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Belarus 

Belarus.

Hospitality beyond borders



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Belarus is the heart of East Slavic cultures. The Belarusian lands are the ones that have become the cradle of many Slavic countries. The Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians are the successors of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania founded on the territory of contemporary Belarus in the Middle Ages and considered to be the most powerful country of the time in Europe.

Today, Belarus is a wonderful country that preserved unique features of original culture and ancient traditions in harmonious combination with today's modernity; it is a country, which never stops surprising even the most sophisticated travelers.

So, feel the virgin nature for yourselves, listen to the melody of the Belarusian language, and experience limitless hospitality of the amicable Belarusians. And, for sure, you will want to come back over and over again.



Landmark Dates in the History of Belarus

100–35 thousand years ago – the first appearance of humans on the territory of Belarus.

VI–XIII cc. – the Eastern Slavs formed the first political alliances, i.e. unions of tribes.

IX c. – the first written mentioning of Polotsk, the oldest city of Belarus, and the Duchy of Polotsk, one of the biggest feudal formations in Europe, in the chronicles.

XIII–XVI cc. – the period of existence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Russia and Samogitia, the most powerful country of the time, founded under the ruling of Duke Mindovg running the country from Novogrudok, the first capital of the Grand Duchy.

1569 – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Russia and Samogitia and the Kingdom of Poland signed the union of Lublin uniting into the federal state known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1654–1667 – the war against Russia.

1700–1721 – the Great Northern War (between Sweden and Russia).

1772–1917 – Belarus was a part of the Russian Empire.

1794 – the uprising under the leadership of Tadeush Kostyushko.

1812 – the invasion of Napoleon's Army.

1830–1831 – the Polish rebellion.

1863–1864 – the national liberation uprising led by Kastus Kalinowski.

1906 – over 335.4 thousand peasants from Belarus were displaced by force to Siberia resulting from the Stolypin agricultural reform 1906–1916.

1915–1916 – during the First World War, there were bloody fights between the German and the Russian troops on the territory of Belarus.

March, 1918 – the Belarusian People's Republic was announced, it existed for less than one year.

January 1, 1919 – the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was announced.

1921 – after the end of the Russian-Polish war (1919–1921), the peace of Riga was signed, based on which Poland received the western territories of Belarus, while the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic revived on the eastern territories.

1922 – the Belarusian SSR became a member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR).

1936–1940 – the period of Stalin's repressions. Over 86 000 Belarusians suffered from political persecutions. About 28 000 were executed by shooting in «Kuropaty» stow near Minsk.

September 17, 1939 – the Red Army entered in West Belarus resulting in merge of these territories with the BSSR.

June 1941 – the Second World War arrived on the territory of Belarus, the Great Patriotic War started.

end of June–July, 1944 – in the course of «Bagration» operation, the territory of Belarus was completely liberated from the Nazi occupants by the Red Army. Minsk was liberated on July 3.

February 1945 – based on the results of the Yalta conference, where, among other issues, the issue about the territories of Poland was considered, the territories of West Belarus except of Belostok region remained within the BSSR.

May 1945 – the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People against the German Nazi invaders was over.

April 1986 – the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, as the result of which, a significant part of territories of Belarus suffered.

1991 – the Union of Soviet Social Republics ceased to exist. Belarus was announced an independent country.

1994 – the election of the President of the Republic of Belarus was held for the first time in the history of the independent country.

1997 – the Treaty of Alliance between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation was signed, the Union State of two counties was created in 1999.

Basic Information About the Country and Useful Information



State Emblem and Flag

Official name of the country

The Republic of Belarus. Unitary democratic social law-based state.

Official languages: Belarusian, Russian.

Administrative division: 6 regions with the centres in Minsk, Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno and Mogilev. There are more than 100 cities in Belarus, including 12 of them with the population more than 100,000 inhabitants.

Geographic position

Belarus is bordered by Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest, by Ukraine to the south, by the Russian Federation to the east and north and by Poland to the west. North to south extent makes up 560 km (350 miles), west to east extent is 650 km (406 miles).

Territory

207,600 km²
Fertile lowland and hilled plainland with about 11,000 lakes and about 20,000 rivers and streams.

Longest rivers

Dnepr, Pripyat, Neman, Berezina, Western Dvina.

Largest lake: Naroch 79.6 km².

Highest point

Dzerzhinskaya Gora 345 m above sea level.

Climate

The Belarusian climate is a moderate one, marked by seasonality (winter, spring, summer, autumn). Winters are snowy with the average January temperatures of -6°C (21°F). Summers are warm with the average July temperatures $+18^{\circ}\text{C}$ (64°F). Annual rainfall is about 550–700 mm.

Population: 9.5 million.

Major Cities

Minsk (capital) — 1,8 million inhabitants
Brest — 309.800 inhabitants
Vitebsk — 347.900 inhabitants
Gomel — 482.600 inhabitants
Grodno — 327.600 inhabitants
Mogilev — 358.300 inhabitants

Ethnicity

Belarusian — 83,7%
Russian — 8,3%
Polish — 3,1%
Ukrainian — 1,7%
Jewish — 0,1%
Others — 3,1%

Local time

GMT+2hrs. At noon in Belarus, it's 11:00 in Paris, 10:00 in London, 5:00 in New York, 2:00 in Los Angeles, 13:00 in Moscow.

Currency: Belarusian Ruble (BYR)

Country Dialing Code: + 375

Weights & Measures: Metric

Voltage: 220V 50Hz

National holidays when all offices are closed

1 January: New Year
7 January: Orthodox Christmas
8 March: Women's Day
9th day after Orthodox Easter: Radonitsa
1 May: Labour Day
9 May: Victory Day
3 July: Independence Day
7 November: October Revolution Day
25 December: Catholic Christmas.

Hints to Belarus

Arriving in Belarus

By plane

Belarus has good flight connections with many countries. You may choose National Air Company BELAVIA <http://belavia.by> or other airlines (see flight timetable at <http://www.airport.by>).

By train, by coach

You can get to Belarus by train, see timetable at <http://www.rw.by> (in the Russian language) or by coach <http://www.minsktrans.by> from many European cities.

By car

Arriving in Belarus is easy. At the border you will have to fill out a declaration on your car and buy Belarusian auto insurance. For driving in Belarus you will need the international driving license. The quality of the roadway covering in Belarus is rather high. Speed limits for cars 60–90–110km/h (37–56–68mph), buses 60–70–90km/h (37–43–56mph), motorcycles 60–90–90km/h (37–56–56mph) in towns, country roads and highways respectively. See more about arriving in Belarus at <http://eng.belarustourism.by/info/arrive/>.

Visa

Normally foreigners except for some countries are required to apply for the Belarusian visa in the country of their residence. However you can also get visa on arrival to the National Airport. See more at <http://mfa.gov.by/en/consular/airport-visas/>.

