
Car route “Legendary road”

Sometimes all you need is a legend, a faint hint at some old mystery or riddle – and you are ready to go to the back of beyond, just to see the place where it all happened. People of our generation, children of computers and best friends of cell phones, are no less fond of legends, fairy tales and stories than their ancestors. Perhaps, even more than their ancestors.

Ghosts and mysteriously vanished treasures, passionate love and guileful treachery, knights in jingling armor, prehistoric monsters *tsmoki* which still dwell in the depths of the lakes... Why are we, children of our enlightened and pragmatic century, still fascinated by legends and fairy tales? A legend is a fancy entwinement of truth and fiction, where real events are generously flavoured with folk fantasy... We want to believe in legends; when we travel, each one of us is an insatiable collector of legends because deep in our souls we all are hopeless romantics!

Route length: 470 km (2-4 days)

Polotsk – Perevoz – Rossony – Bigosovo – Rositsa (Rosica) – border-crossing point Grigorovschina (Grigorivščina) – Piedruja – Kraslava – Aglona – Rezekne – Ludza – Daugavpils – border-crossing point Urbany – Druja– Miory district – Disna – Polotsk

Polotsk

Our journey starts in Polotsk. Just like all ancient cities, Polotsk has its ghosts – witnesses and participants of significant historic events.

One of the Polotsk legend has it that in the moonlight nights, three men in friar’s habits can be met near the Ksaverijskoe cemetery. Who are they? In early 20th century urban ethnographers used to claim that these mysterious silhouettes are **the spirits of Catholic monks Adam, Dominik and Peter**, who were put to death in 1563 by Ivan the Terrible’s royal guards.

Livonian war of the 16th left many scars on the face of Belarus and added one more secret to the list of Polotsk mysteries. This secret deals with mysterious disappearance of the Saint Sophia Cathedral library. It was in 1579 that the library was for the last time mentioned in historical documents. Some scholars believe that the library might contain unique materials, such as manuscripts of Vseslav Charodei, and books copied by Euphrosyne of Polotsk. Only a small number of old Polotsk books and manuscripts have survived until our days; most of them, unfortunately, are kept in foreign libraries. There must be more documents left, but where do we look for them? In early 20th century, Belarusian historian and writer Vaclaw Lastowski put forward an interesting theory. Main character of his historical fiction novel “Labyrinths” finds the unique library in underground passages under Polotsk. **Underground labyrinths** under the most ancient Belarusian city: truth or myth? Turns out, it is a historical fact. In

1864, these labyrinths were explored by an archeologist and artist Dmitry Strukov. In the 1960s, an underground passage from the Bogoyavlenskiy Cathedral to the Zapadnaya Dvina was discovered. Other passages have not been found yet. Is it you mysterious underground labyrinths are waiting for?

During the War of 1812, another ghost appeared in Polotsk. A man in French uniform wanders near Ivan the Terrible’s Earth wall, making lovers run away in dismay. Some people say that this is a spirit of Napoleon’s officer who cheated on his young lover and was poisoned by her. The cruel girl, they say, belonged to the cream of Polotsk society... Other people say that, by taking his long night walks, **the Black Officer** reminds us of the unrested souls of French soldiers which were buried in common graves at the bank of the Polota river.

Worth seeing:

Saint Sophia Cathedral

1, Zamkovaya str., Polotsk, tel. + 375 214 42 53 40

Saint Sophia Cathedral was constructed on the bank of the Dvina in the 11th century by the legendary Vseslav Charodei. It used to be a colossal multiple-domed building, with only two cathedrals in East Slavic lands that could be compared to it (in Kiev and Novgorod). On August 1, 1710, the old church was blown up. Restoration of the Saint Sophia Cathedral, headed by a famous architect Jan Glaubits, the author of many sanctities of Vilna, continued from 1738 to 1750. Today Saint Sophia Cathedral turned into the Museum of Church History, with a Concert Hall of chamber and organ music.

Boris Stone

Not far from the Saint Sophia Cathedral you can see a huge stone with carved cross and an inscription: “God save your slave Boris”. According to the legend, during famine of 1128 Prince Boris Vseslavovich had these words carved at the stones, which used to be pagan religion relics.

Monastery of the Savior and Saint Euphrosyne

89, Euphrosyne of Polotsk str., Polotsk, tel.:+375 214 46 20 99; +375 214 46 01 36

The monastery ensemble includes the Church of Saint Euphrosyne, The Kreuzkirche, ‘warm’ church, two-floor building, gates (bell tower) with residential building. Church of Saint Euphrosyne with fresco of the 12th century is the pearl of Polotsk architecture.

This monastery is one of the most popular city sights. It was founded by Euphrosyne of Polotsk, granddaughter of Vseslav Charodei. At the age of 12, the princess took the veil and became a nun. Later, she founded a female monastery. At the end of her life, she went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and died in Jerusalem in 1167. In 1910, hallows of Saint Euphrosyne were brought to the monastery and today numerous pilgrims from all corners of the world arrive to Polotsk to pray.

In 1161, a famous Polotsk goldsmith Lazar Bogsha made a well-known cross for the Church, which later turned into a unique national relic of Belarus. However, the cross disappeared during the World War II and the mystery of this

event still heats the imagination of historians. A famous contemporary Belarusian artist Nikolai Kuzmich made a replica of the cross of Euphrosyne of Polotsk. Today everyone can come and see the relic with his or her own eyes in the monastery every Sunday as well as during major Christian holidays.

Jesuit collegium

4, Streletskii per., Polotsk

The Jesuit collegium was founded in Polotsk in 1581. The wooden buildings of the collegium were initially located on the isle of Zapadnaya Dvina in front of the church, but after the fire at the beginning of the 18th century the wooden building was replaced by the stone construction. Today the eastern block of the collegium hosts the largest art gallery in Belarus, and the western block belongs to the Polotsk state university.

Lutheran Cathedral

11, Niizhnepokrovskaya str., tel. +375 214 42 27 15

At the end of the 19th century, Polotsk was hometown for more than 200 Protestants. At the beginning of the 20th century, they constructed a stone church building in Neo-Gothic style. Today, the Local History Museum is located here.

Bogoyavlensky monastery

24, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., tel. +375 214 42 29 26

This male monastery was founded in 1582 and was considered to be main centre of Orthodoxy in Polotsk. Its residential building now hosts the museum and library of Symeon of Polotsk and a unique book printing museum. Since 1991, Bogoyavlensky monastery is open to all believers.

Ivan the Terrible Earth wall

This is a fortification monument of the 16th century, erected under the order of the Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible after Polotsk occupation by Russian troops in 1562 for the protection of the Lower Castle.

“Red Bridge”

The bridge across Polota got its name in commemoration of bloody battles between French and Russian armies in October 1812, when the number of victims reached 14 thousand people. In 1974, a memorial headstone was fixed near the bridge to commemorate liberation of the town from French troops.

