5 Minutes of History

We've been handed over from one owner to another a dozen times. We've been burned down to the ground a total of 18 times! We are a living battlefield for disputes of strangers. We are a history of devastation and rebuilding. So be nice to us, we've been through a lot!

1067 As tale has it, after a big bloody fight upon the river Nemiga on a very cold winter, between warriors from Polotsk and warriors from Kiev, the city of Minsk was rebuilt. The area around what is now Niamiga metro station formed into a citadel, surrounded by a wooden wall. Where is the river Nemiga (or Niamiha), you might ask? Covered up completely, runs in pipes underneath Nemiga street.

1242 Peacefully annexed to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

1569 Peacefully re-annexed to the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Lots of Polish influence.

1591 After getting burned down and robbed a few times by Tatars and the Russians, the city is won back by the Poles, rebuilt, and given insignia – the ascendance of Virgin Mary. Minsk becomes a major trade point on the road connecting Moscow and Europe, linking Vilnius and Kiev.

1606 An envoy of The Pope himself, Klaudius Ragoni, writes about how he found Belarus to be beautiful, green, and full of rare flowers that can only be found in a few gardens in Italy.

1654 Minsk is conquered by Tsar Alexei of Russia. Not for long…

1667 King Jan Kasimir of Poland gets Minsk back, but the Polish-Russian War that follows trashes the city. And as if that wasn't enough…

1708 The Great Northern War between Russia and Sweden further destroys half the city and forces it to pay retributions to both armies. Poor Minsk becomes a small provincial town, not much going on.

1793 Becomes part of the Russian Empire. City begins to grow quickly. Not for long! Do you see the pattern?

1812 Napoleon goes through Minsk to get to Moscow. Even though he failed his mission, Minsk dropped from 11000 residents to just 3500, with large portions of the city destroyed.

1839 After the (suppressed) Polish uprising against the Russian Empire, Tsar bans everything Belarusian because he's afraid we might try to do the same. Street names, books and newspapers are in Russian.

1890 We get telephones! Yay!

1917 Russian Empire falls. A year later Belarus finally proclaims itself "Belarusian National Republic" with Minsk as its capital. Citizens even receive national passports.

1919 Minsk loses BNR status and becomes part of the newly formed USSR. So close..!

1941-1944 Under Nazi occupation. The war devastates the city: 80% of buildings turned to rubble. City counts 50 thousand residents (compare to 300 thousand before the War).

1945-1960 Massive rebuilding (but not reconstruction/restoration). It's so bad that moving the capital is considered. Grandeur of Stalinist architecture takes over the city center, shaping it to be what it is today. Churches that survived the war get demolished because religion didn't fit communist ideas.

1972 After enduring two decades of welcoming all interested to Minsk (to do some major construction work) the population hits 1 million. Many institutes are established, manufacturing kicks up, sciences flourish.

1984 We have Metro!

1986-1990 As the Soviet Union begins to crumble during perestroika, Minsk becomes a place for manifestations, calling for the revival of the Belarusian nation.

1991 Finally! Minsk is officially the capital of the independent Republic of Belarus!

2006 The National Library (55) opens. Also works as city's largest plasma billboard by night.

2012 The famous "Teddybear Airdrop Minsk", in which a Swedish advertising agency Studio Total (illegaly) dropped ~800 teddy bears with pro-democratic slogans over Minsk.

2014 World Hockey Championship in Minsk!

37 ROLLERBLADING TRACK

A hangout place for local rollerbladers. The flawless track gives you a choice of 5 or 10 km lap. The track runs through a park along the river, so it's a very picturesque experience (authentic Belarusian landscapes!). Best enjoyed on a sunny summer afternoon. You can rent a bike or rollerblades here. They might ask for your passport as a deposit, but cash is also ok. (POBEDITELEI, 24 | rental open 10:00-22:00)

38 CONCERT CLUB

RE:PUBLIC is a club where a lot of famous Russian (Bumbox, Sergey Babkin, Dolphin, Noize MC, Strykalo) and European (Steve Vai, Papa Roach) alternative artists have their live concerts. Being as it is one of the most popular clubs in town, expect a smoky, fun and very energetic atmosphere. This place opens who-knows-when and closes never. Check out what's coming up: http://republic-club.by/ (PRITYTSKOGO, 62/1 | KUNCAŬŠČINA metro)

39 ANTONIO GAUDI OF MINSK

Has Antonio Gaudi ever visited Minsk? Not likely. But his spirit lives in these strange underwater animal statues! And with a little polishing and conditioning, they could really shine bright.

40 A VERY LARGE SUPERMARKET

KORONA houses cafes, boutiques, electronics, and a large produce supermarket. Get your Belarusian beer here (АЛІВАРЫЯ, КРЫНІЦА, ЛІДСКАЕ) or something stronger, if you perfer (БУЛЬБАШ makes vodka that doesn't make you hurt in the morning too much). Also, their spinach-cheese croissants are to die for! Did you come too late and they are already closed? There are a few truly authentic clubs across the street – Madison and Afrika. (KAL'VARIYSKAYA, 24 | Supermarket open 9:00 – 2:00)

41 SUN TANNING PARK

Locals come to PARK POBEDY is the summer to hang out as families, play some recreational sports and get tan. Believe it: the most dedicated and hard-working sun tanning enthusiasts get a better tan here over the month of August that those travelling to tropical beaches! This place has been cleaned up and fixed up pretty nice over the past decade, making it a great weekend getaway spot. Rent a bike or even a rowing boat, have a picnic, and enjoy the sun (Best enjoyed in late July – beginning of September) or the shade.

42 CLASSIC MINSK WALK

Tourist classic

Stand on the mark and face the tall obelisk on a hill (with a strange building behind it): this is Stella; she celebrates our victory and heroism. This is where all our grandiose soviet-style parades take place. Now look around you: you're in a park! You might see a very international crowd playing frisbee here on Sundays after 15:00. Don't be afraid to walk over and join! Afterwards, take a slow walk along the riverside, towards TRINITY. Once you pass the large white Palace of Sports and an outdoor skating rink, stop to look at Troestkoe Predmest'e (Trinity Suburb) and Isle of Tears across the water. Now turn your head to the right and enjoy the majestic view of the Upper City with the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. Congratulations, you have

MONEY

The official currency is the Belarusian ruble (BYR), but pppssst! We like the US Dollar better because it's more stable and has less zeros.

You can easily exchange dollars and euro at any bank (even at the train station), exchange rates are similar everywhere. Avoid exchanging currency from strangers. ATMs are widely spread as well, but due to low level of trust to Belarusian banks, you never know what the commission might turn out to be.

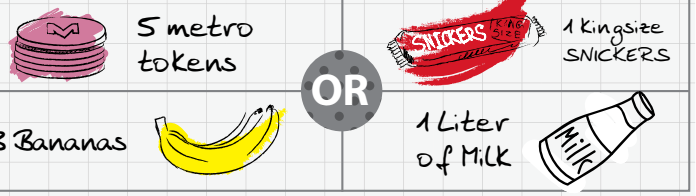
Keep in mind that while most restaurants / cafes / shops accept credit cards, some are cash only. Be sure to check in advance.

CURRENCY	BYR
1 EURO	11100
1 US Dollar	8700
1 Russian Ruble	277
1 Polish Zloty	2660
1 Ukrainian Grivna	1070

as of spring 2013

Don't get scared of all these zeros, Belarus is known for its moderate prices.

STUFF YOU CAN BUY IF YOU HAVE 10000 BYR



LANGUAGE

Belarusian and Russian are both official languages in Belarus. Over 90% of Minsk's residents locals speak Russian (an aftermath of the soviet era), 99.9% understand Belorussian (it is mandatory in schools), and only a handful of true hardcore fans can and do speak it fluently/correctly. A lot of people know English (at least well enough to help out a tourist). So don't be afraid to ask!

