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UNESCO Heritage



Jewel necklace from pearls of Belarus

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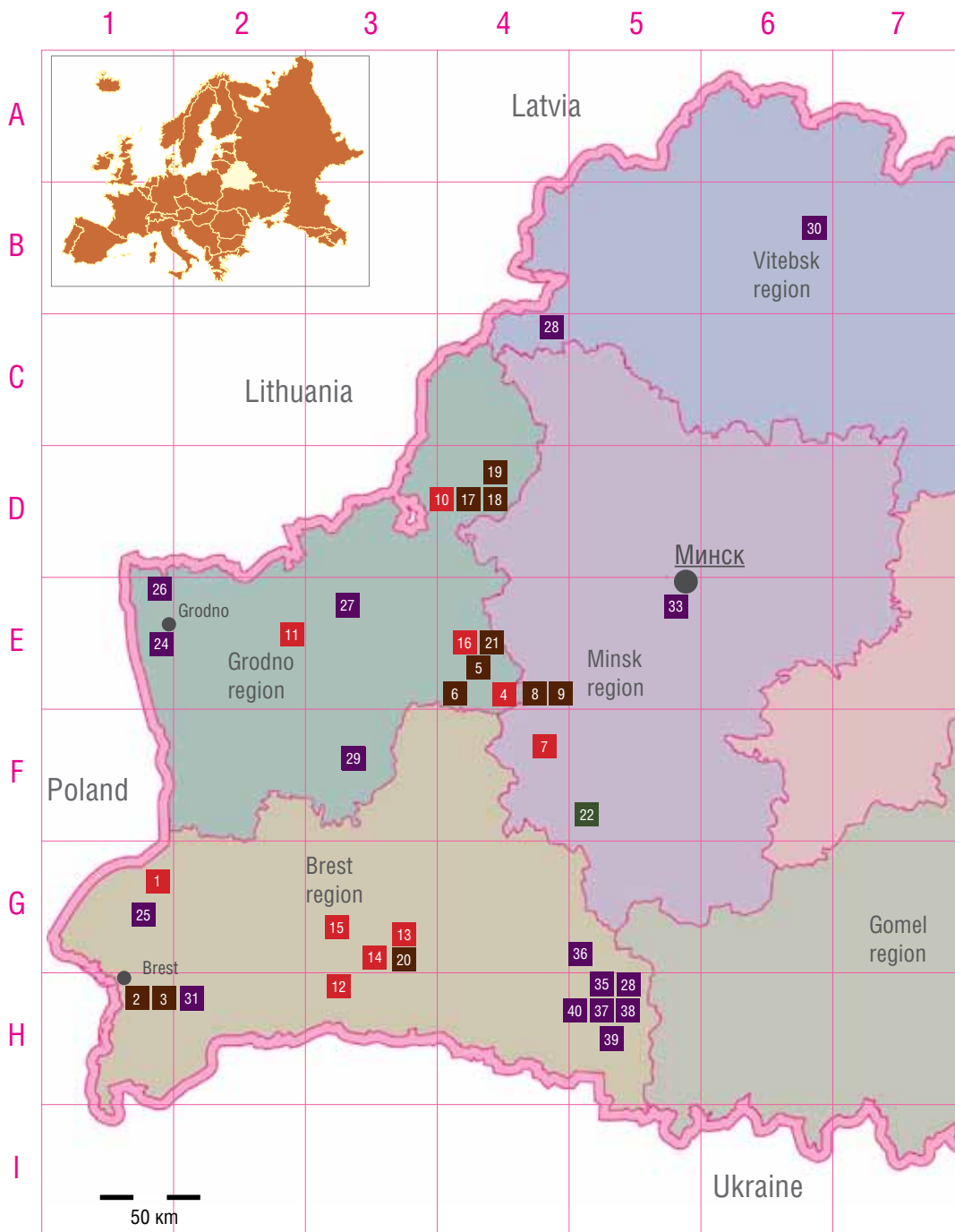
Discover the enchanting beauty of Belarus! Belarus with its elegant old palaces and mighty castles, steeped in legends, mysterious lakes and forests, richly laden with ringing piney scent.

You will visit hundreds of amazing historical sites and will be pleasantly surprised by the boundless hospitality of the Belarusian people. Four locations on the territory of the country are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Mir Castle Complex and Niaswizh Castle will unveil the secrets of the legendary magnate Radziwilly family. Bialowieza Forest astonishes its visitors with its Living Edens beauty. Meanwhile the Struve Geodetic Arc easily amazes imagination with its originality – it is the longest monument in the world which yielded the first accurate measurement of a meridian.

In this edition you will also get yourselves familiar with the Belarusian architectural gems that are just getting ready to replenish the UNESCO World Treasury List; you will read about a unique spectacular ceremony which is already inscribed on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

We wish you most vivid emotions and unforgettable experiences from meeting warm and beautiful Belarus!

