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Poland

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Polish Tourist Organisation

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Poland is Closer Than you Think

Poland is a garden of nature and a treasure trove of cultural riches.

A democracy located in the middle of Europe, inhabited by a friendly, hospitable people building a modern economy, yet cherishing their heritage dearly. Every year, Poland is visited by millions of tourists and when they leave the country they take back with them wonderful memories, and a desire to return as soon as they can.

In Poland everyone can find something of interest. Modern leisure facilities provide recreation of the highest standard. Museums, modern art galleries and concert halls, swimming pools, equestrian clubs, discos and night clubs. Everything is here, ready to satisfy even the most demanding guest. Poland's natural environment makes active rest and recreation possible at any time of the year. In many regions of Poland there are natural sites pre-served in their primeval state rarely encountered in other parts of Europe. Poland's climate ensures favourable conditions for leisure activities throughout the year. Along the Baltic Sea Amber Coast and across the Masuria, the Land of a Thousand Lakes, there are ancient forests, rivers, hills, criss-crossed by paths, bridleways and trails to be enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and water sports enthusiasts.

We guarantee nobody will leave Poland disappointed. Those hungry for adventure will get plenty of thrills, those who are looking for peace and a bit of calm will be able to relax in Poland's nature reserves. And if you are looking for entertainment there are many places which will provide you with the fun and excitement you are searching for. Visitors feel truly welcome in Poland when they experience our traditional Polish hospitality. Polish people like to entertain guests at home. These friendly encounters and jovial discussions will be among some of the lasting memories of your stay in Poland. And it's closer than you think. Welcome to Poland.

Polish Turist Organisation





Poland is Closer Than you Think

A European Homeland

For the last thousand years, Poland was the country where cultures from the east and west of Europe made their initial contact. Poles had to defend their independence many times and they had to befriend many different nations. It is therefore easy to understand how Poland's national character was forged, one that drives the Poles to staunchly defend their freedom at the same time showing great tolerance for others.

Aiding Others

If we consider certain nations, we can see that Poles have played important roles in the history of those nations in the past. In the 18th century Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski joined the struggle for the independence of the United States of America. More recently Ernest Malinowski built a railway line in the Peruvian Andes and Bronisław Piłsudski is highly respected in Japan for his ethnographic work. It is not widely known that Joseph Conrad, celebrated in the world of literature, was born and educated in Poland before he set off on his adventures at sea. During the Second World War Polish mathematicians helped break the Enigma code, giving the Allies access to the military plans of the Third Reich. The Allied forces were also aided by Polish airmen who played a crucial part in the Battle for Britain.

Poland in the 21st century

As a member of the European Union and the NATO Alliance, Poland plays an active part in the development of European integration. A stable democracy with a robust economy and monetary system – this is Poland in the third millennium.

One thousand years ago, Polish Prince Boleslaw the Brave and the German Emperor Otto III met in Gniezno to sign a treaty, the first ever international agreement in this part of Europe.



A Country of Religious Tolerance

Poland has never been a place of religious wars. Even though the majority of Poles are Roman Catholics, they have always shared their country peacefully with followers of other religions. Protestants have lived in Poland for hundreds of years and contributed greatly to the nation's culture. Prominent testimony to this peaceful coexistence is the memorial to Martin Luther in Bielsko-Biala or the cemetery at Wschowa, with tombstones of Lutherans and Calvinists. Today, there are many Evangelical centres in southern and western Poland.

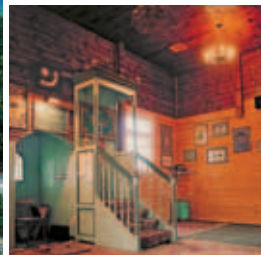
In the 13th century Jews came to live in Poland. Until the Second World War they constituted the largest Jewish community in Europe. From such families as Rubinstein, Natanson, Kronenberg and Epstein came many eminent Jewish personalities in the fields of art, science and economy. The wealth of the Jewish culture and tradition in Poland can be seen from Tykocin and Warsaw to Leżajsk and Lublin, from Cracow and Lesko to Bobowa.

One of the major religious communities in Poland is the followers of the Eastern Orthodox faith, who have been present in south-eastern Poland for centuries.

Tartars have lived in Poland for at last 600 years, preserving their cultural autonomy and Muslim faith, enjoying all the rights and privileges of Polish citizens.



According to an old Polish tradition, a guest is welcomed on arrival with bread and salt. Bread signifies trust and salt endurance. In the past, salt was as valuable as gold, and in great demand, like friendship ...



