

Celebrating Kupallie, a pagan midsummer holiday – Belarus photo digest

Kupallie (Midsummer) is an ancient pagan festival which marks the summer solstice – the longest day and shortest night. This holiday is one of the four most important in the pagan calendar.

When the Slavs were converted to Christianity, the Church designated the day as the feast of John the Baptist in order to destroy the holiday's pagan roots. However, nearly 1,000 years of pressure from the Church were not able to completely wipe out the celebration's pagan connotations.

When Belarus switched to the Gregorian calendar, the Church began to celebrate the holiday on 6 July, which distorted the holy day's compliance with astronomical phenomena.

Nowadays, Belarusians celebrate the holiday in two ways, both of which we present here. We will showcase the way in which enthusiasts celebrate, at night and following old traditions, and the way in which governmental Culture Centres mark the occasion.







About the photographer: Siarhei Leskiec is a freelance photographer whose work focuses on everyday life, folk traditions, and rituals in the Belarusian countryside. Originally from Maladzeczna Region, he received a history degree from the Belarusian State Pedagogical University.