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Notes:

*Geodesic Struve arc (arc points)

** The list of non-material cultural heritage needing urgent protection

*** The candidate for inclusion in the Representative list of non-material cultural heritage of mankind

**** Hieratic constructions of defensive type of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland

***** Wooden hieratic architecture of the XVII–XVIII centuries in Polesye

BIALOWIEZA FOREST



▲ The giant pinetree

Wild and pristine Białowieża Forest (Kamenyuki village, Kamenets District, Brest Region, ^{GPS:} 52°33'18"N, 23°48'14"E) **1** is located in the southwest of Belarus, on the border with Poland. The national reserve covers a huge area of over 160 thousand hectares and is one of the largest in Europe.

The first written mention of the Białowieża Forest is found in the Ipatiev Chronicle and it dates back to 983. In the XV century Jagiello who was fond of the beauty of these places, declared them a prohibited area. But already his successors liked to arrange luxurious hunting in the area. The Białowieża Forest suffered heavy losses during World War II, when the occupants cut down and removed about 4.5 million cubic meters of valuable timber – more than ever in the history of the Forest. Over the centuries, the reserve became the property of Russia, and then it was in the possession of Poland. In 1939 the Forest became a reserve, joining the Byelorussian SSR, afterwards it was given the status of the State National Park, and in 1992 it joined in the List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In 2009 the Białowieża Forest marked the 600th anniversary since the establishment of the protected mode.

Białowieża Forest is a true remnant of a prehistoric relic forest that once stretched for hundreds of kilometers. 600-year-old oaks and 300-year-old pines still remember the sounds of the royal arms. And the unique fauna still hides in pristine bushes: lynx and wild boars, red deer and white-tailed eagles. And, of course, here you can come across the symbol of the Białowieża Forest – the legendary auroch, the so-called "contemporary" of mammoths and woolly rhinos. The world's largest population of these

mighty giants inhabits the Forest! It is better to book a guided tour to truly appreciate the beauty of ancient supernatural beauty. Experienced tour guides will show you the most amazing highlights and will introduce you to the history of the Białowieża Forest.

It is convenient to travel by a little train, by bike or by horse carriage. You will see unique fen bogs, reminiscent of the Amazon landscapes, ancient manor of Counts Tyszkiewicz, picturesque "royal road" on which the Russian monarchs loved to walk, frontier outpost, beautiful forest lakes and so much more. Take a dip into the bright world of children's imagination in the estate of the Belarusian Father Frost. The fabulous kind-hearted magician receives guests from more than 90 countries year-round.

Father Frost's granddaughter Snow Maiden joins her grandfather at the estate during the winter. A 40-meter Christmas spruce towers over the heads of visitors to the Białowieża Forest (a natural spruce tree highest in Europe!). There is a magic well and a treasure trove of Father Frost, where children's letters and drawings are carefully stored and some are displayed.

You should definitely visit the Museum of Nature, in the halls of which, thanks to the unique lighting and sound effects, there is an amazing feeling that you walk through the night forest. The museum exhibition features more than 1,000 exhibits and is one of the most popular in Belarus.

Children might particularly enjoy the open-air cages with animals, home to bobcats, deer, wolves, aurochs and other wild animals.

Bialowieza Forest is the perfect place for leisure and business meetings. First-class hotels and comfortable guest houses, modern sports facilities, excellent bath-houses, large conference rooms will satisfy the most demanding tourist preferences. Hunting enthusiasts can count on the assistance of professional hunters and gourmets will enjoy the extraordinary culinary meat, berries and mushrooms delights from the chefs of the restaurant "Bialowieza Forest".

Stroll through the shady paths of the Bialowieza Forest and a warm feeling from touching the magic of wildlife will be permanently preserved in your souls.

WORTH SEEING

It is easy to get from the Bialowieza Forest to Brest (^{GPS:} 52°6'1"N, 23°40'48"E) with its main landmark – the Brest Fortress (XIX century). The archeological museum "Berestie" **2** – also strikes the note with so many visitors from all around the globe. The museum is a unique European facility devoted to the Medieval Eastern Slavonic town that preserves an ancient settlement of X–XI centuries under the glass. The Museum "Saved Art Values" **3** stores works of art and antiques the Brest customs officers managed to take away from smugglers.

DON'T MISS OUT

True connoisseurs of theatrical art gather in Brest on the International Theater Festival entitled "White Tower" every September, where directors, actors, musicians and artists from around the world submit their best works to the audience.

PLACES TO EAT

- "Bialowieza Forest" restaurant (individual and group reservations, Belarusian national cuisine, European cuisine, wide range of venison, berries, mushrooms specialties): phone no.: +375 1631 56-564/56-436
- "Sosny" cafe, seating capacity up to 50 people, phone no.: + 375 1631 56-450
- "Alesya" cafe, seating capacity up to 30 people, phone no.: + 375 1631 56-287
- Summer cafe «Lesnaya skazka» (translation: "Forest Fairy-Tale")

NIGHT STAY

- Hotel №1*** (tourist complex), phone no.: +375 1631 56-497
- Hotel №2 (Kamenyuki village), phone no.: +375 1631 56-572
- Hotel № 3*** (tourist complex), phone no.: +375 1631 56-543



▲ The estate of the belarussian Father Frost

- House of Count Tyszkiewicz (an old mansion with seating capacity up to 9 people); hunters house "Pererov" (5 seats) phone no.: 56-398 375 1631
- At country estates (specify)

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Bialowieza Forest guided tours (Museum of Nature, cages with wild animals, estate of Belarusian Father Frost), phone no.: +375 1631 56-267

HOW TO GET TO BIALOWIEZA FOREST

Departing from Minsk: by bus / train to Brest

Departing from Brest: by bus at 8:20am, 2:30pm – daily

By fixed-rout taxi: departing at 7:00am, 12:30pm, 5:00pm (except Wednesday)

By direct express bus: departing at 8:25am, 2:30pm.

