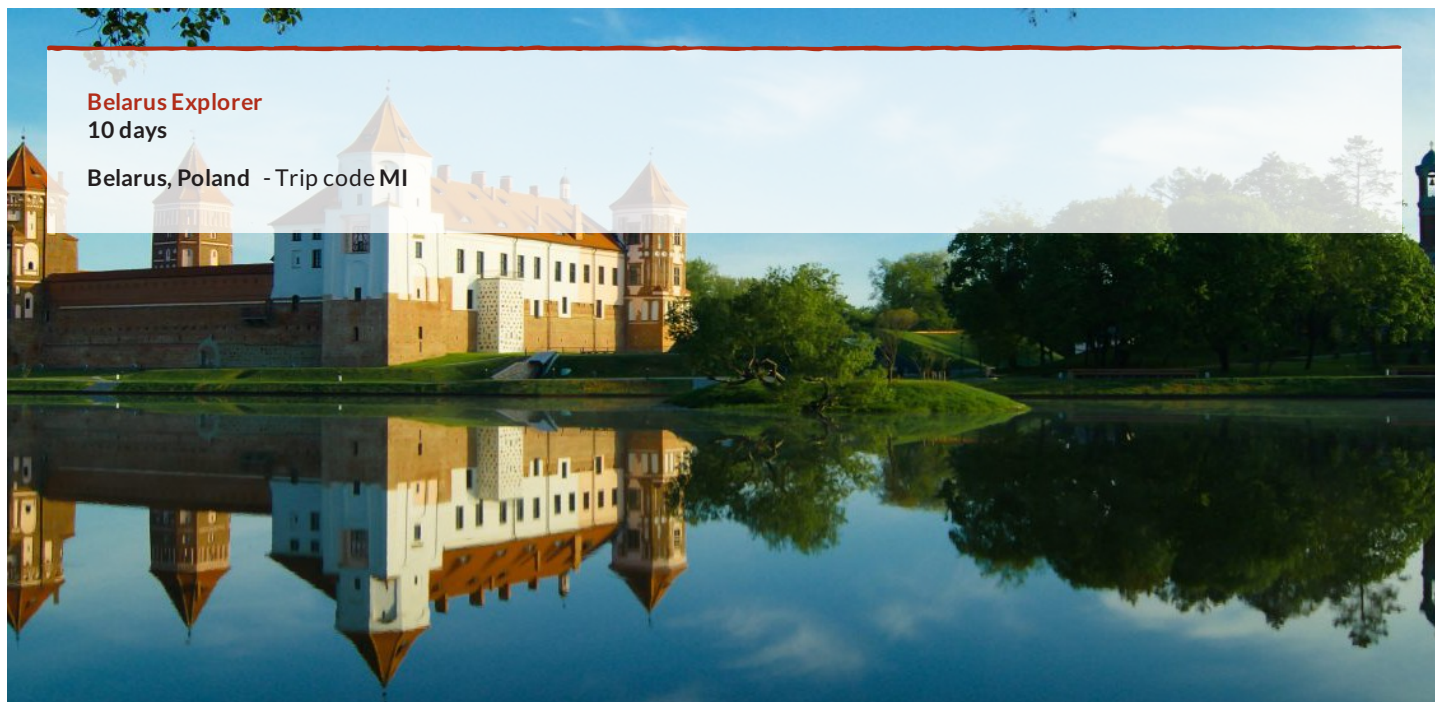


EXPLORE!



Belarus Explorer

Join us on this exploration of the villages, forests and historic cities of Belarus and eastern Poland. Along the way we spend a night in the Nesvizh Castle and visit the 15th century Mir Castle, both fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and take a walking tour through the streets of Minsk. We'll discover the incredible variety of flora and fauna while hiking in Berezinsky National Park and learn about the rich history of Hrodna (Grodno), Polotsk and Vitebsk, home to the artist Marc Chagall.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Cultural gems** - Explore the rich history of Hrodna (Grodno), Polotsk and Vitebsk
- ★ **Castles** - Visit the fortresses of Nesvizh, Mir and Brest
- ★ **Berezinsky National Park** - Hiking through some of the most pristine landscapes in Belarus
- ★ **Minsk** - The Belarus capital: a superb example of Soviet urban planning

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Warsaw, Poland

Join trip in Warsaw, Poland's capital city, and check-in to our hotel for the night.