After many years of invasions, changing rule and cultural opression (see "**5 minutes of history**" section), our nation is now trying to revive and promote everything Belorussian. To underline our country's independence, all street names have been labeled in Belorussian. The 90% still refer to places by their Russian name, including most media. In preparations for the 2014 World Hockey Championship, our metro map has been updated: all stop names are now in Belorussian with a transliteration into an unfamiliar language. No (non-local) English speaker has yet been able to read or pronounce these correctly.

These same metro map markings are present on this map, please regard them as mere symbols and don't attempt to pronounce them in front of locals – chances are no one will understand you.

All street names on this map are written in 1) English as they would be translated from Russian, so you could try and pronounce these in front of locals and - 2) Belorussian as they would appear on street signs, so you could make sure you're in the right place. Pronounce every letter.

Useful Vocabulary

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH	BELARUSIAN
Привет *(pree-vet)*	Hello	Прыветанне *(pry-via-tan-ne)*
Пока *(po-ka)*	Bye	Пака *(pa-ka)*
Спасибо *(spa-see-boh)*	Thanks	Дзякуй *(dzia-kui)*
Пожалуйста *(po-zha-loo-stah)*	You're welcome **[or]** Please	Калі ласка *(ka-lee las-kah)*
Пойдём пить пиво! *(poi-diom pit' pee-va)*	Let's go drink beer!	Пойдзем піць піва! *(poi-dzem pit' pee-va)*

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. Congratulations, you have just completed a classic Minsk Stroll-and-Stare!

43 NAMELESS HEROES MONUMENT

Remember how "Minsk is the cleanest city ever"? It was about time someone celebrated the unsung heroes of this sparkling town! A small monument in honor of street cleaners can be found in the courtyard by KARASTAYANOVOI, 3.

44 SHOPPING IN A SWAMP

This whole area used to be marshland, hence the name ("Komar" = "Mosquito"). Today, KOMAROVKA is a large market block. The scene changes drastically in under a minute, as you go from crisp snobby & expensive boutiques to simple and loud open air produce isles. Tips for visiting the Covered Market (large quare building, green archy roof). #1: avoid the butcher's isle if you are squeamish – pig heads and skinned rabbits laying around all over the place! #2: Do stand in line for the fresh pastries by the main entrance – muffins with raisins are fantastic and cheap ($0.50). #3: If you gathered up the courage to buy cheese or salami – don't be afraid to ask for a taste first! #4: It's generally cheaper to shop here, but watch out for all those old ladies around you – they tend to be extra pushy. #5: Check out all the sculptures along KHORUZHEI street, so you know where to go if someone says "let's meet by the horse". (9:00-19:00 | Closed Mondays)

45 AWESOME STREET ART

Our pride and glory: a very cool wall of art on the inner courtyard behind building 4a on BELOMORSKAYA Street. Considering how quickly authorities paint over graffiti in Minsk, this tiny permanent exhibition feels like a huge victory for the young, free & rebellious.

46 RESIDENTIAL PLANE

See if you can find a plane by the school playground. It's not a big plane, but it's there. Communists greatly valued military heroes, so putting up such a moving display was always a great idea. After checking out the plane, have a glance around: this is what a typical residential neighborhood looks like.

47 GOOD QUICK FOOD

LIDO is the most popular answer to the question "where should we dine, but not McDonald's and not an expensive restaurant?" Lido is a moderately priced buffet-type place (Baltic chain). If you have a large hungry crowd – this is the place to go: food comes instantly (self-service!) and the selection is incredibly wide. Summer terrace comes complementary May-September, and a cozy country-style interior is available year-round. A new LIDO building (looks like a windmill) opens soon at 44 (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 49/1 | Mon-Fri: 8:00 – 23:00, Sat-Sun: 11:00 – 23:00)

48 DOG PEOPLE

Do you like dogs? Then we know of a place you might like. This tiny alley/park, becomes a local dog-owners' scene around 21:30 every day. Watch dozens of dogs run and play. The owners generally turn out to be nice and open people!

49 COFFEE OR BEER?

ARKA is a double feature: a coffeehouse (right non-smoking wing) + a large pub (left wing), but it's generally known as "a fancy place to drink good beer" (=expensive food, but great beer). Large plasmas with football games included. ARKA gets filled up very fast on Friday + weekends, so it's a good idea to reserve a table in advance if possible (http://arka.relax.by) (KOLASA, 38 | Sun-Thu: 12:00-24:00, Fri+Sat: 12:00-24:00)

50 CULT MUSIC BAR

Known as "borderline underground," GRAFFITI is one of Minsk's oldest music bars. We truly believe that all city residents ages 16-36 visited this place at least once (usually during self-search/rebellion stage). GRAFFITI is long known for great deeds such as: giving young bands a chance to shine (live music on tiny stage), organizing outdoor picnics (with concerts, frisbee and 8-bit game tents), as well as movie nights, Funk Fridays and Jazz Wednesdays. Be sure to try their fried rye bread with mayo + cheese (="grenki") along with a nice cold beer. (PER. KALININA, 16 | Sun-Thu: 11:00-23:00, Fri+Sat: 11:00-2:00)

51 GREAT WATERFALLS OF MINSK

Did you know that Minsk has a few spectacular waterfalls? See for yourself, start at a. Standing by the railings and holding your loved one by the waist, asking "do you trust me?", while she spreads her arms and replies "I trust you!" is always encouraged. Now go down to b and walk right through the waterfall underpass. Splashing each other with water is also encouraged.

52 PLANES AND SKYDIVERS

Just outside the city we have one little landing strip called BOROVAYA. If you're chilling out by the National Library (55) on a sunny summer afternoon, look to the north-east: you might be able to see people dropping out of the sky with parachutes. This is where it all happens. In the field by the landing strip you will see a group of happy people and one large bouncy mat (soft landing spot). Turn around and you will see the MUSEUM OF AVIATION with their airplane collection. This spot has become a popular wedding photo location.

53 FRISBEE PARK

PARK URUCH'E, located between the Minsk Circumferential Road (="MKAD") and a very residential area (we call such areas "neighborhoods for sleeping"), became a home to moms and kids, as well as the local Ultimate and Dog Frisbee community. Search for them closer to MKAD on weekends.

54 A FREE MUSEUM

It's called a STONE MUSEUM, but it's actually more of a park (at a very remote location). Giant stones (="valuny") play a big role in our mythology, so Minsk decided to open this very strange museum. What's interesting is that it also happens to be a scaled model of Belarus: the largest stones represent the largest cities, and the lines of rocks between them represent main connecting highways. Best seen by day, the museum is always open and there is no fee (it's a park!).

55 MOST ROMANTIC PARK

"What's the huge octagonal glas
might ask. Nevermind our NATIONAL LIBR
seem to care much for it, but we do like th
it. The park by a has willows weeping
and an dam/bridge (both are great picnic/j
locations). The highlights of the newer
include a water-bike rental and the Br
heaving with locks. TIP: Being located on t
the city, the viewing deck atop the Libra
rather disappointing panorama: 40% fo
residential quarters + vague shapes of th
center.