By personal vehicles:

Departing from Brest – taking Brest–Kamenyuki route (R83) – 60 km.

Departing from Minsk – taking Minsk–Brest route (M1) till you turn to Zhabinka (R7) all the way to Kamenetz and further on to the village of Kamenyuki (R83), (approx.380 km) till turn to Slonim (R21).

Learn more about tourist attractions and facilities on www.belarustourism.by; www.npbp.brestobl.com or contact Tourist Information Centre + 375 17 226-99-00 (Mon-Fri 9:00am–1:00pm and 2:00pm–6:00pm / 4:45pm (Fri)

MIR CASTLE COMPLEX



▲ The sight of Mir castle on the part of the lake

Fantastic silhouette of the Mir Castle (Korelichi district, Grodno Region, GPS: 53°27'7"N, 26°28'11"E) 4 attracts, like a mysterious mirage. At various times, it was owned by the Ilinichy, Radziwilly, Vingshteyny, Sviatopolk-Mirskie families. The construction of the castle was first launched back in the XVI century. Each new owner rebuilt the castle, giving it the features of a Gothic style, the Renaissance, the Baroque style. The Mir Castle is now one of a kind; it has no analogues in Russia or in Poland or the Baltic States. Thus, in 2000 the Mir Castle Complex was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Castle Complex Mir didn't manage to escape numerous destructive wars. During the Northern War (1705), the Swedes captured the citadel, set it on fire

and blew up one of the towers. Traces of a terrible fire are visible in the ancient masonry even now. During the Second World War, ghetto where about 800 Jews died was organized behind the powerful walls of the Castle. But, fortunately, the Castle remembers better times, too. It was here in the Mir Castle where legendary Panie Kochanku held a luxurious reception in honor of the last King of Poland Stanislaw August Poniatowski back in the XVIII century. After this reception, rumors about the unimaginable riches of the Radziwilly family surpassing the entire royal treasury began spreading around.

Many legends surround the Mir Castle. They say that a ram was sacrificed during the construction. The ram sacrifice was supposed to protect the hallmark from demolition. Stone that resembles the head of the ram is visible in the masonry even now. Another legend tells of a cursed pond, dug by the last owners of the Castle Sviatopolk-Mirskie. During the work local wise woman's son died and she cursed the whole princely family out of grief. Since then people drowned in the lake every year till the very time this place was finally sprinkled with holy water.

A pond with a romantic island in the middle is preserved to this day. And in the old park the tomb of Svyatopolk-Mirskie is hidden among the trees (1908). It is remarkable for a large mosaic on the facade and a number of princely graves.

The restoration of the Mir Castle has recently been completed. The exhibition that is housed in the towers and

▼ St. Nikolai church and the square building



ancient quarters, tells the story of the fortress. Some of the rooms are now hotel rooms. A modern elevator was created for those who do not want to ascend the spiral staircase. Although, perhaps, steep, narrow steps create a unique spirit of the age: ascending the stairs helps to imagine yourself a resident of the Middle Ages!

A walk in the Mir Castle Complex can bring amazing discoveries. Graceful Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas (XVII century), an elegant Holy Trinity Church (XVI century), Mir Yeshiva (1815) and synagogues (XIX century) will leave an ever-lasting impression.

You should definitely stop by the mansion-museum, "Mir Trading Quarter", which houses unique furniture from the castle, ancient coins and treasures. You are allowed to take pictures and touch all the exponents. You can stay in a hotel "Mir" for the night or in a rural farmstead "At Nicodemus's", where you will not only be welcome, but also (if desired), be allowed to go horse riding, attend sauna, eat barbecue. Cafes "Castle Road" and "Rogneda" offer delicious and inexpensive lunches. Original souvenirs bought at the local shops opposite the castle will help you preserve a memory of a wonderful journey for a long time.

WORTH SEEING

In the village of Turets (Korelichi district, Grodno Region, GPS: 53°31'42"N, 26°18'39"E) turn your attention to the Pokrovsky Church (XIX century) ⁵, built from quarry stone. In Voroncha (Korelichi district, Grodno region, GPS: 53°25'1"N, 26°3'34"E) it might be amusing to see the two-towered Church of St. Anne (XVIII century). ⁶

DON'T MISS OUT

Best time to visit the Mir Castle Complex - the middle of summer, during the days of the festival "Musical Evenings in the Mir Castle" where famous artists appear "live", and the blossom of festive fireworks light up the sky. The summer festival of arts "Mir Castle" traditionally brings together great number of talented musicians, artists, theater performers and so many other talented folk.

