

Veronica Palm

6<sup>th</sup> grade Age 11 5/6

History Essay

God put it into the heart of every person the desire to be amazed. We naturally desire to see something greater than ourselves. When we travel to find what fascinates us, we are training our souls in a little way to seek God and be in awe of something that is so great we just have to see it and feel that wonder and amazement. If I could travel to any place, I wanted I would choose to travel to the Ukraine. My family will be adopting from that country in Eastern Europe. Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Eastern Europe, and has thousands of fascinating things; two of these fascinating things are Marble Cave and Saint Sophia Cathedral.

Saint Sophia Cathedral was built in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. Its name and architecture were inspired by the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. It was started in the year 1011 A.D. Yaceslaw the Wise, a Grand Prince of Kieven Rus made the Cathedral. It was built to celebrate the adoption of the Roman Catholic Faith which was new to them. Then the cathedral was taken from them by the Ukrainian Greek Catholics who changed its original design to a more orthodox style. The Mongols ruined it. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in was left in disrepair. An orthodox man claimed it and decided to rebuild it. He and his workers built many ornate onion-shaped domes which are traditional in the Orthodox Community. The center onion dome is the largest of all of them, and is gold, while all the others are a lovely green. When the Soviet Union came to power, the Orthodox people pretended to turn their beloved church into an art museum so that it would not be ruined by the Soviet Union. Some of the many things I find fascinating about this Cathedral is the Byzantine architecture and also the iconic art that decorates the Cathedral at every turn. The building is adorned inside and out with mosaics depicting saints and biblical scenes. The most impressive mosaic is called the Virgin Oran, behind the main altar. It was created in the eleventh century and is still completely intact; it is believed by many people that she is the protectress of Kiev. Yet another thing I love about this incredible place is

the history of this beautiful Cathedral. I think it is a sad story, but also an inspiring one. It was built by men and women who loved their Catholic faith so much that they were inspired by God to build something of exquisite beauty on a grand scale, something worthy to be the house of the one and only true God. And the sadness of it being taken away, being changed from the vision of its original makers, and even being forced to conceal its true purpose under Communist tyranny. Even now, it is a source of conflict as both Catholic and Orthodox Christian wish to claim it as their own. Please believe me when I say it would be well worth the trip to the other side of the world to see this incredible Cathedral!

Another incredible place in Ukraine is called Marble Cave. It is made of limestone marble, which is where it gets its name. It was opened to the public in 1989. It is located in Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, but is currently under Russian control. It is one of the seven Natural Wonders of Ukraine. It is one of the top five most visited caves in all of Europe. Marble Cave has some very rare crystals. I have been inside of many caves here in the United States of America that I have enjoyed very much. I have been to Squire Boone Cavern, Kentucky, Howe Cavern, New York, and Onyx Cave, Kentucky. Two things that I find very fascinating about this certain cave is the immense beauty of it, and the many cave rooms which it contains. One of which is the "Reconstruction Room" measuring over 300 feet long making it one of the largest cave rooms in all of Europe.

Life is a journey even if you never leave your home. We are all heading to God in Heaven on our mystical journey. A trip to some place incredible makes us excited, happy, and impressed. It can make us feel wonder, and even humility to see something that much greater than ourselves. Traveling to Marble Cave and Saint Sophia Cathedral would make me stand in awe of God's natural creation and man's creation inspired by God. I believe it really would be worth the trip.

## Works Cited

- Centre, U. (n.d.). Kyiv: Saint-Sophia Cathedral and RELATED monastic Buildings, KYIV-PECHERSK LAVRA. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/527/>
- Morgan, B. (2013, June 21). The caves of kiev, a sacred monastery. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/ukraine/articles/the-caves-of-kyiv-a-sacred-monastery/>
- Ornament Ukraine - tours in Ukraine, tours in KIEV, Lviv, Etnotourism in Ukraine -Marble Cave. (n.d.). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://ornament.ua/place/11/1/>
- The national sanctuary Complex "SOPHIA of KIEV" - center of spiritual life. (2019, December 12). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://st-sophia.org.ua/en/home/>
- St. Sophia's Cathedral - the Historic protectress of Kyiv, Ukraine. (2021, March 23). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://museumstudiesabroad.org/st-sophias-cathedral-kyiv/>
- Ukraine travel Blog: ABOUT Ukraine in English. (n.d.). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://ukrainetrek.com/blog/culture/kyiv-pechersk-lavra-monastery-with-thousand-year-history/>