56 BEST EVER UNMARKED BAKER

A cousin of 1, but from a differer
windows of fresh cakes, pastries, and souf
beige cover with a wavy blue edge next t
there are really no other signs. It's a popular
have to wait in queue behind 3 old lac
students and maybe even 6 kids. But it's goi
it, we promise. If you want a quick non-sw
"che-bu-rek" (triangular deep-fried doug
meat) or a "so-sis-ka v tes-te" (hot dog, Bel
Most customers believe that both prices a
"best ever." (VOLGOGRADSKAYA, 4 | Mon-F
Sat+Sun: 9:00-22:00)

57 CHILDREN'S RAILROAD

Take a 35 minute ride on the childre
feel like a giant inside those small train ca

ood coffee
to-go option)
cDonald's
nutka-Smachna
st Food Chain
Cousine section)
anteen
Bike Track
Fresh Bread
Wi-fi spot
Can't pass through here (walls/fences)
BEST MINSK
MINSK CIRCUMFIRENTIAL ROAD - МИНСКАЯ КОЛЬЦЕВАЯ АВТОДОРОГА
NEZAVISIMOSTI avenue - проспект НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ - праспект НЕЗАЛЕЖНАСЦІ
SPORTS ARENA
SEVASTOPOL'SKIY PARK СЕВАСТОПОЛЬСКИЙ ПАРК
PARK DRUZHBY NARODOV
ПАРК ДРУЖБЫ НАРОДОВ
SKY MINSK
YULIA
Hotel SPORT
JAZZ
KING
TRINITY
EASYFLAT
NIAMIHA НЯМІГА
PLOŠČA PIERAMOHI ПЛОЩА ПЕРАМОГІ
PL. JAKUBA KOLASA ПЛ. ЯКУБА КОЛАСА
AKADEMIJA NAVUK АКАДЭМІЯ НАВУК
PARK ČALIUSKINCAŬ ПАРК ЧАЛЮСКІНЦАЎ
PARK CHELYUSKINTSEV ПАРК ЧЕЛЮСКИНЦЕВ
MASKOŬSKAJA МАСКОЎСКАЯ
"MOSKOVSKIY" BUS STATION АЎТАВАКЗАЛ "МАСКОЎСКІ"
USCHOD УСХОД
BARYSAŬSKI TRAKT БАРЫСАЎСКІ ТРАКТ
TO THE AIRPORT! fast and cheap, take bus #300
BOTANICAL GARDENS БОТАНИЧЕСКИЙ САД
TRACTOR FACTORY
PIERŠAMAJSKAJA ПЕРШАМАЙСКАЯ
PRALIETARSKAJA ПРАЛЕТАРСКАЯ
TRAKTARNY ZAVOD ТРАКТАРНЫ ЗАВОД
ANTONOVSKY PARK
KASTRYČNICKAJA КАСТРЫЧНІЦКАЯ
KUPALAŬSKAJA КУПАЛАЎСКАЯ
Minsk Metro Scheme
OPERATES 5:30-1:00
URUČČA УРУЧЧА
BARYSAŬSKI TRAKT БАРЫСАЎСКІ ТРАКТ
USCHOD УСХОД
MASKOŬSKAJA МАСКОЎСКАЯ
PARK ČALIUSKINCAŬ ПАРК ЧАЛЮСКІНЦАЎ
AKADEMIJA NAVUK АКАДЭМІЯ НАВУК
PLOŠČA JAKUBA KOLASA ПЛ. ЯКУБА КОЛАСА
PLOŠČA PIERAMOHI ПЛОШЧА ПЕРАМОГ
NIAMIHA НЯМІГА
FRUNZIENSKAJA ФРУНЗЕНСКАЯ
MALADZIOŽNAJA МАЛАДЗЕЖНАЯ
PUŠKINSKAJA ПУШКІНСКАЯ
SPARTYŬNAJA СПАРТЫЎНАЯ
KUNCAŬŠČINA КУНЦАЎШЧЫНА
KAMIENNAYA HORKA КАМЕННАЯ ГОРКА
KASTRYČNICKAJA КАСТРЫЧНІЦКАЯ
KUPALAŬSKAJA КУПАЛАЎСКАЯ
PIERŠAMAJSKAJA ПЕРШАМАЙСКАЯ
PLOŠČA LIENINA ПЛОШЧА ЛЕНІНА
PRALIETARSKAJA ПРАЛЕТАРСКАЯ

ST ROMANTIC PARK

hat's the huge octagonal glass thing?" you Nevermind our NATIONAL LIBRARY, we don't e much for it, but we do like the park around by a has willows weeping over the bend /bridge (both are great picnic/journal-writing The highlights of the newer park by b vater-bike rental and the Bridge of Love, h locks. TIP: Being located on the outskirts of e viewing deck atop the Library provides a ppointing panorama: 40% forests + 40% quarters + vague shapes of the distant city

ST EVER UNMARKED BAKERY

usin of 1, but from a different owner: a few fresh cakes, pastries, and soufflés. Look for a with a wavy blue edge next to the bus stop, lly no other signs. It's a popular spot: you may it in queue behind 3 old ladies, 5 hungry d maybe even 6 kids. But it's going to be worth se. If you want a quick non-sweet snack – try " (triangular deep-fried dough pocket with o-sis-ka v tes-te" (hot dog, Belarusian-style). ers believe that both prices and quality are (VOLGOGRADSKAYA, 4 | Mon-Fri: 7:00-22:00, 00-22:00)

LDREN'S RAILROAD

e a 35 minute ride on the children's railroad and ant inside those small train cars (don't worry, you'll fit). Local teenagers (aspiring R/R workers) help to run the railroad. The ride is well within city limits: it's a single track 4km long. The price is as tiny as the wagons: about $2 (~$10 for the New Year's 1.5 hour fancy show). A very creative romantic date. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 86 | Operates May – September | June-August: Wed,Thu,Sat, Sun +holidays | May+September: weekends and holidays only | December 25 – January 7: daily | 11:00-14:00 weekdays, 11:00 -17:30 weekends)

58 FLAT FOR ALL! WiFi

HOUSE OF FISHER (="Dom Fishera") is a super-cozy anticafe. Going here is a lot like going to a friend's flat: change into slippers, go into the kitchen, grab yourself some cookies and coffee and stretch out on a couch! You can play XBOX and board games with your friends, use the wi-fi, watch movies or just chill out. Be sure to check in at the desk when you arrive and check out when you leave – each person pays ~$2 per hour spent here, everything included. You can even bring your own food, but no alcohol please. This also happens to be the hang-out spot for local couch surfers. Enter through the right side-entrance and go up to the second floor. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 84a | Sun-Thu: 12:00-23:00, Fri+Sat: 12:00-3:00)

59 BOTANICAL GARDENS Tourist classic

The lovely CENTRAL BOTANICAL GARDENS have been pleasing the eye since 1932. For a quick tour, check out the flower nursery: take a left after you enter through the main entrance (from KALININA) and pass all the rose bushes. Almost no one goes here because there's no paved walkway, but you can see a huge variety of flowers all in one place! If you have more time, be sure to visit the intricate rotunda in the center where all roads meet, the picturesque Swan Lake, and the spectacular herbarium. Entrances are marked with green arrows. The orangery is open year-round, while the vast Botanical Gardens are best seen June-September.
(Botanical Gardens: 20000 BYR, Orangery: 10000 BYR | May-September: 10:00-20:00 | October: 10:00-19:00 | November-February: 10:00-17:00 | March-April: 10:00-18:00)

60 MOST BEAUTIFUL PARK

Take a quiet afternoon walk from the busy KOZLOVA street to SMOLENSKAYA street, along the stream. Smell the trees and the grass, pass the tennis school, hop over the stream on those rocks. Eat ice-cream on a bench. If this isn't heaven, we don't know what is.

