But, it is very common in our culture to give money to family members, as it is much easier when they buy what they really need or want. But nobody gives money on these holidays to friends - only presents. By the way, everybody knows that our women like to receive flowers on almost every occasion; of course, you can give flowers to your woman/wife, but in addition to a present, since giving only flowers is not very nice.

I would like to add some more information about our Christmas. In Ukraine/Russia we have Orthodox Christmas on January 6th-7th. Usually, we celebrate this holiday only with relatives. Most children buy cakes and go to visit their Godparents. In return, Godparents buy very good presents for them and treat the children with home made food and sweets. There are lots of traditions and customs of celebrating New Year holidays in villages and they are very interesting in their own way.

Regarding New Year and Christmas days, I can't help mentioning the Old New Year. We celebrate this holiday on January 13th-14th and this is more of a religious holiday in comparison with the New Year, which is a state holiday. A long time ago, our people celebrated New Year according to the Gregorian calendar; so it falls on 13-14. From January 1918 - i.e. after the October Revolution of 1917 - with changing a power, we changed our traditions as well and started to celebrate New Year, according to the Julian calendar, on December 31-Jan. That's why we still have a tradition of celebrating Old New Year, especially among older people.

I wish everyone Merry Christmas and a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year! And if you are still looking for that special someone to share your life with, I wish you the best of luck with your search in 2009!

Below are a few phrases you may find useful, with their phonetic pronunciation.



ENGLISH	RUSSIAN	UKRAINIAN
New Year	Noviy god	Noviy rik
Christmas	Razhdestvo	Rizdvo
Happy New Year	S Novim godom	Z Novim rokom
Merry Christmas	Schaslivovo Rozhdestva	Schaslivogo Rizdva
Old New Year	Stariy Noviy god	Stariy Noviy rik
Happy Old New Year	S Starim Novim godom	Z Starim Novim rokom
New Year greetings	Novogodnie pozhelaniya	Novorichni pobazhannya
Great Father Frost	Ded Moroz	Did Moroz
Snow Maiden	Snegurochka	Sniguron'ka
With the coming holiday	S Nastupauschim	Z Nastupauchim
Present	Podarok	Podarunok



If you are coming to Ukraine and you end up meeting the parents/grandparents of your girlfriend/wife, it is worth bearing in mind that you could really impress them by wishing them Merry Christmas or Happy New Year in Ukrainian, since foreigners are generally not expected to know any Ukrainian at all.

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## APPENDIX

### RWD's Cross-Cultural Marriage Survey

In late 2008 RWD initiated a survey aimed at gathering data on cross-cultural marriages, i.e. marriages involving men mostly from North America and Europe, and women from other parts of the world.

The data were validated and analyzed by an outside consultant, hired for the purpose of assuring both technical expertise and a non-biased evaluation.

What follows is an abstract of the survey findings. A summary report may be found at [GoodWife.com](http://GoodWife.com).

### Respondents

The survey questionnaire was distributed through various channels, and valid responses were received from **1,700** people:

- 1,476 Western men (86.2 %)
- 237 non-Western women (13.8 %)

This survey represents by far the largest sampling of cross-cultural marriages ever conducted.

The number of WM-EW marriages in the sample was about half, therefore the general conclusions to be drawn from the survey results are also applicable - to a large extent - to the subgroup that we are most interested in here.

**For the sake of simplicity, from now on we shall therefore assume these results as applying directly to WM-EW marriages.**

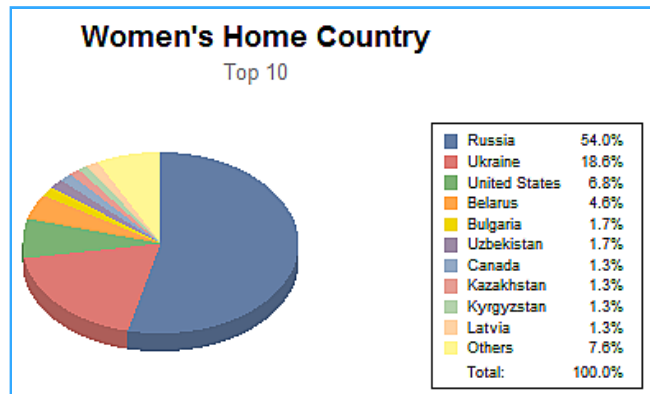
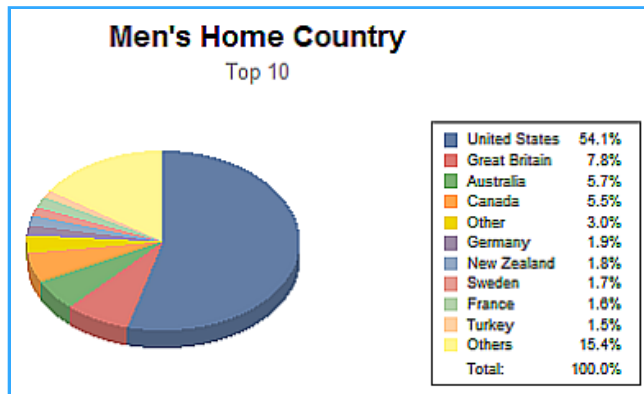
### Home Nationality

Question A003: *What is your home country?*  
Question A004: *What is the home country of your current/former spouse?*

North American men (from USA & Canada) are the majority (almost 60%), followed by South Pacific men (from Australia & New Zealand, 7.5%), and European men (about 5%). These figures may be skewed due to the channels used to advertise the survey and distribute its questionnaire.

EW are mostly from Russia and Ukraine, the most populous FSU countries. The table at right shows the numerical distribution of all respondents by continent, the two pie diagrams below the percentual distribution of respondents from the top 10 home countries.

CONTINENT	Males	Females
North America	915	19
South America	20	15
West Europe	225	2
East Europe	122	67
Asia	36	142
Australia	111	0
Other	44	1
TOTAL	1,473	246

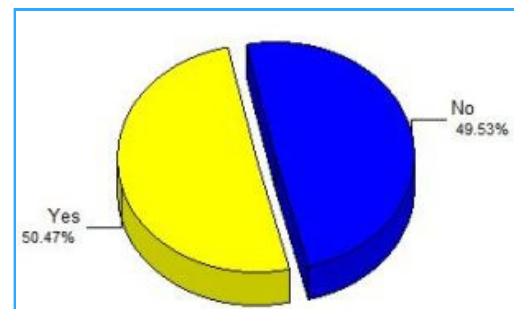


### Previous Marital Status

Question A010: *Were you previously married to someone from your own country?*

The marital status of respondents prior to their cross-cultural marriage.

Practically half of them had had a previous local marriage.



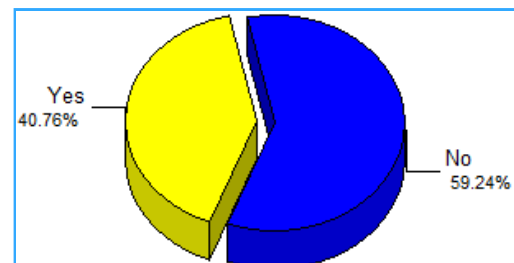
### Current Marital Status

Question A006: *Are you divorced from your cross-cultural spouse?*

The marital status of respondents at the time of this survey.

A 41% divorce rate (**Yes** in the pie diagram at right) is lower than the 50% usually cited as applying to Western couples, for instance in the USA and other Western countries.

A WM-EW marriage is not therefore a guaranteed success, but appears to fare better than a domestic marriage - which, given the many more difficulties to be faced and overcome, is somewhat encouraging.



### Previous Children

Question A011: *Did you bring children of a former marriage into your cross-cultural marriage?*

Approximately 1/3 of the respondents (27% WM, 33% EW) brought children from a previous local marriage into their new,

cross-cultural marriage.



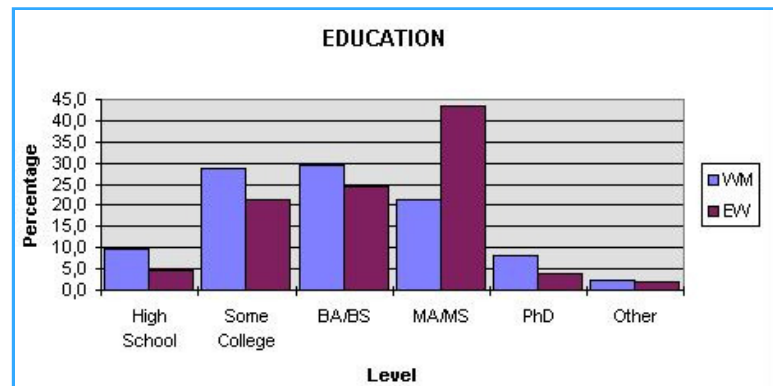
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## Education

Question A129: *What is the highest level of formal education you have achieved?*

Almost 70% of EW possess a university-level education, compared to about 60% of WM.

The EW respondents therefore appear on average to be more highly educated than the WM respondents.



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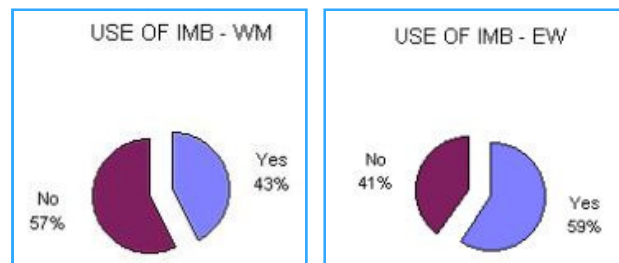
## Courtship

### Source of Contact

A014: *Did you meet your current/former spouse with the assistance of an International Marriage Broker (IMB)?*

IMBs appear to be a vehicle more favored by EW (about 60%) than by WM (43%) for cross-cultural encounters leading to marriage.

This is probably due to the EW's fewer opportunities for international travel.



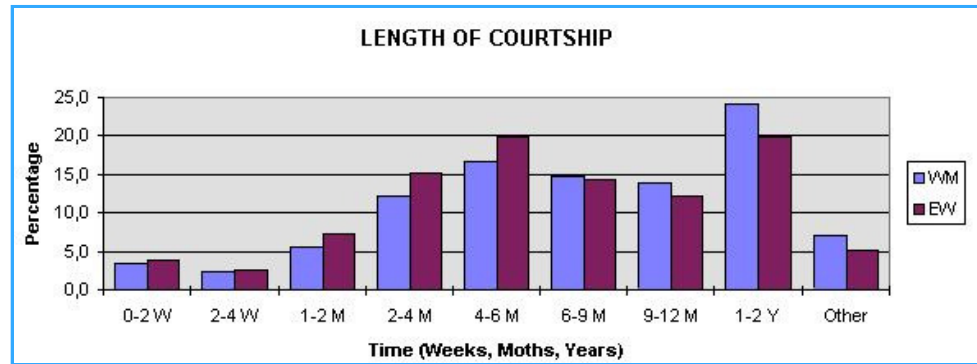
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## Length of Courtship

Question A016: *How much time elapsed between your first contact (email, telephone or meeting) and your decision to marry?*

About 60% of the respondents decided to get married after **at least 4 months** of having contacted each other.

See below the possible consequences of quicker decisions on the subsequent divorce rate.

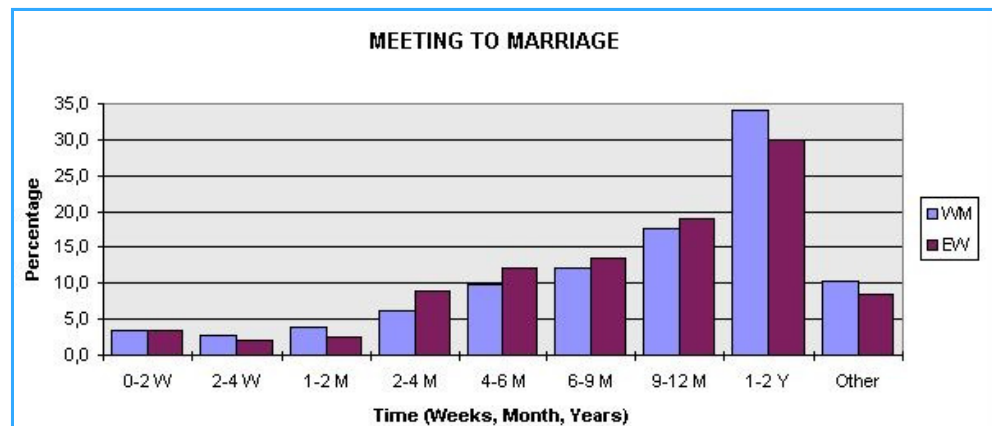


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## Meeting to Marriage

Question A017: *How much time elapsed between your first meeting and your marriage to your current/former spouse?*

The question is slightly different from the preceding one, in that it considers the time elapsed from the first **real** contact (meeting) to the **actual** marriage, rather than to a **decision** to eventually marry (accepted proposal).



WM appears slightly more 'cautious' in the 1st year, less so afterwards.

However, this is



probably influenced  
by the time it takes  
to obtain  
immigration visas,  
particularly for US  
WM.

## Marriage

### Age Gap at Marriage

Question A005: *In what year were you married?*  
Question A007: *What was your age when you married?*  
Question A021: *What was your spouse's age when you married?*

An interesting survey result concerns the average ages of WM and EW at the time of their marriage, showing an age gap of **less than 10 years**.

Two points on which many international marriage brokers base their commercially-biased propaganda, i.e.:

1. Large age differences
2. Very young EW

do not seem to have overly influenced those who eventually **did** get married, and this may be among the causes of their lower divorce rate.



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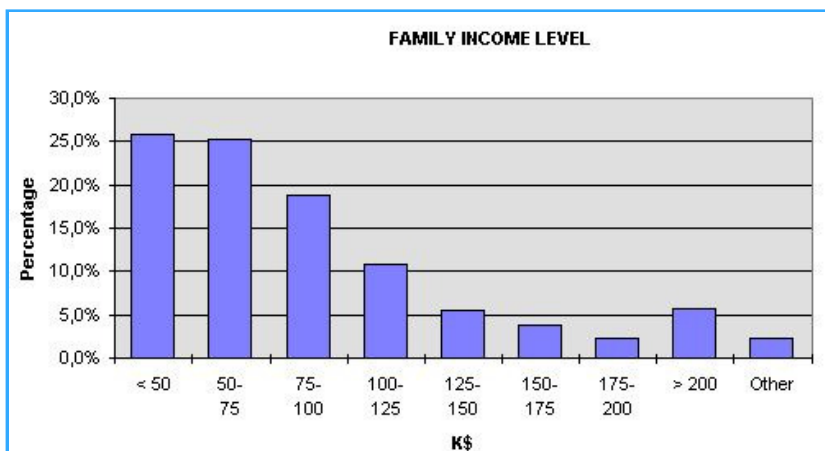
Respondent	Age	Spouse's Age	Age Difference
WM	40	30	9.8
EW	32	41	8.6
Average			9.2

### Earning Capacity

Question A019: *What is/was your annual household income?*

More than half of the cross-cultural marriage families had an income of \$75,000 or less.

Therefore, this type of marriage does not appear to be affordable only by the wealthier WM, as is commonly assumed.



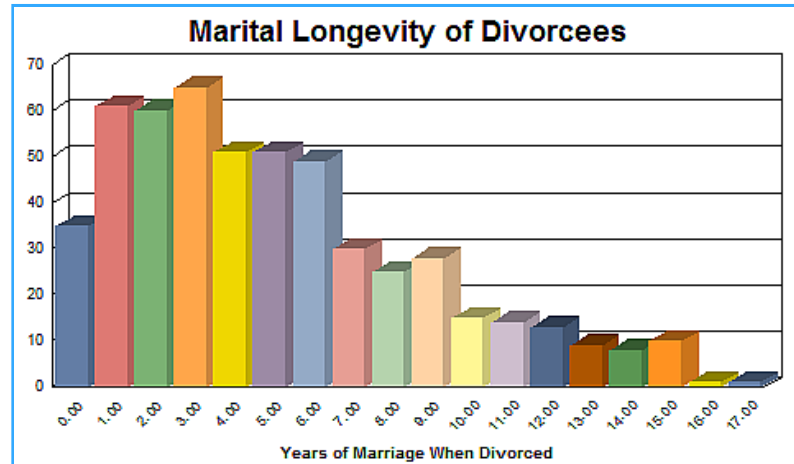
## Divorce

### Marital Longevity

Question A009: *In what year did you divorce?*

The first 3 marriage years appear to be the most critical, probably due to the initial adaptation difficulties from both parties involved.

The situation improves noticeably when progressing through to the 6th year, and seems to stabilize favorably after that.



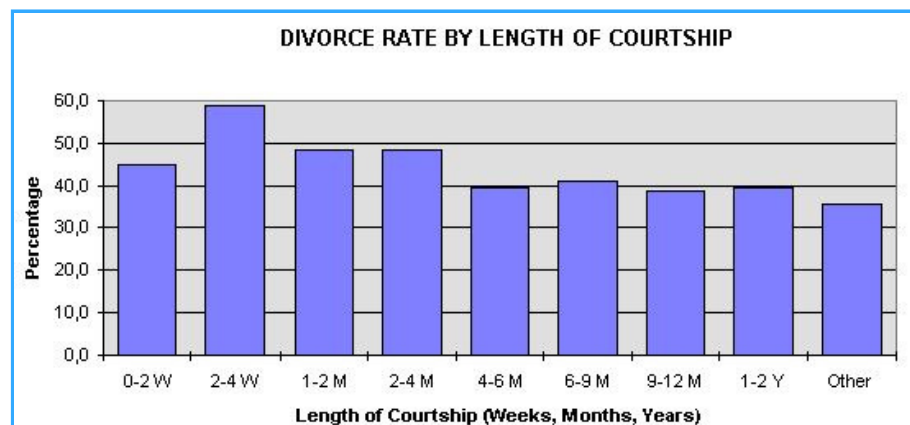
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### Courtship and Longevity

Question A016: *How much time elapsed between your first contact (email, telephone or meeting) and your decision to marry?*  
 Question A009: *In what year did you divorce?*

Do *One-Week Wonders*, i.e. those who rush into marriage after a very short courtship, have a higher divorce rate than the other, steadier types?

For those with 4 or less months of courtship, the divorce rate was 45%-59%, compared to those with courtship of 4 or more months, where the divorce rate was between 36%-41%.



It appears therefore that critical period for divorce is not at the 2-week courtship timeframe, but

rather within the 4-month timeframe.

Longer courtships are presumably less divorce-prone because the couple had more time and opportunity to get to know each other before marrying.

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## Causes of Divorce

Question A015: Please rate EACH of the following factors in terms of their contribution to your divorce, with a value from 1 (not a factor) to 5 (major factor).