House of Peter the First

33, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 27 15

Residence building, built at the end of 17th – beginning of 18th century with the elements of baroque. Russian Tsar Peter the First used to stay there in summer 1705.

Polotsk Museums (www.polotsk.museum.by, e-mail: muzey@vitebsk.by):

Saint Sophia Cathedral – Upper castle

1, Zamkovaya str., Polotsk, tel. + 375 214 42 53 40

Belarusian Book Printing Museum

22, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 57 25

Simeon of Polotsk Museum and Library

22, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 63 39

Art Gallery, former Jesuit collegium and former cadet corps

2a, F. Skaryna str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 36 32

Exhibit in the house of Peter the First “Walk along Nizhnepokrovskaya”

33, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 28 55

Local History Museum, church building

11, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 27 15

Weaving Museum of Poozerje

1, Voikova str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 30 41

Museum of Battle History

Polotsk, Immortality Mound (Kurgan Bessmertija), tel. +375 214 43 44 21

Children’s Museum

46, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 45 58

Nature and Environment Museum in the building of the water tower

21 F. Skaryna str., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 42 13

Tourist information centre:

8, F. Skaryna ave., Polotsk, tel. +375 214 42 69 49, e-mail: tic_polotsk@belladvina.com, www.belladvina.com

Restaurants:

Restaurant “Slavianskii”, 13 F. Skaryna ave., tel. +375 214 46 07 97

Cafe “Damian”, 41b, Nizhnepokrovskaya str., tel. +375 214 42 87 66

Cafe “Dionysus”, 25, Oktiabrskaya str., tel. +375 214 42 31 48

Café “Hutorok Nikolaevski”, 2, F. Skaryna ave., tel. +375 214 42 81 97

Cafe “Badalan”, 57/1, P.Brovki str., tel.:+375 44 734 54 80, +375 44 734 54 81

Hotels:

Hotel “Slavianskii”, 13, F. Skaryna ave., tel. +375 214 42 22 35

Souvenirs:

Shop “Art City” (“Gorad Majstrou”), 7, F. Skaryna ave., tel. +375 214 46 26 70

Shopping centre “Dom Torgovli”, 16, Gogolya str., tel. +375 214 42 52 36

Rossony district**Village Perevoz**

Those tourists who are collecting romantic local legends must see the Mound of Rogneda and Rogvolod on the territory of Sinsha Preserve near Perevoz village. According to the chronicles, it is at this place that the first Prince of Polotsk perished and was buried. Archeological dig could have proved this legend right or wrong, but this is impossible: at this place, a fully functioning cemetery is now located. Because the Mound stands on the peninsula, bodies of the dead are taken to the cemetery on a boat, reminding us of a Greek myth about river Styx, which carried the souls of the dead to the dark kingdom of Hades...

Commendatore Cope at Lake Volobo

If you happen to visit these places, you will never forget their beauty. In village Ozernaja, Lake Volobo, the locals will certainly tell you a story about the Moscow engineer Viktor Bondarev. In the 1970s, he happened to come here together with his colleagues and... fell in love with these places once and forever. After retirement, he used to come here at summer; from May to October, his tent was to be seen at the lakeshore of Volobo next to the beach Zolotye peski. Both locals and tourists acknowledged his indisputable authority and called him *Commendatore*. In 2006, Viktor Bondarev passed away. On the spot where his tent used to stay, local residents placed a pole with a plate which reads, “Commendatore Cope.”

Lake Nescherdo (Neščerdo): meet Jan Barszczewski and ... tsmoki

When talking about legends, we cannot but remember a man who managed to collect all legends of his native region under one title, *Noble Zawalnia, or Belarus in fantastic stories*. This book was very popular among his contemporaries and was more than once compared to *One Thousand and One Nights*. This man is Jan Barszczewski,

one of the founders of new Belarusian literature. He was born on shore of Lake Nescherdo in village Muragi; later, he graduated from the Polotsk Jesuit Collegium. In 1997, a monument to a famous fellow-countryman was erected in the village Muragi.

Jan Barszczewski, just like many other contemporary regional ethnographers, used to claim that in Lake Nescherdo, as well as in other lakes surrounding Rossony, fantastic creatures dwelt, which looked like many-headed snakes or dragons. He used to call them *tsmoki*. Local residents of the Rossony district assured Barszczewski that these terrible creatures used to nest in ... landowners' estates! It may as well be true that the Rossony *tsmoki* are cousins to a well-known Loch Ness monster!

Rossony

The former estate of landowner Glazko, erected in 1900, now hosts the Youth Art Palace, but local inhabitants still call this building “A house with a hundred windows”. (23, Komsomolskaya str., tel. +375 2159 4 10 08, +375 2159 4 12 28, tic_rossony@belladvina.com). The house looks like a small fortress; it is quite evident that such an unusual house, with its secret stairs and unexpected corridor turns, should have an unusual history. The legend has it that landowner Glazko fell in love with a proud rich girl. Some say that she either a representative of a noble German family; others describe her as the first beauty of Poland. The ambitious girl said she would accept Glazko's proposal only if he built a house with a hundred windows for her. Other people say that the girl's answer was, “Build me a castle on shore of the lake; the castle has to be exactly the same as my father's.”

Whim and prejudice are poor guides, but the Romeo decided to take the chance. Glazko bought bricks from abroad, with every single brick wrapped in paper! The architect did his best and decorated the estate with all romantic features of Gothic style: turrets, lancet windows, arches... The house exceeded all expectations; the girl married Glazko, and young people lived happily for some time, until the revolution of 1917 broke out. After the revolution, the married couple left the country and went abroad, but the house, which still remembered this beautiful love story, remained...

A house with a hundred windows has another legend to tell. People say that landowner Glazko was not rich at all; he managed to fulfill his lover's folly only because he hit the jackpot in a casino. The money was enough to build a castle and to enjoy life after the wedding. But when the revolution burst out and the couple had to leave the place, Glazko hid what was left of his fortune somewhere near the house. No one can say whether the money is still hidden somewhere or whether the whole story about the treasure is just a myth. But if there is no treasure at all, why did some fishermen fish out golden coins from the lake several years ago?

Worth visiting:

Comradeship-in-arms Museum of Belarusian, Russian, Latvian and Lithuanian partisans

10a, Sovetskaya str., Rossony

Tel.: (02159) 2-13-67

Schedule: 10.00 – 18.00. Monday off.

The museum was founded in 1980. It occupies thirteen halls, the main exposition demonstrating a collective fight of partisans of Belarus, Russia, Lithuania, and Latvia against fascist invaders during the Great Patriotic War. Certain halls are dedicated to Masherov, underground resistance in the Rossony district, and liberation of the region. One of the most famous permanent exhibitions is devoted to the history of the Rossony district.

