

## Chapter 2

# Geography of Tourism of the Republic of Belarus

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**Abstract** The beginning of the research in the field of geography of tourism started in 1970s with the analysis of the natural and cultural potential. Next decade was dedicated to the territorial organization of recreational activities and tourist regionalization of the country. The new century brought new challenges in research. The scientific investigation focuses on the competitiveness of tourism, services development, and functional organization of the values together with the development of the new geoeconomic approach to the analysis of the tourist market. The natural resource potential of the country starts with the description of the types of existing landscapes, climate, and water conditions for resting tourism and recreation. The role of protected areas in the tourism development with its division is stressed. Next part presents the structure of historical and cultural heritage of Belarus. The most important sights, such as monuments, museums, or military objects are described. In reference to the tourist infrastructure as the most important for tourism development, the accommodation is presented in detail with its numbers, category, and spatial distribution. A discussion about the state of tourism movement in Belarus is led in the next part of the chapter that stresses its structure as well as geographical distribution and importance of a given tourist region for the tourism development. The last part is dedicated to the description of the most important types of tourism practiced in the country such as spa and wellness tourism, cultural and event tourism, rural or religious tourism. The part entitled “The Tourist Regions of Belarus” summarizes the chapter.

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## 2.1 Introduction

Complex geographical research in the field of tourism has been carried out in Belarus since the beginning of the 1970s at the Geographical Faculty of the Belarusian State University in Minsk. It was preceded by experiences in the local lore analysis of natural and economic regions, industrial centers and historic towns, as a basis of local lore and excursion work in teaching of geography (V. Zhuchkevich, V. Dementiev, N. Romanovsky, A. Shkliar, O. Yakushko et al.). On the basis of the system concept of territorial recreation systems (TRS) (V. Preobrazhensky, Y. Vedenin, I. Zorin), research was commenced concerning the structure of tourism demand, assessment of natural conditions in the landscaped districts, the formation of a special recreational Land Fund, the territorial organization of recreational activities, and tourist regionalization of the country (Pirozhnik 1985). “Regional scheme of sightseeing tourism in Belarus” (1980) was developed by a team of researchers (I. Pirozhnik, V. Zaitsev, T. Fedortsova, G. Potaeva) in order to gain practice in territorial planning. In subsequent years, research of specialized types of recreation systems was carried out: lake–river systems, sightseeing systems, recreational development trends in suburban areas for cities of different sizes using the methods of factorial ecology (V. Zaitsev), methodological foundations of esthetic valuation of excursion objects (T. Fedortsova), the comparative analysis of tourist development areas in Bulgaria (1980), Belarus and Slovenia (1985). The most significant scientific results related to the implementation of the geographical research of tourism, management concept of space-functional analysis, and development of methodological bases for territorial analysis of the tourist regions functions at different levels of spatial hierarchy (Pirozhnik 1990, 1992). A set of methods to assess factors of the development of tourism and territorial organization of tourist services, forming recreational lake–forest systems, sightseeing and suburban types of systems, stratification model of urban population recreational needs, assessment methods for recreational potential based on economic benefits of using free time for recreation and tourism was worked out. A model of functional typology of tourist regions and centers was suggested with the development of the system concept of the recreational district and allocation of the two components (TRS and the surrounding socioeconomic space) (Pirozhnik 1985, 1992). The results of such typology create the necessary framework for of the main directions of the regional policy development, ways of different types of districts cooperation, specification of priority areas for development and investment in the new conditions.

The structurally functional approach allows to determine recreational tourist space as a part of ambient geographic surrounding with combination of natural and anthropogenic elements and their interconnections, which are affected by the actual solvent demand and an existence of a system of different services proposals for tourist consumption in free time. Thus, at different stages of its formation, it is important to observe interconnections with types of territorial structure, rank of

tourist functions, segments of customers of the tourist market, and the character of the tourist proposal (Pirozhnik 2008b).

On the existing scientific base and amid the transition to market economy after mid-1990s, the subsequent studies were carried out by geographers concerning the trends of tourist space forming in countries with transition economies and entry of Belarus into the European tourist area (Mechkovskaya 2006), factors of export of tourist services development and the competitiveness of the tourism sector of Belarus (Reshetnikov 2004), spatial base of ecotourism and the functional organization of the national parks (Tarasionok 2003). The analysis of global and regional markets of tourist service trends has allowed to reveal the impact of tourism on the formation of the balance of payments, dynamics of tourist flows, and the role of tourism in economic development of different countries, which is reflected in the development of the new geoeconomic approach in the analysis of the tourist market (Pirozhnik 1996; Aleksandrova 2002; Tarasionok 2011).

From the perspective of new market management in the tourism sector, the key elements of the tourism offer in Belarus are being investigated: medical and spa tourism, cultural and event tourism, agrotourism, and religious and ecological tourism (Pirozhnik 2014, 2015). The research process in geography of tourism is also developed by representatives of the regional university centers: Brest (E. Meshechko, D. Nikitiuk, S. Zarutsky, etc.), Mogilev (I. Sharuh, A. Shadrackov, N. Tupitsyna), Gomel (E. Karchevskaya), and others.

Tourist staff professional education has been leading at the geographical faculty of Belarusian State University since 1974, currently being deployed in several university centers (Minsk, Brest, Pinsk, Gomel, Grodno, and others). For the system of university education, geographers produced several manuals (Pirozhnik 1985; Reshetnikov 2011) and others. Information needs of the tourist market are met with encyclopedias developed by a group of authors (Tourist Encyclopedia 2007; Tourist Regions 2008; Spas and Health resorts 2008), specialized scientific journals (Tourism and Hospitality) and weekly newspaper (Tourism and Recreation), and a network of information centers of the National Tourism Agency.

## 2.2 Natural Resource Potential and Trends in Tourism Development

The Republic of Belarus is located in the center of the European continent (Photograph 2.1), in the western part of the East European Plain. Belarus shares borders with Lithuania and Latvia on the northwest, Russia on the north and east, Ukraine on the south, and Poland on the west. The length of the territory of the Republic of Belarus from north to south is 560 km and from west to east—650 km (Fig. 2.1); the area of the country is 207.6 thousand km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 9480.9 thousand people (2015). In the era of globalization and expansion of cross-cultural cooperation between nations, Belarus, with an advantageous geographical location in the heart of Europe at the crossroads of important transit routes

**Fig. 2.1** The average distance between the tourist centers of Belarus



from east to west and north to south, is becoming an attractive region for target and transit-tourist visits (Fig. 2.1 and Photograph 2.1). The territory of Belarus is crossed by two trans-European transport corridors № 2 (Paris—Berlin—Warsaw—Brest—Minsk—Orsha—Moscow) and № 9 (Helsinki—St. Petersburg—Vitebsk—Mogilev—Gomel—Kiev—Odessa, with a branch Gomel—Minsk—Vilnius), which are associated with the possibility of expanding tourist service in Belarus for about 10 million annual transit flow.

The development of domestic and inbound tourism through the effective use of transit geographical location, as well as rich natural and cultural heritage, is one of the priorities of the Republic of Belarus social and economic policy. The Republic of Belarus, with hilly landscapes and open plains, temperate climate, and green forests extends to the horizon and blue necklace of lakes and rivers, but without bright colors and exoticism typical for many tourist countries, will fascinate every

**Photograph 2.1** The geographical center of Europe in Polotsk (coordinates: 55° 30' north latitude and 28°48' east longitude)



traveler by its virgin nature. Hospitality and unique culture of people will live in the memory of everyone who gets acquainted with it during tourist trips and journeys.

Belarus, as a tourist country, is characterized by considerable regional differences of natural provinces. The northern part of the country is covered with Belarusian Lakeland, where hilly relief with alternating ridges and valleys is combined with blue necklaces of lake groups (Braslavskaya, Narochanskaya, Ushachskaya) connected by river systems and canals into a fascinating aquatic nature trail. Upon that, using the system of artificial canals (the Berezina water system), it is possible to move from the basin of Western Dvina to the basins of Berezina and Dnieper hydrographic system, from the basin of Neman—to the Vistula river system (Augustow Canal) and Pripyat (Oginski Canal), and by the Dnieper–Bug waterway to make a trip from Kiev to Mozyr, Brest and Pinsk (the Dnieper–Bug Canal). In the middle part of Belarus, the Belarusian ridge orographic system is located. The system has a glacial origin; some brows exceeding 300 m and the highest point in Belarus—Mountain Dzerzhinskaya in the southwest from Minsk with the height of 345 m is located there. The elevated part of the Belarusian ridge is a water-parting zone of the Baltic and Black Seas basins. In the south from the Belarusian ridge, the plains of Predpolesie (Tsentralnoberezhinskaya, Stolbtsovskaya, Checherskaya) with slowly flowing rivers, an abundance of fields and meadows are located. The southern part of Belarus is occupied by the Polesie lowlands with an abundance of moist forests and marshes, which are not inferior to the Amazonian rain forest by its flora and fauna biological diversity, and, for Europe, remains a unique natural haven of many species of birds and amphibians.

Moderate continental climate of Belarus with soft cool summers and mild winters, with frequent thaws, creates favorable conditions for traveling throughout the year. The duration of the favorable period for summer traveling (period with average daily temperatures above +15 °C) is equal to 90 days in Belarusian Lakeland, 95–100 days in the central part, and reaches more than 115 days in a Belarusian Polesie. The average daily water temperature in the summer in all waters exceeds 17 °C, and in July it is about 19–22 °C which makes the bathing-beach holidays accessible for all categories of tourists. A favorable period for winter recreation with temperatures from –5 to –15 °C lasts 30 days in the southwest (Brest) and even 60 days in the northeast (Gorodok), and the period of stable snow cover lasts from 60 up to 130 days. Belarus, being an area of plain ski tourism, actively develops mountain skiing centers (Logoisk, Silichi, Boyary, Yakutovy Gory) in recent years, expanding the range of tourist services.

Belarus has a developed hydrographic network. The total length of 20.8 thousand rivers is 90.6 thousand km. The main waterways are Dnieper, Berezina, Pripyat, Sozh, Neman, Western Dvina, and Vilia, on the banks of which the resorts and areas of public recreation are forming. In Belarus, there are over 10 thousand lakes. Lake groups, such as Braslavskaya, Narochanskaya, Ushachskaya, Lepel'skaya, and Bolduyskaya, have a special attraction for tourists. There are about 4 thousand lakes in the Belarusian Lakeland, with domination of relatively deep lakes of glacial genesis with clean water. Vitebsk region concentrates about 90% of the total number of lakes auspicious for recreational use in Belarus. The



**Photograph 2.2** Braslav Lake District

Central Belarus is characterized by a shortage of lakes, and water recreation is organized on the basis of the rivers and water reservoirs (Vilejskoe, Zaslavskoe). About 6 thousand of small shallow oxbow lakes with low marshy banks are located in Polesie. Bogs occupy about 12% of the territory of Belarus and interesting for tourists as objects of ecological tours, hunting and gathering berries (Photographs 2.2 and 2.3).

One of the priority directions of development of tourist complex of Belarus is a water recreation, which includes various forms of tourism activities, such as bathing-beach holidays, water sports and game-hunting classes, boat trips, and tours. Resting near water attracts one-third of country recreational streams from



**Photograph 2.3** Border crossing point “Lesnaya-Rudavka” on the Augustow Canal

major cities, and coastal areas concentrate more than two-third of the recreational infrastructure of Belarus. The total prospective capacity of resorts and recreation areas of national importance, developing on the banks of rivers, is over 200 thousand places, on the lakes—about 150 thousand places, on reservoirs—more than 110 thousand places. In accordance with landscape conditions, recreational and tourist complexes of different types are formed: a forest–lake type (National Parks: Narochansky, Braslav Lakes, the resort Ushachi), a forest–river type (recreation areas: Berezino, Ivanec, Stolby), and a forest–river type with reservoirs (recreation areas: Vilejka, Vyacha).

Treatment resort resources of Belarus include medical climatic and phytotherapeutic factors, mineral water, and mud deposits. Belarus has significant reserves of mineral waters with various composition and curative properties (more than 100 groundwater basins are in use), distributed almost throughout the country. For the purpose of recreational use, 39 deposits of sapropel and 20 peat-mud fields are reserved. Medical factors are used intensively in the resorts of the national (Naroch, Zhdanovichi, Ushachi, Rogachev, Novoel'nya) and local (Bobruisk, Letsy, Chenki, Beloe Lake) significance. Speleotherapy in Soligorsk is developed through the use of specific healing environment in former potash mines.

The forests of Belarus occupy a large area (36.3% of the country) and, in conjunction with the open landscapes of meadows (14.3%) and wetland complexes (11.5%), they create favorable conditions for the formation of resort and recreational landscapes with comfort microclimate and landscape esthetics. The Forest Fund, which is used to organize the rest of the area, consists of recreational forests, which form forests of city green zones, national parks recreation areas, parks, resort forests, and other plantings. The total area of recreational forests of Belarus exceeds 1 million ha (over 15% of total forest area). Lump recreational capacity of forests favorable for recreation and leisure is about 4.6–5.6 million people, including the most comfortable types of woodlands with capacity about 2.3–2.8 million people, that fully covers the requirements of the health-improvement national system. Hunting tourism displays a significant potential for development in the forestry sector. List of species for hunting and fishing includes 22 species of mammals (elk, wild boar, roe deer, wolf, fox, rabbit, squirrel, beaver, etc.), and 31 species of birds (capercaillie, black grouse, hazel grouse, mallard, teal, etc.). There are more than 250 hunting farms in Belarus; more than 20 of them have a level of infrastructure that allows hosting foreign hunters (Lyaskovichi, Barsuki, Telekhany, Braslavskoe, Teterinskoe, Krasnosel'skoe, and others).

