

## Ukrainian Jack Russell-X Leia finds a new hope in Adelaide

Sasha, Vlad and Artur fled their home months after Russia invaded Ukraine. But a very special family member had to take a separate, scary journey to join them in Adelaide.

[Eva Blandis](#) and [Agnes Gichuhi](#), The Adelaide Advertiser, February 23, 2023



Ukrainian Family, Vlad, 13 and Artur, 6 Sasha Masyuk, 34 with Leia inside their Heathpool home. Picture: Ben Clark

Leia, a jack russell and long-hair dachshund, has survived missile strikes in war-torn Ukraine, embarked on a road trip from Ukraine to Poland and took three courageous flights to be reunited with the Masyuk family.

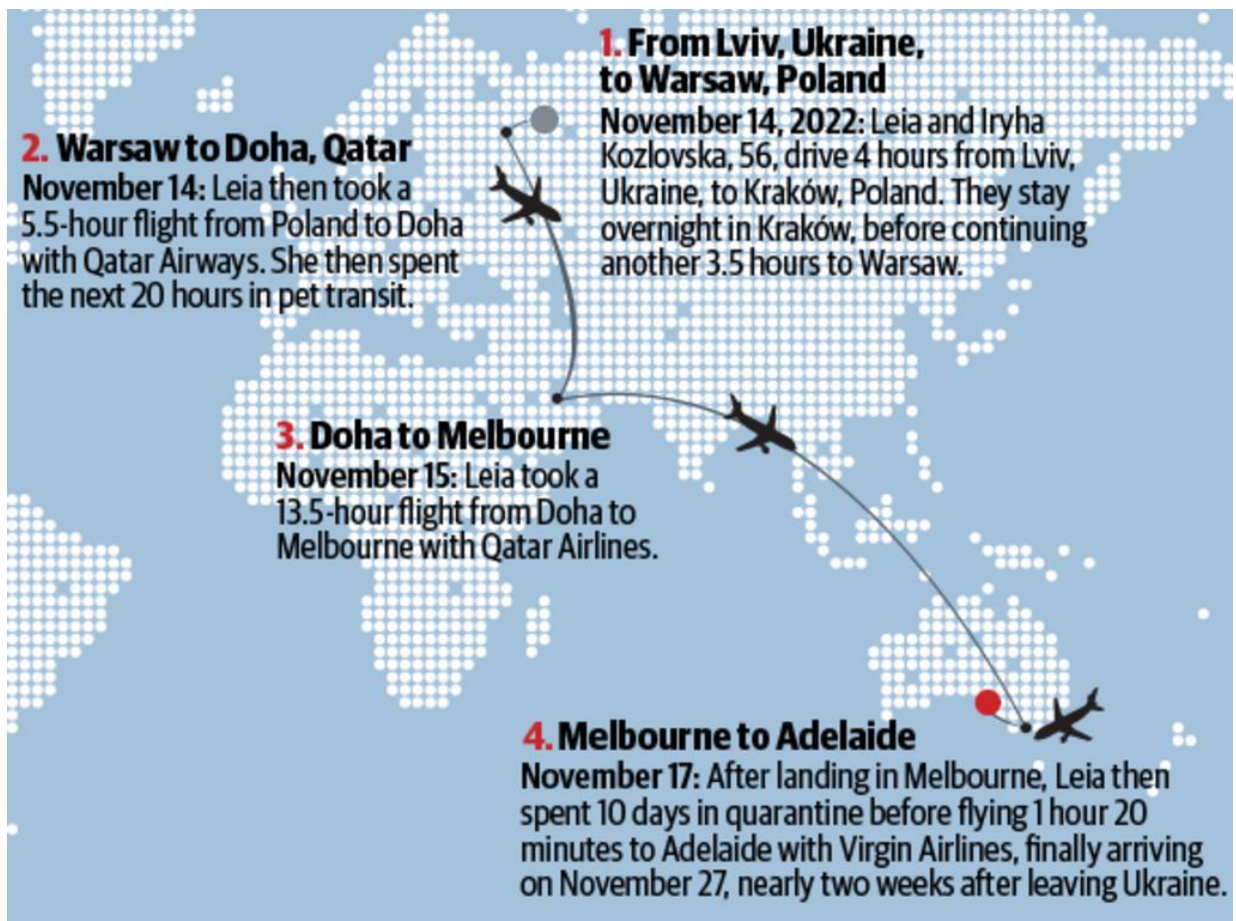
Sasha Masyuk, 34, and sons Vlad, 13, and Artur, 6, lived in Lviv for three months after the war started before fleeing their hometown – without Leia and Ms Masyuk’s husband Andrew.