Verhnedvinsk district

Bigosovo – Rositsa (Rosica)

Bigosovo is a stone's throw away from the border with Latvia and very close to **Rositsa (Rosica)**. According to the legend, the red bricks, delivered to Bigosovo by train for the construction of the church in Rositsa, were passed to the site of church construction in the following way: the residents of neighbouring villages made a chain from the railway station to the church and passed the bricks from hand to hand. This may be the reason why this church perfectly fits into the surrounding landscape. It seems as if the church has risen from under the ground to have a look at the lake mirror at the foot of the hill where it stands.

Border-crossing point Grigorovschina (Grigorivščina) – Piedruja – Kraslava – Aglona – Ludza – Daugavpils – border-crossing point Urbany

Piedruja

The border-crossing point Piedruja welcomes you at the crossroads of European countries with its shining church domes.

Piedruja, first mentioned in historical chronicles of the 14th century, used to be a strategic location for three states: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Russia. The Catherine tract, which goes through Piedruja, was the road along which all conquerors of Europe used to march.

Worth seeing:

Hotel “Piedruja” (200 m from Daugava)

Piedruja, Kraslava district, tel.: +371 656 29682, +371 28608784, +371 26357228

This hotel is located on the riverside of Daugava. You can enjoy your Latgalian or multinational dinner, flavoured with local folk group in the hotel or in the open air. You can also enjoy a raft journey along the Daugava.

Kraslava

Kraslava is located in Latgale, ‘the blue lakes district’. It lies in the bend of the Daugava river, 40 km away from the second largest city of Latvia, Daugavpils, and 275 km away from Riga.

On Kraslava’s coat-of-arms you will see a silver boat with five oars against the blue background. The oars stand for five nationalities of people who live in Kraslava: Latvians, Russians, Belarusians, Polish and Jews. When explaining

the meaning of this emblem to the guests, Kraslava citizens usually say, “We are in one boat, so we have to row together!”

Earl Plater Fortress

8, Pils, Kraslava, tel. +371 65623586

It was Konstantin Ludwig Plater who started to construct the fortress in 1750. In 1791, the construction was finished by August Hiatsint Plater. The castle was designed either by Jan Valentius Didrejsten alone or together with Antonio Parokko. Originally the fortress decor was performed in Baroque style; however, in the late 18th century and early 19th century it was reconstructed in accordance with classical traditions. Kraslava fortress is the only castle in Latgale with such a decor. Both sides of the building are visually similar, while the façade makes it nice and cozy.

Kraslava Museum of Art and History

8, Pils str., Kraslava, tel. +371 65623586, kraslavas_muzejs@inbox.lv

Museum is located in the old park in one of the buildings of the Kraslava fortress, owned by the Platers from the middle of the 18th century to the 1920s. Museum offers a unique exposition “Five ores” which is located in the 17-meter-long replica of a boat.

Augustus stone is located in Kraslava near house No 12, Augustus street. The stone is 2.8 m long, 2.2 m wide and 0.7 m high. It used to be even bigger, but one part of it, approximately one third, had split off long ago. At the foot of the stone there is a big carved rectangle, with a family emblem of earls Broel-Plater and the date– “1729”. The legend says that the King of Poland Augustus II once stopped at this stone in 1729, while hunting. This story might as well be true, because Augustus II indeed was King of Poland from 1697 till 1733, and Kraslava became part of Poland in 1729. However, there exists another reason why 1729 is such an important date for Kraslava. It was in 1729 that Kraslava estate was purchased by Earl Plater and Kraslava became a township. It is highly probable that these events explain the origin of the Plater coat-of-arms carved on the stone. Augustus stone also used to mark the boundaries of the Kraslava township.

Karnickis Mountain (Love Mountain)

Kraslava, Avgusta str., tel.: +371 65622201, tic@kraslava.lv, www.kraslava.lv

Karnickis Mountain is a very picturesque place, which is always associated with a romantic love story of Emilia, the daughter of the Earl Plater, and Jozef Karnickis, a Polish officer. In 1838, Emilia met Jozef, owner of the Evers estate, at one of the castle balls, and fell in love with him. But the Platers were against their love; they wanted Emilia to marry a more prosperous and noble man. In despair, Emilia and Jozef decided to commit suicide. It was agreed the Jozef would shoot himself, and Emilia would jump from the third floor of the castle. It all went as planned with Jozef: he shot himself to death on the night of August 3. As for Emilia, in the very last moment she was saved by her maid. Jozef Karnickis was buried at the very place where he lost his life; his tomb was marked by a monument with

an inscription *Judge not lest ye be judged*. Several years later, his remains were taken to Eversmuižas where he was buried at an estate not far from Ludza (now Cibla). The monument to Karnickis remained in Kraslava; it has been standing on the mountain for more than 165 years already. This beautiful legend about true and faithful love is still passed on from generation to generation, while the hill bears the name of Karnickis Mountain, or Love Mountain, and the spring at the foot of the hill is often referred to as the Spring of Love. Guided tour: 30 min.

Anemones at the Chocolate hill

Sauleskalns str., Kraslava, tel.: +371 65622201, tic@kraslava.lv, www.kraslava.lv

Anna and Janis were deeply in love with each other; no one in Kraslava could love so passionately and so devotedly. They wanted to get married, but Anna's parents, who had already found a fiancé for her, forbade her to see Janis. The young lovers could not bear separation; they disobeyed the parents' orders and saw each other every night at the Chocolate hill. However, their happiness did not last long. Anna was forced into marriage, and Janis, miserable and desperate, threw himself into Daugava. When Anna learned about her lover's death, she went to the Chocolate hill to mourn. The hill, wet with Anna's tears, was full of anemones which reminded Anna of her dead lover. Each year, before she grew old, Anna came to the Chocolate hill during anemone blossom to shed tears over her Janis. Anemones still blossom at the Chocolate hill each year; they tell us a beautiful story about sincere and true love. Guided tour: 30 min.

Tourist information centre of the Kraslava district:

13, Brīvības str., Kraslava, tel. +371 656 22201, +371 26395176, e-mail: tic@kraslava.lv, www. Kraslava.lv

Restaurants:

Board house "Daugava", 28, Rīgas str., Kraslava, tel. +371 656 22634, +371 29112899

Cafe "Mārīte", Tīrgus 2, Kraslava, tel. +371 656 24039, +371 29112899

Cafe "Todes", Rīgas 58, Kraslava, tel. +371 29166609

Cafe "Zodiak", 34, Rīgas str., tel. +371 26359045, +371 26522408

Guest house "Zīve", 14 Pārtseltuvus str., Kraslava, tel. + 371 29185835 (advanced reservation)

Hotels:

Guest house "Zīve", 14 Pārtseltuvus str., Kraslava, tel. + 371 29185835

Guest house "Priedaine", 2, Klusa str. Kraslava, tel. +371 26430798

Cottage "Vilnis", 10, Raiņa str., Kraslava, tel. +371 26355115

Youth hostel "Zvaniņš", 8, Pils str., Kraslava, tel. +371 26541545

Stable yard "Klajumi", Kaplava, Kraslava district, tel. +371 29472638, ilze.stabulniece@inbox.lv, www.klajumi.lv

Cottage "Arkādija", Gandeli, Kraslava district, tel. +371 27006998, +371 29709006

Cottage "Skerskāni", Udriši, Kraslava district, tel. +371 29195745, skerskans@inbox.lv

Bicycle rental in Kraslava:

Guest house "Zive", 14 Pārtseltuvus str., Kraslava, tel. +371 29185835

Guest house "Priedaine", 2, Klusa str. Kraslava, tel. +371 26430798

Guest house "Stirnmeži", Kaplava, Kraslava district, tel. +371 25960091, +371 29728133.