Belarus stands out among European countries when it comes to the degree of preservation of contemporary high natural landscapes. In order to preserve the biological and landscape diversity, a favorable natural and ecological environment for tourist activity and rest is created, and a network of protected areas is formed in Belarus. The network of specially protected natural areas is a resource basis for the development of ecological tourism and the determinant of its territorial organization. Natural Heritage Foundation of Belarus forms a network of more than 1.2 thousand of protected objects and territories, including plots of land with unique reference or other valuable natural complexes and sites of ecological, scientific,

**Table 2.1** The fund of natural heritage of the Republic of Belarus (2014)

Protection status	Number	Area, thousand ha	Average size, thousand ha	Share, %	
				in the fund total	in the area of the country
Nature reserves and National Parks including	5	475.9	95.2	29.4	2.3
Biosphere Reserves	1	80.9	80.9	5.0	0.4
National Parks	4	395.0	99.6	24.4	1.9
Reserves of national significance	85	862.5	10.2	53.3	4.1
Reserves of local importance	249	261.7	1.0	16.2	1.3
Natural monuments	874	17.4	0.02	1.1	0.1
Total	1213	1617.5	X	100.0	7.8

\*without Polesky Radiation and Ecological Reserve in the area of the Chernobyl NPP disaster (215.5 thousand hectare)

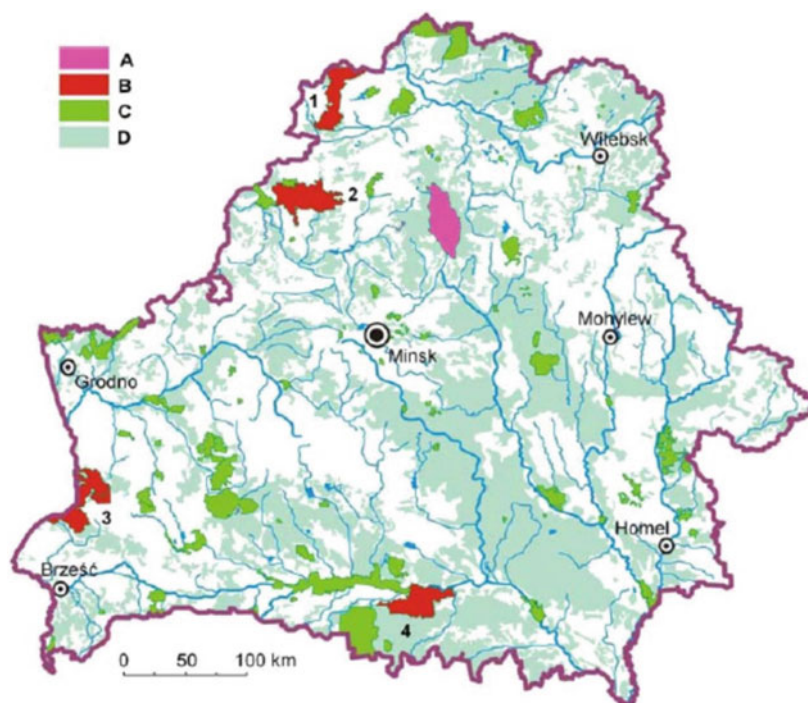
historical, cultural, esthetic, and other values, withdrawn in whole or partly from economic circulation (Table 2.1). For all of these objects, there is a special regime of protection and use established legislatively. The total area of the land protected by the Fund (NPAs) is about 1.62 million ha (7.8% of Belarus territory) and includes 1 biosphere reserve (Berezinsky), 4 national parks (Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Braslav Lakes, Narochansky, Pripyatsky), 85 reserves of national significance, and an extensive network of local reserves and monuments of nature. The total area of NPAs is dominated by national reserves (53%) and national parks (29%). A distinctive feature of the network of NPAs in Belarus is a relatively large average size of national parks (about 100 thousand hectare), of which two (Belovezhskaya Pushcha and Pripyatsky) are organized on the basis of preexisting reserves of national significance (about 10 thousand hectare).

On the background of average size of national parks and reserves sufficient to solve ecological and environmental problems, there is an uneven distribution of them among natural landscape provinces and regions of Belarus. In the Brest region, the network of protected areas covers 13.4% of the territory, in the Grodno—10.5%, Vitebsk—8.6%, Minsk—6.1%, Gomel—5.2%, and Mogilev—only 2.6%. In a number of geographical provinces (Eastern Belarus, Predpolesie), where there are no objects of complex forms of nature conservation, it is planned to create a number of new national parks (Svislochsko-Berezinsky, Surazhsky, Belaya Rus (Logoisky)). More than a half of the total area of NPAs forms the reserves (over 53% of the total area protected by the Fund)—resource protection objects under partial protection of the natural complex elements (of 85 reserves of national



importance—38 biological, 31 landscape, and 16 hydrological) with a small average size (10.2 thousand hectare—reserves of publican significance and 1.0 thousand ha—local). Among the natural monuments of national importance (306 objects), the following types are dominating: geological (212—erratic boulders and their clusters, Museum of boulders in Minsk) and botanical (88) presented by separate groups of trees of rare species. A large group of parks—monuments of garden art (150 old parks to be restored, but only 75—having the status of monuments) requires a set of measures for the reconstruction and restoration as objects of historical and cultural heritage.

The leading role in the preservation of the natural heritage of Belarus and the development of ecological tourism is played by NPAs recognized at the international level (Fig. 2.5), among them the National Park Belovezhskaya Pushcha, included in 1992 in the list of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve (organized in 1925) and RAMSAR sites of international importance for the protection of birds (a total of 21 sites, including Olmanskie bogs reserves, Middle Pripyat, Sporovsky Biological Reserve, and others) (Fig. 2.2).



A – Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve; B – National parks: 1 – Braslav Lakes, 2 – Narochansky, 3 – Belovezhskaya Pushcha, 4 – Pripyatsky; C – reserves-zakaznik of national significance; D – forest areas.

**Fig. 2.2** Natural protected areas of the Republic of Belarus

## 2.3 Cultural and Historical Potential

The Historical and Cultural Heritage Fund of Belarus has more than 17.8 thousand immovable objects, of which 5.4 thousand are included in the State Register of historical and cultural values (Table 2.2).

In the structure of Belarusian historical and cultural heritage, the most widely represented groups of objects are archeological (43.7%) and architectural (32.8%); historical objects form about one-fifth of the total of monuments of art, a little more than 1%. Higher numbers of architectural objects can be found in the capital city of Minsk (87%) and the western part of the country—Brest (46%) and Grodno regions (41%) and relatively lowest—in the eastern regions—Gomel (19%) and Mogilev (12%). A higher share of historical monuments is in Brest and Gomel regions (31–36%), and archeological—in Grodno, Minsk, and Gomel regions (44–46%), with their absolute dominance in the Mogilev region (75%).

The spatial distribution of objects reflects regional peculiarities of historical and cultural development of Eastern Belarus in 1920–1940 as a part of the Soviet Union and the western regions as a part of Poland until 1939. In addition to the cross-border National Park “Belovezhskaya Pushcha,” in the UNESCO World Heritage List, there are the castle complex “Mir” (2000), architectural and cultural complex of the Radziwill family of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in Nesvizh and the “Struve Geodetic Arc” (transboundary site of nineteenth century, including 19 topographic–geodesic points on the territory of Belarus)—since 2005. There are

**Table 2.2** The structure of historical and cultural heritage of Belarus (2014)\*

Regions	Total number of objects (%)	Of which			
		Architectural	Historical	Monuments of art	Archeological
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>5379</b> <b>100</b>	<b>1763</b> <b>32.8</b>	<b>1191</b> <b>22.1</b>	<b>60</b> <b>1.1</b>	<b>2350</b> <b>43.7</b>
Brest region	741 100	342 46.1	228 30.8	7 0.9	160 21.6
Vitebsk region	934 100	292 31.3	258 27.6	4 0.4	376 40.3
Gomel region	866 100	167 19.3	313 36.1	8 0.9	377 43.5
Grodno region	727 100	300 41.3	96 13.2	4 0.6	326 44.8
Minsk region	661 100	199 30.1	151 22.8	4 0.6	304 46.0
Minsk City	380 100	330 86.8	15 3.9	29 7.6	5 1.3
Mogilev region	1070 100	133 12.4	130 12.1	4 0.4	802 74.9

\*The numerator is the total number of facilities in the region, the denominator—the share of this group in the total number of objects (without other objects)



**Photograph 2.4** Architectural and cultural complex of Radziwill family in Nesvizh (Minsk Region)



**Photograph 2.5** Castle complex in Mir (Grodno Region)

proposals to include the UNESCO World Heritage List more than 10 other sites to, such as Augustow Canal (together with its part on the Polish territory)—a monument of hydraulic engineering from eighteenth century connecting river basins of Neman and Vistula, the reconstruction, which was completed in 2006. In general, Belarus concentrates 4 of 1013 UNESCO World Heritage List objects (0.39%), while its share in the world population is three times lower (0.13%) (Photographs 2.4 and 2.5).

What is unique in the history of UNESCO is an international scientific and technical heritage object “Struve Geodetic Arc,” stretching throughout 10 countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) from Fuglenes (70°40' N) on the coast of the Arctic Ocean to the Staro-Nekrassowka (Stara Nekrasovka) on the banks of the Danube River (45°20' N) with the total length of 10°35' along the meridian 25°20' E, or more than 2808 km in linear measure. Geodetic measurements determining the length of the meridian arc specifying the size of the earth were carried out from 1816 to 1852. The measurements on the territory of Belarus were led by K.I. Tenner. In the course of operation on the territory of ten countries, 258 geodetic points and 103 main triangulation points were laid. The structure of the monument includes 34 geodetic points, 5 of which are located on the territory of Belarus. They were discovered during search operations in 2001 by experts of “Belaerokosmogeodeziya” in the

Ivanovo district, the Brest region [centers of basis points: Leskovichi, Ossownitza, Tchekutsk (Chekutsk)], as well as in the Oshmyany (Tupishki) and Shchuchin (Lopaty) districts in the Grodno region. Twenty-one remaining points of Struve Arc, which are included into the list of historical and cultural values and protected by the state, can be found in Belarus.

The most valuable architectural monuments are masterpieces of ancient Belarusian school of architecture of eleventh to twelfth centuries (Polotsk St. Sophia Cathedral and Polotsk Church of the Saviour and St. Euphrosyne, Grodno St. Boris and Gleb Church, Vitebsk Holy Annunciation Church), medieval monuments of military defensive architecture (Kamenets Tower from thirteenth century, Novogrudok Castle, Grodno Castle, Lida Castle, Krevo Castle, the Mir Castle and park complex, Nesvizh palace and park complex, Golshanskiy Castle), unique defensive type churches (Synkovichi St. Michael Church, Murovanka Holy Nativity of the Virgin church, Komai Church of St. John the Baptist), the rich heritage of baroque (Grodno, Pinsk, Nesvizh, Slonim, Minsk) and classicism (Gomel Palace and Park Ensemble, Kosovo Palace, Ruzhany palace complex) Polesie wooden churches, architectural ensemble of Independence Avenue in Minsk.

National Belarusian culture has its roots in the distant past. Belarusian land gave the world the bright galaxy of outstanding figures of culture, science, art, and politics. Belarusian book printing was initiated in the sixteenth century by an enlightened and educator F. Skaryna, and his ideas were continued by S. Budny, S. Polotsky, and other great humanists. The Belarusian land at different milestones of its history nurtured a bright galaxy of outstanding poets (A. Mickiewicz, Y. Kupala, Y. Kolas, M. Bogdanovich, and others), composers (S. Moniuszko and M. Oginski), artists (M. Chagall, H. Soutine, and V. Vankovich), military and government officials (T. Kosciuszko, W. Wroblewski, T. Vavzhetsky), as well as scientists and travelers (I. Domeyko, K. Yelski, I. Cherskiy, N. Sudzilovsky, O. Schmidt) which left a deep mark on the history of the world. What is more Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres and Menachem Begin, Nobel Prize in Physics Zhores Alferov are natives of Belarus (Photographs 2.6 and 2.7).

One of the most important elements of the national historical and cultural heritage is rich and unique traditional material and spiritual culture preserved mainly in rural areas. The country has about 100 centers of folk arts and crafts, dozens of local areas with traditional weaving and embroidery, pottery, and others.

Regional differences in the distribution of objects of cultural tourism reflect a significant dominance of objects (especially of first- and second-value categories) in Grodno and Brest regions, as well as in the western districts of the Vitebsk and Minsk regions. These regularities confirm the figures of total number and density of objects on 100 km<sup>2</sup> by administrative regions (Figs. 2.3 and 2.4).

Despite the considerable destruction during two world wars in twentieth century, there are more than 40 settlements in Belarus with preserved historical planning structure, urban facilities, and natural surroundings that have historical and cultural values. Among them, 9 cities and towns (Minsk, Grodno, Brest, Vitebsk, Zaslavl, Kobrin, Pinsk, Polotsk, and Mozyr) are included in the State Register of historical



**Photograph 2.6** Memorial sign on geodetic point of Struve Arc, Tchekutsk (Chekutsk) in Ivanovo district, Museum-Estate T. Kosciuszko in Mereczowszczyzna (Kossovo), Oginski Canal

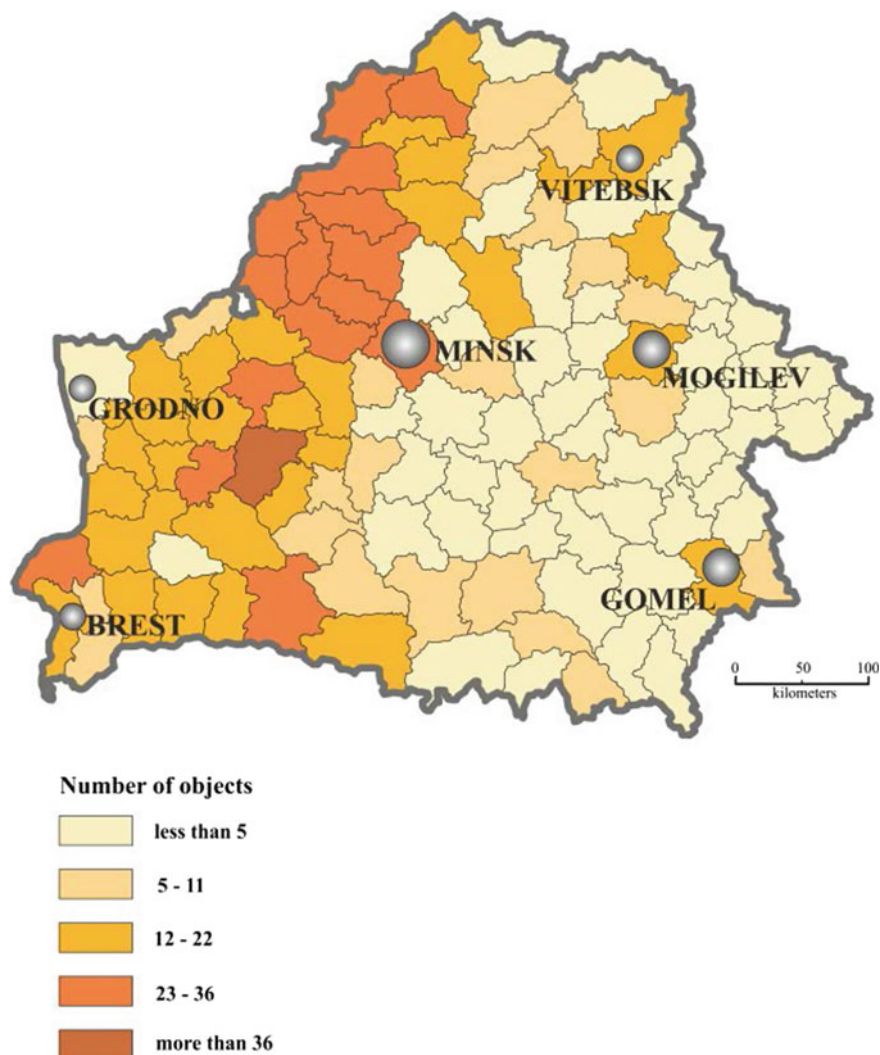
and cultural values. Since 1991, Belarus carried out restoration work on the 63 sites of historical and cultural heritage, including the Annunciation Church from twelfth century, Church of St. Barbara from nineteenth century in Vitebsk, the Church of the Holy Spirit from eighteenth century on the territory of Kucein monastery in Orsha, a town hall from eighteenth century in Shklov, church of defensive type from sixteenth century in the village Murovanka in Shchuchin district, shopping arcade and the manor in Pruzhany, A. Mickiewicz house museum in the village Zaosie in Baranovichi district and house museum T. Kosciuszko in Kossovo on Ivatsevichy district, The Vankoviches' House in Minsk, and other objects are of great interest for cultural tourism. In accordance with the State program of culture, the development in the Republic of Belarus, the restoration of the World Heritage sites, is completed—the Mir castle, architectural and cultural castle complex in