Information on obtaining visa to Belarus can be found at <http://mfa.gov.by/en/consular/>, the whole list of Diplomatic Representations of the Republic of Belarus abroad see at <http://www.belembassy.org>. See more about visa at <http://eng.belarustourism.by/info/visa/>.

Customs

There are some things that cannot be imported or exported to/from Belarus by tourists and visitors. The list of such things is rather common with other European countries. More information at <http://www.mfa.gov.by/en/consular/customs/> and <http://gtk.gov.by>. See more about customs at <http://eng.belarustourism.by/info/custom/>.

Clothes

In summer it is recommended to wear light clothes. In autumn it is recommended to wear jackets, cloaks, umbrellas are also necessary. In winter when it's freezing and snowing we wear fur coats, sheepskin coats and warm shoes.

Floors

Belarusians consider the ground floor to be the first floor, and so on.

Communication, official languages

The majority of staff in hotels, restaurants, big stores speaks at least English. People in the streets even if not speaking any foreign language would be delighted to help you find the way.

Money

Banknotes come in denominations of 100,000, 50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 1,000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 rubles. Exchange offices dealing in major currencies operating 24h can be found in the hotels, airport, railway stations and in the streets. ATMs are widely used. Most hotels, stores and restaurants accept credit cards.

Safety

The crime rate in Belarus is relatively low. Belarus is considered to be one of the safest tourist destinations as the crimes against foreigners are rare. Of course, there is no need to walk alone in the dark suburbs in search for troubles.

Toilets

Public toilets can be found in the streets. You can also use those in restaurants for free. Sometimes toilets can be marked M for the Gents' room, and Ж for the Ladies'.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely discretionary in Belarus and service charges are not automatically added to the bill.

If you want to tip in a restaurant or cafe, give about 5% of the total amount. Taxi drivers and hotel staff don't generally expect tips, although they are always gratefully received!

Traveling for disabled

If you are travelling in a wheelchair and willing to visit Belarus, you'd better consult the organizers of your tour whether there are the facilities needed for your visiting of several places. The most convenient city for the tourists travelling in a wheelchair is Minsk and the regional centres. Small towns and villages are unlikely to have the accommodation needed. On the whole, the Belarusian hotels and tourist infrastructure objects don't have the substantial experience of working with disabled people. However, they will do everything possible to make your stay comfortable.

Useful phones (free calls)

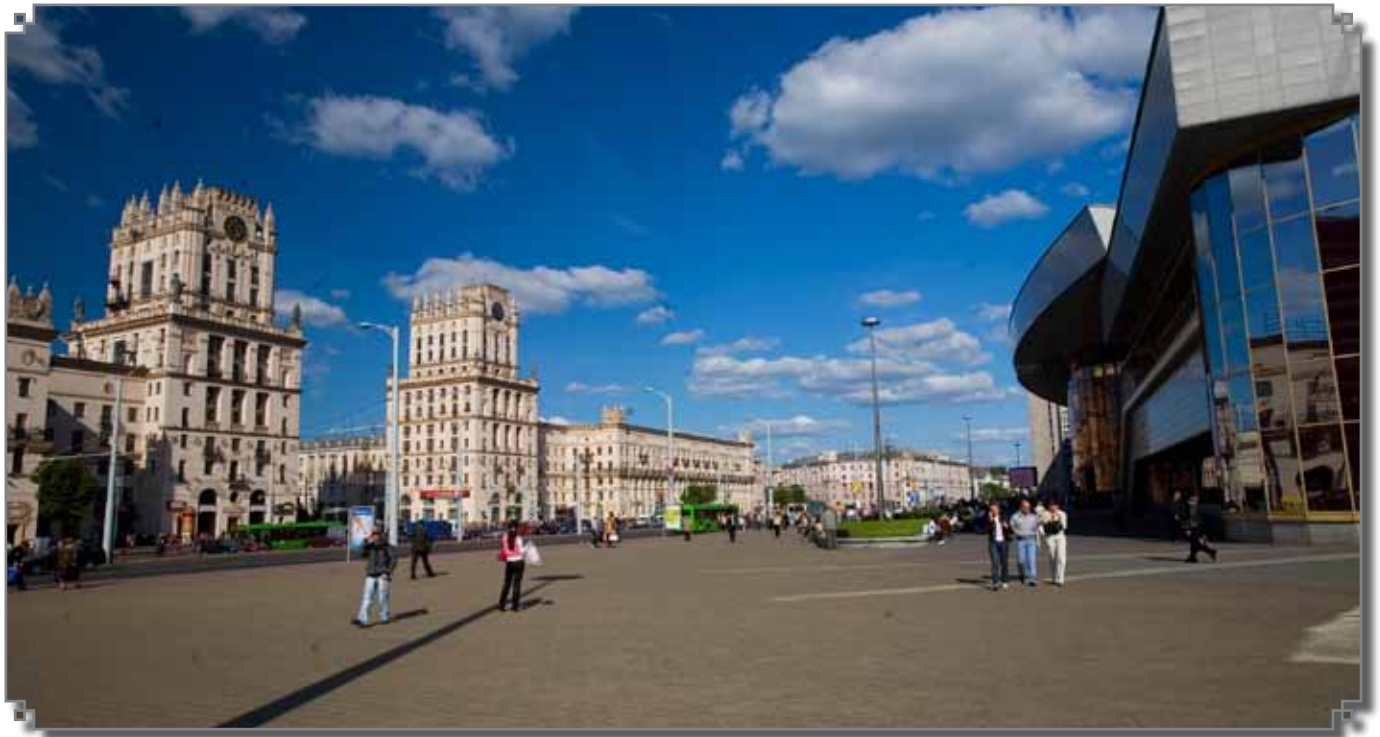
101 — rescue service
102 — police
103 — first aid