Aglona

Aglona is worthily considered to be the third popular sight of Latvia and the first one in Latgale.

In 1980, due to the 200-anniversary of the church, Pope John Paul II assigned Aglona church the status of Basilica minoris. Pope John Paul II visited Aglona in September 1993 and served a Pontifical Mass on a newly reconstructed consecrated square with nearly 380 000 pilgrims.

Aglona tourist information centre

34, Somersētas, Aglona, Aglona district, tel. +371 29118597, +371 65322100; tic@aglona.lv; www.aglona.lv

Restaurants:

Guest house "Upenīte", 7, Tartakas str., Aglona, Aglona district, tel. +371 26312465

Guest house "Pie Vijas", 7, Daugavpils, Aglona, tel. +371 29287044, 65321905

Cafe "Turība", 36, Somersētas, Aglona, tel. +37165342313 / 26483558

Hotels:

Guest house "Silmalas", Rušona, Aglona district, tel. +371 29101378

Guest house "Upenīte", 7, Tartakas, Aglona, tel. +371 26312465

Guest house "Pie Vijas", 7, Daugavpils, Aglona, tel. +371 29287044, 65321905

Guest house "Mežinieku mājas", Gūteņi, Aglona rural municipality, Aglona district, tel. +371 29234425, +371 25820461

Guest house "Aglonas Cakuli", 4, Ezera str., Aglona, www.aglonascakuli.viss.lv, tel. +371 29194362, +371 2933422

Hotel of Aglona Basilica, 8, Ciriša str., tel. +371 65381109, 29472155

Worth seeing:**Aglona basilica**

Address: 8, Cirišu, Aglona, Aglona district, tel.: +371 653 81109, +371 29472155

For more than 300 years, Aglona Basilica has been an international relic and the heart of Latgale. Every year more than 250 000 pilgrims come here to celebrate the Blessed Virgin resurrection from August 13 to August 15.

In 1699, landowners Ieva and Dadziborg Shostovitski invited the Dominican monks from Vilnius and built a nice wooden church in a very picturesque place between the lakes Cirišu and Egles. In 1768-1789, the old church was reconstructed into a new Baroque brick church together with the adjoining monastery building. The church was built in honour of the Blessed Virgin resurrection; the main altar is decorated with an icon of Holy Blessed Virgin by the unknown artist of the 17th century. For 10 years already the Holiest altar sacrament has been taking place in the Aglona Basilica.

Mākoņkalns

Mākoņkalns rural municipality, Rēzekne district, tel.: +371 646 46712

At the south coast of lake Raznas, you will see one of the highest hills of Latgale – Mākoņkalns, or Clouds Mountain (absolute height – 248 m, relative height - about 55 m above sea level). In earlier days, it was a place where a well-known castle Volkenbergas, built in 1236, used to stand. Legend has it that after the death of the king and his wife, Volkenbergas and its territories were inherited by the king's three daughters – Rosa, Lucia and Maria. Each sister built a new fortress on the territories she inherited: Rosa's castle was called Rezekne (Rēzekni) / (Rositten), Lucia built Ludza (Lucina), and Maria's fortress was known as Vilaka (Marienhaus). People say that Mākoņkalns, with its mysterious ruins, is a place where a castle with a beautiful enchanted princess once sank. The princess's guard is a black dog. In the first Easter night, the princess leaves her abode and waits for someone to save her from her curse. If you want to see the princess, you will need a black cat, a black dog, and a black rooster. At midnight on Easter, take the animals and come to Mākoņkalns. When the rooster starts to crow, the dog begins to bark, and the cat starts to meow, the beautiful girl will come out of the water... This is what the legend about Mākoņkalns and the Volkenberg castle tells us. If the castle had not sunk, it definitely would have been one of the most fascinating sights of Latgale. And still, those who live Latgale are very proud of Mākoņkalns, one of the highest hills in this region. Climb the legendary Mākoņkalns, enjoy beautiful panoramic view... Maybe you are the one who the enchanted princess is waiting for? Guided tour: 1 – 1.5 hours

Lake Raznas

Kaunats, Čornajas, Lūžņa, Mākoņkalns rural municipalities, Rēzekne district

Tel.: +371 646 46712

When all lakes in Latvia already had their names, it turned out that one lake was left unnamed. People decided to seek advice from the next man they see. An old man was passing by; when asked how they should name the lake, the old man said, „Razna”, which means „in different ways” in Russian. People thought this was how the old man wanted the lake to be called; this is how lake Raznas got its name. Guided tour: 1 – 1.5 hours

Rēzekne

Rēzekne is the true heart of Latgale! It is a multinational and multilingual city where different nations live in peace. In this town, people live with Faith, listening to dense sonorous ding-dongs of Catholic, Orthodox, and Old Believer

churches. "Vienoti Latvijai" (also known as "Latgales Māra") is the symbol of Rēzekne, and is considered to be one of the most magnificent samples of monumental constructions in Latvia. Rēzekne castle ruins, Zamkovaya mountain, Latgale Museum of Culture and History, and various churches are also of great interest.

Mysterious ruins of the Rēzekne castle keep fascinating legends which tell us about the castle and its former owners. One legend says that in dungeons under the castle daughter of the Volkenbergas castle, Rosa, still dwells. Rosa sits on the golden throne and waits to be saved. The throne is guarded by two dogs; one of them has a golden chain on its neck, and the other has a chain made of silver. Every nine years, in the Easter night, Rosa comes out of the dungeon to find a courageous man who would free her. To save the girl, the brave hero has to take her golden cross to the church and sprinkle it with holy water. Many young men tried to free Rosa, but none of them succeeded. Those who managed to defeat beasts, demons and devils suddenly felt that the cross in their hands became intolerably heavy, and their way to the church seemed to last for eternity. Each time when a brave man has no more strength left and lets the cross go, he hears a soft cry, and Rosa disappears again, to be confined in the dungeon for another nine years.