STAY

HOTELS

"Mir" hotel, Mir town, September, 17 Square, 3; phone no.: +375 1596 23-851

COUNTRY ESTATES

Country estate "At Nicodemus's", Mir town, Oktyabrskaya Street, 31;

phone no.: +375 29 662-33-93, +375 33 629-54-66

Country estate "Castle Suburbs", Mir town, Pionerskaya Street, 44, phone no.: +375 29 620-86-71

Farmstead "Svityazyanka", Grodno Region, Korelichi



▲ The sight of Mir castle on the part of the island

district, Voroncha village, phone no.: +375 29 675 87 80; +375 1596 27-434; +375 1596 27-434

WINING AND DINING

Cafe "Rogneda", Mir town, September, 17th Square, 1

Cafe "Castle Road", Mir town, Krasnoarmeiskaya Street, 9 (behind the church)

Cafe "Mirium", Mir town, Krasnoarmeiskaya Street, 1a (opposite the Castle)

OTHER LANDMARKS

Farmstead museum "Mir Trading Quarter", Mir town, Second Lane of the Kirova Street. building 2 (opposite the church, behind children's playground); phone no.: +375 29 929-42-68

HOW TO GET THERE

BY BUS

Departing from Minsk: departure from the "Vostochny" port authority in Minsk, by Karelichi, Novogrudok, Dzyatlovo and Lida-bound buses (bypassing Novogrudok).

BY CAR

Departing from Minsk to Mir town – 100 km, M1 express highway (Brest-bound)

Learn more about tourist attractions and facilities on www.belarustourism.by; www.npbp.brestobl.com or contact Tourist Information Centre + 375 17 226-99-00 (Mon-Fri 9:00am-1:00pm and 2:00pm-6:00pm / 4:45pm (Fri))



▲ Niaswizh castle during the restoration time

Niaswizh Castle (Niaswizh district, Minsk Region, GPS: 53°13'22"N, 26°41'30"E) **7** – a living legend of the Belarusian land. A magnificent residence was built by powerful Radziwiłł in the XVI century. The Radziwiłł family got a nickname uncrowned kings of Rzeczpospolita since the Radziwiłł were one of the most important and wealthy clans of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The wealth and influence of the members of this genus was so great that even the French monarchs had

borrowed money from them. Now the palace in Niaswizh is a unique fully preserved magnate residence in Europe. In 2005 Niaswizh palace and park complex were included into the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Niaswizh Castle was the first bastion construction in Belarus. It was built by Nicholas Radziwiłł Sirootka, who was known for progressive views, and applied most advanced foreign achievements in the construction. The Castle was closed at the man-made island and was protected by high banks with projecting bastions and moats. During the XVI–XIX centuries wars the Castle was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt again. Each time, it only began looking more and more like a palace.

Paintings by the great masters, hetman clubs, and marshal's batons, family silver and gold - all this was the decoration at the Nesvizh residence. But the hosts were particularly proud of the 12 Apostles, gold and silver cast in full life-size. During the 1812 war the precious sculptures disappeared. According to one version, they are hidden somewhere in the vicinity of the castle. And a mysterious treasure has been haunted by the adventurers for more than two centuries now. It is believed that the most famous ghost of Belarus Chorna Lady (The Black Lady), miserable soul of Barbara Radziwiłł, who was poisoned by vengeful queen Bona Sforza, inhabits one of the towers of the Castle. Another legend is associated with the Niaswizh famous 35-kilometer underground passage leading to the Mir Castle. And though archaeologists did not manage to find such a lengthy tunnel, underground

▼ The church of Christ's body



tunnels were really detected in the castle. In the nearest future, when the restoration will be completed, tourists will be able to visit Niaswizh dungeons, as well as galleries, arsenal and Kameniza (the old part of the palace where unique 300-year-old frescoes are preserved). The updated magnate residence appears as a comfortable hotel, cafe and a restaurant altogether. In a meantime you can visit the Radziwilly Library and the Archives.

Niaswizh Park that was supposed to match the Castle was created in the XIX century by the best artists and gardeners of that time, and included English, Japanese, Castle and other gardens. One can easily find relaxation in the shade of the sweeping trees, among the romantic ponds and ingenious sculptures.

Among Niaswizh's sightseeing attractions there is a great Cathedral Church or the Church of Corpus Christi (XVI century). This Cathedral Church is considered to be a contemporary and is a family tomb of the Radziwilly. There are about 70 undestroyed graves, among which there are mummies. Radziwilly Sirotko was the very first to be buried here back in 1616. Niaswizh Temple is the first church in Eastern Europe, built in Baroque style; it became the prototype of the famous Roman Church II Gesu. Niaswizh City Hall has a reputation of the oldest in Belarus (XVI century), meanwhile the Slutsk Brahma (dates back to XVI century) attracts visitors by an amazing combination of power and grace.

You can spend the night at a comfortable hotel "Niaswizh". Numerous cafes, bars and restaurants are always there to offer a wide range of food courses.

Get familiar with the charm of medieval mysteries in the ancient capital of uncrowned kings!