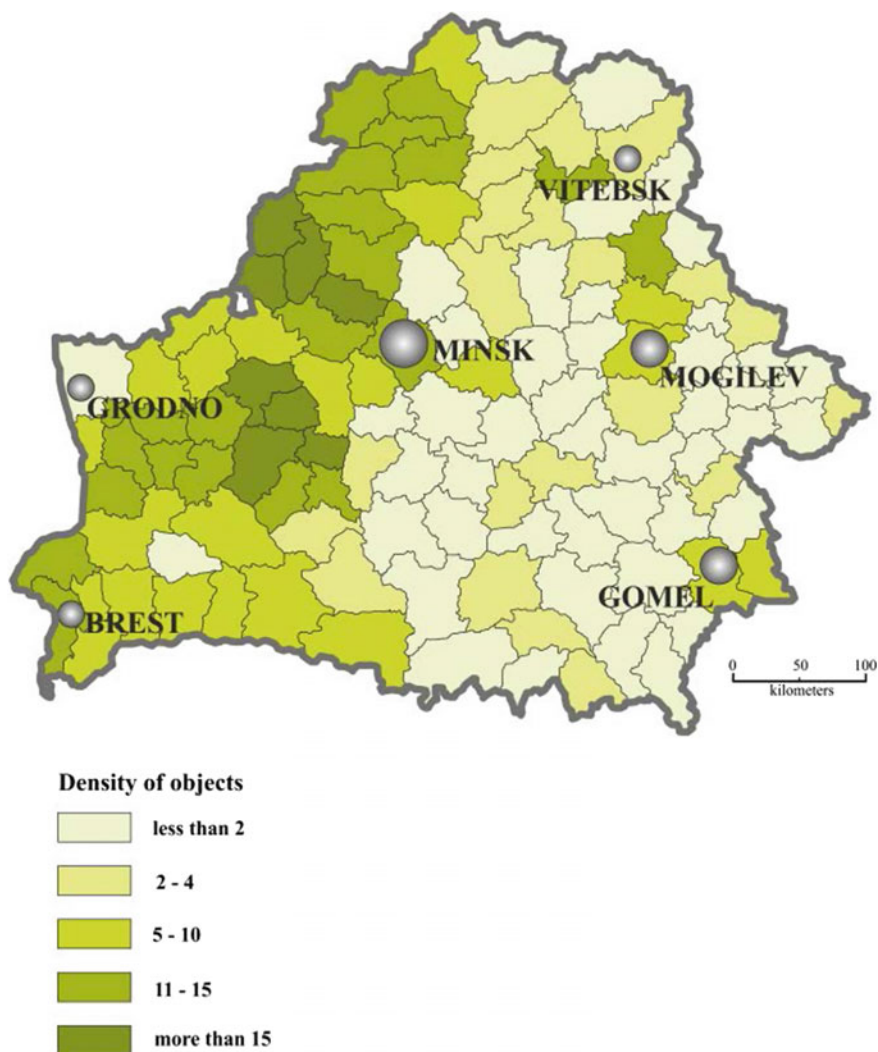
**Photograph 2.7** Historic center of Minsk: **a** City Hall (17th c.), **b** The sculptural group “Urban Scales,” **c** Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary (eighteenth century), **d** Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (seventeenth century)

Nesvizh. Documentation is developed, and restoration of more than 20 architectural and historical sites (Trinity Church in the village Wolczyn of Kamenetz district (the burial place of the last king of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth Stanislaw Poniatowski), Potemkin palace from seventeenth century in Krichev, Paskevich palace from nineteenth century in Gomel, etc.) is completed in all regions of Belarus. Formation of a manor and ethnographic complexes and expansion of a network of local tour routes in all areas promote the development of local tourist markets (N. Orda museum complex in the village Vorotsevichi of Ivanovo district, museum-ethnographic complex in the village Wolczyn of Kamenets district, museum and ecological complex in the village Berezhnoe of Stolin District, the home museum of Ivan Dameyko in the village Medvyadka of Karelichy district, manor and park complex of M.K. Oginski Zalesie in Smorgon district, and others.).



**Fig. 2.3** Number of objects in administrative districts

Current task for Belarus is the museumification of military battles fields. Some work was carried out in the early twentieth century during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the events of the Patriotic War of 1812. The monuments in Kobrin, Vitebsk, at Borisov on the Berezina River (place of the French troop's waftage) and others were erected. The events of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 are immortalized by numerous memorials and monuments of military glory (Brest Fortress memorial, Bujnichy field—a place of battle in the defense of Mogilev in 1941, memorials of partisan glory, and national struggle Proryv



**Fig. 2.4** The density of cultural and historical sites on 100 km<sup>2</sup>

(Ushachi district), Ostrov Zyslov (Luban District), Khatyn (Logoisk District), and others).

Restoration of fortifications on the west form Minsk on the old Soviet–Polish border that existed before 1939 was carried out to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. Unofficial name of these fortifications “Stalin Line” appeared in 1942, but the main work was carried out there during the period from 1927 to 1939. On the territory of Belarus, fortified sectors of Minsk, Polotsk, Slutsk, and Mozyr were established. The events from the defense



of Minsk fortified sector played a significant role in June 1941 and returned from oblivion after more than half a century. Historical representatives of weapons were established on this site, a museum of modern weapons and military equipment was created, and there were also guided tours and reconstructions of historical events.

Different types of towns and villages with valuable objects of historical and cultural heritage require different approaches for integrating them into modern life and using in various fields of cultural and tourist–excursion activity. In large cities (with more than 100 thousand people), historical and cultural sites make a small part of the development and do not determine the economic life of the city (Minsk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Brest, and Mogilev). So, historical and cultural complexes are included into the urban planning structure of city centers, and the goal is to save historic buildings, restore the monuments of architecture and history, and incorporate them into the modern life of the city. In small towns and villages with valuable historical and cultural complexes, historical buildings and planning are often not only the main feature, but also the only chance for revitalization of economic activity (Nesvizh, Mir, Novogrudok, Mstislavl, Zaslavl) through rehabilitation and restoration of historical and cultural monuments and creation of workplaces in tourism and hospitality. In the changing conditions of market economy, it is not possible at times to find sufficient funding for the restoration of unique monuments in the rural areas (castles in Krevo, Golshany, and Smolyany), objects of wooden architecture, and architecture in depopulated rural areas. Monuments of history and culture at the area of Chernobyl disaster underwent tragic fate—in the 16 affected districts of the Gomel and Mogilev regions, there are about 400 archeological sites, 170 architectural projects (including 30 manor and park complexes and 67 monuments of wooden architecture). About 1 thousand pieces of arts and crafts and 350 exhibits of folk life were transferred to the collection of the Museum of Ancient Belarusian Culture (Minsk).

An integral part of the Cultural Heritage Fund and the place of its storage is a network of 162 museums (Table 2.3), among which 51% are combined museums, 25%—historical museums, 8.6%—art museums and 8.6% others. The Museum Fund of Belarus includes more than 3750 thousand items of which 2720 thousand (72%) belong to the main collections, and more than 1 million—to scientific support.

**Table 2.3** The Museum Fund of Belarus and its usage (2014)

Types of museums	Number of museums		Number of museum items of main collections		Number of visits	
	Entities	%	Thousand	%	Thousand	%
Total museums of which:	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3169.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5731.0</b>	<b>100</b>
Historic	43	26.5	898.0	28.3	1543.0	26.9
Combined	91	56.1	1926.5	60.8	2996.8	52.3
Arts	14	8.6	80.3	2.5	494.2	8.6
Literature studies	7	4.3	171.6	5.4	399.0	7.0
Specialized	7	4.3	93.2	3.0	298.0	5.2

On the basis of the considered natural features, recreational, cultural and historical potential of the Belarus regions, 27 tourist zones are formed in Brest region—Euroregion Bialowieza Forest, tourist and recreational zone Beloe Lake and Telekhany, cultural and tourist area of Pinsk.

Polesie, transit-tourist zone, Brest–Baranovichi border region; in Vitebsk region—Vitebsk, Polotsk, Braslav, Orsha-Kopys'; in Gomel region—Gomel, Vetka, Mozyr-Turov, Chechersk, Zhlobin; in Grodno region—Grodno, Lida, Novogrudok, Slonim; in Minsk—the historic center of the city and Loshitsa Manor; in Minsk region—Minsk, Logoisk, Naroch, Borisov and Slutsk; in Mogilev region—Mogilev, Mstislavl, Bobruisk, Shklov.

Distinctive features of the present stage of conservation and tourist usage of natural and cultural heritage in Belarus are: (1) the growth of national consciousness under the revived sovereign state development, strengthening the understanding of respect for the natural, historical, and cultural heritage by all social groups; (2) the expansion of international cooperation and integration into the world community as an independent subject, which increases the demand for the protection of natural and cultural heritage, improving the legislation, the expansion of the restoration, and protection of natural and cultural sites; (3) broad support of international organizations (UNESCO, UNWTO, Commission for the Protection of Heritage of the Council of Europe and others) of initiatives in heritage conservation and its involvement in visitor usage, for the disclosure of the historical and cultural identities of Belarus in the context of globalization and ensuring of sustainable development of objectives.

## **2.4 Touristic Infrastructure and Level of Regional Development**

Touristic-recreational potential of Belarus enables to develop competitive national touristic products using a wide network of infrastructure objects. Complex tourist service is provided by 1000 objects of collective accommodation facilities (Table 2.4), including hotel accommodation facilities (530) and sanatorium-health resort organizations (466) which have a total accommodation capacity of 82,000 year-round places that delivered services to 2.5 million tourists and holidaymakers in 2014. Touristic accommodation facilities categorized according to the international star rating (3–5 stars) are mostly concentrated in the capital city, regional centers, national parks, and the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve. Hotels with 4- and 5-star rating are located in Minsk and Vitebsk. Accommodation services and rural tourism programs are offered by more than 2000 rural ecotourism entities (not counting non-organized renting of country estate in resort and recreational areas). It is worth noticing that during the last decade, a large-scale modernization of sanatorium and health-resort facilities was carried out (which did not result in the increase of number of beds), together with expansion and construction of new

**Table 2.4** Total capacity of collective accommodation facilities in Belarus (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Main indicators	2000	2005	2010	2014	Index, 2014/2000
Hotels and similar accommodation facilities (entities/places, thousand)	<u>256</u> 26.2	<u>279</u> 23.5	<u>359</u> 26.7	<u>530</u> 35.4	<u>1.9</u> 1.4
Total sanatorium, health resort and health-improving organizations and other specialized accommodation facilities (entities/places, thousand)	<u>318</u> 47.1	<u>321</u> 46.1	<u>334</u> 43.5	<u>466</u> 46.9	<u>1.5</u> 1.0
Total collective accommodation facilities (entities/accommodation capacity at the end of the year, places, thousand)	<u>574</u> 73.3	<u>600</u> 69.6	<u>693</u> 70.2	<u>996</u> 82.3	<u>1.7</u> 1.1

hotels and similar accommodation facilities (that allowed to increase the number of beds by 1.4 times).

According to the regional profile of 6 regions and Minsk city, the last one and its agglomeration is notable for the highest concentration by hotel room capacity indicator (4 hotels have 5-star category, 5 hotels—4-star category, 14 hotels—3-star category). More than one-third of the total hotel room capacity (two-fifth when counting altogether with Minsk region) is concentrated in Minsk city, with a planned increase to 15 facilities (with total capacity of 4000 places) in 2016. The highest number of beds in the sanatorium and health-resort sector is in the Minsk region (more than two-fifth), where 2 resorts of the national importance are actively evolving (Naroch, Zhdanovichi), together with the network of local resort areas. Brest and Vitebsk regions concentrate around 15% of the total number of beds of the sanatorium and health-resort sector; Grodno and Gomel concentrate around 10–13% each, and Mogilev region has the smallest potential (Table 2.5).

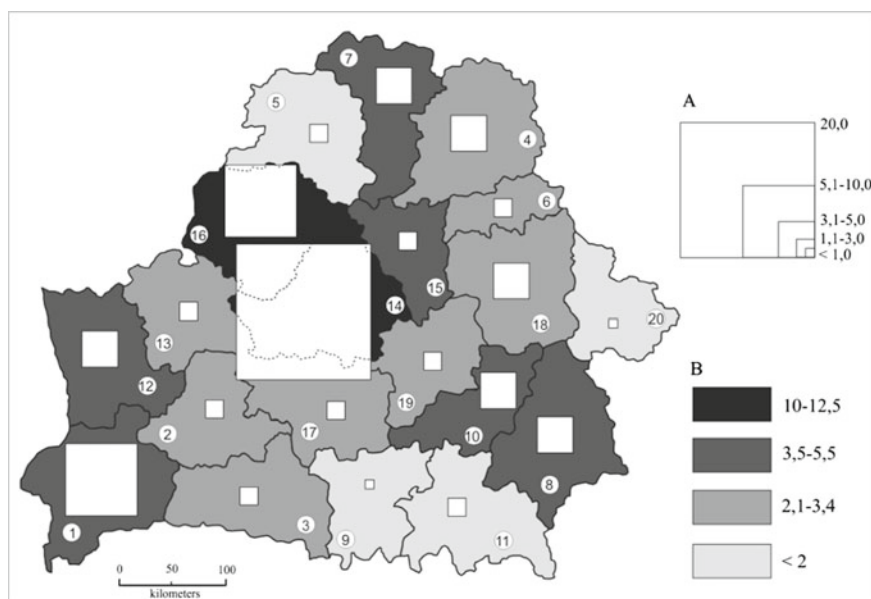
Within the regional structure of 20 microregions of Belarus (Fig. 2.5), the territories with the highest number of beds are the following: Minsk (the capital), Molodzechno (with significant touristic-recreational potential of Naroch health resort zone), and Brest frontier microregions. Eastern microregions, governed by large regional centers (Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Gomel), have relatively smaller bed capacity than the ones with significant recreational potential and sanatorium and health-improving infrastructure of large industrial enterprises (microregions Polotsk (Ushachi resort) and Zhlobin (Rogachov resort)).

The structure of collective accommodation facilities of Belarus demonstrates that the share of hotels and similar accommodation is 38%, and of sanatoriums, health resorts, and health-improving organizations—62%. The reason for that was the domination of departmental network of health-improving organizations, set up at the previous stage of development, as well as lagging in modernization of hotel accommodation facilities in peripheral microregions (Fig. 2.6).