More information at

<http://eng.belarustourism.by/info/>

English	Русский (Russian)	Беларуская (Belarusian)
Welcome	Добро пожаловать (Dabro pазhаlоvat')	Вітаем (Vітаem - We greet you)
Hello	Здравствуйте (Zdrastvujte) Привет (Privet) - <i>inf</i> Алло (Allо) - <i>on phone</i>	Прывітанне (Pryvitanne - Greetings) Вітаю (Vітаю) - <i>inf</i> Дзень добры (Dzien' dobry) Дабрыдзень (Dabrydzien')
How are you?	Как дела? (Kak dela?) – <i>inf</i> Как поживаешь? (Kak pazhyvaesh'?) - <i>inf</i> Как поживаете? (Kak pazhyvaete?) - <i>frm</i>	Прывітанне (Pryvitanne) - <i>inf</i> Як справы? (Jak spravy?) - <i>inf</i> Як маешся? (Jak mayeshsia?) - <i>inf</i> Як маецяся? (Jak mayeciesia?) - <i>frm</i>
I'm fine, thanks. And you?	Спасибо, хорошо. А у Вас? (Spasibo, kharashо. А u vas?)	Добра, дзякуй. А Вы? (Dobra, dziakuj. А vy?)
What's your name?	Как тебя зовут? (Kak tebiа zavut?) - <i>inf</i> Как Вас зовут? (Kak Vas zavut?) - <i>frm</i>	Як цябе клічуць? (Jak cyabe klіchuts'?) - <i>inf</i> Як Вас завуць? (Jak vas zavuts'?) - <i>frm</i>
My name is ...	Меня зовут... (Meniа zavut ...)	Мяне клічуць ... (Myane klіchuts' ...)
Where are you from?	Откуда Вы? (Atkuda Vy?) - <i>frm</i> Откуда ты? (Atkuda ty?) - <i>inf</i>	Адкуль Вы? (Adkul' Vy?) - <i>frm</i> Адкуль ты? (Adkul' ty?) - <i>inf</i>
I'm from ...	Я из ... (Ja iz ...)	Я з ... (Ja z ...)
Pleased to meet you	Очень приятно (Ochen' priyatno) Приятно познакомиться (Priyatno paznakomit'sja)	Вельмі прыемна (Vel'mi pryemna) Прыемна пазнаёміцца (Pryemna paznajomіцца)
Good morning	Доброе утро (Dobroe utro)	Добрай раніцы (Dobray ranitsy)
Good afternoon	Добрый день (Dobryi den')	Добры дзень (Dobry dzen')
Good evening	Добрый вечер (Dobryi vecher)	Добры вечар (Dobry vechar)
Good night	Спокойной ночи (Spokoinoi nochi)	Дабранач (Dabranach)
Goodbye	До свидания (Do svidania) - <i>frm</i> Пока (Пока) - <i>inf</i>	Да пабачэння (Da pabachennja) - <i>frm</i>
Good luck	Удачи! (Udachi!)	Поспехаў! (Pospelau!)
Cheers/Good health!	На здоровье! (Na zdorovie!)	На здароўе! (Na zdaroue!)
Have a nice day	Хорошего дня! (Kharoshevo dnia!)	Добрага дня! (Dobraga dnja!)
Bon appetit	Приятного аппетита! (Priyatnavo appetita!)	Прыемнага апетыту! (Pryemnaga apetytu!)
Bon voyage	Счастливого пути! (Schastlivava puti!)	Шчаслівай дарогі! (Shchaslivai darogi!)
I don't understand	Я не понимаю (Ya ne panimau)	Я не разумею (Ja ne razumeju)
Please speak more slowly	Вы не могли бы говорить помедленнее? (Vy ne mogli by gavarit' pamedlennee?) - <i>frm</i> Помедленнее, пожалуйста! (Pamedlennee pазhаlusta!) – <i>inf</i>	Вы не маглі б гаварыць павольней? (Vy ne magli b gavarыts' pavolnei?) - <i>frm</i> Павольней, калі ласка! (Pavolnei, kali laska!) – <i>inf</i>
Please, write it down	Запишите, пожалуйста (Zapishite, pазhаlusta)	Запішыце, калі ласка (Zapishyte, kali laska)
Do you speak Russian/ Belarusian?	Вы говорите по-русски/по-белорусски? (Vy gavarite pa-ruski/pa-belaruski?) Ты говоришь по-русски/по-белорусски? (Ty gavarish' pa-ruski/pa-belaruski?)	Вы размаўляеце па-руску/па-беларуску? (Vy razmauljaetse pa-rusku/pa-belarusku?) Ты размаўляеш па-руску/па-беларуску? (Ty razmauljaesh pa-rusku/pa-belarusku?)
Yes, a little	Да, немного (Da, nemnоga)	Так, трохі (Tak, trohi)
How do you say ... in Russian/ Belarusian?	Как сказать ... по-русски/по-белорусски? (Kak skazat' ... pa-ruski/pa-belaruski?)	Як сказаць ... па-руску/па-беларуску? (Jak skazats' ... pa-rusku/pa-belarusku?)
Excuse me	Извините! (Izvinite!) - <i>frm</i> Извини! (Izvinі!) - <i>inf</i>	Прабачце! (Prabachtse) - <i>frm</i> Выбачай! (Vybachaj) - <i>inf</i>
How much is this?	Сколько это стоит? (Skol'ko eto stoit?)	Колькі гэта каштуе? (Kol'ki geta kashtue?)
Sorry	Простите! (Prastite!) - <i>frm</i> Прости! (Prasti!) - <i>inf</i>	Прабачце! (Prabachtse!) - <i>frm</i> Даруй! (Daruj!) - <i>inf</i>
Thank you	Спасибо (Spasiba) Большое спасибо (Bal'shоe spasiba) Благодарю Вас (Blagadariц vas) - <i>frm</i>	Дзякуй (Dzjakuj) Вялікі дзякуй (Vjaliki dzjakuj) Дзякую Вас (Dzjakuju vas) - <i>frm</i>
Response to 'Thank you'	Не за что (Ne za shto) Пожалуйста (Pазhаlusta)	Няма за што (Njama za shto) Калі ласка (Kali laska)

abbreviation and symbols: *frm* – formal, *inf* – informal, "Vіtayu" – underlined letter "а" means that it is stressed



▲ Two intricate towers of the Stalin-style houses, situated right opposite the building of the Central Railway Station are justly considered to be the gates of the city of Minsk and one of its symbols.

▼ Part of the main city avenue with its unique Stalin style building up reminds of the USSR period and adds a special coloring to the city look.



One of peculiar features of Minsk making it unique in its kind is the architectural complex of «Stalin's» developments of the central Nezavisimosti Prospekt (Independence Avenue), the main through street of the city founded already in the XVI century and worth being included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Hero-city Minsk, almost knocked to smashes during the Second World War, rose from the ashes. Even today, Nezavisimosti Ploshchad (Independence Square) (formerly known as Lenin's Square) with the Government House remained intact by miracle and the monument to Lenin erected by its entrance impresses with its splendor and modern multilayer underground shopping center.

Nezavisimosti Ploshchad is the biggest square of the city and may serve as the best starting point for a walk along «Stalin's» Avenue with elegant masterpieces of the epoch of the 1950's. Look around the astonishing complex with the main building of the Belarusian State University and colonnade of the Central Post Office. Then walk through a row of public gardens with fountains along buildings with small balconies, shops and cozy cafes towards Ocyabrskaya Ploshchad (October Square). It is here you will get to see the pompous Palace of the Republic and the Residence of the Head of State.

The connoisseurs will be also interested in typical for

its epoch architecture of the State Department Store, the oldest department store, reconstructed after the war and opened already in 1951. Today, one can still buy original souvenirs, as well as items of everyday use here.

Further, you will find Pobedy Ploshchad (Victory Square) being one of the symbols of Minsk and one of the places to see, where people come to honor memory of millions of those, who died during the Second World War. There is the 38-meter imperial obelisk topped with the three-meter sculpture of the Order of Victory on the square. At the foot of the monument, the eternal flame has burnt constantly since 1961.