61 DESCENT SECOND HAND

Keep in mind that Belarus is not big on local second hand – almost everything is brought in from Europe (and not the cream of the corn, obviously). It's really hard to find something authentically soviet-vintage, most items are well hid in private collections. Nevertheless, this second hand (be as it may European) offers a wide selection of well-conditioned clothes. Almost every item seems wearable, which is odd. Look around if you have an extra minute, you might find something. (DOLGOBRODSKAYA, 3 | Mon-Fri: 10:00-21:00, Sat: 11:00-19:00, closed Sun)

62 INDUSTRIAL TRASH PARK

If you walk here from PRALETARSKAJA metro, you will find yourself wandering through 1950's industrial buildings behind rows of fences and an abandoned train track, leading nowhere. If you walk here from TRAKTORNIY ZAVOD metro, you will be walking from the tractor factory through a 1950's residential block (built by German war prisoners). If you make it to ANTONOVSKY PARK, you might actually enjoy it: kids will be pretending to be pirates trying to get across a river over a waterfall (it's a very dangerous mission!) by hopping on concrete stones across a creek, and moms will be pretending that they are watching.

63 HIPPO-MARKET

HIPPO (="ГИППО") is a lot like 40, but smaller and no clubs across the street. There is a pizza restaurant and a sushi restaurant on the second floor though. (9:00-23:00 daily)

64 LOSH'ITSKIY PARK

This once giant homestead used to belong to a line Polish counts. What is now LOSH'ITSKIY PARK still holds the restored remains of their residency. The park became this neat and beautiful only a few years ago (although rumors of it being haunted by ghosts still go around!). Families love coming here on the weekends to spend some time together. Frisbee is often played on a small stadium located deeper into the park.

65 BELARUSIAN IRISH PUB

They say every city needs an Irish pub. Well, here's ours: DROZHZHI UNITED ("DROZHZHI" = "YEAST"). People come here to watch football matches, talk, or just drink good beer (Guinness & Kilkenny always present). (SVERDLOVA, 2 | 9:00-2:00)

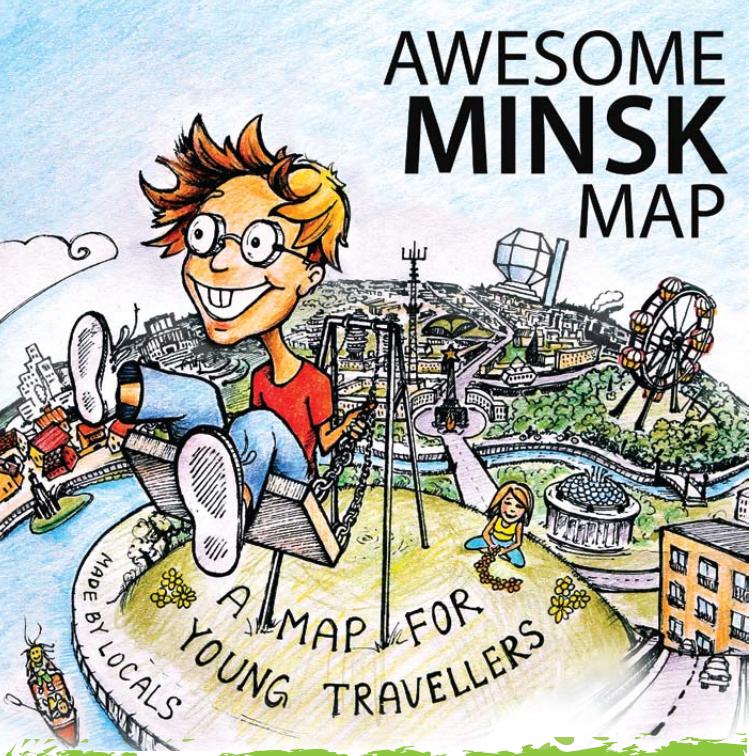
66 FRENCH NAME / GREAT BAKERY

BAKERY DU SOILEIL is a cafe with home-like atmosphere and great food. Do not be fooled by the name: it's not just cakes, there are many main dishes hidden in the cookery section. Still, their bakery section deserves a special mention: great cakes at very affortable prices. The cheesecake here is heavenly. If they fix their wi-fi issue some time soon - the place might become too good to be true. Might be tricky to find, it is located away from the main road (VORONYANSKOGO, 50/4 | 11:00-23:00)

67 LOCOMOTIVE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY

What's that train engine doing there? The answer is simple: This 1962 soviet Эр model locomotive is here because the large low building infront of it belongs to the railroad workers union. You should've seen how they got it here: had to hire the largest truck in the city! Come over here and climb all over it.

AWESOME MINSK MAP



ACT LIKE A LOCAL

1) Get tough (but not too tough) aboard public transport. If someone gently pushes you out of the way on the metro without saying "excuse me" – do not be offended, they are just trying to be polite and not bother you with words. And you you need to exit on the next stop, but the way is blocked by 100 people, also gently squeeze your way through. Don't forget to give up your seat to old ladies!

2) Don't be too loud. Keep your voice fairly low, don't point at things and shout in the street. Don't use your hands too much when expressing emotions and thoughts – stay calm and remain indifferent. But please smile a lot, maybe it will become popular thanks to you.

3) Complain about everything, a lot! About how prices go up every day, how there's too many new shiny glass buildings, how too many good, smart people are moving away from the country to make more money, about "kids these days". After complaining, say something like "Although… I heard it's A LOT worse elsewhere!" And then maybe throw in an example.

4) Don't cross the road on a red light, even if

7) Eat lunch at Stolovaya. There's a great way to try some native (and almost homemade) food for a very reasonable price: the canteens (buffet type place). With a quick-moving queue, don't waste your time trying to understand the tiny menu in cyrillics or figuring out the prices. Just pick whatever looks tasty, it's all good. Most of these dishes are soviet era classics! Soup comes first, salad + meat + side dish comes second, and a punch called "kompot" is third, every child knows this is the only way to dine properly. The total cost for an average meal should not exceed 5 Euro and you will be full. But hurry, Stolovaya opens around 11:00 and gets filled up with students+office workers fast. By 15:00 almost everything is gone for the day, and by 16:00 they are closed.
Tip #1: The cheapest canteens belong to universities, then come factory canteens, and then commercial canteens.
Tip #2: A lot of Stolovayas are closed Saturday + Sunday, but not all.
Tip #3: Some canteens are well-hidden: you may have to go downstairs into the cellar (if it's a university), go up a few flights of stairs or go into obscure alleyways. Don't give up

1 CHEAP DELISCIOUS PASTRIES

In for something sweet and baked? This small window shop is well hidden: search for it behind the bus stop, next to the FC chicken fast food place. There it is, with a small ХЛЕБОБУЛОЧНЫЕ ИЗДЕЛИЯ sign above it. This cake factory retail spot gets resupplied 3 times a day! The prices for these fresh pastries are rediculous: $0.50 at most, so try one of everything. Bonus: search the near-by metro underpass for a similar sweet-spot. (MOSKOVSKAYA, 16 | Mon-Fri: 10:00-19:00, closed Sat+Sun)

2 TURN YOURSELF ON

WiFi

A Starbucks-type coffee place opened up recently in a tight shop (almost a booth) right above a metro exit. COFFEE-ON offers large sandwiches, cakes and pastries, movie nights, wi-fi and, obviously, coffee, all of which instantly made it the hang out place for local institute of culture and the arts students. Coffee "to-go" option is also available. (SURAZHSKAYA, 4 | Mon-Fri: 7:00-24:00, Sat+Sun: 9:00-22:00)

3 PECULIAR STATUE PARK

MIKHAILOVSKIY SKVER is a nice park to have an ice-cream or read a book. Also, it has three very unique sculptures, all by the same author. The girl with an intricate, but useless umbrella is a tribute to a tragedy that took place in a jam-packed Niamiha metro underpass in 1999. The lady on a bench (everybody likes to take pictures with her, especially the locals) was originally supposed to be just a sketch work. And the happy man asking for a cigarette is the scariest story: the commissioner of this statue, a film producer (prototype of the figure), died the same year the statue had been completed… Never make a statue of yourself, they say.