Sanatoriums and health-improving organizations prevail in all microregions with significant recreational potential (Molodzechno, Glubokoe, Polotsk, Bobruisk, and

**Table 2.5** Regional structure of touristic infrastructure of Belarus in 2014 (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Region	Hotels and similar accommodations				Sanatoriums, health resorts and health-improving organizations				Number of organizations engaged in tourist activities (tourism agencies and bureaus)
	Entities	Places, thousand	%	Places/1000 people	Entities	Places, thousand	%	Places/1000 people	
Brest	71	4.2	11.9	3.0	65	7.0	14.9	5.0	107
Vitebsk	97	4.8	13.5	4.0	112	6.7	14.3	5.6	104
Gomel	78	4.8	13.6	3.4	40	5.9	12.6	4.1	99
Grodno	58	2.6	7.3	2.5	52	4.7	10.0	4.5	77
Minsk	111	5.1	14.4	3.6	141	19.4	41.4	13.8	88
Minsk City	60	10.4	29.4	5.2	10	1.1	2.3	0.5	522
Mogilev	55	3.5	9.9	3.3	46	2.1	4.5	2.0	88
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>1085</b>



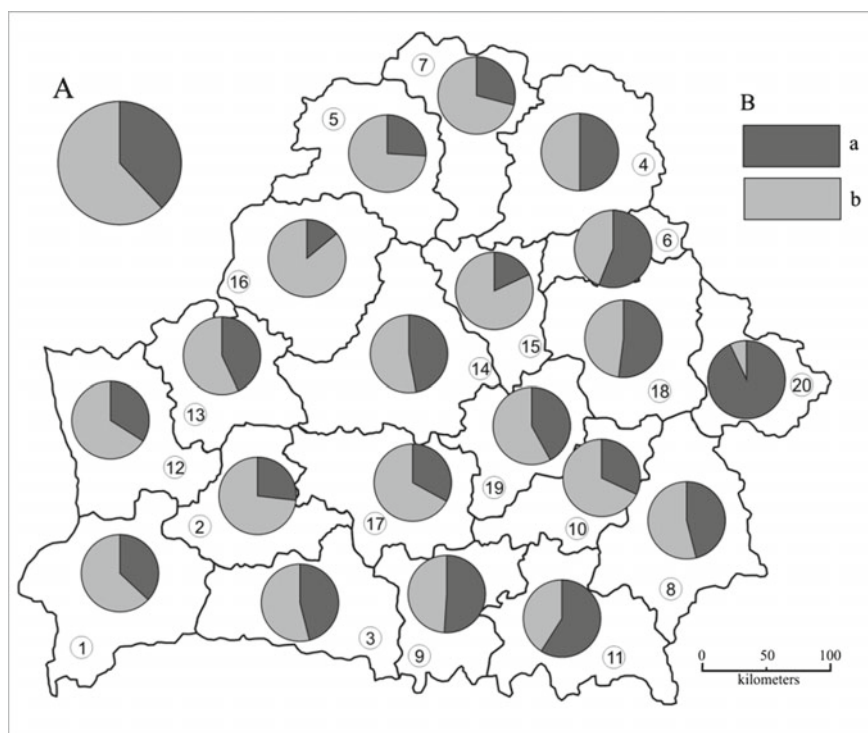
A – beds (thousand), B – level of recreational development (beds/10 sq.km.), 1–20 – Economical micro-regions: 1 – Brest, 2 – Baranovich, 3 – Pinsk, 4 – Vitebsk, 5 – Glubokoe, 6 – Orsha, 7 – Polotsk, 8 – Gomel, 9 – Zhitkovichi, 10 – Zhlobin, 11 – Mozyr, 12 – Grodno, 13 – Lida, 14 – Minsk, 15 – Borisov, 16 – Molodechno, 17 – Sluck, 18 – Mogilev, 19 – Bobruisk, 20 – Krichev

**Fig. 2.5** Capacity of collective accommodation facilities (2013)

Zhlobin), as well as in ones governed by large economic centers with large industrial enterprises that own health-improving facilities (Brest, Grodno, Baranovich, Pinsk, Slutsk, Borisov, and Lida). Urban hotel accommodation prevails in eastern microregions (Mogilev, Krichev, and Mozyr), affected by ecological consequences of the disaster at Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

However, according to the level of recreational development and improvement intensity, the majority of microregions have low performance, with the exception of Minsk and Molodechno (with 10 and more beds per 10 km<sup>2</sup>); the performance of Brest, Grodno, and Zhlobin microregions is slightly above the average in Belarus. Gomel, Zhlobin, Polotsk, and Borisov microregions display almost the average national level of recreational development and improvement (3.8 beds/10 km<sup>2</sup>), while the majority of 12 microregions in total has lesser meanings, less than 3 beds per 10 km<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2.5).

The majority of hotels are public (58.2% with two-fifths of those being a municipal property), more than two-fifth are private (40.4%, with 7% having foreign involvement). The share of hotels in foreign property is small (1.4% in 2010). The standards and prices of customer service vary from hotel to hotel. Over the



A – Belarus; B – types of tourist infrastructure objects: a – hotels and similar accommodation facilities, b – sanatoriums, health-resorts and health-improvement organizations, 1–20 – micro-regions (see Fig. 2.5)

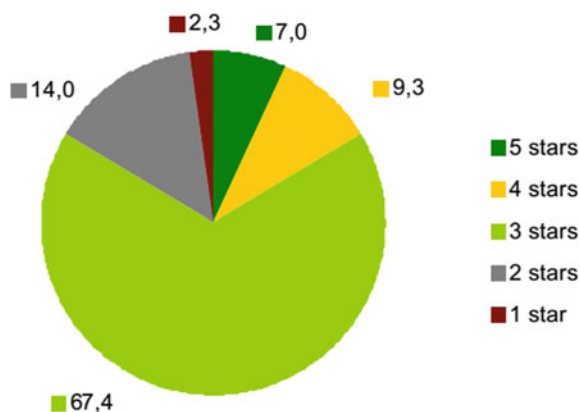
**Fig. 2.6** Structure of collective accommodation facilities by type (% , 2013)

period of the analysis, the average hotel load per year had decreased from 45–52% in 2005–2008 to 34% in 2014 due to crisis in the global touristic market and overregulated state of the national market. Hotel complexes make 75% of all accommodation facilities, but only 46 meet international standards and have a star category, with domination of 3-star facilities (Fig. 2.7) (Photograph 2.8).

Tourism activities in various segments of touristic market of Belarus are provided by more than 1085 agencies and bureaus, with a high level of their territorial concentration in Minsk—522 (48%). The share of small public companies engaged in tourism activities is 82%, of public organizations—15%, and of foreign companies—only 3%. Tour operators and travel agents with mixed type of activities dominate in the structure of companies engaged in tourism service (52%), the share of tour operators is 13%, and of travel agents—36%.

In order to promote the most attractive segments of the inbound touristic market and to expand cooperation with leading worldwide and European destinations, the

**Fig. 2.7** Hotels and hotel complexes according to star rating in 2013 (% of total hotels and hotel complexes with a star category) (Source National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)



**Photograph 2.8** Hotel Europa\*\*\*\*\* in Minsk (author's photograph)



following complex of measures is planned to be taken: (1) increasing the share of hotels and hotel complexes with a 2- and 3-star category—up to 60–70% with modern conveniences and a wide range of services, as well as with 4- and 5-star category (for business, congress, cultural, and festival tourism) and roadside facilities to serve transit touristic flows; (2) simplification of complicated procedure of issuing visas for foreign citizens, together with reduction in prices and increases in numbers of preferential categories of tourists (students and youth, participants in sport events, etc.); (3) improvement in marketing and promotional activities to target touristic markets in order to promote the national touristic product; development of differential pricing policy which reflects level and quality of services and considers economic situation of neighboring countries and major destinations.

## 2.5 Tourist Flows and Types of Tourism

### 2.5.1 Dynamics of Visitors and Organized International Tourist Flows

In accordance with the methodological approach of UNWTO, geographical distribution and intensity of tourist traffic of the country should be considered from two angles: (1) the number of visitors, covering all persons, across the border for business, personal, tourist, or transit purposes; (2) the number of tourists, including persons using objects of tourist infrastructure for the night's lodging.

According to the statistics of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the volume of incoming flow of foreign visitors exceeded 6.2 million people in 2012 and has increased in comparison with 2008 by 116.2% (Table 2.6). The target structure of incoming flows of visitors is noted for the dominance of private trips (2/3) and transit visits (1/4) with some decrease in business and tourist arrivals in the share compared to 2008. The sharp decline in the share of tourist arrivals by 2013, compared to 2000, is explained by a change in accounting methods and the abolition of tourist trips by voucher after the entry of neighboring countries (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia) in the EU and Schengen area. We also should take into account that within the framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, there is no border and customs control with the Russian Federation and visitor flows through the Russian–Belarusian border are not registered. Based on the aforementioned volume of visitors incoming to Belarus, the intensity of arrivals of foreign tourists amounts to around 65 persons/100 residents that reflects both the growing tourist exchange and transit character of the country.

Dynamics of outbound visitors from Belarus has higher rates (which in 2008–2012 grew by 133.3%), as it includes significant transit traffic from the CIS countries (mainly Russia) to the Central and Western Europe and growing links between Belarus and neighboring countries (Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia) with

**Table 2.6** The number of arrivals of foreign visitors to Belarus (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Purpose of travel	2000		2008		2012		Index, 2012/2008 = 100
	Thousand visits	%	Thousand visits	%	Thousand visits	%	
Business	234.6	11.6	425.4	8.1	407.4	6.7	95.8
Tourism	609.2	30.0	122.3	2.3	46.6	0.8	38.1
Private	840.5	41.4	3056.1	58.1	3845.5	62.8	125.8
Transit	266.3	13.1	1430.4	27.2	1524.9	24.9	106.6
Service staff of transport vehicles	79.2	3.9	227.7	4.3	303.0	4.8	133.1
<b>Total arrivals</b>	<b>2029.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5261.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6127.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>116.2</b>



**Table 2.7** The number of departures of Belarusian citizens abroad by purpose of travel (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Purpose of travel	2000		2008		2012		Index, 2012/ 2008 = 100
	Thousand visits	%	Thousand visits	%	Thousand visits	%	
Business	591.1	12.4	347.8	5.5	372.3	4.4	107.0
Tourism	2,091.8	44.1	721.6	11.4	239.6	2.8	33.2
Private	1930.3	40.7	5000.3	79.1	7502.9	89.0	150.0
Service staff of transport vehicles	134.0	2.8	253.0	4.0	311.2	3.8	123.0
<b>Total departures</b>	<b>4747.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6322.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8426.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>133.3</b>

whom agreements have been signed on local border traffic (only implemented on the Latvian–Belarusian border). In the target structure of visitors from Belarus, 80–90% of visits are private with purposes of visiting friends and relatives, business trips, shopping, and other personal interests (Table 2.7).

Analysis of the dynamics of the target of tourist trips to Belarus based on statistics of organized international tourist arrivals by tourist agencies and offices shows their sustainable growth with small volume at the level of 100–150 thousand persons per year (Table 2.8), which is about one-tenth of the total flow of foreign tourists recorded in the objects of tourist infrastructure. At the same time, tourists from the CIS countries (mainly Russia) constitute more than two-fifth of the total flow with a steady decline of countries from other world destinations. This situation is due not only to the loss of interest in tourist visits, as with changes of accounting methods and declaring private purposes during the tourist trips which reflect more fully the statistics of the State Customs Committee.

In the geographical structure of organized incoming tourist flows, more than two-fifths of foreign tourists are representatives of the neighboring countries of the CIS (Russia and Ukraine). The flow from the neighboring countries of the EU (Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia) does not exceed 4–5%, which is approximately equal to the flow from the main destinations of Europe (Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Sweden, and Finland). At the same time, the flow of tourists from the USA

**Table 2.8** Dynamics of arrivals of organized foreign tourists to the Republic of Belarus, thousand persons (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Region	2000	2008	2013		Index, 2013/2008, 2008 = 100
			Thousand persons	%	
CIS countries	12.2	52.8	114.2	83.5	216.3
Non-CIS countries	48.1	38.8	22.6	16.5	58.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>91.6</b>	<b>136.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>149.3</b>

**Table 2.9** Geographical distribution of organized foreign tourists visiting the Republic of Belarus, persons (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Countries	2000	2008	2013		Index, 2013/2008, 2008 = 100
			Persons	%	
Russia	11,257	50,444	111,286	81.3	221
Ukraine	449	1898	1979	1.4	104
Poland	13,464	2832	3126	2.3	110
Lithuania	1949	2600	2093	1.5	81
Latvia	6364	1425	1031	0.7	72
Germany	5669	3027	1931	1.4	64
UK	7674	7674	1657	1.2	22
Italy	1463	2672	952	0.7	36
France	387	1257	729	0.5	58
USA	2881	1168	1070	0.8	92
Turkey	107	6087	1988	1.4	31
Finland	96	962	341	0.2	35
Sweden	380	594	204	0.1	34
Israel	3723	491	465	0.3	95
China	100	376	682	0.5	181

and Israel has reduced in recent years despite of large diaspora of immigrants from Belarus. The growing flow of tourists from China, small in size at present, reflects the expansion of tourism ties with an important economic partner of the country (Table 2.9). The decline of organized tourism flows to some extent reflects the impact of the crisis on the world tourist market after the economic downturn of 2008–2009 and stagnation in the following years.

Dynamics of outbound international organized tourist flows from Belarus is characterized by higher rates (186.2% in 2008–2013) in comparison with the incoming flow (149.3%). At the same time, higher growth is observed in the segment of non-CIS countries (232.4%), which accounts for about 70% of the total flow (Table 2.10).

In the geographical structure of the organized international tourism flows from Belarus, in recent years, Ukraine dominates (one-fourth of flow) receiving tourists from Belarus in Crimea and the Black Sea coast. The same volume of flow (about

**Table 2.10** Dynamics of departures of organized international tourists from the Republic of Belarus, thousand persons (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Region	2000	2008	2013		Index, 2013/2008, 2008 = 100
			Thousand persons	%	
CIS countries	107.5	167.4	213.3	30.1	127.4
Non-CIS countries	1181.6	213.0	495.1	69.9	232.4
Total	1289.0	380.4	708.4	100.0	186.2

**Table 2.11** Geographical distribution of organized international tourists from the Republic of Belarus, persons (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Countries	2000	2008	2013		Index, 2013/2008, 2008 = 100
			Persons	%	
Russia	77,854	30,029	37,258	5.3	124
Ukraine	29,481	137,338	175,796	24.8	128
Turkey	7555	74,730	98,988	14.0	132
Egypt	2523	44,282	52,954	7.5	120
Bulgaria	10,953	19,665	89,172	12.6	453
Poland	1,092,763	7197	52,819	7.5	734
Lithuania	11,966	8491	37,666	5.3	444
Czech Republic	17,514	11,101	17,729	2.5	160
Greece	852	1940	26,760	3.8	1379
Spain	4746	3534	16,307	2.3	461
Italy	3268	6725	13,460	1.9	200
France	2937	6027	9054	1.3	150
Montenegro*	232	3625	12,651	1.8	349
Cyprus	1603	869	3542	0.5	408
United Arab Emirates	331	1689	8967	1.3	531

\*2000—Serbia and Montenegro

24%) was directed to the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern destinations (Turkey, Egypt, the UAE, and Cyprus).

