

On riding away from my shelter in the petrol station, I was chased by three very large, very angry dogs, with the hair standing up on the backs of their necks and teeth bared, barking and snarling aggressively. Since there was a lot of loose gravel on the surface, it was easy to spin up the rear tyre, and my makeshift machine gun soon halted their progress!

The road was incredibly wet and slippery, and the bike felt very unstable in the corners, which I put down to the combination of water and the deep grooves made by heavy trucks. I rode through several speed traps, but was again warned of them all by oncoming drivers.

Three and a half hours later, the rain finally stopped, but the roads were partly flooded for the rest of the way. I seemed to be travelling in the same direction as the storm, since there was blue sky behind me, black sky overhead and in front of me, and on stopping for fuel, I would ride off in the dry, only to ride into rain a few minutes later. I was already wet, so couldn't be bothered to stop for a longer time in the hope that I could continue without rain.

Riding through a small village after Ternopil, I was chased by a dog for the second time in one day. I stopped at a particularly mucky, decrepit railway crossing to take a photo, during which time I noticed that the rear tyre looked a bit flat. At the next petrol station, I asked the attendant whether he had a tyre pressure gauge and compressor, which he brought from the workshop. With just 1 Bar in the rear tyre, it was no wonder that the handling in corners had felt a bit suspect. I used the compressor to raise the pressure, but on inspecting the tyre, noticed something silver and shiny embedded between the tread blocks, which turned out to be a nail. I know there's never a good time to get a puncture, but why did it have to happen on a Saturday evening, in the rain, in the middle of nowhere in Ukraine, on a tyre with just 3,000 kilometres on it?



I mimed removing the nail with pliers to the petrol station attendant, but he tried to tell me that I should leave the nail alone. I retrieved my puncture repair kit from the left hand pannier and showed him that I could plug the tyre once the nail had been removed. He understood, and helped me remove the nail with his makeshift version of a pair of pliers - a key and screwdriver held tightly together. I plugged the hole, filled the tyre with air and hoped for the best, despite the instructions informing me that I should ride no faster than 60 kilometres per hour and no further than 600 kilometres on the repaired tyre.

With tyres at the correct pressure, the handling was dramatically improved, although the bike still wandered in the wet grooves in the road. Since I was unable to find a decent looking hotel in Ternopil, despite the advice and directions given to me by the crowd that immediately surrounded me on stopping at the main railway station, I pressed on to Lviv. Although several hotels were signposted, I somehow failed to locate any of them, despite

riding around in circles on the wet, slippery cobblestoned roads. In heavy rain, I eventually found the *Grand Hotel* in the old town. Dripping muddy water on their expensive-looking carpets in the entrance foyer, I enquired about the availability and prices of rooms, but at 120 Euros for the night, decided to ride towards the Polish border in the hope of finding something cheaper, even though it was now dark and still raining. On the way out of town, I stumbled across the *Hotel Dnister*, a modern conference centre and hotel, so stopped to ask about a room. Still not cheap at 75 Euros for one night, but by now I had had enough, my trusty *Daytona* boots had also started leaking and I thought it was a better prospect than riding on to Poland. Plus they insisted I park the bike right next to the hotel entrance, under the watchful eyes of their 24-hour security guards. Whilst unpacking the bike, a Canadian tourist chatted to me and asked me many questions about security and breakdowns on the road during a solo trip.

With dry clothes, I had a meal and a beer in the hotel bar, before standing on the adjacent covered balcony to look at the view, which was completely obscured by rain and fog. I chatted to a Ukrainian couple who were staying at the hotel. Conversation was difficult, but Marena spoke a little German, her boyfriend Yura a few words of English. They insisted on me joining them for a glass of *Krim* champagne, and Yura made a toast "to friendship".



Ukraine - Lviv

I left Lviv early the next morning in dry weather and encountered only light traffic on the road to the border with Poland at Shegyni. During a petrol stop shortly before the border, I called my friend Christoph, who I had arranged to meet in Bratislava, to tell him I should be there in the evening. I also asked him to look up the address of BMW in Vienna, in the hope that I could get a new rear tyre fitted on the way through, although it was holding up well, with me checking the pressure at every available opportunity