4 THE MOST ROMANTIC PLACE

Seriously. A little pond (that sometimes turns into a fountain) endeared with statues of tender young lovers reaching towards each other, covered by weeping willows, closed off from the busy main avenue by a lovely old building… Walk the granite path that crosses it, hand in hand. What can be more romantic? The composition is entitled…"Youth"!

5 SHOP TILL YOU DROP

Tourist classic

STOLITSA (="Capital") is a large underground shopping center. You will find Belarus-made lingerie, candy, alcohol, leather, shoe, clothing boutiques down here. Standing around the balcony of the central round well and examining what's happening below/above/left/right is a popular leisure activity. In case you get hungry – you can try the buffet-type MAESTRO on the upper level or get some take-out food from RADZIVILOVSKIY supermarket on the second level and go eat on benches on the ground level or even outside. Speaking of outside: local skaters found NEZAVISIMOSTI SQUARE (PLOSHAD' NEZAVISIMOSTI) to be a perfect practice/hang out place. (Open daily 10:00-22:00)

6 WHAT'S A GOOD BAR AROUND HERE?

The answer is DOODAH KING. The bar feels very "American" thanks to the classic bar stand, southern-style posters, live music and every kind of booze imaginable. After polishing off your first bottle of vodka, it is customary to ask your drinking buddy "Ty menya

11 GOOD OLD SECOND HAND

One of the first second hand shops, Kirova 19 shop maintains a good reputation: with new stuff coming in every Thursday, locals rarely leave with empty hands. (KIROVA, 19 | Mon-Fri: 10:00-19:00, Sat: 10:00-17:00, closed Sun)

12 NEWTON | FASHION | BAR

WiFi

NEWTON fairly new-one, but it feels as though it has been around forever. Cult status is sustained by: 1) combining a bar, a café, a handmade store and a fashion shop with dressing rooms (within a very tight space); 2) serving yummy homemade pastries with good coffee (try the soft oatmeal cookies) and having all prices listed in thousands-of-BYR; 3) creating that "urban-grunge-romantic" feeling (it is located on a street with many factories: think red brick walls, scary-looking fences and dirty windows)… The local art community really hopes that this factory quarter will one day turn into a huge creative cluster, with galleries, shops and graffiti everywhere (OKTYABR'SKAYA, 16 | Fri-Sat: 10:00-23:00, Sun-Thu: 10:00-22:00)

13 CENTRAL BOOK STORE

One of the oldest and largest book stores in town – it operates since 1962. So what if 90% is in Cyrillic writing and no one sells coffee? Check it out anyway; they have a nice selection of tourist guides in English and other languages. Besides, this place used to be more tourist-friendly: in the 19th century this was a hotel. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 17 | Mon-Fri: 10:00-21:00, Sat: 10:00-20:00, Sun: 10:00-19:00)

14 LONDON

WiFi

Stary Mensk's (8) hipper brother, LONDON is an equally tiny space that can fit all of Minsk. Buying alcoholic drinks gets you a pass to go on the second floor. Extra space forms in a summer terrace when it's warm outside. Did we mention their great tea (and coffee) selection for your five-o'clock? God Save our London Coffee-Bar. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 18 | Sun-Thu: 10:00-24:00, Fri-Sat: 10:00-2:00)

15 NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

Tourist classic

After the recent reconstruction, the museum sparkles with glamour, making it a popular wedding photo scene. The permanent collection boasts the works of Great Russian painters of 18th-20th century: Rerikh, Repin, Shishkin. But perhaps a true capitalist would enjoy the fellowship atmosphere of social-realist works of our communistic 20th century, gathered on the second floor of the new annex. Be sure to get some unique postcards on the way out (about 10 for 1€), and maybe even visit the art supply store in a cellar around the corner. (LENINA, 20 | Daily 11:00-19:00, closed Tuesdays | tickets ~$5 | free admission last Wednesday of every month) (Art Supplies: KIROVA, 21)

16 CAFERERIA CHALLENGE

"Why are there so many people on the first floor? Why are most of them drunk? Why is everybody pushing me?!" Chill out, this is completely normal for TSENTRAL'NIY cafeteria. Follow this algorithm: get to the

21 HIDDEN CHURCH

One of Minsk's oldest remaining churches (mid-19th century) is well hidden from the eye by tall soviet architecture. This catholic cathedral has a double name: Church of the Holy Trinity and Church of St. Roch of the Golden Hill. Tale has is that during a terrible cholera epidemic, one of the local catholic worshipers saw a prophetic dream, in which he had to find an old statue of St. Roch, buried under the rubble of an old cathedral, and the saint would help the city beat the disease. The statue was indeed found under rubble, cleaned, and carried through the city to this spot. Cholera began to decline starting that moment, and St. Roch became known as the city patron. See if you can find this beautiful gothic church.

22 UNUSUAL THINGS SHOP

is a great way to describe PODZEMKA. Come in for this underground (="podzemka") experience: a ton of really weird + fun + unconventional things, a strange (but laid back) crowd, and good music in the background await you. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 43 | Mon-Sat: 10:00-20:00, Sun: 11:00-18:00)

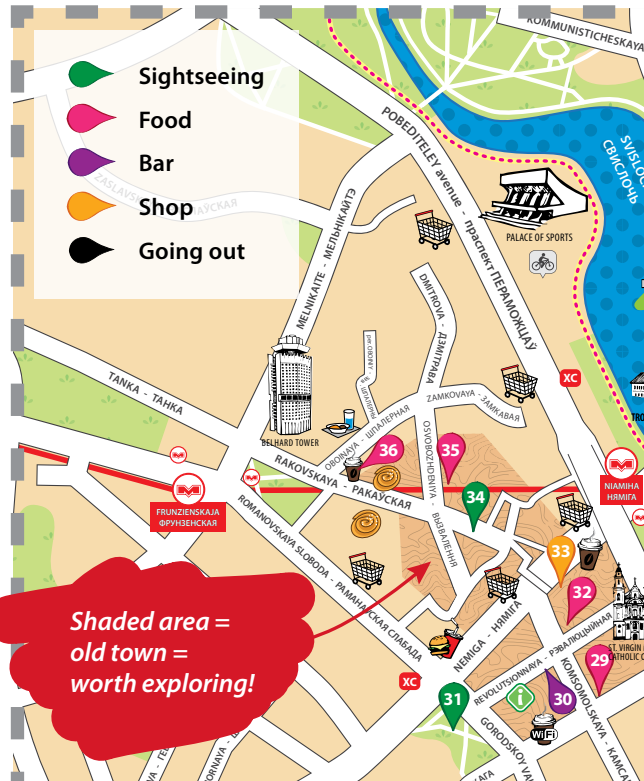
23 ZERNO

WiFi

ZERNO (='bean") quickly gained respect with local freelancers for their clean + classy white interior, moderate prices and free wi-fi. Not to mention the nice coffee and polite baristas. Check out their cheesecake, they say it's the best in town. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 46 | 8:00-23:00)

24 BELARUSIAN CANDIES!

Belarus makes great candy (who kn
combination of price and variety is
individually wrapped candies by weight. D
fancy Belgian pralines, but do expect gre
KOMMUNARKA. We enjoy the wafer-
"Minchanka", apple flavored "Sufle", and v
the rum-filled "Stolichnaya". Most expensiv
$10 per kilo. The purchasing algorithm is
weigh the candy: pick out what you like ar
weigh it in a plastic bag. You could ask h
good mixture for you, or you could just
around for "one of each, please!" 2) Pay. I
the ancient soviet checkout method will re
to a separate cash register, pay and get a
shops got rid of this step. 3) GET CANDY!
receipt – hand it to the first lady and g
otherwise pay on the spot. 22a has a small
enjoy your candy with coffee or tea. 22c
store. (KRASNAYA, 21 | Mon-Fri: 9:
9:00-16:00) (KOMMUNISTICHESKAYA, 14/
10:00-20:00, Sat: 10:00-18:00) (ARA
Mon-Fri 10:00-21:00, Sat: 9:00-19:00, Sun



4) Don't cross the road on a red light, even if the street is completely empty. It's a certain respect for the road we've developed over the years. If there is no streetlight at all – that's a whole different story =)

5) Cut through residential quarters to get somewhere faster. Not only will this save you time, but you might also come across very interesting stuff, hidden from the outside world (such as amazing graffiti walls, really old deserted soviet-era cars, strange sculptures, etc.). 43 45 are great examples of this. Minsk is a pretty safe city, so no neighborhood is too bad. There are, however, areas that can not be cut through because of fences (factories, secure parkings). They are shaded with a darker color on the map.