The share of outbound flow of organized tourists from Belarus to the Mediterranean countries of the EU amounted to about 10%, where there has been a significant increase of visits to Greece in recent years (Table 2.11). It should be noted that position of Bulgaria on the outbound market of Belarus has been restored in recent years (around 13%), the share of which is comparable to the proportion of the neighboring countries of the EU (Poland and Lithuania).

### **2.5.2 Tourist Flows in Accommodation Facilities and the Regional Intensity of the Tourist Development**

The total volume of tourist flows registered in the objects of tourist infrastructure in Belarus in 2013 amounted to over 2.6 million persons and has increased in comparison with 2008 by 118.3%, with an average annual growth of 3.7%, which corresponds to average world trends on the tourist market (Table 2.12). About two-third of tourists were citizens of Belarus, and about one-third—foreign tourists, whose quantity amounted to 970 thousand persons. At the same time, foreign tourists from the CIS countries accounted for 31.6% in hotels and 26.1% of the total flow in the sanatoriums. The share of foreign tourists from foreign countries in the

**Table 2.12** Number of tourists lodged in collective accommodation facilities in the Republic of Belarus, thousand persons (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

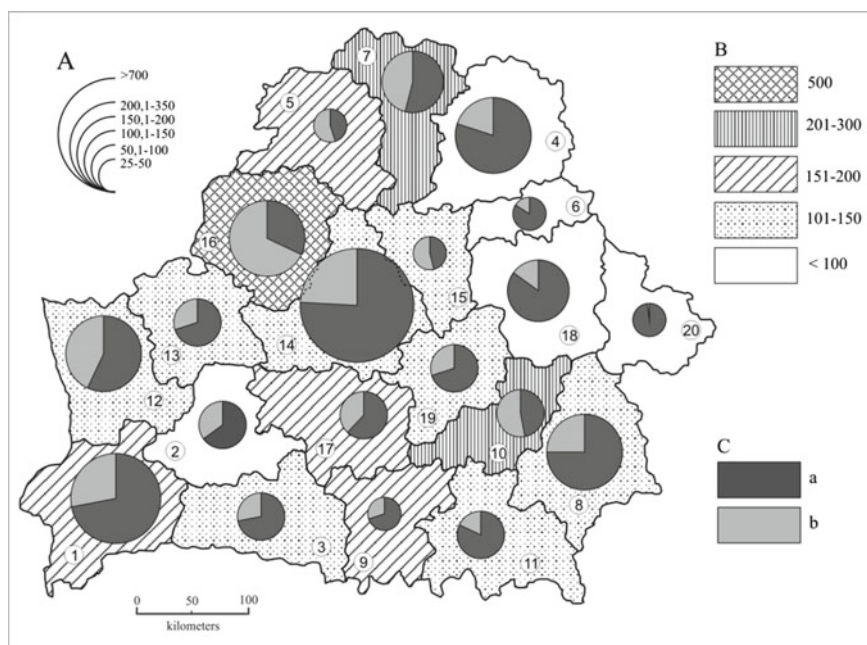
	2000	2008	2013	Regional structure of tourists in 2013		
				Citizens of the Republic of Belarus	Citizens of the CIS countries	Citizens of non-CIS countries
Number of tourists lodged in collective accommodation facilities	2017.8	2229.0	2638.6	1672.3	788.2	178.1
Hotels and similar accommodation facilities	1447.2	1546.0	1805.1	1065.3	570.7	169.1
Total sanatorium, health resort and health-improving organizations and other specialized accommodation facilities	570.6	683.0	833.5	607.1	217.5	8.9

hotels was significantly higher (about 10%) than that in the health and fitness facilities (about 1%). Thus, taking into account the visits to rural tourism facilities (about 40 thousand non-residents), the total flow of foreign tourists into the country in 2013 exceeded 1 million persons (by the method of registration in the objects of tourist infrastructure).

According to the regional structure of tourist flows, in the context of 20 districts (Fig. 2.10), the largest amount of tourists is registered in the Minsk capital district (over 700 thousand persons) and Brest border district (350 thousand). A significant annual flow of tourists (150–200 thousand) is concentrated in areas with significant recreation and resort resources (Molodechno and Polotsk districts), on Grodno border district and eastern districts with large cities (Vitebsk Gomel).

The intensity of number of tourist night's lodging (an average value is 145 persons/100 locals) was higher in the areas with a large number of health and fitness facilities (Molodechno district—resort Naroch, Polotsk—Resort Ushachi, Zhlobin—resort Rogachev) with a longer period of stay in comparison with the accommodation facility (Fig. 2.8).

Average intensity of tourist flows is 28 persons/100 locals, only in the most developed Molodechno district, where in localized Naroch resort area, this rate exceeds 50 persons/100 locals. In three districts (Minsk, Brest, and Polotsk), the intensity of the flows also exceeds the national average (28 persons/100 locals). In most districts, in the eastern part of the country, this rate is close to the national average level and in a small group (4 districts) of peripheral areas—not more than 20 persons/100 locals (Fig. 2.9).



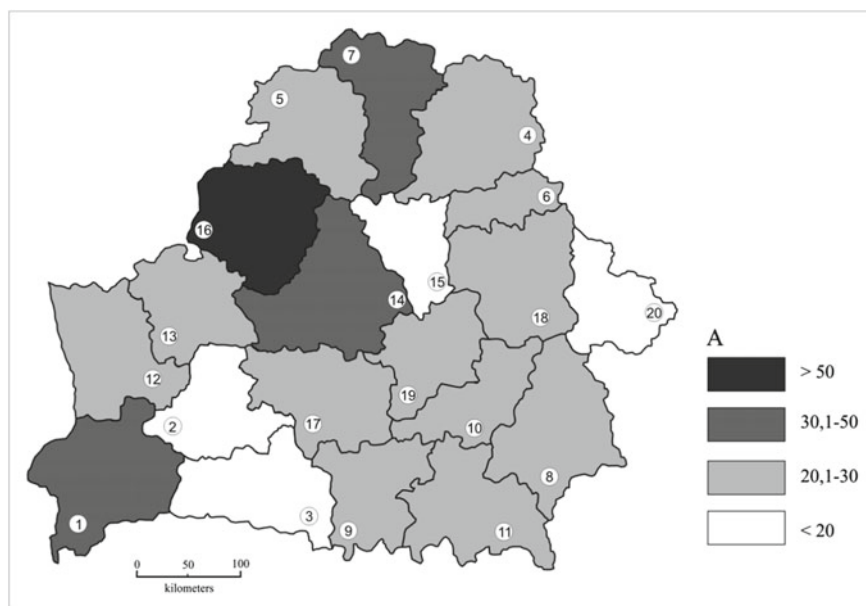
A – the number of tourists (thousand persons); B – the intensity of tourist night's lodging/100 locals; C – types of tourist infrastructure objects: a – hotels and similar accommodation facilities, b – sanatorium, health-resort and health-improving organizations

Economical microregions: 1 – Brest, 2 – Baranovichi, 3 – Pinsk, 4 – Vitebsk, 5 – Glubokoe, 6 – Orsha, 7 – Polotsk, 8 – Gomel, 9 – Zhitikovichi, 10 – Zhlobin, 11 – Mozyr, 12 – Grodno, 13 – Lida, 14 – Minsk, 15 – Borisov, 16 – Molodechno, 17 – Sluck, 18 – Mogilev, 19 – Bobruisk, 20 – Krichev

**Fig. 2.8** Volume and intensity of tourist traffic (2013)

In districts with a high intensity of tourist night's lodging, a higher volume of tourist services was also observed (Fig. 2.10). The highest annual volume of tourism services was provided by Minsk capital district (more than 115 million dollars), Brest border, and Molodechno–Naroch resort district, as well as Gomel, Grodno districts with their large cities. In districts with large health resort and health-improving complexes (Polotsk—Resort Ushachi, Zhlobin—Resort Rogachev, Vitebsk—Resort Letsy, Bobruisk—Resort Bobruisk, Lida—sanatorium Radon, Glubokoe—Braslav Lakes National Park), the intensity of tourist services varies at a level close to the average for the country (41 dollars/100 infrastructure objects).

For the evaluation of the level of development of tourist services, the index of development of tourism services sector ( $W_t$ ) can be applied, which is expressed by the following formula:



A – the intensity of tourist flows (tourist/100 infrastructure objects)

**Fig. 2.9** The intensity of tourist flows in tourist infrastructure objects (2013)

$$W_t = Q/\sqrt{S \times L}$$

where  $Q$ —annual volume of tourist services rendered in the objects of tourist infrastructure (million dollars),  $S$ —area (thousand km<sup>2</sup>), and  $L$ —population of the district (thousand people).

The results (Fig. 2.11) reflect the highest level of development of the tourism sector in Minsk, Molodechno–Naroch resort and Brest and Grodno border districts. In the districts of the northwestern part of the country with significant fund of recreational resources (national parks and resorts) and tourist infrastructure (Polotsk, Glubokoe), as well as in several districts of the southeastern part (Gomel, Zhlobin), with the resort areas of national and regional importance (resorts Rogachev, Chenki), the indicator of the development of tourism services sector is close to the national average ( $I_t = 0.28$ ). Most districts of the eastern part of the country (Vitebsk, Mogilev, Bobruisk, Borisov, Orsha) and southern Polesie (Pinsk, Mozyr, Zhitkovichi) have indicators of the development of tourism services sector below the national average. This fact is due to the significant demographic potential of the large cities in the eastern part of the country and underdeveloped tourism infrastructure in the southern districts, which leads to lowering of the levels of the index of the development of tourism services sector.



A – annual volume of tourist services (million dollars); B – the intensity of tourist services (USD / 100 locals); C – types of tourist infrastructure objects: a – hotels and similar accommodation facilities, b – sanatorium, health-resort and health-improving organizations

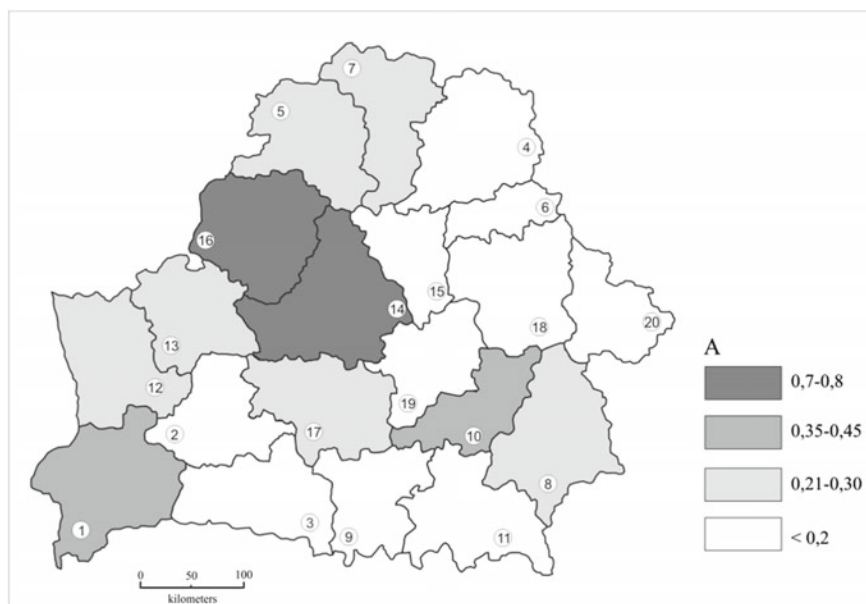
**Fig. 2.10** Volume and intensity of tourist services (2013)

## 2.6 The Main Forms and Types of Tourism

### Spa and wellness tourism

Belarusian medical, recreational, and resort fund comprises a number of natural factors (the climate, the hydrography, mineral waters, therapeutic mud, phytotherapeutic resources), which favorably affect the physiological state of a person and help in the treatment of various diseases. Neighboring tourist markets of Russia and the European Union, which have a significant demand in medical and recreational tourism, the absence of sociopolitical conflicts and natural disasters in the country contributes to the influx of foreign tourists for the therapeutic purposes. Negative aspects of recreation and geographical location are the lack of direct access to the sea, and the barrier of the Western border and visa requirements for tourists from EU countries.

The main hydromineral resources of Belarus are mineral waters of different composition and properties. There are about 200 sources on the territory of Belarus, over 120 of which are used in spa treatment. The use of some unique deposits of mineral water with specific composition and properties is promising (bromine and



A – the index of the development of tourism services sector ( $W_t$ )

**Fig. 2.11** Intensity of tourism services sector development by microdistricts (2013) A the index of the development of tourism services sector ( $W_t$ )

iodine-bromine, sulfide and hydrogen sulfide, ferrous, sodium bicarbonate (Belarusian analog of the “Borjomi”), mineral water with high content of organic substances). It is necessary to expand the practice of promoting Belarusian recreational tourism for domestic and foreign tourist markets, emphasizing the unique mineral waters and therapeutic muds, on the basis of which it is formed (this technique is used, for example, in the Borovoe sanatorium in the Vitebsk region). Sapropelic mud is widely represented in Belarus (39 deposits are reserved for therapeutic purposes, with total volume of 72.6 million  $m^3$ ). Corporate is also widespread in Belarus (113 deposits are reserved for therapeutic purposes with volume of 122 million  $m^3$ ).

A comprehensive analysis of the modern state of specialized infrastructure of the health resort sector in 2013 shows that sanatorium institutions account for 19% in the structure of the whole sector (with an average capacity of 288 beds), where 51% of hospital beds are staffed and maintained and 59% of all persons receiving therapeutic services are accommodated (492 thousand in 2013). Health institutions account for about 18% of hospital beds and 17% serviced and small institutions of affiliation (the average capacity of 60 seats) make up 31% of hospital beds and 25% of served clients. In recent years, there has been a gradual improvement in the quality of specialized infrastructure of the health resort sector, and deep renovations



of accommodation facilities have been proceeded, as well as modernization of healthcare infrastructure, increasing the proportion of double and single rooms.

The main part of holidaymakers in health resorts of Belarus are Belarusians (73.1% in 2012) and about one-third are foreign tourists who are having rest in Belarusian sanatoriums (231.3 thousand in 2014). In major Belarusian health resorts (“Borovoe,” “Ozerny,” “Yunost,” “Radon,” “Priozerny,” etc.), the proportion of foreigners is up to 30–35% of all holidaymakers. Using rate of intensity of healthcare influx (the number of service days in health resort establishments per one thousand local population) and rate of served customers in 2005–2013 as source indicators, the typology of regions was held (Table 2.12). It reproduces regional differences in the level of sanatorium facilities development. With the reached average characteristics of currents intensity (965 service days/1 thousand of local population and the increase of service by 133.4%), Brest, Minsk, and Grodno regions form a group of regions with high characteristics of sanatorium service rate and intensity. Vitebsk region has indexes which are close to the republican average, Gomel district has high intensity but low dynamics, and Mogilev region is notable for low level of development and dynamics (Table 2.13).

