Belarus

MILITARY-HISTORICAL TOURISM IN BELARUS

Since time immemorial, Belarusian lands, being in the center of Europe, have repeatedly become the scene of hostilities. In different years, events unfolded in such a way that there probably was no place in our country where tragic echoes of wars could be avoided. It is not surprising that the present Belarus has a rich military-historical heritage, which has survived to this day. These are majestic defensive castles, and harsh fortresses, fortifications, pillboxes, bunkers. In memory of various military events, memorial complexes were created in settlements, obelisks were installed, monuments were erected and the Eternal Flame burns, and significant collections of military history were collected in museums.

The last three wars: the Patriotic War of 1812, the First World War and the Great Patriotic War, distinguished by bloody battles and great human losses, left an indelible mark on Belarusian soil, and also significantly influenced the course of history. The events of those times are immortalized in different parts of our country.

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The Patriotic War of 1812

The Patriotic War of 1812 between a coalition of states led by Napoleonic France on the one hand and the Russian Empire on the other is one of the most important and sad events in the history of Europe of the XIX century. During the military hard times, it was the Belarusian lands that became the scene of bloody battles and decisive battles, which led to significant losses in the warring troops and among the civilian population. Monuments reminiscent of these sad episodes have been preserved in different parts of our country.

Bobruisk fortress

The construction of the Bobruisk fortress began in the summer of 1810 with the construction of a citadel in the line of defense of the western borders of the Russian Empire. On the eve of the war of 1812, it was armed with more than 300 guns, the garrison numbered about 4 thousand people. At the beginning of the war, the fortress played a significant role in ensuring the movement of the 2nd Western Army P.I. Bagration. During the rest in Bobruisk, the army replenished food supplies, received reinforcements, left the sick and wounded here. At the end of **July 1812**, the Bobruisk citadel took a powerful blow to the army of Napoleon, and after the departure of the Russian troops of Bagration, the garrison held back the siege of the French for 4 months.

Coordinates: 53.136983, 29.244003

Saltanovka village (Mogilev district)

At the initial stage of the war, the battle of **July 11, 1812** was of great importance. As a result of a bloody battle, the Russian troops of the 2nd Western Army were able to delay the advance of the enemy, which subsequently ensured the combination of forces of the 1st and 2nd Russian armies. In honor of these events, in 1914, the Memorial Chapel was erected in Saltanovka. Its walls are decorated with commemorative plaques, which indicate the military units of the Russian army that took part in the battle.

Coordinates: 53.800479, 30.259037

Klyastitsy village (Rossonsky district)

On **July 18-20, 1812**, near the village of Klyastitsy, one of the key battles of the Patriotic War took place, as a result of which the Russian troops managed to stop the active advance of the Great Army to St. Petersburg. This was the first major victory over the French in the war. In 1857, a chapel monument dedicated to this event was erected in Klyastitsy, but in the late 1930s it was demolished and covered with land. In 1962, a new monument was erected at this place, but a few decades later it fell into disrepair. In 2013, Polotsk local historians Andrei and Alexei Bukhovetsky, using photographs and an old map, discovered the foundation of the chapel, an old obelisk and other artifacts near the Nishcha River. Thanks to the enthusiasm of researchers and the indifference of local residents to the historical past, some of the monuments were restored.

Coordinates: 55.886523, 28.603998

Borisov

Borisov tet-de-pon – pre-bridge fortifications – began to be built on the eve of the Patriotic War of 1812 in order to defend the city from a possible enemy attack. By the beginning of the invasion of Napoleon's army, work was not completed, but earthen fortifications – embankments and ditches – played an important role in the defeat of the Great Army. In **November 1812**, a battle took place here, as a result of which Napoleonic troops were driven over the River Berezina and the city came under the control of the Russian army. Today, two impressive redoubts have been preserved here, a stele has also been erected and two guns from the time of 1812 have been installed.