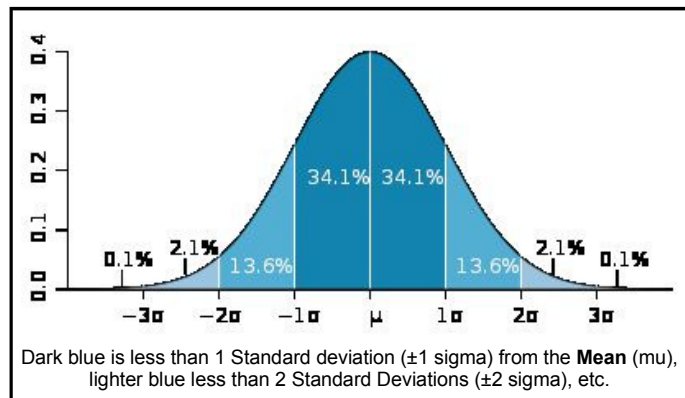
The questionnaire responses were submitted to a statistical evaluation, which requires a minimum of explanation.

The arithmetic **Mean** is measure of **central tendency** simply obtained by dividing the sum of numerical data by their quantity.

The **Standard Deviation** is a measure of **scatter**, i.e. of how tightly the data cluster around a peak value in their distribution.

In a *normal* distribution (equally distributed data, see diagram at right), a Standard Deviation of 1 on either side of the **Mean** accounts for 68.27 % of the data, of 2 for 95.45%, and so on.

In the two tables below, male and female assessment of the most significant factors in their divorce are ordered in **descending Mean** values, indicating which factors were considered more significant by either sex.



The Standard Deviations (St.Dev., 1.09-1.73 for males, 0.92-1.66 for females) signify that there was a substantial **agreement** in their answers, with the females exhibiting a more marked concurrence in their assessments than males.

WM's Responses			
Rank	Cause	Mean	St.Dev.
1	Commitment	3.25	1.51
2	Family goals	3.03	1.50
3	Communication	2.83	1.44
4	Sex	2.61	1.54
5	Infidelity	2.55	1.73
6	Financial	2.45	1.50
7	Stress	2.39	1.36

EW's Responses			
Rank	Cause	Mean	St.Dev.
1	Abuse	3.21	1.70
2	Family goals	2.98	1.48
3	Communication	2.75	1.37
4	Stress	2.73	1.56
5	Sex	2.66	1.56
6	Financial	2.62	1.66
7	Commitment	2.54	1.41

8	Cultural	2.11	1.29
9	Family	2.04	1.44
10	Abuse	1.97	1.50
11	Language	1.62	1.09
12	Children	1.61	1.22

8	Cultural	2.44	1.39
9	Infidelity	2.25	1.49
10	Family	2.10	1.45
11	Children	1.73	1.27
12	Language	1.58	0.92

Both sexes seem to agree on some of the most (*Family goals, Communication*) and least (*Family, Language, Children*) significant factors (with the exception of *Abuse* for Females, rated topmost). *Sex* is rated almost identically (4th and 5th ranks), and *Financial* at the same middle level (6th rank). *Stress* appears understandably of more weight in Female responses (4th rank compared to Men's 7th) as a consequence of their relocation and adaptation to new living conditions, probably due more to inter-personal problems than to the larger environment, since *Cultural* is rated a low 8th by both.

Finally, the consequences of spousal *Infidelity* appear to be viewed rather differently by Males (5th rank) than by Females (9th rank) 😊.



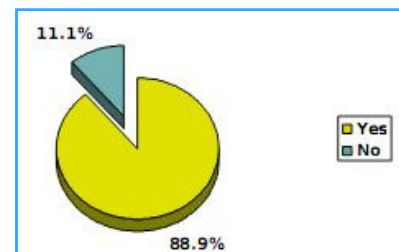
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## Try Again?

Question A018: *If your marriage were to fail (or did fail), would you consider another cross-cultural marriage ?*

The majority of respondents (almost 90%) thought that cross-cultural marriages were worth another try.

This means that they are still considered a valid option even by most the currently divorced respondents (40%).



## Conclusions

Survey results show that WM-EW marriages, compared to domestic marriages, usually:

- Suffer nearly 25% fewer divorces
- Involve a reasonable 9-year age difference



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## APPENDIX

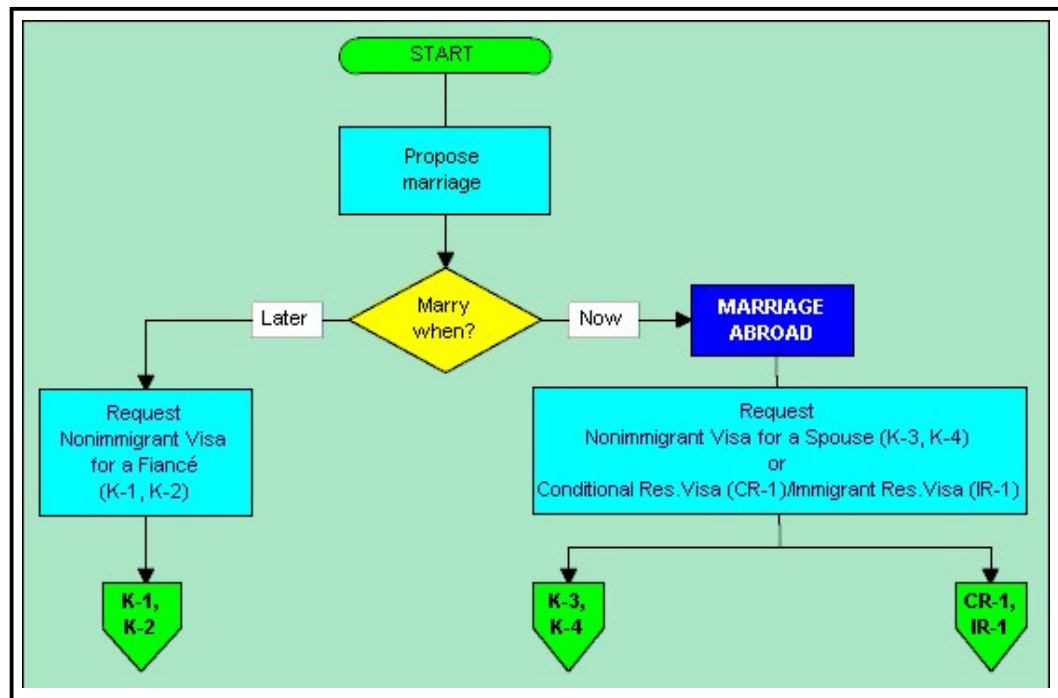
### US Visa Legislation

If you visit the **USCIS** (United States Citizenship & Immigration Service, a component of the US Department of Homeland Security) website, you will find a "How-To" guide ([www.uscis.gov/files/article/A2eng.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/A2eng.pdf)) which makes everything sound simple, efficient, and straightforward.

While in theory it is, in practice people generally find the process to be mired in inefficiency, apathy, and incompetence. Some are lucky and complete the process of obtaining a visa in as little as 4 months, but most find the process takes much longer (though rarely more than 1 year).

This complicated immigration procedure is best illustrated with the aid of flowcharts, showing it to its possible conclusion - naturalization, i.e. full US citizenship.

Basically, two 'routes' are available, depending on whether the US citizen WM has:



- An EW fiancée to be later married in the USA
- An EW spouse already married abroad

The second route offers in turn two alternative 'paths':

- The newer, quicker K-3/K-4 visas
- The earlier, slower CR-1/IR-4 visas

The second item

in each type of visa (K-2, K-4, IR-1) is for the EW fiancée's/spouse's children.

Click on the bottom **green** connectors to view the detail flowcharts for each 'route/path'.

Below is a summary of the main differences between the various types of US visas applicable in this area:

EW's Marital Status	EW's Visa	EW's Children's Visa	Duration of Visa Validity	Status during Visa Validity	Entries to the USA	HISTORICAL NOTE	IMPACT OF IMBRA
Fiancée	K-1	K-2	90 days	Non-immigrant alien	Single	- The K-1/K-2 visas were created following the 1945 <i>War Brides Act</i> to allow US servicemen overseas to bring their foreign brides/fiancées and their children to the USA.	The International Marriage Broker Regulation Act ( <b>IMBRA</b> ) is a US Federal Statute approved in 2005 that has a number of important effects on the approval of petitions for US visas - see <a href="#">IMBRA</a> .  Specific IMBRA requirements are listed in the NOTES under each detail flowchart.
Spouse	K-3	K-4	2 years	Non-immigrant alien	Multiple	- The K-3/K-4 visas were created in late 2000 to allow spouses of US citizens to get a visa to the US quickly, without having to wait for an immigrant visa (CR-1, IR-1) to become available.	
Spouse	CR-1	IR-1	Fully landed immigrant				

### ***WM's Requirements***

Before you decide which visa is right for you, you must determine if you **qualify**.

For instance, **only a resident US citizen can file a K-1 fiancée petition**, where you must prove that:

- You are a resident US citizen
- You and your fiancée intend to marry within 90 days of your fiancée entering the US
- You are both free to marry
- You have met each other in person within the 2 years preceding your filing the K-1 visa petition, unless:
  - The requirement to meet your fiancée in person would violate strict and long-established customs of your or your fiancée's foreign culture or social practice
  - You prove that the requirement to personally meet your fiancée would result in extreme hardship to you

- Your income must be at least 125% of the current-year poverty guidelines - unless you are an active-duty military, in which case you must meet 100%

Visa applications must be filed at the USCIS office competent for your residential location, which can be found consulting the [USCIS Field Office Locator](#).

A plethora of websites on the Internet offer information which might be correct - in part or in whole - but it is best to read the official requirements directly from those government agencies charged with oversight and enforcement of the law.

RWD has a sub-board devoted specifically to the discussion of this topic, where more detailed version of the flowcharts are also shown.

See [Immigration and Visas](#)



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[Getting Married in Russia and Ukraine](#) 

**NOTE - For more on the topics of this page, please refer to the following links:**

Since it is beyond the scope of this book to offer exhaustive advice on US Immigration Law, we do encourage you to visit the official Government websites to educate yourself on the subject.

- **USCIS:** [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
- **US Department of State:** [travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types\\_1310.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types_1310.html)
- **US Department of Justice:** [www.usdoj.gov/criminal/dss/immigration-crimes](http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/dss/immigration-crimes)

## APPENDIX

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### Getting Married in Russia and Ukraine

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The following applies to WM who are US citizens.

#### Russia

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Documents for the Russian spouse:

1. A passport with permanent registration (*propiska*) at the place of marriage, or temporary registration made at a local **UVIR** (*Department of Visas & Registrations*) office.

Documents for the US spouse:

1. Register Your Visa with Your Russian Sponsor  
Every foreigner is required by Russian law to have his visa registered by his sponsor through either the local or central UVIR (Office of Foreign Visa Registration).
2. Prepare a Marriage Letter at the U.S. Embassy  
U.S. citizens who intend to marry in Russia must complete the standard affidavit form (*svidetel'stvo*) in which they state their current marital status. The form must be completed in Russian and notarized at the Embassy. The transliteration of your name should be identical to that on your Russian visa. The American Citizen Services Unit of the Embassy offers notarial services Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; the cost is \$30.00 or the equivalent in rubles. Russian authorities consider the document valid for only three months after a U.S. Embassy consul or vice consul notarizes it. Due to Russian government regulations this service is available only at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and not at the U.S. Consulates General in St. Petersburg, Vladivostok or Yekaterinburg. Legal Permanent Residents are not entitled to this service.
3. Have the Marriage Letter Authenticated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
This service is performed by the Department of Legalization of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at 1st Neopalimovskiy pereulok, dom 12a, approximately a twelve minute walk from Smolenskaya Metro (on the dark blue line). The hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. (until 4:30 p.m. on Friday). Monday through Friday; telephone 244-3797. The procedure costs about 100 rubles with a five-day turnaround. There is no next-day or expeditious service available. All fees can be paid at the Sberkassa located in the waiting room of the Department of Legalization.
4. Obtain an Official Translation of the Information Page of Your Passport  
The necessary translation can be obtained at any certified translation center that has a Russian notary public present. The following is a partial list of certified translation centers in Moscow:
  - Bureau of Interpreters (23 Leningradskiy Prp., Metro stop Dinamo), 250-0407/1723
  - Uni V Tour (6 Bobrov Per., Bldg. 3, 2nd floor, Rm. 8, Metro stop Chistye Prudy), 625-2225/2667
  - Santor (1 Gogolevskiy Blvd., Bldg. 10, Metro stop Kropotkinskaya), 771-1884
5. Get Married at the Civil Registry Office (ZAGS)  
After completing the first four steps, you must contact the ZAGS (Zapis Aktov Grazhdanskogo Sostoyaniya) office where your fiancée/fiancé is registered and submit your documents for inspection. ZAGS officials generally will demand that you submit apostilled\* copies of all pertinent US civil documents (i.e., divorce certificates, annulments) for their inspection. ZAGS will then schedule the civil service wedding 32 days from the date of registration. You do not have to stay in Russia for this period, but rather be present to submit the application and appear on the 32nd day in order to get your marriage license. If your fiancée/fiancé is a Muscovite, you must submit the documents you have prepared, your passport, and Russian visa to the Civil Registry Office at the following address: Palace of Weddings, 17 Butyrskaya St. Telephone 685-1960, 685-7988.

From <http://moscow.usembassy.gov> - please note that these procedures are subject to change without notice and that the information provided is merely a



guideline you may find helpful.

Furthermore, the procedures listed below may not apply to US citizens who intend marry other Americans or third-country nationals in Russia)

## Ukraine

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The Ukrainian civil marriage process can take several weeks to several months. If you are marrying another American, or a third-country national, it is the Embassy's understanding that Ukrainian authorities require that one of the parties be present in Ukraine - for an unspecified period of several months - before they can register their marriage in Ukraine.

To marry a Ukrainian citizen, a US citizen should follow these step-by-step instructions.

1. If you have been married before, please make sure that you have the original or certified copy of divorce decree or death certificate properly authenticated in the U.S. Since Ukraine acceded to the 1961 Hague Convention abolishing Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents, the U.S. documents destined for use in Ukraine should be certified by one of the officials in the jurisdiction in which the document has been executed. Said official must have been designated as competent to issue certifications by "apostille" (usually in the office of the State Secretary of State of his/her counterpart). PLEASE NOTE: According to the law, the U.S. Embassy cannot certify any documents issued in the U.S.
2. Fill out a Letter of Non-Impediment to Marriage ("marriage letter") at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv on Fridays between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. This form (in English and Ukrainian) contains basic information and is a sworn statement that you are not currently married. It must be signed only in the presence of a Consular Officer and there is a fee of \$30, payable in U.S. dollars cash only. No appointment is required for this service. This service takes an average of 15-20 minutes. Authenticate the "Letter" at the Legalization Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, located in Kyiv at 2 Velyka Zhytomyrska, tel: 238-1669, any working day of the week. The Ministry accepts documents for legalization between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and returns documents after 4:00 p.m. on the same day. Please keep in mind the difference in working hours between the Ministry and the Embassy when you make your travel plans. The application fee is 8 Hryvnas for each document. The legalization fee is 8.50 Hryvnas (about \$1.5) for Ukrainian citizens, 17 Hryvnas (about \$3) for foreign citizens and 85 Hryvnas (about \$16) for legal entities per document for next-day service. For one-day expediting service one has to pay a double fee. Please note that the Ministry's fees and hours are subject to change without prior notice.
3. Obtain a certified translation of the data page of your passport, any annulment decrees, divorce decrees or death certificates of your former spouse(s) (if you were previously married), and the letter of non-impediment to marriage. To arrange your marriage, take all the documents, including your original passport (with a translation), the authenticated original death or divorce decree (if any) (with translation), and the authenticated Letter of Non-Impediment to Marriage, with translation to RAGS - loosely translated as the civil registrar's office in the hometown of your fiancée\*. The Central RAGS in Kyiv is located at 11 Prospekt Peremogy, tel: 236-0071. The person who deals with marriages to foreigners can be reached at 236-7981, 236-0243 or 236-0147.

From [http://kiev.usembassy.gov/amcit\\_marriage\\_civil\\_eng.html](http://kiev.usembassy.gov/amcit_marriage_civil_eng.html)

Disclaimer: This information is based on the latest guidance the US Embassy has received from Ukrainian officials, and is provided for general information only.

Questions involving interpretation of specific Ukrainian laws should be addressed to a legal counsel or the appropriate Ukrainian authority.



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## APPENDIX

### An FSU Photo Gallery

Some sights you might see while visiting there.

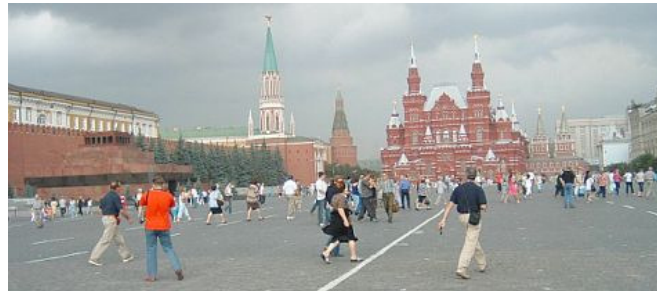


A strolling EW (rear view), allegedly enough to turn even statues' heads 😊

## Russia



St.Basil's Cathedral, Moscow



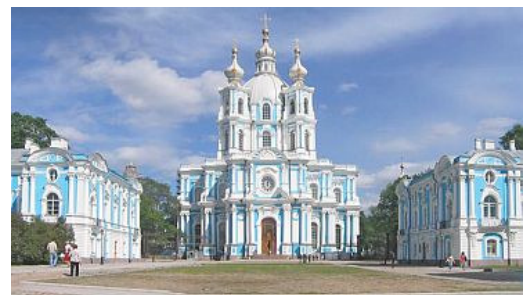
Red Square, Moscow (Lenin's Mausoleum at left)



Foreign Ministry, Moscow



The Hermitage Palace from the river Neva at night, St. Petersburg



Smolny Sobor Cathedral, St. Petersburg



The Winter Palace, St. Petersburg



View from atop Kazansky Cathedral, St. Petersburg



Church of Spilled Blood, St. Petersburg



Peter the Great, St. Petersburg



Imperial Palace with its Grand Cascade, Peterhof



City center, Tver



Kremlin, Pskov



St. Sophia, Novgorod



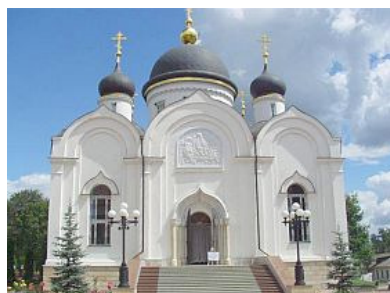
St. Georgey, Novgorod



City center, Kharkov



Blagoveschensky Cath., Kharkov



Zadonsk Monastery, Voronezh



Wooden country *dacha*, Volga region



Endless field of sunflowers, Donetsk region

## Ukraine



Fountain on Maidan (Independence Square), Kiev



Spring evening, Kiev



Cathedral, Kiev



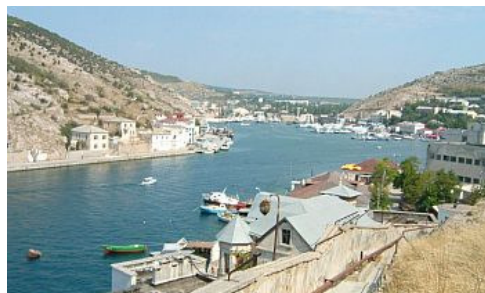
Opera house, Odessa



Monastery, Odessa



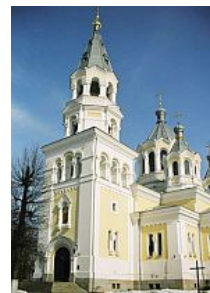
Arkadia public beach on the Black Sea, Odessa



Harbor, Balaklava



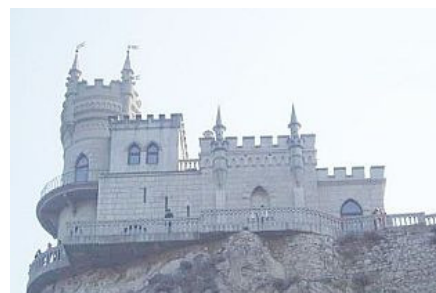
Golden Beach on the Black Sea, near Balaklava



Church, Zhitomir



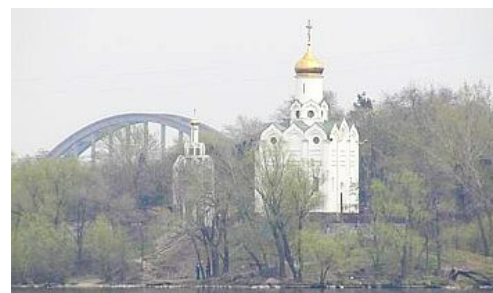
Shoreline, Yalta



Swallows' Nest Castle, near Yalta



Sunset, Dnepropetrovsk



Monastery Island, Dnepropetrovsk



Monastery, Poltava



Country church



Monastery, Svyatogorsk

## Belarus



Minsk



Zirovichi monastery, Hrodna



River Neman at Hrodna

**NOTE**

The above photos were contributed to the RWD [Image Gallery](#), where they are viewable in their full size (except by *Guests*), by the following RWD members:

*Aikorob, Docetae, GoodBrew, Groovlstk, Jet, jb, RussianGal, Rvrwind,  
Stor\_oksen, Timothe, Troutrivers, UkGraham, Wendaaaal, Wiz*

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## APPENDIX

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# Be Honest: Why Are You Looking for a Woman in the FSU ?

