

FACT SHEET FOR U.S. VISITING FACULTY AND STUDENTS

U.S. Embassy Point of Contact

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Belarusian Visa

Detailed info on applying for a Belarusian visa is available at <http://www.belarusembassy.org/>

Please be advised that visitors coming to Belarus for the first time are not entitled to getting a multiple-entry visa. Originally they receive a one-entry visa and upon arriving in Belarus apply to the Consular Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for a multiple-entry visa. Local host institutions are providing assistance with this matter.

On February 4, 2006, changes to the 1993 Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus entered into force. The legislation introduces three new categories of legal presence in Belarus. Foreign citizens may be granted permission for a temporary stay (up to 90 days within a chronological year), temporary residence (up to one year), or permanent residence.

Belarusian Embassies and Consulates will issue visas for temporary stays. A temporary stay visa will allow the bearer to be present physically in Belarus for a maximum of 90 days within the 365-day period for which the visa is issued. Once an individual has spent 90 days in Belarus at one time or through a combination of

visits, s/he will not be eligible to receive another visa until the original 365-day period has passed.

Individuals who receive a visa for a temporary stay but wish to remain in Belarus for longer than 90 days will need to apply for temporary or permanent residence with the Ministry of Interior (MoI). This is pursued while the individual is in Belarus and must be accomplished within the 90 days allotted for temporary stay. Permission for temporary residence can be granted to students, spouses or close relatives of Belarusian citizens, or for "work, business, or other activities."

The legislation also introduces a migration card that will be filled out by foreign citizens upon entry into Belarus. Foreign citizens will be required to retain this card and present it to the border authorities when exiting Belarus.

Another new provision in the legislation states that foreign citizens visiting and transiting Belarus should be prepared to demonstrate sufficient financial means to support their stay. For individuals in Belarus for less than one month, this amount is equal to approximately USD 15/day/person. For those staying for longer than one month, the requirements call for USD 375/person/month. Proof of funds can be requested at the time of visa application, at the border, or during registration. According to the MoI, cash, credit cards, paid hotel reservations, or a letter from an inviting party pledging full financial support are sufficient means to demonstrate financial wherewithal.

U.S. Department of State Consular Information Sheet for Belarus http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1033.html was updated on February 12, 2010 and contains additional important information for those who prepare to travel to Belarus. Please note that starting July 21, 2010, foreigners who are staying in Belarus no more than 5 business days (plus a weekend) are not required to register. The registration fee is currently approximately \$6 (the exact amount can be calculated by taking half of one National Minimum Tariff Unit) regardless of the duration of stay. Failure to register can result in fines and difficulties when departing. U.S. citizens staying in hotels are automatically registered at check-in. Registration performed by a hotel is free of charge.

Airport Pick-up and Housing

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy Minsk (PAS) will make arrangements for an Embassy vehicle and a PAS representative to meet the incoming grantees at the airport.

It may take a couple of days for you to decide on permanent accommodation in Minsk. We will be glad to make a hotel reservation for the time you will be looking for an apartment.

Using an Embassy real estate agent, we will identify several housing options from which grantees can choose an apartment to their liking. In terms of residence area, our preference is that U.S. visiting faculty reside in the downtown area closer to their host institutions and/or subway lines. The average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apt with a living-room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom in downtown Minsk is **\$500 to \$700**. A similar two-bedroom apt will start at **\$600 a month**. Grodno prices will definitely be lower. Rent does not cover utility bills which landlords usually pay on

their own. The tenants have to cover their telephone and electricity bills, as well as TV cable if available. Please note that real estate agents working with us in Minsk charge a finder's fee which is a one-time payment of half a month's rent. Contact faculty in Grodno usually provide several accommodation options out of which visiting faculty at the Grodno State can make their selection. Average monthly apartment rent in Grodno is around \$ 250-300.

Arrival in/Departure from Minsk

PAS will provide an airport pick-up and drop off for all visiting faculty and their faculty members. Please note that it refers only to your first arrival in and final departure from Belarus. You are responsible for the airport transfer when you travel for your personal reasons.

Please inform PAS about your arrival date and time as soon as a finalized travel itinerary is available. For those grantees who start teaching in the fall semester we recommend plan their arrival in Minsk for the last week of August/first week of September. For those teaching in the spring semester we encourage to arrive during the first week of February.

Please do not schedule your arrival in Minsk during the weekend or late in the week. Note that it will take you two to three days to find an apt to your liking and it would be good if you could start the process early in the week to be able to move in by the end of the week. Moving in during the weekend would be problematic due to a difficulty to reserve an Embassy vehicle for an overtime work during not regular working hours.

Customs Clearance

Upon arriving in Belarus, all travelers are to declare their valuable belongings (e.g. computers, printers, etc.). We would recommend that you do not estimate the price of your laptops more than \$1,000. In case of a more expensive value of goods, even if it is your personal belonging that you temporarily bring into the country, they'll charge you with an additional customs fee. Also, it's only 50 kilos of your personal luggage that you can bring into Belarus tax free. Should you have more luggage, please be prepared to pay extra (it's about 2 Euros per each extra kilo), more info at <http://www.belarusembassy.org/>

Insurance

Upon arriving in Belarus, all foreigners are required to purchase a local medical insurance. 12-month medical insurance costs USD 85.00. It is essential that you have local medical insurance for further registration. For more information on medical insurance in Belarus please check <http://www.belarusembassy.org/>

In-country Orientation

Upon arriving in Belarus, PAS staff will conduct an in-country orientation for all visiting faculty and their family members. The orientation session will also include a security briefing by a Regional Security Officer.

Access to E-mail and Internet

If the grantees plan on bringing their laptops, we would be able to provide a contact contractor who for a reasonable fee will help them to get hooked up to the Internet. Please be also advised that U.S. visiting faculty can freely use the resources, including PCs and access to Internet, at the Embassy's Information Resource Center, which is located in the same building with us.

Use of Pouch Address

Visiting faculty are entitled to sending two boxes of teaching materials via pouch. Note that it takes three to four weeks for a shipment from the U.S. to reach Belarus. Please have your shipment sent to the below address:

*Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Minsk
Department of State
7010 Minsk PL
Washington, DC 20521-7010*

Sharing Fulbright experience

You may also contact Dr. Wendy Smith, U.S. Fulbright Scholar, who could share her Fulbright experience and answer to some FAQ on the specifics of the program in Belarus.

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