



Central manor of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park

Beneficial projects against background of wilderness area

Investors awaited by Belovezhskaya Pushcha area

By Viktor Korbut

The Pruzhany and Kamenets districts, in the west of Belarus, near the Belarusian-Polish border, recently hosted the *Belovezhskaya Pushcha — Tourism and Recreation* Investment Forum. The initiative to discuss major projects around the national park belongs to the Sports and Tourism Ministry, as well as Brest and Grodno Regional Executive Committees. In particular, the event tackled how the bypass will be equipped with roadside services and which sights will be available in the suburbs for tourists. Much has been done already, but more projects lie ahead.

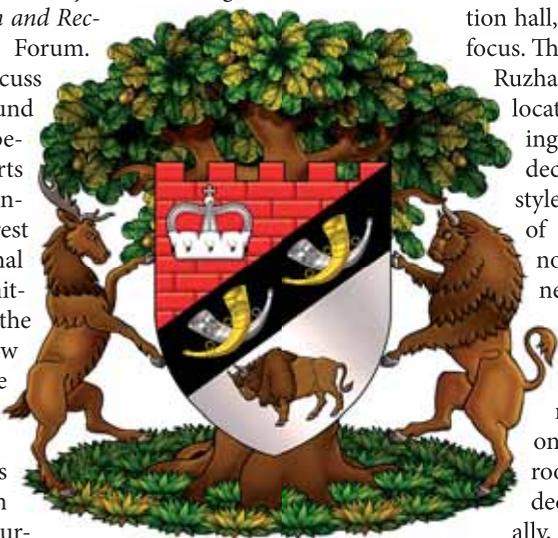
Five investment projects are currently under discussion for the region and ten land lots have been allocated for the construction of roadside services. In particular, a hotel for 110 guests is planned, located between the Water and Ice Palaces in Pruzhany, involving external funding, allowing them to host international competitions. Moreover, investors are being invited to restore several 19th-20th century estates.

Construction site near reserved forest

The major site in the region is a 182km bypass around the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. It is to acquire agro-estates, hotels and roadside services, as well as special crossings for hoofed animals and amphibians.

Investors have the opportunity to choose interesting

sites at affordable prices. Not long ago, the Kamenets District was visited by a delegation from Qatar, whose businessmen plan to implement a major investment project covering 500 hectares of



land, building an entertainment centre. This is to include two golf courses, a tennis court and a hotel accommodating 130-150. A land lot has been found near the new bypass. Other infrastructure sites are being allocated, with opportunities open to local entrepreneurs as well as state enterprises.

Zhuravliny Castle

Zhuravliny agro-town includes two villages — Kozly and Mokroe, which are situated 12km from Pruzh-

any. They have now almost merged, boasting around 450 residents, and have their own public and cultural centre, designed in the style of a castle. It features a hotel, a sauna, shops and an exhibition hall, with tourism under focus. The Belovezhskaya and Ruzhanskaya pushchas are located nearby, inspiring the restaurant to be decorated in hunting style. It bears 21 coats of arms — from local noble families. The new hotel still smells of fresh paint, while its furniture and carpets also have a new aroma. Seven one-bed and one two-room VIP lounge are decorated individually, with soft and hard furnishings selected for each room.