Poles – Citizens of the World



He Stopped the Sun

Four hundred years ago, Nicolaus Copernicus proved mathematically that the Earth moves around the Sun and not vice-versa. This breakthrough, known as the Copernican Revolution, was the beginning of a new era in astronomy and science.



Without Violence

Solidarity leader, Lech Wałęsa, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983, started Central Europe on its road to freedom. In 1989 Poland regained its independence in a non-violent way. Scenes of political opponents sitting together at the 'Round Table' showed the world how to solve a conflict at home and across borders in a peaceful way.



A Pilgrim of Love

Father Karol Wojtyła was an experienced trekker and a nature lover who walked even the most difficult of trails. After being elected Pope, he became a pilgrim of love and hope. He was respected and listened to throughout the entire world. Communing with millions was a characteristic feature of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II.



Music for Everyone

The Polish composer Frederick Chopin, born at Żelazowa Wola near Warsaw, is one of the world's greatest musicians. The sheer beauty of his work casts a spell over people across all the continents. How this is possible is a mystery that can be only explained by Chopin's musical genius.

Castles and Palaces

The doorway to Poland's culture is symbolically and literally marked by the sculptured bronze door in Gniezno Cathedral, a repository of relics dating back to the origins of the Polish state in the 10th century A.D.

The Heritage of All Mankind

The city of Toruń, the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus, has preserved its Medieval urban cityscape with defensive walls, towers and the spires of its many churches.

Zamość attracts visitors with the beauty of its Renaissance architecture and the well restored sections of its formidable fortifications.

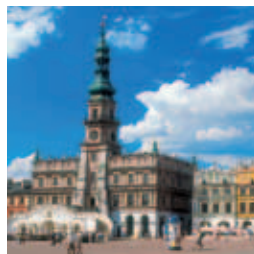
Malbork possesses the world's largest Gothic castle, once the seat of the Teutonic Order. Visitors will be impressed by the enormous size of the castle complex. The beauty of the amber collection displayed in the castle art gallery is breathtaking.

Sunlit Castles and Palaces ...

On a hilltop overlooking the town of Nowy Wiśnicz is a castle bathed in sunlight and surrounded by fortifications. This is a rare example of the architectural style, palazzo in fortezza.

Sunlit castles draw visitors to Baranów Sandomierski and Krasiczyn with their beautiful architecture and splendid interiors.

Łańcut, once the stately home of Polish aristocratic families, is the meeting place of the aristocracy of the operatic world at the annual festivals held there. The large collection of antique carriages on display in the Łańcut coach house draws many people from all over ...



UNESCO Sites and Other Tourist Attractions

... and Baroque Contrasts

The Royal Palace at Wilanów in Warsaw, the Jesuit Monastery at Święta Lipka in Masuria, and the Old Basilica at Bardo in Lower Silesia are all very different and very beautiful examples of the Baroque style in Poland. Baroque artists were often inspired by the memento mori theme. One of them used three thousand human skulls to decorate the walls of the chapel at Czerwna near Kudowa Zdrój! Incredible and true!

To the Manor Born

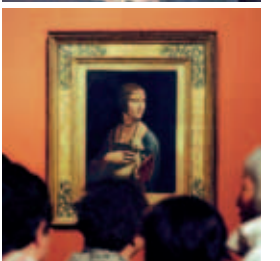
Manor houses, the family seats of the Polish gentry, were always furnished with objects of art and rare books. The intellectual aspirations of their residents have left an indelible mark on Polish culture. One such house is the small country house at Żelazowa Wola where Frederick Chopin was born. The composer's famous polonaises and mazurkas were named after old country fairs and rural events.

Leonardo da Vinci in Cracow

When visiting the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow, you will observe how crowds seem to gather in one place. They all come to admire the portrait of the Lady with the Ermine by Leonardo da Vinci.