Coordinates: 54.233079, 28.49847

Brilev field (Borisov district)

In **November 1812**, the remnants of Napoleon's army reached Berezina, but for the French troops there was a real threat of encirclement. The Russian army of P.V. Chichagov stood on the right bank of the river, the army of P.H. Wittgenstein approached Borisov from the north, the Cossack troops of M.I. Platov and the vanguard of the main forces of the Russian army M.I. Kutuzov pursued from the east. Despite this, the French still managed to build two bridges across the Berezina and, under the cover of artillery, transfer part of the troops to the right bank. Heavy battles took place near the village of Brili, as a result of which the enemy lost 25 thousand people and the entire convoy. The remnants of the French troops, along with Napoleon, retreated. On the 100th anniversary of the Berezinsky crossing, an obelisk was installed on the Brilevsky field. During the Soviet-Polish war, it was destroyed and rebuilt only in 1992. A concrete-cast-iron monument and a «mound necropolis» were built here. And in 1996, a «French monument» appeared – in memory of the soldiers of the Great Army who died during the crossing of Berezina.

Coordinates: 54.312486, 28.354617

Studenka (Borisov district)

At the end of the 19th century, Borisov landowner and collector I.Kh. Kolodeev discovered in Studenka the locations of Napoleonic bridges built during the Berezinsky crossing, and decided to install two memorial signs here. It was possible to implement the plan in 1901. The monuments have stood for about 20 years. In 1962, a new memorial sign was opened here, replacing one of the wells of 1901, destroyed by this time. In 2002, the second monument was restored. On the occasion of the 190th anniversary of the events of the Berezinsky crossing, another monument to the dead soldiers was unveiled. The monument is made in the form of a figure of a dying ancient warrior boy fought by the enemy. It symbolizes all those killed during the war of 1812 in Belarus, regardless of nationality and religion.

Coordinates: 54.325382, 28.35565

Pleshchenitsy (Logoysky district)

The battles near the village of Pleshchenitsy on **November 19-21, 1812** were one of the last in which the remnants of the Great Army tried to restrain the offensive of the Russian troops. Soon after – on November 23 – Napoleon fled, and the army stopped resistance. In 1987, a memorial sign in the form of a boulder with a memorial plaque was erected in Pleshchenitsy.

Coordinates: 54.419894, 27.807522

World War I (1914–1918)

The First World War is one of the bloodiest and widest military conflicts in the history of mankind. It was the Belarusian lands that may have suffered the most from brutal and destructive battles, since the front line stopped here for more than two years. Today, this sad event is gradually forgotten due to years ago, but there are many places on the territory of our country that recall the events of that turbulent time.

Mogilev

On **August 21, 1915,** the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander from Baranovich, to whom the front came too close, moved to Mogilev. The presence of a well-branched railway network, significant distance from the front line, the convenience of communication and communication with the main rear authorities and headquarters of the Russian fronts undoubtedly gave great advantages for the new «main apartment.» Emperor Nicholas II and members of his family constantly lived in Mogilev, key military and political decisions were made.

Coordinates: 53.909032, 30.342976

Vidzy (Braslav district)

The village is known primarily for the majestic Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, the construction of which was completed just before the outbreak of World War I. At that time, it was considered one of the tallest structures in Belarus. German troops, having occupied Vidza, actively used the Catholic church as an observation post. In **March 1916**, before the start of a serious offensive, known as the Narochan operation, Russian troops heavily fired on the church, almost completely destroying the towers and depriving the Germans of the opportunity to observe. In memory of those events, several Russian artillery shells were embedded in the walls of the temple.

Coordinates: 55.394213, 26.627076

Naroch (Myadel district)

In the Catholic cemetery of the village of Naroch there is a large monument with an eagle that spread its wings. At the foot of the monument is a German military cemetery. In the German military tradition, it is the eagle that is called upon to protect the peace of dead soldiers. Probably, the monument was erected in honor of the events of **1916**, when the Narochansky operation was carried out by the Russian army. This was a distracting maneuver, the purpose of which was to pull to the east part of the German forces that launched an attack on the Western Front, when there was a serious threat of the fall of France. As a result of the battles, the Russian army lost about 80 thousand people, the loss of the Germans – half as much, but the goal of the Narochansky operation was achieved.

Coordinates: 54.94322, 26.678891

Boruny (Oshmyansky district) and Desyatniki (Volozhinsky district)

In the village of Boruny there is a cemetery from the First World War. Among the numerous graves of soldiers here is the grave of the crew of the Russian bomber Ilya Muromets, who was shot down nearby during an air battle in **1916**. The military cemetery in the village of Desyatniki is one of the most beautiful and well-groomed memorials for the dead soldiers. Located on a gentle hill at the bend of the river, it more resembles a park. Here the graves of Russian and German soldiers are peacefully adjacent. At the entrance there is a monument in the form of an eagle, which, according to tradition, is called upon to monitor order and protect the peace of the dead.