Take a ride in the observation wheel enjoying wonderful views of the central part of the city in the children's park named after Gorky. Without fail visit the public garden by Pobedy Ploshchad, where the house-museum of the first Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor' Party, the party that pioneered revolutionary movement in the Russian Empire, hides modestly in the shadows of the trees.



▲ In 1954 38-m high obelisk was erected the centre of Victory square. It is crowned with the 3-m sculpture of the Victory order in honour of the Soviet army soldiers and Belarusian partisans. There is a Memorial hall in the pedestrian subway commemorating the Heroes of the Soviet Union who perished liberating Belarus. There are also pedestals with the capsules containing the ground from the hero-cities.

BY THE WAY:

The building of «GUM», the main state department store, is considered to be the most authentic monument of Stalin style building up in Minsk.

Independence avenue has been building up since 1930-ies and first was named after V.I. Lenin. The House of Parliament and the monument of the October revolution leader that survived miraculously World War II are located here.

Lee Harvey Oswald who, according to four government investigations and the Warren Commission, was the assassin of President of the United States John F. Kennedy, by firearm in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963, lived in Minsk on Komsomolskaya str. from 1959 to 1961.

▼ Saint Simeon and Elena Catholic Church located on Independence avenue along with the Archangel Michael sculpture and «Nagasaki Bell» memorial was once the theatre and the film studio.

▼ The cozy parks and green areas of Minsk invite everyone to have a good rest any time of the year. Public Garden on Lenin street.





▲ Troitskoe suburb is a historical district known for its restored building up of the XIX c. Today it is one of the favourite places for tourists and Minsk citizens.

▼ The City Hall, constructed again in Svoboda square is surrounded by various sightseings, among which are the ensemble of the former monasteries of Bernardines, The Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, The Catholic Virgin Mary Church and many others.



In Minsk, there are things to see and places to have rest for any traveler.

Take a walk in Troitskoe suburbs, also known as «the Old Town» reconstructed on the bank of Svisloch river. Feast your eyes with stone pavements, houses in the XIX century style, cozy courtyards with numerous restaurants and cafes extending warm welcomes to visitors.

On the opposite bank of the river, the main Orthodox Cathedral of the country combining features of the Baroque and Goth styles, serving in its times to the Bernardinian monks, rises over on the hill. A little further, there is the City Hall, and the main Catholic Church; the district of old city developments reviving at present is also located nearby. All the territory adjacent several meters around was once the center of the old settlement of the XI century, excavation of which still reveals many secrets even nowadays.

Not far away from here, there is another, not the least interesting, place with original well-preserved buildings known as Rakovskoe suburbs referred to the beginning of the XX century, hidden from onlookers' eyes by modern buildings.

Modern Minsk offers its guests numerous entertainment facilities: museums with huge choice of collections and

rare objects; theaters with contemporary and classic plays; art galleries exhibiting works of modern artists; Belarusian goods stores and fashionable boutiques carrying world-known brands. Should you get hungry, numerous restaurants offering cuisine to any liking, small bars and cafes are at your service. You can spend an evening or an entire night in a modern nightclub or a pleasant disco dancing and having fun with live music at the background, participating in interesting shows. Admirers of gambling are welcomed in casinos and play-clubs.

Many Minsk hotels are classified according to international standards and offer correspondent level of service and comfort able to satisfy even the most demanding tourists.



▲ Saint Peter and Paul Cathedral remained intact on the territory of Rakovskoe suburb that is mostly hidden behind the urban building up. During World War II part of this district was included into the Jewish ghetto.

▼ Today the number of books kept in the National Library of the Republic of Belarus yields only to the number of those in the National Library of Russia. In the beginning of September, 2008, the collection of the library amounted to more than 8,5 million items kept on various data media.

▼ «Stolitsa» shopping centre occupies 3 levels under the Independence square and offers a wide range of Belarusian goods.





▲ Belarusian bookprinting starts with the editions of Francisk Skorina, which stood out for their high quality printing, art, engraving and ornamental adornments. The Museum of Belarusian Bookprinting in Polotsk.

▼ Not far from Vitebsk in Zdravnevo village the manor of the renowned Russian painter Ilya Repin was restored. Today there is a painter's museum there.



Belarus is the motherland for many outstanding figures: Francisk Skoryna, the first publisher in the Slavic lands, St. Efrosinya Polotskaya, poet Adam Mitskevich, Zhores Alferov, a Nobel laureate, Tadeush Kostyushko, a revolutionist and a hero of several countries, Chaim Weizmann and Shimon Peres, presidents of Israel, as well as Maxim Bogdanovich, Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas and many others.

In addition, in medieval times, the Belarusian lands turned to be the homeland for Mindovg, the Duke of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as for other eminent families known in Europe such as the Radziwills, the Khreptovichs, and the Sapegos. Scattered all over different corners of Belarus, their castles and family estates made significant contribution in the development of Belarusian country leaving behind priceless heritage that even today boggles tourists' imagination.

Russian generals and commanders also left their marks in cities and towns once owned by them. Kobrin, for example, is associated with the life of Count Suvorov, who spent several years in this city, while the unique palace and park complex of the Rumyantsev-Paskevichs in Gomel fascinating its contemporaries with its elegance, collections of valuable items and trophies of two field

marshals is rightfully considered to be the masterpiece of national classic architecture. Its image is represented on 20-thousand-ruble Belarusian bill.

Visiting Vitebsk, one should visit the museum of the most known Belarusian artist Mark Shagall; its collection includes 300 original works of art, such as lithographic pictures, engravings, aquatints, as well as reproductions of some of the most popular Shagall's works.

In Belarus, there are also 19 of 34 preserved points of «Struve Arc» running through the territories of several countries from Danube to the Arctic Ocean, the wonderful man-made monument to human intelligence created about 150 years ago with purposes of exact measuring of shapes and dimensions of the Earth.



▲ The monument of the most famous Belarusian painter Mark Shagall in Vitebsk.

▼ Saint Francisk-Ksaverii Cathedral in Grodno, the city, richest in its collection of the architectural monuments preserved intact. The Cathedral was constructed in XVII century and was the richest not only in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth but in the whole Eastern Europe. Fresco painting of the church comprises numerous compositions and together with the other elements has a high artistic value.

BY THE WAY:

Saint Sophia Cathedral, the architectural monument of the XI-XVIII century is one of the three churches of ancient Rus', dedicated to Saint Sophia. The other two are located in Kiev and Novgorod.

The manor of Tadeusz Kosciuszko, political and military figure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the leader of 1794 revolt, the national hero of Belarus, Poland and the USA, the honorary citizen of France is situated in Ivatsevichi district of Brest region.

▼ Palace and park ensemble of the Rumyantsevy-Paskevichi in Gomal astonishes with its splendour and magnificence.





