

Location

The Republic of Belarus, or simply Belarus, lies in the center of Europe, on the watershed between the Baltic Sea and the Black sea. Also known as “White Russia” our country borders with Russia to the northeast, Ukraine to the south, Latvia and Lithuania to the northwest, and Poland to the west.



Located in the center Minsk is the capital and the largest city of Belarus with over 1,901.1 million inhabitants. Vilnius was a Belarusian capital for over six centuries; only in 1939 it became a Lithuanian capital. The two countries (Lithuania and Belarus) once united under The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later The Polish Commonwealth up until today share common historical and cultural roots.

Language

The Belarusian language is one of the official state languages along with Russian. It is closely akin to Ukrainian and to a lesser extent to Russian, which, however, is given an overwhelming predominance over the Belarusian language. The Belarusian language, once the prominent mother tongue of Francisk Skarina, first Belarusian to print the Bible, and the diplomatic language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, nowadays has entered the category of vulnerable languages, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.



Francisk Skaryna

People and Nature

Originally referred to as blue-eyed Belarus, it boasts of mild climate, flat lowlands and green blanket of forests, all of which is attracting tourists from all over the world. Not only beautiful nature, but also the national character, due to which Belarusian people are considered quiet and hospitable, create all conditions for the “green tourism”.



Belarusian girl in Namitka headdress

Belavezhskaya puscha is one of the biggest and oldest national parks in Europe. It is here where you can find almost 2000 giant trees, some of them pre-dating Columbus’ discovery of America. National Park "Pripyat" is the only place on earth where there are prehistoric floodplain oak forests. Remarkable wildlife and rare plant life in the national parks include such species as elks, wild bores, deer, beavers and lynx. Belarus is home to the world’s largest population of rare European bison (Zubr).



European bison (Zubr)

Symbols

One of the features that distinguish Belarus from her neighbors are Belarusian symbols that have rich history behind it. To start off, every Belarusian cherishes a cornflower - symbol of happiness and longevity. This charming blue flower made its way not only to Belarusian fields but also to Belarusian literature and became an essential part of national identity. Cornflower has become the symbol of The International Festival of Arts "Slavianski Bazaar" in Vitebsk". This festival that is held annually in July became a famous trademark of the country.



Hockey

Hockey is extremely popular in Belarus. The 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship will be held in Belarusian capital Minsk in May 2014.

Food and Drinks

The national Belarusian dish is “Draniki” (potato pancakes), which served hot with sour cream topping and kvas, a refreshing lightly alcoholic beverage.

The national alcohol are medovuha and krambambulya, drinks made by infusing alcohol with various herbs and honey. Various kinds of beer are also cherished by Belarusians.