Polish Sites on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List:

- The Old Town in Cracow, Toruń, Warsaw and Zamość.
- The Salt Mine at Wieliczka.
- Evangelical Churches of Peace at Jawor and Świdnica
- The monastic complex at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska
- The Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz
- The Gothic castle of the Teutonic Knights at Malbork
- Białowieża Forest (World Natural Heritage List)
- The wooden churches in the south Małopolska region
- Mużakowski/Muskauer Landscape Park in Łęknica
- Centenary Hall in Wrocław



Religious Traditions in Poland

Churches Carved in Wood

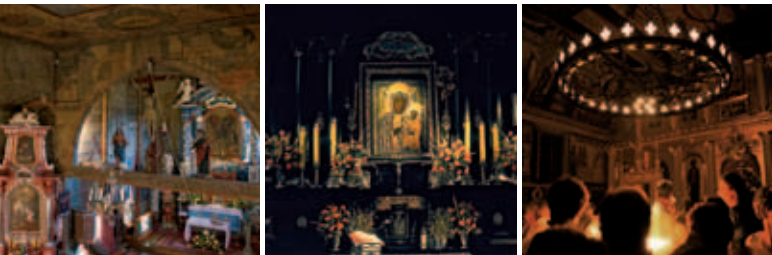
Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox wooden churches are found in the regions of Małopolska and Podkarpacie (Carpathian Foothills) in many villages and little towns. They are unique examples of rural wooden architecture and enchant visitors with their graceful forms and beautiful interior decorations.

Pilgrim's Progress

Roman Catholic sanctuaries are landmarks in Poland. The majority of pilgrims go to the Pauline Monastery on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa to the Blessed icon of the Black Madonna, venerated both in Poland and abroad. The followers of other faiths have their sanctuaries in many places around the country. The Eastern Orthodox at Grabarka, the Protestants at Karpacz, Wisła and Cieszyn, and the Muslims at Bohoniki and Kruszyń.

Colourful and Mysterious

On Palm Sunday, prior to Easter, an unusual procession is held in Łyse, a village in the Kurpie region, and in Lipnica Murowana near Bochnia. Several, 25 metre-high Easter 'palms' can be seen soaring above the crowd. Made of wicker and wood, decorated with paper flowers, these palms are slender but surprisingly solid. Corpus Christi processions are also representative of ancient religious and folk customs. Those held in Łowicz are especially well-known. Women's costumes flash with the colours of the four seasons and the procession resembles a parade of a field of flowers.



The Salt Mine in Wieliczka

Wieliczka – Man and Nature Create a Masterpiece

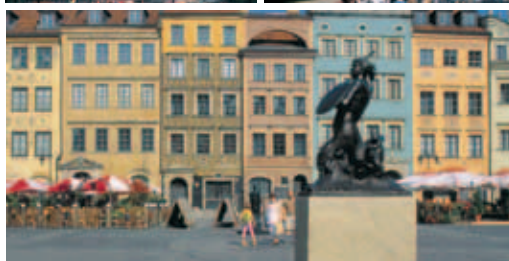
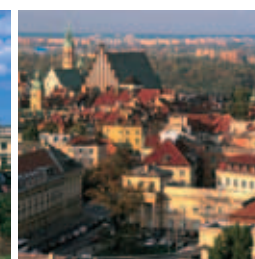
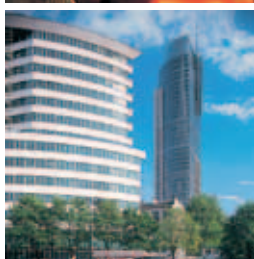
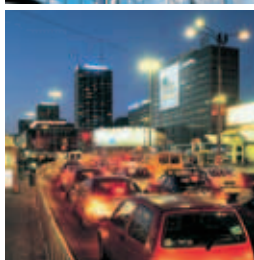
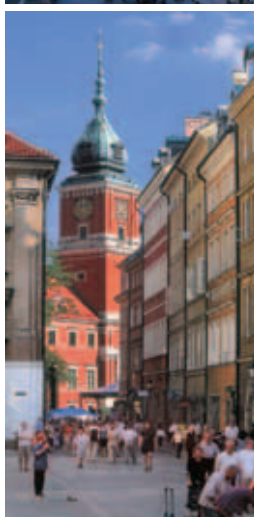
Nature created the salt rock and the salt crystals and men carved them into galleries, chapels, sculptures and chandeliers, into this unique sparkling gem to stand as an equal amongst the great creations man has fashioned anywhere in the world. The Salt Mine in Wieliczka also contains an exceptional and unique museum of mining history with modern examples of equipment used as early as in the 13th century.