General sanatorium-recreation network in Belarus comprises more than 100 sanatorium-recreational establishments including 74 specialized sanatoriums. In most of sanatoriums, services are provided for lung diseases (66 objects), musculoskeletal and rheumatic diseases (55), heart diseases (53), digestive diseases (45), and other (urology, female, etc.). To satisfy the demand in new kinds of services (spa and wellness), a wide network of sanatoriums and cabinets has been created in the recent decade of renovation of sanatorium facilities—more than 80% of sanatoriums have pools and saunas, about 40%—solariums and beauty salons, 50% have rehabilitation capsules. Maximal progress of spa services development is visible in sanatoriums in the Minsk region. They are also established in Brest, Grodno, and Gomel regions and in Vitebsk and Mogilev regions with a little lag (Pirozhnik 2014).

**Table 2.13** The typology of regions of Belarus by level of sanatorium-recreation development (2013)

Level of development (number of overnights in sanatorium establishments per 1 thousand of population, Belarus = 965)	Rate of service increase in sanatorium establishments (2005–2013), Belarus = 1(133%)		
	>1 (148– 152%)	~ 1 (100– 120%)	<1 (90– 100%)
>1 (980–1115)	Brest Region		Gomel Region
=1 (870–890)	Minsk Region Grodno Region		
<1 (440–790)		Vitebsk Region	Mogilev Region

With significant reserves of therapeutic and recreational resources, and their high quality and effectiveness of sanatorium treatment, with considerable investment and demand, resorts perform the city-forming function in a number of locations and settlements. This led to the formation of independent residential units—holiday villages. Originally, resort areas develop on the basis of rural fishing and other small settlements which in the course of recreational development completely change their spatial and morphological role. In some cases, the resort district can become an independent functional part of the city, existing previously on another city-forming basis.

Climatobalneological resort Naroch is developed roughly in this way, where significant reserves of mineral waters and therapeutic muds, high quality of natural and recreational landscapes, as well as large investments from many ministries and departments during the last 50 years have caused significant changes in the morphology of the rural settlement in the northeast of the Naroch where a health resort was established. Resort gradually acquiring functions of city-forming significance became a leading specialized industry in the service sector. It led to the formation of an independent settlement: the Naroch Resort with about 3300 inhabitants. Manor buildings disappeared because of dominating role of resort functions; general resort center was created in place of the former fishing village, multistoried housing was introduced creating some problems of extreme urbanization, for example exemption of recreational land on the lakeside for residential development, recreational degression of natural landscapes as a result of high concentration of holidaymakers, and residential population on limited territory.

There are more than 6 thousand places among the sanatorium facilities and tourist infrastructure in the resort area, with about 100 thousand visitors [75% are holidaymakers in sanatoriums and tourist establishments (Table 2.14)]. Defert's index of tourist functions, which is calculated as the ratio of the number of seats in recreational facilities per 100 residents, reaches 105 for Naroch and 40 for the entire lakeside zone including private households, which corresponds to the resort areas and settlements where recreational and tourist functions are highly developed (with the ratio over 100), although in communities with complex business and utility facilities, it can be lower. Schneider's index, which is calculated as the ratio of the

**Table 2.14** Changes in the number of tourists in Naroch resort area (in thousand people) (*Source* Bulletin 2014, pp. 92–93)

Types of recreational facilities	2000		2010		2013	
	Number of persons	Persons per day	Number of persons	Persons per day	Number of persons	Persons per day
sanatorium	24.3	445.3	50.9	653.5	51.3	664.5
recreational holiday	25.6	484.0	13.1	242.1	14.1	255.6
touristic	14.8	164.2	6.2	45.1	9.2	41.0
total	64.7	1093.5	70.2	940.7	74.6	941.1

annual number of tourists per 100 residents, reaches about 340 people in Naroch and corresponds to areas with developed tourism.

Development of resort and recreational activities in the Naroch zone coincides with the implementation of large-scale conservation measures in the Naroch water-producing area. It is designated to decrease the intensity of eutrophication and degradation of lake ecosystem. Indicators of the quality of water from 1978 to 2008 prove it: The increase in transparency from 4.8 to 6.8 m and decrease in phosphorus concentration between 0.33 and 0.016 milligrams per liter and chlorophyll between 4.7 and 1.4 microgram per liter occurs.

Spatial morphological structure of resorts and recreation centers that are established on the basis of lake groups is formed within the following functional zones: 1—water areas of lakes with boating routes and additional tourist parking infrastructure; 2—coastal zone (beaches, swimming areas, water sports stations, playgrounds) with high recreational load, requires corresponding facilities and functional zoning; 3—residential zone with localization of tourists objects arrangement, sociocultural and trade-related infrastructure, with a high level of mastering; 4—zone of camping and hiking, areas for mushroom and berry collection, fishing, moderate recreational loads, considering environmentally acceptable levels.

With intensive mastering of less recreational-rich regions, but with stable tourist and recreational demand, these resort functions can form an additional branch of services in rural areas, creating specific objects of spa treatment and sociocultural infrastructure. These spa objects do not convert the existing morphological structure of rural settlements and are formed on free territories, accounting for specific architectural composition of districts. Such a model of morphological structure is typical for the Zhdanovichi resort (Minsk Region). The resort features date back to the early twentieth century (the first private holiday house was opened by doctor I. Zhdanovich in 1908), but actively began to develop after the creation of the Zaslavskoe reservoir (1956). Subsequently, two sanatoriums and network of recreation centers were created with the total capacity of more than 3 thousand people. The place has held the status of a resort area since 1974, but the resort facilities did not lead to a deep transformation of the village, because they were developed in the adjacent free areas as an additional element. Holiday functions act as supplement here, along with residential and production areas of the village. After the construction and reconstruction of Zaslavskoe reservoir, during the construction of Vilejka–Minsk water system in the 1970s, recreational reservoirs (Krynica, Drozdy) were created. The structure of land use in the area of the resort has undergone significant changes. Large areas of former peat extraction and forests have been flooded, some villages have been relocated, and large areas have undergone forest planting. Spa service, located in the suburban area of a major capital's agglomeration, experiences competition from residential zone and manufacturing function of Zhdanovichi town, and, as a result, suffers from various forms

of short-term suburban recreation, competing for valuable natural and recreational landscapes.

In areas with localized resort and recreational resources, low level of demand and small individual investments resort functions act as an accompanying branch to the service industry, creating small autonomous settlements with treatment facilities and municipal infrastructure. These spa facilities do not have close functional links with the system of rural settlement and develop largely isolated (their inhabitants create their own housing, heat and water supply facilities, maintenance and utility services, and other). Many local resorts develop according to this model. For example, the impact of local resorts (Letsy, Chenki, Beloe Lake) on the morphological transformation of rural settlement and individual settlements is negligible, because they form autonomous elements of rural settlement, and the small size of resorts (0.5–1.0 thousand) restrains them from becoming objects of local attraction and creating large resort settlements. Their development also leads to changes in land use patterns, but on a smaller scale than the first two types (conversion of forests into resort category, creation of forested parks, and improvement of coastal zone). Thus, the mentioned trends of spatial development of resorts and their impact on changes in the morphology of the settlement, primarily rural, system depend on the volume of resort and recreational resources, the size of investments and resort function grade (primary (city-forming)—secondary—auxiliary), leading either to a complete transformation of the morphological structure of settlements (Naroch), or to creation of additional structural elements (Zhdanovich) or to the formation of autonomous resort areas (Letsy, Chenki, Beloe Lake).

### **Cultural and event tourism**

Nowadays, one of the busiest branches of the Belarusian tourist market is cultural and event tourism, that is becoming more popular among different social groups and foreign tourists. The number of the museum visitors, which is gradually growing after the crisis period of 1990s—from 3.8 million people in 2000 (with the average number of 381 visits annually per 1000 inhabitants) to 6.1 million in 2014 (642 visits per 1000 inhabitants), shows the increasing dynamics of the tourist service that exceeds the level of the active state of the tourist market in 1980s (4.8 visitors in 1987, 486 visits per 1000 inhabitants). We can notice the most intensive tour influxes (180–340 thousand people in the year) in big national and regional historical museums and in the memorials; the attendance of the historic-cultural museum-reserves has highly grown (200–250 thousand people in year); the museums of the Belarusian writers and the natural museums of the national parks (70–100 thousand people) are actively visited (Table 2.15).

Belarus is estimated to have more than 20 high-attractive centers and places of international and national importance that one may find interesting to visit. There are more than 40 attractive sights of regional importance that are a must-see for tourists visiting Belarus; more than 80 sights are of local importance, which are worth visiting during traveling via tourist routes (Pirozhnik 1997). For example,

**Table 2.15** The most visited historic and cultural places in Belarus (2011) (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014 and Golubeva 1999)

Historical and cultural objects	Annual attendance, thousand visits	Number of main collection items exhibited during the year, units
Memorial Complex “Brest Hero Fortress”	338.6	47,781
Brest Regional Local History Museum	187.3	164,495
Museum of National Park “Belovezhskaya Puscha”	116.8	604
Vitebsk Regional Local History Museum	181.1	200,284
Polotsk National Historic and Cultural Reserve Museum	243.1	64,852
Gomel Palace and Park Ensemble	304. 4	166,498
Grodno State Historical and Archeological Museum	156.0	172,137
“Mir” Castle Complex	195.5	196
Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War History	219.4	16,523
National Historical Museum of the Republic of Belarus	174.0	284,300
National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus	182.9	27,195
State Memorial Complex “Khatyn”	182.0	617
National Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum “Nesvizh”	210.4	5651
Yanka Kupala State Literature Museum	105.8	39,308
Yakub Kolas State Literature and Memorial Museum	64.1	32,135
Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum “Zaslavl”	35.9	12,753
Mogilev Regional Local History Museum	94.5	130,147

among the ethnographic sights, introducing the culture of Belarusian people, the most attractive are Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle—open-air museum (village Ozerco, Minsk district), The History and Culture Museum-Preserve “Zaslaŭje,” Museum complex of ancient crafts and technologies “Dudutki” (Puchovichi district), Braslav Museum complex, Mogilev museum of ethnography, Motal Folk Arts Museum, Vetka Folk Arts Museum, Valynchy regional history museum (Verchnedvinsk district), etc.

Nowadays, cultural-event tourism develops rapidly and is becoming increasingly popular among tourists. It includes visiting exhibitions and festivals of modern art and culture. The interest of different social groups and foreign tourists in the cultural values, ethnic traditions, and art of the different peoples grows, and it can become the reason for tourist trips. Cultural traditions and heritage, historical reconstruction, and folk festivals make up a very attractive tourist product, highly demanded on the market.

The most visited cultural events and festivals take place during summer tourist season, in the museum-reserves, in open-air theater and performance stages in the towns of Nesvizh, Mir, Grodno, Novogrudok, Vitebsk, Polotsk; in autumn, most events take place in Minsk. Belarusian Orthodox Church regularly organizes the festival of modern Christian music “Blagovest.” Under the aegis of the Roman Catholic Church, the following international cross-confessional festivals are organized the Vitebsk region and in Minsk (Table 2.16): festival of Christian music “Mahutny Boza” in Mogilev and International Catholic Festival of Christian Films and TV programs “Magnificat” in Glubokoe. Analyzing the number of participants of the cultural-event tourism, it should be noted that the biggest demand is for the music events, where the number of visitors is from 40 to 120 thousand people due to the different target groups, whereas theatrical events target only some social and professional groups of people and are more exclusive in nature, not exceeding 10,000.

To assess the extent of use of historical and cultural potential of regions, the index of development of cultural potential ( $I_t$ ) is used, calculated as the ratio of the number of tourists in the region ( $N_e$ ) to the number of historical and cultural objects in the region ( $N_k$ ):

$$I_t = \frac{N_e}{N_k}$$

Minsk—the capital and the hero city is marked by the high level of museums and objects of historical and cultural heritage usage, the Brest and Minsk regions are marked by medium usage ( $I_t = 1.2$ — $1.4$ ), Vitebsk, Gomel, and Grodno by mid-low usage ( $I_t = 0.7$ – $0.9$ ), and Mogilev is marked by the lowest usage ( $I_t = 0.4$ ), as the area most affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

The sociological research of the sightseeing routes in the museums of Belarus showed that locals dominate among the visitors, and foreign visitors make up only 3.3% (from Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Germany). Thus, in the general flow of visitors, Minsk residents (46%) and residents of the regional centers (26%) dominate, and visitors from small districts (23%) and rural settlements (11%) do not exceed one-third of the total flow.

The awareness of tourists is a definite prerequisite for making decisions to visit museums and sights; however, sociocultural environment has a decisive influence. The results of the research showed that about 40% of tourists receive sights information in school from teachers, parents, or close relatives (21–24%) and friends (10–20%), i.e., there is a predominance of live interpersonal

**Table 2.16** The list of major annual events at the market of cultural-event tourism in Belarus

Month	Name	Place of realization	Organizers	Amount of visitors, thousands of people
June	Festival “Nights of the Bolshoi Theatre in the Radziwill castle”	Nesvizh	National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, National historical and cultural museum-reserve “Nesvizh,” and National State Television and Radio Company in cooperation with the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Belarus	about 3.5–5.0
July	“Musical evenings in the Mir castle”	Mir	National Television and Radio Company in cooperation with the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Belarus	about 40.0–50.0
July	International festival of arts “Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk”	Vitebsk	Ministry of culture, Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee, Center of culture “Vitebsk”	more than 120.0
August	National festival of Belarusian song and poetry	Molodechno	Ministry of culture, Minsk Regional Executive Committee, National academic symphonic orchestra, National State Television and Radio Company	4.0–6.0
September	International Theatre forum “TEART”	Minsk	Center of fine arts, in cooperation with the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Belarus, Belgazprombank, The Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw, The Polish Institute in Minsk	more than 9.0
November	International festival of modern choreography	Vitebsk	Ministry of culture, Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee, State institution “Centre of culture “Vitebsk”	1.0–2.0
November	International Theatre festival “Panorama”	Minsk	Ministry of culture, Minsk City Executive Committee and National academic theatre of Yanka Kupala	more than 6.0
November	International festival of organ music “Zvany Saphii”	Polotsk	The Culture Department of the Polotsk City Executive Committee, Polotsk historical and cultural museum-reserve	2.0–4.0

communication. In the Mir castle, the most effective source of information (after school and teachers) are tour guides (17.5%), and the impact of advertisement was noted only by 8% of visitors. Giving overall high evaluation to the guided tours (51.8% of visitors state excellent impression, 43.7%—good, 3.2%—not good, 1.2%—bad), sightseers and experts disagree about the most efficient forms of cognition and communication. With the prevalence of monologic forms of presenting information, over the dialog forms in museums and on tours, about two-fifths of experts consider a tour monologue and presentation as the most efficient form of communication, but the visitor priorities are bit different. More than 28% of tourists prefer self-guided tours, 26%—self-guided with consulting the information assistant, 12%—individual tours, and only about 20%—group tours (Golubeva 1999). Obviously, the inclusion of historical sights requires highly skilled employees and qualified management during all stages of tourism development.

### Rural tourism

The spectrum of agritourism services, in accordance with the legislation of tourism in Belarus, includes renting rooms (but not separated beds, or tourist cottages, caravans, etc.), disposal of home meals (and not using other types of catering, also in terms of the so-called small catering), and finally the provision of other related services—sightseeing, cultural, and recreational activities.