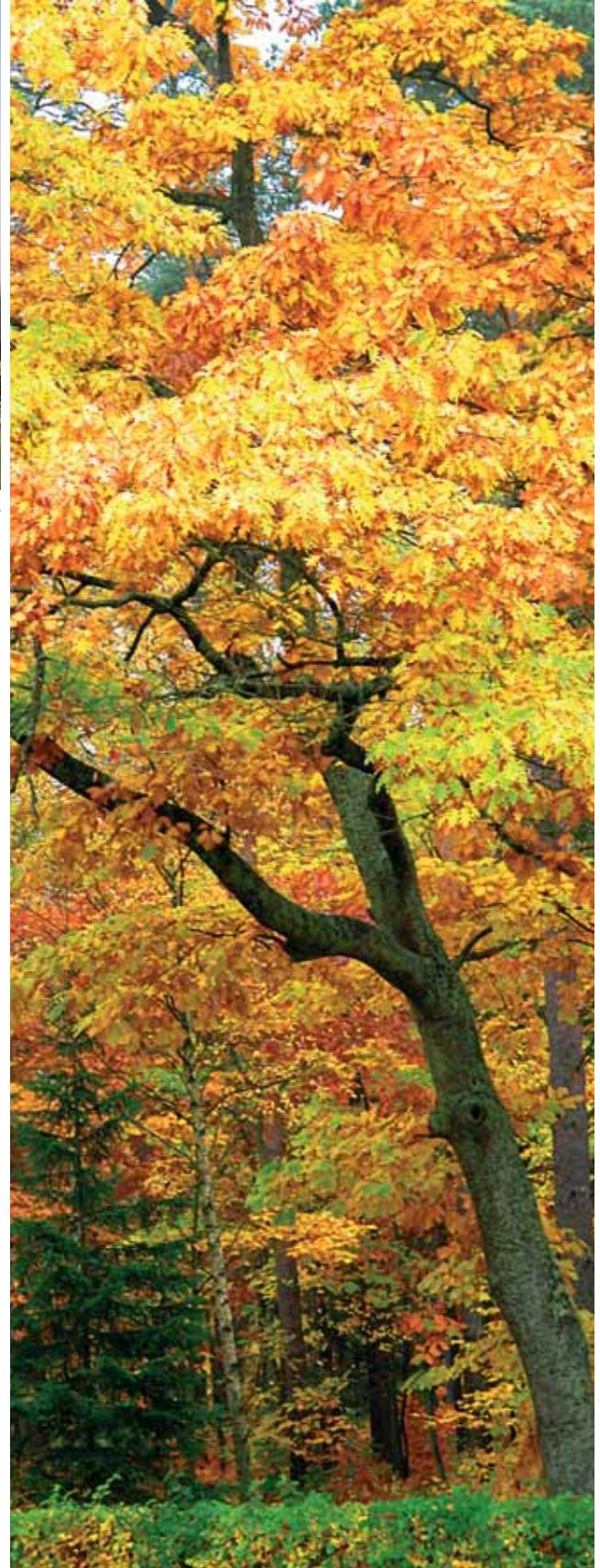
Back in 2000, the 19th century St. Peter and Paul's Church was restored in Zhuravliny, consecrated by Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Filaret, the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus. A year ago, Alexander Lukashenko also visited the site. He noted that each house in the agrotown boasts its own individual design and looks beautiful and fitting. "Zhuravliny has become one of the most beautiful places in the Pruzhany District," asserted the Be-

larusian President. Tourists are gradually discovering this hidden gem.

Skansen near the pond

The facilities, built by entrepreneur Nikolay Burnos in the village of Kletnoe, near the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, are the best locally to date. The village may have seemed initially unpromising but has enjoyed an inflow of injections, worth several dozen million Dollars.

Several streets have been paved in stone, with graceful marble fountains complementing simple cottages. Mr. Burnos doesn't like to demolish old buildings in his native village, preferring to restore them. They grace the landscape like mini-lodges. Each is like a VIP hotel, already welcoming visitors, with a kitchen and bathroom, as well as two bedrooms. Meanwhile, the hotel offers modern facilities: a fibre-optic cable is currently being laid to allow high-speed Internet access, while a man-made lake is adjacent to the guesthouses. A couple of years ago, there was nothing there but a meadow. A hill was made from the excavated soil and a wind generator has been placed upon it to generate electricity to illuminate the site. Mr. Burnos is delighted, explaining, "There



Autumn beauty of Belovezhskaya Pushcha

are so many tourists from Russia here, especially from St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as from the Czech Republic and Arab Emirates."

Mr. Burnos works in St. Petersburg but invests money in his native village. Everyone knows Nikolay — their former neighbour turned into St. Petersburg businessman. He is a frequent guest in the village. Generously, he has personally paid for every pensioner to be connected to the phone lines. He's also paid for gas and sewerage treatment facilities to be connected to the village. He explains, "My village is close to my heart. I'm confident that Kletnoe deserves to be restored and am glad of the bypass being constructed nearby. Foreign guests love our Belovezhskaya Pushcha and landscapes, so I have no doubt that the number of visitors will increase. They'll be able to stay in Kletnoe, receiving the level of service they are accustomed to."

Palace-phoenix

The remains of the Sapegi Palace in Ruzhany have long been depicted on postcards

as a romantic ruin. However, recent restoration is allowing several of its halls to be opened, with fascinating artefacts exhibited; moreover, works continue.

Ruslan Kniga, the director of the museum, tells us, "The chancellor's guest room will be unique, delighting history lovers, who'll be able to enter another age. We've put a great deal of effort and funding into recreating this past way of life, purchasing original antique furniture and originals and copies of military trophies, weaponry and ammunition."

Theatrical performances are to be organised at the museum, with one dedicated to the arrival of Polish King Władysław IV Waza, who stayed at the palace in early 17th century. Local enthusiasts will join professional actors in recreating historical events; a carriage and costumes, including those of king's maids of honour and servants, have already been ordered.

The Belovezhskaya Pushcha region is rich in natural beauty while allowing us to enter past ages in comfort.



A bypass road is currently being constructed around the Belovezhskaya Pushcha