

A trip to beehive through magnificent manors of nobility

New tourist routes developed to country's most remote corners

By Viktor Andreev

One should head to the provinces to gain a true understanding of Belarus. Tourist companies are already offering original excursions to

for next year. An Ice Palace is being constructed, alongside cultural-entertainment facilities. Gorki is famous for its Agricultural Academy, founded in the 19th century and which still stands.

plaque marking the place where prominent artist, poet and musician Napoleon Orda was buried. He was born in Ivanovo, later working with Chopin and sketching architectural sites across Belarus,

Nesvizh treasures

Sergey Klimov, Director of the Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve, promises that 27 rooms at the Radziwills' former Palace are to open in December. An impressive 8,000 square metres of the palace are to be filled with original artefacts. Visitors will soon be able to enjoy a restaurant and two small hotels: one offering more deluxe accommodation. The best of local cuisine is to be available, including some ancient recipes from the days of the Rzech Pospolita. The Roman Catholic chapel is being restored and a tour of the Radziwills' possessions is being organised.

Bees in museum

A honey museum is soon to open in the village of Gorni, not far from Lida. Visitors will be able to observe the life of bees from inside, seeing how bees live, build cells and 'unload' pollen, by watching through the glass wall of a specially constructed beehive. Honey will be available to taste in tea and there will be information on apitherapy (whereby bee stings are used to treat illness). The therapy is already used in Belarusian spas.

A museum of folk medicine has been operating in the Gomel Region's Staraya Buda for two decades now, as librarian Nina Serebryanaya tells us. Trained as a doctor, she has worked there since its opening. She is the chief collector of the archive, filling shelves with various healing herbs and plants. At this time of year, around 50 plants are to be found in the countryside which can be used to treat illness.



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

During 'Kolyady Tsars' holiday

Let's meet in Troitskaya Street

An unusual museum is being set up in Grodno's Troitskaya Street. Velikaya Troitskaya Street was where many Jewish people lived in days gone by. Benjamin Yeruzalim, the museum's director, tells us that visitors can learn about their settlement in Grodno from the 13th century onwards, viewing films and photos and learning from the biographies of prominent Grodno-born Jews. Some of the exhibits are already housed in a synagogue in Bolshaya Troitskaya Street.

Mr. Yeruzalim is hopeful that local people might contribute exhibits for the future exhibition. He explains, "Some descendants of Grodno residents who went abroad before WWII may have old photos, letters, documents, commemorative tokens, ceremonial items, prayer books, artworks or household items which would be interesting to see. Perhaps some might share their family history. Anything relating to the Grodno ghetto and its prisoners would be especially valuable."

Nonmaterial treasures

Several Belarusian sites hope to become registered on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. The 'Kolyady Tsars' custom, celebrated in the Kopyl District's Semezhevo from January 13th to 14th, is already listed.

Other ancient customs worthy of interest include 'Tershka's Wedding' — organised in the Lepel District during Kolyady; the pagan god Tershka symbolised male dignity and power, being worshipped by young couples in the pre-Christian times. Meanwhile, 'Yurauski Karagod' has been performed in the Zhitkovichi District's Pogost, in the Gomel Region, for centuries. On Yuri's Day, rural residents put on floral head dresses and festive clothes to go into the fields for circular dances and to sing ceremonial songs. 'Rusalle' is celebrated in the Lyuban District, with 'Rusalnaya Yaechnya' (mermaids' scrambled eggs) cooked over an open fire. The Brest Region's Gorodeya is known for its pottery. In the 19th century, 300 potters resided there and it now hosts Belarus' only potters' school. Tourists can admire earthenware being made and try their own hand at the skill.

Music under old poplars

A museum in Ozerny (housed by the former school building) near the Minsk Region's Cherven, honours Polish composer Stanislaw Moniuszko, who was born there. Original costumes for his *Halka* opera (staged by the Poznan Theatre in late 1920s) are on show. An old poplar on the site dates from the composer's day. The family home of the composer is found in neighbouring Ubele. It was sadly destroyed during WWII but Valentina Tarasik, Chair of the Cherven District Council of Deputies, is seeking investors to restore the estate — an initiative supported by the Culture Ministry.



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Dozhinki Festival-Fair of Rural Workers festive celebrations

the country's main cities and popular historical sites, with guides even taking guests to some of our traditional villages. We offer the chance to gain insight into our unique cultural legacy, taking part in ancient Belarusian customs.

Dozhinki continues

This year, Molodechno hosted *Dozhinki* — a Festival-Fair of Rural Workers. The celebrations have now finished but excursions to the town continue, as Tatiana Ganich, a leading specialist with Molodechno Regional Tourist Centre, explains. She suggests that I wander through Molodechno's streets, imagining how it must have appeared in 1388, when Duke Dmitry Olgerdovich first mentioned this Belarusian town in a letter to the Great Duke of Lithuania, Jagailo.

To defend the town in the 14th century a castle was built, whose remains can still be seen today. The Ogiński dukes (one of whom wrote the famous *Farewell to the Homeland* polonaise) converted it from a fortified wooden fortress into a splendid palace, with a park and greenhouse. By 2015, a cultural and historical centre should be operational there.

Gorki, in the Mogilev Region, is *Dozhinki's* capital

Tasty Motol

The village of Motol, known since the 17th century and located near Pinsk, has hosted its famous *Motol Delicacies* culinary festival for several years now. It once belonged to Queen Bona Sforza, who visited the area, bringing over craftsmen and land surveyors from Italy and Germany. Moreover, Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, was born there; his original home still stands.

Plenty of interesting sites exist in the suburbs. Neighbouring Ivanovo, or Yanov-Polesky, was first mentioned in written sources in 1423.

Tourists can see the memorial

Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland. The Protection of the Holy Mary Church and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Catholic Church are both located in Ivanovo's central square while three out of five remaining geodesic points from the Geodetic Struve Arch in Belarus (a UNESCO World Heritage site) are found nearby: at Chekotsk, Leskovichi and Osovnitsa. Each is open to visitors.



ALEXANDER STADUB

Architecture impresses with its grandeur at Nesvizh National Museum-Reserve