Places of Interest

Minsk welcomes guests with places of interest that draw in the feel of the capital. There are green parks and quiet embankments, squares and central streets, architectural monuments and comfortable recreation areas — it is here where one should start one's acquaintance with the city on a relaxed walk.

City Gate

For several decades the Minsk twin towers on Privokzalnaya Square by the Train Station have been greeting the ones who come to the city by railway. Initially, the architects who worked on the post-war look of the square had the idea of reconstructing ancient entrance gates to the Minsk castle that was passed by every wanderer who came to the city. Erected in the middle of the 20th century and designed in the style of Stalinist classicism, two symmetrical 11 storied buildings became a kind of front door into Minsk and still impress visitors with their excite grandeur. Each tower, decorated with national ornaments, has four sculptures — a female worker, a farmer girl, an engineer and a soldier — who look like peaceful guards of the city. It is an interesting fact that one of the houses has a clock that has been working since the moment of its installation. Its clockwork was made in Germany and after the Second World War was brought to Belarus as a war trophy.

Ferris Wheel

The ride takes its visitors up to a height of 54 meters, which is enough catch a glimpse of the city's landscape from above the treetops and roofs. From open or closed cabins one can see and enjoy plant and power station chimneys on the horizon, residential neighbourhoods on the outskirts, roofs shining in the sun and people walking in the street. The ferris wheel is situated in the heart of the capital — in the central children's park founded back in the early 19th century, becoming the first public recreation park in the country. Two centuries later, one can still relax by the water, stroll along the alleys and sit in the shadows of trees here. The park has preserved centennial poplars, alders and pines, and every summer Minsk dwellers come here again and again to distance themselves from the hustle and bustle of city life, and to take a walk in the park with their children.

Upper City

The area of Svobody square and nearby streets is a tourist hot spot with numerous architectural monuments of various historical periods. It has the 18th-century Jesuit collegium church (today it is the Cathedral of Saint Virgin Mary), 18th century former merchants' club where visitors could rent rooms to stay, a former shopping street of the early 19th century, and a restored Europe Hotel that boasted of having an elevator, central heating and electricity back in the early 20th century. Facing the river Svisloch is the main Belarusian Christian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. It is located in the building of the former Monastery of Bernardine order. In 2004, in the Upper City the City Hall was restored — the symbol of municipal government which Minsk gained the right to in the late 15th century. The City Hall was built in 1600 and it was frequently reconstructed until it was completely demolished in 1857 by order of the Russian Emperor. Each building in the Upper City has its history and the architectural ensemble creates a unique atmosphere attracting Minsk citizens and its guests. It is lovely to have a walk along old streets and to enjoy numerous cafes facing the city's historical center.

National Library

The main library of Belarus arouses interest mostly by its exterior appearance. An unusual building, it opened its doors in 2006 and immediately became the modern symbol of the city. It attracts tourists' attention at evening when the fa ades of this outlandish rhombicuboctahedron are ablaze with dynamic illumination making the building an original background for photo sessions. On the library's roof there is an observation deck where one can hop onto a panoramic elevator and view the surroundings and the life of the noisy avenue. Meanwhile, the building stores 9 million book copies in 80 different languages, including an assortment of manuscripts and rare books, a miscellanea of maps and printed music, drawings, magazines and newspapers. One can see antique books and documents in the Book Museum which is open for visitors and exhibits of contemporary art at the library's gallery.

Alexander's Park

Probably the nicest park in Minsk and one of the best places for recreation. It is situated in the city's center, right next to the enterance to Oktyabrskaya and Kupalovskaya metro stations. The park was founded in the early 19th century. Officials and employees of the surrounding clerical offices and establishments rushed here in hot evenings to enjoy the cozy, shadowy green alleys. Here, in 1874, the city's first and most popular fountain was opened, "A Boy Playing with a Swan". The fountain appeared here to celebrate the opening of Minsk's public water supply, and it still delights Minsk dwellers with its look. In 1890, the building of the municipal theater was opened in the park, and it became a place of attraction for theater goers. Operatic and theatrical companies from Europe stage their performances here. Today the building has become a home of the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre — the country's oldest and most popular theatrical company.

The Svisloch Embankment

Close to Pobeditelei avenue, the Svisloch river twists and turns along one of the most picturesque places of Minsk, with the Svisloch embankment. Unlike the nearby busy street, filled with a cacophony of sounds, this place offers a calm and relaxed haven in the center of Minsk. From the bridge on Bogdanovicha street one can see the river's mirror-like surface and reflections of the Trinity Suburbs. In the morning the Embankment is busy with joggers and people rushing to work. In the evening it is filled with noisy crowds of students, elderly people and mothers with strollers. Each season has a special charm in this place — the whispering of grass at summer, the springtime drip-drop, autumn's gold or the white blanket of winter.

Red Church

The church of saints Simon and Helena is better known as the Red Church as it is made of red brick. The church was built at the request of the city's inhabitants and was financed by Minsk nobleman Edward Woynillowicz who designed the church. It was opened in 1910 and named in honor of the patron's children, who had died in their childhood. For some strange reason its basilica survived Soviet years when the square's look was changed completely and "outdated" architecture was disposed of. The church used to house a theater, a motion picture studio and a cinema. Today, the architectural gem has been returned to believers and it graces the ensemble of the Independence Square. In the year 2000, "The Bell of Nagasaki" monument was installed near the church — a silent remembrance to all victims of the nuclear catastrophe.

Trinity Hill

When looking from Podebitelei avenue over the river Svisloch one can see the magnificent view over the historical area that looks quite different from the architectural pattern of Minsk center. Trinity Hill is a historical interpretation of how city neighborhoods might have looked like centuries ago. It is a place, on the left bank of the river, where the city center with its busy life had been located during the late 12th till the late 15th century. It had the city's first Catholic church and other important sacred places as well as trade and handicraft market rows.

As years went by ancient layouts disappeared due to fires and old buildings were replaced by newer ones. The neighborhood got its modern appearance in the early 1980s after a large-scale reconstruction of existing buildings and erection of newer once on centennial foundations. Today Trinity Hill is an open air museum with doll's houses, cozy patios, and a still history restoring the appearance of the city of the 19th century.

Park Pobedy

The artificial lake that was given the name of Komsomolskoe was planned as a real Minsk lakeside resort with embankments for promenades, alleys, beaches and a boat station. It was created by the entire youth population of the city in 1940. The park's opening was supposed to have a huge celebration on June 22, 1941, but the celebration never took place — it was the day when the Second World War began. In peaceful times the lake eventually became the place to attract Minsk dwellers who wanted to relax by the lakeside. Several years ago wild beaches and pathways were replaced with restored embankments, well-groomed alleys and bicycle tracks. Nowadays it is a favorite place for walks in the open — over 25 kilometers of walking paths twist along the picturesque lake, around fountains and over bridges, while admirers of water rides can explore numerous islands on a rented boat or twin-hull craft or on board the motorship..