Another legend has it that the Rēzekne castle was once owned by a king with three daughters. Each daughter received her own castle as a gift from her father. The princess of the Rēzekne castle fell in love with a musician who played gusli, a well-known Russian instrument. Her father did not approve of their love and shut her up in the castle vault. The princess is still to be found in the vault; she sleeps there, sitting on her dower chest full of gold. The chest is guarded by two dogs; only he who can beat the dogs can free the princess. Some brave men tried to save the girl, but could not cope with the dogs; this is why the princess still sleeps in the castle vault, waiting to be saved. She is allowed to leave the vault for only one night in the whole year. When she is out, she walks along the Rēzekne river. Then she returns to the vault and lapses into sleep for another year. Guided tour: 1.5 – 2 hours.

Rēzekne tourist information centre

98, Atbrivošanas aleja, tel. +371 64605005, 26337449, tic@rezekne.lv

Worth visiting:

Rēzekne St.Nikolas Old Believer Preaching House

4, Siņicina str., Rēzekne, tel.: +37164625471, +371 26354441

The Preaching House was built in 1895, and in 1906 it was considerably restructured: a bell tower with three bells was erected, after which the House obtained its modern look. Bells are the peculiar pride of the Rēzekne Preaching House: the main bell weighs 4 tons and is considered to be the biggest in Europe. These bells were cast by A. Lavrov's company in Gatchina. A museum, describing the life of Latgalian Old Believers, was opened in St.Nikolas Old Believer Preaching House. You can visit the museum upon advanced registration.

Restaurants:

Restaurant "Rozaliņa", 2, Brīvības str., Rēzekne, +371 64607840

Bar-saloon "Mōls", 22/24 Latgales str., Rēzekne, +371 64625353, +371 29460041

Cafe "Baravika", 11, Brāļu Skrindu str., Rēzekne, +371 646 25072

Cafe "Marijas kafija", 88, Atrīvošanas avenue, Rēzekne, +371 646 05450

Hotels

Hotel "Latgale", 98, Atrīvošanas avenue, Rēzekne, tel. +371 64622180, www.hotellatgale.lv

Hotel "Kolonna Rēzekne", 2, Brīvības, Rēzekne, tel. +371 64607820, reservationRēzekne@kolonna.com, www.hotel.kolonna.com

Hotel "Rebir", 165, Atrīvošanas avenue, Rēzekne, tel. +371 64638052, rebir@inbox.lv

Guest house "Zaļā sala", Greiškāni, tel. +371 29373015, 26366391, www.hotelzalasala.lv

Ludza

Ludza tourist information centre

42, Baznīcas str., Ludza, tel. +371 65707203, 29467925, tic@ludza.lv; www.ludza.lv

This is a very beautiful region of lakes and forests, the morning part of Latvia, which used to be home for Baltic Latgalian tribes a thousand years B.C.E. This theory is supported by historical evidence of 14 encampments, more than 25 settlements and about 70 burial grounds. To protect the town, the population erected a Latgalian wooden castle between Small and Large Ludza lakes on top of the hill; the castle gave rise to a dynamic and rich town which received the name of Ludza, in honour of the King's daughter Lucia. Ludza was first mentioned in Kievan Rus Hypatian Chronicles in 1177, in the context of birth and baptism of Prince Rurik's son in Ludza. In 1777, when Latgale became part of Russia, Ludza was made the county centre; it quickly turned into a big trading centre and a second largest town in Latgale after Daugavpils. During Latvia's independence, Ludza was an economically and socially active city with 238 enterprises, 356 shops, beautiful wooden Catholic church, hospital, grammar school, station, museum, but almost all wooden buildings and strategically important constructions were lost during the fire of 1938.

Ludza has always been on the crossroads of important trade routes between Europe and Russia, which determined the whole life and destiny of the region and its people. The land was contested by Russia, Sweden, Poland and Germany. As centuries passed by, this land became the new home for other nationalities, including Estonians, Russians, Old Believers, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Jews. Today, appearance and future of this town, which still stands on the crossroads of important routes and events, is defined by the interplay of everyday life and traditions, culture and art.

! You can explore Ludza on your own or order a guided tour (1-2 hours), +371 65707203, +371 29467925, tic@ludza.lv, ligakondrate@inbox.lv).

Ruins of the Ludza medieval castle

52, Baznīcas str., Ludza, Ludza district; tel. +371 65707203, +371 29467925, tel./fax +371 65707202 (Ludza tourist information centre), tic@ludza.lv, ligakondrate@inbox.lv, <http://turisms.ludza.lv>

In 1399, the most imperious castle of the Livonian order in Latgalia was built by the German crusaders between Small and Large Ludza lakes. The building was made of stone, had three floors, six towers, three gates and two vorburgs (fortification in front of the castle). The castle, built out of stone and red bricks, was decorated with black glaze-coated bricks. Today ruins of the Ludza castle are very popular with local residents and tourists; from here, you can enjoy amazing view of the town. Old castle, king and enchanted princess are heroes of many beautiful legends. One of these legends tells about a rich king who lived in a huge castle in Ludza. The king had a beautiful daughter who fell in love with a commoner. The father tried to talk the girl out of the marriage with a servant, but she would not listen. In a moment of anger, the king cursed his daughter, and devil took her to the dungeons. The king, overwhelmed by his grief, died soon; then wars began and the castle was destroyed. Local people used to avoid the castle: from time to time, they would hear someone in the castle weep and cry for help. One Sunday morning three shepherds lost their flock and found it near the old castle. One of the shepherds, an orphan, became a victim of his friends' trick: they took the boy's hat and threw it into the castle. The boy burst into tears, but suddenly a beautiful girl appeared in front of him; she held out his hat and said, "Don't be afraid, I will do you no harm. I am the princess of this castle; I bear my father's curse. I beg you, set me free from the curse which has been torturing me for so many years. When you turn 21, come to me on the Easter morning and take me with you. But remember: you must not take anything except for me." When the boy grew up, he went to the castle; when he entered the dungeons, he saw many rooms full of wonderful treasures. In the last room, he found the princess; but just when he was taking her hand to take her with him, he saw two lovely wreaths on the wall. The boy took one wreath for himself and put another one on the princess's head. A sudden burst of thunder rolled over his head, and a moment later the young man found himself on the ground, near the dungeons. The legend says that the boy should not have touched the wreaths; because of his curiosity, the princess will have to stay in the dungeons forever.

Statue of St. Mary, Queen of the Marian lands

Baznicas str., Ludza, tel.: +371 65707203, +371 29467925, T./факс: +371 65707202 (Ludza tourist information centre), tic@ludza.lv, ligakondrate@inbox.lv, <http://turisms.ludza.lv>

One morning, a woman was walking down the path between a church and the castle ruins. Suddenly she saw a beautiful woman in blue and white clothes coming towards her. "Where are you going?" the unknown woman asked. "I am going to see my friend," the woman answered. "What are you carrying?" the beautiful maiden demanded. "An iron", the woman replied.

