

Belarus: A closer look at their aviation industry

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Belarus is in the spotlight at the moment for their recent, controversial decision to force a foreign civilian aircraft to land under false pretences and for political reasons.

We thought we would take a look at their aviation industry, what you might experience if operating into the region, and a brief review of what it will mean if other countries ban use of their airspace.

Who is 'Belarus'

The Republic of Belarus is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe. They border Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The capital is Minsk. Before gaining their independence in 1991, the country was known as Belorussia, or 'White Russia', and was a small Slavic Republic included in the Soviet Union (along with Russia and the Ukraine.)

They are considered a developing country and rank pretty high on the Human Development Index. They are a member of the UN and have a decent bilateral agreement with the EU, but are not a member of it.



An important route connecting Russia to the rest of Europe.

Tell us about their airports.

The main international airport is **UMMS/Minsk**:

- 13R/31L 11,946ft/3641m ILS CAT I
- 13L/31R 12,139ft/3700m ILS CAT III / CAT I

It is a decent airport with good facilities and no major threats for operating in.

Aside from UMMS, you also have the following airports with customs facilities (although none of them have a runway longer than 9000ft)

- **UMBB/Brest** (not to be confused with Brest, France) with an 8596ft/2620m runway 11/29
- UMGG/Gomel also known as Homiel/Gomel/Pokalubichi with an 8428ft/2569m runway 10/28
- UMMG/Grodna with a 8399fr/2560m runway (limited taxi and apron space) 17/35
- UMOO/Mogilev offering a 8419ft/2566m runway 13/31 (there is one taxiway off the runway so 180° turns and backtracks required here, and very limited facilities)
- UMII/Vitebsk why 8550fr/2606m runway 05/23 (also very limited)
- **UMIO/Orsha** opened in November 2020, offering a new cargo hub for the country. Runway 05/23 is a decent 9846ft/3001m with a CAT II ILS



Those aprons could do with some work

Tell us about their airspace.

The airspace is what most operators are really interested in. Belarus is a fairly decent sized country which is the main airspace between Russia and Poland, and Western Europe (unless aircraft want to route further north through Lithuania and Latvia).

Above FL275 in the UMMV FIR is Free Route Airspace meaning you can plan direct between Entry and Exit points (AIP ENR 4.1)

Several authorities are currently banning their operators from routing through Belarus Airspace. This means significant detours to the north for aircraft routing to Russia.

The Ukraine borders Belarus and Russia has multiple airspace warnings and restrictions preventing many operators from overflying their airspace, so Belarus is a fairly important trade route for aircraft routing from Western Europe to Russia.

Using Minsk as a connection to Russia can have some customs issues though. Reports suggest Russia considers flights between the two as domestic (leading to cabotage issues with Russian customs), and so most operators seem to opt for **EYVI/Vilnius or EVRA/Riga** instead.

Tell us about their infrastructure.

Belarus' infrastructure is a relatively aging ex-Soviet one. However, they have focused on improving their aviation infrastructure over the last decade or so. The major airports all offer at least a CAT I ILS landing system, and their en-route navigation facilities meet ICAO standards.

In 2020, the Belarussian government announced they would offer **Minsk as a Fifth Freedom hub**, allowing foreign operators to layover in Minsk, and fly onto other long-haul destinations.

The Aviation Market in Belarus was (pre-Covid) outpacing the growth of the wider Eastern and Central European market, with short haul carriers such as Wizz looking to increase flights to the country.



Minsk 1 (UMMM) closed in 2015

Tell us who to talk to if we want to fly there.

You need overflight and landing permits if you are a private or commercial operator. Easiest way is to fill out Form 2 and send it by AFTN direct to the authorities. They need 3 days notice if you're heading to an international airport, and 5 if you want to fly to a domestic one.

The email for the Belarus CAA is ops@ban.by
AFTN: UMMDYAYX +375 17 222 5517

If you want to get in touch direct with someone at UMMS/Minsk airport then their admin number is +375 17 279 1436 or you can try one of the main handling agent, Belavia at +375 17 220 2555.

The Belarus AIP is available online <http://www.ban.by/AIP/Belarus210715/html/index.html>

Anything else to tell us?

Notam O0401/21 is in force from Apr 30 to July 31 closing runway 13R/31L at UMMS

For updated information on current airspace advisories and restrictions, check out our article on the current events surrounding Belarus.