

# True value of collectors' treasures

Modern collectors' interests vary, with some keen on buttons or cigarette packs, and others on playing cards, bottles or military artefacts. Some hoard particular crockery but coins remain the ultimate collectors' gem. The hobby is undoubtedly relaxing and, some would argue, a profitable investment. Of course, every such collection forms a unique 'communication' with the past.

By Yevgeny Sokolov

## Monetary tree

Constructor Alexander Bukato began collecting coins in 1985. Initially, they were safely kept in a money-box but then he decided to drill a hole in every coin, before cleaning them and covering them in lacquer. Inserting a thin wire, he twisted them in the form of a tree. Over the course of time, his tree reached two metres in height, its branches holding over 7,000 Soviet and Russian coins: worth over 1,200 Roubles — enough to buy a fur coat or furniture set in Soviet times. Of course, the true value of his collection is historical.

"I even have Soviet Kopecks minted in 1922, 1924 and 1938," Alexander tells us. "Here are three 1946 Kopecks; after the 1961 monetary reform, spikes on its emblem became thicker while the letters of the 'USSR' abbreviation were rounded off. My collection also includes jubilee Roubles minted to mark certain historical events — such as the 1980 Olympics."

## Each to their own

Explaining whether it's possible to make money from coin collection, the Chairman of the Belarusian Numismatic Society — Victor Kakareko — notes, "This depends on inner needs. Assessing a collection from a material or an historical point of view are two different matters. A copper coin might cost much more than a golden coin but much depends on the mintage volumes. For example, if a five Rouble coin from 1899 had a mintage of 52 million while a National Bank commemorative coin is produced in a limited run of just 5 or 10 thousand, then the latter exceeds in value that of the coins minted in Tsar Nikolay II's time."

At present, over 600 collectors are registered countrywide, with most aged 40-50. Apart from exchanging coins, numismatists sell and buy coins via Internet auction; not long ago, a 30kg lot was sold for \$2,750. "Most probably, it comprised cheap coins — as just two one Rouble coins from Peter I's time could be bought for such a sum," Mr. Kakareko assumes. The



Over 7,000 coins 'grow' on Alexander Bukato's monetary tree

most expensive Russian coin was sold last year through a Zurich e-bidding: for 3.6m Francs.

## Family collection

The National Bank of Belarus regularly mints golden, silver and copper-nickel coins. "In most cases, their nominal value varies from one to twenty Roubles but there are also some coins worth Br50 or 100. Their real sale price varies from \$10-70, with golden coins being much more expensive," explains experienced numismatist Iosif Sudnik. Of course, every coin is legal tender in the shops (at nominal value).

Belarusian commemorative coins are steadily gaining a leading position globally, enjoying much demand among collectors. Many series have been minted — including 'Cities of Belarus', 'Belarusian Folk Crafts', 'Architectural Monuments of Belarus', 'Belarusian Holidays and Ceremonies', 'Belarusian Folk Leg-

ends', 'Orthodox Churches', 'Family Traditions of the Slavs' and 'Signs of the Zodiac'.

"All circulations sell out quickly and, in recent years, our coins have been awarded at almost every international numis-



matic contest," notes the Deputy Chairman of the National Bank Board, Sergey Dubkov, who is also a keen collector. "My mother — an alumnus of the Belarusian State University's History Department — laid

the foundation for our family collection, which has some rarities — including Arabian coins and those from Roman colonies of the 1st-2nd AD," he adds.

## In search of rarities

Belarus can hardly boast rich mineral deposits but is truly a European leader for buried treasure. Sadly, many archaeological artefacts disappear due to unsanctioned amateur searches using metal detectors. Ilya Shtalenkov, the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Numismatic Society, believes that many finds remain secret, being kept by private collectors abroad. The National Bank advocates the creation of a civilised and transparent numismatic market in Belarus, and recently organised a Numismatics and Architecture international conference, aiming to attract attention to the significance of preserving our historical-cultural treasures.

# Ecological route to reserved land with unique wilderness

Narochansky National Park prepares surprise for forthcoming 2014 season, offering tourist route to Charovki

By Marina Svetlova

The route is truly unique, while being surprisingly close to urban life. The untouched wilderness is actually close to such towns as Myadel, the resort area of Naroch and numerous spas. It seems miraculous, but Charovki (translated from Russian as 'mystery') is home to rare plants of national significance: a botanical and geological treasure. It has taken several years for the National Park and the Belarusian National Academy

of Sciences' Experimental Botany Institute to create an interesting eco-tourist route through the landscape, while ensuring that no damage is done to local habitats.

An impassable swamp separates the 90 hectare site from the rest of the world and excursions are only possible in the company of a trained guide. The diverse natural eco-systems are home to a wealth of flora: over 20 rare and endangered plants (all on the Red Book list and enjoying Europe-wide protection).



Tourists relax at Sputnik sanatorium on Lake Naroch

Visitors can see meadows, juniper brushwood, coniferous and deciduous forests, impassable bushes of alder, waterlogged springs, a picturesque lake and an upland swamp with a beaver dam, as well as hills, boulders and, of course, the sparkling Naroch.

Naturally, it's a perfect venue for scientific-educational botanical and geographical excursions, ornithological observations, film-making and photography. Tourists can walk on foot or cycle around designated routes, with bicycles and binoculars available to guests.

# Eternal creativity

## New tourist routes to connect Marc Chagall Museum in Vitebsk and Mark Rothko Art Centre in Daugavpils

The Mark Rothko Art Centre and the Marc Chagall Museum are annually visited by huge numbers of tourists from Europe and Russia. Accordingly, they are now joining forces to connect under a single tourist route, explained the Director of the Marc Chagall Museum, Lyudmila Khmel'nitskaya, speaking at a recent press conference in Vitebsk.

"If tourists from Europe have travelled thousands of kilometres to visit the Mark Rothko Art Centre in Latvian Daugavpils, it's easy for them to cover another 300km to reach the Marc Chagall Museum in Belarusian Vitebsk. The same concerns our visitors," she emphasised, adding that interest in the two artists is growing worldwide. "Their names help promote a posi-

tive image of our countries. The main problem to solve is the rapid issue of tourist visas," explains Ms. Khmel'nitskaya, expressing confidence that a solution can be found, since both Belarus and Latvia are eager to see a successful outcome.

Tackling other joint projects, Ms. Khmel'nitskaya noted that, in April 2014, a new exhibition is to open at the Mark Rothko Art Centre in Daugavpils, showcasing works from the Vitebsk museum: *Marc Chagall and European Avant-garde Artists*. "For us, this is very important; in 2014, Riga is to be the cultural capital of Europe, with many events organised also in Daugavpils, such as the exhibition of our museum," underlined Ms. Khmel'nitskaya.

A return exhibition of contemporary artworks is planned for Vitebsk, featuring works from the Mark Rothko Art Centre in Daugavpils.