

Unique monument highly rated

Mir Castle among Europe's most beautiful castles

The British online site femalefirst.co.uk has compiled a list of the top 23 castles in Europe, featuring Belarus' architectural pearl of Mir Castle.

The site notes Mir Castle's turbulent history and its near century long abandonment. It was restored in the late 19th century but retains elements of the Renaissance and Baroque style, as well as beautiful parklands and waterways.

The website also commends Bojnice Castle in Slovakia, Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany, Edinburgh Castle in the UK, Dracula Castle (Bran) in Romania, Trakai Castle in Lithuania, Prague Castle in the Czech Republic and Vianden Castle in Luxembourg.

The Grodno Region's Mir Castle

is a unique and exceptional example of 16th century defensive architecture, combining successive elements of European style: Gothic, Baroque, and Renaissance. In 2000, it was registered on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List and, in December 2010, opened to tourists after renovation.

The castle complex comprises a family vault, an Italian Renaissance garden, an English garden and a pond, as well as the castle itself. It traditionally hosts concerts and knights' festivals, as well as art and craft fairs.

The tradition of Christmas balls was resumed at Mir Castle in 2013, reviving the grand and glamorous receptions once hosted by the noble Radziwills and Svyatopolk-Mirskie.



Celebrations near Mir Castle

Murderer discovered twenty years on

By Ignaty Popkovsky

Twenty years after a woman was stabbed to death, her murderer has been uncovered

The Grodno victim's case was reopened recently, with her friend discovered as the culprit (now aged 55). During questioning, the murderer admitted that she had acted during a quarrel over her friend's lifestyle choices. Her original alibi has proven false.

Sergey Shershenevich, from the Department of Investigation in the Grodno Region, tells us, "In 1992, we lacked the technology of today and were unable to convict our suspect. Now, the truth has been uncovered with the help of a lie detector."

The case was recently closed, due to the statute of limitation, so no formal punishment is planned.

Escape from captivity

By Olga Krotova

Russian policemen have freed a Belarusian being held hostage by a criminal gang in the Moscow Region

He was kidnapped one evening in late December 2012 in Moscow, near Kursk Railway Station. According to the Investigative Committee of the Moscow Region, he was forced into a car by his assailants, who were unknown to him, then driven to a house in Kirov Street in Podolsk.

He was held for over a month, being forced to pay 232,000 Euros for repair works, which were never carried out. On February 1st, the hostage managed to call the police, who arrested an unemployed Armenian man, aged 38, on arrival. His co-conspirators are still at large but will be charged with 'Extortion' and 'Illegal Deprivation of Freedom'.

Timely surgery saves life

Grodno's first kidney transplantation operation

Doctors at the Regional Clinical Hospital have operated on a woman born in 1965, explains Svyatoslav Savitsky, the Chief Doctor. He tells us, "The operation was successful. The patient was stable, showing kidney function."

A new database of potential donors is helping the process, allowing organs to be delivered to their recipients in a timely fashion. The Regional Transplantation Centre at the Regional Clinical Hospital is working with the Organ Recovery Co-ordination Centre to make full use of potential donors. Last year, over 90 viable organs were donated.

Virtual excursion without leaving home

Interactive archives from Maxim Bogdanovich Museum

The Grodno interactive virtual museum allows fans of the great poet to explore artefacts from the Maxim Bogdanovich House-Museum, as well as those kept in Lithuania and Latvia (at the Latgale Culture and History Museum and Kėdainiai Area Museum). The initiative is part of the *Virtual Past — Formula for Success for Museums' Future* project, which aims to broaden public access to museum archives within the next two years.

With logo on uniforms

By Nadezhda Rodionova

Around a thousand volunteers needed in Minsk for 2014 IIHF World Championship

Students from Minsk's State Linguistic University, the BSU and the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture are to be encouraged to apply to help with the event from March onwards, explains Yevgeny Vorsin, the Chairman of the Belarusian Ice

Hockey Federation and the Head of the Directorate for the World Championship. No doubt, it will be a wonderful experience for all those involved. Special uniforms bearing logos will identify volunteers taking part.

In all, 56 hotel complexes will be accommodating guests, in addition to eleven student dormitories and seven Student Village hostels. Serious attention is being paid to security and a memorandum is being prepared to fix hotel

tariffs during the World Championship. Jointly with a ticket operator, a ticket programme has been developed, and the event is now to be widely promoted abroad via the official tourist operator, TsenturKurort.

The 2014 IIHF World Championship has already been promoted via the largest tourist exhibition in London, and a similar presentation is planned in Germany, followed by another eight major venues.

Clear views from above

Pilotless aircraft to help protect the environment



Pilotless aircraft already in demand

By Victor Novodelov

The most suitable pilotless aircraft are being selected and adjusted to suit specific needs, being noiseless, able to offer video surveillance night and day and to provide long-distance focusing — to allow exact

identification of poachers' faces, as well as their weapons and car number plates. Those who currently steal animals and fish tend to work in groups, at night, using underhand means.

Sergey Novikov, the Head of the State Animal and Plant Protection

Inspectorate, has informed journalists of plans to technically re-equip his department. Since being set up a decade ago, on January 27th, 2003, by special Presidential decree (which granted special status to the service) the Inspectorate has moved with the times to use the most efficient methods possible to end the 'illegal outrage' of poaching — as Mr. Lukashenko calls it.

The results are obvious, as the number of wild animals has almost doubled while the number of violations has more than halved (from 25,000 to 11,000). The illegal nets confiscated would twice cover the country's perimeter, stretching 7,500km. As Mr. Novikov notes, his service aims to preserve nature for future generations. Fines for those caught hunting illegally are set at up to 100 base units and can lead to imprisonment.

Tribute to Dionysus

Drivers may lose their vehicles as drink driving penalty

The Supreme Court of Belarus is supporting a proposal to confiscate vehicles from careless drivers. "We can try to prevent the evil which can be caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol," notes the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court, Alexander Fedortsov. "We are ready that such measures are applied regardless of who is the owner of the vehicle."

Previously, the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Justice have prepared a draft law suggesting that vehicles are confiscated from drunk drivers only within the limits of criminal responsibility.