6) Use the trashcans! Minsk is widely known as "the cleanest city". And that's not just because of the dusting fairies that come out at night to sweep it, but also because we try to keep it clean. If you look around, trashcans are not hard to find. So please use them. Thank you!

8) Avoid taking pictures with authorities. Probably not a good idea to ask a policeman to take a smiling picture with you. Be careful about where you take pictures in general. There's a weird fear that all state secrets shall be revealed if you take a picture in certain supermarkets. Best case scenario: you will be politely asked to stop taking pictures. Worst case: 15 days in detention (that's for being a particularly energetic photographer in front of President's Residency by Kupalauskaya metro station).

9) Don't go hugging or kissing people, especially during first meeting/introduction. Maybe later. MAYBE.

10) Don't wave our money around, screaming "look at me, I'm a millionaire!!!". You look foolish! And keep your eyes from rounding up and chin from dropping when you see the number on price tags; it's not actually that expensive.

ESSENTIAL TOURIST INFO

TOURIST CENTER

Minsk Tourist Information Center – a strangely lonely and quiet place. Nevertheless, they have a lot of good maps and brochures. Take a "Where Minsk" magazine to find out which events are coming up. Enter the building from the backyard.

REVOLUTSIONNAYA, 13 (РЭВАЛЮЦЫЙНАЯ, 13)
Open: 8:45-18:00 (Mon-Thu), 8:45-16:45 (Fri)
Lunch Break: 13:00-14:00. Closed Sat + Sun.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CITY

Check out minsk.com for upcoming events in their calendar. Relax.by and Afisha.tut.by are both great resources, unfortunately, both are in Russian only.

OPENING TIMES

Most shops open around 9 or 10 and close around 20 or 21 every day, with earlier closing times on Saturday and Sunday. Museums open around 10-11, close 17-19. A lot of museums and galleries are closed Mondays.

BEST TIME TO VISIT MINSK

Coming here in November-March might scar you for life: gloomy, gray, cold, wet. On the other hand, if you come May-September, you will never wish to leave thinking you have found heaven on Earth: beautiful blue skies, green fields and forests, a subtle breeze... It's a great dilemma.

Feedback regarding this map is greatly appreciated!

Please feel free to email the author (if you found any errors or you just think this map is cool =) at awesomeminskmap@gmail.com

This map was designed by Marta Chernova

Map version 1.0 (© May 1, 2013) | .PDF format | NOT FOR SALE | FREE FOR ALL

After polishing off your first bottle of vodka, it is customary to ask your drinking buddy "Ty menya u-vah-zhah-yesh?" (="Do you respect me?"), followed by a long, intense, life-changing dialogue (sometimes monologue). (Bersona, 14 | 11:00-5:00)

7 FUN STREET

On weekends during the warmer months (May-September), MARKSA street becomes a pedestrian culture scene. Come to see festivals, participate in artistic activities, enjoy fireshows, watch movies, listen to young and fresh bands make sweet music. And in case you are wondering, the street residents ARE furious with all the noise.

8 OLD BAR, COZY BAR

WiFi

One of Minsk's oldest and coziest cafes. A tiny room fits 4 tables, so the place is virtually always full, but in the summer it expands into a street café. The crowd usually consists of romantic couples and good old friends. STARY MENSK has a great selection of warm alcoholic beverages: Belarusian traditional Krambambulya (Kram-bam-boo!-lia) vodka-based drink is for real men only, while sweet and delicious "Peach Tree" is popular with the girls. They also have an impressive selection of coffee, tea and hot chocolate. The hot chocolate is literally melted chocolate: the only proper way to enjoy it is with a spoon. (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 14 | Sun-Thu: 10:00-24:00, Fri + Sat: 10:00-2:00)

9 SEAFOOD TAKEOUT

Belarus does not border a sea, nor is fish our primary export. Yet somehow, SANTA (not the bearded jolly man) manages to provide the entire population with great fish products of all sorts. Check out their takeout cookery for some home-style fishy dishes (and more). Always dreamed of trying caviar, but don't want to commit to a restaurant or buy a whole can? Ask for a "bleen-chick s ikroy" (crepe with caviar). Or maybe you want to know what seaweed tastes like? Ask for 50 grams of "mor-skaya ka-pus-ta". A lot of dishes are self-explanatory (salmon steak, pickled herring), but some are a lot more exquisite and surprising. So if you're into fish – take a risk. Although the cookery is not the cheapest in town, it's definitely cheaper than any café or restaurant (with better food too).

Tip #1: Ask for a fork + napkins and eat on the alley benches across the street. Feed the crumbs to the fat pigeons.

Tip #2: Some dishes are even better when heated, but the shop will not reheat it for you. Take some to your hostel and enjoy it hot there.

Tip #3: If you've walked into a fresh fish market– that's their other shop, not the readymade takeout. They won't be able to help you with your immediate hunger here – walk up the street a few meters, it's by the GURU COFFEE CLUB (also approved by us).

10 TRADINIONAL FOOD

VASIL'KI is place to try Belarusian national cuisine. The name translates as "cornflowers" or "knapweed", our wonderful national sky-blue flower. Try our famous draniki (thick potato pancakes) here. Soups, salads and meat dishes are also good. Waitresses in costumes with national motifs, countryside interior, moderate prices – you may now safely brag about how you've experienced Belarusian cuisine. (Multiple locations: NEZAVISIMOSTI,16; NEZAVISIMOSTI, 89; KOLASA , 37; Open 8:00-23:00)

After polishing off your first bottle of vodka, it is customary to ask your drinking buddy "Ty menya u-vah-zhah-yesh?" (="Do you respect me?"), followed by a long, intense, life-changing dialogue (sometimes monologue). (Bersona, 14 | 11:00-5:00)

TSENTRAL'NIY cafeteria. Follow this algorithm: get to the bar stand and get in line, then pick what you'll be having (like a ham sandwich or ice-cream), then make your order once your turn comes up (don't forget beverages!), and after paying for everything on the spot, gently push your way through the crowd to the stands by the window (try your best not to spill hot tea on anyone). Congratulations! You've successfully completed a local challenge! By the way, there's a descent supermarket on the second floor. Be sure to note the colorful patriotic soviet-era reliefs up on the walls (Cafeteria open daily 9:00- 23:00, supermarket closes at 21:00)

17 THE MOST UNDERAPPRECIATED GALLERY

One of the coolest galleries in the city features the works of university art+culture students. Coming here is always a delight: fresh, interesting and thought-through pieces make it hard to not be amazed at the level of craftsmanship. There are usually very few visitors here because it's "just a student exhibit", but never underestimate the hungry and the foolish! It's a little tricky to find: as you walk up to the Palace of the Republic (large square building in the middle of OKTYABR'SKAYA PLOSHAD'), take the stairs on the left side down, below ground level. Do not be alarmed by the bulldog guarding the sun tanning salon (freaks us out every time!) (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 21 | 10:00-19:00 | closed Mondays | free)

18 CENTRAL CHILDREN'S PARK

Viewpoint

Go for a walk around our attraction/recreational PARK GOR'KOGO. Have some cotton candy, feed the ducks, draw with chalk on the asphalt, have a picnic! In other words, feel like a Belarusian kid for a few hours. Take a ride on the Ferris wheel, it's provides a great view of the city. Check out the other amusement rides too! (Rides operate April-October | Mon: 15:00-21:00, Tue-Thu + Sun: 11:00-21:00, Fri+Sat+Holidays: 11:00-22:00 | ~$1.5 for Ferris wheel, other rides range $0.50-$1.80)

19 EMBASSY DISTRICT

Just around the corner from the busy PLOSHAD' POBEDY (="Victory Square") is a quiet and beautiful embassy district (starting here and going down along the park fence). Buildings are 4 stories tall at most, fences are neat and orderly, streets are quiet and peaceful - perfect for long thoughtful walks.