▲ The desire of the ancient Belarusians to influence the powers of nature developed into the whole range of the rites, restored in the «Historical-cultural museum «Zaslavl» in the form of animated excursions.

▼ «Dudutki» museum offers the chance not only to watch the craftsmen working but also to try making something with your own hands.



Belarusian traditions and national holidays will swirl you in the whirlpool of fun and happiness. The Belarusians are rightfully considered the most tolerant nation cordially welcoming guests.

Many nations, representatives of which may be seen at the festival of national cultures in Grodno, contributed to formation of Belarusian culture. The festival of rural culture «Zaborskiy fest», where Belarusian traditions may be not only seen, but also tasted, is held in summer. Pagan holiday Kupalye celebrated on the Eve of July 7 is necessarily accompanied by folk traditions, songs, circle dances. On the Eve of Ivan Kupala, girls float wreaths of flowers with lit candles on river waves reading fortunes about their suitors. The best place to observe and participate in the celebration is to visit the museum of folk architecture and lifestyle in Strochitsa village not far from Minsk.

Traditional Belarusian culture is essentially bound to workmanship. Woodcarving, pottery, embroidery are just few of the things that our ancestors succeeded in. It is interesting to know that only men could weave Slutsk belts, the relics of the Belarusians, wear them and help their owners to put them on. It was widely thought, that if woman's hand touched precious threads of the belt, the tissue would lose its colors and the belt could be thrown

away at once. One can have a look at works of modern masters in some villages or in the museum complex of old folk crafts and technologies «Dudutki».

That is why little souvenirs, such as woven towels decorated with ornament, straw handicrafts and linen tablecloths, or even felt boots decorated with beads warming you in bad weather will become the best remembrances of Belarus.

Visiting our country, do not forget to ask someone to talk Belarusian, listen to the melody of its sound polished through centuries. It is not without reason, Belarusian language is considered to be one of the most melodious languages according to scientists' opinion.



▲ The mill is a symbol of «Dudutki», the museum of the ancient folk crafts and technologies that meets the travelers at the gates of the complex. This is the only working windmill in Belarus.

▼ Special interest should be given to the events held at rural farms.

BY THE WAY:

Valenki (traditional winter footwear) are made today at the only felt-fulling factory in Belarus founded in 1928 in Smilovichi (Minsk region).



▼ The monuments of the wooden architecture (churches, mills, manors and others) of the various regions of Belarus are joined into the complexes in the Belarusian State Museum of the Folk Architecture and Lifestyle.





▲ The International Arts Festival «Slavyanski Bazaar» in Vitebsk is popular with Belarusian artists and spectators as well as the guests from the «near» and «far» abroad.

▼ The artistry of the Belarusian ballet dancers is well-known in many countries outside Belarus.



Modern cultural life of Belarus includes numerous art exhibitions and festivals. The theater festival «Belaya Vezha», the art festival «Belarusian musical autumn», the music festival "Golden hit", the festival of classical music «the Muses of Nesvizh» and even musical evenings by the walls of Mir Castle will give you a whole bouquet of bright impressions and emotions.

The true symbol of Belarusian culture is the international «Slavyanskiy Bazaar arts festival in Vitebsk», wherein popular artists from many countries participate.

If you are interested in museum values, you should visit museum-city Polotsk, one of the oldest cities in Belarus, the first written mentioning of which is referred to the IX century. In Polotsk, one can take pictures and receive personal certificate by the commemorative token of the geographical center of Europe, according to scientist's opinion, which is located not far from the city.

The biggest number of museums is located in Minsk. One can evaluate works of art in the National Art Museum, while in the National Historical Museum, you will see staged performances of the traditional puppet theater «Batileiki» once enjoying great popularity and folk love.

Modern theatre art founded on folk beliefs, rites, and ceremonies can be evaluated on the stage of about 30

theaters. Plays based on works of famous Belarusian playwrights such as Dunin-Martsinkevich, Kaganets, Kupala, Kolas are presented for audience's approval on stages of such theaters as the theater named after Y. Kupala, M. Gorky and others.

The most known theater of the country is the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, artists of which gained raving success both with national and foreign audience.



▲ The national Art Museum in Minsk has the collection of the Belarusian and foreign paintings. More than 27000 pieces of art, kept in its exposition, branches and depositories, form 20 various collections and make up two main expositions of the museum - the collection of the national art and the art collection of the peoples of the world.

▼ The comedy «Pavlinka» staged at the National Academic Y.Kupala Theatre, the oldest theatre in Belarus, opened in 1920.



▼ During the state holidays numerous concerts are held in many cities of Belarus. Independence Day in Minsk.





▲ Nikolai Radzivil Chorny, who was awarded with a title «The Duke of the Holy Roman Empire» made Nesvizh his family residence. Even today Nesvizh Castle strikes the tourists with its beauty.

▼ Historical reconstructions and festivals bring the participants back to the past. The Medieval culture festival in Novogrudok.



The Belarusian lands absorbed traditions of eastern and western cultures that received their reflection in various styles of churches and cathedrals, castles, palaces and fortresses underlining tolerance of the Belarusian people.

Wars and destructions did not spare many architectural masterpieces, but even those few constructions that remained intact provide possibility to evaluate all beauty of the Belarusian architecture.

There are no doubts, that Mir Castle included into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000 is considered to be one of the most known masterpieces. This prominent example of protection architecture of the XVI century combining features of the Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance styles impresses visitors with its power and elegance even today.

Nesvizh Palace and the park complex is another pearl of the Belarusian architecture popular among tourists, it was also included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2006. Owners of the castle, the most known of which are the Radziwills, rebuilt it several times; therefore, the castle carries features of many architectural styles. Founded in the XIX century, Landscape Park with decorative lakes still pleases tourists with its shady passes, it is rightfully considered to be the most romantic palace and park complex of Belarus.

Due to numerous legends, the ruins of Krevo Castle beckon tourists. This Castle gained world fame after the conclusion of the Treaty of Krevo between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that took place here in 1385.

Almost every castle and estate keeps wonderful mysteries, and you certainly will hear ghost stories and unbelievable stories about former owners of estates from local villagers. Today, many castles and family estates often become places for organization of medieval festivals and historical reconstructions.



▲ Kamenets tower is one of the best-preserved defensive towers on the territory of the Eastern Europe and the highest one (about 31 m).

BY THE WAY:

Saint Archangel Michael Church in Synkovichi village, one of the earliest defensive gothic castles in Belarus, is a functional one.

The Duke Mindovg proclaimed Novogrudok the capital of the Great Duchy of Lithuania. Nowadays, even destroyed, the castle in Novogrudok amazes with its mightiness.

Due to numerous legends, from the stories about the secret tunnels to the myths about the walled-up princesses, the ruins of Krevo Castle are one of the most visited tourist sites in Belarus. Constructed in XIV century, it was the first castle in Belarus, built solely from the stones. The walls of this castle are 2,5 m thick, its height is 12-13 m. In 1385 the well-known Krevo Union between Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania was signed here.

