

COUNTRY: BELARUS**FACTS:**

Area: 207.595 km²

Population: 9.449.923

Government: Unitary presidential republic

Language: Belarusian, Russian

Religion: The most common religion in the republic is Christianity. Christians of Belarus profess:

- Orthodoxy
- Catholicism
- Protestantism

Among other religions, the most common are:

- Judaism
- Islam

Currency: Belarusian Ruble (BYN)

Time difference from CET: +3

Climate: Temperate continental

Capital: Minsk

National Day: July 3rd

TIME: GMT+3**HOLIDAYS AND VACATION:**

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Orthodox Christmas (January 7)
- International Women's Day (March 8)
- International Labor Day (May 1)
- Victory Day (May 9)
- Independence Day (July 3)
- October Revolution Day (November 7)
- Catholic Christmas (December 25)

OFFICE HOURS:

9-18

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS:

COURTESY:

Belarusian people are known for being very polite, peaceful and compromised. No matter what situation may happen. They try to perceive the situations in the way they are, they don't complain and usually try to avoid conflicts.

DRESS:

Belarusians tend to wear black or grey suits when it comes to negotiations, the official dress code is obligatory at all the official events, presentations, meetings.

BODY LANGUAGE:

When men meet men for the first time it is required to maintain direct eye contact and have a firm handshake. Light hugs are only permitted for longtime friends and family members. When women greet women in an initial meeting then a simple handshake or a nod will be the custom. If a man meets a woman for the very first time then no touching is supposed to happen. If a man tries to shake the hand of a woman it would be considered odd.

There are no specific rules as to how to distribute and receive business cards.

Belarusian people do not use a typical American smile, they seem to be more serious though greeting and comforting at the same time.

NEGOTIATION:

BUSINESS MEETING:

If you say that you'll be somewhere at a certain time then you have to be there at that certain time.

Belarusians usually follow a hierarchical business style to always respect the different levels within an organization. The final decision-maker is usually the highest individual in authority. Though nowadays more and more young leaders try to be more «up-to-date» and more “western” trying to make decisions based on their team's point of view.

Belarusians mostly prefer not to mix their professional and private life, so avoid asking your partners personal questions in business settings.

NEGOTIATION SKILLS:

Personal relationships are very important – establishing a partnership based on trust is essential for doing business successfully.

INVISIBLE CODES:

In Belarus, decision making can be a slower process than in western societies. Coordination with executives is an integral part of the business. Even minor changes have to concur. Just be patient and, if possible, try to make concessions.

ETHICS:

Older people in Belarus instead of “Mr” and “Mrs”, will introduce themselves using their first name and patronymic (the name from their father) and you should use these when addressing them.

For men, the ending is usually *-ovich/-evich* and for women it's *-yevna/-ovna*.

COMMUNICATION:

Belarusians usually connect their social events with food. If you are invited to dinner, be ready to have a solid meal.

GIFTS:

You need to be careful with gifts, as when you meet a business partner for the first time, precious gifts might be associated with bribery. Small presents will be appreciated, but make sure it's appropriate and not overdone.

REPRESENTATION:

AT A RESTAURANT:

Since the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the national culinary traditions have been interlaced with Baltic, Slavic, Jewish and partly German cuisines.

Therefore, Belarusian cuisine is one of the most diverse on the continent. It is similar to the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, but is unique in its own way, hearty and delicious.

Belarusian cuisine widely uses potatoes, the “second bread”. Historically, potatoes were introduced to Belarus 75-90 years earlier than Russia, and our climate facilitates the growth of many tasty varieties.

Grated potato is very common, and can be cooked in various ways, with methods combined. Belarusian cuisine often uses raw grated potato, shaped and fried. Mashed potato is sometimes combined with flour and baking soda. Traditional *draniki* (potato pancakes) enjoy great popularity, they are usually served with sour cream, fried fat (pork rinds), mushrooms and various sauces.

People also cook *bulbianiki* (potato pies with various fillings) and *bulbianaja babka* (potato pudding). Pig guts can be stuffed with grated potato and fried afterward. Boiled potatoes are eaten unpeeled, as *saloniki* (eaten with salt) while stewed potatoes are called *tušanka* or *smažaniki*.

Cabbage, carrot, peas, beans and radishes are typical of Belarusian cuisine.

Kvass is a popular non-alcoholic drink, coming in several varieties: *biarozavik* is kvass made of birch juice, while *klianovik* uses maple juice, and *miadavucha* is made from honey, with fermented berries and herbs. *Zbicieńi* is a hot drink made of honey and spices.

IN THE HOME:

Belarusians tend to have equal rights in the family. All the household chores in families are evenly divided between family members. Usually, families spend their weekend at home watching movies, cooking altogether, helping each other about the house, playing board games or going on barbecue parties with family friends.

OTHER:

COUNTRY AND PEOPLE:

At first sight, Belarusians might seem to be quite cold and reserved. Upon further acquaintance, however, you will see that they are very open, hospitable and communicative.

Beyond this initial reserve you will discover that they are very giving, kind-hearted individuals who try hard to look after their guests. Belarusian culture refers to the feminine type, where standing out from the crowd is not admirable, people understate their personal achievements, contributions and capacities. Modesty, tolerance and respect to each other – these are Belarusian main traits.

As for the surroundings and country, the Belarusian cities are clean and well-kept similar to the ones in Europe. And this is peculiar not only for Minsk, where there are many tourists but also for the smaller cities. The secret here lies not only in the special infrastructure of the cities but in the fact that Belarusians are prone to cleanliness. For instance, in many courtyards of multi-apartment buildings, residents themselves are engaged in landscaping, planting beautiful plants, and establish a watch with cleaning in the entrance, if the janitor does not do his job well enough.

CHALLENGES:

The language barrier can become a big issue during your visit to our country. The amount of English-speaking people is not very big in Belarus. This could be because the Belarusians are rather shy and reserved, being afraid of using the language they are not very confident in, as nowadays the majority of schools teach students a lot.

While you will have few troubles speaking to the people of Minsk, you may encounter some difficulty speaking with the locals of smaller cities of the country unless you speak Russian fluently.

WHAT IS THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN:

The crime level in Belarus is very low, so one does not need to worry about becoming a victim of a robber or burglar. The only crux you can come across during your stay in our country is of a bureaucracy origin: all foreign citizens must be registered if they intend to stay longer than 5 days.

WHEN IT WORKS WELL - WHAT HAS TO BE IN PLACE:

You are well-prepared and have the knowledge and the facts, are able (or know the people who are) to prove your point. If you can speak Russian/ Belarusian you have a big advantage over those who can't.

INFORMATION AND/OR KNOWLEDGE AND/OR SKILLS:

If a person is well-educated, professionally competent, peaceful and polite, no problems shall be encountered during his time in Belarus. A Belarusian will not start the conversation by himself in most cases but will be eager to reply and support someone's initiative.

WHAT MAKES THE INFORMATION AND/OR KNOWLEDGE AND/OR SKILLS IMPORTANT:

Belarusians are usually plodding and hospitable people, so they value the same values in foreign people as the ones that they try to cultivate in their own society.

SITUATION - BEHAVIOUR - RESULT:

- If you have doubts about something you don't know well or have doubts about, you should ask politely and adequate help will be provided.
- If you act friendly and well - mannered, people will act the same towards you.
- Show your knowledge about the country's customs and you will gain a lot of respect.
- If you can speak Belarusian and not just Russian, that will be a huge plus.

