

Trip to Geographical Center of Europe Polotsk Belarus

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I spend 3 days from last week with my beloved girlfriend Svetlana in Polotsk Belarus. Since I'm here in Belarus for only 21 days, I'm trying to see as much as possible from what is remarkable from this beautiful green country. Polotsk is famous with;

- Polotsk (Палатск) is old Orthodox Christian Spiritual center and **oldest city of Belarus (founded y. 862)**
- It is famous for being home city of [Saint Efrosinia Polotskaya](#)
- *Polotsk* is **Geographical Center of Europe**
- **Saint Ephrosinia Church (12th century)** - where Cross of st. Efrosinia is kept
- **Museum of Book-printing** - one of the best in Europe
- **"The Stone of Boris"** - monument of old Slavonic culture



- [Spaso Efrosinievsy Nuns Monastery](#) (Convent) - (established y. 1582) - monastery islocated 15 minutes from Central Train Station

It is interesting that probably the greatest Belarusian enlightener enlightener **Frantsysk Skorina** was *born in Polatsk*, Skorina is among most important people of Belarus of all time. It was in Polotsk also when first Belarusian "printer" was used.

I went to Polotsk with absoulutely no idea what to expect. To reach there we travelled on a Belarusian train in a sleeping coupe. Mentioning train I should say train station in Minsk is very well organized and looks very European, the only inconvenient thing from other Western countries trains is you have to call Train Station and reserve ticket in advance. If you don't do so there is a high risk there are no free tickets.



Central Railway Station Minsk, Belarus



Minsk inside Central Train station (Copyright Wikipedia)

The train we were in was old probably 25 or 30 years old, but inside all was clean and well maintained, the train windows had curtains and in between coupe corridors there was even carpet. The train toilet seemed a bit ancient and was a bit dirty, but I guess this is normal as even in developed countries like Holland train toilets are bit dirty. Smoking inside the train just like in Bulgaria nowadays was prohibited. Overall train travel was from 11:53 to 08:20 The train is quite slow if compared to Western European but, was comfortable and most importantly warm. Going down from train in Polotsk, I noticed even though the train station was little it was generally well organized. We left our luggage in a Luggage Keeping Room (very cheap for 1 day it costs about 1 euro or less!).



Polotsk is a famous tourist destinations for people from Russia and Ukraine, so finding and booking a Hotel in advance was a bit of a struggle. Thankfully Svetlana managed to book in advance a Hotel **Parus**. Hotel cost was cheap too about 12 EURO per night for person. Parus hotel was destined quite good, with rooms having a sightview to *Dvina River*

After leaving our luggage in Train Station, we went for an eat and find out prices in cafeterias are very low too. We eat quickly in tiny cafeteria - *Mini Cafe* and for Coffee Tea and a small snacks we pay only about 1.5 euro!

As Polotsk is small with inhabitants of only 80 000 ppl and is a famous spiritual center for centuries - the city "feels" very calm and relaxed. It is very easy to orientate too, the central part of the city is located in less than 10 minutes walk from Central Train Station. Next to train station is the Central Bus Station. The central part has few old monuments and just 3 minutes after crossing the central part (on the right)you reach the part with 3 of city landmarks;

- *Historical Museum of Book Printing*
- *Saint Sophia Cathedral*
- *Bogoyavlensky sybor (Epiphany Cathedral Church)*



Saint Sophia Cathedral Polatsk



River view to Saint Sophia Cathedral Polatsk



Cathedral of Epiphany Polotsk, Belarus

Svetlana planned, we stay 1 day in Polotsk and then travel to one of the other old cities of Belarus

Grodno and then to **Vitebsk**, however we were so tired and Polotsk was so beautiful that we decided stay

in Polotsk for one more day. On first day in Polotsk near the hotel there was a small Inn (Damyan) offering menu with traditional Belarusian kitchen food. We ate two nights there and in general the prices there were normal for a tourist city - a dinner for 2 costs 15 / 20 euro. The inn decoration was with traditional tools and objects used in old times Belarusian living style. Unsurprisingly many of the tools were very similar to ones in Bulgaria so I felt pretty much like in our traditional Bulgarian taverns (*Mehana*).

On Second day we catch bus number 4 (IRC) to reach to Spaso Efrosinievsky Monastery - named so in honor of st. *Efrosinia of Polotsk*. It is my first I visit Belarusian / (Russian) Monastery and honestly I was amazed how well all in monastery is organized.



Starting from Buildings Church buildings and even Nuns and Priests I met I can say Belarusian Spiritual Life is on supreme level. The Monastery had 3 Church buildings, where on the picture you see two of the Church buildings. The architecture of main Church was very much in Byzantine Eastern Style and the Church architecture differs from the usual Russian styled Churches, I've seen in Minsk and Polotsk. The Church architecture very much reminded me of our homeland Churches in Bulgaria.

The main Church building keeps **thousand of Christian saints and st. Martyrs Holy Relics**. Just to name a few - relics of St. martyr Georgi, st. Seraphim Sarovski, st. Longin (the keeper of the Lord's tomb), st. mrtr Panteleimon, st Nicolas, st Spiridon ...

On the left near the alter walls are kept the **Holy incorruptable body of saint Efrosinia Polatskaya**, The holy incorruptible body of the saint is 10 centuries old!



In Church photography was prohibited so unfortunately I couldn't take picture of st. Efrosinia's Holy Body. On the left and right corner of the Church near the outer doors there are a number of saints Holy relics to venerate. On the right near the Church Alter, there was a shrine containing a *holy relics piece of approximately 100 of the greatest Christian saints!!!*

The blessing one gets by visiting the monastery is great, being in the Church and near the Holy relics makes one feel the Pure Joy of Grace of the Holy Spirit flowing.

I and Svetlana stay for half of the evening service and then took to our hotel in Polotsk receiving the blessing of multitude of saints. On the next day, took our baggage and on our way to Train Station, we saw an old house used currently as Kids Museum. I've been in a kids museum already and I know though it is made for Children the joy to be there is not different even for adults as in each of us lives a kid.

Below are few pictures from the Kids Museum :)



Inside Kids museum (Church inside building :))



Old Belarusian Musical Instrument (top in Yellow)



Weighting tools Kids museum (Me and Svetlana)

On 3rd day of our stay in *Polotsk*, we catch a bus back to Minsk. The bus was a small mini-bus very similar to ones we have in Bulgaria. Just like with almost everything in Belarus it was necessary to reserve and buy our bus tickets in advance (on previous day).

In General we had great time in Polotsk. It is cheap there are things to see and it is small and everything is nearby you. If you happen be in Belarus visit Polotsk for a day or 2 its worthy.