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INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

This travel guide is meant to give you a clear view on all the highlights Minsk has to offer, from a **local perspective!** We don't want to bore you with too much text because we believe that if you are really interested there is plenty of information on the Internet regarding the history, specific sites, and attractions. What we do want you to do is to explore Minsk and Belarus in a local and unique way.

Our mission is to introduce **Minsk and Belarus to foreigners** like yourself who are keen to explore and discover a lesser known country right on your doorstep. Minsk is a beautiful city with a unique mixture of post-Soviet and modern European atmosphere, full of interesting places to see and fascinating things to do! In this book we share our love for our city with you. All the information you will read is a collection of local advice without any commercial or sales bribes. Making this travel guide 100% authentic.

Another very important mission for this book is to promote **local (social) enterprises and projects**. We feel that visitors like you would be more willing to visit and buy products and services from locals who take care of their communities and environment and who are dedicated and committed to sustainability in all their endeavours. Therefore, our suggestions not only have you discovering new and lesser known areas and businesses, but they also offer you wise and sustainable choices in how you spend your money.



Another important part of our mission is **to make Minsk accessible for native and non-native English speakers**. That is why we offer free translations and support to all our recommended locations to help you navigate our beautiful city and country.

The team? Behind the two authors Masha Cheriakova and Hanna Hrydziushka and two illustrators Rita Tsikhanovich and Darina Psardieva, stands a team of more than 30 locals who contributed to the creation of this guide. While we each are very different individuals, there is one common thing that unites us; our love and passion for Belarus.

We wish you a wonderful visit to our beautiful country and may this guidebook lead you to new and unforgettable adventures!

On our website: www.hifivebelarus.com you will find all updated information about travelling to Belarus.

MEET MINSKY, YOUR CUTE GUIDE TO THIS BOOK!



PREPARATION TIME

WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER A CHECKLIST FOR YOU WITH STEPS AND INFORMATION REGARDING COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TO HELP MAKE THE PREPARATION FOR YOUR TRIP SMOOTH AND EASY. BUT PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT TOURISM INDUSTRY IN BELARUS IS DEVELOPING AT A FAST PACE. THEREFORE PLEASE CHECK ALL THE RULES REGARDING VISAS, INVITATIONS, MIGRATION CARDS AND REGISTRATIONS WITH THE BELARUSIAN EMBASSY IN YOUR COUNTRY.



VISA OR NO VISA TO VISIT BELARUS?

If you are from one of these countries (see list below) and want to visit Belarus for **no more than 5 days via the Minsk National Airport** (arrive and depart by plane), we have good news for you! As of 2017, you do not need a visa. All you need is a valid, up-to-date passport (must be valid for at least 90 days after your departure from Minsk), and or other official documents from your country permitting foreign travel along with the appropriate photo identification. You will also need medical insurance (more info below) and money (around €22 per day). Two important things to remember is that a five day visa-free visit does not work if you arrive or leave Belarus via any airport in Russia and the arrival and departure days count as full days in this 5 day visa free travel.



IN ALL OTHER CASES (A TRIP FOR MORE THAN 5 DAYS OR TRAVELLING BY TRAIN, BUS, OR CAR) YOU WILL NEED A VISA TO ENTER BELARUS.

Albania
Andorra
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bahrain
Barbados
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazil
Bulgaria
Canada

Chile
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Dominica
El Salvador
Estonia
Federated States of Micronesia
Finland
France
Gambia*
Germany

Greece
Haiti*
Honduras*
Hong Kong – Special Administrative Region of China
Hungary
Iceland
India*
Indonesia
Ireland
Italy
Japan

Korea (Republic)
Kuwait
Latvia
Lebanon*
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Macao (Macau) – Special Administrative Region of China
Macedonia
Malaysia
Malta

Monaco
Namibia*
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Norway
Oman
Order of Malta
Panama
People's Republic of
China*

Peru
Poland
Portugal
Romania
**Saint Vincent and
the Grenadines**
Samoa*
San Marino
Saudi Arabia
Seychelles

Singapore
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom of
Great Britain and
Northern Ireland

**United Mexican
States**
United States of
America
Uruguay
Vanuatu
Vatican
Vietnam*

* If you are from **Vietnam, Haiti, Gambia, Honduras, India, China, Lebanon, Namibia**, and or **Samoa**, and want to visit Belarus under the 'no visa for 5 days regulation', you should have a valid multi-visa to the EU states or the Schengen Area with a mark confirming the entry to their territory and a return plane ticket.



NO VISA FOR UP TO 30 DAYS TRIP

If you are from: Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Qatar, Serbia, Turkey, and or Venezuela and you want to visit Belarus for up to 30 days, then you do not need a visa if you are arriving and departing via the Minsk National Airport.