This small conversation over, the woman headed home. Being a devout believer, first thing she did after she came home was to pray to the image of the Blessed Virgin who, as she found out in amazement, looked exactly like the maiden she had just met! Local sculptor Leon Tomacicki was so impressed by this amazing event that in 1930s he erected the statue of St. Mary near the Karnickis chapel. Each day, Virgin Mary welcomes and blesses everyone who heads to the Catholic church. Guided tour: 20 min.

Rupučakmens (Toad stone) – memorial stone in commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the city

Ludza, on the square opposite hotel „Valensija”

Tel.: +371 65707203, +371 29467925, tel./fax: +371 65707202 (Ludza tourist information centre), tic@ludza.lv, ligakondrate@inbox.lv, http://turisms.ludza.lv

Since early times, in Lurupa there was a big stone of an unusual form and remarkable surface. Once, a woman, who was passing the stone on her way to milk the cows, saw soldiers near the stone. But when she approached the stone, the soldiers were gone. “Toads, gone!” cried the woman. This is how the Toad stone got its name. Today, you will find the Toad stone in Ludza, opposite Ludza Orthodox church. It was brought here when the city celebrated its 800th anniversary. Stone base contains a capsule with a message for future generations. Guided tour: 20 min.

Ludza Catholic Church

52, Baznīcas, str., (Baznīcas iela 52), Ludza, Ludza district, tel. +371 65725653

In order to promote Catholicism in the region, Polish people built the first Catholic Church in 1687. In 1738, after the church had been burnt down, on the same spot, the Honourary Abrickis built the greatest and the most beautiful Latvian wooden catholic church with 2 towers, 5 altars, and rich liturgical inventory. The fire of June 11, 1938 destroyed the church and it was only in 1995 that the new white restored catholic church opened its doors to the believers.

Ludza Orthodox Church

121, Latgales iela, Ludza, Ludza district, tel. +371 65781397

This church, designed by A. Zakharov, was built in 1845 in the Russian classic style and is considered to be one of the most beautiful buildings of the old city centre. The church is protected by the government.

Large Ludza Lake and Small Ludza Lake

Ludza and Ciblas districts, Ludza, tel.: +371 65707203, +371 29467925, tel./fax: +371 65707202 (Ludza tourist information centre), tic@ludza.lv, ligakondrate@inbox.lv, http://turisms.ludza.lv

Once upon a time, two sisters, Lucia and Rosalia, decided to build two castles. Having chosen suitable spots for the castles – about 20 km away from each other – the girls made a huge pile of stones and started working. However, they only had one spade and had to use it in turn, throwing it over to each other. Once, Rosalia thrust the spade with such force that it flew past Lucia and got stuck into the earth, so that Lucia had a hard time pulling it out. Cavity in the ground made by the spade handle became Small Ludza Lake, while Large Ludza Lake appeared at the spot where the spade itself was. Look at the form of these lakes – don't they look exactly like the spade and its handle?

Recreation sites near the Small Ludza Lake (equipped as part of the Water Joy project):

Recreation site “Soldier’s trumpet” (21 Peldu str.): beach with infrastructure, children’s playgrounds, pavilions, swimming pool, rent of tourist equipment, playgrounds for beach volleyball and football, stage, fishing spots, place for fire. Here, various events and festivities take place: Neptune’s Day, beach volleyball and football championships.

Recreation site near Ludza Local History museum (2 Kulneva str.): pavilion, benches, fishing spots, a raft.

Recreation site opposite the Soldier's Trumpet (22 Sojkina str.): fishing spots, pier for boats.

Guided tour: 1.5 – 2 hours

Restaurants:

Cafe "Kristīne", 25, Baznīcas str., Ludza, tel. +371 26527888

Cafe "LEAN", 30, Stacijas, Ludza, tel. +371 29443534, +371 657 81331

Cafe "Larina", 45, Latgales str., Ludza, tel. +371 657 24310, +371 26575924

Latgale cuisine (for groups, in advance) - Ludza traditional crafts centre, 27a, Tālavijas str., Ludza, tel. +371 65707203, +371 29467925, ligakondrate@inbox.lv, www.ludzasamatnieki.lv

Hotels

Hotel "Ludza", 1, Maija str., tel. +371 29104055, +371 65726112, hotelludza@inbox.lv

Hotel "Pie stacijas", 86, Stacijas, Ludza, +371 26199290

Hotel "Valensija", 20, Kr. Barona, Ludza, +371 28629829, www.valensija.lv

Recreation centre "Dzerkaļi"; Dzerkaļi, Cirma district, Ludza district; +371 26324735, www.dzerkali.lv

Daugavpils

The second largest city of Latvia, founded in 1275. The city is the birth-place of the world famous artist Mark Rotko, tango king Oskar Strock and actor Solomon Michoels. The fortress, built in the 19th century, and the church mountain, comprising the churches of four confessions, are considered to be the symbols of the city.

Daugavpils tourist information centre

Tel. +371 65422818, 22a, Rīgas str., info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

Worth seeing:

Daugavpils fortress

Daugavpils, Daugavas str., tel. +371 65422818, info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

This fortress is a unique cultural and historical sight, the symbol of Daugavpils. It is the only fortress of the second half of the 19th century in the Eastern Europe, which has remained unchanged.

Historic Centre of Daugavpils

Tel. +371 65422818, info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

Historic centre of Daugavpils is a unique national architecture masterpiece of town planning, which has been fully rebuilt within a very short period of time, in the course of the 19th century.

Daugavpils Local History and Art Museum

Daugavpils, Rīgas 8, tel. +371 65424155, museum@apollo.lv, www.dnmm.lv

One of the oldest and largest museums of Latgale. It was founded in 1938 in one of the most beautiful buildings of the city, which is considered a historical and architectural monument (jugendstyle). Exhibits: 'History and culture of the Daugavpils region', 'Nature of the Daugavpils region', Art Hall of Mark Rotko, Art Hall of Leonid Baulin.

Monument to Pavel Dubrovin

Daugavpils, Dubrovin Park, tel. +371 65422818, info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

In Dubrovin Park, not far from the fountain, there is a monument to former mayor and the founder of the park, Pavel Dubrovin (1839-1890).

Unity House

22a, Rīgas, Daugavpils, tel. +371 65422818, info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

It used to be the largest building in the Baltic States during the First Latvian Republic period. Now the building hosts the centre of Latvian culture, Daugavpils theatre, tourist information centre and central library, information centre of USA, bank, book store etc.

Solar clock

13, Vienības, Daugavpils, tel. +371 65422818, info@visitdaugavpils.lv, www.visitdaugavpils.lv

The solar clock is located in the Vienības street, 13, not far from educational building of the Daugavpils University.