Coordinates (Boruny): 54.318039, 26.13665
Coordinates (Desyatniki): 54.165772, 26.149348

Smorgon and surroundings

During the First World War, a front line passed directly through the city of Smorgon. As a result of positional battles, which lasted 810 days, the village practically ceased to exist. There was no life here – only trenches, trenches and pillboxes. The events of those times are reminiscent of the memorial complex in Victory Park. Several German military structures and shelters have also been preserved in the city. The Krevo Castle of the XIV century in the village of Krevo was greatly affected by the war. Having occupied it, the Germans set up observation posts and shelters here. In **the summer of 1917,** the castle survived a powerful artillery shelling, which thoroughly destroyed the historical monument. And in the village of Zalesye, right near the railway, there is an obelisk in memory of soldiers who died in the local hospital. The hospital itself was located in the former Oginsky estate, which has survived to this time. It was led by Colonel Alexandra Tolstaya – the daughter of the famous writer Lev Tolstoy.

Coordinates (Smorgon): 54.481725, 26.401673
Coordinates (Krevsky castle): 54.310879, 26.282678
Coordinates (Zalesye): 54.420286, 26.523055
http://oginskizalesse.by

Vygonoshchi (Ivatsevichi district)

In this section, the front line passed from Lake Vygonovsky and further south along the Oginsky Canal. In the very center of the village of Vygonoshchi, several large machine-gun pillboxes have been preserved – in the military period a German stronghold was created here. Each pillbox housed several machine guns, and for small-caliber Russian artillery of those times, the structures were almost invulnerable.

Coordinates: 52.61344, 25.918641

Porechye (Pinsky district)

During the war, a German refuge was built in the village of Porechye. The bunker, which has survived to the present, is located in the deep rear of the German defense. It is one of the largest freestanding structures built by German engineers during the First World War. Inside there are several large halls, which are connected by two corridors running along the ends of the bunker.

Coordinates: 52.28127, 25.81813

Zabrodye (Vileisk district)

In the village of Zabrodye, through which the front line passed during the war years, the only museum of the First World War in Belarus was created. It contains a collection of original objects and documents reflecting military weekdays and events that took place around the village. The museum has military uniforms, German and Russian helmets, trench elements, canned soldiers, razors, flashlights, a large number of photo documents from the front line.

Minsk region, Vileisk district,
Narochansky v/c, v. Zabrodje.
+375 29 651 74 44, +375 29 333 84 46
Running time: Tuesday – Sunday, 11.00 – 19.00.
Monday is the day off.
Coordinates: 54.544139, 26.729319
https://zabrodje.com

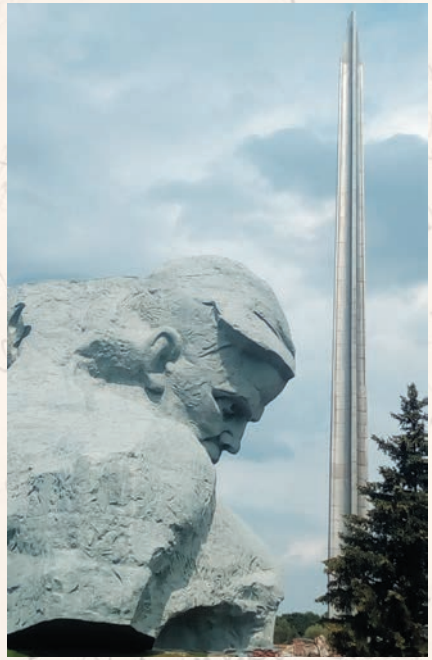
Great Patriotic War (1941–1945)

Passed more than 75 years since that moment when on our earth volleys of tools, explosions of grenades and mines, a roar of tank motors when bloodshed stopped calmed down, the Great Patriotic War ended. For years of hard times Belarus lost every third inhabitant, but even the covered with blood of millions of people, plundered and half-ruined country didn't surrender. Many decades later the memory of a feat of the people which made the greatest contribution to the Victory over fascism is sacred.