▼ Today castles and palaces once belonging to the famous families still attract visitors. Lubcha Castle has remained almost intact.

▼ The harmonic mixture of such architectural styles as Gothic, Baroque and the Renaissance makes Mir Castle, included into the UNESCO World Heritage List one of the most impressive castles in Europe.





▲ Today the unique and most comprehensive exposition of the military machinery, artillery, tanks, aviation, shooting arms adopted by the army since the times of World War II is gathered in the historical-cultural complex «Stalin Line», the military-historical museum in the open air. The fortifications have also been recreated there. Here you will have a chance to shoot with a real gun.

▼ In the centre of «Khatyn» memorial there is a 6-m high sculpture, symbolizing one of the village dwellers who managed to escape from the burning house.



Many places of Belarus keep the memory of numerous wars rolled all over the territory of our country. There is Brest Fortress, an architectural monument to be visited for sure, among them. The fortress is one of the most significant and known places of Belarus, an outstanding symbol of resistance during the Second World War. On June 22, 1941, the garrison of the fortress, that was later awarded the title «Hero-Fortress», was one of the first to face the German aggressors, it hold the fort being encircled for over a month.

The main entrance to the memorial is designed in the form of a huge star cut through the cement block, while soundtrack and walls speckled with missiles allegedly transfer tourists back to war years. The 100-meter obelisk «Bayonet» can be seen from any point of the fortress and it is associated with the monument «Fortitude» consisting of three rows of gravestones. On May 9, the Victory Day, the fireworks are held in the fortress.

One of the most honored places in Belarus, the memorial «Khatyn», represents the tragic reminder of war horrors of the Belarusian people. The history of Khatyn reveals the tragedy of over 600 Belarusian villages, villagers of which were burnt alive by the Nazi invaders during the Great Patriotic War.

And do you know that partisan movement in Belarus during the Second World War was the most powerful in Europe, and that the biggest Jewish partisan party in Europe functioned in the country? One should for sure visit the museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk, the first museum devoted to the events of the Second World War maintaining the unique artifacts and trophies.

One can see events of 1812 for himself at the place, where Napoleon's Army crossed Berezina river, not far from Studenka village near Borisov. Legends about treasures hidden during the retreat of Napoleon's Army haunting historians' and treasure hunters' minds are still alive here.



▲ The memorial complex «Kurgan Slavy» crowned by 35-m obelisk with 4 stylized bayonets, symbolizing 4 fronts participating in the liberation of Belarus during World War II.

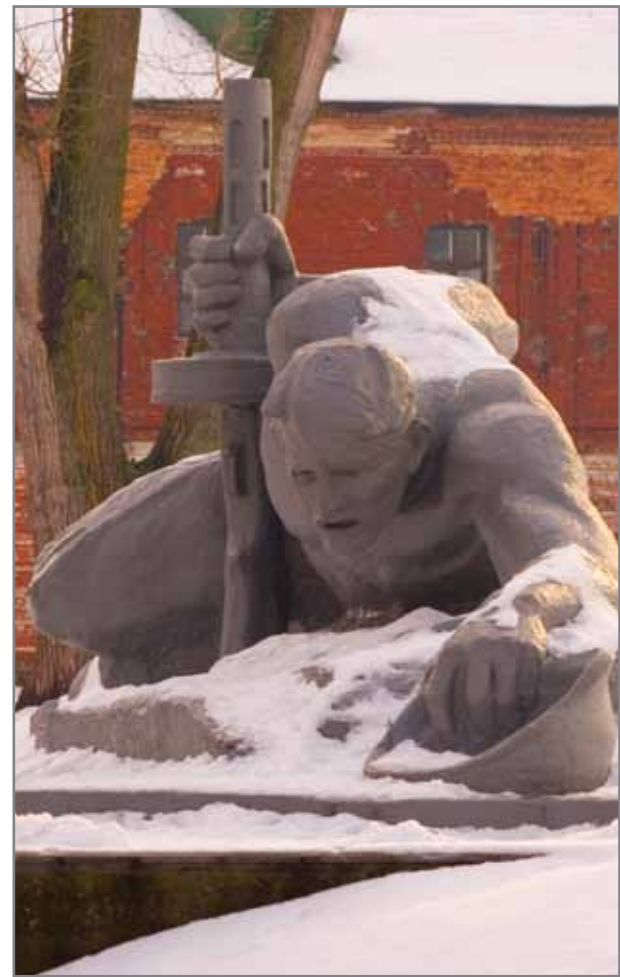
BY THE WAY:

One of the memorials, the «Yama», dedicated to the victims of Holocaust, was constructed in Minsk at the place, where in 1942 about 5000 prisoners of Minsk ghetto were shot.

▼ The monument to the Russian soldiers in Brilevskoe field by the village Studenka near Borisov, where in 1812 Napoleon's army was forcing the river Berezina, retreating in the pressure of the Russian army. There is another monument beside him — it is a memorial sign dedicated to Napoleon's army soldiers. Most festive events dedicated to the war of 1812, including the reconstruction of the events take place on Brilevskoe field.



▼ The sculptural composition «Thirst» in Brest Fortress depicts a Soviet soldier trying to reach out to the river and dip water with his helmet leaning on the machine gun.





▲ Mayak hill is one of the most beautiful places on the territory of the National Park «Braslavskie Lakes», known for its numerous lakes, popular with the fisherman, and the plentiful birds kingdom (more than 180 species).

▼ The complex of buildings in Viskuli in the National park «Belovezhskaya Pushcha» that once was the residence of the leaders of the former USSR, is connected with the termination of the whole era. It was here, where in 1991 the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine signed the Belavezha Accord which declared the collapse of the USSR and creation of the CIS (The Commonwealth of Independent States).



The beauty of the virgin Belarusian nature with its unique healing sources of mineral water and healing muds steadily beckons tourists.

Forests of our country, which is the center of Europe, cover 1/3 of the territory, Belarusian swamps are rightfully considered to be the «lungs» of Europe, as they produce a significant amount of oxygen. There are over 70 species of animals and about 300 species of birds, some of which are unique, in the woods, nature reserves as well as in 4 national parks and 2 wildlife reserves. Belarusian woods are rich with huge variety of mushrooms and berries and represent a great interest for amateurs of outdoor recreation.

In the National Park «Belovezhskaya Pushcha» included in the World Heritage List by the UNESCO in 1992, 500-year old oaks, as well as age-old ash-trees, pines and fir trees were preserved until present days. Population of rare wisents lives in the park, the estate of the Belarusian Santa Clause with live Christmas tree highest in Europe is located there.

You should visit Berezino biosphere reserve being a part of the global network of biosphere reserves of the UNECO, it amazes visitors with its variety of species of wild animals.