The Wieliczka Salt Mine in Brief:

- Age: over 800 years old
- Length of galleries: over 300 kilometers
- Tourist route: over 2,000 meters
- Visitors: 700,000 per year, from all continents
- Unique features: underground lakes, chambers and pits, chapels and sculptures carved out of the salt rock, wooden bridges and passages
- Highlights: the Chapel of the Blessed Kinga, the patron of salt miners, hewn out by hand from solid salt
- Underground town: on several levels at depths ranging from 60 to 100 meters. The town has a sanatorium, post office, cinema, restaurant, souvenir shop and concert halls





Warsaw

– City with an Attitude

The capital of Poland is a meeting place for politicians, economists and artists of all nationalities. Warsaw's 1.7 million inhabitants are known for their sense of humour and hard working traditions. It took them 15 years, with the help of the entire nation, to rebuild their beloved city, of which 84% was razed to the ground during the Second World War.

The scenic Old Town and its Market Square with mansard roofed houses attract artists and tourists. Here, the wine-cellar and elegant restaurants are constantly busy, but there's always a table waiting for new guests. Warsaw's St John's Cathedral is the national Pantheon and not far from it is the Royal Castle which was the residence of the last Polish King. The most elegant houses in Warsaw are aligned along the Royal Route which links the three royal residences: the Royal Castle, the Łazienki Palace and Park, and the Wilanów Palace. Among the numerous neo-classical buildings located in the Royal Łazienki Park, the most impressive is the Palace on the Water, which is situated on an island surrounded by water. A particularly beautiful landmark is the Frederic Chopin Monument. Here, every Sunday in summer, the music of Frederic Chopin is played by celebrated pianists.

The Wilanów Palace is an outstanding example of the Baroque style in Poland. It belonged to King Jan III Sobieski, remembered for his victory over the Turks at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Like other great cities in Europe, Warsaw offers a great variety of entertainment: theatre performances, cabaret shows, film festivals as well as concerts by famous opera soloists, pop stars and classical music performers. Poland hosts one of the world's most prestigious cultural events which is organised every five years, the Chopin International Piano Competition, as well as the International Festival of Contemporary Music, Warsaw Autumn, and the Mozart Festival.





Cracow – A Treasury of World Heritage

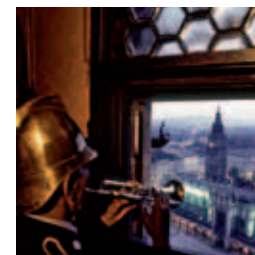
Built by many generations of artists living in Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Art Nouveau times, fortunate to survive unscathed the ravages of war, Cracow never fails to attract and amaze the many tourists who visit the city every year. It enchants them with its historical monuments and works of art. It attracts crowds to concerts and festivals, not to mention to the magical atmosphere of its cafés and jazz clubs. Overlooking the city is Wawel Hill, the heart of Poland.

The Renaissance Royal Castle houses a collection of countless objects of art and legendary tapestries. The Wawel Cathedral, where Polish kings were crowned and buried, is also the national Pantheon – the burial place of many eminent artists and national leaders. Not far from Wawel Hill is Kazimierz, a district once inhabited by the largest Jewish community in Europe. Today, Kazimierz is the venue for concerts and exhibitions all related to Jewish culture and traditions. Kazimierz organizes a Jewish Culture Festival each year which features artists from all over the world. The many exotic and quaint cafés in the district are never empty. In one of them, traditional Jewish dishes are served on Singer sewing machine table tops. The Main Market Square – the largest European open air society salon – occupies the central part of the Old Town in Cracow.

Languages from all over the world can be heard here most days. The Cracovian hejnał, an hourly bugle call, is played from the tower of the Church of the Holy Virgin. This Gothic church, rather austere on the outside, has a very richly ornamented interior around a masterpiece of Gothic art, the high altar carved in wood by Wit Stwosz. In the very centre of the Market Square is the Cloth Hall, the oldest commercial centre in Poland. Here you can buy souvenirs and folk art products. On the upper floor you can visit the Gallery of 19th century Polish Painting. The Market Square is the frequent venue of a variety of parades and performances. On New Year's Eve thousands of people come here to enjoy themselves and dance under the stars! There are plenty of cafés and restaurants on the edges of the Market Square, each with its own style. There are many theatres and art galleries all close to the Square. Certain cellars and basements in the Gothic style create a very special ambience, very popular as jazz clubs and cabarets. Before Christmas, the annual Szopka (Nativity scenes) competition and exhibition is held in the Market Square. This tradition known as the Cracovian Szopka contest dates back to the time of St Francis.