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The answers offered by a member in an RWD Forum thread:

There are a number of reasons why I would say that a man (and woman) would have to be motivated by the idea that they can get something better.

For most men, they lose a lot by seeking a wife in another country:

- Financial, and I am not just talking about plane fares and hotels. As most Western women work (70% or so and a much higher proportion among women younger than 50 and not on maternity leave), they contribute to the family income. It is rare that an EW will arrive in her new country and start working and making as much as a Western woman in the same profession she had back home, because of language issues and having to establish a new network in her new country.

- Emotional. A man marrying a woman from another country will follow her on her emotional roller ride over a year as she goes through culture shock. This can be a pretty hellish experience in my opinion, even when it is a good marriage and both love each other.

- Time. When you marry a foreign woman, you have to spend a great deal of time helping her get settled in, helping her doing things that any woman from your country would already know how to do. How many American men or Canadian men, for example, have to teach their American or Canadian wives how to drive?

An EW will also be sacrificing a great deal for a foreign husband. This includes:

- A profession that they loved. As I noted, language issues may make it difficult for them to immediately start working in their old profession in their new country. Some are lucky and can immediately find a job in their chosen careers immediately, but I would estimate that these are the exceptions.

- Family and friends who will be thousands of miles away, which contributes to her culture shock.

She, presumably, would need some pretty strong motivations to leave as well.

You hope that she is leaving because she did not find any men that she considered good enough, and married a foreigner because she considered him a better man than the local men she could date and marry. Much better than a woman who is motivated to leave simply for financial reasons, and will use any man to achieve this goal. Nonetheless, if an EW considered that she could find a better man in her country, she would not marry a foreigner in most cases.

There are certainly many other disadvantages for both men and women marrying a foreigner.

Given the disadvantages, somebody who is reasonable would need a very strong motivation to actively seek a foreign bride or husband, and they would have to really believe they can find someone a lot better than they could back home.

My conclusion based on what I have read and seen here at RWD is that **looks is the main**

**motivator.** WM hope to get someone prettier, thinner and perhaps younger. All things told, this is probably better than other options. I have met some guys in the past whose main motivation seemed to be their belief that EW would somehow be more docile, submissive and controllable than women in their own country. Other potential options would be the desire to be a knight in shining armor, or perhaps cultural reasons (i.e. someone had a grandmother who was Russian).

There are some men who do not fall into these categories. Usually these are the men who worked overseas, and happened to meet an EW and fell in love.

As for wanting a "traditional" woman, I would wager that most American men would have much better luck going to a small American town in one of their red states and looking for a woman who identifies herself as "Christian", as the odds are likely much better that she will be truly more "traditional" than most of the EW foreigners likely to be encountered.



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## APPENDIX

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### Street-Smart Here and There

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The sobering comparisons made by an experienced EW RWD member.

I've spent more than 40 years of my life in Russia, St. Petersburg mainly but some 3-4 years in other parts, and altogether maybe 2 years in Ukraine - mostly Crimea) and Georgia, Abkhazia.

I've been for a total of 1 year - I think - in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland and the Baltic States. All of these were considerably safer - even for a foreigner, as I were there - than the rest of the FSU, not excluding my beloved and native St.Petersburg.

Now I've lived 13+ years in the US, and let me tell you - it IS safer. No, let me say it differently, here I feel and am safe, there - in Russia and Ukraine - I did not.

Street smarts certainly help, but your US street smarts may not be what is needed even in some European countries, let alone the FSU.

Say you have a problem in the US: do you hesitate to call police or turn for help to a police officer? I don't think so. But it took me close to 2 years here to start doing this, and stop being scared of policemen.

In Russia or Ukraine the real street smarts would be to avoid them as far as possible. And never ever surrender your passport. It's a very common ploy to take your passport to the precinct, and you'll have to pay through the nose to get it back. You'll never be able to understand what your "crime" was - I, a native, couldn't...

Not to go to great lengths, but in France it's not a very good idea to get involved in any way with a policeman. And there's no presumption of innocence there, either.

Theft is much more prevalent in the FSU than in the US. Do not leave your jacket on a chair when you go to wash your hands in a restaurant or to the dance floor in a club. You date is sure to be smart enough not to leave her purse, but may assume that you know such things also, and not warn you. Do not leave nice gloves, a scarf, etc., say on the counter while you are examining some merchandise. Do not let grocery bags out of your hands. Etc., etc., etc.

I could go on forever. My daughter-in-law just reported that my toddler grandson's pretty mittens from my Christmas parcel were pinched from his stroller while she was been paying for her groceries.

Have you ever heard of an American burglar stealing groceries or ordinary, not brand-new and expensive clothes? A Russian or Ukrainian burglar will take everything that he can carry that has even the slightest value - to sell or to consume.

My son - the one who lives in St.Petersburg with his family - when discussing with me my possible future visit, said that I'll have to be led by the hand everywhere, otherwise I'll be in trouble. I've lost my "Piter" street smarts after all these years in Chicago.

I thought he was exaggerating, but this past summer my brother was in StP for a month - after 1 day he always asked his friends or my son to accompany him. And he lived there for 60 years, and only came here in 2001. Go figure

A lot more people are drunk in the streets - including teenagers. Addicts are also quite a

common occurrence. Especially in Ukraine, where they grow poppie crops for medical purposes, but much of the poppy straw etc. somehow lands in the drug markets not only in Ukraine, but as far as St. Petersburg and even Murmansk.

Second, teenagers are a lot less supervised, and though there isn't gang violence as we know it here, there is a lot of motiveless violence which is delicately called "hooliganism" - which ranges from taking something from a child or a granny and kicking it around the street out of reach of the victim, to going 4-5 against one just because he (or she) "looked at them" in a way they didn't like.

Another thing - in most of American cities it's enough (well, almost) not to go after dark to certain neighborhoods, and if you don't know where they are - there's a very big chance you'll meet a patrol car and an officer will very politely dissuade you of going there - this is my experience so far, and of all of my friends and colleagues. So, roughly speaking, if you do not want to meet with gang violence - do not go to their areas. Also they tend to do mischief towards other gangs, not to passers-by. I worked for a year in a very nasty US city district with many gangs, Black and Hispanic, a poor area... pretty much a ghetto. I never had any problem - though admittedly I always left before 6 PM.

In FSU cities there almost is no such thing as good area, bad neighborhood, etc. Not even a building or apartment complex usually - in the same building there could be awful communal apartments like in the projects, and luxurious flats bought and refurbished by the newly affluent. And there is an awful lack of police in the street - there is a saying that a police patrol is never there when you need it, and it's true. And as often as not they ARE a problem themselves.

So what could I say? If one has an established and trusting relationship with one's date - listen to her, do not say "I want to go to this or that club, I've heard that it's an interesting scene, etc.". She may know that "interesting" does not start to describe it - but she may not have words to explain to you, or may be ashamed to admit that her beloved city is less than perfect.

Somebody also posted the recommendation to go around in groups - yes, 2-3 couples and an interpreter or two not going into dark alleys and courtyards are pretty much safe. Beware of groups of teenagers - any place, any time of the day. Unless they are obviously a school group or something like that, of course. Do not play the hero - if possible, cross the street and go to some public place like a supermarket, if you are too late to do that - run like crazy ... your girl will know enough to run, but may hesitate if you decide to confront them.

The thing to remember is that too many people there are too poor, desperate, and drown their sorrows in vodka. However humble your circumstances - for many people there you'll seem to possess untold riches.

By the way, do not drink heavily in a bar or a restaurant. If it becomes too noisy and boisterous - it's time to leave. If someone starts paying too much attention to your date - it's time to leave.

Do not carry much cash on you. And it may be more expensive to change currency in a bank, but it's heaps safer. Even so, my sons always go there to cash my money transfers not only with their wives, but with a friend or two. People were known to be killed for as little as \$100.



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## APPENDIX

### In Defense of Russian Men

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The perspective of a young EW RWD member from Saint Petersburg.

FSU people belong to different social classes just as they do in the USA, and people tend to stay within their social class and see a foreign country from that perspective. That said, the WM on this Forum - and those who have a commercial interest in having WM think that Russian men are terrible - are talking about one class, a small class that has its equivalent in the USA and in any other country.

I have visited the US, saw a variety of social situations, and really had a hard time seeing the differences that my hosts were able to spot from 40 meters away.

Here in Russia, any local can see if someone is from their own social class (not to be confused with economic class), and they tend to shy away from those who by training are thought to be incompatible. ALL cultures have this ability, it is just a more complex a task in Russia because of the sheer number of social classes that do not associate or intermarry. In large Russian cities you do not observe the same degree of US compartmentalization - everyone shares the same metro, sidewalks and neighborhoods. Foreign visitors often ask me which areas and streets of St. Petersburg are safe - a logical and prudent question, given their lack of experience - but they are not convinced when I tell them that there are no bad neighborhoods, they may go anywhere and see a mix of different people in any neighborhood.

Some classes are rather low in socialized behavior and it is common to find drunks and abusive people there, but overall that is a small portion of the population. I think those men and women who are claiming that an entire gender is bad or great or whatever, are talking about their more limited social set, and the level of their own acceptance by that group.

My direct social activities are among men and women who are very compatible, including a few American men who have values, intellectual curiosity and personalities similar to ours - their country makes no difference, their class however makes all the difference. My best male friend is an American who is very much Russian in temperament and personality. He fits perfectly into our social group but, since he is a foreigner, the clues as what class he really belongs to are often confused - so many different groups think he is one of theirs. But in reality they are mistaken, due to just not recognizing the class-cluing we all go by to align our associations. Being aware of that and looking for class clues is one of my interests: I study the local cultural anthropology wherever I go.

The Russian men I know are nothing as bad as some claim. For example, based on their use of language and reasoning skills, those I know are better educated or have more interest in intellectual matters. The men I know here are good humored, kind hearted, social and well adjusted. They are successful, energetic, and a joy to be around. I am sure there are some men like that in the US, but in a smaller percentage than in large Russian cities.

The young men in particular are optimistic and loyal friends to us women, have passions for sports, business, study and culture. I go out frequently for socializing and, comparing their public behavior with that of Europeans or Americans, they are sober, reasonable and patient, they do not get into fights or arguments over trivial non-issues as I have seen in the US and England where a favorite weekend pastime is to get drunk. The World Health Organization backs me up on that: the per-capita alcohol consumption in Russia is lower than the EU average, 3 times less than in Luxemburg, and much less than in Finland.

There is a lot of drinking in some situations but on the whole Russians drink less (even including those who overindulge) than the per capita average for the EU. That means a lot

of people are quite moderate, most in fact are. So to say a whole gender is prone to excess drinking reveals more about the scope of the observer and from which social class he finds himself in.

That said, there really are few drunks to be seen on our streets - a few derelicts around the outside of metro stations. Depression is a real problem in rural areas, where older men have few options and fewer job possibilities, but our cities have a high rate of mental balance and lack of stress compared to other large world cities. One of the reasons young people drink so little compared to their US and UK counterparts is that here beer is not considered alcohol and so it is available to kids. Growing up with it makes it so commonplace that college students getting totally blind with drink as in England just does not happen here. Go to clubs and you will see a lot of social drinking but few drunk kids, very few. The drink of choice is imported, pricey beer, cocktails like B-52s, and Scotch. Vodka is not very popular with people of my age - 27 and younger.

That is the Russia and the Russian men I know. Where do you find such poor examples? Please do not expect to find gems in garbage cans, a class-by-class comparison of people from your neighborhood and their Russian equivalent might embarrass you.

When men and women tell others "*There are no good men [or women] here [or in any country]*", they are not saying that there are literally no good matches, rather that there are none of their own class in their neighborhood who would accept them.

The same exact thing is said and meant in the USA. There are more compatible women in your country than here in Russia, yet you think that you can escape your confines by going where you think ALL hot-looking girls are compatible: that is a recipe for very bad times. Find a social class most similar to yours and search within that one, and you will likely find much more compatible women. Learn more about their culture, there is probably some reason why good women or good men pass on opportunities with the random girl or guy that you think is HOT. But you will not know until it is too late.

Mate selection is really complicated by physical attractiveness, it blurs the lines and causes a lot of mismatches. Even within a culture, a very attractive young woman is given the benefit of the doubt and assigned to a wide range of incompatible classes solely due to physical attractiveness.

Overall, young people are more social, better educated and well-mannered here, so if you are not seeing that, you should seriously consider in which other pool you'd better be fishing.



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## APPENDIX

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### Why EW May Want to Leave the FSU

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This part of a response by a US RWD member - who has been living in a major Russian city for the past 4 years, teaching English - in a thread discussing the possible differences between EW living in large and small FSU cities, expresses from a privileged, direct observation point his opinions why EW may consider favorably relocating to a Western country.

Highlighted initials refer to other RWD members;

- **BF** and **Mrs. A** are EW married to WM
- **G** and **J** are WM married to EW

This city has gone through so many changes in the last few years, even last year - it's mind boggling. I definitely know this city and its women. Do you know how far many of these women commute to get here ?

The summer just ended and now we have the prospect of seeing the sun maybe a half dozen times until April. Doesn't bother me that much, but it does bother many of them.

When it comes to women here, let me tell you what I base my conclusions on. I've spent time with about hundreds of women over the last 4 years. It's part of what I do here. Matter of fact, I just met another 12 this week, and that number will grow to about 40 or 50 before the end of the month. I do this consistently throughout the year. Women 22-35 yrs old, on average.

I don't just spend a few moments talking with them, I spend months at the very least, and years at the most. Some become good friends, some lovers, and all I know on a level you will never know. I have so many phone numbers on my mobile - well into the hundreds - that it's hard to tell one Olga from another and one Natasha from another. I literally number them 1,2,3,4, etc. and still have trouble remembering them all at times. I do remember what they tell me, though.

These ladies, as most Russians ladies, are not shy about expressing their opinions. We talk about everything. After months of seeing them 2-3 times a week, I feel like I know them better than if I worked with them directly on a daily basis, because I see and talk to them in a relaxed, open environment.

**I can safely say that many of these women would leave this city in a heartbeat.** What you don't seem to understand in your sweeping generalization, is the mentality of these women. They don't believe in the government here, have a pessimistic view of things here bordering on the fatalistic, and absolutely hate the grind that this city can be. As **BF** (and me) said, many are here because of necessity, not desire. Many see no future here, have absolutely no faith that things will change and, as women, feel uneasy about ever being in a stable, secure situation, which as women many of them strongly desire. Yes, even here. Many just want to be happy.

It never ceases to amaze me the number of women here that are looking to find a man to build a life with. All love their families, but understand that their happiness comes first. It's not selfish, it's normal. Men really do have it made here, and the women know it.

Sure, the majority would never leave, just as the majority would never leave Mother Russia even if they live in a village. And some are doing quite well in their careers (for now) that it would be impossible for them to leave. Given the current state of the economy around the world, many people here are very nervous about things. Things in Russia are shaky at the moment, and Moscow is no exception.

Personally, I would say that 30-40% of them would have no problem leaving with the right guy. Our **Mrs. A** left for Pittsburgh, and with all due respect, I'd take Charlotte over Pittsburgh anyday. **G's** lady went to Tampa Bay, the geriatric capitol of the world, and **J's** highly educated lady left for Corpus Christi of all places (a place that has a population of about 200,000 where 90% of it is Mexican). **BF** lives in Charlotte herself, for God's sake. All lived in Moscow at one time or another if I'm not mistaken.

Personally, I know many others from RWD through the EW I've met that live in places like Portland, St Louis, Myrtle Beach, Sacramento, Tucson, Alabama (any city there, does not matter), Seattle, Columbus, Toronto, Ottawa, etc. that are living happy lives with their new families. No different than Charlotte.

Your lady initially left for Detroit. Consistently one of the most depressed areas in the country. Sorry, but these women aren't exceptions, and you guys aren't any better than the average guy here. **Matter of fact, I am/was surprised at the number of women who said they would leave if they could.**



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## APPENDIX

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### Why Would EW Look for WM Mates?

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Elsewhere in this Appendix we relate [John and Olga's Story](#) of their meeting and subsequent marriage.

Also interesting is a post that John made in **August, 2008** in reply to a question from another RWD member, inquiring why EW would be looking for WM mates.

My wife has given me a lot of reasons that she looked for a foreign man for marriage. The point that she was looking for a partner for marriage and not just a boyfriend is key. My wife is definitely a beautiful woman and would have no problem getting a man in any country BTW. Why did she choose to put a profile on an IMB website and seek out a foreigner for marriage? Many reasons. I will try to list a few but I can assure you this list is not inclusive.

First - for some reason my wife just did not view the Russian men as a good option for marriage. She was simply not attracted to them in a relationship sense. Sure she had a few Russian boyfriends in the past but for a number of reasons she did not desire to marry a Russian man. She has stated reasons of: too spoiled, unfaithful, drinking too much, no career, no opportunity, etc. etc.

