

# Whole-hearted holidaying

Forty 9-16 year olds from all over Belarus recuperate at Nadezhda 21st Century International Rehabilitation-Recuperative Centre's Merry Hearts summer camp, after heart operations

By Timofey Veremeev

The unusual project was launched in 2006, and has now taken place for the sixth time. Children recovering from heart operations were able to attend the Children's Heart sponsored camp, which receives funding from BPS-Bank JSC and Astomstroy JSC.

New impressions and positive emotions are very important in aiding children's recovery after cardio-surgery, since most tend to be restricted in the physical exercise they can enjoy, leading to a limited social network. The camp helps them make new friends, while gaining confidence and a better understanding of themselves.

Each child is given an individual programme including walking and cycling, simulator exercises, and speleo-, phyto- and aromatherapy. They also have a lot of fun taking part in games, contests and comedy shows.



Children who have undergone operations recuperate at International Rehabilitation-Recuperative Centre

## Sites where prominent writers lived

**Three tourist routes being launched for Belarusian Written Language Day — celebrated this year in Gantsevichi, Brest Region**

The routes are connected with the life and artistry of talented writers from the Brest Region. Two have been developed by the Gantsevichi Centre for Children and Youth Tourism and Excursions, with one including a visit to the village of Lyusino, where Yakub Kolas lectured from 1902-1904; he later devoted a novel to Lyusino. On April 24th, 1982, the Yakub Kolas Literary-Ethnographic Museum opened there, in honour of the poet's 100th birthday. Tours of the village of Ostrov will, in turn, familiarise tourists with the life and work of Mikhas Rudkovsky.

The nearby local history museum has prepared its own route devoted to its native writers. The tour begins in Gantsevichi, continuing through the villages of Ostrov, Guta and Malye Krugovichi.

## New historical point on tourist map

**Archaeologists unearth remains of Polotsk school once attended by famous Belarusian first book printer and enlightener Frantsisk Skorina**

Candidate of Historical Sciences Denis Duk, an associate professor and the Head of the National and World History Department at Polotsk's State University, was in charge of the dig. He tells us that archaeologists have discovered remains of the Bernardine Monastery where Frantsisk Skorina received his primary education.

The renowned Belarusian scholar from Polotsk began learning Latin at the Bernardine Monastery School. Until recently, the exact location of the monastery was unknown, as no ruins remained. However, historians assumed its approximate location, with archaeologists discovering the remains of the foundations this summer, which matched plans of the building. Their finds confirmed that the School had once stood there, with holy vessels belonging to the Bernardines discovered alongside dishes, glazed tiles and book covers.

According to Mr. Duk, it's not yet possible to preserve the site as a museum, since privately owned houses are densely located nearby. However, the tourist map of the ancient city can gain another historical point.

# 'Lonely Wolf' on remote river bank

Bragin resident opens homestead 30km from Chernobyl

By Maxim Gradov

Entrepreneur Alexander Levitsky now has a newspaper advert reading: 'A comfortable house on the bank of the Dnieper River, offering a banya and shashlyk'. It's pretty standard for any newly established homestead but Alexander's house, in the village of Verkhnie Zhary, is far from ordinary, being the 'most southern' rural tourist site in Belarus, just 30km from Chernobyl.

Verkhnie Zhary is located approximately the same distance from Chernobyl as Pripjat — the now deserted town where nuclear workers were based. On finding the 'Lonely Wolf' guesthouse on the Internet and locating it on the map, we thought it must be a mistake. Who would choose to holiday there rather than the Braslav Lakes or Lake Naroch? However, on addressing Bragin District Executive Committee, we learnt that 'Lonely Wolf' has been successfully welcoming guests for two years now. "We've already had about twenty guests, even without placing advertisements," admits Alexander with satisfaction. "A Gomel family were the first to come, followed by fishermen. Guests from Vitebsk have also been here."

Asking cautiously about

radiation makes Alexander smile. He assures us that any anxiety is needless. Some time ago, local lands became a resettlement zone

fence and now conducting repairs. He's not the only householder either. The countryside is wonderful, so the village won't disap-

even has satellite TV and can sleep about ten people at any time. His renovations continue inside and out, all by his own hands.

passing to my children and grandchildren. My wife and I have long dreamt of living somewhere remote and peaceful — so business is not the main factor driving us." In fact, Alexander is considering taking in lonely pensioners, as there are many elderly people in Verkhnie Zhary.

**Anatoly KASY-ANENKO**, Chairman of the Public Council for Agro-Ecotourism Development at the Gomel Regional Executive Committee and an associate professor at Gomel State University:

*Each Chernobyl affected district has guesthouses, with around 11 in the Bragin District alone. They are not abandoned at weekends, as people love to celebrate holidays in the countryside. Rural tourism somehow fills the niche which restaurants and cafes fail to occupy. I think guesthouses have a bright future, as highlighted at a recent international seminar in Khoyniki by Israeli tourism specialists. They consider the Polesie Radiation-Ecological Reserve and the zone of resettlement to be extremely attractive to foreign travellers. So-called 'disaster tourism' is gaining popularity worldwide so, with wise promotion, Belarusian Chernobyl territories and their guesthouses could join international routes.*



After Chernobyl, life returns to normal course

(showing from 5 to 15 Curie units per square kilometre) and the status was lifted a few years ago, with scientists acknowledging the territory as clean. They even allow fishing and the gathering of berries and mushrooms. "One Russian has bought an abandoned house not far from here, raising a

pear," stresses Mr. Levitsky.

The entrepreneur purchased the former primary school building at a symbolic price three years ago. Now, everything has been replaced; only the original walls remain. Alexander has a Russian stove, a sauna and a toilet, with water supplied from his own well. He

Alexander lives in Bragin, earning money as a stall holder. He's invested all his profits over the years in this new business and is modest in his expectations. Speaking of risk, he notes, "I'd rather not guess at how tourism will develop but I know that the house will stand for a long time,