

Belarus Solidarity Cycling Expedition

join us and support greenways

in Eastern Europe (1st –31st August 2008)



By establishing first-hand contacts we support locals in coming up with ideas for sustainable business initiatives that respect the human desire for prosperity and nature's need for protection. We seek to raise awareness about environmental issues and the value of preserving cultural resources. Expect the unexpected, laugh, improvise, share and push those pedals on a tour that will make your summer;

- Cycling through greenways (nature routes in eco-corridors) and supporting sustainable development of greenways (www.greenways.by).
- With one year old Dutch 18 gears "SPARTA" Hybrid Bicycles and transporter at the back
- Following bus for excess luggage and temporary drop outs
- An experienced local guide and continuous central office back up
- In each period a nature excursion of two days by canoe or hiking
- In each period a village festival on local crafts, culinary and pagan traditions
- Banja (Russian Sauna) regularly prepared for the group!
- Transport from Minsk to the tour departure point and back arranged
- Accommodation in Minsk arranged on request by *Country Escape*

Did you know that Belarus has:

- 10 million inhabitants
- 207.600 Km² of territory (38% of forests!)
- frontiers with Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia
- 20.000 rivers, 10.000 lakes !
- been independent since 1991 (formerly part of the USSR)
- been recognized as a country featuring preserved nature and rare biodiversity
- been increasingly opening up to the outside world and tourism (especially health, ecotourism and adventure tourism)

Minsk, the capital, is:

- 1800 km from Paris, London and Rome, 1500 km from Amsterdam, 960 km from Berlin, 470 km from Warsaw, 180 km from Vilnius...
- 13% of the population
- the urban and modern display of a rural and poor country





Itinerary: Flat to hilly. Quiet asphalt roads or hardened sand. Sometimes through fields or forest tracks. No age limit, but good physical condition is required. Cycling regime: 70 to 100 km/day every second day.

Accommodation: You are required to bring a tent although bed accommodation will be arranged at certain locations. Separate rooms upon request.

Meals: Breakfasts and dinners are arranged by our hosts. We will buy our lunch and will usually picnic somewhere on our way. Vegetarian kitchen is difficult to organize in Belarus but everything will be done to arrange good veggi alternatives.

Participants: The group consists in average of 10-12 Western Europeans & 3-6 Belarusians.

Climate: Can be quite warm in August, up to 32^oCelsius during the day. But rain showers are very well possible, as well as mosquitoes ☺

Price and dates: You can join the tour for one or more periods:

- 1st period: 1-11 August, from Bielowieza (PL)– Motol
- 2nd period: 10-21 August 2008, from Motol – Lepel
- 3rd period: 20-31 August, from Lepel – Krolova

We introduced an own currency so that people from countries with a different buying power pay the same price. Fee per day is the price of 17,5 “breads”, or 25 breads when you join for only one period. This means for Western Europeans 35 euro per day for more than one period, and 50 euro per day if you join for only one period (In Western Europe a bread is about 2 euro). In Eastern Europe the breads are cheaper of course! In Belarus a bread is for example an equivalent of 50 cent ☺.

This price includes **food, accommodation** (sometimes accommodation will be available, but you are required to take your tent), **bike** (except when you want to take your own), **local organization, luggage bus** and **guiding**.

Passport & VISA: ECEAT Belarus can give you “visa support”. This includes an invitation, obligatory medical insurance and a one night hotel voucher, that need to be sent by registered mail. The cheapest and easiest solution is that more than 10 people ask for the tourist visa at the same time. VISA needs to be arranged *at least 1,5 month* in advance. Otherwise you can take the more expensive business visa. For this you don't need an original invitation (a copy sent by fax/email is acceptable), and it can be bought on the airport on arrival. A tourism visa costs 50 euro in the Netherlands for example, a business visa 65 euro. The invitation costs 10 euro, and the medical insurance 50 cents per day.

Transport to the departure point: The ECEAT team will leave by bus from Amsterdam to Poland on the 29 of July, and will return the 1st of September 2008. There is still place for up to 10 people in the bus. There are direct night trains from Düsseldorf to Minsk. Minsk also has an international airport.

Insurance: ECEAT is not organizing or “selling” the expedition but just facilitating it; ECEAT can therefore not been held responsible for any eventual accidents. We will ask you to sign a “participant contract” that will also refer to this point.

Contact and deadline registration: volunteers interested in taking part in the expedition should register by 31 May 2008. Please contact rebelfarmer@hotmail.com for more details.

Chat with participants from the Solidarity Cycle Tour 2008 at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/experiencebelarus2008>
View more pictures from Solidarity Cycle Expedition 2007 on <http://www.flickr.com/photos/12463228@N07/show>



In partnership with:

Country Escape, an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) located in Minsk, became associated with the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT) in 2006. Out of this union emerged the Belarus Tour, a cycling expedition through the rural and preserved area of the country. 2007 saw the first edition of the tour, which was a nice start to our mission: from South-West to North-East, 1500 kilometres of meeting local people, discovering and listing Belarus resources, studying tourism possibilities...