Second - my wife had traveled to foreign lands in the past and she had seen the difference between her Russia and the rest of the world. My wife had a great job, and lived relatively well compared to 95% of most people in her city. Even so - she still lived uncomfortable in comparison to her current life in USA. She had to work 60-70 hrs per week, deal with crappy roads in her Lada, and deal with constant dirt and mud all around everywhere in her town. The housing there leaves much to be desired for and usually only the very rich live in comfort comparable to the average American.

Next - Lack of opportunity in her country for her future children. She has a strong desire to have a family but could not imagine raising one in Russia. While there are more opportunities today than 15 years ago - there are still many opportunities to succeed that the average Russian simply does not have access to.

Money - yes money. While we are not filthy rich we certainly live a comfortable life. Life here with me means she does not need to work but she can if she wants. She does not need to worry about anything financial because I care for those things. Sometimes things are tight and we need to be careful but for the most part we do what we want, when we want, where we want. This type of freedom can only be achieved by having the income to do so and it is much easier to make good money here in USA than in Russia.

I saved the best for last: Love. Yes, true love. My wife was hoping to find her soulmate somewhere in the world. And we both tell each other very often that we are soulmates.

Now those some of the reasons my wife has told me in the past she ventured to look for her love internationally. There are more I'm sure but they escape me now.

So ... to answer your question as to what's in it for them: at least for my wife it is a combination of many things...She found the man of her dreams (me), she lives a comfortable life with little stress and a lot of love. She has the opportunity to attend schools of her choice, work at jobs of her choice, travel and see the world at will, and to have nice things. These things were not all possible when she lived in Russia.

It seems like you're interested in this for similar reasons I was interested. My main reason for seeking a woman abroad was that I wanted to be married to one good woman. I wanted

my partner in life. Every and I mean EVERY single American woman I was in a relationship with seemed to be a competitor more than a partner. I was fed up with this way of thinking. So I started my search internationally. It did not take long to find my Olga.

The main reason I selected Russia to search is because there were so many thousands of beautiful women with marriage as their goal. With such a great amount of these women quite simply the numbers were in my favor. I viewed thousands of profiles and narrowed my search within a few days to the top 50 or so. Then I wrote the top 10. My Olga was one of those top 10 and since we first talked we basically never looked back.

She has been here with me for a year and we are extremely happy together.



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## APPENDIX

### Why Do EW Prefer WM?

The reasons given by an EW member of RWD - **RM** in her text below stands for Russian Men.

I could tell why personally I prefer Western men.

First, it does not have anything to do with economic conditions, and with my wish to live in the West. Wishing to live in the West is one thing, wishing to have a man of my own is another thing. These things do not necessarily coincide for me.

**Attraction counts**, so I will talk about personal attraction only.

The WM are just more appealing for me: they are people who grow up under normal conditions, whereas RM grew up under abnormal conditions. This can be seen on RM's faces, virtually: hardship, deprivation, denigration may have taken their toll and made a negative impact on their personality. WM, however, generally look happy: they appear to lead a satisfying, pleasant, comfortable life, and are open, easy-going, optimistic - at least they give this impression.

Russian men don't smile, they often display super-sober, even grumpy faces. My female instincts don't like it at all. I have seen and had enough soberness, I want to enjoy life. Therefore, I'm naturally attracted to people who enjoy their life.

I have written it somewhere already - Russian men look like life has been beaten out of them.

Another big advantage of WM over RM is that even in their 40s and 50s, WM seem to hardly lose in quality. Many even gain. With advancing time, RM quickly and drastically lose in quality. This is especially noticeable at high-school reunions: I could barely recognize my former classmates 15-20 years after graduating. Where have all their sparks and laughs gone? Sad, meaningless eyes, disinterested faces.

Last but not least, the trait that I personally like in WM is their mentality. I appreciate their being reasonable and considerate, not reckless like some RM. Democracy and perhaps Protestantism fostered accuracy and moderation, equally-respectful treatment for everyone irrespective of his/her position and wealth. Russian society has a long way to go in order to achieve at least a fraction of this mentality.

Mind you, I'm speaking about the WM I have met, mostly middle-class professionals, i.e. people who earn their living by using their skills and education. I cannot say anything about upper-class or working-class WM.

There is however one area where a Russian man would be preferable: **communications**.

When I talk in Russian to a Russian, I am sure that 100% of my message will be understood to the tiniest nuance, exactly how I want it to be. With a WM, I need to make some extra effort because I cannot understand each and every little detail or nuance of the conversation. Therefore, I feel somehow limited in expressing myself to a WM, which is a disadvantage.



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## APPENDIX

### While You Wait

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The advice of an RWD **Commercial** member, who has been organizing trips to the FSU for US WM for the past 10 years or so.

We offer his opinions because of:

- His long experience in this area
- His unique point of view, i.e. that of someone who has had the opportunity of seeing the dynamics involved with less personal emotional involvement

Therefore, an almost 'impartial' observer and reporter.

In my opinion is the greatest single thing that can help find a good wife is **education** about what is involved in the process - unless one just gets lucky, and some RWD WM have, knowledge is often the key to success.

The RWD Forum offers a wide range of opinions.

Basically, whatever an RWD WM did to find his EW wife, that is the method that he is going to recommend - after all, it worked for him.

But not every method is going to work the same for each man. And during his education process, one will read many varied options and should decide on the method(s) one is more comfortable with.

One will hear:

- From those WM who say meet only one EW at a time: *"How can you give any woman your full consideration if you are meeting many women?"* WM offering this advice met one EW and married that EW, so this is going to be the method they will recommend.
- From those WM who say: *"Don't look, don't write, don't use an agency. Just go on a vacation, have a good time."* This is what they did, it worked for them, so this is what they will recommend to others. Maybe their reader will get lucky also.
- From those WM who met many EW on a single trip, that they found the love of their life this way, so this will be the method they will recommend.

So, education is important. Read what others did, read of their mistakes, read of their experiences and what they recommend, then choose what you think you are most comfortable with.

I have had WM tell me that they would like to meet more than one EW on a trip but they were not raised this way, they could only date one woman at a time. If you are dating women in your same city, or in the next county, sure, date one at a time - but when you are traveling half way around the world, do you really want to put all your eggs in one basket? Maybe you do. Some have done so and married the one and only EW they ever met. And as I said above, they will recommend this method.

Some WM making their first trip will met one EW. Many of these men will have said their trip was a complete waste of time and money, with the exception of the education they got, and they swear they will never go this route again.

You may start out with one method and then change it. Most men do. And there's nothing

wrong with that. Whatever method you choose remember this: your trip will be so much more meaningful, effecient and fun when you have removed the scam factor. Education will help you to remove or lessen the scam element there.

What I would recommend is to continue your education: read, read, read. I would advise NOT to begin writing any EW - not one - until you know when you are going to be able to make a trip to see her.

These ladies will want to know when you are coming and if you say that you don't know or you're not sure, many of them will think: "*Oh great, here's another **writer**.*"

These EW do NOT want long correspondence. Well, 99% don't. One will hear advice from that WM who wrote his now EW wife for 6 months or a year, and of course he will recommend this long-time writing, but I know from the EW I hear from: 100% - not 99% - but 100% tell me they would prefer to meet a WM sooner, not later.

Reader, you should know **when** you are going to make that trip. Again in my opinion only, you should not begin writing any ladies until you are within two months of your trip

In your first communication with this lady/these ladies, tell them if they have a sincere interest in meeting you, that you will come see her the next month. **The next month!**

That's always a true statement when you begin writing two months before the trip. The percentage of EW agreeing to meet you will ALWAYS be higher when they know a WM is serious, when they know the WM is coming soon, when they know the WM is not going to be wasting their time by writing 50-100 e-mails or letters over the next 6 months, and as such many more EW will agree to meet you.

Of course having a very nice photo of yourself and a well written profile won't hurt your chances either 😊.



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## APPENDIX

### EW's Complaints about WM Courting Them

The experience and advice of an RWD member:

**QUESTION:** "Specifically, what is the complaint that EW whom you know make about foreign men?"

This is not an easy question to answer. I think the number one, all-time complaint is the same for women and men, and I think it always will be the No. 1 complaint:

- From EW: if he were real, he would be here, not writing 😞
- From WM: if she cared and were serious, she would write more 😞

They are each 100% right and 100% wrong in their own way. In other words, there are no winners on either side. I'll tell you what EW have told me to my face, this being based on my living in Russia for the past 1 1/2 years.

*"Who is this man, how can he have so much to say to me ?  
Why is he telling me his life story, since he has never met me ?"* 😞

Some advice to WM writing to EW they never met.

- **First**, don't think *"Well it's me and I am not just anyone, I am special"*.

Well my friend, you are not special to her until after you meet her. You think that you are special, but she may have had many telling her that they were different and special. The same men saying that never going over to meet her.

Some of these special men that did go acted like KING KONG - they beat on their chest telling the EW how he was the best, and she would never find a man who would love her like he could 😞.

She has already heard it all before.

- **Second**, earn her respect, don't demand it !

First letters: keep them to a half page, let the letters build in content over time, keep your life story till you meet her in person. Don't write a one-liner: *"ME Tarzan, YOU Jane, you like, I like, if you write me, I know you like"* 🙄.



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## APPENDIX

### Introductory Letters from EW

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The experience and conclusions of an RWD member:

Having tried and failed with a variety of agency sites, I think I may have some valuable insight, especially for beginners.

First of all...**any site that requires payment to open an introductory letter should be avoided like the plague.** Even if the girl actually reads a guy's profile and writes a personal introductory letter, it is almost certain that as a relationship progresses the agency will eventually try to interfere, especially if the girl is popular and generating a lot of revenue.

**Any affiliate agency that publishes their girls on many different sites, whether they send letters or not, should absolutely be avoided.** The chances that the lady is reading all or any of the letters her profile generates is slim to none. It is not difficult to research if a particular lady is posted on many sites.. just have to put in the time to find her.

Frankly, **girls that send introductory letters that are not personally written to each individual man they are sent to should probably be avoided.** I had this experience on a site where I recieved an introductory letter from a lady but, after reviewing HER profile, I determined I did not meet HER criteria for age, height and weight or interests. I asked the site owner to investigate, and was told the lady was in fact interested, so, I responded. The second letter from the lady did not respond to any of my questions and was clearly a form letter. I did not write to her again. Months later I found the same lady on a different site through a different agency and received a new form introductory letter from her. I thought, WTF is up with her?

**Some sites have the facility for the user to check and see who has viewed his profile.** The ONLY agency site I still use has this tool. I get alot of introductory letters on this particular site which has a policy that allows agencies to send introductory letters for the ladies. However, **if I do not see that my profile was viewed I do not read the letter, even though it is free to read the first letter.** In these situations it is obvious to me that the agency is trying to generate revenue and the chances I will be corresponding with a greedy agency manager or terp is too high to take the chance.

Since I stopped using agency sites and have pursued contacts via other methods there have been a number of very interesting differences in the quality of the communications. I will like to mention the main differences. **First and foremost, the ladies who are not really interested make it clear very quickly.** There is no drawn out letter writing with silly questions. They either like me or not. That is a big help. Then, even more interestingly...**the ladies who ARE interested are far more open and engaging. They ask a lot more direct and specific questions, and are far more open and revealing in answering my own questions.** I have determined that **agency girls are being coached and even pushed to write when they are not interested to keep the revenue flowing.** The BEST example of this type of unethical agency behavior has to be \*\*\*, where the ladies are required by their membership contract to answer EVERY letter they get. It is just not possible for a popular lady to answer all those letters without help, help in the guise of agency managers and terps...ultimately the lady has no idea who "she" is writing to and when a guy shows up "she" may know little or nothing about him. It is a BIG shock for the man when that happens.

I will also like to say I believe the less ethical agencies are involved in manipulating and taking advantage of EVERYONE. They send fake letters for ladies who are no longer interested or have local boyfriends purely to generate money, sometimes the girls cannot get their profiles removed no matter how hard they try. I know one lady in Odessa who has a profile on a major site with a bad reputation. I had recieved a generic introductory letter

from this woman. Later on I found her on a free site and we have since struck up a nice friendship and chat frequently on Yahoo. She has been trying for a year to have her profile removed from the agency site but nothing happens.

**BTW.. the line that many agencies use that the ladies do not have access to computers and the Internet is rapidly becoming less and less true.** Personally I believe the agencies are peddling mostly the bottom dwellers at this point. Once I broke free of my "addiction" to agency girls, I have found many women with great careers and reasonable financial means sufficient to get themselves on the Internet, many of whom have been to the USA or Europe on their own and have the visa stamp in their passport or meet the requirements to get one.

Marriage agencies are dinosaurs. The sooner they cease to exist the better for everyone because in their desire to make easy money they have succeeded in alienating a lot of men and women to the entire idea of international marriages.

**By creating "beauty standards" for the girls, yet with no standards for the men, by accepting money from men when they know good and well that the man will not succeed with his chosen girls, by sending fake letters and interfering in relationships, by paying girls to join and keeping them interested with beauty shows, contests, giveaways and pay-offs on gift and letter revenue, and by using bait and switch tactics to generate more revenue with men who have crossed the ocean, these agencies discredit the entire concept.**

A few words of explanation:

- *Affiliate agency* refers to local 'feeder' agencies who provide EW profiles to larger, international agencies
- *Other methods* refers to:
  - Free sites
  - Chat groups at Yahoo or other similar instant-messaging providers
  - Ads in FSU newspapers



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## APPENDIX

### Wake up, Delusional WM!

The counter-arguments offered by a WM member to two other WM members complaining of having been the blameless victims of Green Card Girls:

You may have made six trips to the FSU and Harry "courted" his wife for four years, but both you and Harry knew doodly squat about the EW you were marrying.

There is no excuse for what a Green Card Girl does to a WM, yet to say that the man bears no responsibility for his fate is as silly as Harry first cussing out the Consular officer in Moscow for delaying his wife's visa and then, a few years later, blaming the USCIS interviewer for not knowing that his marriage was a sham and handing his wife a Green Card.

I could write a thesis on this and it would be ignored, misunderstood, and taken out of context, but here it goes, anyway. With apologies to the mathematicians here, a simple formula for disaster is:

#### **Lonely WM + Desperate EW = Train Wreck**

First, to be fair, you and Harry could never have got to know your wives prior to marriage as well as "normal" couples do, because your wives made it a priority to hide their true selves.

Yet what's apparent from reading about events prior to all of these train wrecks, is that **these Green Card Girls are always as cold as ice, indifferent, and do little more than go through the motions once they've flashed a winning smile, spread their legs, and shown a minimum of interest in the WM courting them.**

They'll keep up this half-hearted effort for the length of courtship, with flashes of warmth whenever a gift arrives or a vacation is offered. This occasional affection is just enough to keep the WM's self-deception machine running smoothly. They'll send a daily SMS or a by-rote email every few days, but it's funny how they often have an excuse why they can't talk on the phone as often as you like, isn't it?

At this point it's obvious to everyone - except the WM in question - that the EW has little interest in him and he's chasing the moon - but that pretty face and the occasional scraps she tosses his way are enough to keep him committed. And since she's 5,000 miles away, his friends and family who could see them together - and instantly note the lack of chemistry - are of no use until it's too late.

Once a Green Card Girl arrives in the US, she feels more secure and can shed some of those annoying pretensions she had to adopt to help fuel her fiancé's self-deception. That's when she starts sleeping in another room - doing this during courtship on her own soil would have been too risky, but she's emboldened, now.

She has her own friends, and contrary to what Harry thinks - that she has told her friends lies about what a terrible guy he is - she has in fact been perfectly honest with them. The reason they're cold to him is that they understand his wife's motivation and tacitly support her. They may not go around ruining people's lives for gain like she does, but they don't judge her for it, and getting to know Harry might stir some uncomfortable feelings of sympathy once she lowers the boom on him, so best to keep him at arm's length.

I wish I could say that my opinions on this subject were shaped only by reading discussion boards, but I dated women like Harry's wife and saw things from both Harry's side as a potential mark and later when I unwittingly dated some EW who were unhappily married to

WM men.

**Bottom line is that the signs are always there in boldface yet, to paraphrase the Bible: "There are none so blind as those who will not see".**

Guys who hook up with Green Card Girls attribute these signs to cultural differences and bend over backwards making excuses for their women.

I make no excuses for women who take advantage of lonely and naive men, they're the scum of the earth. But to create this impression that men all over are vulnerable to their charms and that those of us who managed to marry good women were simply lucky - or that we're headed for the same fate as you and Harry someday - is mean-spirited poppycock.

Green Card Girls aren't Oscar-winning actresses, and their talent is nothing more than a pretty face.



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## APPENDIX

### John and Olga's Story

A condensed real-life experience of a WM searching, finding and marrying an EW:

DETAILS	JOHN	OLGA
Age	39	31
From	USA, NY State	Russia, Volga region
Status	Divorced with custody of 15 y.o. son	Single, no children
Occupation	Entrepreneur	Manicurist
Yearly income	Mid 6 figures	~US\$ 15,000
Languages	English, studying Russian	Russian, intermediate English
Religion	Non-religious, but both believe in God	
Met virtually	December 2006	
Met personally	February 2007	
Married	September 2007	

John's courting experience, an abstract from his **2007** posts at RWD, with the most relevant passages highlighted:

My search for an EW started at Christmas 2006. I purchased a 3-month platinum membership at a **reputable IMB**.

I selected about 40 out of 1500 or so profiles that I was interested in, then sent all an **introductory letter**. About 40 girls wrote me back. It took me only about two weeks to narrow it down to Olga and stop communicating with the others.

**Her posted pictures - while good - did not even come close to doing her justice.**

We talked for 3 days and **I decided I wanted to meet her in person**. She was pleasantly surprised when I told her this. And I told her that I was only talking to her. This encouraged her drop all of the other men contacting her and we were both exclusive.

I planned my trip after talking to her about 10 times on Skype. Voice-only Skype with broadband on both sides is basically free. I remember on our first skype conversation me telling her this would be a true test because of the language barrier. We talked verbally and with text. I let her type in russian and I used translate.ru to translate back and forth with skype. We also talked.

**Now after my arrival she began to understand me much more. Communication is very much about body language and facial expressions.**

Of course **we talked about some very serious matters such as our thoughts on marriage and roles in that relationship before I planned the trip.**

After getting the deal breakers and deal makers out in the open, I booked the flight. The Russian tourist visa was very simple to get, only took me 48 hours to have it after I applied.

My first visit to my new girlfriend was February 2, 2007. One thing I remember was my fear before I showed up in her home city and before I flew there. I was literally sick with fear and excitement. I was so nervous I could not sleep. When I ate I sometimes did not keep it down and threw up. I was a wreck.

**The communication barrier lessens with time one on one with the woman. I don't know about you but I speak very much AMERICAN which is not English.**

**I stayed 6 days.** We hit it off BIG time and we fell in love as a matter of fact. We were both excited about a new life together.

We had a wonderful time with each other, **her family, and her friends.** I speak no Russian so she had to translate to almost everyone. I talked with her mother in private using translate.ru with both of us sitting in front of the computer. This was cool. Her mother could see we fell in love in only a few days of my visit and she commented on this.

