

Lviv Mayor Backs American Uber in Battle with Russian Yandex



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by Lee Reaney

After launching in Kyiv last June and in Odesa a few weeks ago, Uber starts taxi service in Lviv



LVIV – Competition in Ukraine's ride-hailing industry just got hotter after US-based Uber launched services in a third Ukrainian city -- just one week after Russian operator Yandex.taxi did the same.

For the rival companies this marks the second new battleground city in Ukraine this month. Uber launched in Odesa shortly after Yandex's arrival. Uber arrived in Ukraine last summer by offering services in Kyiv.

"Uber in Ukraine shows record growth rates in the region of Europe, Middle East and Africa", the company said in a press release.



Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi is vocal in his opposition to Yandex.

Yandex's arrival in the city of 700,000 has already generated controversy. Mayor Andriy Sadovyi called on residents to boycott Yandex, a Moscow-based firm. Yandex, he said on his Facebook page, started out badly in his city by erecting dozens of advertising banners without permission.

"This company will not function if no one uses its services," he said, "Choose non-Russian goods! Uber, in particular, starts up on Thursday. This is your choice in terms of price, quality and personal stand."

Yandex.Taxi not only competes with Uber in Kyiv and Odesa, it has beaten Uber to the punch in Dnipro and Kharkiv.

A new way to get around

Lviv is enjoying a tourism boom. In January, it received an estimated 500,000 tourists.

Uber says rides will cost 4 UAH for the car and 5 UAH per kilometer, with a minimum charge of 14 UAH. Uber drivers can make up to 25% commission.

The company says that it will not cost more than 22 UAH to get to Lviv train station and not more than 55 UAH to get from the city center to Lviv's Danylo Halytskyi International Airport.

"We believe citizens and guests will appreciate the new possibilities of movement and the freedom that Uber brings to city residents", said Alexei Stakh, Uber's general manager for Ukraine and the CIS.

Friendly reception

In some countries, the ride-sharing application has shaken the taxi industry and faced law suits But, in Ukraine, the reception largely has been warm. In addition to the Lviv mayor, both Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko have publicly expressed support.

"We are impressed by the positive reception we received from municipal authorities not only in Lviv, but in all Ukrainian cities we have launched in", said Uber Associate Account Manager Ira Komisaruk., "In Lviv particularly, we see a great desire of the city administration to promote IT industry and to use innovative technologies to make Lviv even better place to live or to visit."

Uber declined to comment about its plans to launch in other Ukrainian cities.

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