Reviews:

"Cycling through Belarus is not just cycling through beautiful landscapes. It is not just enjoying the company of a wonderfully hospitable people. It is not just facing a fascinating country rich with culture and history. Riding my bike through Belarus with ECEAT was a truly in-depth experience combining all these aspects."

Sarah, participant of the tour 2007

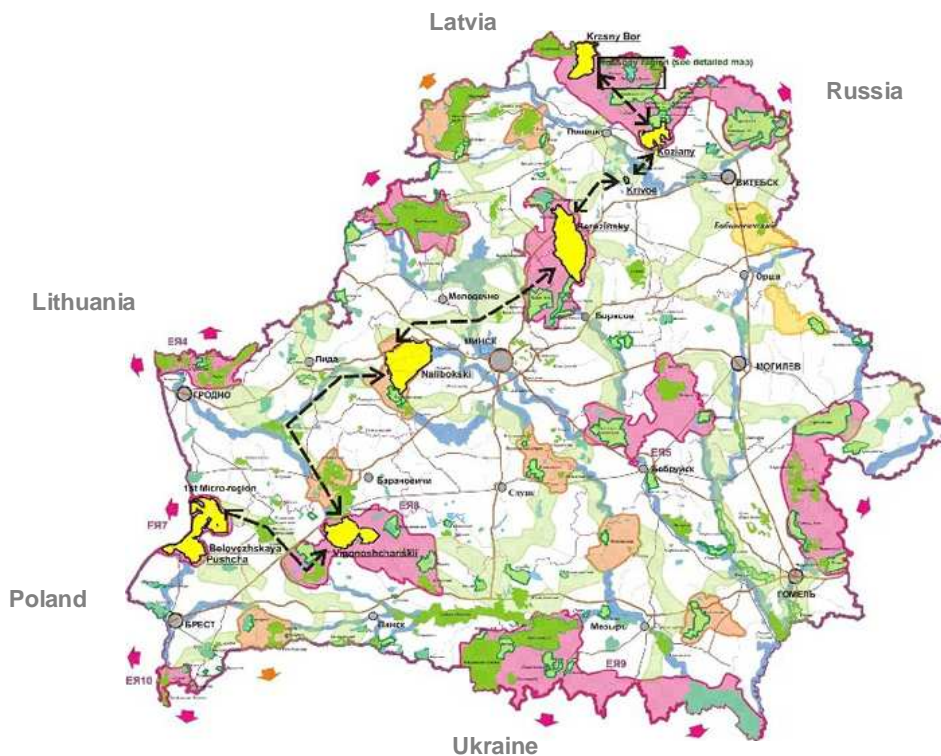
"Your photos of the countryside remind me of my childhood 45 years ago"

Monika, working in an NGO for developing countries

"It was great event for me. I really have learned a lot from each of you, and thank you so much for your friendly company and for this very special climate created by the group. Thank you." **Lena**, Belarus participant of tour 2007

"This was a true agro-ecological tour: cycling in the countryside, sleeping in the houses or in the gardens of the local people, mingling with the Belarusians, sometimes in comfortable, other times in more original places." **Ludo**, tour 2007

"We were received wholeheartedly, in the traditional way in Russia. The presence of Belarusians in our group was very positive." **Jan**, tour 2007



Schedule:

	GROUP1			
31-jul	Arrival Poland			
1-aug	tour 1	border crossing		Biking
2-aug	tour 1		sat	Local biking, Festival Gribov's village (tourleader)
3-aug	tour 1		sun	Interview day
4-aug	tour 1			Biking
5-aug	tour 1			Canoe trip
6-aug	tour 1			Canoe trip
7-aug	tour 1			Biking
8-aug	tour 1	GROUP2		Interview day
9-aug	tour 1	Arrival	sat	Biking
10-aug	festival	festival	sun	Festival Motol
11-aug	tour 1	tour 2		Interview day
12-aug	Departure	tour 2		Biking
13-aug		tour 2		Biking
14-aug		tour 2		Canoe trip
15-aug		tour 2		Canoe trip
16-aug		tour 2		Biking
17-aug		tour 2	sun	Biking
18-aug	GROUP3	tour 2		Interview day
19-aug	Arrival	tour 2		Biking
20-aug	tour 3	tour 2	wed	Interview day
21-aug	festival	festival	thurs	Festival Lepel
22-aug	tour 3	Departure		Interview day
23-aug	tour 3			Biking
24-aug	tour 3		sun	Biking
25-aug	tour 3			Interview day
26-aug	tour 3			Biking
27-aug	tour 3			Berrie picking trip (in Europe's biggest peat field)
28-aug	tour 3			Berrie picking trip
29-aug	tour 3			Biking
30-aug	festival		sat	Festival Rossony
31-aug	tour 3		sun	Interview day
1-sep	Departure			