

# Journey with historical entourage

A few months ago, my friends and I took a weekend 'city break' by car, visiting three districts across the Grodno Region, aiming to enjoy the ancient estates for which Belarus is well-known

By Yuri Chernyakevich

Over just two days, we managed to drive over 100km and saw a dozen notable sites in the districts of Slonim and Zelva. However, we discovered that we most liked Volkovyssk, with its wonderful palace and estate. Situated in the village of Podorosk, its exquisite facade dates from the mid-19th century, designed by Roman Bokhvits, the son of famous philosopher Florian Bokhvits. Its majestic grandeur is simply elegant, making it stand out among Belarus' many



ancient estates. It housed a school until just one year ago, when the site was put up for auction and bought by a private investor. "The estate sold at auction for \$120,000, to Russian businessman Pavel Beregovich," explains the Head of Volkovyssk District Executive Committee's Culture Department, Ivan Morzhalo. He tells us, "We're currently working on restoring the site, with the new

owner planning to create an agro-eco tourism venue, as well as a museum of Belarusian gentry."

We visited a similar agro-eco tourism site in the Volkovyssk District, in the village of Kraski, just 4km from Podorosk. Since December 2009, the former home of the Segen family has been owned by another Russian businessman and is now on regional and national tourist routes. It often hosts groups from the capital of Belarus, and from other regions countrywide, as Mr. Morzhalo tells us. From the very start, the new owner of the estate insisted that it be open to tourists. "Naturally, we discussed the issue with him in advance, so that we knew his position. There are no problems with excursions touring this historic building," notes Mr. Morzhalo.

The estate is enjoying a 'new life', with much restoration work afoot. In autumn, when I visited the Volkovyssk District, I watched about a dozen people hard at work in the gardens: pruning bushes, painting the fence and clearing debris. Mr. Morzhalo assures me that all the necessary work has now been carried out and that the local authorities are making sure that the original appearance of the historic building remains fully preserved.

Mr. Morzhalo underlines, "From the very beginning, the owner expressed his desire to conduct restoration at the highest technical level, following



Estate in Kraski has already found its owners

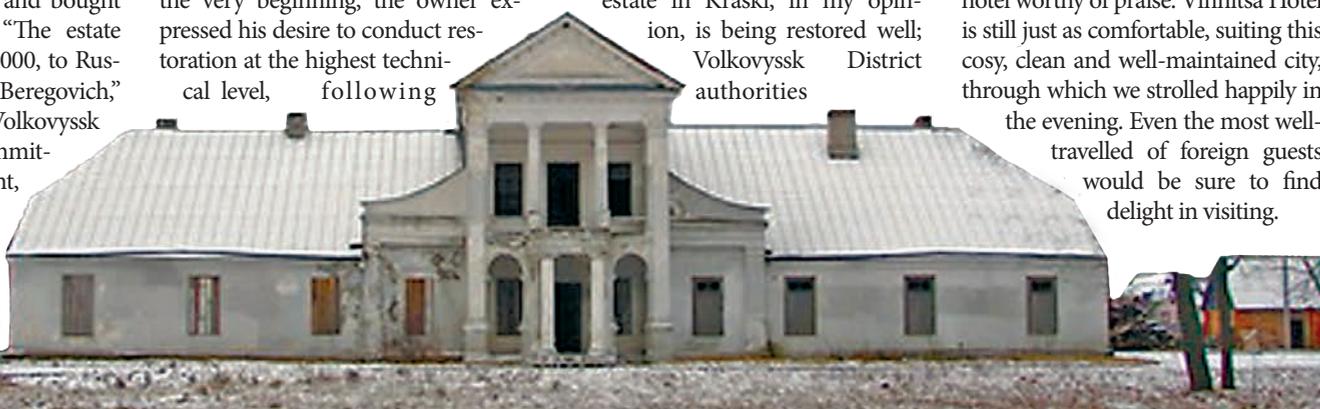
archive sources. Mr. Vadim Selikh — the owner — is familiar with Belarusian legislation on protecting our historical and cultural heritage and is keen to adhere strictly to this."