Four years ago, the family rescued and adopted five-year-old Leia from a Ukraine shelter. She was missing one front leg and needed a “good family” to take her in.

A few weeks before the war started on February 24, 2022, the family had plans to fit Leia with a new prosthetic leg.

Those plans were abruptly halted when the war began to intensify and the family needed to escape Lviv, but Ms Masyuk said she “didn’t want to leave her.”

During period of conflict, Ms Masyuk remembers keeping Leia safe when “air alarms” went off, to signify nearby “missiles in the sky.”



Leia's big trip from Ukraine to SA

When it was “too dangerous” to be outside or in their apartment, The Masyuks and Leia would seek refuge in their apartment’s ground floor makeshift “bomb shelter”.

“She was really stressed and cried during the first (few months) and definitely had some special feelings of danger,” Ms Masyuk said.

“She wanted to be near us all the time, it was a big stress not just for the children but for her as well. It was really stressful to stay in Ukraine.”

Once Ms Masyuk and her sons were able to relocate to Adelaide, Leia stayed with Andrew, 35, in their previous apartment, but Ms Masyuk was determined to see her beloved Leia.

Andrew, who worked as an engineer before the war started, spent “an enormous amount of money” to make sure Leia safely reunited with Ms Masyuk, Vlad and Artur.

Before Leia could arrive in Adelaide, Ms Masyuk says Leia needed additional treatments, immunisations, vaccinations and certified documents from the Australian government.

Once the documentation was finalised, Ms Masyuk’s mother, Iryha Kozlovska, 57, drove Leia from Lviv, Ukraine to Warsaw, Poland, and stopped in Krakow, Poland for a night.

Leia was then transported to Doha by Qatar Airways, where she spent 20 hours in a transit location for pets, before embarking on a long-haul flight to Melbourne.



Ukrainian siblings Vlad and Artur. Picture: Ben Clark



Leia in transit to Australia.

“I was extremely worried about how she would experience the travel, because it was a big trip with three flights and quarantine,” Ms Masyuk said.

“I tried to call on each stage of her trip and asked if she’s arrived, and the people were very kind and supportive (then) sent me photos.”

Once Leia arrived in Melbourne on November 16, 2022, she spent 10 days in quarantine before she was reunited with the Masyuk family on November 27, 2022.

“It took six months and five companies. But I’m happy that she’s with us because she’s part of our family,” Ms Masyuk said.

Ms Masyuk said Leia was “really happy” to see her and her sons’ and hasn’t shown any sign of post-traumatic stress, but the family still feel incomplete while they wait for an important family member.

“When we took her to our new home, she tried to find my husband (then) she started to cry a little bit,” Ms Masyuk said.

“There are two things I would just like to be – that the war will be finished and my husband will be with us.”

Since living in Adelaide, the Masyuk family said they refer to Adelaide as their “safe place” and have made a wide range of friends.

“It’s really fun and nice how Australia built such an environment where people from different countries with different traditions can live in one society and be kind to each other,” Ms Masyuk said.

The family said the Associations of Ukrainians in South Australia and The Advertiser Foundation gave them the extra help they needed when they moved.

Ms Masyuk said they received a total of \$2000 from the foundation.

“It was not just really nice it was extremely helpful, because I kept that money in order to find a new apartment,” she said. “I’m really thankful for the help.”

The Masyuks lived with a host family with four months before making the decision to find their own house.

“They became not just a host family, they became like real family,” Ms Masyuk said.

The Associations of Ukrainians in South Australia is a community that Ms Masyuk is proud to be part of.

“When we came the Ukrainian community was the first place to support us,” she said.

“Almost every weekend different kinds of entertainment was provided for my children.”

Ms Masyuk’s eldest son, Vlad, goes to Adelaide Secondary School of English and also enjoys playing soccer and has recently become an Air Force Cadet.

Artur is enrolled at East Torrens Primary school where he receives extensive English lessons.

Ms Masyuk has also recently started a job as a finance officer at Duxton Capital Australia in the Adelaide Hills.

“The Ukrainian community played a significant role in this,” she said.