Memorial complex «Brest Fortress Hero»

The created in 1971, Memorial complex «Brest Fortress Hero» became a symbol of courage and heroism, shown in days of the Great Patriotic War. Soldiers of the Brest fortress assumed the first attack of enemy army and held defense for 32 days while the enemy expected to capture her in several hours. The memorial complex includes ruins and the survived constructions of old fortress, the museums which funds contain more than 80 thousand exhibits, majestic monuments and sculptural compositions. The main monument «Courage» – a sculpture of the soldier 33.5 m high. The sculptural composition «Thirst» represents the Soviet soldier who, leaning on the automatic machine, with the last bit of strength tries to reach the river and to scoop a water helmet.

Brest, Geroyev St. of defense of the Brest fortress, 60,
+375 162 20 03 65
Operating time: Tuesday – Sunday, 09.00 – 17.00.
Monday – day off.
Coordinates: 52.079273, 23.658756
https://brest-fortress.by



Buynichsky field (Mogilev district)

The memorial complex «Buynichsky Field» immortalizes a feat of defenders of Mogilev who in **1941** courageously defended the city from fascist aggressors. Since July 10 the opponent systematically subjected positions of the Soviet army to bombing and shelling. And in the approach which began on July 12 the enemy directed through the Buynichsky field of 70 tanks. Fight continued 14 hours, the Soviet parts lined and burned 39 tanks, beat off several attacks of the opponent – held the positions till July 22. On July 13-14 the correspondent of the Izvestia newspaper writer Konstantin Simonov and the press photographer Pavel Troshkin who photographed padded German tanks were in the place of fighting. Years later the writer's ashes under his will were dispelled over this field of fight.

Coordinates: 53.86169, 30.254242

Orsha

In 1966, the Memorial «For Our Soviet Homeland» was erected in Orsha on the eastern bank of the Dnieper – a monument to the famous and legendary Katyusha. It was in the battles near Orsha on **July 14, 1941** that the first combat use of barreless field rocket artillery systems took place. Lightning shots were sent to the occupied city station, and this turned out to be enough to destroy a large number of enemy forces and military equipment and prevent a further Nazi offensive on Smolensk. Another military monument in Orsha is dedicated to the liberators of the city from Nazi invaders. During the Vitebsk–Orsha operation on June 23-28, 1944, the city, as well as several more settlements of the Vitebsk region, were liberated from the invaders.

Coordinates: 54.50589, 30.430111

Memorial complex «Trostenets» (Minsk)

During the Second World War, the Trostenets death camp, created in the fall of **1941**, became the largest in Belarus and on the territory of the Soviet Union that was occupied by the Germans. In terms of the number of victims of fascism, Trostenets became the fourth after Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka. After liberation from the Nazis, more than thirty mass graves were discovered here, some of which reached a length of 50 meters, as well as cremation pits, where the Nazis burned the executed, gas-poisoned and even living people on fires. These hellish ovens worked daily. The charred skeletons of the executioner were taken to pre-prepared ditches, into which they were methodically trapped with a caterpillar tractor. In total, more than 206 thousand people died in Trostenets. On June 22, 2015, the Trostenets Memorial Complex was opened on the site of the concentration camp with a 10-meter central monument «Gate of Memory» – it was a continuation of the memorial built here in the 1960s.

Coordinates: 53.842875, 27.740759

New Village (Ushachsky district)

During the Great Patriotic War, the Polotsk-Lepel partisan zone was created with a center in the urban village of Ushachi. By right, this zone was called the Partisan Republic, it covered an area of 3 thousand square meters, included 1220 settlements and 80 thousand civilians. This site did not give rest to the German invaders. In **December 1943 – February 1944**, the Nazis made five unsuccessful attempts to clear rear of the partisans. And in the spring, two new punitive operations were developed. Against 17 thousand partisans, a 60,000-strong enemy army advanced. For 25 days, unequal battles continued, but on the night of May 4-5, the partisans carried out the legendary breakthrough of the ring of fire, left the encirclement and brought out 15 thousand civilians. In the summer of 1974, the Breakthrough Memorial Complex, a monument of partisan glory, was erected at the site of the breakthrough of the blockade.