WORTH SEEING

In the village of New Sverzhen (Stolbtsy district, Minsk Region, GPS: 53°27'23"N, 26°43'42"E) two ancient temples are well preserved. The Church of St. Peter and Paul (1588) **8** was built by Nicholas Radziwilly Sirotko, a well-known fighter against Protestant beliefs of his father Radziwilly the Black. Dormition Church (1590s) **9** – was founded in the XVI century and later reconstructed into the Uniate Church – in the beginning of the XVII century. Interestingly, the two churches "look" at each other across the road.

DON'T MISS OUT

Medieval music and tilting matches, mock battles – you can witness it all with your own eyes at Niaswizh medieval festivals that take place in spring and summer. Fans of classical music are rushing to "Muses of Niaswizh" Niaswizh May Festival of Chamber Music. The roar of powerful motorcycles invades the city streets in



▲ Niaswizh castle

July – bikers from around the world gather on a grand International Biker Festival "Niaswizh".

STAY

Hotels

Hotel "Niaswizh", Minsk Region, Niaswizh, Belorusskaya Street, 7, phone no.: +375 1770 55-367

PLACES TO EAT

Restaurants

"Ratusha", Sovetskaya Street, 3

"Niasvizh", Belorusskaya Street, 7

Cafe

"Chabarok", Leninskaya Street, 17

"Nesterka", Sovetskaya Street, 5

"Teremok", Chapaeva Street, 1a

HOW TO GET THERE

You can get to Niaswizh by bus (route "Minsk-Pinsk", bypasses Niaswizh) departs from "Central" port authority. You can get there by commuter train from Minsk (Minsk-Baranovichi or Minsk-Stolbtsy). Commuter trains depart from subway station "Institute of Culture" in Minsk or from the Railway. It is necessary to get to the Gorodeya station. Niaswizh-bound bus departs from Gorodeya.

Learn more about tourist attractions and facilities on www.belarustourism.by; www.npbp.brestobl.com or contact Tourist Information Centre + 375 17 226-99-00 (Mon-Fri 9:00am-1:00pm and 2:00pm-6:00pm / 4:45pm (Fri))

STRUVE GEODETIC ARC



▲ Geodesic point Tyupishki. Oshmyany district

Struve Geodetic Arc, which is also known as the Russo-Scandinavian meridian arc, can be easily inscribed on the Guinness World Records as the first accurate measurement of a meridian and the longest monument in the world. It is a chain of survey triangulations stretching from Hammerfest in Norway to the Black Sea, through ten countries and over 2,820 km.

The chain was established and used by the German-born Russian scientist, member of the St.Petersburg Academy of Sciences, founder and director of the new Pulkovo Observatory near St Petersburg, Friedrich Georg Wilhelm

von Struve in the years 1816 to 1855 in order to establish the exact size and shape of the earth. His calculations, made 200 years ago, are now only 3.5 cm apart with the modern satellite observations! Struve's idea was to tab geodetic points along the 25 degrees east longitude meridian. Difficult and meticulous work took him more than 40 years – from 1816 till 1855. Engineering marvel stretched from the Arctic Ocean to the Danube River. The northernmost point "Point Fuglenes" is located near Hammerfest in Norway and the southernmost point "Old-Nekrasovka Point" is located near the Black Sea in Ukraine. By order of Russian Emperor Alexander II and King of Norway and Sweden Carl XV these points were immortalized with monuments.

Originally the Arc included 265 chain points – in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldavia and Ukraine. The chain was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a memorable ensemble of the chain made up of 34 commemorative plaques or built obelisks out of the original 265, main station points which are marked by drilled holes in rocks, iron crosses, cairns, others. A very special role was granted to Belarus - 31 chain points were found on the territory of the Belarusian soil. In 2005 5 Belarusian chain points: (Tupishki) inshmyan Oshmyany district, GPS: 54°17'29"N, 26°02'43"E **10** and "Lopati" (Lopaty) Schyuchinsky district, GPS: 53°33'37"N, 24°52'11"E **11** – in the Grodno Region; "Ossownitza" (Ossownitsa) in Ivanovo district, GPS: 52°17'21"N 25°38'58"E **12**, "Tchekutsk" (Chekutsk) in Ivanovo district, GPS: 52°12'12"N, 25°32'23"E **13**, "Leskowitschi" (Leskovich) in Ivanovo district, GPS: 52°10'5"N, 25°33'18"E **14** – in the Brest Region) were all inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. More than in any other country!



A colossal mistake threw luster on a unique monument of engineering! In 2006 the National Bank of Belarus has released an exclusive silver coin "Struve Arc" which weighed 33.62, and had a nominal value of 20 rubles. It was square-shaped, but it was not the reason it gained popularity. Instead of the real extent of Arc, which is 2820 km, on the coin it was stated to be 2880 km! Unfortunate mistake was corrected, and coins were even removed from circulation, however some of them were still released. Now the "Arc" coin is highly valued among coin collectors and is considered a rarity.

There is a place for the Russian-Scandinavian Arc in the collections of stamp amateurs, too. In 2007 Belarusian Post released the original branded box with its image.