NO VISA AT ALL

If you are from: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and or Ukraine, and you want to visit Belarus then there is no visa required no matter how you enter Belarus.

FOR ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE OF YOUR NEAREST BELARUSIAN EMBASSY OR CONSULATE TO FIND OUT THE MOST CURRENT AND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION REGARDING VISAS AND TRAVEL TO BELARUS.

SPECIAL CASES

Foreigners who want to visit **Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, Augustow Canal** or some places of Hrodna and Brest regions, who are not travelling into Belarus via the Minsk National Airport, can do so for 10 days without a visa. Read details on pages 98 and 99.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA?

IF YOU ARE GOING TO BELARUS FOR MORE THAN 5 DAYS AND YOU ARE NOT FROM A COUNTRY LISTED AS 'NO VISA', YOU MUST OBTAIN A VISA. ALTHOUGH A BIT MORE CHALLENGING THAN JUST JUMPING ON A PLANE, IT IS DEFINITELY WORTH THE EFFORT. BELARUSIANS REQUIRE A VISA MOST PLACES WE TRAVEL AND FIND OUR VISA STAMPS A BEAUTIFUL SOUVENIR OF THE PROCESS AND WE ARE HAPPY TO HELP GUIDE YOU STEP-BY-STEP THROUGH THIS PROCESS. IT WILL BE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. SO, HERE WE GO:

STEP 1

Find out whether your country has a Belarusian Embassy or Consulate by checking their website. There you will also find the up-to-date info and Embassy rules specific for your country.

STEP 2

Get your stuff (documents) ready! In general you need to send the following documents to apply for a visa:

- Visa application form (a form you will find on the Embassy/Consulate website that you found in Step 1). In general, there are only three types of Belarusian visas: transit (valid for up to 2 days), short term (up to 90 days) and long term (up to a year, allowing you to stay 90 days in Belarus within this one year). The visas can be single, double, and multi-entry. Most tourists usually get a single entry, short term visa.
- One colour photograph (35×45 mm, not older than 6 months please). Keep in mind the requirements for your passport photograph.
- Valid passport or travel document (should be valid for at least 90 days following your planned departure from Belarus).
- Medical insurance. It is **mandatory** for all foreigners, (whether you need a visa or not) to have medical health insurance. A copy of your medical insurance certificate will be required when applying for a visa at the Embassy or Consulates. You will also need to show the original certificate upon your arrival at border control (once again, whether or not you have a visa). So, if you do not have medical travel insurance; you can buy it online, through any insurance company, and or travel agency. Some banks even offer travel insurance to their premium account holders. Just make sure that the insurance you take out is valid in Belarus (It should state somewhere within the form and or certificate **Belarus, Europe incl. Belarus or Worldwide**).

- If a visa is required, you will also need a confirmation of the visa fee payment, which you will need to take with you or provide a copy of to the Embassy or Consulate where your visa will be granted. The cost of a visa differs depending on your country of origin and the visa type. For most countries, it is around €50-60, while for Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia it costs €25. For further information regarding visa fees check your local Belarusian Embassy/Consulate's website.
- For some countries you must provide additional information to acquire a visa. Visa support documents can differ depending on the purpose of your travel. The good thing is that in many European countries and elsewhere, you do not have to provide support documents when applying for a private, single entry, or short-term visa (less than 30 days). Nevertheless, always check with the Embassy/Consulate before applying to make the process less of a hassle.

STEP 3

After having collected all these documents, you can go to Step 3: print them, and get them to the Embassy! In some countries, you need to go to the Consulate in person, in others – you can send the documents by post. So check this with your Embassy! Additionally, if you must visit your Embassy in person make sure you are clear on their visitation rules (some Embassies do not allow electronics such as phones, tablets, and or computer on site).

STEP 4

Wait for 5 days! Your passport and visa should be returned to you in 5 working days. You can also choose a 2-day delivery for an additional cost.



GETTING YOUR VISA AT THE AIRPORT

IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO GET YOUR VISA DIRECTLY AT THE AIRPORT IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME OR OPPORTUNITY TO GO THROUGH THE STANDARD VISA PROCEDURE. BUT (YES, THERE IS ALWAYS A BUT), YOU HAVE TO APPLY TO THESE RULES IF YOU WANT TO GET YOUR VISA AT THE AIRPORT:

1

You fly with a direct flight to Minsk (again no transfer in Russia).

2

You have money to spend as the visa at the airport will cost you twice or three times more.

3

You still have to send (two days before or even earlier) all the documents mentioned above to the Consular Department of Minsk National Airport.