Russian house

11, Tautas, Daugavpils, Tel. +371 65437936, rusdom@inbox.lv, www.rusdom.lv

Exhibits: Old Faith Church in Latvia, Orthodoxy in Latvia, Gzhel bright room, Khokhloma gorenka, fairytale backyard, where characters of Russian fairy tales live, and Fairytale House where they stay for the winter. The characters have been created by the Daugavpils artist Petr Hudobchenok.

St. Mary's Catholic Church in Grīva

28 Baznīcas str., Daugavpils, tel.: +371 65424194

In the end of the 19th century, there were an Old-believer and an Orthodox church in Grīva, but there was no church for the Catholic community. In 1845, terrible fire burned this place to the ground. Local people prayed day and night, asking God to save them from more grievances. Once, when a father of a large family was praying at night, Virgin Mary came to him and said that people should build a church; in this church, their prayers for God's mercy will be heard. The pious man decided not to wait for the dawn: at once, he woke up all his neighbours and told them about Virgin Mary's epiphany and her message. In the morning, every one living in Grīva was aware of the miracle. The land where the church was to be built belonged to Earl von Ettingen; upon hearing the news, the Earl came to Grīva, knelt down and prayed to God. After that, he ordered to put a cross at the spot where Virgin Mary was seen and

declared that this land would be used to construct the church. This happened in 1860. From that day on, the man who had seen Virgin Mary started a fundraising campaign to raise donations for the church to be built. Twenty years later, when he finally had enough money to start the construction, local people of Griva gained permission to build the church. Guided tour: 20 min.

House of Jānis Rainis in Berķenelē (Berķenelē manor)

Berķenelē, Kalkunes rural municipality, Daugavpils district, tel.: +371 29272200, berkenele@inbox.lv

This manor, located 7 km from the city, has an interesting coat-of-arms, a wheel with broken spokes, which its first owner allegedly received from the Empress Catherine the Great. Once, the Empress was making a tour of her possessions, willing to see how her people lived. When going down a steep slope not far from the manor, the horses went wild; the coachman could not calm them down, and it seemed as if the honorary guest would have to have a swim in the cold river at the foot of the hill. The convoys, motionless with fear, did not know what to do. Fortunately, a strong young man who was plowing not far from the road saw the accident. He hurled down in front of the storming horses, grabbed the carriage wheel and tried to stop the carriage. Three spokes broke out, but the carriage stopped just near the river. In gratitude, the Empress decided to reward the brave man. She told him to walk for an hour, measuring the land with his steps: the land that he would be able to cover would belong to his family. The young man followed the Empress' will; later, when he was granted title of nobility, he also received a coat-of-arms, a carriage wheel with three broken spokes. Guided tour: 1 – 1.5 hours

Jezupova (Juzefova) park

Jezupova, Naujene rural municipality, Daugavpils district, tel.: +371 65471321, muzejs@apollo.lv, naujenesmuzejs@inbox.lv

The park and the manor used to be called Hofzumberg, which means “house on the mountain” in German. In the late 18th century, the park got its present name, Juzefova park. In 1990, there used to be a manor in the park. Juzefova park gives rise to a spring with healing water. In the south-eastern part of the park you will see a big grey rock, 10 m high, 46 m wide and 32 m long. On its flat surface, a carved cross can be seen. The nurse of Bogdan Šahno, the last owner of the Juzefova manor, used to claim that this rock is an illustration of tragic events of 1922. A young couple who worked in the manor, a maid and a stableman, fell in love with each other and were getting ready for the wedding. But the old earl, who was also in love with the young maid, did not allow this marriage to take place. The maid put on her wedding dress and threw herself out of the window. Her fiancé could not live without his beloved and hang himself in the park. The rock with the carved cross indicates the place where these tragic events happened. Guided tour: 30 min

Daugavpils hotels:

Hotel “Park Hotel Latgola”, 46, Ģimnāzijas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65404900, reception@hoteldaugavpils.lv, www.hotellatgola.lv

Hotel "Dinaburg", 39, Dobeles str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65453010,

+371 65453009, info@hoteldinaburg.lv, www.hoteldinaburg.lv

Hotel "Flora", 45, Krimuldas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 29224913, +371 20062571, viktors.travel@inbox.lv

Hotel "Rebir", 19, Vienības str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65421857

Sports centre "Olimpija", 2u, Valkas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65451070, +371 26545708, info@hotel-olimpija-sk.lv, www.hotel-olimpija-sk.lv

Sports centre "Celtnieks", 7, Elgavas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65432510

Guest house "Villa Ksenija", 17, Varšavas str., 17, Daugavpils, tel. +371 65434317, villaks@villaks.lv, www.villaks.lv

Guest house "Leo", 58, Krāslavas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65426565, lauma@apollo.lv, www.hotelleo.lv

Guest house "Duets", 1, 2 Preču str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 27026227, +371 65435607,

hotelduet@inbox.lv, www.hotelduet.lv

Guest house "Paradīze", 193, 18 November str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65451551, daugavpils@ibs.canon.lv

Guest house "Viesnīca Verina", 44, Ģimnāzijas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65422190, hotelis@verina.apollo.lv, www.verina.lv

Guest house "Teika -D", 4, Varšavas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65457547, nina-hotel@mail.ru, www.hotelteika.lv

Recreation centre "Vilnis", 74, Dzintaru str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 29119558, info@stropuvilnis.lv, www.stropuvilnis.lv

Daugavpils State Gymnasium Hotel, 24, Saules str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 65420611, +371 26159884

Restaurants:

Bistro "Vēsma", 49, Rīgas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 44363

Cafe "Arabika", 8, Viestura str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 02612

Cafe "Ukrainiskaja hatka", 25, Cietokšņa str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 24480

Cafe "Vita", 22a, Rīgas str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 27706

Restaurant "Gubernators", 10, Lāčplēša str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 22455

Cafe "Pasaules brīnumi", 15, Vienības str., Daugavpils, tel. +371 654 21797

Druja

Druja is a small town in the Braslav district of the Vitebsk region. It stands on the left bank of Zapadnaya Dvina at the spot where it merges with Druika. Druja was first mentioned in Stryikovski Chronicles in 1386.

In the middle of the 17th century, Druja, which had already received Magdeburg rights, consisted of three districts that stretched along the Dvina. Old Druja was located over the Drujka river, in the western part of the town; wedge-shaped Sapezhin lay between Zapadnaya Dvina and Druja; while Sapezhin outskirts were situated on the high hill, in the western part of the settlement. Sapezhin used to have a market place with a city hall as well as a Dominican church, a synagogue, hospital, houses of Sapeha, etc. Today you can see Blagoveschenskaya Church (Good News

Church) near Dvina on the May 1st Street and a group of 1-2 storeyed buildings of the late 19th and the early 20th century at the city square. The most interesting historical buildings in Druja are the Bernardine cloister and church, founded by the Sapeha family in the 17th century.