Pay a visit to the National Park «Bralsav Lakes»,

one of the most beautiful regions of the country; the Lakeland consists of dozens of water reservoirs and lakes interconnected by small rivers, brooks and canals with total space of 130 km².

If you are interested in birds, do not forget to visit the National Park "Pripyatskiy" impressing with its variety of birds.

The National Park «Narochanskiy», with 1/3 of the territory covered by the most beautiful pine forests, with the pearl of Belarus, i.e. Naroch lake, in its center is the most popular place for summer camping among campers, amateurs of beach recreation and water trips. The Park is also known for its natural resources of healing mineral water attracting here those, who wish to improve their health.



▲ «Narochanskiy» National park is one of the most popular holiday sites. Naroch is the largest lake in Belarus. Its square is 79,6 sq km and its depth is 24,08 m. The length of the shore line is 41 km. 22 species of fish live in Naroch. The National Park «Narochanskiy» is famous for its natural mineral water springs. 18 sanatoriums and recreational centres are situated here.

▼ Many trees in the National Park «Belovezhskaya Pushcha» are hundred years old. The diameter of the stem of this giant oak is about 1,5 m.

BY THE WAY:

The protection forests of Belovezhskaya Pushcha are home to more than 900 species of plants and more than 250 species of birds and animals, including the rare ones.

The National Park «Belovezhskaya Pushcha» is the residence of Ded Moroz (analogue of Santa Claus), who welcomes guests all the year round.

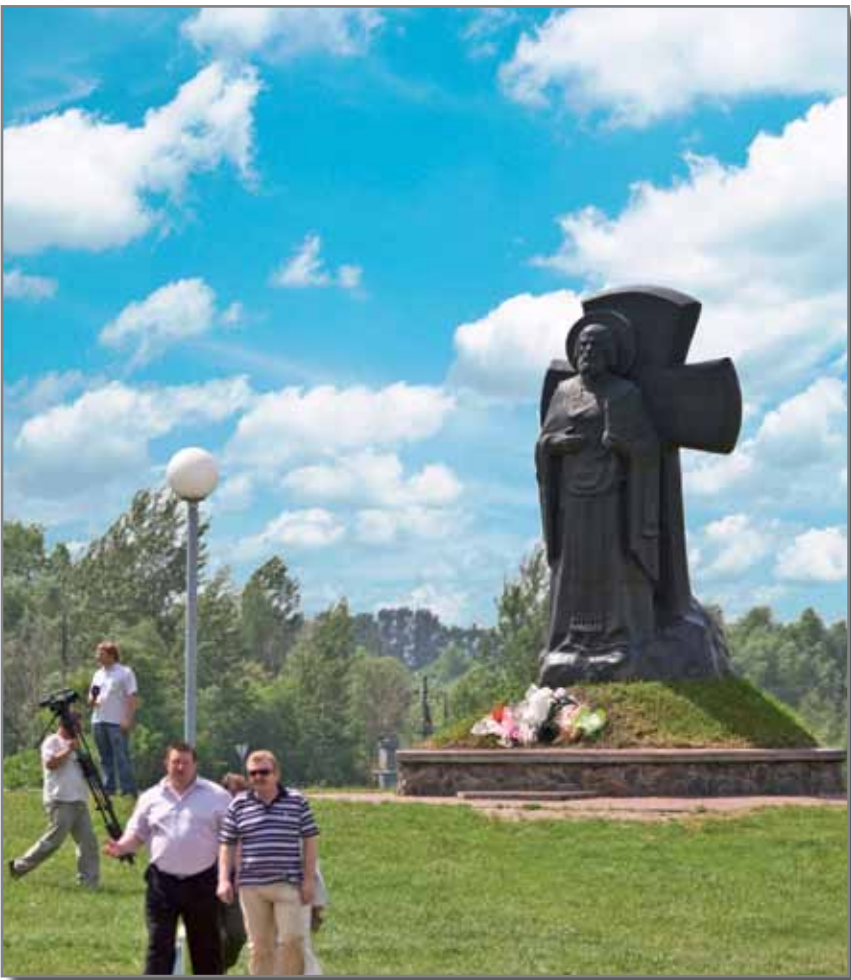
▼ The largest European population of aurochs lives in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Auroch is the biggest land mammal of the European continent, male's mass can reach 1 ton.





▲ Pripyat is one of the longest and full-flowing rivers in Belarus, a real Eden for birds and ornithologists. The floodplain oak forests of the National Park Pripyatsky are unique.

▼ The monument to Kirill Turovsky in Turov. This famous native of the Turov land was a church figure and Ancient Russian writer, canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.



In south of Belarus, famous Belarusian Polesye spread for many kilometers from east to south, as if it were separate country with its own nature and own way of life. The National Park «Pripyatskiy», where rare landscapes were preserved almost intact, cover the biggest part of this unique territory. It is here, one can see the biggest natural swamps in Europe, they are Zvanets (it space totals to 150 km²) and Dikoe (with the space of 80 km²). Bottom land of Pripyat river provides home for many plants, animals and birds, and, if you are lucky, you can meet here even a wisent.

Of course, Polesye is known for its cranberry places. Plantations of this wholesome berry take about 500 ha in the National Park «Pripyatskiy».

One of the oldest cities of Belarus is Turov, once political, economic and cultural center of the Dregovichis (ancestors of contemporary «Poleshuks») and of the powerful Princedom of Turov. It was these places, where in the XI century, the Turov New Testament, the oldest book of Belarus, was created. This was also the home land of the prominent theologian and philosopher Kirill Turovskiy, the monument to whom one can see visiting the Old Settlement of the XII century.

In the suburbs of Turov, there is the unique natural sight,

i.e. the Turov meadow, which consists of the system of islands surrounded by floods turning into the heaven for the bird kind and natural laboratory for ornithologists in spring.

Should you happen to be in Pinsk, visit Jesuit Collegiums (1631), where the Museum of Belarusian Polesye is located, take a look around numerous cathedrals and the Monastery of the Franciscans, one of the biggest architectural complexes of Belarus of the Baroque style. Or simply take a walk along cobblestone pavements of the Old Town soaked with history.

Unfortunately, resulting from the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the neighboring Ukraine in 1986, a part of the territory of Polesye was contaminated. Therefore at present, the regions of Belarus which suffered most from the technogenic catastrophe are closed for public.



▲ This type of traditional block with honey (called «borti») can still be observed in Polesye.

▼ Pinsk, the biggest city on Pripyat', has become a place where various cultures were meeting, creating the unique colouring of the city. Pinsk is the second city in Belarus after Grodno with the largest number of the architectural monuments remained intact.

BY THE WAY:

For better preservation the harvesting of cranberry is still done manually like many years ago. The largest natural swamps in Europe remained intact here, in Polesye region.

