

Welcome to castle for cup of hot coffee

Bykhov Castle to accommodate a museum while Minsk's citadel to feature museums and cafés — as part of state *Castles of Belarus* programme

By Lyudmila Minakova

Some time ago, over a hundred castles existed on Belarusian territory; sadly, their number has fallen drastically over recent centuries and many are in a ruinous state. To preserve these architectural monuments and attract tourists, the state has developed its *Castles of Belarus* programme, running from 2012-2018, which envisages the reconstruction of 38 historical-cultural sites.

"It took about a year to prepare the programme. Initially, it was planned to include only 16 sites but, eventually, the figure has reached 38," explains the Head of the Belarusian Culture Ministry's Department for Historical-Cultural Heritage Protection and Restoration, Igor Chernyavsky. These include not only castles (as most are in ruins) but palaces, citadels and, even, one ancient settlement in the village of Milograd (Rechitsa District);

the famous Milograd archaeological culture probably originated here.

"All these sites are arousing huge public interest. However, we're yet to worthily represent them. The programme aims to bring sites into order, distinguishing their particular features and making them open to tourists," adds Mr. Chernyavsky. Works are to follow special plans which aim to preserve the original historical appearance of each site. Seven are undergoing conservation, with partial restoration: the castles of Novogrudok, Krevo, Golshany, Bykhov, Geraneny (Ivye District), Smolyany (Orsha District) and Telman (Bragin District). Full restoration is impossible, as their original historical appearance is unknown. Meanwhile, artefacts

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Grodno's Old Castle to be restored in style of 16th century royal castle of Stefan Batory



Staging of Jagailo's medieval wedding at Lida Castle

will go on show at Bykhov Castle in a permanent exhibition.

"The adoption of this pro-

The MT reference:

In line with the programme, seven castles are to be reconstructed, for further use as museums, hotels and cafes. These include a palace complex in Ryzhany, Grodno's Old Castle, Kamenets Vezha (Tower), Lida and Lyubcha castles, Mir's castle complex and Nesvizh's palace and park estate.

gramme is good news for early 2012," admits the Director of the Bykhov District Museum of Local History, Sergey Zhizhiyan. "Bykhov Castle has been needing attention for a long time. Reasonable conservation, with partial restoration, will help preserve it for future generations."

Works are to cover 19 archaeological sites where castles were previously located — including in the village of Zhaber (Drogichin District), Krivlyany (Zhabinka District) and Zaslavl and Braslav. Museums are planned for another five archaeological sites: in Turov, Milograd, Glusk, Ryzhkovichi (Shklov District) and in the city of Minsk. "The most major works are planned for Minsk's citadel," Mr. Chernyavsky tells us. "Its complex will be reconstructed in line with archaeological documentation, allowing us to see the history of our capital and to sample bygone dishes and beverages."

Handicraft skills for all

By Marina Bogomazova

Ancient weaving looms and potter's wheels acquire second life at Postavy House of Crafts

An atmosphere of antiquity reigns at the Stary Mlyn House of Culture. Weaving looms and spindles stand in corners, alongside potter's wheels. A clay penny whistle, freshly baked, trills in the background.

Both adults and children come here to handcraft items, each young master keen to learn as much as possible — from straw weaving and straw appliqué to the independent creation of clay dragons, symbolising the new Chinese year. They sew patchwork quilts and mould souvenirs from salt dough, while adults knit, weave carpets and shape larger ceramic works. Zhanna Globenko has been weaving a huge tapestry showing views of the town since last summer. The classes are headed



Geroima Tanana

by experienced masters such as Geroima Tanana, who has been engaged in straw appliqué for many years. She designs her own pictures while young Olga Safonova teaches ceramics.

"Many of the souvenirs created by pupils from our House of Crafts are sold on festive occasions," notes Ms. Tanana, while sharing her successes. "Moreover, anyone wishing to can join our House and buy any item — blankets, tableware, decorations or souvenirs."

More halls, more exhibits

Unique medieval books on show at new exhibition at Grodno's museum

By Yelena Stasova

The Museum of Religious History in Grodno is launching its *Belarusian Religion and Culture* exhibition, opening four new halls dedicated to the 14th-18th century's Orthodox, Catholic, Uniate and Protestant cultural traditions within Belarusian territory. Books, icons, sculptures of saints and other religious items are on display — including very rare medieval editions. One Roman Catholic book of prayer was published in Venice in 1586, while Belarusian manuscripts from the 17th century include a 1644 Gospel — uniquely illustrated by a painter from the 'circle' of first printer Piotr Mstislavets.

The exhibition features unique icons, church vestments and chalices, and models of particular Orthodox and Catholic churches; there are over 150 new exhibits on show in total.

From 1992-2009, the museum underwent reconstruc-

tion, acquiring eleven exposition halls, two exhibition halls and one concert hall. A year ago, the first stage of its major exhibition was unveiled in six halls, showing relics from pre-Christian times and from

day religious life in Belarus.

The museum has been organising musical evenings, as well as its *Epoch. Time. Building* permanent exhibition — dedicated to the history of the museum building and its

of the city, in a two storey stone palace built from the 18th-20th century. It was initially owned by Karol Chreptowicz, a member of a magnate family, and then transferred to Grodno headman An-



the dawn of the new religion, alongside artefacts from the faiths of Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Islam and Judaism in Belarus. Those from the age of atheism were also on display, as were items from modern

owners, as well as the way of life of Grodno residents in the 19th century.

The Museum of Religious History (previously of Atheism) was founded in Grodno in 1977, located in the centre

toni Tyzenhaus, before being home to the Vice Marshall of the Major Lithuanian Tribunal, Franciszek Muczynski. It finally passed on to publicist, translator, philosopher and colonel Ignaty Lyakhnitskiy.