



EXETER
INTERNATIONAL

ESSENTIAL MINSK



CENTRAL EUROPE



ITINERARY AT A GLANCE:

DAY 1	ARRIVAL MINSK
DAY 2	MINSK SIGHTSEEING
DAY 3	MINSK – NIASVIZH – MIR – MINSK
DAY 4	MINSK – ONWARDS

WHY EXETER INTERNATIONAL?

Our Knowledge & Experience

At Exeter International we have been creating memories and crafting custom-designed journeys for 27 years. We are a team of specialists committed to providing the best travel experiences in our destinations. Each of our experts has either travelled extensively on reconnaissance trips, or has lived in their area of expertise, giving us unparalleled first-hand knowledge. Because we focus on specific parts of the globe, we return to the same destinations many times, honing our experience over the years.

Hand-Selected Guides

We know that guides are one of the most important components of any travel experience. That is why we only use local experts who have a history of working with our guests and whom we know personally. We are extremely particular in selecting our guides and are confident that they will be one of the most memorable aspects of any of our trips.

Authentic & Extraordinary Experiences

Our Extraordinary Experiences are different, unusual, and not something easily googled. We also know how important it is to remain authentic. Going beyond the obvious is becoming increasingly important to our guests, and we focus on developing experiences that enrich and enhance both head and heart. We also recognize that the obvious sights are still popular, and we make every effort to skip lines whenever possible, therefore maximizing time in each destination.

Original Custom Programs, Meticulously Planned

Our experts speak your language both literally and culturally. Our advice and recommendations are impartial, honest, and always have the individual in mind. We save valuable time in pre-trip research and offer smooth and effortless touring in each destination. Our planning is detailed, and we think of everything, including restaurant reservations. You will also have complete peace of mind on the ground with 24-hour local support.

Quality Vehicles

We use late-model luxury vehicles, often Mercedes, Audi, BMW, or Volkswagen, depending on the size of the vehicle you need. The only exception to this is in some Central Asian countries that use vehicles predominantly from Japan.

DAY 1



MINSK

Arrival in Minsk. You will be met by your private driver who will be waiting for you just outside of Customs, after you pick up your luggage. *The cost of your flight is not included in your trip. Flight details are TBA.* Transfer to your centrally located hotel.

While we often think of Minsk and Belarus as part of the Russian sphere of influence, it is truly more historically part of the Lithuanian and Polish world, culturally and historically. Minsk was part of Lithuania and in the 16th century, of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Annexed by Russia in the 18th century, Minsk became a provincial capital and, after the formation of the Soviet Union – the capital of the Belarusian Soviet Republic. Following the Nazi invasion in June 1941, Minsk was heavily bombed and occupied a few days later. Under Nazi control, half of Minsk's population perished and the city became the site of one of the largest ghettos in Europe, believed to have housed some 100,000 Jews. In the final months of the Second World War, in the fights between the Nazi and the Soviet armies, the city was virtually reduced to rubble. After being recaptured by the Red Army, Minsk's historic center was gradually rebuilt with Stalinist-style monumental public buildings, wide boulevards, and wide squares.

This afternoon, your guide and driver will meet you in the hotel lobby for an overview tour of the Belarusian capital city and its Soviet architecture. You will visit Independence Square, which some locals still call Lenin Square because of the former Soviet leader's statue standing in the center after all these years. More than any other former Soviet Republic, Belarus has left almost all Soviet monuments intact which makes it rather unique; this is something you don't even see in Russia today.

Not far away, you will later see the Red Roman Catholic Church. Actually, called the Church of St. Simeon and St. Helena, this beautiful house of worship was built in the early 1900s, only to be closed by the Soviet authorities a couple of decades later. It has been recently renovated and is again functioning as a religious center.

Continuing along Independence Avenue, you will see the former KGB building - a yellow Neo-classical structure with imposing colonnade. In the park across the street, one of the few remaining in the former Soviet Union busts of Felix Dzerzhinsky – the founder of the secret service which was the predecessor of the KGB, can still be seen. Dzerzhinsky was Belorussian Jewish, and he is respected to this day in the country.