Accommodation: Ibis Warsaw Stare Miasto (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Cross into Belarus; visit Brest Fort and stay at Nesvizh Castle

Today we leave Poland and enter the lesser visited but fascinating country of Belarus. Our first stop is the 19th century fortress at Brest, once the largest in the old Russian Empire. It was an infamous prison during the Soviet trials of the 1930s; this immense fortress went on to achieve lasting fame when it became a symbol of Soviet resistance during the German invasion of Russia in 1941. We then continue to the impressive UNESCO World Heritage Site of Nesvizh Castle, which has been home to the Radswill Family for over 400 years. We will spend the night in this remarkable building.



Accommodation: Nesvizh Palace (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Visit Mir Castle; walking tour of Minsk

This morning after time to finish exploring Nesvizh Castle we drive to the beautiful Mir Castle, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction began here at the end of the 15th century and it has sections in Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles. We drive to the Belarusian capital of Minsk. Set on the banks of the Svislach River, the city was first settled by the Early East Slavs back in the 9th century AD. Trinity Suburb is one of oldest and most picturesque areas, which is perfect for strolling in, and Victory Square is the most famous part of the city and features a memorial to the fallen heroes of World War II. On arrival we'll enjoy a walking tour of the main highlights of the city. Our hotel in Minsk is conveniently located just a few minutes' walk from the Partyzanskaya Metro Station and it's then a 15-20 minutes journey into the very centre of the city. Close to our hotel is the Belarus Department Store where you may like to browse for local products such as textiles. The area around the hotel is dominated by locals including a very large tractor manufacturing base which employs an astonishing 17,000 people. The hotel and the surrounding area have a very Soviet layout and give us a glimpse into what normal local life is like in the city. The hotel is tall and offers great views from the higher floors.



Accommodation: Hotel Turist (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Free morning in Minsk; drive to Vitebsk

This morning is free for you to relax and further explore Minsk. You may choose to visit the Azgur Museum which houses numerous sculptures from the Soviet era or if you're looking to relax then Sendai Japanese Garden is very serene or there's the Minsk Botanical Gardens. This afternoon we drive to the picturesque city of Vitebsk. Straddling the waters of the mighty Dvina River, close to Belarus's border with neighbouring Russia, lies the thriving city of Vitebsk. It's the birthplace of Marc Chagall, one of the most renowned painters of the 20th century, and it's possible to visit his former home here. Other main sights include the Uspensky Cathedral, Three Bayonets Memorial Complex and the City Hall.



Accommodation: Hotel Luchesa (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive via historic Polotsk to Berezinsky National Park

You have some free time this morning to discover more of Vitebsk before we depart for Polotsk, a cultural gem that is one of the oldest Slavic towns in the region. Tracing its origins back to the 9th century, the town is home to no fewer than 130 historical and cultural monuments, including the 11th century Cathedral of Saint Sophia. The town provides us with a fascinating lunch stop en route to the forests and marshes of the Berezinsky National Park.



Accommodation: Hotel Serguch (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Hiking in Berezinsky National Park

Encompassing one of the largest areas of marshland left in Europe, the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve provides a haven for an incredible diversity of flora and fauna, including more than 780 herbaceous species, 34 species of fish, over 50 species of mammal and an impressive list of over 200 different birds. We have a full day hiking or you may choose to partake in optional canoeing through the park today, enjoying the natural and scenic beauty of one of the most pristine environments in the country.



Accommodation: Hotel Serguch (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Drive to Lida via Lake Naroch

We drive toward Lida today, but will take a break on the banks of Lake Naroch, the largest lake in Belarus. Covering nearly 80 square kilometres, the lake is home to pike, perch, eel and tench and its picturesque landscapes provide us with an ideal lunch stop before continuing the rest of the way to Lida. The city has a long history and it previously had a very large Jewish population, but they suffered badly during World War I and II and the Soviet occupation that followed, so their numbers diminished drastically.