The basic element of the tourism market in this sense is a agritourist object—rural homestead (house or part of a building), which is a property and place of residence of the agritouristic actor—a private person or founder of an object (a member of a farm household), located in rural areas or in small urban settlements up to 20 thousand inhabitants (excluding resort areas) and corresponds to set of technical and sanitary standards and has a level of infrastructural development corresponding to the type of locality.

Agritourism service market in Belarus had been actively developing since the second half of the first decade of this century (Table 2.17). During last six years, the number of tourist farms has increased more than 4.3 times and exceeded 2.0 thousand in 2014. Tourist traffic in farm houses was also characterized by a high growth of rates, and the level in 2014 exceeded 318 thousand people (there were about 87% of domestic tourists and 13%—foreign tourists). In Belarus, based on the significant natural, ecological, and cultural potential of rural areas, a new segment of the market is being formed—the agritourism sector, which concentrates more than one-tenth of the overall domestic tourism (2905.6 thousand of people in 2014).

**Table 2.17** The tourist agrotourist farms development in Belarus (*Source* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2014)

Specification	2008	2010	2012	2014	Index 2014/2008
Number of agrotourist farms	474	1247	1775	2037	4.3 times
Tourist agrotourist farms services users (thousands of people)	39.0	119.2	222.6	318.8	8.2 times



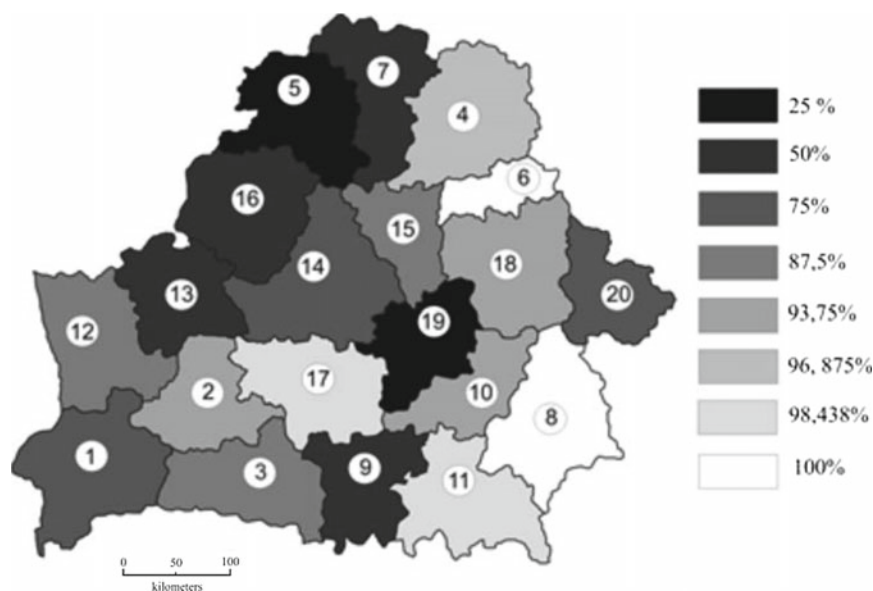
The regional system of tourist agrotourist farms spatial location is in the phase of active development but, simultaneously, certain general characteristics tend some stabilization. In the macroregional system with 6 regions of Belarus, the majority of the tourist farms are located in the capital, Minsk Region—more than 27.0%. Undoubtedly, the main factors of their location in the Minsk Region are the capital city agglomeration receptive market, communication position near the trans-European transport corridors, and attractive natural landscapes in the Belarusian Lakeland (region of the “Narochansky” National Park), natural reserves (“Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve,” “Naliboki Pushcha”), a dense network of water reservoirs and rivers.

Vitebsk region is characterized by a significant level of agritourist farms concentration (about 25%), especially in the western part of the Braslav and Polotsk Lakeland districts, where in forest–lake areas (Rossony, Miory districts), small rural settlement dominates.

In the western regions of the country, in the borderland (Grodno, Brest regions), a dynamic growth of agritourist farmsteads was noted in 2008–2013, with concentration of about 13–15% of farmsteads in each, with a high level of concentration in the suburban areas of regional centers and in the area of the “Belovezhskaya Pushcha” National Park. Recently, an increase in the number of agritourist farms has been observed in the Gomel region (11% of households), where a greater number of farmsteads is located in the western part of the zone of the national “Pripyatsky” park and the riverine areas (Rogachev, Svetlogorsk). The lowest number of agritourist farms has been observed in the Mogilev Region (9% of households), where the farmsteads are mainly created in the riverine areas with large water reservoirs (Osipovichy, Byhov).

In the microregional system, where the spatial location analysis was carried out within 20 socioeconomical regions, a significant predominance of the capital region (Minsk) and the northwestern (Glubokoe, Molodechno) and western regions (Grodno, Lida, Brest) are observed. This situation reflects the influence of the demand, natural, and communication factors. (Fig. 2.12)

Agritourist sector infrastructure development is primarily based on local communities entrepreneurship and the on the application of network technologies and branded products, for example, cluster—“Volozhinskie Gostincy,” which is built with using technology of “green routes,” and which includes in its offer 12 agritourist farms, 4 crafts centers, 9 local history museums, 4 ecological museums, and 6 festival events. It causes some morphological changes in the rural settlement system which, in most areas, does not exceed the phase of assimilation and colonization of rural tourism space. The research of agrotourism in the Brest border region (the international project “Cross-border tourism in Belarus and Polish border regions,” 2012) showed that more than a half of households hosts no less than 100 visitors annually, and about 17%—more than 300. The majority of the farmsteads owners (62.5%) have knowledge of quality standards requirements of tourists’ services, but experts pointed that improvements in accommodation standards and sanitary status of farmsteads are needed.



Economical microregions: 1 – Brest, 2 – Baranovichi, 3 – Pinsk, 4 – Vitebsk, 5 – Glubokoe, 6 – Orsha, 7 – Polotsk, 8 – Gomel, 9 – Zhitkovichi, 10 – Zhlobin, 11 – Mozyr, 12 – Grodno, 13 – Lida, 14 – Minsk, 15 – Borisov, 16 – Molodechno, 17 – Sluck, 18 – Mogilev, 19 – Bobruisk, 20 – Krichev

**Fig. 2.12** The concentration's quantiles of agritourist farm localization in 2013

More than 54% of experts indicate the costs of stays correspond to the quality of services, and about 24% of experts indicate that costs are too high. However, about 78% of domestic tourists and visitors claim that the prices of agricultural tourism services correspond to their quality. There are some difficulties in communicating between foreigners and farms owners as a result of owners' poor foreign language skills (about 27.5% of hosts receiving foreign guests declare a basic knowledge of English and 17.5%—German). There is a significant potential for improving the quality of agritourist services through enhancement of owners' skills and knowledge, especially the knowledge of practical methods for process management.

### **Religious tourism**

There are 3321 religious communities registered in Belarus, having 2664 hieratic buildings at their disposal, with 671 of them being cultural property sites. The importance of Belarusian landmarks as world heritage has been acknowledged by the UNESCO experts. Farny Roman Catholic Church with the Radziwills' Chapelle tomb in Nesvizh, St Boris and Gleb's (Borisoglebskaya or Kolozhskaya) Orthodox Church from twelfth century in Grodno, The Salvation and St Euphrosyne's (Spasso-Euphrosynevskaya) Orthodox Church, and St. Sophia's (Sophiyskiy) Orthodox Cathedral in Polotsk, St. Nikolas' monastery in Mogilev, defense temples in Synkovichi near Slonim and in Kamai near Postavy, wooden churches of

Polesie—all these historical and cultural landmarks are to be included in the World Heritage List.

Two main directions of religious tourism have been established in the Republic of Belarus: (1) visiting major sanctities outside of Belarus (Holy Land for Orthodox and Judaists, Holy Sepulcher and Rome for Catholics, Mecca and Medina for Muslims); (2) visiting significant religious sites in Belarus both by local residents and foreign tourists.

There are approximately 50 pilgrimage centers in Belarus (see Table 2.18), most of which belong to Belarusian Orthodox Church (64%); 36% belong to Roman Catholic Church. Holy sites with wonder-working icons are dominating among pilgrimage objects (46%), followed by holy springs (30%) and fonts of holy springs (10%). The two most worshipped icons in Belarus are Zhirovichi Icon of the Mother of God (Zhirovichi village, Slonim district, Grodno region) and Budslav Mother of God Icon (Budslav village, Myadel district, Minsk region).

The veneration of holy miraculous icons is quite widespread in Belarus. The most revered icons in Belarusian Orthodox Church are the following: Minsk Mother of God Icon (located in Holy Spirit Cathedral, Minsk city), Barkalabovsk Mother of God Icon (Byhov, Mogilev region), Kupyatich Mother of God Icon (Kupyatichi village, Pinsk district, Brest region), Orsha Mother of God Icon (Orsha city, Vitebsk region).

Apart from Budslav Mother of God Icon, there are other icons, worshipped by Belarusian Catholics as follows: Logishin Mother of God Icon (located in Logishin town, Pinsk district, Brest region), Brest Mother of God Icon (Brest city), Gudogai Mother of God Icon (Gudogai village, Ostrovets district, Grodno region), Minsk

**Table 2.18** Main pilgrimage objects of Belorussian confessions

Pilgrimage objects	Total number of objects	Regions					
		Brest	Vitebsk	Gomel	Grodno	Minsk	Mogilev
Sacred relics	$\frac{1o}{1o}$	0	$\frac{1o}{0}$	$\frac{0}{1o}$	0	0	0
Icons	$\frac{2(1c/1o)}{21(14c/7o)}$	$\frac{0}{2c/2o}$	$\frac{0}{2c}$	$\frac{0}{1c}$	$\frac{1co}{8c/1o}$	$\frac{1c}{1c/1o}$	$\frac{0}{3o}$
Sacred springs	$\frac{1o}{14(2c/12o)}$	$\frac{0}{2o}$	$\frac{0}{1c/2o}$	$\frac{0}{1o}$	$\frac{1o}{1c/1o}$	$\frac{0}{4o}$	$\frac{0}{2o}$
Fonts	$\frac{1o}{4o}$	—	—	0	$\frac{1o}{0}$	$\frac{0}{2o}$	$\frac{0}{2o}$
Crosses	$\frac{1o}{1o}$	$\frac{0}{1o}$	—	$\frac{1o}{0}$	0	$\frac{0}{0}$	—
Sacred Graves	$\frac{0}{2(1c/1o)}$	$\frac{0}{1c}$	—	—	0	$\frac{0}{1o}$	—
Stones	$\frac{0}{1o}$	$\frac{0}{1o}$	—	—	0	—	—
Total number	$\frac{6(2c/4o)}{44(16c/28o)}$	$\frac{0}{3c/6o}$	$\frac{1o}{5(3c/2o)}$	$\frac{1o}{3o}$	$\frac{1co/2o}{9c/2o}$	$\frac{1c}{9(1c/8o)}$	$\frac{0}{7o}$

$\frac{6(2c/4o)}{44(16c/28o)}$ national pilgrimage objects  
 $\frac{6(2c/4o)}{44(16c/28o)}$ regional pilgrimage objects c—number of Catholic objects/o—number of Orthodox objects

Mother of God Icon (Minsk city, Saint Virgin Maria Cathedral), Kongregatskaya Mother of God Icon (Grodno city).

Annually, thousands of believers attend imperishable hallows of Belarusian saints: Saint Euphrosyne of Polotsk (Polotsk city), Saint Princess Sophia of Slutsk (Slutsk city), Saint John of Korma (Korma village, Dobrush district, Gomel region).

Belarus indeed abounds with miracles, amid which one can mention myrrh dropping icons of Saint Pokrov church in Dzerzhinsk, the amazing cases of Christ and Blessed Virgin's Holy Faces appearing on trees and rocks (Pustynki village, Mstislav district, Mogilev region), the unique cross-shaped boulders growing out of the ground (Turov).

Annually, thousands of pilgrims rush to the holy springs, the healing power of which has been acknowledged both by scientists and ecclesiastical authorities (Zhirovichi village, Logoisk, Polykovichi village, and others).

The pilgrimage geography of Belarus is quite wide, and almost every area has its own holy sites, most of which are concentrated in the Grodno region (14 objects—or 28%), the Minsk region (10 objects—20%) and Brest (9 objects—18%). The largest pilgrimage centers of Belarus are located in Zhirovichi village, Budslav village, and Polotsk city, which are of national importance, as far as they attract thousands of pilgrims from Belarus and abroad annually.

The tour around Polotsk is in good demand among tours in Belarus, along with Minsk—Slonim—Zhirovichi tour, attending historical center of Slonim, the functional monastery and seminary in Zhirovichi. Slonim has preserved the following ancient planning and architectural monuments from seventeenth to eighteenth centuries: former Bernadine's monastery and nunnery, the city hall, the synagogue, St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church, and other ancient buildings. Tours to the town of Miory, attending Miory Roman Catholic Church and ethnographic museum, and to Mosar village (Glubokoe district, Vitebsk region) are extremely popular among tourists.

Religious pilgrimage in Polotsk is related to the erection of Transfiguration of the Saviour (Spaso-Preobrazhensky) Monastery in the twelfth century (now St. Euphrosyne Monastery). Euphrosyne of Polotsk was canonized as a Belarusian saint by the Orthodox Church in 1984. The incorruptible relics of Saint Euphrosyne are now based in St. Euphrosyne Church of St. Euphrosyne Monastery in Polotsk, transported from St. Feodosiy Monastery, Jerusalem, in 1910.

Pilgrimage in Polotsk was born in twelfth to thirteenth centuries as pilgrimage to monasteries that turned into pilgrimage to hallows in twentieth century. Pilgrimage tours in Belarus are often timed to certain dates. Annually, on the 5th June, people come to see the Hallows of reverend Euphrosyne of Polotsk, the Protectrix of Belarus.

The largest center of Orthodox pilgrimage in Belarus is located at the Holy Assumption Monastery in Zhirovichi village, Slonim district, Grodno region. It is famous for such ancient wonder-working sanctity, as Zhirovichi Icon of Mother of God. The icon in Zhirovichi is the smallest of all Virgin Mary's icons. It is made of light-gray jasper and is of elliptical shape, sized as a child's palm (43 × 56 mm). The icon depicts the bas-relief of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus



**Photograph 2.9** Pilgrim centers of Belarus: **a** Polotsk (Church of St. Euphrosyne, the Cross and reliquary with relics of Saint Euphrosyne of Polotsk); **b** Zhirovichi (the Assumption Monastery and the Icon of Zhirovichi Mother of God); **c** Budslav (Roman Catholic Church of Assumption of St. Mary and the Icon of Budslav Mother of God)

Christ in her right arm. It is remarkable that Zhirovichi Icon is one of the 100 most significant orthodox icons in the world, and it is commemorated by the Orthodox annually on May 20th. Nowadays, the number of pilgrims flocking to Zhirovichi reaches approximately 100,000 people per year.