Later you will venture farther north to visit Victory Square with its grey obelisk and the eternal flame honoring the heroes of World War II. Also here, you will see the recently rebuilt Minsk City Hall which again stands on the same spot it was erected back in the 16th century. Just steps away, St. Mary's Cathedral was built in the

1700s as part of a Jesuit Monastery. After Minsk became part of the Russian Empire and the Jesuit order was banned, the cathedral became part of the local diocese. Under the Soviet regime, the cathedral was closed and fell into disrepair. Recently, the cathedral has been restored and now houses religious services once again.

EXETER SERVICES

Airport Transfer; Vehicle, Driver & Guide (4 hours)

HOTEL

DoubleTree



DAY 2

MINSK SIGHTSEEING

This morning your guide will meet you in the hotel lobby for a full-day tour of the city's main sights with private car and driver. This morning you can cross the Svislach River to visit the small Troitskoe Predmestye neighborhood, which was once Minsk's Old Town. Rebuilt in the style of the 17th – 18th century, it is now dotted with small cafes, restaurants, and craft shops and is a great area to explore on foot. Also here, you may also see some of the Russian Orthodox and Catholic churches and cathedrals which have miraculously survived the Second World War.

Nearby, you will also see the Island of Tears – a monument dedicated to the victims of all wars. It is designed in the form of a chapel decorated with statues of mourning women. Also on the bank of the Svislach River, your guide will point out the apartment building in which Lee Harvey Oswald – a former Marine who defected to the Soviet Union, lived for several years in the 1960s. He even married and had a child before returning to the United States for the alleged assassination of President John Kennedy.

Continuing your tour, you can make a stop at the scenic Yanka Kupala Park with its famous fountain, and the Museum of the Great Patriotic War. The museum was opened shortly after Minsk was reclaimed from the Nazi army, but before the official end of the Second World War in May 1945, making it the first of its kind. The museum's impressive collections of over 80,000 items include art, photographs, military uniforms and banners, as well as military equipment and soldiers' personal effects.

Finally, you might want to enjoy some time in the National Art Gallery, which features collections of icons, sculpture, and applied art, including pieces by famous Russian painters like Vasnetsov, Repin, Levitan, and Makovsky. The museum is best known for its Chagall collection who was actually Belorussian and born not far from Minsk. The collection also features the family portraits of the Radziwill family, famous in the US for its connection to the Kennedy family. Most people are surprised to know that the Radziwills are actually Belorussian by origin and not just Polish. This is the perfect place to start the discussion of the Radziwills, as tomorrow you will visit their palace and castle in the countryside.

EXETER SERVICES

Vehicle, Driver & Guide (8 Hours)

HOTEL

DoubleTree

DAY 3



MINSK — NIASVIZH - MIR — MINSK

This morning you will head out into the countryside to see two of the most important sights in Belarus: the Radziwiłł family palace in Niasvizh and their nearby Mir Castle. Both are wonderfully restored.

A one-hour drive through surprisingly verdant Belarus will bring you to the idyllic town of Niasvizh, where the Radziwiłł noble family built their palace in 1583. Now a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site, the palace has been authentically brought back to its original splendor. The palace was rebuilt many times and displays features of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical periods. Don't miss the ancient porcelain and crystal collection, original parquet floors and intricately carved wooden interiors.

A twenty-minute drive from Niasvizh is the village of Mir and the famous Mir Castle. Originally built in the 16th century, the Mir Castle displays wonderful Gothic elements as well as other architectural styles ushered in over the centuries. It's an enchanting castle complete with five towers and the remnants of a moat. We love the atmospheric restaurant in the basement of the castle, which features wonderful mushroom soup as well as light salads like grilled chicken Caesar. It's the perfect stop for a bite to eat on your day in the country. (Lunch cost is not included in your program)

Later today, you will transfer back to Minsk and your hotel for an evening at your leisure.

EXETER SERVICES

Vehicle, Driver & Guide (8 Hours)

HOTEL

DoubleTree



DAY 4

MINSK - ONWARD

This morning, your driver will meet you in the hotel lobby for the private transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

EXETER SERVICES

Transfer only

WHAT IS INCLUDED



Cost of the Program: From \$1,575 per person, based on two (2) people traveling together.
From \$1,375 per person, based on four (4) people traveling together.

Accommodations

Minsk

Three (3) nights in a Junior Suite at DoubleTree by Hilton; Tax and Breakfast included daily.