Coordinates: 55.204769, 28.492714

Khatyn Memorial Complex (Logoy District)

The complex was created in memory of hundreds of Belarusian villages destroyed by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War. It is located on the site of the village of Khatyn, burned by the punitive detachment of the SS on **March 22, 1943**. In accordance with the principle of collective punishment, which violates all the rules of warfare, 149 residents of the settlement were burned alive or shot for possible assistance to partisans. The village itself was also erased from the face of the earth. Of the adult residents of the village, only 56-year-old village smith Iosif Iosifovich Kaminsky survived. Burned and wounded, he regained consciousness at night when the punishers left the village. Among the corpses of fellow villagers, he found son Adam. The boy was shot in the stomach, received severe burns. He died in his father's arms. Joseph Kaminsky and his son Adam served as prototypes of the famous monument in the memorial complex, which was opened in 1969.

Coordinates: 54.333975, 27.944787

https://khatyn.by

Memorial complex «Red Coast» (Zhlobinsky district)

The village of Krasny Bereg, where a concentration camp was created in **1943**, is called the second Khatynya. Children aged 8 to 14 years were brought here: some were forcibly sent to Germany, others took blood from the wounded German soldiers right here. 1990 children passed through the «death factory». In 2007, the Memorial Complex was created in the Red Coast – a monument to the victims of fascism. It is the Sun Square with eight alleys-rays diverging along the apple orchard, reflecting the tragic events of the camp.

Coordinates: 52.963152, 29.776223

Memorial complex «Ola» (Svetlogorsk district)

The Nazi invaders occupied the village of Ola at the end of July 1941. On the morning of **January 14, 1944**, a German punitive detachment, together with a military unit, which consisted of about 1 thousand soldiers, surrounded the village. People were driven into houses, which were then set on fire. Those who tried to escape were shot with machine guns and machine guns, thrown alive into the fire. As a result, 1,758 civilians were shot and burned, including 950 children. After the war, the village of Ola was not revived. In 1958, a monument was erected on a mass grave in which civilians and Soviet soldiers were buried (2253 people in total) – a sculpture of a kneeling soldier with a wreath. Later, as a result of the reconstruction of the fraternal burial, the Ola Memorial Complex was created, which was inaugurated in June 2020.

Coordinates: 52.738056, 29.664209

Kurgan of Glory (Smolevichsky district)

On the 21st kilometer of the Minsk – Minsk National Airport highway there is a beautiful monument to the Great Patriotic War – the Memorial Complex «Mound of Glory0». It was in this place in **July 1944** during the largest offensive operation Bagration that the 150,000-strong group of Nazi troops was surrounded. This event in history was called the Minsk Cauldron. The defeat of the group ended on July 11 and was another step towards the liberation of Belarus. The total height of the memorial is 70.6 meters. An earthen hill 35 meters high is crowned by a sculptural composition of four bayonets, which symbolize the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Belorussian and 1st Baltic fronts that liberated Belarus. From the foot of the mound, encircling it, two concrete stairs lead to the monument, each of which has 241 steps.

Coordinates: 54.018883, 27.897837

Stalin Line (Minsk District)

The historical and cultural complex «Stalin's Line» consists of restored fortifications of the Minsk fortified area, which were located on the defensive line of the USSR in the 1930s. At the beginning of World War II, the retreating Red Army resisted the enemy here for several weeks. The open-air museum was created in 2005 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The complex includes two long-term defensive points (pillboxes), which are the historical basis of the museum. Machine gun pillboxes and a command and observation post were restored. The exposition presents military equipment – from the time of the First World War to the present day, all types of trenches, trenches and anti-tank ditches are shown.

ag. Loshany, Minsk district,
+375 17 512 12 33
Running time: Monday – Sunday, 10.00 – 18.00.
Coordinates: 54.05735, 27.294383
https://stalin-line.by

Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War (Minsk)

This museum is the largest repository in the country in memory of the great and terrible days of military hard times. Over 8 thousand exhibits telling about the history of the Great Patriotic War are presented in ten exhibition halls. Of particular importance are collections of handwritten partisan magazines and improvised partisan weapons, which in 2009 were given the status of historical and cultural value of the Republic of Belarus. The excursion ends in the magnificent Victory Hall, decorated in the form of a glass dome of the Berlin Reichstag, over which Soviet soldiers hoisted the Victory Banner in 1945.

Minsk, 8 Pobediteley Ave.,
+375 17 327 11 66
Running time: Monday – Saturday, 10.00 – 18.00.
Sunday is a day off.
Coordinates: 53.916333, 27.53789
http://warmuseum.by

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