20 MODERN ART + BOOKS +BAR +SHOP

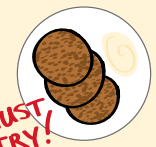
There's this strange letter in the Belarusian alphabet - ў. It's called "ooouh (like in 'moon') kratkoe" and pronounced in words the same as the letter w in "wave". This letter is considered to be somewhat of a symbol of the Belarusian language (there's even a monument in Polotsk)... So they named our hippest art gallery "Ў". Not only does Ў-GALLERY show some pretty funky modern art, but it is also a fashion-forward handmade + souvenir shop, a bookstore, and a very cozy bar (Ў-BAR) , favored by local bohemia. This spot tends to have the densest population of Belarusian-speaking people, especially in the bookstore. Finding it: if you are lost between garages and shacks, you're on the right track. Be sure to visit the washroom! (NEZAVISIMOSTI, 37a | Mon-Fri: 11:00-22:00, Sat+Sun: 12:00-22:00)

Local Food

A very Belarusian three-course meal

Shchy + slice of rye bread
(cabbage soup)

MUST TRY!



Draniki + sour cream
(thick potato pancakes)

Kolbaski + ve
(grilled pork

+ Pricy traditional food can be found at TALAKA and RAKOVSKIY BROVAR 34
+ Cheaper but equally great restaurant is VASIL'KI 10

Take advantage of the cookery (take-out) sections in supermarkets – almost every major s has one. It's a great way to save money and try some traditional delicacies. "Paparats-Kvet well-known fried chicken cutlet with cheese inside. Check out our cafeterias (="STOLOVA in "ACT LIKE A LOCAL")

Belarus is often teasingly called the potato nation by nei countries, and that is for a number of reasons 1) we seem t like potatoes, 2) a lot of our traditional food contains po 3) we are great at growing them!

LARUSIAN CANDIES!

...arus makes great candy (who knew?). The best ...n of price and variety is to purchase ...wrapped candies by weight. Don't expect any ...an pralines, but do expect great candy from ...RKA. We enjoy the wafer-and-chocolate ...", apple flavored "Sufle", and we really enjoy ...ed "Stolichnaya". Most expensive candies cost ...). The purchasing algorithm is as follows: 1) ...andy: pick out what you like and the lady will ... a plastic bag. You could ask her to create a ...re for you, or you could just make her run ..."one of each, please!" 2) Pay. In some shops, ...soviet checkout method will require you to go ...te cash register, pay and get a receipt. Some ...id of this step. 3) GET CANDY! If you have a ...and it to the first lady and get your candy, ...ay on the spot. 22a has a small café for you to ...candy with coffee or tea. 22c is the factory ...SNAYA, 21 | Mon-Fri: 9:00-19:00, Sat: ... (KOMMUNISTICHESKAYA, 14/1 | Mon-Fri: ..., Sat: 10:00-18:00) (ARANSKAYA, 18 | ...00-21:00, Sat: 9:00-19:00, Sun: 9:00-18:00)

25 BEER BREWERY TOUR

Minsk's oldest beer brewery (opened in 1864) called ALIVARYA recently organized a factory museum. They offer a terrific tour of the brewery, along with and equally terrific degustation (Must be over 18) at the end. With the help of the tedious Germans, beer got pretty good over time. Over the last few years, the quality of our beer has improved significantly (equipment renovation + new investors), making our Russian and Ukrainian friends jealous (#1 national gift request). Proud owners now strive to revive factory traditions, and their efforts are paying off. If you like blonde beer, try Zolotoe, and if you prefer dark – Porter is tasty. A jolly time guaranteed. Sign up online in advance, and make sure to ask for an English guided tour – http://www.alivaria.by/museum/signup/Pages/default.aspx (KISELEVA, 30 | 3 tours daily, 12:00-17:00 | closed Tue and Wed | 50 000 BYR (~$6))

26 OPERA + SCULPTURES

Tourist classic

They say that in 1937, when the NATIONAL OPERA AND BALET THEATER was first opened, more funds got bribed away or stolen, than used for actual construction needs. They also say that upon completion the place dropped some major jaws. On a completely unrelated subject: the Opera house was reconstructed and reopened in 2008, and it looks magnificent, inside and out. Along with the renovation brought a new fountain and a handful of new sculptures, including the centerpiece above the main entrance. Great place to take summer pictures.

27 BY THE RIVER

Tourist classic

The TRINITY SUBURB (Troetskoe Predmest'e) represents the lonely but proud remains of a once majestic merchant city. This small area once incorporated 5 different churches, none of which survived to this day. Nowadays, city dwellers love to take walks here along the river. This place looks especially wonderful on a nice summer afternoon: the water sharply reflects the sun, the view across the river is spectacular, and the girls are beautiful. The small buildings of the suburb house museums, souvenir shops and even tattoo salons. Walking between the houses and finding (seemingly) hidden stairs and passageways is a delight. And the island? The ISLE OF TEARS (Ostrov Slez) is a monument in memory to soldiers who died abroad.

28 UPPER CITY

Tourist classic

Lose yourself in the angled streets of Verkhniy Gorod (="Upper City"). Just kidding, you won't get lost: it's too small. Historically, this is one of the oldest parts of the city, and a lot of vital city life used to take place here. Today, this super-strategic high ground is a popular upper-class hangout location. Enjoy all the pricy (but cool) places around here: CHILL OUT café has live music, GAMBRINUS (gastro-pub) has 100 kinds of beer from all over the world, and BESSONITSA (club/bar) will keep you up all night. And if you prefer to stay outside, be sure to check out the entire neighborhood. Don't forget to sit in the bronze "Governor's Carriage" by the RATUSHA (="City Hall") and enjoy the view of the river that opens up from the CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

29 TAPAS BAR

WiFi

Come in for good Spanish food and live music (weekend scenario). Locals love TAPAS BAR place for a broad wine selection, the summer terrace and moderate prices (of course) (INTERNATSIONAL'NAYA, 9/17 | 11:00-24:00)

30 TNT ROCK CLUB

WiFi

Rock-freaks of all ages – play a fierce solo on your air-guitars! A club entirely dedicated to one thing: ROCK music. The name is inspired by a famous AC/DC song, known to have caused a true blast! TNT ROCK CLUB celebrates aspiring local bands, giving them a real chance to leave their names in the Hall of Fame. Come to this heavily decorated rock-shrine and listen to local talent live every Friday and Saturday at 22:00. Did we mention their Museum of Rock? (REVOLUTSIONNAYA, 9 | Mon-Thu: 12:00 – 2:00, Fri+Sat: 12:00 – 4:00)

31 NICE LITTLE PARK

Not much goes on in this park, yet it makes you feel like you're looking over the entire city. If you pick the right bench, you will be able to see busy street traffic on Gorodskoy Val, Minsk's oldest fire station (now their museum), endless amounts of people, going about their business and awaiting their transport, and even trolleybuses making U-turns in such a tight space, that it seems impossible at first. And if you look away from all that and up the hill, your eyes will come across summer greenery, birds, a strange scary looking militia building and Minsk's oldest castle-prison behind it. The park statue uniting this composition is dedicated to our beloved 19th century poet Adam Mitskevich.