Accommodation: Hotel Lida (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Visit to the Augustow Canal; walking tour of Hrodna

Our first stop today is to view the restored eastern section of the 19th century Augustow Canal on our way to Hrodna. Home to one of the largest Catholic populations in the country, Hrodna is filled with a wonderful collection of Medieval and Baroque architecture, including the impressive Cathedral of Saint Francis Xavier and the unique Church of Saints Boris and Gleb; the only surviving example of Black Ruthenian architecture left in the area. We take a walking tour of the city on arrival this afternoon.



Accommodation: Hotel Neman (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive through the Knyszynska Forest to Bialystok, Poland

Today we depart Belarus and head back over the border to Bialystok in Poland. Immigration formalities at the border may take around an hour to complete, after which we continue our journey travelling through the charming villages of the Knyszynska Forest and stop in the small community of Kruszyniany to visit its unique wooden mosque. The mosque is still used today by the small Tartar population of the region. We drive on to north-eastern town of Bialystok on the banks of the Biala River. It's the largest city in the region and it lies at the heart of Belarusian culture in Poland and was a recent finalist for European Capital of Culture. Home to a number of museums and parks, the city also boasts one of the oldest puppet theatres in the country.



Accommodation: Best Western Hotel Cristal (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Trip ends at Warsaw airport

We leave Bialystok today and drive three hour to Warsaw airport where our trip ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 9
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

9 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Belarus Holidays & Tours

Climate

Belarusian climate is moderately continental, a transitional form from maritime to continental climate with mild and humid winters, warm summers and damp autumns. Average July temperatures range from +17 C to +18.5 C, January temperatures vary from -8 C to -4.5 C.

Time difference to GMT

+3

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox

Language

Belarusian

Poland Holidays & Tours

Climate

Poland has a temperate, changeable climate. September and October are cooler and gradually become damper until late November when temperatures fall below freezing with snowfall, particularly in mountainous areas. Cold temperatures last through to March, but are tolerable. Snow can lie for up to three months in the mountains.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Polish

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Minsk - Minsk Centre Library €5.00 Vitebsk - Chagal Art Gallery €1.00 for 1 hour Berezinsky National Park - Museum of Nature €12.00

Clothing

We recommend taking lightweight clothes for during the day plus some warmer clothes for colder nights. Take a lightweight rain jacket and an umbrella. Ladies should take a headscarf, which may be required for entering some churches.

Footwear

We recommend bringing comfortable shoes and sandals for relaxing and walking shoes for the walking tours and hiking.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and day pack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Please carry a mosquito repellent with you for walk in the National Park.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £30.00 for tipping on this trip. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Belarus Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£6

Dinner price

£11

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£0.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Ruble

Recommended Currency For Exchange

USD or Euro

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

You might find it difficult to obtain money from some ATM machines using Maestro and Visa cards due to difficulties in reading the card.

Credit Card Acceptance

Restaurants and shops in major towns.

Travellers Cheques

Are difficult to cash on this tour.

Poland Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£8

Dinner price

£18.00 - 22.00

Beer price

£1.50 - 3.00

Water price

£0.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Polish Zloty2

Recommended Currency For Exchange

British Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are all accepted at exchange offices and banks2

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival

ATM Availability

Available in all major cities

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are widely accepted in all major cities

Travellers Cheques

Easily exchanged

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Poland: Visas not required by citizens of the UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. Belarus: Entry visas are required for UK citizens and need to be applied for in advance. A tourist voucher is required as part of your application and Explore will request this on your behalf. This is received and sent to you from 4- 6 weeks before departure. You should ensure that your passport has at least six months' validity and two unused pages. All other nationalities should consult their relevant Embassy prior to departure for visa requirements. Please note that Belarus Immigration Authority requires you to have medical insurance which is recognised by the government. You have the option to purchase such medical insurance at the border for 20 Zloty (approximately 5 Pounds) for a week.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcours. See www.travcours.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcours. The Team at Travcours will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

This trip is designed to acquaint you with Belarus's highlights and to give you the opportunity to get to know this fascinating lesser known country better. There's so much to see and do during your time in Belarus and there's a lot of ground to cover, so please be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

Non refundable permits

Belarus Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Tetanus, Tick-borne encephalitis, Tuberculosis and Typhoid The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Poland Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Tickborne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
