

Substantial travel with rich national colour

Belarus' national stand to be launched at *World Travel Market*, in London

By Viktor Korbut

World Travel Market — one of the largest events in the tourist industry — is to be hosted by the UK's capital in November. Representatives of Belarusian tourist firms and hotels plan to show British businessmen and visitors the possibilities of holidaying in our country, located at the geographical centre of Europe.

Engine of progress

The World Tourism Organisation has published a report stating that, since early 2011, the flow of tourists to Central and Eastern Europe has risen by 12 percent. "Despite the many challenges of the global economic crisis, the process of restoring international tourism — active since 2010 — has grown stronger during 2011," says the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organisation, Taleb Rifai. "The present situation is especially favourable for those countries which are just forming their market economies; there, tourism is driving development, ensuring export revenue and the creation of new jobs."

Belarus treats travellers' needs with hospitality. In recent times, many guides about the country have been released, in addition to various albums. Scientists from the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Arts, Ethnography and Folklore have also contributed, issuing a research study entitled *Tourism Mosaic of Belarus*. The book is the result of an innovative project initiated by the Sports and Tourism Ministry, authored by Alexander Lokotko, Olga Knyazeva, Yevgeny Morozov and Olga Izotova. They have demonstrated how tourism is developing in Belarus, looking at 52 local districts boasting unique customs, while describing festivals and crafts observed countrywide, focusing on the most

interesting places.

Information breakthrough

Belarus is now actively developing software, launching tourist information terminals to provide information on accommodation and excursions. In the near future, 15 hotels in Gomel are to join the online booking system. The city is the cultural capital of Belarus and the CIS this year and, from September 15th-18th, it will host the 6th International Festival of Choreography — *Sozhski Karagod (Sozh Round Dance)*. By then, tourists will be able to conveniently book and pay for their hotel rooms online.

Other regional cities and dis-



Country's first floating hotel opens on River Pripyat

trict towns are planning to join the online booking system, creating a nationwide accommodation service which will then integrate with international networks. Belarusian hotels will become available to almost 250,000 foreign tourist operators. So far, only about 40 Belarusian hotels are part of the national system, with travellers able to book rooms via Belarus' official portal: Belarus.by ("Tourism" section). The national system is also to soon include a range of excursion programmes — all bookable online in advance. At present, about



Places where modernity, traditions and nature harmoniously complement one another

1,000 routes are available countrywide.

From Avgustovsky Canal to Black Sea

A yacht club is to be built in Gomel, as the city is well-located on the River Sozh, near the Shipbuilding and Ship-Repair Plant. Sailing enthusiasts will be able to over-winter their boats or leave them for repair. The plant is ready to fulfil any order relating to the manufacture or repair of

the quality of water in Belarusian rivers and lakes. In all, 556 of 567 officially acknowledged beaches have been studied — all open to the public. Additionally, the Avgustovsky Canal Tourist Recreational Park is to open near Grodno, with almost 6,000 hectares coming under special order for a period of twenty years; neighbouring infrastructure is to be improved while investments will be attracted.

The first floating hotel was

ship. At present, ten different ports operate countrywide: in Bobruisk, Brest, Gomel, Mikashevichi, Mogilev, Mozyr, Pinsk, Rechitsa, Vitebsk and Grodno. Additionally, vessels travel along the rivers Dnieper, Berezina, Sozh, Pripyat, Zapadnaya Dvina, Nieman, and Mukhovets and along the Dnieper-Bug Canal. Experts view the development of water tourism and rise in passenger boats along Belarusian rivers as an interesting and promising avenue.

Under the roof of the Radziwills' Castle

The Culture Ministry promises that, on July 1st, Nesvizh Castle — the Radziwills' former residence — will open all its halls to visitors. Its apartments are almost complete, with a hotel, café and restaurant awaiting guests. Specialists are now decorating the interiors (with plaster moulding and gilding) but some works — such as restoration of frescoes and fireplaces — will need more time to complete.

Nesvizh Castle was built in 1583, using Italian architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni's designs. Since then, it has preserved its rectangular form, being fenced with earthworks, bastions and towers. It was primarily constructed as a defensive fortress able to withstand a long siege. Numerous rooms for servants were located in the surrounding bulwark, which also housed storehouses and stables. Specialists say that Nesvizh Castle is intriguing in its above-ground premises and numerous cellars and vaults.

Really, Belarus has so much to offer. Its history and modernity, nature and traditions are harmonious and complementary.

Video clip breaks record for 'hits'

By Anna Pimenova

An online broadcast of the habitat of a rare species of falcon in Belarus — the common kestrel — enjoys great popularity among ornithologists and nature lovers abroad

The *Common Kestrel Online* project was launched by ornitholo-

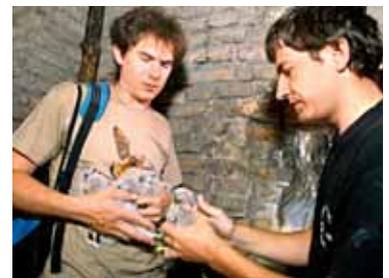
gists in mid-April. "People from 130 countries worldwide can view our pair of nesting birds, on a multi-storey residential building in Brest — via web-cam," notes Ruslan Shaikin, a specialist on ecological education at the APB-BirdLife Belarus Public Association. This year, the falcons have laid five eggs and, at present, both parents are taking it in turns

to sit upon their eggs; the chicks are expected to appear any day.

The common kestrel is a small falcon, similar in size to a dove. The males differ in having a grey head and tail. In recent years, these birds have often nested in cities. "Local populations of common kestrels exist in Minsk, Grodno, Baranovichi, Brest and elsewhere," continues Mr.

Shaikin. "The Brest population of this species is the largest seen in an urban environment, with around 50 pairs. The biggest group resides in the suburbs of Machulishchi in the Minsk District."

Ornithologists usually advise us to leave nesting birds alone, since disturbing them can cause birds to abandon nests and eggs.



Common kestrel nestling

However, contemporary equipment is allowing nature lovers the unique opportunity to discover the secrets of the birds.