One of the largest catholic pilgrimage centers in Belarus is located in Budslav Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the miraculous Budslav Mother of God Icon (Budslav village, Myadel district, Minsk region). Bernardines' Catholic Church and Monastery have existed in Budslav since 1589. The icon was stored here in 1613, and later it was transported to newly built stone churches two times. As it is written in the monastery's chronicles, the icon was presented by the Pope Clement VIII to Minsk Voivode Yan Pats in Rome. Nowadays, there is an annual celebration of the Icon in Budslav, which occurs on July 2nd and is visited by about 5000–10,000 people, with the yearly inflow of approximately 10,000–25,000 people (Photograph 2.9c).

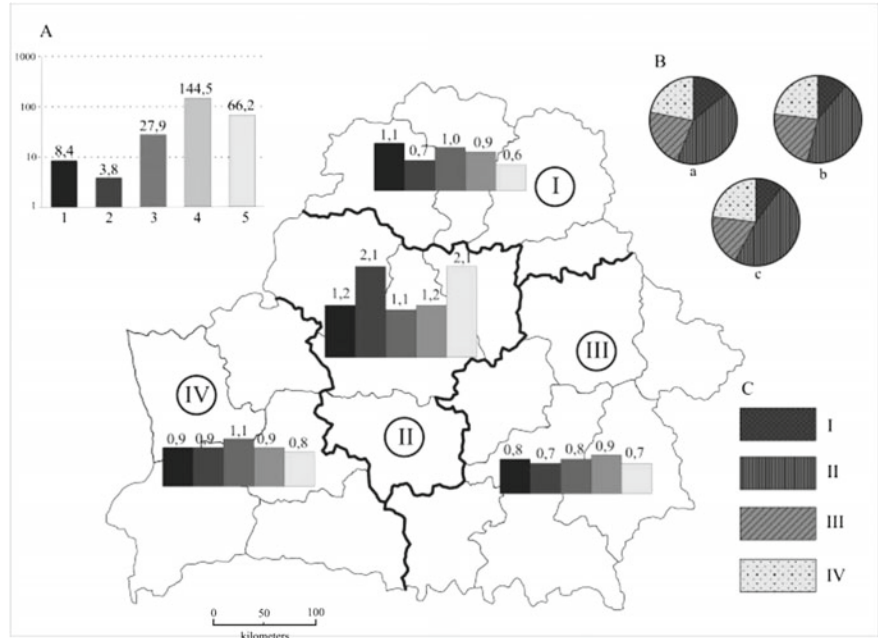
## 2.7 Tourist Regions of Belarus

Four main recreational and tourist regions are identified in Belarus on the basis of the regional differences of recreation and resource potential of the tourist specialization and recreational functions level of development (Pirozhnik 1992, Pirozhnik 2008a): Northern (Vitebsk region), Central (Minsk region and Oshmiany, Ostrovets, Smorgon districts of Grodno region), Southeastern (Gomel and Mogilev regions), and Western (Brest and the main part of the Grodno region) (Fig. 2.13, Table 2.19).

The most developed recreational and tourist functions are presented in Minsk and Molodechno microdistricts with developed recreational and tourist infrastructure, network of resorts and recreation areas. Brest and Grodno microdistricts, located near the state border, and also the microdistricts of east part of the country headed by the large cities—Gomel, Vitebsk, and Mogilev—with less intensive development of all elements of tourist sector are characterized by linearly node territorial structure. The majority of microdistricts (13) are on initial stages of territorial structure formation. Taking into account the stadial character of recreational and tourist space formation and key features of its territorial structure, it is possible to allocate types at each stage (Table 2.20, Fig. 2.14).

**Northern region** has a significant natural and recreational, cultural and educational potential. The region concentrates 13% of tourist beds fund and tourist flows (Table 2.19); however, the intensity of tourism development is below the national average (Fig. 2.13). Picturesque hilly lake and forest landscapes make it very prospective for tourism development. The role of the tourist resources of Belarusian Lakeland increases, especially due to the loss of polluted recreational areas in the southeast part of the country. Specialization of this region is associated with the development of cultural, educational, and event tourism (Vitebsk, Polotsk), balneological (Ushachi, Letsy resorts), as well as sports and recreational tourism





A – indicators of the intensity of recreational development and tourism flows in the region (Belarus = 1.0): 1 – the number of beds / 1 thousand of population, 2 – beds / 10 sq. km, 3 – tourists / 100 local residents, 4 – tourist nights / 100 local residents, 5 – tourist nights / 1 sq. km; B – the region's share in (%): a – the bed fund capacity, b – number of tourist nights, c – the volume tourist services; C – tourist regions: I – Northern, II – Central, III – South-Eastern, IV – Western.

**Fig. 2.13** The tourist regions of Belarus

**Table 2.19** Tourist regions of Belarus (2014)

Regions	Tourist infrastructure		Tourist flows		Tourist accommodations		Volume of tourist services	
	Places (thousand)	%	People (thousand)	%	Bed-day (thousand)	%	Million USD	%
I. Northern	10.8	13.7	347.6	13.2	1497.4	11.0	39.9	10.2
II. Central	33.2	42.0	1050.0	39.8	5877.8	43.0	186.5	47.6
III. Southeastern	17.2	21.8	568.4	21.5	3181.3	23.3	75.6	19.4
IV. Western	17.8	22.5	675.0	25.5	3105.3	22.7	89.4	22.8
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>79.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2641.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13,661.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>391.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.20** Stages of development of the territorial structure of recreational regions in Belarus

Stages of territorial structure development	Tourism intensity	Rank of tourist functions	Type of territorial structure	Microdistricts
Generation	Stagnation	Accompanying	Spot	Baranovich, Pinsk, Glubokoe, Orsha, Zhitkovichi, Lida, Mozyr, Borisov, Krichev
Formative	Extensive seasonal growth	Additional	Localized	Polotsk, Bobruisk, Zhlobin, Slutsk
Development	Intensive dynamics	Profiling	Linear-nodal	Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev, Molodechno
Consolidation	Stable growth	Leading	Areal network	Minsk



a – areal-network, b – linear-nodal, c – localized, d – spot

**Fig. 2.14** Types of recreation and tourist space, territorial structure by districts *a* areal network, *b* linear-nodal, *c* localized, *d* spot

(national park Braslav Lakes). Braslav tourist area, formed on the basis of the lake group (more than 30 lakes), is a popular place for sport tourism and recreation. The annual tourist flow in Braslav area exceeds 35 thousand people. Self-supported



travelers, relaxing in agrotourist farms in coastal villages and tourist campsites on parking lots, account for about three-fourth of the tourist flow structure. The lake ecosystems of Braslav Lakes National Park preserve rich flora and fauna and are attractive for the development of ecological tourism. An important place of ecotourism in the Northern region is also the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve (partially located in the Central region), with widely available natural forest and wetland complexes; there is a large aboriginal population of beaver and other rare animals. In addition to natural resources, Lakeland is characterized by considerable potential for sightseeing tours. The leading excursion center of the region is the National Historical and Cultural Reserve, created in Polotsk—the oldest city in the country, with a rich 1140-year historical heritage, architectural monuments from eleventh to twelfth centuries (Sophia Cathedral, Transfiguration Church) and other epochs. The place is the cradle of Christianity in Belarus (a place of pilgrimage to the St. Euphrosyne Monastery) and the motherland of an outstanding educator and printing pioneer F. Skorina (Museum of Printing, a memorial monument). It is also important to note the cultural capital of Belarus—the ancient Vitebsk (the motherland of Marc Chagall, the venue of the international art festival Slavianski Bazaar) and small old towns with preserved historical and architectural monuments (Braslav, Glubokoe, Postavy, Mosar, Orsha).

**The Central region** has the most developed tourist infrastructure and concentrates more than two-fifth of tourist and recreational infrastructure capacity, tourism flows, and volume of services. Specialization of the region is determined by high level of development of resort, medical (Naroch and Zhdanovich resorts), and tourist excursion services (the capital of Minsk, historical and cultural venues from the UNESCO World Heritage List—“Nesvizh” Museum, Historical and Cultural “Zaslavl” Reserve, “Khatyn” Memorial Complex, etc.). Health function is largely related to ensuring Minsk agglomeration recreational needs, recreational flow, from which 520 thousand people come to the 100-km suburban area. Furthermore, one-third of this flow is concentrated in a 30-kilometer forest city belt. A high demand for suburban recreation stimulated the creation of a network of recreational reservoirs (Zaslavl, Krynica, Vyacha, Vilejka, Pticz, etc.), ski tourist complexes “Logoisk” and “Silichi” and memorial military–historical complex “Stalin Line.” Naroch resort and recreation area, formed in the vicinity of a picturesque lake and forest landscapes, regional climate and balneotherapeutic medical resources, is the largest in the country. The total capacity of the recreational base is over 6.0 thousand people (about 60%—year-round). Together with unorganized tourist flows, overall lump number of tourists in the summer period reaches 10 thousand people. The annual average recreational flow exceeds 100 thousand people. The capital of Belarus, Minsk Hero City, has the most developed tourist infrastructure (international Airport, more than 10 thousand places in the hospitality fund, the most developed network of sports and entertainment facilities) and is a major center of international tourism sector in Belarus, as the reception of foreign tourists and in terms of creating a demand for overseas tours. In addition to the attractions of Minsk (monuments of architecture, modern buildings, museums), tourists are attracted by medieval monuments of national historical and cultural reserves in

Nesvizh (the palace and castle complex, parks, Church of Corpus Christi from the sixteenth century with ancestral burial of the Radziwill family—the first Baroque style church on the territory of Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Town Hall et al.) and Zaslavl (monuments of archeology and architecture, “Mill” ethnographic complex), Kupala Memorial Reserve (Vyazyinka in Molodechno district) and Kolas Memorial Reserve (Nikolaevszina, Stolbtsy district), “Khatyn” Memorial Complex. One of the most attractive unconventional tourist sites in Belarus is the museum of material culture “Dudutki.” Cultural festival programs (Minsk, Nesvizh, Molodechno) and excursion-animation programs “Visiting the Belarusian Father Frost” in Naliboki Forest, as well as visiting farmsteads within the green route “Volozhinskie Gostincy” are also gaining popularity. In the capital city of Minsk and Molodechno, microdistricts have developed the most advanced forms of areal network and linear-node territorial structure of tourist service (Fig. 2.14).

**Southeast region** is formed in the basin of the Dnieper region major rivers (the Dnepr, the Berezina, the Sozh, the Pripyat). Its recreation profile is determined by the organization of health-improving resting primarily in the resorts of national (Rogachev), and local importance (Bobruisk, Chenki). The region contains more than one-fifth of recreation and tourism bed-space and tourist flows; however, the intensity of all tourist development indicators is below the country average (0.7–0.8). A line-node type of tourist services territorial structure is specific to the major urban microdistricts (Mogilev, Gomel), and in most of districts it has localized (Bobruisk, Zhlobin) or spot character (Fig. 2.14). Cultural tourism develops acknowledging the rich heritage and draws from the East Slavic traditions of complex national excursion centers (Mogilev—the ensemble of St. Nicholas Monastery from the seventeenth century, the Church of St. Stanislaus of eighteenth century, military-historical object “Buinichi field” and Heritage Village; Gomel—the palace and Park Ensemble of Paskevich family from seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) and the regional centers: Bobruisk (fortress, nineteenth century), Mozyr, Krichev, Zhlobin. Other venues with significant potential are as follows: palaces, parks, and manor ensembles in Krichev, Zhylichy, and Grudinovka, a complex of temples and monasteries in Mstislavl (Pustynki from sixteenth century, the Carmelite Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary from seventeenth century —“Belarusian Suzdal”), historical and archeological monuments of ancient Turov (settlement from ninth century, Turov stone crosses from twelfth century in the Church of All Saints), folkloristic (Zhirkovichy, Ivolsk, Negovka) and ethnographic monuments of Vetka (Museum of Folk Art, a collection of icons, samples of wood carving, weaving), Neglyubka (weaving towels), literary memorial museums of national writers I. Melezh (Glinische, in Khoyniki district), and I. Shamyakin (Korma, in Dobrush district). There is also a potential for ecotourism in the “Pripyatsky” National Park (the unique floodplain landscape of Pripyat, rich bird fauna, the ancient town of Turov) and in specialized tours in Polessie Radiation Ecological Reserve.

**West region** is highlighted by the concentration of historical and cultural heritage (Grodno, Pinsk, Brest, Novogrudok, Mir, Slonim, Lida, Zhirovichi Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage-awarded place “Struve Geodetic Arc,” and

others), which determines its specialization—cultural tourism and excursions. The region contains more than one-fourth of recreational beds fund and tourist flows (Table 2.13). It is relatively close to the country's average level of the tourist development of the region and the formation of linear-nodal type of territorial structure in Brest and Grodno microdistricts and its spot character in the rest of the region. A favorable transport and geographic position of the region contributes to the development of transit tourism and cross-border tourist exchange with Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Organization of ecological tourism in the National Park “Belovezhskaya Pushcha”—a World Heritage Nature Reserve, created on the basis of the largest ancient forest in Europe, has significant prospects for development. There are more than 1000 oaks aged from 300 to 700 years, there are 450-year-old ash trees, 220-year-old pine trees, and 150-year-old junipers. The pride of the park is the largest population of bison. Memorable places associated with historical events (Brest Union of 1596, Brest-Litovsk peace in 1918, the defense of the Brest Fortress in 1941, the signing of agreements connected with demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 in Viskuli) acquired world fame. Novogrudok land became the nucleus of the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the thirteenth century—one of the largest states in the medieval Europe. The region has a large number of preserved ancient religious buildings of the Belarusian national architectural school (St. Boris and Gleb's (Borisoglebskaya or Kolozhskaya) Church from the twelfth century—Grodno), fortifications (Kamenets Tower from the thirteenth century, Unique Churches of defense type in Murovanka from the sixteenth century (Shchuchin district), and Synkovichi from fifteenth century (Zelva district), medieval castles in Grodno, Novogrudok, Lida, Mir, Lyubcha, Krevo, where the festivals of medieval culture and spear running are organized. The important sites of historical and memorial museum tours are sights in homelands of A. Mickiewicz (Zaose—Baranovichi district), T. Kosciuszko (Kosovo-Merechevshina—Ivatsevichi district), E. Orzeszkowa (Grodno), and the last king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—S. Poniatowski (Wolczyn—Kamenets district). In Neman and Polesie regions, there were formed regional centers of folk crafts: pottery and ceramics (Gorodnaya—Stolin district, Derechin—Zelva district, Porozovo—Svisloch district), folk costumes (Novogrudok, Mosty, Motal—Ivanovo district), tapestry (Telekhany—Ivatsevichi district). In recent years, on the basis of local balneological and mud resources, health-related tourism has been actively developed, and the following local resorts have been formed: “Beloe Lake” (Brest district), “Sosnovy Bor” resort (Zhabinka district), the “Radon” (Dyatlovo district) and “Ozerny” (Grodno district) sanatoriums, and others. Agrotourism sector is actively developed through the extension of green routes: “Neman Way,” “Water route of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” and “Zel'venskiy diariush.” Cross-border tourism ties develop in the “Belovezhskaya Pushcha” National Park and the Augustow Canal.

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