

# Romantic trips to provinces

Small Belarusian towns are rich in art masterpieces and in historical and cultural treasures

By Viktor Korbut

Belarus has two major centres of tourist attraction: Minsk — the capital of the country; and Mir — a small town with a famous 16th century castle, registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Our huge megapolis and this small settlement both allure travellers. Minsk's power of attraction is evident, since it's an administrative and cultural centre, as well as an intersection of railways, air and roads. However, such small towns as Mir may become more popular among tourists in future, believes Yevgeny Kolendo, an engineer on city construction ecology and tourism at the Belarusian Scientific-Research and Design Institute of Urban Planning.

According to Mr. Kolendo, at present, tourists tend to visit small towns primarily to admire their architecture. However, this isn't the only attraction for travellers. He stresses that each has a special way of life. "Tourists need this. They want to feel themselves transported to another world — to another civilisation. Each small town boasts its own unique face. They are quite self-sufficient and are no strangers to contemporary technologies, yet their way of life remains patriarchal. European scientists have long noted that they preserve our national traditions and spiritual culture."

Residents of small towns honour folk and church holidays, which are more than beautiful rituals. They are part of their family culture, which is borne from the home and manifests itself in the form of various carnivals and festivals. Moreover, such towns usually have unique museums, boasting true treasures. Where should tourists go to see such delights? We offer several op-



Nesvizh Palace and Park Estate is architectural monument included on UNESCO World Heritage List

tions on the map, helping you to imagine the original culture of various corners of our state.

## Vetka: a collection of manuscripts in Red Square

The town is located not far from Gomel — Belarus' cultural capital for 2011 — and is famous for its colony of Old Believers — supporters of one of the branches of the Orthodox faith. In 1978, Fiodor Shklyarov, born to a family of Old Believers, founded a museum there. His icons, ancient books and other artefacts, kept by families of Old Believers from throughout the district, formed the basis of the unique collection (now

kept in a former merchant's house, located in Vetka's Red Square). The rarities gathered by Shklyarov include Ivan Fiodorov's Gospel, released in 1569 — one of the first books in Russia. Manuscripts are also on show (decorated with plant and flower ornaments — Vetka's unique feature), alongside icons from the 16th-early 20th century and folk costumes.



## Borisov: Tower of Pisa on oak footings

The town is worth visiting not only because battles against Napoleon took place there in 1812; many artefacts have been found from those times. It also boasts St. Resurrection Cathedral, the archways and walls of which

need to be reinforced. Being reconstructed in Borisov's central square, the building is unique, standing on oak footings. However, these have dried and sunk, leading to the church leaning like the Tower of Pisa; splits have appeared under its layers of plaster. Specialists long pondered how to save the building and finally decided to reinforce the church to allow it to open to tourists. It was constructed in 1874 by an engineer from St. Petersburg, Piotr Merkulov, with the 12m high cathedral being made from red bricks. Its silhouette of many domes is certainly a symbol of Borisov.

## Molodechno: treasures of ancient Baltic tribes on a noble estate

This year, Minsk's Regional Local History Museum opens a new display in Molodechno (half way to Vilnius) dedicated to the Republican *Dazhynki-*

2011 Festival-Fair of Rural Workers. The Director of the museum, Taisia Lenkevich, tells us, "The museum will showcase unique rarities found during archaeological digs in the Minsk District. These include: silver decorations from ancient Baltic tribes once living on Belarusian territory; gold rings from 12th-13th century Dregovich tribes; 11th-12th century items made from glass, leather and bones; and 16th-17th century tiles. The most interesting coins among the treasure were unearthed in 1971 in the Molodechno District's Moroski village, while an 18th century gold-woven Slutsk sash is also going on show (donated in 1968 from the State Historical Museum of Moscow). Black letter books from printing houses in Cologne, Nesvizh, Vilnius, Warsaw and Moscow, released from 1646-1789, and 17th century documents written in old Belarusian also go on

display."

A drawing room of a noble manor is to be the most spectacular part of the exhibition, recreating a late 19th century modernist interior, including an antiquarian piano.

## Nesvizh: walking through Radziwiłł Palace

In summer, reconstruction of Nesvizh Palace and Park Estate will end. This 16th-18th century architectural monument on UNESCO's World Heritage List will become completely open to tourists, with a museum exhibition formed. "This monument of architecture is unique to Belarus and to the whole of Europe. Its interiors boast original 16th-18th century elements, so our task is to carefully restore them," explains Sergey Drushchits, helping lead the works.

Nesvizh Castle was founded by the Radziwiłłs in 1583, constructed by Italian architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni. Reconstruction and restoration works were launched in 2004; soon, a hotel, café and restaurant will open on the palace and park estate.

## Ruzhany: baroque style interiors

The western wing of Ruzhany Palace will be restored this year. Already, the entrance gate and eastern wing, which already boasts an exhibition, have been revamped. The display details the appearance of Ruzhany Palace several centuries ago and tells of its owners: the Sapegi family (Belarus' second largest noble family after the Radziwiłłs).

Next year, restoration works will begin on a manege and on a unique theatre from the baroque period, allowing actors from Minsk and abroad to perform there. Ruzhany Palace will open fully to tourists in 2015.

## Artificial language adds to mutual understanding

**Business incubator at Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics hosts Day of Passionate Intellectuals**

The meeting coincided with St. Valentine's Day and explored how best to find mutual understanding, even when dialogue is conducted in an artificial language. The event united theorists and practical workers in various

areas relating to linguistics, with participants discussing technologies used to analyse and synthesise artificial languages. They debated the advantages of Esperanto: the most popular among them.

The meeting was attended by heads of language courses and schools, as well as marketing specialists, start-up entrepreneurs and developers of social network applications.

## Foreign hunters keen to visit Mogilev lands

By Sergey Kulyagin

**Last year, the Mogilev Region's hunting farms doubled their earnings by offering tours to foreigners**

Last year, almost 40 tours were organised, welcoming guests from France, Germany, Russia and elsewhere. Europeans preferred to hunt wild boar

and wood grouse, with some elk and deer also shot.

Hunters are attracted by large trophies and good infrastructure, since most hunting farms in the region boast comfortable lodges. Alongside hunting, tourists are offered various leisure programmes: excursions, eco-routes and visiting sites of natural beauty.



Hunting tourism in Belarus popular among foreigners