Man-made monument of engineering of the XIX century will be particularly interesting for the hunters looking for diverse and unusual experiences. The obelisk, topped by a 100-pound "earth" ball with the contours of Belarus is towering over the Belarusian town of Chekutsk. This is a monument erected on the spot where one of the Arc points was encountered. The specialists have extracted a cube, dated 1825, with a cross measuring mark from approximately one meter deep dungeon. The memorial sign that commemorates the Russian-Scandinavian Arc, can be found in the villages Tyupishki and Bezdezh (Drogichin district, Brest Region, GPS: 52°19'19"N, 25°18'45"E) ¹⁵, as well as 3, 5 km. to the south-east of Vselyub (Navahrada district, Grodno Region, GPS: 53°43'15"N, 25°47'57"E) ("Amalengof" point) ¹⁶.

WORTH SEEING

In Golshany (Oshmyany district, Grodno Region, GPS: 54°15'30"N, 26°0'35"E) (not far from the point of "Tyupishki"), the

▼ The ruins of Golshany Castle



▲ Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Baruny

ruins of a medieval castle of the Sapiehi is preserved (early XVII century) ¹⁷. Franciscan Monastery and THE Church of St. John the Baptist are also worth visiting (XVII century) ¹⁸. The legend has it that the castle and the monastery were inhabited by ghosts. From Golshany it is easy to get to Boruny (Oshmyany district, Grodno Region, GPS: 54°19'4"N, 26°8'11"E), where a spectacular St. Peter and Paul Church makes an ever-lasting impression on travelers (XVIII century) ¹⁹. The temple became famous due to a 300-year-old wonder-working icon of Borunsk Mother of God.

In Bezdezh (Drogichin district, Brest Region, GPS: 52°19'19"N, 25°18'45"E) ("Bezdezh" point) be sure to visit the Museum of Folk Art "Bezdezhsky Fartushok" ("Berdezh Apron") ²⁰ – the only museum of aprons in the world. And in Vselyub (near point "Amalengof") you will come across the Church of St. Casimir (1443) ²¹ – one of the oldest churches on the territory of modern Belarus.

DON'T MISS OUT

Largest medieval festival "Golshany Castle" is held in Golshany in summer. Serious tilting matches, bouts of chivalry, horse competitions are held to the accompaniment of ancient music. <http://h-t.by/ru/index.htm>

HOW TO GET THERE

It is best to travel through the points of the Struve Arc by car. Thus, you can enjoy the magnificent scenery running through your window and give a look-over at the surrounding sights.

Learn more about tourist attractions and facilities on www.belarustourism.by; www.npbp.brestobl.com or contact Tourist Information Centre + 375 17 226-99-00 (Mon-Fri 9:00am-1:00pm and 2:00pm-6:00pm / 4:45pm (Fri)



▲ The rite "Kolyadnye kings"

▼ Holiday celebrations



Intangible cultural heritage is a living tradition cherished for centuries. Many residents of the Belarusian villages pass on from generation to generation authentic rituals, songs, dances, the uniqueness of which is recognized throughout the world.

So in 2009 the experts of the UNESCO World Heritage List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage introduced the rite of "Kolyada Kings" of the village Semezhevo in Kopyl district, Minsk Region. And in the near future this list might be supplemented by the works of masters-Shapovaly (people who masterfully hand-make felt boots, called 'valenki'), Dribin district, Mogilev Region.

Traditional folk ritual "Kolyada Kings" ²². For the first time this amazing theatrical performance was launched in Semezhevo (Kopyl district, Minsk region, ^{GPS: 52°56'51"N, 26°59'58" E}) in the XVIII century when parts of the Russian army remained in the village.

Brave warriors went home and arranged a colorful presentation, and the owners treated them generously. The tradition was so deeply rooted that it lives on for more than two centuries!

The performance kicks off on a "Schodry Vechar" (on a Generous Night, January 13/14). Young men and boys march along the street under the loud beating of drums. Torches burning in the hands of each participant bring extraordinary entertainment to the ritual. "Kolyada Kings" are dressed in special costumes, resembling ancient

military uniforms – white shirts and trousers, red belts with a "brand" typical iconic Semezhevo ornament that covers their chest crosswise, and high hats with colored ribbons. Local characters Grandpa and Baba join in the procession. Participants come into the houses and the villagers act out the drama of "King Maximilian", and the hosts are not being stingy and present the performers with gifts.

The ritual "Kolyada Kings" exists only in the village Semezhevo. Grand for its preservation is expected from a special UNESCO fund. The money will help turn the whole action into the even more colorful and memorable event.

Creative work of masters-Shapovaly (Dribinsky district, Mogilev Region, GPS: 54°7'12"N, 31°5'39"E) **23** is considered a historical and cultural value of the Republic of Belarus.

"Shapovalstvo" – is the skills of masterful hand-made creation of felt boots "valenki". The first mentioning about this art in Dribin district dates back to the XIX century. Local peasants were engaged in 'shapovalstvo' in order to get by, because their land was far from being fertile. Masters went to the villages, selling their simple products. There is evidence that they even traveled to America! In order not to give away the secrets of their profession, Shapovaly-masters used a special secret language. Some elderly residents of the Dribin district are familiar with the language to the present day. Living traditions of the masters-Shapovaly are carefully preserved in the studio under the historical and ethnographic museum of Dribin, where people teach ancient craft to their children.