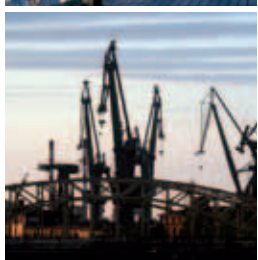
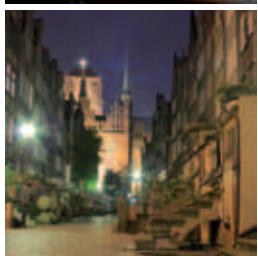
Only a five minute walk separates the Market Square from the Collegium Maius, the oldest building of the Jagiellonian University which was established in 1364. Both the University and the Old Town are surrounded by the green park, with its memorials, statues and parkland sculptures, called the Planty, set out on the site of the former city defense walls.

The annual events held in Cracow are: the Beethoven Music Festival, Festival of Short-Films, Festival of Street Theatre and the Music in Old Cracow International Festival. They all are highly regarded internationally and have an aura of Cracovian style about them. But what is this Cracovian style? To find out, visit the Jama Michalika café with its Art Nouveau decorations, Parisian ambience, the aroma of Viennese breakfasts and those typical Cracovian discussions about art, poetry, and women...



The Cracovian hejnał breaks off abruptly in mid tune. Legend links it to the Tatar invasions, when the watchman who spotted the enemy sounded the alarm. A Tatar arrow pierced his throat in mid tune. The melody has remained the same to this day. Today the hejnał marks the hours for revelers and those in a pensive mood. It sounds best at dawn, when the head is "... dazzled with wine and eternity..."





Gdańsk – the City of Freedom

Gdańsk is as old as Poland itself. Located in the north of the country on the sea coast at the mouth of the Vistula, Gdańsk was the Polish gateway to the sea, a thriving, wealthy city, an important Hanseatic port and a Free City. In the 20th century, Gdańsk was the scene of the first battle of the Second World War. Like the heroes of ancient Thermopylae, the heroic defenders of Westerplatte wrote a chapter in the history of this majestic city.

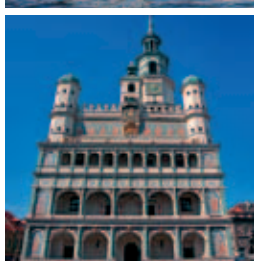
Being so prosperous, the city of Gdańsk was often besieged by mercenary armies and had to defend its sovereignty. It is no wonder that here in Gdańsk, the Solidarity movement and the struggle for the freedom of Poland, was born.

For centuries, ships from all over the world have moored at the Gdańsk waterfront. Today, tourists can board pleasure boats to take them on a cruise along the Baltic coast. The Old Town, also known as the Main Town, developed along ulica Długa (Long Street) and Długi Targ (Long Market). Ending at the Golden and Green Gates, these streets are lined with many historical monuments, art galleries and jewellers' workshops. Here, one finds the Gothic Town Hall and the Artus Court where the town's patricians played host to royalty. The nearby Golden House symbolises the affluence of the local burghers. The Neptune Fountain is a meeting point popular with tourists and friends and lovers alike. It is here that the majority of Gdańsk summer art festivals are held, as well as the famous Dominican Fair which attracts many visitors from all over the world.

A real masterpiece of architecture is the short ulica Mariacka (Holy Mary Street) with its narrow houses and spacious terraces under which are located amber jewellery galleries. Outside Gdańsk the Oliwa Cathedral is not to be missed. Its showpiece is a magnificent organ noted for its fine tone and Baroque ornamentation which uses mechanised figures. Sopot and Gdynia are the closest neighbouring cities to Gdańsk. Sopot is an international health resort and a cultural centre. People come here for rest, recreation and entertainment in style. Many stroll along the waters edge on the 500 metre-long local pier. Gdynia is host to Poland's most important film festival. Moored on its waterfront are two famous museum ships: the Second World War destroyer, Błyskawica, and the masted tall ship Dar Pomorza.

The skyline of the Main Town is dominated by the Church of the Holy Mary built in the Gothic style.wz It is believed to be the largest ancient brick church in the world. It can easily accommodate 25,000 people!





Poznań - the Seat of the First Polish Rulers

Poznań is a city steeped in artistic and trade traditions, with many schools of higher education, museums and avant-garde theatres. It is also the site of the Poznań International Trade Fair. On the island of Ostrów Tumski, surrounded by the waters of the Warta, stands a 10th century cathedral containing the tombs of ancient Polish rulers.

The Old Town Square is dominated by the town hall, a magnificent Renaissance building. Not far from the Market Square stands the former Jesuit church, the Fara, considered to be the most beautiful Baroque building in Poland. Many famous people stayed in the nearby Jesuit College, including Napoleon Bonaparte and Frederick Chopin, who gave a recital here.

