



Belarus

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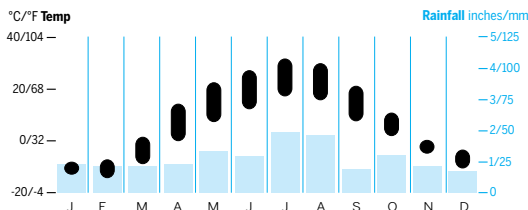
Why Go?

Eastern Europe's outcast, Belarus (Беларусь) 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 Soviet Union rather than the European Union, this little-visited dictatorship may seem like a strange choice for travellers, but its isolation is 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. Outside the monumental Stalinist capital of Minsk, Belarus offers a simple yet pleasing landscape of cornflower fields, thick forests and picturesque villages. The country also offers two excellent national parks Belavezhskaya Pushcha and Prip'yatsky, and is home to Europe's largest mammal, the *zoobr* (or European bison). While travellers will always be subject to curiosity, they'll also be on the receiving end of warm hospitality and genuine welcome.

When to Go

Minsk



Jun–Aug Don't worry about high season: come to escape the crowds elsewhere.

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

May International Workers' Day still sees parades and much festivity all over Belarus.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Belarusian rouble (BR)
- » **Language** Belarusian, Russian
- » **Money** ATMs taking international cards are widely available
- » **Visas** Needed by almost everybody

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 207,600 sq km
- » **Capital** Minsk
- » **Country code** 2375
- » **Emergency** Ambulance 03, fire 01, police 02

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	BR9065
Canada	C\$1	BR8525
Euro Zone	€1	BR11,072
Japan	¥100	BR9178
New Zealand	NZ\$1	BR7253
UK	UK£1	BR13,122
USA	US\$1	BR8677

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €20
- » **Two-course meal** BR70,000
- » **Museum entrance** BR10,000
- » **Beer** BR10,000
- » **Minsk metro ticket** BR1800

Resources

- » **Belarus Embassy in the UK** (www.uk.mfa.gov.by)
- » **Belarus Tourism** (eng. belarustourism.by)

Connections

Belarus has good overland links to all neighbouring countries. Daily trains from Minsk serve Moscow and St Petersburg in Russia, Vilnius in Lithuania, Warsaw in Poland (via Terespol) and Kyiv in Ukraine. 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 – its Stalinist architecture belies a lively and friendly city – before taking a day trip to the medieval castle at Mir and the ancient Belarusian town of Nyasvish to get a feel for the charming Belarusian countryside.

One Week

Begin with two nights in funky and fun Brest, where the fascinating Brest Fortress awaits exploration, then take a train to quirky Minsk for a few nights, allowing yourself time for a day trip to Mir and Nyasvish before continuing on to Russia by train.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Belavezhskaya** A bitter herbal alcoholic drink.
- » **Draniki** Potato pancakes, usually served with sour cream (*smetana*).
- » **Kletsy** Dumplings stuffed with mushrooms, cheese or potato.
- » **Khaladnik** A local variation on cold borsch, a soup made from beetroot and garnished with sour cream, chopped up hard-boiled eggs, and potatoes.
- » **Kindziuk** A pig-stomach sausage filled with minced pork, herbs and spices.
- » **Kolduni** Potato dumplings stuffed with meat.
- » **Kvas** A mildly alcoholic drink made from black or rye bread and commonly sold on the streets in Belarus.
- » **Manchanka** Pancakes served with a meaty gravy.