The evening before I left we discussed the possibility of marrying. We both agreed we would like this with each other. So...we became technically engaged and agreed to marry but I did not do the romantic proposal yet. (Although I knew what the answer would be!)

I got back to visit her in Russia in March 2007 and **stayed almost 3 weeks.**

## Conclusions

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While unusually fast - about 10 months from finding to marrying - John's story shows his approach was basically sound.

Equally interesting is a post he made in **August, 2008** in reply to a question from another RWD member inquiring [Why EW Would Look for WM Mates](#), also in this Appendix.




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[Why Would EW Look for WM Mates](#) 








## APPENDIX







### Tom's Train Wreck






An example of how a visit should be NOT conducted, based on the experience of an RWD member - whom we'll call Tom - as written in his Trip Report, which is reproduced here in almost its entirety because it describes vividly his moment-by-moment impressions, and also touches upon several of the points made in this book.

Our comments at right are obviously a *post-mortem* exercise, and of course it is not easy to appraise a situation correctly while on the spot and engaged in what appears to be a promising pursuit.

The *Flag-O-Meter* at right shows the progressive accumulation of signal flags as the saga unfolds, similarly to a car odometer,.

Tom's Trip Report	Our Comments	Flag-O-Meter		
				
PREPARATION				
After many months of reading the forums, studying, learning from the mistakes and experiences of others, I decided to take the plunge.	 Sound approach.	1	0	0
I figured I had done sufficient research to guarantee my success and a happy ending.	 As it turned out later, not really enough.	1	1	0
I joined a website in March of this year and really liked the profile of one woman in particular - we'll call her <b>Tatyana</b> , age 39 (I'm 41). This woman was definitely motivated, she hates it there and cannot wait to leave. No children and spoke English, along with very similar hobbies and interests listed in her profile and she looked stunning in pictures. So I wrote her a letter.	 A mixed picture, attractive traits but a questionable motivation, worth looking more deeply into.	1	2	0
It seemed there would be no response	 Possible bad	2	3	0

<p>but after 2 weeks a response did come! And I wrote again. Another two weeks passed and she responded again. And so it went. A few times her delay was even longer and I assumed she had just stopped writing.</p>	<p>sign, but might have been due to Tatyana having some temporary difficulties or engagements.</p>			
<p>I decided to expand my search to the EM site (where I noticed Tatyana also had a profile and was active on it every day. Hmmmm, she can be online every day but delay responding to my letters by as much as 20 days? <b>The first red flag.</b></p>	<p> Bad sign by Tom's own admission.</p>	2	3	1
<p>My letters to her were always positive, happy, entertaining - telling her about life in Florida, hobbies, interests, etc. I sent her many pictures from around here but received no comments about them.</p>	<p> Another bad sign: Tatyana's interest seems to be waning, or maybe is caught by others and she put Tom on the back burner, just in case he might become useful later.</p>	2	3	2
<p>She would write that she was often in depression due to loneliness, how she lives with a mean old mother and has to spend all her money on mom's healthcare, how she has back pain, doesn't like her job, her boring lifestyle, etc.</p>	<p> Yet another bad sign: this usually means a <i>scammer</i>, but it's not Tatyana's case, as we shall see further on.</p>	2	3	3
<p>This should have been my clue to run for the hills, but being the typical guy, <b>I figured I would be able to fly in there, fix everything and make her very happy!</b></p>	<p> The classic <i>White Knight in Shining Armor</i> syndrome.</p>	2	4	2
<p>After about 4 months, her interest level seemed to increase and she started responding in a more timely fashion.</p>	<p> Maybe because somebody else's interest in Tatyana's had declined in the meantime.</p>	2	5	2
<p>I started discussing the possibilities of a visit to Kiev with her. I was busy in July</p>	<p> Good idea normally, but wise in</p>	3	6	2

and she was busy in August so we set the trip for Sept 4. Exactly 6 months from the date of my first letter. It could have been sooner had she responded to my letters in a timely fashion and shown some interest!	this specific case?			
While we were waiting for the magic day to arrive, we talked every weekend using Skype.	 Good practice.	4	6	2
As a general rule, she only told me negative things - weather was bad, had to cancel her vacation to pay for mom's cataract surgery, mom yells at her all the time, belittles her, is ungrateful, etc. She was more than ready to leave her country and her mom behind.	 To an outside observer, Tatyana's personality picture is steadily deteriorating: an embittered complainer.	4	6	3
Naturally, I thought a nice man like myself could make this lonely woman very happy!	 The <i>White Knight in Shining Armor</i> syndrome again, but probably written in self-irony after the fact.	4	7	3
By the way, the pictures she posted on the websites are very old or very air brushed. She sent me a recent one via Skype and it looked nothing like the others. (I was glad she sent it though, because I may not have recognized her in person without it).	 Using old photos is not very honest.	4	8	4
As the weeks passed, we discussed our meeting, making the necessary arrangements, etc.  Tatyana generously suggested that she would meet me at the airport and that she could reserve an apartment for me, etc.  It seemed like the most convenient thing so I accepted her offer. I suggested she reserve the apartment in a location near her own home so that it	 Again, good idea normally, but wise in this case?	5	9	4

<p>would be convenient for her to move between home, the old mother, time with me, etc. She lives in a suburb.</p>				
<b>TRAVEL &amp; ARRIVAL</b>				
<p>The big day finally arrived and my worried dad drove me to the airport and grilled me the entire time about why in the hell I would be going to Kiev for a vacation!</p> <p>I just told him I had heard that was where all the beautiful women are! I flew Sarasota-&gt; Atlanta -&gt; Frankfurt -&gt; Kiev.</p> <p>Lufthansa was the model of efficiency in Frankfurt - only 1 hour between connections and they somehow got us all off the first plane, onto buses, all the way to the other side of the airport, back thru security again, onto more buses, and onto the Kiev flight, and it still left on time.</p> <p>Unfortunately this left no time to get a bite to eat so I had been living on power bars for the past 8 hours!</p>	<p> Good travel arrangements.</p>	6	9	4
<p>Arrived in Kiev and holy crap! I cannot believe I am actually here!</p> <p>The immigration area at Boryspol airport was an absolute mess. Thousands of people in line before me and very slow moving lines. I needed to take a huge dump after all of those power bars and saw the immigration line was not going to clear out anytime soon, so fortunately there was a bathroom at the left side of the room. Pleasant surprise - real toilets when I had been expecting the hole in the floor variety.</p> <p>By the time I got out of there, the</p>	<p>(No comment)</p>	6	9	4

immigration room had cleared out and I sailed through. I was hoping to see my waiting Tatyana but no such luck. Maybe it is like the USA where only ticketed passengers can get beyond a certain point. Then onto the baggage claim area.


While filing out the customs form, I was approached by 2 separate people offering to 'help' me. I declined all offers, found my luggage, sailed thru customs, and then the sea of people parted and there she was!! Yay, first mission accomplished!

Many of the stories here say "*She was even more beautiful in person*" blah, blah, blah. Well, I cannot say that. As I mentioned previously, her online pictures are at least 5 years old and maybe as much as 8 years old. And air brushed. Nevertheless, she was still reasonably attractive and good enough for me.

She tried to carry my briefcase, but of course, I couldn't let her, it was HEAVY!! She led me outside and found a mini bus for us to board. We sat down and she held my hand and said she was glad to finally see me! So far, so good.

We sat in the mini bus for a good 30 minutes waiting for it to fill. The temperature was about 97 that day so it was a rather sweaty wait. We finally departed and rode this mini bus on to points unknown. I was surprised to see a police officer standing about every 500 yards on each side of the road along our route.

The bus dropped us at a metro station and we descended underground and

 The initial meeting seem promising.

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<p>rode a train for another long while. Then we got off at the station and ascended to ground level on the biggest escalator I have ever seen.</p>				
<p>Then we walked through a tunnel under the street - me dragging my luggage which had lost a wheel on this journey - and Tatyana seemingly annoyed with all the noise it was making.</p>	<p>🚩 Tatyana displays unjustified irritability, particularly considering that Tom has just arrived after a long journey.</p>	7	10	4
<p>We crossed a field amidst some apartment buildings, down a path, up a hill, past some dumpsters, around a corner, and voila, my building. The huge metal door was covered in graffiti and opened into a very dark, dirty hallway. From there, we got into a tiny elevator that barely held the two of us with luggage and we went to the 6th floor. From there, we had to unlock another heavy metal door that protected a hallway. Tatyana locked the door behind us.</p> <p>Once inside the hallway, mine was the first door on the left. The apartment door opened into a small entry area with a small bathroom and small kitchen on the left side and a bigger room on the right. The apartment had been repainted and the appliances were all new. In the main room, a single bulb hung from a wire in the middle of the ceiling. The wires were just twisted together by hand, no electrical tape around them. I remembered it was probably 220V and no ground wire in sight!! Mental note not to touch any of that!</p> <p>In the main room, there was only a bed. No TV, no telephone, no other furniture. I was completely happy there though, all I needed was a bed/shower/toilet. I</p>	<p>🚩 Tatyana had arranged for the apartment - not a very good idea, apparently.</p>	7	11	4



did start thinking about what life must be like for those that actually have to live in a place like this. There were no closets in the apartment so the main room would have to contain EVERYTHING. Bed, couch, dresser, table, clothes, TV, etc. etc.

The back wall of the apartment was all windows - old, creaky wooden framed windows that did not seal up tightly. This place must be hell in winter time! And the view was actually not bad. It was of a tree-lined courtyard between apartment buildings.

There were some rickety looking porches on some of the apartments and everything needed painting and freshening up but I have certainly been in places much, much worse over the years. Asia is much worse. The Caribbean is much worse. I was happy to be in Kiev. **I gave Tatyana the \$660 for 11 nights rent and she left to pay the landlord.**

First order of business after 20+ hours of travel was a nice shower. Oops, no towels in the apartment so I used my dirty t-shirt and felt refreshed and wonderful. Tatyana returned an hour later with some towels!

Second order of business was eating a BIG meal. We left the apartment - locking the apartment door in 2 places, unlocking the hall door, re-locking the hall door, down the tiny elevator, into the dark hallway, and outside. Kids were in the street kicking a soccer ball, dogs were running free everywhere. We walked down the hill, past the dumpsters, under the tunnel, back down the biggest escalator in the world, into a train, and to the city center.

(No comment)


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<p>Third order of business - change money. \$100 bill after \$100 bill was rejected by the changer as being counterfeit. Finally they liked 3 of the bills I presented and gave me grevnyas.</p> <p>Then we walked and walked and walked. I was starving and ready to pick up a pigeon, twist off its head, and eat it right then and there. Finally we arrived at a cafeteria-style restaurant on Kreschatyk, near Freedom Square. Tatyana selected a bunch of different things for me to try. I'm adventurous and definitely not in love with American cuisine so I ate everything and loved it all.</p>				
<p>Then we walked further and ended at the riverfront park with the huge arch. We bought ice cream and sat on a bench and talked. We held hands.</p> <p>Then 2 of the hottest women I have ever seen walked by in the shortest skirts I have ever seen. Tatyana voiced her displeasure of the short skirts. Damn! I was hoping she would be wearing hers tomorrow!</p>	<p>🚩 Signs of Tatyana's jealousy or possessiveness ?</p>	7	12	4
<p>The sun was setting and we were both tired, me from a long journey and her from a stressful 2 hour wait at the airport wondering if I would show, etc. So we decided to call it a night.</p> <p>Back to the metro station, holding hands during the train ride back to station, up the giant escalator, under the tunnel, up the hill, past the garbage, to the apartment, past metal door #1, up the tiny elevator, past the double-locked metal door guarding the hallway, into the double-locked apartment door which she opened for me and all I could do was say goodnight and head for the</p>	(No comment)	7	12	4

bed and collapse.				
DAY 1				
<p>Now I'm an early riser and when the sun comes up, I automatically wake and am ready to go. This happened at 7:00 and Tatyana wasn't arriving until 10:00. This gave me 3 hours to start thinking of all sorts of bad things.</p> <p>In my hasteful and groggy state the night before, I had neglected to notice that the apartment door could only be opened with a key (even from the inside). Tatyana had the key! I couldn't open the door even if I had to.</p> <p>Lets see.... I don't know where I am. Nobody else in the whole world, except Tatyana, a complete stranger, knows where I am. My cell phone doesn't work. There is no phone in the apartment. There is no TV in the apartment. There is no food in the fridge.</p> <p>What if Tatyana never returns? What if there is a fire?</p> <p>My only option is to leave via the 6th floor window. The facade of the building doesn't lend itself to climbing. I'll have to make a rope with the only 2 sheets and 2 towels and maybe a few pairs of jeans and get as far down as possible and then fall the remainder of the way. Oh, I could toss out the mattress to make a landing pad.</p> <p>I can't stay here very long without food so I'll give her until noon before I have to panic and implement my plan. 10:00 comes and goes and I start to get really nervous.</p>	<p>🚩 Not much thoughtful of Tatyana, leaving a foreigner completely stranded in an inadequate accomodation.</p>	7	13	4
FORTUNATELY she does appear at	(No comment)	7	13	4

<p>10:15 and I breathe a sigh of relief.</p> <p>We talk for a bit and then walk down the hill, under the tunnel, I notice an under-the-street market where I can buy some groceries, we pop out to street level and there is a beautiful park spread out in front of us. It is a Friday morning and the weather is perfect and it seems a school field trip must be underway as there are many children and teachers in the park. There are vendors selling everything from honey to chainsaws. I'm not making this up!</p> <p>The center of the wide boulevard in the park has been decorated with flower topiaries and everyone is taking pictures next to the various creations. The trees are beautiful, the people are beautiful, the park is beautiful, the weather is beautiful but Tatyana points to all the litter laying around and tells me the park is dirty.</p> <p>I really was happy just being there with her and hadn't noticed anything bad. We see a 4X4 Lada in olive drab and I want a picture next to that instead of the topiaries. Tatyana takes the picture but thinks I am strange for wanting to pose with this ugly car. Hey, I'm a car guy and this is an exotic one for me!</p>				
<p>After an hour or so, we leave the park and ride the metro into the city again. She never tells me where we are going, I just follow.</p> <p>She takes me back to the same cafeteria we visited last night. We have lunch. The place certainly is cheap and the food decent. Then we find a phone card vendor and buy a card so I can call my sister.</p>	<p> Tatyana doesn't seem a very communicative person.</p>	7	14	4

<p>We walk to another park adjacent to the river. It too is beautiful and I'm surprised to see people milling about drinking beers! We call my sister who would be sitting in Atlanta morning rush hour traffic at this time and I tell her about the beautiful park and to get over here as soon as possible because beer is everywhere (sister likes beer).</p> <p>We continue to walk and walk and walk. We pass the opera house and the cruise ship terminal. Tatyana wants ice cream again!! I go for just a bottle of water. We spend some time walking around some of the shopping areas on Kreschatyk.</p>				
<p>Around 18:00, Tatyana leads me back to the SAME cafeteria for dinner. I tell her we can go to any restaurant and she tells me she likes this one because it is healthy Ukraine food.</p>	(No comment)	7	14	4
<p>After dinner, we go back to the metro station, back to her stop, up the giant escalator, back to the apartment (behind 3 security doors), etc.</p> <p>We lay around on the bed talking for a while (it is the only piece of furniture in the room, remember?). We discuss how amazing it is to go from e-mailing to an actual in-person meeting. A few hours later, she decides to go home.</p> <p>I offer to walk with her but she says it is dangerous out there for me but nobody will harass an old woman like her.</p> <p>She has the keys in hand and is just about to lock me into the apartment for the night (again!) and I tell her that I need to keep the keys. All of the happiness left her face at this time (never to return again as I would soon</p>	<p> Tatyana now appears to want to exercise total control over Tom's circumstances.</p> <p>Excessive possessiveness, a control freak ?</p> <p>Refusing any alternative arrangement, and eventually yielding in anger to Tom's reasonable request, are indications of very worrying personality traits.</p>	7	14	5

discover).

She tells me I cannot leave the apartment because Ukraine people are very bad and will take my money or will kill me if I go out alone. I tell her not to worry, I have worked in 10 different countries during my career.

She asks why I need to go out. I say I need to go to the market in the morning because I wake up early and am very hungry. She says I cannot go to the market because I don't speak Russian. I tell her not to worry, the numbers are the same and speaking is not required. I'll select what I want, look at the number on the cash register, and pay it.


She says Ukraine people are very bad and they will charge me too much.

I say don't worry, now hand over the keys please.

She says again that I cannot go to the market, she will bring food to me at 7:00. I say don't be ridiculous, it is Saturday and you shouldn't have to wake at 6:00 or before on Saturday just to bring food to me. If I have the keys, I can go to the market early and she can arrive whenever she likes. I told her I have done this before in Korea, Japan, Philippines, Oman, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Trinidad, etc. and never had a problem.

She says Ukraine is different, very bad people here. Then she says she won't be able to come into the building to meet me without the keys.

I tell her not to worry, I'll be waiting for her downstairs but that we should also get another set of keys so that we both have a set. She says this is not

<p>possible, there is only 1 set. I tell her we will get another set made, I will pay for it.</p> <p>She says this is not possible. I tell her everything is possible. We will find a way to make another set tomorrow.</p> <p>She hands over the keys (angrily) and she stomps away..</p>				
<p>In the morning, I awoke, dressed, went to the market, secured breakfast without incident and returned to the safety of the apartment without incident.</p> <p>Tatyana kept me waiting at the front door for more than 30 minutes arriving at 12:30 instead of 12:00 and she was clearly still very angry.</p> <p>I tried to ignore it and be my cheerful self. We went upstairs and she asked if I went to the market. I said yes. She goes to the kitchen to see what I bought. One item was like a sweet roll - some bread filled with apples and raisins. She told me that was a sweet and NOT a breakfast food.</p> <p>Her basic tone was that I was an idiot for buying this item. Then she picked up a small box of Tide I had purchased and told me I really got ripped off because that market wasn't the right place to buy soap. Then she looked in the fridge and told me I bought the wrong water because I couldn't read the label and the water has gas (carbonated). I told her don't worry, I will shake it until the gas is gone.</p> <p>Then she told me I don't need her; If I can go to the market alone, I don't need her. (Oh great, just what I've always dreamed of - <b>a drama queen!</b>). I told</p>	<p> Tatyana is still in a bad temper, and uses every little opportunity to manifest her displeasure.</p> <p>Any conciliatory attempts by Tom are rejected.</p> <p>The fact that Tom is a man who travelled long and expensively to meet her seems to be of no consequence at all to her.</p>	7	14	6

<p>her it is better to WANT someone than to NEED someone and that I wanted her. It fell on deaf ears and I got nothing but attitude from her.</p>				
<p>I suggested we go to lunch and she started walking. The entire trip down the hill, thru the tunnel, down the escalator, into the metro, out on Kreschatyk, etc. she walked just a few paces faster than me, kept ahead of me, never looked back to see if I was still behind her, no further hand holding, etc.</p> <p>She led me back to the SAME cafeteria once again. This time she didn't even ask what I wanted to eat but instead just filled a tray and handed to to me. Hey, at least she wouldn't let me starve to death!</p> <p>I tried to talk to her during the meal but she was ignoring me. I assumed I must have committed some cultural faux pas but I can't imagine that any man from any country would allow himself to be locked into a flat every night. I told her I was very sorry about this misunderstanding but that I'm not willing to be locked into the flat every night. She told me that I don't trust her so the relationship won't be successful. I told her this has nothing at all to do with trust. I asked her what I should do if there were a fire in the building - should I jump out the window and fall 60 feet and break my legs?</p> <p>She said there wouldn't be any fires and that I simply don't trust her. Then she ignored me for the rest of the lunch.</p>	<p> Again, Tatyana's cold-shoulder treatment.</p>	7	14	7
<p>After we finished eating, she got up and started walking again and I followed. She would point out some church or</p>	<p> Bad temper often leads to bad decisions.</p>	7	14	8



historic building and tell me to take a picture of it and then she would speed off to the next place.