▲ Shapoval's Work

▼ Valenki





▲ The Tower of Kamianiec

World famous architects and most talented engineers have created their masterpieces in Belarus during centuries. Besides four iconic landmarks that have already made the part of the human treasury, ten more remarkable highlights have been recently inscribed on the UNESCO Preliminary List. And, perhaps, in the short term they will enlarge the Master List of the UNESCO World Heritage.

▼ Memorial complex "Brest Hero Fortress" "Thirst" sculptural group



The Kalozha Church of St. Boris and Gleb (1189 г.) ²⁴ in Grodno (Grodno Region, *GPS: 53°40'42"N, 23°49'6"E*) – is the only surviving monument of the medieval Grodno architectural school that has been preserved till the times we live in. The temple emerged on a steep bank of the Neman River, on a former site of a pagan sanctuary. Wonderful ornaments, lined with stones and shaped tiles are the main peculiarities of the church. Another feature is the clay resonators (the vessels built into the wall with their necks looking outside) that give the building terrific acoustics. Kalozha Church is popular with newly wedded couples: a marriage contracted here is believed to be happy.

White Tower (XIII century) ²⁵ in the town of Kamenets (Kamenets District, Brest Region, *GPS: 52°24'17"N, 23°49'10"E*). Crowned with geared rim, White Tower (or Tower of Kamenets, Kamenetsky Pillar) is the only completely preserved monument of ancient Russia in Belarus. During its construction architect Alexa used a unique foundation, due to which the tower has been standing on a shaky indestructible, swampy soil for seven centuries. The height of the "pillar" equals to about 30 m, thickness of walls is up to 2.5 m, and the entrance was originally located at a height of 13 m (the defenders got inside through the remote stairs). The tower was built for protection against the Crusaders and the Tatars and Mongols. Now it houses the museum with a wealthy exposition.

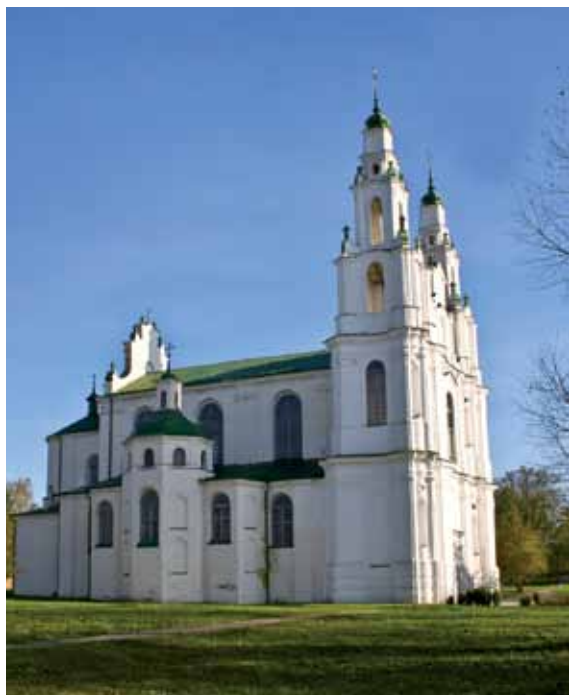
Augustow Canal (XIX century) ²⁶ is located in the Grodno Region (Grodno District, Grodno Region, *GPS:*

53°51'51"N, 23°43'19"E). The Canal has only two analogues in the world: one in Sweden and the other in Great Britain. Alexander I ordered the construction of this amazing facility in response to the Prussian introduction of high duties on Russian goods. The new waterway bypassed Russia's inhospitable neighbor, depriving it of its profits for a very long time. The Canal, equipped with 29 dams and 18 locks, joined the Vistula and the Neman Rivers, stretching for nearly 103 km. Now it has lost its transportation value, but won many admirers among tourists. It is pleasant to travel on the water surface on a kayak or a boat, watch the "locking" (the process of passage of the vessel through a gateway), looking at numerous historical attractions.

Iconic fortifications of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland.

In the dashing days the temples were often used not exclusively for the sermon processions, but for defensive purposes as well. Belarus has preserved three unique temple-fortresses. Malomazheykovskaya Church or Murovanka (XVI century) ²⁷ (Schuchin district, Grodno Region, GPS: 53°41'59"N, 25°0'7"E) which combines the features of the Gothic style and Renaissance. Warlike appearance of the temple struck the note with Charles XII during the Northern War, and he ordered to bombard the church immediately. The Church of St. John the Baptist (the beginning of XVII century) ²⁸ in the Kamai (Postavy District, Vitebsk Region, GPS: 55°3'37"N, 26°36'19"E) has never closed during its entire

▼ Church of St. John the Baptist



▲ Saint Sophia Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Polotsk

400-year-old history. Two high towers allowed the medieval defenders sweep away the territory, while remaining invulnerable. The Church of St. Michael the Archangel (XV century) ²⁹ in Synkovichy (Zelva district, Grodno Region, GPS: 53°7'23"N, 25°9'27"E) according to the legend was built by outstanding Duke Vytautas. Its massive walls, 1.5 m thick, could withstand any blow.

