



Belarus Беларусь

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Best Places to Eat

- » Jules Verne, Brest (p103)
- » Strawnya Talaka, Minsk (p100)
- » Gurman, Minsk (p101)

Best Websites

- » **Republic of Belarus** (www.belarus.by) Official website
- » **Belarus Tourism** (www.eng.belarustourism.by)
- » **Belarus Embassy in the UK** (www.uk.belembassy.org)
- » **Belarus Tourist Information Portal** (www.belarus.tourist.minsk.by)

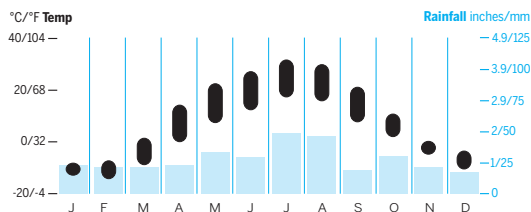
Why Go?

Eastern Europe's outcast, Belarus lies at the edge of the region and seems determined to avoid integration with the rest of the continent at all costs. Taking its lead from the old Soviet Union rather than the European Union, this pint-sized dictatorship may seem like a strange choice for travellers, but its isolation remains at the heart of its appeal.

While the rest of Eastern Europe has charged headlong into capitalism, Belarus allows the chance to visit a Europe with minimal advertising and no litter or graffiti. The country offers two excellent national parks and is home to Europe's largest mammal, the *zooobr* (European bison). While travellers will always be subject to curiosity, they'll also invariably be on the receiving end of extremely warm hospitality and genuine local welcome.

When to Go

Minsk



Mid-Jul-Aug
Don't worry about high season: come here in summer to escape the crowds elsewhere.

Early-mid-Jul A
fine time to enjoy a Belarusian festival or two.

Jun & Sep The weather is fine and there are few tourists.

Connections

Belarus has good overland links to all its neighbouring countries. Daily trains from Minsk serve Moscow, St Petersburg, Vilnius, Warsaw (via Terespol) and Kyiv. Bus services, which tend to be less comfortable, connect Minsk to Moscow, St Petersburg, Kyiv, Warsaw and Vilnius; Vitsebsk to Moscow and St Petersburg; and Brest to Terespol in Poland.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Spend two days getting to know Minsk, whose Stalinist architecture belies a lively and friendly city, before taking a day trip to the charming Belarusian countryside.

One Week

Begin with two nights in Brest, where the dramatic Brest Fortress and a clutch of museums await, before heading to Minsk for a dose of history and imposing architecture, as well as spending a day or two exploring the countryside around the city.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Belavezhskaya** Bitter herbal alcoholic drink
- » **Draniki** Potato pancakes, usually served with *smetana* (sour cream)
- » **Klitsky** Dumplings stuffed with mushrooms, cheese or potato
- » **Kolduni** Potato dumplings stuffed with meat
- » **Manchanka** Pancakes served with a meaty gravy

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Belarusian rouble (BR)
- » **Languages** Belarusian, Russian
- » **Money** ATMs taking international cards widely available
- » **Visas** Needed by almost everybody; see p104

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 207,600 sq km
- » **Capital** Minsk
- » **Country code** ☎375
- » **Emergency** Police ☎02; ambulance ☎03

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	BR3052
Canada	C\$1	BR3081
euro zone	€1	BR4274
Japan	¥100	BR3736
New Zealand	NZ\$1	BR2235
UK	UK£1	BR4911
USA	US\$1	BR3025

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** BR70,000
- » **Two-course evening meal** BR60,000
- » **Museum entrance** BR2000
- » **Beer (bottle)** BR1000
- » **Minsk metro ticket** BR700