

## *Traditions*

Throughout many centuries of history, the Belarusian people created its unique and original culture. Traditional folk customs and rites harmoniously interlace with Christian traditions.

Christians make up the biggest part of the population of Belarus. According to the Christian doctrine, Christmas and Easter are the main religious holidays, annually celebrated by millions of believers all over the country. In Belarus, all the Christian holidays are celebrated twice: by the Catholic and Orthodox religious calendars.

Along with Christian holidays, such folk festivities of pagan origin as Kupalle (Midsummer Night) and Maslenitsa (Shrovetide) are widely celebrated in Belarus. Folk games and traditional ceremonies are part of them.

One of the main traditions of Kupalle is search for the mythic paparats-kvetka (fern flower). Those, who find it, will enjoy good luck for the whole year; all their wishes will come true.



Maslenitsa is a ceremony at the junction of two seasons; it sees off winter and meets spring. Popular festivals of folk music, dancing and national costumes are organized at the time of Maslenitsa.



New Year is widely celebrated all over the country. Preparations to this holiday start a couple of weeks before. The towns and cities of Belarus put on holiday attire; illumination,

New Year trees in the squares and New Year fairs add to the holiday mood. The culmination of the festivity is the December 31 – January 1 night, when various concerts and open-air merrymaking take place. January 1 is an official holiday.

"The estate of Belarusian Father Frost" is the most famous tourist brand of the country. It is visited annually by about 150 thousand people.

An animated fairy tale of Belovezhskaya Pushcha is the "Estate of Belarusian Father Frost", where you can plunge into the magical fascinating world created by skillful woodcarvers' hands. The estate is a continuation of the enchanting magic of the ancient forest, a fairy tale created by human hands, which naturally fits into its color.

The estate was opened on December 16, 2003. By this time, the wood carvers' brigade under the guidance of the well-known master of his craft A.L. Maslo made numerous wooden sculptures, decorated buildings and fences with intricate carvings, created almost all the main sculptural compositions.

The house of Father Frost looks especially beautiful with wooden columns, decorated with intricate carvings and frosty paintings on the windows, twined with garlands of miniature light bulbs. Smoke above the chimney, flowers and greenery near the house emphasize its residential appearance in summer.

Father Frost welcomes guests all year round in his Estate, reads letters sent to him and answers them, maintains order in his possessions. He has different clothes prepared for each season.

Many objects of the Estate – The small tower of Snow-maiden, Magic Mill, turning bad deeds into dust and sand, the glade of the Twelve Months, the living New Year tree, the alley of the Eastern Calendar symbols and others have their legends, stories and beliefs. In the Estate you can make the most secret wishes, ask Father Frost to help them come true. Helpers of a good wizard will always give a gift to his guests. At the Estate entrance you can ride on the New Year's train, buy souvenirs in the shopping malls near the bus stop, go to the cozy equipped "House of Father Frost" to eat pancakes and try a variety of Belarusian cuisine dishes. Numerous gazebos, tables covered under fence roofs and under the shadow of huge trees are equipped for rest.



The Belarusian people are proud of the country's past and its traditional culture. The medieval festival "The White Castle" is arranged every spring in Minsk. The spectators can admire performances in costume, combats of knights and ancient music. Every summer, in Belarusian castles (in Lida, Mir, Novogrudok, Nesvizh, etc.) knights' tournaments and international medieval festivals take place. They attract spectators and participants from many countries of the world. During several days, you will have a chance to plunge into a romantic atmosphere of the Middle Ages, to contemplate the construction of historic events, to become an apprentice of a craftsman, enjoy medieval music and try on knights' armor or ladies' magnificent dresses.