Saint Sophia Cathedral (1044–1066) and Spaso-Preobrazhenskaya Church (mid XII century) ³⁰ in Polotsk (Polotsk district, Vitebsk Region, GPS: 55°29'10"N, 28°45'31"E). Saint Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk is one of the first Orthodox defense temples founded by legendary Duke Vseslav the Sorcerer as a symbol of equality (together with the Second Rome – Constantinople) and constant rivalry (with Kiev and Novgorod). St. Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk was destroyed and rebuilt several times, however the elements of the XI centuries were still preserved – 3 pillars and fragments of vipers. Spaso-Preobrazhenskaya Church belongs to the Saviour and St. Euphrosyne Convent. The relics of the most famous Belarusian Saint Euphrosyne of Polotsk and a copy of the legendary Evfrosinievsky Cross are both kept here. **Brest Fortress (end of XVIII – the beginning. XIX century). ³¹**

in Brest (Brest region, Brest, *GPS: 52°5'0"N, 23°39'17"E*). For this mighty fortification Ekaterina II's government made an unprecedented step – it sacrificed the whole town. Ancient Brest was destroyed and then rebuilt near the citadel. The bypass canals, numerous forts (over 20) and the mighty fortress wall (almost 2 km long.) made the Brest Fortress almost inaccessible. On June 22, 1941 the citadel was the first in the Soviet Union to resist the blow of the Nazi Germany, and kept the defense for 28 successive days. Now the Brest Fortress is a memorial and it was granted the honorary title "Hero-Fortress".

St.Nicholas Convent (founded in XVI century) ³² in Mogilev (Mogilev district, Mogilev Region, *GPS: 53°53'37"N, 30°20'44"E*). The complex of the Convent represents Baroque style Saint Nicholas Cathedral that has been inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites in Europe, and the Church of St. Great Onuphrius. In the Church it is worth paying attention to the frescos (XVII century) and carved iconostasis created back in 1672. An unusual icon is preserved here, which was formerly a portrait of the

last Tsar of the Russian Empire, Nicholai II. The portrait of Tsar-martyr was given to the church and consecrated at the request of Master Maximus, Archbishop of Mogilev and Mstislav.

Architectural Ensemble of Independence Avenue (1940–1950) ³³ in Minsk (Minsk district, Minsk Region, *GPS: 53°54'8"N, 27°33'42"E*) – is a trademark of the Belarusian capital. This is the largest street in the world, built up in a single architectural style – in Stalin's Empire Style. The Avenue is notable for the fact that throughout its history it has changed 14 titles. The very first name of the Avenue was the street Zakharyevskaya – it was given in honor of the first governor of Minsk. During the Second World War the city was badly damaged it had to be rebuilt almost from scratch. The main city avenue was designed on the basis of the Nevsky Avenue that is in St. Petersburg: the width of the carriageway is exactly 2 times the height of the buildings. This creates an impression of spaciousness and festivity. Meanwhile the mighty buildings, decorated with so many little details, following the idea of the then

▼ Gomel Palace & Park Ensemble



urban planners, demonstrate power, now sunk into oblivion, of the Soviet state.

Palace and Park Ensemble ³⁴ in Gomel (Gomel district, Gomel Region, *GPS: 52°25'19"N, 31°0'59"E*). This is one of the oldest and most prestigious and reputable museums in Belarus. The ensemble includes the Palace of Rumyantsev-Paskevichy, a chapel-shrine of the Paskevichy, an office building, "Winter Garden", an observation tower and an ancient park. The Palace (XVIII - middle of the XIX centuries) dazzles with the splendor of noble interiors. Guests can visit graceful galleries, magnificent pillared hall, and an elegant red living room. The exhibition numbers more than 150 thousand original antiques. The elegant chapel-tomb (late XIX century) was the first monument in the country restored after World War II. A wonderful park (mid XIX century) with fountains and exotic plants perfectly sets off the pearl of the palace as if a luxurious setting.

Wooden cult architecture of XVII-XVIII centuries in Polesie. Features of Gothic, Baroque styles, Classicism and local traditions are harmoniously combined in the guise of Belarusian wooden temples. This is a unique phenomenon that struck the note with the UNESCO experts. We advise you to start with David-Gorodok (Stolin district, Brest Region, *GPS: 52°3'21"N, 27°13'48"E*), which preserved the Church of St. George (XVII century) ³⁵. Draw attention to the beautifully carved iconostasis, which is about 300 years old. In Kozhan-Gorodok (Luninets district, Brest Region, *GPS: 52°12'19"N, 27°0'35"E*) Nicholas Church overlooks the landscape (1816) ³⁶, it is decorated with unique wooden sculptures and carvings. Michael Church (1796) ³⁷ in Rubel (Stolin district, Brest Region, *GPS: 51°58'18"N, 27°3'38"E*), is also worth visiting, the Church of Elijah (1881) ³⁸ in Velemichi (Stolin district, Brest Region, *GPS: 52°1'12"N, 27°14'32"E*), Michael Church (1784) ³⁹ in Olpeni (Stolin district, Brest Region, *GPS: 52°1'19"N, 27°9'35"E*), the Church of Saint Parascheva of the Balkans (1884) ⁴⁰ in Berezhnoe (Stolin district, Brest Region, *GPS: 51°59'35"N, 26°59'31"E*).



▲ Malomazheykovskaya Church

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