Some features of the traditional lifestyle of «the poleshuki» (the dwellers of Polesye region) are considered to be the national property. The Museum of the folk art in Vetka, the only one of this kind, has the collection of the antiquities, handwriting books and the famous neglyubsky cloth.

▼ Tourist steamboat on Pripyat' is a good alternative to the boats and launches.





▲ Zaslavskoe water reserve, known as «Minsk Sea» is a favourite site of those keen on sailing.

▼ The spectacle sport events attract fans from all over the world to Belarus. Ice hockey Amateur Championship for the prizes of the President's Sport Club.



There are places, where amateurs of active rest can spend time in Belarus: offered cycling tours, water trips, walking routes along the most beautiful places will not leave anyone indifferent. Would you like to try your powers in horse riding? – Welcome to one of numerous rural farms.

The Augustow Canal with its clever system of gates is the true masterpiece of engineering art and the triumph of human genius, it gradually turns into one of the most popular places among water-travelers. Canoe trips on Braslav Lakes will not be less interesting, as well as sailing activities on Naroch Lake or Zaslavl water reservoir near Minsk.

Participation in jeep-trial competitions or gay «rides» on quad bikes will give plenty of energy and charge you with adrenalin. Those, who are lured by the sky, are invited to visit avia clubs. You will be offered parachute-jumping activities, flights on planes and helicopters.

Various competitions held in our country constantly attract numerous sport fans. Belarus actively hosts different European and World competitions, and in 2014, the Ice Hockey World Championship will be held in Minsk.

Keen hunters appreciated hunting in Belarus long time ago and they proudly sing about their trophies taken

home. Fishing in our country will give you plenty of bright emotions, and, who knows, you might catch a huge pike or a bream.

It is also amazing, that in our country, with the highest altitude above the sea of a little bit more than 350 meters, ski resorts were created, the most popular of which is located not far from Minsk in Logoysk region. Because of hilly landscape, local citizens call this region «small Switzerland». One can mountain ski or snowboard here in winter. Notwithstanding little altitude variations and lack of multi-kilometer tracks, both the amateurs and the professionals enjoy skiing and the level of service.



▲ One of the most active kinds of rest in Belarus is offered by the equestrian clubs, among which there are interesting routes, thematic hikes and participating in the historical reconstructions.

BY THE WAY:

More than 2800 lakes in Vitebsk region offer exciting fishing. Fishing on the Pripyat River is also considered to be one of the most exciting pastime.

Kayaking-lovers can try their strengths during the spring tide on the river Stracha for example.

Avgustov canal is an outstanding object of the hydro engineering architecture of the first half of the XIX century. It connects rivers Vista and Neman. Its length is 102,8 km (about 22 km including 4 locks on the territory of Belarus).

▼ Strolls around the beautiful site «The Blue Lakes» situated on the territory of «Narochansky» National park will make you feel the healing power of the Belarusian nature.

▼ «Silichi» is one of the complexes for skiing and snowboarding lovers.





▲ The interior of the traditional tavern creates the mood for the delicious national meal.

Distinctive feature of Belarusian cuisine is true popularity of dishes made of meat, milk, vegetables, fish, as well as different corns and mushrooms. But, among other ingredients, potato takes special place in Belarusian cuisine, as it is used in about 1000 different dishes. We serve potatoes fried, boiled, or stewed. It may be served as a side dish or as a main dish. No wonder why the Belarusians are called «bulbashy», which means lovers of potatoes.

Traditional Belarusian dishes made of potatoes are potato Gnocchi (kletski), potato pancakes (draniki) and grilled grated potato with crackle (babka).

Pork takes special place in Belarusian cuisine as well. Some pagan traditions are

still preserved in Belarusian villages, that is why in winter, on Kolyady holiday, people stick pigs and make sausages from their meat, salt pieces of fat and prepare polendvitsa, which is dried salted meat. And, how tasty home-made sausages fried with potatoes and greens are! Try it and you will not regret it!

Porcini are appreciated most of all mushrooms, especially when they are stewed with potatoes and sour cream in pipkins. A boiled bean with garlic and flax oil is another national Belarusian dish.

Bread juice, krupnic and krambambulya are traditional Belarusian drinks. Belarusian bread juice is made of birch syrup with addition of bread crusts for flavor. Krambambulya is a spicy strong alcohol drink created by representatives of the nobility about two centuries ago, while krupnik served warm is prepared based on special extract of herbs and honey.

Leaving Belarus, don't forget to take with you some bread. Its taste and aroma will remind you of our hospitable county.

▼ Pancakes with honey or jam are the best treatment after the long stroll around the residence of Ded Moroz in the National Park «Belovezhskaya Pushcha».



BY THE WAY:

The juice is traditionally obtained by cutting or chipping the bark of the tree. Aluminum or plastic fillet is pulled into the cut and the juice streams down it into the bottle. After the needed quantity of juice is obtained the cut is stuck with the resin or wax to protect the tree. The birch trees normally give 2-7 liters of juice a day. Birch tree juice contains sugar in it and is drunk independently or used to create other beverages.

It is easy to cook dishes of Belarusian cuisine at home. Here are some recipes:

Draniki (for four)

Ingredients:

- 6 large potatoes,*
- 1 egg,*
- 2 table-spoons of flour,*
- 1 onion,*
- Vegetable oil,*
- Salt and pepper to your liking.*

Method (see pictures):

1. Peel off potatoes and grate them with small grater.
2. Peel off onions and grate them with small grater, add them to potatoes together with salt and black ground pepper.
3. Add eggs.
4. Add flour to the substance and mix the dough until it is uniform.
5. Pour oil on a pan, put potato mass on the pan in the shape of small pancakes with the help of a table-spoon. Fry draniki on medium fire for about 2–3 minutes to gratinate. Then flip them over, slack the fire, cover the pan with a cover and cook for another 1–2 minutes.
6. Serve them hot with sour cream and machanka.



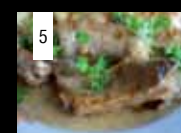
Machanka (for four)

Ingredients:

- 500 g of pork meat,*
- 300 ml of beef bouillon,*
- 40 g of sweet butter,*
- 1 onion,*
- 25 g of flour,*
- 200 ml of sour cream,*
- Spices and salt to your liking.*

Method (see pictures):

1. Cut pork meat into dices and fry on a pan until the crisp, then add bouillon and spices. Keep cooking for another 20 minutes.
2. Fry flour for couple of minutes in a separate pan. Add 2 spoons of bouillon and stir. Add sour cream, spices and cook on small from 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Fry onion and add it to pork.
4. Pour the substance in an oven form and add sour cream, cook for another 20 minutes.
5. Once ready, pour machanka in deep plates for every person to dip pancakes in there.



BON APPETIT!





Belarus.

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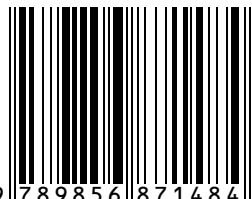


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