32 THE LAW OF THE SANDWICH

You've been walking around our favorite city for too long and just realized that it's 3:00 AM and you are very hungry? No problem: ZAKON BUTERBRODA (="the Law of the Sandwich") serves sandwiches 24/7. If the weather is too nice to stay inside this creatively painted interior, then go up and study the inner courtyards and passages inside this block. Pay attention and you will find some very romantic/secluded benches to eat your sandwich on. FYI, the Law of the Sandwich states that a butter & bread sandwich shall always land on the floor butter down. (REVOLUTSIONNAYA, 12 | Open all the time except 7:00-8:00)

33 FINALLY... SHOPPING!

This "19th-century-Minsk-style" (=classicist) building has been under construction for a while, but now it finally opened its doors to... shopaholics! Shop for arts & crafts supplies and handmade gifts on the second floor, drink coffee in COFFEEBOX in the corner on the third floor, or maybe it is Swarovski crystals you've been craving. And that bridge on the third level connecting you directly to Rakovskaya Street is finally open! (NEMIGA, 3 | 10:00 – 21:00)

34 CITADEL + WALLPAPER

Tourist classic

This is where it all began for Minsk. Rakovskaya Street and all adjacent lanes are considered to be the oldest part of town: the original city fortifications surrounded the entire area from here to the river. This quarter has been undergoing some major cultural revival (you can still find a few broken-down/abandoned buildings). As a result we've got some nice traditional food places on either sides of the mark: down below is RAKOVSKIY BROVAR ("Ракаўскі Бровар," VITEBSKAYA, 10 | open 12:00-24:00). These guys are famous for two things: a quality microbrewery and being the number one place to bring foreigners for "impressive Belarusian texture". Overpriced? Maybe, but coming in for a liter of fresh beer (or getting beer to go!) is admittedly not a bad idea. Above is TALAKA ("Талака," RAKOVSKAYA, 18 | open 10:00-6:00), a cozy restaurant in the cellar of an old building, with great food + drink. If you keep walking higher and higher up the hill (take OBOINAYA = ШПАЛЕРНАЯ or DZMITRAVA streets and keep going up to MELNIKAITE), you will be amazed at just how quickly the cozy historic center turns first into a wallpaper factory and then into ugly soviet 9-level apartment buildings. This town is a mystery.

35 HOMEMADE EVERYTHING CAFE

WiFi

Fresh on the block is КОФЕЙНЯ. Don't be fooled by the name: even though "Kofeinya" translates to "coffeeshop", the owner lets you know right at the door that "this is not just a coffee place, we've got great food too!". She then proceeds to offer salmon steak and vegetable salad, both of which are fantastic. Proudly, she points out that everything here is homemade, even ketchup and mayonnaise. The menu reminds a family party, where each family member has a trademark dish that he makes for the table. Each item seems to have been carefully picked, and the food is original, hearty, and not at all pricy. (OSVOBOZHDENIYA, 11 | Mon-Sat: 8:00-23:00, Sun: 10:00-22:00)

36 EXPENSIVE SANDWICHES

If you miss grilled chiabatta sandwiches, come to BUVETTE. $4 for a small sandwich, and $7 for a really big one is pretty expensive for Minsk, but the lovely white + wooden interior, wealthy youngsters and the vibration of the metro line just below sets a very inspirational mood. Plus, the food is pretty good. And if you found yourself on a spending spree, be sure to try the heavenly Bounty cake ($1.80 for 100 g), the coconut filling melts on your tongue! (RAKOVSKAYA, 34 | 10:00 – 23:00)

Get in/ get out

PLANE

International Minsk-2 airport is located about 40 km east of the city.

Ways to get to Minsk:

1) cab ($30-40)

2) shuttle bus #300 (~$2, pay the driver)

300C goes to Central Bus Station (near Central Train Station) and takes about 1-1.5 hours, depending on inner city traffic, but according to schedule. It makes a stop at "Moskovskiy" bus station on the way.

300У only goes to Moskovskiy bus station (near 55) and takes 45 minutes.

Tip: if you want to see the entire main avenue + center – take 300C to Central. If you are tired and want to get to the city fast – take either one and get off at "Moskovskiy" + take metro. The price difference between the two is insignificant.

TRAIN

Central Train Station is located near PLOŠČA LIENINA metro station, almost in the center of the city. International ticket offices are located in a separate soviet-style building, while local tickets can be bought in halls of the main new shiny building.

There are plenty of descent currency exchange offices at both the airport and the trainstation.

BIKE RENTAL

Renting bicycles is not that popular in Minsk, but let's change that, shall we? Prices vary from about 25000 BYR per hour to 100000 BYR per day.

One of the stranger places to rent a bike is at Petrol Stations called "A-100". 4 hours will cost you 40000 BYR and 24 hours – 70000 BYR (Open 8:00-18:00)

Public Transport

METRO

The metro is best way to get around. Metro scheme looks like the letter X (2 lines: red and blue). It's really hard to get lost, although some transliterations and signs make it easier.

Get in: buy purple tokens for 1700 rubles ($0.20). Buy a few at a time to avoid queues, pop them into the slots, go through tourniquet on green.

BUS, TROLLEYBUS & TRAM

Also cost 1700 BYR. Buy tickets (one kind for all) from MinskTrans booths at bus stations, or the conductor aboard, or for 2000 BYR from the driver. Be sure to immediately punch them in using red punchers inside the vehicle – controllers may appear at any time.

ood

meal

Kolbaski + vegetables
(grilled pork sausage)

eam
xes)

RAKOVSKIY BROVAR 34

10

arkets – almost every major supermarket
nal delicacies. "Paparats-Kvetka" is a
ut our cafeterias (="STOLOVAYA", see #7

potato nation by neighboring
f reasons 1) we seem to truly
onal food contains potatoes,

Dairy

Belarusian dairy products deserve a special mention.
Milk (="moloko"), farmer's cheese (="tvorog"), sour-cream (="smetana"), cheese, yogurt, butter, etc. are very popular. Foreigners often note how natural our dairy products taste. If you haven't tried our famous dairy desert, syrok (="сырок"), you have not lived. Syrok comes in small individually wrapped bars (~50 grams) and tastes a lot like cheesecake (but better). Our favorite is a chocolate one made by GorMolZavod #1.

Bread

Try walking by one of our bread bakeries – the aroma shall become the piper, and you will become a mouse, searching for the entrance to the factory. You should actually be looking for the factory SHOP. That's where all that magic happens, fresh off the line. Delicious freshly baked loafs, buns and sweet cakes are often not even wrapped or packaged! Do not panic, everything is sterile. Also sold at 1 and 56

Look for these signs on the map:

Students are always poor and hungry. Here's how penniless local students solve this issue:

1) Kefir + sweet bun, best eaten on the run. If the situation calls for an at-home celebration, here is the recipe: loaf of white bread (="baton") + mayonnaise + ketchup.

2) Introducing our luxurious fast food chain – open 24-7! Marked on the map as a red "XC" dot. But where is it, I can't find it in reality…? Wait, it's that little pathetic kiosk? That's right, ХУТКА-СМАЧНА (literaly – "Quick-Tasty") is our national treasure. Hungry students are not picky about that weird-looking hot-dog or unexplainable coffee. Get the tiny pizza, drown it in ketchup and slip away into the night! Weird coincidence: the XC's are usually located very close to a WC

XC