After some time, we ended up sitting in the courtyard of a church and she told me it was very bad that I didn't have a religion (she had previously said that was acceptable to her in our letters!). Then she complained about her back pain. We walked some more and came to another park and sat on separate benches.

We laid down and took short naps on the benches since we weren't talking anyway.


The next time I looked at her, she said again that I don't trust her. I told her she was wrong and I tried to find some words in her dictionary. I found 'self-reliance', 'self-sufficiency', 'independence' and told her these were American core values instilled into us from birth; That it was counter to our culture to be locked into a room and have to depend 100% on a caretaker to come and take us out for the day. It was the wrong thing to say.


She said if I want independence, then I am free to go and do whatever I want to do: I have the keys to the flat, I can go to the market, I don't need her, I can go meet many women.

Now Tatyana thinks she can get Tom back under her control with a *take-me-or-leave-me* ultimatum.

It is about 18:00 in the evening by this time and I'm just about fed up with her giving me the attitude ALL day long.

I can't see myself getting married (for the next 40 years) to a woman who manages her anger like this so I tell her once again that I'm very sorry we've had this problem, that I travelled a very

 Bad move on Tatyana's part!

 After being treated like dirt for 6 continuous hours, Tom reacts and calls her bluff.

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<p>long way to be with her (AND ONLY HER!!) and that I want to continue to be with her but <b>if she feels it is time to part, then just say the word and we will finish and say goodbye right here, right now.</b></p>				
<p>She thinks about this for a while, and then says we will go eat dinner. She leads me back to the SAME cafeteria again and then we went back to the apartment and talked for a while. She gave me a hug (no kiss), and never said she was sorry about anything.</p> <p>I had said it, one would think she could meet me halfway. As we were saying goodnight, I told her we will start fresh in the morning and we will have happy, fun days from tomorrow onward. <b>After she left, I laid on the bed and breathed a deep sigh of relief. It had truly been a long and miserable day. So counter-productive and not at all like the 10 days of fun and joy I had envisioned.</b></p>	<p>🚩 The matter is still left unsettled.</p> <p>However, after 1 full day together, Tom is starting to suspect that Tatyana may have been a bad choice.</p>	8	15	9
DAY 2				
<p>Day two: I managed to arrive during the hottest week of the year in Kiev. I'm from Florida so I'm accustomed to hot weather, but Kiev was worse!! It was nearly 100 degrees every day and never a cloud in the sky. Those crazy people won't wear shorts either!! I had shorts for sleeping in and for wearing around the apartment so this day I didn't change into my jeans before going downstairs to meet Tatyana. She arrived and pointed to my shorts and said "What is this? I don't like short pants, you cannot wear these". No s&amp;#t sweetheart, its only for around the apartment. She had no room to talk because she was wearing the exact same clothes from yesterday.</p>	<p>🚩 Further bitching, complaints, bad mood from Tatyana.</p>	8	15	10

We went upstairs to talk about what to do for the day. She notices that I had washed some clothes and she gets upset with me for that. She says I don't know how to use the washing machine because the controls are labelled in Russian and that I should have waited for her to help me. How difficult is it to press some buttons until the thing comes on? I thought a woman would be happy with a man who cleans up after himself and does his own laundry?! She said again that I don't need her. I told her we are on vacation and are supposed to be having fun, that I didn't come to Kiev to make her wash my laundry! I asked her if we can go to the zoo today and she said its not very good so we won't go there. I get dressed into my hot jeans for the trip out into the 100 degree weather. I take a water bottle from the fridge. She tells me this bottle is too big to bring, we can buy a smaller one later and we leave the apartment.



After walking to the metro station, I go to a kiosk to buy the smaller bottle of water but Tatyana tells me we should wait and buy it later. I tell her I'm thirsty now and I buy the water. We hop on a bus to God knows where and while riding, she tells me that I'm drinking too much water and it isn't normal to drink water all day long. Excuse me, but I'm also sweating profusely all day long in my jeans and boots, riding around in a hot, non-air-conditioned bus, sitting in grid-locked traffic, no ventilation, walking 10 miles under the blazing sun, etc. I tell her it is normal to drink a lot of water in my country. There wasn't a seat for me on the bus so I'm standing near the driver who happens to be a fairly attractive woman in her late 30's. She is wearing a small, loose fitting

summer dress seemingly without undergarments. I've got a direct line of sight toward her big boobs which are bouncing all over the place, mesmerizingly, as the bus rambles along. I'm thinking I want to be with the bus driver instead of Tatyana! Hmmm, should I start talking to the driver in English to see if she understands? About that time, we arrive at a store called 'Metro' which is apparently a membership warehouse similar to Sam's Club in the USA. I am surprised to see the car park outside full of private cars - and quite a few expensive cars too. Capitalism is alive and thriving here.

It was fun to shop in 'Metro' and see everything they have, to see the setup of the store, etc. Actually I was surprised to see just how similar it was to Sam's Club and how much good stuff they had for sale in there! Tanya wanted to buy some toilet paper and selected a bulk quantity of rough Ukrainian paper. It was brown and looked like sandpaper! I offered to buy a package of the soft, white kind but she declined, she wanted the sandpaper. She said it doesn't make sense to spend so much money on something you just throw away. Well, I have to give her high marks for frugality.

She also needed some sweat pants for winter and she took me into the tiny dressing room to help her try on all of the pants. That was a strange twist. Was this ice queen starting to thaw?

She finally found a pair of pants she liked and they were only about \$15 so I said we should get them. Then we went to look at the food. She asked if I liked

<p>caviar and I said I hadn't ever tried it. She was shocked when I told her that the prices start around \$100 in my country. Then I saw the cans and what she was talking about was actually salmon eggs - like Walmart sells for fishing bait, not the little black sturgeon eggs I had been thinking of. The salmon eggs weren't expensive so we got a can along with some bread and butter, and a few fruits. At the checkout, Tatyana got into an argument with the cashier over the price of the pears. The cashier insisted the price was right and Tatyana insisted it was wrong. Good lord man, what are we talking about here? \$4 vs. \$3? Just get the damn things, we are not poor. But Tatyana told them to keep the pears and we paid for the other goods and left (disappointed because I really wanted to eat one of those pears!).</p> <p>As we were walking away, Tanya was angry again and told me this was yet another example of bad Ukrainian people, that the woman was trying to charge us too much and pocket the difference herself. I had my doubts. We went to a Ukranian restaurant inside of the store and she made me try some buckwheat among other Ukranian foods. I liked it all.</p>				
<p>While we were eating, a person of African descent walked by outside and Tatyana was shocked. She said something like "Oh my god! Look! A black person. We need to be careful, they're not good, you know?". I said don't worry, nothing to be afraid of.</p>	<p> Narrow-minded, too.</p>	8	15	11
<p>Upon leaving, we had to walk about a mile from the store/restaurant, under the blazing mid-day sun to get to the other side of the road for the bus going</p>	<p> Albeit rather late, the truth seem to be dawning on Tom.</p>	9	15	11

toward home. Unfortunately we didn't get the bus driver with the big boobs again.

Back at the apartment, the full force of the afternoon sun was burning through the western facing wall of windows. Since the place had just been repainted, there were no blinds or curtains installed yet. And no air-conditioning. All we could do was open the windows and hope for a breeze but the temperature was still above 90 inside that place. I changed into my shorts and Tatyana sort of frowned but didn't say anything this time. She started preparing the caviar and buttered some bread and loaded it with the eggs and gave it to me. I took a bite and it was nasty! It tasted like little salty eyeballs popping open inside my mouth.

I had to wash down every mouthful with a drink of water and Tatyana told me that I shouldn't drink water with food (she had told me this many times before - every time we ate, in fact). She believed that one should wait about an hour after eating before drinking anything! The only way I could finish this caviar was with lots of water to wash it down! Not wanting to be rude, I ate the entire slice of bread and eggs even though it was disgusting.

Then she made another slice for me. I had to tell her I couldn't eat any more and that I didn't like it. After she finished her portion, the second piece she had made for me was still sitting on the counter. Tanya pointed to it and pointed to the garbage can - motioning for me to toss it there.

After I did that, she went off: "What is

wrong with you? You would throw away this food when you see all the hungry dogs outside? You could feed this to the dogs but instead you waste it? You are a strange man!".

I said Jesus Christ woman, you just told me to throw it into the garbage and I did exactly as you asked. Then you find some other reason to yell at me about it? I don't know your customs, I don't know that we are supposed to feed these dogs outside. How could I know this? Then she retrieved the bread from the garbage and took it downstairs.


**By this time, I'm starting to suspect that this woman is fatally flawed.**


When Tanya returned from feeding the dogs, we started looking through the books and magazines I had brought for her.

One of the items was as much a cute joke as anything, it was the Florida driver's manual. I thought she may like to browse it and get some idea about our traffic signals, procedures, etc. She told me she cannot drive a car. I said maybe not now, but you can learn. She said no, she doesn't want to learn, she is scared of it. I said don't worry, it is fun! Besides, we don't have metro, we don't have buses, taxis, etc. A car is a necessity. She says "You will do all the driving for us". Gosh, I had thought someone from there might have been excited about such a new opportunity.

**Apparently this woman is non-expandable and has a very rigid and limited vision of her future.**

As evening approached, we rode the metro back into the city for dinner. We

 Yet further bitching, complaints, bad mood from Tatyana.

 Tom finally puts his foot down.

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went to a restaurant "Ukrainski" across from TGI Friday's. It was very similar (cafeteria-style) to the first place she had taken me so many times already. After picking up our trays, the first stop was the drinks and salads counter and I took a glass of juice.

Tanya started on me again about how I should not drink with food but should wait for at least 1 hour after eating. I ignored it and kept the drink on my tray.


Then at the food counter, there was some nice looking roast beef so I motioned for the server to give me a slice of that. Tanya told me I should get the fish or chicken instead. I told her I've had fish/chicken for the last 5 meals so today I want some red meat. She says it is very bad for me and people should not eat red meat. The server was confused about whether to give it to me or not. I confirmed with him and Tanya told me "No, I don't want you eating this!"

**Allright, enough is enough. My patience just ran out.**

I said "Listen, for 41 years I've been drinking with every meal, eating red meat, never had any problem of any kind, never visit a doctor, and look at me! I'm the absolute picture of good health and strength and fitness. So guess what? I'm going to continue to drink with my food and eat red meat."

I asked the server to now give me TWO slices of the roast beast and he did. Tanya didn't speak to me all through the dinner.

The metro ride back to the apartment was very quiet too. Then, oddly, she




 Except as a delayed attempt by


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<p>laid on top of me at the apartment and started kissing me.</p> <p><b>Made no sense after another full day of her bitchiness.</b></p>	<p>Tatyana at recovering what she finally perceived as a severely deteriorating situation.</p>			
DAY 3				
<p>Tanya arrived in the morning wearing the same clothes for the third day in a row (wonder if she washes them every night?). Her facial expression looked clearly distressed already. I asked her if anything was wrong and she said she had back pain and her mother had been angry with her.</p> <p>Note to self: Really pay attention today to the metro stations and directions inside the metro in case I have to leave this woman soon and go it alone.</p>	<p> More complaints from Tatyana.</p> <p> Tom is beginning to consider an escape plan.</p>	16	15	13
<p>Although I was doubtful that we would be together more than another day or two, I still wanted to do something nice for her. After all, she had arranged the apartment, met me at the airport, transported me to the apartment, kept me from starving to death in a strange land where I couldn't read the menus, spent all of her time with me each day as my personal tour guide, etc. Her purse looked somewhat old and tattered and, as her birthday was only about 2 weeks away, I suggested that we should go shop for a new purse for her. She took this to mean that I was ashamed to be seen with her and the current purse!</p> <p><b>(This woman could put a negative spin on winning the lottery).</b></p>	<p> Tom is gradually realizing the hopelessness of Tatyana's case.</p>	17	15	13
<p>After a few minutes of convincing her this was not the case, we went to the metro station and on to points</p>	<p>(Business as usual, no new or unexpected</p>			

<p>unknown. Once again, it was a 100 degree day with no shade and no air conditioning. Very sweaty. I suggested to her that maybe we should just rent a car and be done with all this public transportation; that way we could go everywhere we wanted in air conditioned comfort. Tanya told me it is not possible to rent a car. I asked why but she just said 'not possible'. I told her I have international driving license and money so it is possible. She got mad and said I don't trust her and don't believe her again. I said I'm just CURIOUS as to why its not possible. You can't tell me just 'not possible' but provide no reason. She said there are no cars for rent here. Gee, I seem to remember passing a Hertz counter at the airport. Must have been a dream.</p>	<p>developments)</p>			
<p><b>Nevermind, she apparently knows everything and arguing with her is futile!</b></p>	<p> Tom's realization deepens.</p> <p>From now on, there is no point in updating the <i>Flag-O-Meter</i> any further - we'll just let Tom continue his frustrating story to its predictable end.</p>	18	15	13
<p>We were riding in the metro for a long time and made a change to another track at one of the stations. I've never lived in a city that had a subway system so this was different for me. One time the train lunged forward unexpectedly and I went flying halfway across the car and landed flat on the floor. Everyone pretended they did not even see this. Except for Tanya who thought it was the funniest thing she had ever seen and she laughed uncontrollably for 20 minutes straight. Wow, she CAN actually laugh at something!</p> <p>Anyway, no harm done but remember to ALWAYS have a hand-hold in the metro. Eventually the train came out of the ground and crossed over the river. I was amazed by what I saw. It appeared that there was a park all along the entire bank of the river. There were lush green forests, shade</p>				

trees, sandy beaches, and thousands of people playing down there. They were wearing shorts! They didn't have shirts or shoes! They were cooking food, sailing small boats, drinking beer, floating on rafts, riding jet skis, playing in the water, catching fish. Fantastic! This is what we do in Florida on hot days and they have all of the same things here in Kiev! Meanwhile, I'm sitting in this greenhouse of a train, dressed in hot jeans, hot shoes, shirt, all stuck to my body because of constant sweat and I can't drink enough water!

I said "Look Tanya, a beach! Lets go there!" She said no, its not a good place. I asked what is the problem with it. She said the water is dirty and you will get sick if you go in the water. I asked about all of the hundreds of people who were clearly playing in the water. She said "They are crazy and they will be sick tomorrow". OK, hundreds are crazy but you are the normal one. Makes perfect sense. I suggested that we could just rent a sailboat but not actually go into the water. She said she was scared of it because she cannot swim.

Good lord, does she like to do ANYTHING fun?

Eventually we left the metro and walked a good while under the blazing sun. Apparently we passed a butcher shop because Tanya recoiled at the 'bad smell' (which I hadn't noticed and could not detect). She told me animals are killed in there for meat and it is very sad and not good. Then we came to some type of huge indoor flea market. I had read about places like this; There were stalls upon stalls of fake designer goods. Purses, jeans, watches, you name it, it was all there and usually priced around 50% of the normal price. It looked as if an entire container ship from China had been unloaded into this building. Did I mention it was hot? The building had a metal roof and was not air conditioned. We walked and sweated and looked at hundreds of purses but she did not see anything that struck her fancy.

Then she decided that MY wardrobe needed changing! Admittedly, I was just wearing basic T-shirts every day due to the hot weather. I had brought along nicer shirts for evening wear, but we usually ended our evenings by 9:00 or 10:00 and never went to any nice places so the good shirts never left the suitcase. It didn't make sense to me to wear an expensive shirt and lean up against a dirty metro seat or bus seat, and to sweat in it all day long so I wore my T-shirts. All of them were new and dark colors. Tanya found some spandex T-shirts and told me to buy these because I should be wearing tight fitting shirts. Yuck!! I don't want to look like Borat and also the thought of wrapping my body in tight, synthetic fabric in 100 degree weather was just not appealing. You need loose fitting cotton for extremely hot weather so I told her I was happy with my shirts and did not need to buy any and that we were shopping for her. She told me angrily that she doesn't like my shirt!

Then we reached the shoe section. All of the famous Italian names were here, but again, for a fraction of the usual price. Tanya told me she didn't like my shoes either! (Which were brand new New Balance sneakers in dark colors. Sorry, maybe not the style there, but if we're going to be walking 10 miles every day and be in 100 degree weather, I cannot even imagine wearing leather shoes. No wonder everybody walking the street is frowning, their feet are in some serious pain!. Anyway, Tanya wanted me to buy some sandals (I had no idea these would be accepted fashion in Kiev so I left all of mine at home). I told her I had 3 pairs at home already and didn't need any more. Then we reached the jeans section and she said that she didn't like my pants (which were brand new Levi's). I asked her if she really expected that I would have access to the correct Ukrainian fashions when shopping for clothes in the USA? I then bit my tongue and fought the urge to tell her that I didn't like HER clothes that she wore every day. Her shirt was rather worn and old-looking and she has the nerve to pick apart MY NEW shirts, MY NEW pants, MY NEW shoes??

Then we reached a jacket section which was very impressive. First of all, the selection was 10 times greater than anything, anywhere in the USA. And the jackets were the most beautiful I had ever seen. Every type of fur was here; Sable, Mink, Fox, Rabbit, Beaver, Otter, etc. Just gorgeous stuff and some of the really nice coats were priced in the thousands (in dollars!). Wow, I could visualize some beautiful blonde Slavic woman standing out in the snow in one of these fur coats with a matching fur hat - Yummy! Tanya decided she would rather have a new jacket than a new purse and asked if that was OK. I said go ahead. She tried on probably 50 or 75 jackets, some multiple times each. It took several hours! Finally she decided on a black leather one and it was about \$200 which I thought was reasonable for a birthday/thank-you present. Then she threw it into the bag and moved on, no 'Thank you' was said. Should I ask her why it is OK to kill animals for leather but not for meat? Naaaaa.

We went to a Ukrainian style restaurant inside of this shopping area and again, she gave me a hard time for adding a bottle of water to my tray (you need to wait 1 hour before drinking).

After taking one bite of her food, she looked disgusted and put down her fork and said "It's not fresh, they made it yesterday". I couldn't tell if this was true or not and I ate all of my food.