Mr. Morzhalo adds that, although the palace and estate no longer belong to the district executive committee, staff remain responsible for the protection of our heritage and national monuments, so call in regularly. The reincarnation of the estate in Kraski continues and sale to a private owner does not mean freedom from responsibility. The Ministry of Culture of Belarus confirms that renovation meets the required standards. The Head of the Department for Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage, within the Ministry of Culture, Igor Chernyavsky, notes, "The estate in Kraski, in my opinion, is being restored well; Volkovyssk District authorities

are liaising closely with the owners of these historic buildings. It would be great to see such co-operation adopted across all Belarus."

Needless to say, opportunities for co-operation with the private sector in protecting our historical heritage are promising. Besides preserving ancient walls from destruction, investors are injecting money into the regions; restored estates, palaces and parks have a positive impact on Belarus' image and become tourist attractions.

Having visited three areas of the Grodno Region in a single day, we decided to spend night in historic Volkovyssk. In 1517, Austrian diplomat Sigismund von Herberstein spent a night there during his travels across Europe, writing that he found the local hotel worthy of praise. Vinnitsa Hotel is still just as comfortable, suiting this cosy, clean and well-maintained city, through which we strolled happily in the evening. Even the most well-travelled of foreign guests would be sure to find delight in visiting.



Palace and park estate in Podorosk in process of restoration

## Forest fires will be jointly extinguished

By Vladimir Samsonov

**Belarusian rescuers will receive more than 1.5m Euros under project of the European Union — We Will Preserve the Belovezhskaya Pushcha Together**

Implementation of the project will include the development of the system on protection of the population and environment in frontier areas of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha and the improvement of the level of

preparation of fire-fighting units in the Grodno and Brest Regions. The project is also aimed at the development of co-operation of the rescue agencies of Poland and Belarus.

Under the project, the recipients of the international technical help will be two Belarusian regional departments and an association of local governments, Euroregion Belovezhskaya Pushcha, of Poland. The total budget of the project is more than 4 million Euros, the budget of the Belarusian part,

is about 2m Euros, including 1.5m Euros which will be received under the grant of the European Union. The project should be implemented by the end of June, 2015.

During the project's preparation, it was revealed that in the case of forest fires, the equipment status of the fire and rescue services was inadequate for effective reaction to the occurrence of emergency situations in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. It is necessary to raise the level of environmental protec-

tion of the unique woodland and also the level of interaction of the Belarusian and Polish rescue departments in the frontier territories. It is planned to acquire three modern fire-rescue vehicles for the Brest department and four for the Grodno department and four complete sets of rescue equipment, fire-rescue vehicles and boats for the Polish rescue services. Training courses will be organised for employees of the relevant departments of both countries.

## No long retention on border

By Sergey Smirnov

**Fans of the Ice Hockey World Championship will be able to enter Belarus on a visa-free basis, by simply presenting their ice hockey match tickets at the border**

"The important thing is that fans should take measures to keep the ticket information safe. Only those who show their tickets for the Championship will be able to cross the border. If someone else tries to enter Belarus on the same ticket, this person will not be allowed to enter the country. Thus, if someone makes a photocopy of the valid ticket and tries to enter Belarus using it, only the one which showed the ticket first will manage to do this," said the Head of the Department of Border Control Management of the State Border Committee of Belarus, Sergey Belko. "The same principle of entry is also being used for the tickets bought in electronic form."

Also, each foreigner who arrives for the World Championships will be obliged to register at their registered accommodation within five days of arrival, excluding weekends and holidays. This work will be carried out either by officials at the hotel where the fan is staying, or by officials in the students' village in Minsk, who will be authorised to do this. "The procedure is very simple and a fan will not have to go anywhere, but he is obliged to carry out this procedure. Based on this registration, a fan will have the right to stay in Belarus," noted Sergey Belko.



## Journey free of charge with match tickets

**No road tolls for visitors of Ice Hockey World Championship in Belarus**

Foreign tourists arriving for the Ice Hockey World Championship will be exempt from road tolls across Belarus, explains the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus, Anatoly Kalinin. He emphasises that our Year of Hospitality will rely greatly on transport services but believes that all will go smoothly in May, when the prestigious championship is taking place.

Foreign tourists need only present their match tickets for the Ice Hockey World Championship to gain exemption from toll payments. The Transport and Communications Ministry hopes the move will aid traffic flow and prevent visitors from experiencing any anxiety over the toll system — which is still a little complicated.