Mir Castle

Mir castle - a defensive fortification and residence in the urban settlement (urban settlement) Mir, Korelichi district, Grodno region of Belarus. An architectural monument, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (since 2000). The architectural complex includes a castle of the 16th-20th centuries, ramparts of the 17th-18th centuries, a pond of 1896-1898, a chapel-burial vault of the Svyatopolk-Mirskys with a watchman's house and a gate, landscape and regular parks, a manager's house.

The castle is similar in structure to a square with a side of about 75 meters, at the corners there are five-storey towers 25-27 m high, which go beyond the walls. The fifth tower is a six-story tower with an entrance gate. Mir Castle for its time was a powerful military structure, where almost all known elements of medieval fortification were applied and local traditions of castle architecture were embodied. It was built according to the project of a talented architect, who, most likely, was a master from the people and had an artistic taste. The lack of good fittings did not prevent the architect from creating a first-class military engineering structure for that time and decorating it with various architectural details. The high saturation of fire weapons with the mutual overlap of the shelling sectors, the setting of towers with the expectation of flanking fire along the walls, high, steep ramparts with bastions in the corners made Mir Castle a first-class defensive structure of its time. More than that, all the elements of the castle make up a holistic architectural composition, which creates a complete complex of a unique structure that had no similar ones in the lands of the Baltic States, Poland and Russia. Throughout its existence, the castle complex in Mir has repeatedly undergone restoration and restructuring, but these processes did not make significant changes in its volume-planning and compositional systems. At the same time, Mir Castle has retained its original stylistic elements of the Gothic and Renaissance, while acquiring new unique characteristic of the Baroque and Romantic style. Together with the original style features, they formed the unique appearance of the castle, thanks to which the complex has become on a par with the architectural monuments of the World Heritage. Mir Castle, as one of the most recognizable castles in Belarus, is placed on the 50 Belarusian ruble banknote.

Built at the beginning of the 16th century by the tycoon Yu. I. Ilyinich, the castle became the first private property castle in the lands of Belarus. From 1568 to 1828 the castle was owned by the Radziwills, then the Wittgenstein family (until 1891). The last owners of the castle were the princes Svyatopolk-Mirsky (until 1939). After the advent of Soviet power, the castle became state property. Mir Castle is the most eastern Gothic building, as well as the largest and the only non-cult object of the few surviving examples of the original Belarusian Gothic.

The complex took part in almost all the wars that swept through at one time on the Belarusian soil: starting with the Russian-Polish war of 1654-1667 and before the Patriotic War of 1812. The castle was sieged and stormed more than once. It was damaged in 1665 and 1706, then restored at the beginning of the 18th century. Then it was badly damaged again in 1794. In 1812, a battle took place under the walls of the castle between the Polish cavalry of General Rozhnetsky, which was part of the French army, and the rearguard of the 2nd Russian army - the Cossack cavalry of M.I. Platov.

Since 1989, a branch of the National Art Museum of Belarus. In 2011 it received the status of an independent museum.

As of 2019, the castle has a hotel where tourists can stay, a restaurant and a cafe. A ticket to the museum allows, in addition to visiting the halls inside the castle, to bypass the galleries and climb the towers, where a part of the exposition is located.