On the metro ride back to the apartment, we passed over the river and beaches again and I wanted to be down there playing amongst those people. I asked Tanya to bring a blanket for tomorrow so that we can go to the beach. She told me that the river is the toilet for all of Kiev and there will be pieces of \*snip\* floating in the water if we go there. Come on man, thousands of people are down there wearing shorts and having more fun

than us. She told me that the water can go up a man's penis and make him sick. Also that it would do the same in the female body. I said don't worry, we will stay out of the water. We can take some lunch and go sit on the blanket under a tree and have a nice time. She said it will be like playing in the toilet. AS if playing in the metro is so much more fun!

It had been a very hot day that day and the apartment didn't cool enough for sleeping until well past midnight. So I laid in bed, wide awake for a long time, sweating, sticking to the sheets, thinking about all that had transpired during the past few days. I also listened to the various people coming and going down below and thought about how amazing it was to be sleeping in a residential building somewhere in the middle of Ukraine! If only I were fluent in the language, I would go downstairs and talk to everyone!

Anyway, a decision was made: We are going to the beach tomorrow. (In my whole life, there has never been a bad day at the beach with a girl so why should it be any different here?)

If Tanya and I do not have a fun time together at the beach tomorrow, then I will tell her goodbye!

#### DAY 4

She arrived in the apartment and found something to scold me about almost immediately! Remember, the apartment is one room with only a bed. Thus, my suitcase could only be on the floor. The lid was open and leaning against the wall. All of the clothes in the suitcase were clean, folded and stacked neatly. There was 1 pair of jeans from yesterday that had been thoroughly sweated in so they couldn't be mixed with the clean clothes and I layed them on the floor next to the suitcase awaiting the next laundry day. Tanya made a beeline to these jeans and picked them up and started asking me if I was a pig for leaving my clothes all over the floor! I gave her the look of death and she backed off a little. The good news was that she did actually bring a blanket so she must have decided to go along with the beach idea.

After a while, we departed for the city and spent some time checking out some underground shopping near TGI FRidays. Ahhhhhh! Air conditioning. I liked this type of shopping. Then we ate lunch at the SAME cafeteria again and then she told me to take a picture of something but I didn't have the camera. That set her off. "Why you didn't bring camera? You don't think there is anything interesting in Kiev to take pictures? Nothing interesting for you here!" Blah, blah, blah.

First of all, Ms. Tour Guide, YOU are the one who has been telling me only bad things about your town. I actually kind of like the place.

Then I asked her if I came to Kiev to take pictures or if I came to Kiev to meet with her and she shut up for a while. Not sure if the point had been made or if she was ignoring me out of anger because she did seem to be walking a few paces faster than me. Then she wanted to go to McDonalds for ice cream so we went there. After she finished her ice cream, she put her head on the table and said her back hurts again. I suggested we go back to the apartment if she's not feeling well. She says no, she doesn't want to go there but she would go to my apartment in my country. I said "Really?" kind of shocked and in disbelief that she would say that after she had been scolding me all day. Well, this made her angry again and she kept her head on the table and ignored me.

I'm starting to think I'm dating a 12-year old child! I began mentally preparing my 'goodbye' statement when she stood up, took my hand, and said "We go to beach now".

As we were walking along the riverfront, toward the walkover bridge, she was again doing the angry walk - 6 paces ahead of me and just a bit faster than me. She was pointing out every piece of litter along the way. "Look! Dirty! Too much garbage. Beer bottles. Broken glass. Is this what you like?".

I could see the arch at the top of the hill and knew the IMB office was just a short distance from there. I tried to turn her around saying her back hurts, we should return home. But her angry walk and talk continued.

Crossing the walkover bridge, some trash cans were overflowing and she stopped to show me all of that "Look! You didn't trust me that it is a dirty place here! Now you see all of this garbage? You like it?". I said relax, its not that bad, go visit Kingston, Jamaica sometime! We continued over the bridge and she said "See the water? It is brown. Very dirty. Can you smell it? I told you Ukraine people very dirty. You don't believe me". I didn't notice any bad smells. Finally we reached the other side and made our way down the sandy beach. It was really not that bad. Kind of nice to have some green areas right in the middle of such a huge city.

After walking a while, we came to a quiet spot and I spread the blanket out and we laid down. Tanya soon jumped up screaming. As luck would have it, there was a fresh dog turd a mere 2 inches from her side of the blanket. I quickly gathered up the blanket and moved it far away to a location I thoroughly checked for turds before placing the blanket. Just a natural reaction, I guess, because there was certainly no reason to try and make things right anymore.

An hour passed, then maybe two. Not a lot of conversation was going on. I looked across the river and could still see the arch. My gateway to the IMB office. I wanted to be over there! I looked at my watch and it was 16:00. The

IMB is open until 20:00 so there is still time to go there today if I get rid of her right now.....I was getting restless and suggested that we leave. That way, I could just say goodbye at the metro station and send her home while I stayed in the city.

Unfortunately she didn't want to leave. She told me that I wanted the beach and now I'm going to have it all day. I said yes, but I didn't want it with an angry woman! No comment from her. I suggested again that we leave but no response from her. So I asked her how she felt about our meeting. She pretended not to speak English anymore. Everything I asked, she just said "I don't understand". I was using words that I had heard her use before so I knew she was understanding and just playing dumb.

There was no choice but to tell her I thought it was not going well and that I would be heading over to the IMB offices to arrange meetings with other women. Well, she understood that and it made her jump up and be ready to leave the beach immediately!

Now I would have to endure another 'angry walk' across the walkover bridge (It would have been better if she didn't know until we got to the metro station). She said she didn't understand me. Why would I say I want to go to the beach and then not be happy after she took me there and gave me exactly what I had asked for? I said I wanted to go to the beach with a HAPPY woman, not an angry woman. Then she told me to shut up and we had a silent walk the rest of the way.

We reached Independence Square and I expected her to go into the metro but she stayed with me. I told her I could find the office on my own but she said she was going to make sure. Oh good lord, would this long silent walk ever end? We reached the office and she came inside with me. She sat down and started talking with all of the girls there and I could tell it was all about how much of an \*snip\* I was, how I had said I wanted the beach and she took me there and then I didn't want it anymore, etc. etc. etc.

One of the beautiful women who works there started a computer for me and told me to make a list of women I wanted to meet. I tried to browse the listings but Tanya was still sitting right behind me blabbering away angrily about how bad I was. I dumped her more than an hour ago, I shouldn't still have to listen to this! I told one of the girls I was going out for some food and would return later. I took a 2 hour dinner break and when I went back, I passed Tanya in the hallway. She had spent 2 hours there.

**I said thanks for everything and I'm sorry it didn't work out.** She completely ignored me and tried to walk through me as if I wasn't even there!

**Yep, right decision was made, don't want an angry wife like her for the next 40 years!!**

## Conclusions

From what he wrote in his Trip Report, Tom appears basically a good and accomodating man, but he took too long - 4 days - to react to Tatyana's obviously problematic personality, all-too-frequent bad temper and lack of civil manners.

The final *Flag-O-Meter* reading shows:

- 🟢 18 good choices/events
- 🟡 15 questionable choices/events
- 🔴 13 bad choices/events

Fortunately for Tom, he eventually stopped the process before it could become even worse for him: it would have turned into a 'Marriage Made in Hell' 😞.

He wasted some enthusiasm, time and money - thus, given the non-fatal extent of his damages, we could classify his experience as a minor **derailment**, rather than a full [train wreck](#) 😞.



Derailment



Train wreck

What did Tom do with his remaining days in Kiev, after the first 4 spent with Tatyana? Judiciously, he tried to save his wrecked expedition by meeting other EW, but was not much fortunate in that, either.

Here is the rest of his instructive tale.

There isn't much more to tell really.....

I never saw Tanya again and spent the remainder of my days going on dates with different women from the IMB.

The first was Elen and what a disaster she is. We arranged to meet and she told me I would be able to recognize her because she was wearing a \$2,000 Loius Vitton jacket (as if I would know what that looks like!). We met and she wanted to go for some champagne, so we went to one of the cafes on Kreschatyk. She looks at my watch (which I thought was a very cool Swiss Army mechanical GMT watch) and she pushes it aside and tells me that her ex-boyfriend wore a Patek Phillipe. Was I supposed to be impressed or something? Then she asks me how much money I make per year. I told her it wasn't polite to ask such a question. She asks what kind of house I live in and if there is a mortgage. I said it was a modest house but without mortgage. She said she wants a huge house. She asked what kind of car I drive. This is where it really gets good. I have a Porsche 911 and a Toyota pickup truck but I only told her about the Toyota. She was clearly disturbed by this. Then I noticed a similar truck parked out on the sidewalk and pointed it out to her. "Yep, thats what I drive right over there, baby!" She said loudly "You cannot take a woman out in that!". I said the woman I want to meet is just happy to sit near me and the type of car we're sitting in isn't so important. She told me such a woman doesn't exist and I would be divorced in 3 years after the woman got her green card and found a richer man. Then she told me her Patek-Phillipe



wearing ex-boyfriend also had an airplane. I told her she should call him and try to win him back! Then she told me that after she gets married, she won't work anymore and that she also doesn't clean house or cook. I asked how she planned to spend her days. She said she would be "creative, paint and draw, go to the gym, go shopping" and that she "could inspire her husband to make even more money". I told her she was every man's dream! A woman who won't cook, won't clean, won't work, will spend all the money and demand more, probably won't give him sex except when she wants it. And that a man cannot make sufficient money to keep a woman like her happy because she will always demand more! She sat back and paused for a minute with an evil grin on her face because she knew I was speaking the truth. Then she told me that 2 million a year would be a happy salary. WOW, did I ever want this date to end!! I suggested we leave but she said she wanted to drink the bottle of champagne first! Good lord, there was still 3/4 of the bottle remaining. I couldn't do it. I stood up, left some cash on the table to pay for the champagne and said "Really nice to meet you, I'm ready to leave now" and got the hell out of there! As I was walking away, it dawned on me that this was the worst woman I had ever met in my entire life. Worse than Tatyana! Maybe a lot of American women have similar thoughts but NEVER has one vocalized such thoughts to me, EVER! And as grouchy as Tatyana was, at least she was frugal and non-materialistic.

Then I met Galina. A very pleasant woman and the first one with a positive attitude. And a sharp dresser too. High heels, low-cut top, etc. Sadly, we seemed to run out of conversation after about an hour and I really didn't know what to say to her after that. Back up a minute to when we took a taxi to our lunch destination.....she asked me if we should hold the taxi there or just get another one later. How the hell should I know? But I assumed it would be expensive to pay him to stay there so I said let him go. After lunch, she called him but he was busy and she couldn't find another taxi. She said something sarcastic about it being my decision to let the taxi go! After my first 2 experiences, one tiny grain of bitchiness is all I need to see, honey!

Then I met Natalia who was EXTREMELY fluent in English, had a good career, had been to the USA on business, etc. She was the same age as me and looked pretty good in the pictures on her IMB profile. In real life she looked about 5 years older so I have to assume the agency pics are not current. We had a great flowing conversation over dinner, never ran out of topics, seemed to have a lot in common, etc. Man, the prices of the dinners in the nicer restaurants over there is outrageous!! Plan to drop \$100-\$200 for a small meal. Over here, two can eat at the Bonefish Grill, for example, and be totally stuffed with quality food, have wine for maybe \$80, so it was definite sticker shock but I kept this to myself. I was attracted to this woman mentally although not really physically. She seemed much older than me. Life is probably harder over there. But hey, George Bush Senior always appeared to have married his mother and they had a successful marriage. So I wanted to see her again and give her time to grow on me. We exchanged numbers but she never took my call and never called me. After reading other posts here, I think she may be just using the service to have a nice dinner once a week.

Then I met a real beauty with a 16 year-old son. Unfortunately I cannot imagine any possible way to be successful in uprooting not 1, but TWO people, bringing them here, etc. A younger child is probably easier to transition than an older child...And if they're 16, then you've got to buy potentially 2 cars and practically start the college tuition right away. Maybe if I was a multi-millionaire and retired with enough free time on my hands to be with them and assist them every day.

None of the women really lit my fire enough to make me want to pursue.

Finally Sunday came and the weather turned dreary (and cooler by 50 degrees). Under a gray sky and light rain, Kiev wasn't so beautiful anymore and I was ready to leave. I walked around the town taking some final pictures and then left empty handed, empty hearted, with no plans to return and no real desire to begin a new letter writing campaign. If I did decide to return someday, I would try a smaller city.....



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## APPENDIX

### Have A Good Row !

An unusual but sensible piece of advice from an RWD member married to an EW:

It's no secret that it's of paramount importance that you get to know a woman as well as you possibly can prior to proposing. That point is driven home time and again here by married members, yet all our new guys seem to worry about are how to know if they're being scammed or how to know if their girl is sincere. There's an ocean and several landmasses between that and the asking her to marry you, yet time and again guys have an excuse as to why it doesn't apply to their situation.

Want to avoid a debacle? Want to avoid having your fiancée reach out to a green card-savvy EW for an escape plan, before she even steps on the airplane to come join you?

We often talk a lot about how important it is for guys to know their woman before proposing, but I think it's even more important that you do whatever needs to be done so that your girl knows you as well as humanly possible before you ask for her commitment.

It seems to me that too often guys are completely oblivious to this in even the most mundane ways. For instance, **there's great value in such basic things as a good argument or two during your courtship.**

If you've never had a growler with your fiancée, how will she know how you will handle yourself when the inevitable argument happens - particularly when it happens when she's thousands of miles from family and friends? Will you deal with conflict by hitting her (a genuinely valid concern given the environment she grew up in)? Will you hide her passport? Will you forbid her from seeing her friends?

Now, you really can't be naive enough to think that your week or two of visits, plus the occasional gifts and romantic emails, are enough to put these fears to rest. Can you? In the past I've seen some guys smugly announce that they've never had an argument with their fiancée - well duh, outside of emails and phone calls, you haven't spent more than a week or so with her, not even enough time to get on each other's nerves! You shouldn't be bragging about this, you should be worried about it.

Your performance under stress, your temperament, and your day-to-day mood are all suspect - hell, everything outside of your happy-go-lucky vacation attitude will be a question mark until you've been living together for some time. She may not discuss this with you, but as her visa interview date approaches, she is thinking about it. A lot.

On top of all this she has a million other fears - language, culture, finance - the list goes on and on. Does she have 100% faith in you to help her overcome these issues? Does she even know you well enough to answer that question?

Is it any wonder then, why newly engaged women turn to their own forums to meet experienced women who will help them, should this stranger they agreed to marry or this new life they chose turn out not as advertised? Taking this a little further, is it any surprise that the women who hand out such advice come to see all men who marry with such foolish expectations as jackasses of a feather, and thus are just as happy helping those women who are truly in need as they are helping Green Card Girls?

I'm certainly not justifying this behavior, it's disgusting, but guys in this situation didn't wake up one morning to find themselves cast in the middle of a bad soap opera - there's a pathology here, traceable right back to the relationship's origins. If you want to take shortcuts because (use this space to fill in whatever makes you and your fiancée special, at least until her green card arrives), please be aware that there are consequences.



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## APPENDIX

### A Different Language Environment

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Language difficulties as related by a WM RWD member married to an EW, particularly revealing because of his previous experience with reversed roles, which probably made him appreciate them much more vividly than others could possibly do 😊.

**I can personally relate to what she will experience when she comes to the US, because when I first moved to Ukraine my Russian was very limited.**

Over time and with classes, I became more fluent. It was extremely difficult at first because there was so much I wanted to say but couldn't, and it wasn't just the language I had to learn, but a whole new system of doing things. I felt like a child most of the time. The sense of isolation was horrible. Even when I could follow conversations, I couldn't really contribute much because by the time I had the meaning down and had formed a comment, they had moved on. Even in Spanish, in which I am very fluent and have been for many years, I still struggle with the deeper meanings of things. You, of course won't be fluent in Russian. I can't imagine how I would have survived if my wife hadn't been fluent in English. There were many times when I just felt like giving up and buying the next ticket home. Now add all of this to a new marriage, a new country and system, loss of friends and family, and you can see how much a lack of English skills magnifies the difficulties in a relationship.

Even as her English gets better, the more in depth you go on a topic, the more you will need to rely on a dictionary or electronic translator to get the real meaning across and even those aren't near perfect. Imagine trying to have a deep philosophical discussion where ever couple of minutes you need to drag out the dictionary. Eventually you just get tired and end the conversation.

Another thing I found was that the process of really paying attention in another language just wears you out mentally. It doesn't come as effortlessly and naturally as in your native language. Doing this all day can really make one exhausted. Imagine when she is first here and adjusting, the toll such mental exhaustion will have on her overall attitude and energy levels.

Your ability to truly get to know her will only go forward as fast as her abilities in English improve. Even now, with my adequate Russian, my wife's English skills, knowing my wife for 5 years, me having spent two years in Ukraine and her having spent over a year here, some topics are difficult to discuss and, to be honest, are skirted around.

I know there are many who have leapt this hurdle and now have a successful marriage, but I think that each and every one will say that it was more difficult and required a huge expenditure of patience on the part of both parties. RW require a tremendous amount of patience, even without this added issue. I think there are more failed relationships due at least in part to the language barrier than there are relationships that have overcome it.

Any relationship is a gamble. In addition to the issues you face with any new relationship, in this case you already have the long distance issue, the cultural issue, the acceptance by friends and family issue, the limited time together issue, in some cases the age difference issue and on and on.



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## APPENDIX

### A Day at RAGS, Simferopol

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An actual experience made in August, 2008 by a British RWD member who married his EW L. a few days later in Kerch (no RAGS offices there).

We got the bus to the centre and found the office. There was a lot of people outside! L. made her way to the front and asked this security bloke what we should do etc. He said there was 2 lines and we should stand in this one. So, we stood in line in the blazing sun from 9am until we got inside at 10.45am. When we did get inside, we were told that we were in the wrong line and had to go back outside and join the back of the other! L. was not impressed and took a disliking to this security guard.

We went back and waited.... And waited... And waited! It was 42°C in the shade, but there was very little shade outside this office. There was a small tree a little way down the road, so we took turns standing under it and watching people's places in the line. At 11.45 someone told us that they stop taking papers at 12 noon and there was still 6 people in front of us! I said it was no problem and we could stay and return tomorrow. L. then explained that this office only works one day each week! I became a little angry and called the Ukrainian system bad, using more than a few swear words!

Once again, we were in the position of not being able to get married!

L. suddenly made up her mind to do something, but didn't tell me what. She disappeared into the building and I heard an almighty row in the hall. It was L. and the security guy! I don't know what was said and L. wouldn't tell me, but I think she used a few bad words! She pushed him out of the way and walked into an office. A few minutes later, she came outside and told me to come with her.

We walked into the building, around a few corridors and I was told to wait outside this office. While we waited, L. told me what she had done. She told them that I collapsed in the street because of the heat and she needed to get me out of the sun and home as soon as possible! It was funny, because at the moment she was telling me this, I was leaning against the wall at a silly angle and it looked good. A woman came from the office and asked us in.

This woman had no time to spare! It was 11.58! She took our documents, scanned them very quickly and asked L. for the copies of her passport. L. didn't know she needed them! OH NO!!!!

