



Cottage developments near Minsk District's Borovlyany among first in contemporary Belarus, with construction continuing

# One's long way home may become considerably shorter

Over the coming three years, the share of self-contained housing may reach 40 percent in Belarus, with various designs planned, varying in floor space and price, for those seeking a house of their own

By Alexander Svetlov

One Grodno suburb's housing development differs from others nearby in having cottages built within a couple of days. Constructed by Grodnozhilstroy JSC, using its own materials, each 115sq.m cottage is priced at just over \$500 equivalent per square metre, including basic interior finishing.

"Grodnozhilstroy has built 31 cottages in this district, using four designs. Construction on the land bought by the company began in 2008; the initial stage of houses was

completed within two years but there are plans to continue," explains Grodnozhilstroy's Design Director, Cheslav Malets.

It's impossible not to compare a flat in a large building with a cottage — even if it is small. The lure of having your own modest plot of land is certainly great and there's no doubt that the idea appeals to many Belarusians. "We plan to significantly increase the volume of individual housing construction over the coming three years, with its share expected to reach 40 percent of total housing. This is part of a draft housing policy

being studied by the President," noted Belarus' Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikovich, speaking recently at a seminar in Grodno devoted to housing construction. "There's a great deal of waste land on which comfortable accommodation could be built. Already, land plots have been outlined for each region and district — to satisfy the needs of those wishing to build their own homes," added the PM.

It's no secret that builders of individual accommodation face problems in developing land lots. Anyone can see that new residen-

tial districts are being developed 'unevenly', with many people experiencing serious difficulties with infrastructure. With this in mind, one of the goals of the Grodno seminar was to elaborate reasonable schemes to significantly cut commissioning periods for housing. In particular, it was proposed that capital construction management organisations or those authorised by city executive committees should develop a project and the necessary design-estimate documentation (including land-related) for further registration of individual houses and their

transfer to citizens in need.

"We've found a scheme which would enable us to house various categories of citizens, including providing the relevant infrastructure. Those on state support — such as families with many children — would receive a plot free of charge, for their life term, while others would be able to buy plots independently, at market prices. This should settle the matter quickly," Mr. Myasnikovich explained. By the way, floor space for the cottages varies from 70 to 220 square metres and the price ranges from Br5-11m per square metre.

## Capital providing budget priced accommodation

A chain of budget hostels — aimed at students and organised tourist groups — is growing in Minsk

By Maria Dmitrieva

In late February, a new hostel is opening in the historical centre of the Belarusian capital — in the Troitsky Suburbs: the third in a chain. Ksenia Kurus, 20, won the StartupWeekend Forum contest last January — an annual meeting at which investors meet new entrepreneurs. The investor backing the project has allocated \$50,000, helping Ksenia open the first two hostels since last May: in Chizhovka and not far from Kupalovskaya metro station. Ksenia tells us that the hostels are occupied even in winter.

The latest addition to the chain is to occupy part of a building in the Troitsky Suburbs, sleeping 55 people across 11 rooms: from double luxury suites to standard rooms for three, four, five or six guests. Prices range from \$15 to \$45 per person per day, with breakfast included.

"The opening of hostels for tourists and backpacking students is a positive trend," believes Andrey



Minsk's Traveler Hostel ready for launch

Novikov, who heads Minsk City Executive Committee's Department for Consumer and Hotel Services. He notes that demand for affordable accommodation remains high in Minsk, opening the way for further investment in this sphere.

The first Minsk hostel launched

in June 2011, in Postoyalets, offering rooms for two and eight people. At present, seven hostels operate countrywide, offering accommodation from as little as \$9 per day — up to \$67 per day, making them affordable to those on a tight budget.

## Pogranichny Island opens to tourists in border city of Brest

By Olga Kobayakova

**Brest Fortress' Pogranichny Island launches as tourist attraction, with local authorities, diplomats and journalists among first visitors**

Brest Fortress's Terespul Fort has always been a 'forbidden zone' for casual visitors, being located on the Belarus-Poland border. It still boasts mid-19th-early 20th century powder rooms, barracks and earthen ramparts. However, in June 2011, President Alexander Lukashenko ordered that the site should be opened to tourists. It has taken around 18 months to develop the attraction and conduct an inventory. A cable bridge has been built and pathways laid.

According to the Chairman of the Brest Regional Executive Committee, Konstantin Sumar, this is the first step towards the establishment of a historical-cultural estate around the Brest Hero-Fortress Memorial Complex. Around three hundred hectares are being developed, to

include the Kobrin and Volyn fortifications, where military units served until recently.

Pogranichny Island will play a key role, with local authorities planning to establish a simplified passenger border checkpoint at Brest-Terespol. The project envisages the restoration of the old Terespul Bridge, giving access on foot or by bicycle, while a new bridge will allow passage from Belarus to Poland. The partially preserved cobbles seen on the Island and on the Polish side show how Brest and Terespul were connected in the past.

In addition, a guard house remains, which checked travellers in the late 18th-mid-19th century, as they entered the Russian Empire.

Brest Hero-Fortress Memorial Complex Director Grigory Bysuk notes that organised groups can book tours of the Island, but applications must be received several days in advance. Information is being placed on the Fortress' Internet site.