The hotel, situated near the heart of Minsk's Old Town has a unique and contemporary atmosphere. No other hotel of this quality has such a fantastic location in this area. Each room has a stunning city views.

All rooms offer free high-speed internet, large plasma screen televisions, tea and coffee making facilities in the rooms. The hotel offers a fully-equipped fitness center, onsite restaurant, urban café, and rooftop bar

Junior Suite: This is the recommended starting category for all Exeter International guests. These rooms offer either one king bed or two twins and feature approximately 731 square feet of space decorated in the eclectic style with traditional craft. The extra amenities offered in this room include television and an espresso coffee machine.

Meals

No meals included, other than breakfast as described above. Your final documents will include our top recommendations. *Your guides will recommend restaurants that fit your exact needs daily.*

Services

Private vehicle, driver and guide at your service as described. The timing for each day is noted in your program. Exeter International's local offices are available for your assistance 24 hours per day while you are traveling. Our local staff may also assist you with restaurant reservations and purchasing of additional theater and museum tickets at your request.

Transportation

Transportation is included in the program as noted. Timing for each day is noted in your program.

Guides

Hand chosen for their knowledge on local history, art & architecture. Guides are at your disposal as noted in your itinerary.

Tickets

All entrance tickets as described in the program.

Exeter International Travel Information

BAGGAGE

The vehicles reserved for your itinerary can accommodate up to two medium-sized suitcases per person. If you intend to travel with additional luggage, please advise your travel consultant so appropriate arrangements may be made. In general, we schedule a sedan for parties of two, a minivan for parties of three to four and a minibus for parties of five or more.

SIGHTSEEING

Sightseeing arrangements have been made with your special interests in mind. Your drivers and guides are at your disposal for full or half-day sightseeing programs as indicated in the itinerary. Within those time and mileage guidelines, your driver and guide are at your disposal, so you are free to modify your program as you please. Should you require additional time or mileage, the costs will be quoted on request and may be paid for locally in the local currency or U.S. Dollars.

Every effort has been made to confirm that scheduled sightseeing venues will be open at the time you plan to visit them. However, individual estates, museums, gardens and other points of interest can change their hours of operation at short notice. In the event that a particular attraction is closed on the day or time of your visit, your guide will offer alternative arrangements or rearrange your sightseeing to accommodate these unexpected events.

OPTIONAL EXPENSES

Charges for extra meals, transport, sightseeing services or other optional additions to your established itinerary are your responsibility and must be paid locally in the local currency.

GRATUITIES

Gratuities are not included in your tour price. Your final documents will detail tipping guidelines.

DINING WITH YOUR GUIDE

On days when dinner and lunch costs have not been included in your itinerary (or in your tour cost), you may, at your discretion, choose to invite your guide to dine with your party. You are under no obligation to do so but, if you do extend such an invitation, the guide is your guest and you will be responsible for the cost of his/her meal.

Booking Conditions

PAYMENTS

Exeter International must receive a deposit of 25% of the total program cost before reservations for your independent travel program can be initiated. The balance of payment is due 60 days prior to departure. *No reservations are made on your behalf until this deposit has been received.* Availability and pricing is subject to change until this deposit is received. **All deposits are nonrefundable.**

CANCELLATION

Written cancellations received less than 60 days prior to departure are subject to the following forfeit of tour cost

- 59-14 days prior to departure, 50% of total tour cost
- 14 or less days prior to departure, 100% of tour cost

REFUNDS

We regret that refunds cannot be issued for arrangements confirmed on your itinerary but unused once your tour has begun.

INSURANCE

Exeter International strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance to protect your investment. You will find insurance costs noted on your invoice and insurance coverage information in your original booking packet.

PRICES AND ARRANGEMENTS

Once an itinerary is finalized and final payment has been made, a \$100 revision fee will be charged if the itinerary is changed.

The tour price includes planning, handling and operational charges. Rates are quoted in US Dollars on the current rate of exchange and tariff as of 2019. Exeter International reserves the right to increase tour prices to cover increased costs, tariffs and taxes, and to reflect fluctuations in foreign exchange markets.

Devaluation of a foreign currency will be weighed against any tariff increases imposed. Exeter International does not breakdown costs involved in any Small Group or Individual Travel Program.

All arrangements are subject to availability and modification if necessary.

Prices are subject to change if necessary until paid in full.

Exeter International

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