As quick as a flash, this woman told us to follow and ran down corridors. We arrived at another office and there was a short conversation. Suddenly, people were running all over the office, getting paper, starting the photo copier etc. L. handed her passport over and in seconds she had copies. We ran back to the other office and the woman put all our papers in a file. She handed L. a piece of paper that turned out to be the bill for the legalising of our documents. She told us to pay this at the bank and come back at 3pm. She said that she would look at our papers properly then. We were ushered out of the building and the doors closed behind us.

I was a little shell-shocked and confused by these events. I thought the office closed at 12, but L. explained that they only stop taking papers at this time. They work until 4.30pm.

First, we found a bank and paid the 150-griven fee. Then, we went to a bar in the centre and had some lunch. On the way back, my daughter phoned and L. was happy to talk to her for a while. We still had some time, so went to another really cool bar. This bar is almost beside the office and is a very nice place. Air-conditioned and very nice staff, so we stayed there and had a few beers until it was time to go back to the office.

At 2.30pm we decided to get back in line. When we arrived, we were surprised to see there was no line of people outside. However, when we walked in, we found the people inside. At least we were in the shade! There was a young lady in this line who was having problems getting her marriage documents legalised. Apparently she was marrying a guy from England and they would not accept his divorce documents. I started to worry! After talking to her for a short time, I saw the problem. This guy had only been divorced for a few months and didn't have the decree absolute. He only had a decree nisi. I explained what she must do and we talked through the whole process with her. She wished us good luck and told us she would see us outside when we finished.

The line soon disappeared and we found ourselves back in this office, facing this serious-looking woman. L. handed her the receipt for the bank payment and she started to study our papers. One of my documents was a letter from my employer, saying that I could only have 2 weeks holiday. This was because you are supposed to live there for one month before marrying. When this woman looked at it, she frowned and asked L. why it was notarised. L. answered that she thought all documents had to be and the reply was "this is not a legal document from a government office! It is a piece of paper, written by god knows who, signed by god knows who and should not have been notarised. It is only a letter from a company in a different country and can not be treated as a legal document". I was worried again!!!!

When she finished looking at everything, she talked to L. for a short time about her security guard. Apparently, there was a lot of complaints about him today and after what had happened to me, she had ordered him to allow people to wait in the hall of the building. After this conversation, she reached into a drawer, pulled out a stamp and a small form. She wrote some stuff on the form, stapled it to our papers and stamped it. We now had legal permission to marry!!!!



A picture of the "line" of 6 people just before we got in.  
It was my turn to take shade under the tree!



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## APPENDIX

### A Traditional FSU Marriage Ritual

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The experiences of an RWD member who married in Russia:

We followed the traditional route, and there are variations according to region, etc., with old-style courtship instead of western "dating". Her father had died years earlier, so my future wife set up the traditional meeting with her mother and a trusted uncle in his stead. In a traditional setting the man doesn't do the asking - he brings along a representative to speak on his behalf, usually an older relative.

I didn't have any relatives in Moscow, so one of her cousins - younger but close to my age - agreed to be my representative, and all I had to do was bring the required bread and vodka and answer questions from her uncle and mother. I surprised her cousin by bringing along chocolate in addition to the bread and vodka, explaining that we needed all the help we could muster ! I think it was the chocolate that put us over the top.

As a signal that conditional permission had been granted, her mother took the bread to cut and serve, the vodka was opened and my future wife was then permitted to come into the same room to join us. She brought out the traditional wedding towels (*rushniks*) upon which we would stand at our church wedding and which are used later at the baptisms of future children. The final condition set by her mother was that the family priest approve so I still had to meet with him. That wasn't a problem, since I had been attending the same Orthodox church, but it was still a condition and he could have nixed the wedding.

No engagement ring - she didn't want it because it's not traditional there. Being Orthodox we wear our matching rings on our right hands. In Russia a ring on the left hand can mean that you are a widow/widower/divorced but again looking.

There is no "engagement" in Russian culture and the "betrothal" happens at the very beginning of the church wedding, just inside the entrance where the priest hands the rings to the couple to exchange. After some prayers and choir chants the couple, with their hands bound together by a thin wedding towel, move with the priest toward the front altar area to be "crowned." Later the priest leads a procession of the couple and attendants three times around the altar. There are no vows in a Russian ceremony, in fact after answering a couple of questions by the priest at the entrance of the church - such as are they legally free to marry ? - the couple do not speak throughout the remainder of the almost hour-long ceremony.

There are no bridesmaids or best men in an Orthodox wedding, just two sponsors/attendants (one for each) who hold crowns over their heads - without touching them - through the liturgy. Since the ceremony is a holy sacrament, the couple drink 3 times wine from a common cup administered by the priest and hold candles. Their hands, which were tied together during the ceremony, are unbound when the priest presents them as husband and wife. As with most Orthodox liturgies, the majority of the ceremony is done with everyone standing. No musical instruments are used and everything, from readings to chants, are sung and not recited.

The tradition of the *rushniks* - the large towels symbolizing the entry of the house - is that the first who walks on them is the master of the house. We simply stood on our wedding towels, one binding our hands also, and the role was decided at the wedding party with a large wedding loaf (*karavay*) - a round baked bread. Ours had the designs of a cross on it, and in its center was a hole containing a small cup of salt. We each broke off a piece of bread - the largest piece determining who would be the master - dipped it into the salt, and ate it immediately.

I like the traditional symbolisms: one common loaf, baked by the two families, means the new family is one unity, but still retaining its connection to the original families. Eating the

bread together means that, as of now, all things in life will be shared. The salt indicates how life is not just sweet and tasty, but also has its bitter moments - sadness and sorrows - also shared from now on.

At ZAGS - RAGS in Ukraine - the officiant directs a 10-12 minute ceremony at which the rings are exchanged near the midway point. We had both weddings, since church weddings in Russia are not legal events.

## Ransom of the Bride

In Russia's distant past the ransom of the bride was a true theatrical folk performance.

The bride's family would block the road several times during the groom's trip to the bride's house, and would not let him pass until he demonstrated some of his talents. He could be tested on strength, intelligence and various other skills. For example, he could be asked to saw a log blocking the road, or solve a riddle proposed by the bride's family. If he failed any of the tests, he had to pay a penalty in coins or sweets.

In contemporary Russia this ritual is usually performed on the way to ZAGS or on the groom's trip to the bride's house.

The ransom is set up by the bridesmaid and the best man (called "witnesses" or *svideteli*). Challenges are posed to the groom, such as composing a poem for the bride, writing her name in rose petals, etc. Although this custom is light-hearted and fun, in certain Russian provinces a ransom **literally** means a ransom, and ***babushkas*** occasionally passing by may block the road until the groom pays to pass through.



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## APPENDIX

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### "Handle with Care!"

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The advice of a WM RWD member married to an EW.

Is there not almost a consensus from the married WM members here, that they got an amazing soul mate? This is a high risk, high reward scenario. Our best defense is taking the time to learn and learn to minimize that risk as much as possible.

Find an equal with the same goals, outlooks, interests, and treats each other with respect and care. Be honest with yourself and improve yourself like Kiev said. The greater the disparity on the 1-10 beauty scale there is, the more risk you are taking. It is a personal decision when it comes to risk tolerance.

I think if people took as much time being committed to making each other happy as they did about being deceived then the risk would be mitigated even more IMO. It is truly a very cold and mean person that would hurt someone on purpose that they like and care about. If they truly love the person than that is just a plain stupid person at that point.

Look at the real issues and not the effect. Look at what complaints come out of the women that divorce a WM and learn from them. In no particular order there seem to be common themes.

If you care about the person, then care enough to learn from others also.

First, never take away from the pride of an EW - and any woman in general, if you know what is good for you 😊.

You made at least one trip to the FSU, so you should know how difficult some of the most basic tasks here are to perform there. It is a thin line to walk between encouraging and being condescending. Let them make the mistake first and then be there to help IMO. I do not know many people that want to be treated as a child when they are an adult. If you minimize the pride that they get from achieving goals or as who they are as a person, then you minimize everything you are to that person.

Think long and hard and dedicate yourself to the success of that person in your motherland. Not to your definition but to theirs, and ensure they have a sense of purpose here.

Set expectations as to what your life is here and what their life is going to be like here. None of this goes away once they are here, it becomes exponentially greater once they step onto foreign soil. The truth is the truth, and we know enough what the unrealistic lifestyle of Hollywood is - not what we have to offer. Perception is reality until they get here, take the time to make sure that they have the best understanding of what reality is in your life.

I prefer to know a person by how they live every day. I really did not want to turn things into a vacation. Get into the trenches of everyday with them. The best way to know a person is to walk in their shoes. Take a genuine interest in the life they have, and experience it. Why spend your time in false pretenses of a tourist agenda, when you can live and breath reality? I hope it would help some gain a real appreciation for the person they are marrying. Sure this route is not possible for you on the first trip as it was for me. You can though ask to see places and do things that they love to do in their city that many tourist would never even know about.

Do not marry a woman with children, if you are not prepared to love them as your own. If

you do not love them like she loves them, then you are in fact making her feel like you do not love her as much as she thought. How can you love a person, and then not love something that came from that person just as much? Hard to put into words, I hope I gave it justice.

In closing, it takes **TWO** people committed to make it work. Look for actions and just not talk. Make sure you feel that it is there on both your sides.



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## APPENDIX

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### FSU Toilets - A Survival Guide

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How to use them and still live on to share the experience, as related by three RWD members: two WM from Australia and the USA, and an EW formerly from St. Petersburg 😊.

#### *Russia*

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Nature calls, so you find a rest room. All you see is a hole in the floor! And there's no sign posted giving directions on how to use it. But be not afraid, here's a user's guide.

Rule One: exhaust all other possibilities. If you are truly in need and condemned to use the squat toilet, comfort yourself with the knowledge that you are several thousand miles from friends and family. No one has to know. Proceed as follows:

Most stalls do not have toilet paper. This is the best time to realize this. Either take paper from the general dispenser in the bathroom area or preferably bring your own as it will be made of tissue and not plywood carpaccio.

Approach the squat toilet apprehensively and make sure it's not covered in stool. If it is covered in stool, choose another stall. If another stall is not available, accept the cards that have been dealt you. Close the door to the stall, knowing full well the handle has more germs on it than the entire population of Botswana.

Place your feet on the appropriate foot grids, assuming they are not covered in stool. If they are covered in stool, place your feet on the least-fouled space you can find, being careful to maintain balance. Unfasten and drop your trousers and underpants, making sure that they do not make contact with the urine- and stool-covered surface area.

Grimace and ask yourself if a country with such a toilet can or should ever be a superpower.

Assume a squatting position like a competitive ski jumper. Stick your butt out like a hoar in a 50-cent video. This is a good time to pretend you're not a miserable tourist with your pants around your ankles, squatting over a barbaric hole.

Use your right hand to prevent the soiling of your trousers and underpants by holding them off the ground and pushing them forward, away from any Danger Zone. This is perhaps the best time ever to be a kilt-wearing Scotsman. In your left hand should be the assortment of paper/wipes/anti-bacterial sheets you intend to use after you are finished with your production.

You would think you would want your left hand to brace your squatting self against the stall wall. However, the stall wall is covered in nose nuggets and as such is not touchable. At any rate, if you have a pecker you will need your left hand for guidance anyway.

For the peckered: use your left hand to aim it away from your trousers and underpants. Point it backwards between your legs - as if it were a rocket engine designed to propel you far away from this alien hellhole. At the same time be sure not to drop any of the objects in your left hand as they will be rendered horribly irretrievable, should you do so. If you do not have a pecker, use the left arm to balance yourself - waving it around wildly rather than touching the snot covered stall wall or filthy support bars (if any).

If you are able to maintain balance for several seconds, you are ready to begin bowel evacuation. At this point the bulk of your focus should be towards the quick evacuation of your bowels without soiling your clothing, missing your mark or - God forbid - losing your balance and falling.

For aiming purposes keep your head tucked between your legs - like a bombardier on a very unpleasant mission assigned by General Squalor. If your aim is true you will have the pleasure of watching (yours) drop down a deep, dark hole to a resounding ploop. If it's not true, you will have the pleasure of watching (yours) come to rest on the floor between your legs.

After you have completed your bowel evacuation, DO NOT STAND UP. Remain squatting and miserable. Continue using your right hand to prevent contact of your trousers/underpants with urine/stool. Place your tissues and wipes in your left hand on top of your underwear/trousers and select the items you need for wiping. Wipe and curse culture simultaneously, all the while maintaining the squatting position.

Do not drop the soiled tissues. That would be too easy. Sadly, the 16th century plumbing can only handle shit. Soiled tissues are to be placed in the bin behind you. Without leaving the squat position, twist your body in order to see the bin and make a good throw. Don't worry if you miss, as it's obvious from the sheet pile on the floor that even the squat-tastic natives are no Michael Jordans.

Once sufficiently wiped, humiliated and traumatized, you may stand and re-underpant and re-trouser yourself. This is a good time to reflect on your life and also a good time to try blacking out these last ten minutes - like a freshly-sodomized felon might do.

The filth-covered flush button is behind you and may or may not work. Open the door to the stall, again knowing the handle has more germs on it than a decade of scrapings from Paris Hilton's tongue.

Exit the stall and never, ever, ever get yourself into a situation where you have to do that again. But first, wash your hands until they bleed.

## Ukraine

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You may not realize it, but your "coping skills" are highly dependent on your native environment. Taken out of your environment and thrust into another one, those skills may be irrelevant or inadequate.

"Is it safe to use the toilets in Ukraine?" Back home using a public restroom is likely to be a perfunctory affair and not worthy of any special notice. Ukraine is another matter.

Imagine the surprise, dear readers, when arriving at Borispol, the Simferopol airport, and desiring to use the local restroom.

First, there is a line to pay 50 kopec to a stony-faced middle-aged woman who, with a great flourish, whips off an elbow-to-wrist length of sand-paper and hands it to you. Then you may approach the toilette which may or may not have a door. When you glimpse the toilette itself, your travel weary brain objects in a fashion similar to the children's game of "What's wrong with this picture?"

With disbelief, you realize there is NO TOILET THERE. Your mind begins to race, what appened to it? Where did it go? What do I do now? As you calm down, you can be more

analytical and appraise the situation. You realize that nothing at all happened to the toilet, it was DESIGNED THIS WAY!

Yes, dear reader, a simple round hole in the floor, in front of which is the comical outline of two feet, set apart at the approved angle and distance. Hmm, what to do? Perhaps if you moved back in line a bit you could catch a few pointers from some of the other patrons if they chose one of the stalls with the missing doors but, on second thoughts, you intentions might be misunderstood. So there is no alternative but to "sally forth" into the fray.

So, you pick a stall with a door, but the door won't close, it requires some contact pressure from you to close it. As you do so, some unknown - but easily guessed - substance rubs off the door onto your shirt. Now, unbuckle and unzip, and lower your pants and undergarments, not too low, as you realize the accuracy of the previous patrons left a lot to be desired. "Aha," - you say to yourself with wry amusement - "the fellow before me had corn for dinner last night." At first, you try hard to avoid the more obvious "piles" that surround the hole in the floor, but you realize with revulsion, that you can't, it's everywhere, just in varying degrees of thickness on the floor.

Positioning yourself on the thinnest layers, you need to crouch over, but how low? You need to remember that you can't go too low, as your clothes may end up touching what is smeared all over the floor; too high, and you may have a "trajectory" issue. Once you resolve that, you are now ready to proceed with your "mission". Some may find the stress or awkwardness of the situation to produce a feeling of reticence as far as the "mission" is concerned. This is understandable considering that you are hunched over large piles of smeared urine-soaked excrement, with one hand wrapped in toilet tissue holding the door and the other hand straining hard to hold your pants off the floor, all the while attempting not to soil your own clothes in the process.

## FSU

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When you're traveling in the FSU - and even walking around with a child in, say, St. Petersburg - it can become a big Ha-Ha, indeed...The above description about Ukraine is even somewhat mild compared to the general FSU picture.

How would you like a toilet with two rows of stalls facing each other - without doors at all? In a major train station? Not "some" doors missing but none intended, and the walls between stalls only shoulder high - when one is squatting?

How about a toilet - one stall - in a big, central and popular pub in St.Petersburg - where there's no door between the lavatory area and the toilet proper, and the latch on the outer door is broken - by force obviously, since there is a big jagged hole where the latch used to be?

How about men's toilets where you are afraid (with reason - other than the dirt, etc.) to let your kid go by himself? And so on, and so forth, and forever... and I haven't even started on the toilets in the rail stations of smaller cities, like Simferopol...

Oh, and another thing: wherever you are in Russia/Ukraine, it's a very good practice to use a toilet whenever/wherever one is available - not just when you direly need one. They are few and far between - AND you have to know your toilet geography by heart. AND the one you know of may be closed - mostly "For cleaning", but there could be other reasons, or no reason at all stated.



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## APPENDIX

### WM Driving in the FSU

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The experiences and opinions of an RWD member living there.

Well, my hat is off for bravery to any Westerner driving in Russia or Ukraine. The only sane person who I know can get away with it is a good friend who lives in the UK and part time in the Baltic's. His business is cars and so he drives enough to get away with it.

Those who know me well would point out that I drive, but that is only at the insistence of my wife - given her number of fenderbenders, she just wants to arrive somewhere without incident and the best way to accomplish that is with her husband at the wheel. Personally, I feel much safer on public transportation in Russia because of issues surrounding how being "at fault" and fiscal responsibility are so commonly reached.

Please don't misunderstand the tone of this post, I don't want to be a killjoy. But I would be less than forthright if I withheld information so that you can make your own decision - and understand all sides of the issue better.

**The quickest way to be at fault in a Russian traffic accident is to be a Westerner, especially an American or Brit** - might as well get out the checkbook immediately after being t-boned by the guy who ran the red light because, by the time the Militsia are finished, the Westerner is going to pay for damages and perhaps even go to jail, depending on how badly the other guy hit you.

There's even a Russian joke about it: 4 drivers arrive at an intersection, crash and cause an international incident. The 4 drivers were: a Russian, a Ukrainian, a Georgian and an Uzbek. Who was at fault? The **American** 😊.

That may sound funny, sitting here on a forum and reading. But it's not so funny when the crash has happened, the blue lights are flashing and the officer has a big smile on his face cause he's about nail you to the wall: you didn't move quickly enough to avoid the drunken Russian driver who swerved into your lane and took away the right half of your rental car. Being at fault, the rental car company isn't going to be happy either. The insurance laws are so one sided, too, that it's a big reason why so few Western car rental companies operate in Russia. Likely, you just purchased a car. With one side missing.

It became law in January, 2004 to have insurance on Russian roads, but millions of drivers don't bother and the easiest way for the police to sort it out is find out which driver has insurance, then write him up as at fault: that saves them hours of work and lots of hassle.

And if the police don't show up, as is likely outside the big cities, you get on a cell phone and call for what the Russians call "support". Whoever shows up with the most friends as "support" beats the crap out of the driver who didn't have as many friends. Loser pays damages.

Bribes usually don't work well because of "influence". You could pay a bribe only to have an influential friend of the other driver call the district commander, and soon there is a knock on your door as it turns out you were at fault after all. Oh, about that bribe: "What money? You never gave me any money".

"There are two problems in Russia", an old saying has it, "roads and fools".



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