Druja has retained the main features of city planning of previous ages – the main street directions are traced either parallel or perpendicular to Dvina. In the western part of Druja there is a monument to General Kulnev, a hero from the Patriotic war of 1812, who fell during the battle on Zapadnaya Dvina. Opposite the town, across the river, the Latvian town of Piedruja can be seen, which also lies on the hills.

The oldest landmark of Druja is situated right in the Zapadnaya Dvina river. Not far from the mouth of Druika, near the river bank, you will find a huge rock in the water; on its surface, you will see a six-pointed cross and a faded inscription. It is one of three remaining well-known **Boris stones** which, upon the order of Prince Boris Vseslavovich in early 12th century, were decorated with Christian symbols and inscriptions and were placed in different locations of the Polotsk Principality. People used to call them differently: Boris, Boris -Khlebnik, Pisar', Pisanik, Boris-Gleb, Borisoglebskiy, and even French stone and Napoleon stone. The stones inscription read: “God save your slave Boris”. Legend has it that during the Great Famine of 1128 Prince Boris had these inscriptions carved on big stones which used to be pagan relics. By doing so, the Prince hoped to promote Christianity in the Polotsk land, glorify his own deeds and find favour in the eyes of God. Exact number of Boris stones is still unknown, but in the 19th century there were more than ten. Boris stone in Druja is the only stone that lies almost at the same place where it had been placed initially. For instance, the famous Boris stone in Polotsk, which now lies near the walls of the Saint Sophia Cathedral, was brought there only twenty years ago; before this, it lay in the bed of the Zapadnaya Dvina close to Novopolotsk. Third stone, “Pisanik”, a block of red granite, was transferred to Moscow in 1878. It took much effort to relocate the stone, but finally it was placed in the reserve museum “Kolomenskoe” where it is to be found nowadays.

Some of Boris stones were destroyed during the imperial period, and three stones were blown up in the 1930s as part of the Soviet Union anti-religious policy.

Miory district

For many centuries, people of these places used to worship huge boulders. In the **village Yazno**, you will find a huge rock where, according to different legends, either Napoleon or Catherine II once dined. A boulder near the **village Bertovschina (Bertovščina)** was a place where the French army once stopped for the rest. Another interesting site is a Sewer Stone near Stariy Pogost: according to the legend, it used to sow clothes for local people until, one day, some woman put him into rage and it stopped sewing ever since.

Village Perebrodje

The village is located not far from Miory. It is famous for its lakes Obsterno and Nobisto, two largest lakes of the Obsterno group, connected by river Hrabrovka. According to the legend, the lake was divided in two in one night (!)

by the peasants, so that the troops of King Sigismund August could march on. After that, the tiny Perebrodje village became part of the Magdeburg Law and became a township. It used to be a very small village, not more than 30 houses, but its fishermen were famous all over the countryside. This is not surprising, considering that they lived in the country of lakes!

Another legend tells us about two brothers who lived between the Obsterno and Nobisto lakes and used to fish out so much fish that they began to sell it in the nearest villages. Later, when both of them had families, they started to dream about their own land. But local landowners did not want to share their land and wished to drive the brothers out from these places. The brothers' dream came true in a most unexpected way. One night, armed men knocked at the door of the elder brother's house. It turned out that king Sigismund August and his army needed to cross the river as soon as possible. The brothers started to transport the soldiers across the river, but soon understood that they were losing time: the river was not too wide, but they had only a limited number of boats and could not take many soldiers at a time. Wishing to make the crossing faster, the brothers came up with a resourceful solution: they placed the boats side by side across the river and put logs on top of the boats, thus forming a bridge. It took the army only an hour to cross the river. King Sigismund August, impressed with the brothers' inventiveness, granted them a certificate which made them permanent owners of a piece of land 10 km in diameter.

Disna

Disna is the oldest town in the Miory district and the smallest in Belarus, with its population of 2.5 thousand people. Disna has a very long and fascinating history. In the 11th century, it used to be a domain of Polotsk princes and had the name of Kopets-Gorodok. A small Kopets-Gorodok was considered to be a very important strategic point – it protected the capital Polotsk from the invasions of crusaders.

An island located at the spot where the two rivers run into each other is a place where the history of Disna began. Historical name of the town, Báthory Island, is well-known up to our days. In 1579, before Polotsk campaign, Polotsk was occupied by the troops of Ivan the Terrible. It was here that King Stephen Báthory made a camp and reviewed his troops. Back from the campaign, he left his artillery in the castle. In summer 1581, Stephen Báthory's Pskov campaign started from here. According to the legend, the king ordered to deepen the ditch surrounding the castle to make it inaccessible. This is how the river beds of Dvina and Disna merged and the castle turned into an island.

Surprisingly, although the banks of Zapadnaya Dvina and Disna are quite high, the town is regularly flooded. In spite of the floods, people of Disna do not mind living in this town which, in such moments, looks much like Venice.

Disna is located on the spot of tectonic fault, which explains why there are so many stones here. These stones are best seen in dry summers, when shallow rivers uncover huge stone blocks. Legend has it that in ancient times, when Vikings used to pass the castle in Kopets-Gorodok on their way down the river, they were often stopped by the cruel **Stone Robber** who levied tribute on them. The Robber then turned into actual stone, but is still to be seen on his guard, near the island.

The walls of the stone 19th-century Resurrection Cathedral keep the **icon of Hodegetria** of the 15th century. According to the legend, this wooden icon came to Disna by water, down the Zapadnaya Dvina, in the 18th century. On August 10 every year a mass procession is held here, with the icon being carried along the streets of the town from Resurrection Cathedral to Hodegetria and back.

Worth seeing:

Centenary bridge

This unique arch bridge with wooden cover on metal and stone ground has been used for more than 100 years.

Resurrection Cathedral of the 19th century

Disna, Yubileinaya str., (before – Zamkovaya str.)

The walls of this stone church keep the icon of Hodegetria of the 15th century.

Disna Historical Museum

5, Kuzmina str., Disna, 5, tel. +375 2152 3 73 46

Enthusiasts from the boarding-school collected lots of materials dedicated to the history of Disna, including exhibits from the archaeological excavations of 1982. Here we can trace the town history from the Stone Age up to the present time.

Restaurants:

Cafe “Dvina”, 11, Yubileinaya str., Disna, tel. +375 2152 3 73 98

Hotels:

Hotel, 26, Yubileinaya str., Disna, tel. +375 2152 3 73 86

Polotsk

Once again, we are in Polotsk, and here our journey ends. Before leaving the city, wait for the moonlight night and go straight to Ivan the Terrible Earth wall. If you are lucky to meet the Black Officer, you might learn about Napoleon’s carriages full of gold which are still buried somewhere in Belarus...

TEXT:

LYUDMILA DRIK, RIFTUR

TATIANA KOZAČUKA, KRASLAVA TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

LIGA KONDRATE, LUDZA TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE