

7 WONDERS OF BELARUS

Belovezhskaya Pushcha

- Belovezhskaya Pushcha is the oldest national Park of Europe situated in Western part of Belarus and partially on the territory of Poland, it occupies the area of 85 thousands hectares. Once the area was reserved exclusively for hunting for Polish kings and Russian tsars. Nowadays Belovezhskaya Pushcha withing territory of Belarus possesses status of national park.



- 86% of the area of Belovezhskaya Pushcha is covered by woods. The age of trees ranges up to 160-180 years while their heights amount up to 32-35 meters. Sometimes you can find true record breakers: 200 to 350 years old pine trees with trunk diameter of up to 150 cm or oaks older than 600 years.





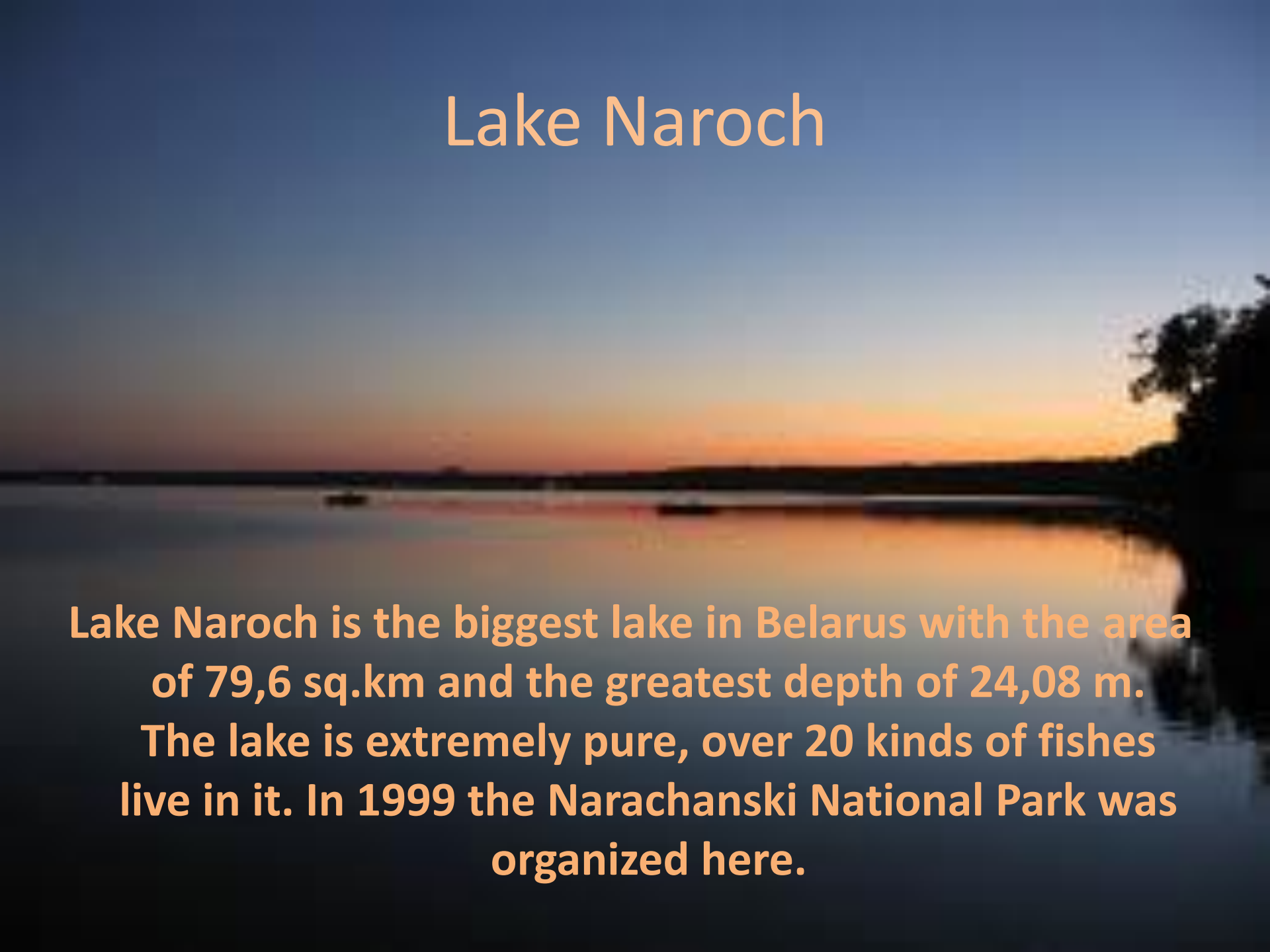
- Variety of flora and mild climate form favorable conditions for life of forest animals. Here live 55 species of mammals, more than 200 species of birds, 11 species of amphibia, 7 species of reptiles.



- However, the most remarkable wild animal of the park - and the biggest one in Europe - is European bison called "zubr" in Belorussian.



Lake Naroch



Lake Naroch is the biggest lake in Belarus with the area of 79,6 sq.km and the greatest depth of 24,08 m. The lake is extremely pure, over 20 kinds of fishes live in it. In 1999 the Narachanski National Park was organized here.

- The lake is distinctive with the richness of swimming birds on it and nesting of rare for Belarus species of birds, such as mute swan (лебедь-шипун), terns (крачка), small osprey (орлик), small grebes (поганка), is registered in its suburbs.



MIR CASTLE



THE CASTLE IN MIR IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MONUMENTS OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF BELARUS. IT IS THE FIRST STONE PRIVATELY OWNED RESIDENCE OF THE BELORUSSIAN LANDS. IT WAS BUILT IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 16TH CENTURY.



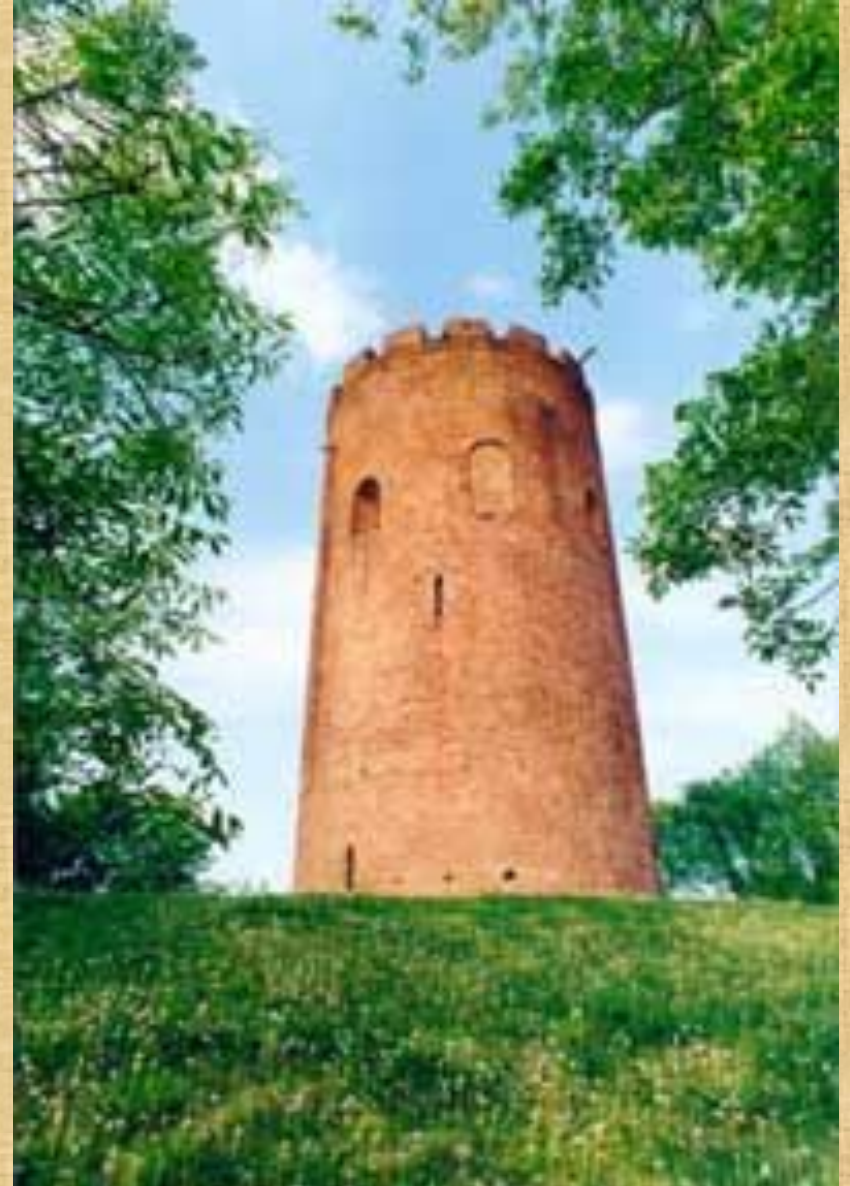
- THE DECORATION OF THE CASTLE IS BASED ON THE CONTRAST OF RED BRICK WALLS AND WHITE PLASTERED NICHE WITH DIFFERENT ARCHES THE MAJESTIC CONSTRUCTION ALWAYS ATTRACTS ATTENTION OF RESEARCHERS, VISITORS AND ARTISTS. THE MONUMENT IS DISTINGUISHED BY RICHNESS AND PLASTICITY OF THE GOTHIC DÉCOR HARMONIOUS COMBINATION OF ELEMENTS OF THE RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE WITH OTHER STYLES AND ITS PARK THAT MAKES WITH THE SETTLEMENT MIR ONE ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE ENSEMBLE**



- The Mir castle was owned by the Il'inichys, the Radziwills and the Svyatopolk-Mirskys who changed the initial appearance of the castle according to their tastes. For the centuries of its existence the castle was ravaged more than once, destroyed and revived again. Today the castle is restored. In 1993 the diploma EUROPA NOSTRA was awarded for the successes in restoration. In 2000 the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO has inscribed the castle on the World Heritage list

The White Tower of Kamenets

- A neat example of 13th—century fortification architecture, the White Tower of Kamenets (Belaya Vezha) attracts thousands of tourists to Brest Region from afar and wide. It is utterly impossible to stay indifferent to the terse Roman and early gothic shapes of this dungeon.



- This is the only medieval military architecture monument of the kind fully surviving in Belarus. The pillar of Kameniets was built between 1276 and 1288 by order of Volhynia's Prince Vladimir Vasilkovich. The outside diameter of the 30-metre round vertical tower is 13.5 metres. The dark red brick walls of the tower are 2.5 metres thick. The tower is referred to as «white» standing for "unconquered". There are embrasures on every of the five levels of the tower. Since 1960 the tower has been home to an archaeological and local history museum with varied collections of medieval weaponry and armour.



Saint-Sophia cathedral in Polotsk

St Sophia Cathedral is situated on the highest bank of the Western Dvina. St Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk was built in the same period of time as the similar cathedrals built in Kiev and Novgorod



The cathedral was built in the mid eleventh century. Duke Vseslav of Polotsk invited professional architects from various countries to construct the cathedral

The cathedral was not only the leading temple of the Western-Slavonic Orthodoxy, but also a large cultural-educational center, a burial-vault of Polotsk princes (16 sarcophaguses were found).



- From the middle of the 11th century till 1579 there was a really rich library, archives of state acts and theological manuscripts, Ephrosinya Polotskaya assisted a lot to increasing their number. The library was plundered during the Livon war 1558-1583, when the city was stormed by the troops of the Polish king Stephan Batorij together with the Jesuits.

National Library of Belarus

- founded on 15 September 1922, is a copyright library of the Republic of Belarus. It houses the largest collection of Belarusian printed materials and the third largest collection of books in Russian behind the Russian State Library (Moscow) and the Russian National Library (St Petersburg).



- It is now located in a new 72-metre (236 feet) high building in Minsk. The architects Viktor Kramarenko and Michael Vinogradov designed the National Library of Belarus as a gigantic diamond - a symbol of the knowledge stored in the books within. The building can seat about 2,000 readers and features a 500-seat conference hall.



- In addition to serving as a functional library, the National Library is a city attraction. It is situated in a park on a river bank and has an observation deck looking over Minsk. As of 2009 it is the only structure in Minsk with a public observation deck. The area in front of the library is used for many public concerts and shows.



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