

# Valozhynskiya Gastsintsy has much to show of interest

Belarus' most famous green route — *Valozhynskiya Gastsintsy* — attracts 10,000 visitors annually

By Vasily Kharitonov

The route appeals not only to those who love historical and cultural attractions, but to those wanting to enjoy the unique colour and atmosphere of the region. Each of its estates, built by local residents, draws 4-5 tourist buses every weekend and, every year, the number of tourists has risen by a quarter. The route was developed in 2010 but is only now complete: tourists can explore rare artefacts, learn about bee keeping, listen to lyre playing and take their picture with a bison. In bygone days, the 'gastsintsy' was a trade road connecting towns and villages.

The route covers 220km, although only a small portion is open to tourists over their 1-2 day excursion. Further development is possible, especially as *Valozhynskiya Gastsintsy* (Volozhin Routes) is of interest to foreigners. Special programmes could be created, including thematic, as the owner of Martsinova Gus estate, Ales Bely, agrees. He offers tours for visitors from Poland.

He usually begins by taking guests to the museum of 'Rakov Civilisation', which features a plaster model of Adam Mickiewicz; it belongs to artist and restorer Felix Yanushkevich. In the centre of Rakov, he has gathered a rich collection of items from local culture and every day life. He often tells visitors of the history of the famous town — from the days of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the present. Guests then tour the art gallery, where paintings and sculptures from the estate of his brother, Valerian Yanushkevich, are exhibited, alongside various ceramic and metal items: from pots to a crossbow. It took decades to gather them in one place.

Meanwhile, the Frolov fam-



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ily love to share their beekeeping knowledge with visitors to their estate. A brave soul is invited to drive the bees into the hive and everyone can learn about the life of bees via a video documentary. There are sweet little souvenirs to buy, such as a glass hive in which a little bee family lives peacefully. Naturally,

**Over the Neman Estate in Lida District wins several prizes at Republican Contest The Best Farmstead**



guests never leave without tasting pancakes served with honey and herbal tea.

Borok Farm is owned by talented artist and musician Ales Los, who makes his own musical instruments. He also has a display of wooden boats dating from various decades and is soon to launch an open-air theatre and plein air event, entertaining guests with traditional concerts. He plays familiar and less well-known instruments, including the pipe and lyre, performing not only popular melodies but rare ones from Belarusian villages.

You can stop for a meal at Ganets' banqueting hall, which looks out onto a small pond. Seated in

its original interior, you can enjoy locally sourced dishes and chat intimately about the advantages of rural life. Owner Anatoly Ganets, who plays the accordion professionally, sometimes hosts musical evenings at which artists from Belarus, Poland and Lithuania gather.

Martsinova Gus' home replicates that of a mid-19th century nobleman and often hosts discussions on history, teaching guests about ancient rituals and culinary delights.

Not to be missed is a visit to Naliboki Forest, whose hiking trails lead you past a wealth of flora and fauna — including bison. You can even have a picnic, surrounded by bird song.

## Professional judgements are always highly valued

By Tatiana Pastukhova

**Belarusian State Academy of Arts students to be screened as part of Belarusian Panorama non-competition programme at Minsk's Listapad-2012 International Film Festival**

Rick Vermeulen is to be a special guest at the film festival, having organised similar events in Rotterdam and Transylvania. He is a Northern Film Festival selector (the largest

regional festival in Holland), and is a member of the Dutch Film Fund's advisory council. Mr. Vermeulen will be watching the screening of film shorts by students and graduates of the Academy of Arts, as well as giving a seminar entitled *Strategies of Participation in Film Festivals and the Film Markets of Europe*.

According to *Listapad's* organisers, the seminar should help young cinematographers learn more about how films are chosen for festivals and how best to promote their works at

an international level. Moreover, they'll have the opportunity to ask Mr. Vermeulen questions and receive advice from the expert, who boasts over a decade of experience.

It's hoped to create a regular professional platform for young cinematographers at the *Listapad* Festival, with master classes, seminars, screenings and creative laboratories being organised, allowing tomorrow's film makers to meet professionals in the sphere of film production, direction and promotion.

## Children vote with their hearts

By Viktor Andrejev

**The Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2012 is to follow new rules in Amsterdam, with a special children's jury voting in the final of the show, alongside the 12 country-participants**

The young panel of judges will vote as a '13th state', awarding points from 1 to 12, following a decision by the European Broadcasting Union.

On December 1st, Belarusian Yegor Zhesko will open the final show with his *A More-More...* followed by singers aged 10-15 from



Yegor Zhesko

Sweden, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Russia, Israel, Albania, Armenia, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and the Netherlands. Yegor has received vocal training from

Valery Shmat — artistic director of the music production centre Golden Voice, and of *Belarusy* folk group. He has coached Yegor for three years and sees the children's jury as a great advantage, explaining, "The idea is a good one since the competition is for children. The opinion of peers is important and we hope that children will vote with their hearts, objectively."

Yegor's song is quite modern, with a dance melody, and is rich in percussion. He is looking forward to his appearance on the stage of *Eurovision*.