The Raczyński Palace houses the oldest public library in Poland. The Działyński Palace contains collections from the Kórnik Library, including a priceless 1543 edition of Nicolaus Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres).

Next to the Adam Mickiewicz University stands the Monument to the Victims of the Events of June 1956, commemorating one of the first mass protests in Poland against the communist regime. Poznań's Malta Park is a large water sports centre. Regattas on Lake Malta attract many rowers and motorboat owners. The park hosts the second largest International Theatre Festival in Europe (after Edinburgh). The Wieniawski International Violin Festival and Poznań's boys' choirs are wellknown to music lovers worldwide. Every year, the Poznań International Trade Fair management organises several dozen events, including art fairs, building construction, computer systems, electronics and agricultural products fairs. St Martin's Fair is a very special event during which all sorts of things can be bought at a reduced price. In Poznań, a reputable trading town, your bargaining skills will be well appreciated.

Every day at noon, the little doors on the Town Hall tower open and two goats appear, butting horns 12 times. According to legend, they once saved the town hall from fire. With time, they have become the symbol of the city and of its witty, stubborn and hard-working citizens.

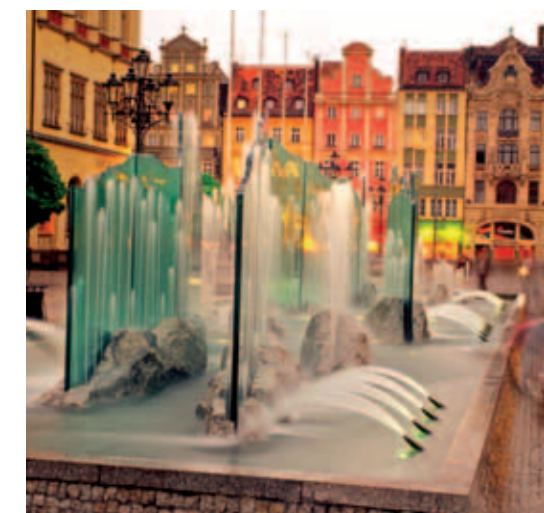
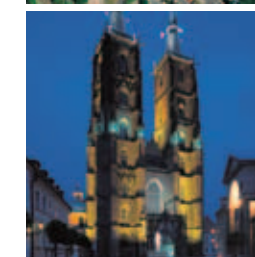
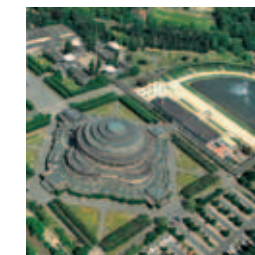
Wrocław – the Meeting Place of Nations

In Wrocław, artistic masterpieces from all epochs, decadent and cosmopolitan architecture and the spirit of a small town go hand in hand, right in the very heart of Europe. Meandering through the city, the River Oder is spanned by one hundred bridges and dotted with a dozen islands. One of them is known as Ostrów Tumski. The earliest buildings in Wrocław were erected here over 1000 years ago. As the centuries passed the city changed hands many times and belonged to Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, Germany and Poland. Protestant, Roman-Catholic and Jewish cemeteries are evidence of the cities cosmopolitan history. The Old Town Market Square was once at the junction of old European trading routes. Its architecture reflects the mix of architectural styles from different epochs. The monumental Gothic Town Hall is now a busy cultural centre.

The people of Wrocław know about the good life. The Market Square is lined with many excellent restaurants, including the highly reputed Świdnicka where the beer always tastes the best! Among many cultural events organised in Wrocław, the most highly acclaimed and internationally well-known is the Wratislavia Cantans International Oratorio & Cantata Festival.

The Aula Leopoldinum at Wrocław University, with its elaborate stucco works, sculptures, paintings and frescoes, is the most magnificent Baroque interior in the whole of the city.

Wrocław's most often visited attraction is the Raclawice Panorama, a monumental canvas which is 15 m high, 114 m long and covers an area of 1,710 sq m. The painting shows a battle scene from the 18th century Polish-Russian wars. Hung on the internal walls of the rotunda in the form of an unbroken circle, it encircles viewers, effectively placing them in the very center of the battle. A three-dimensional visual experience created almost one hundred years ago!



Sea, Lakes and Forests

Poland's Gardens of Nature include the amber beaches of the Baltic Sea, lakes and rivers, mountains and forests. Here, you can find rest, relaxation, adventure and many tourist attractions.

Along the Amber Coast

Międzyzdroje, Kołobrzeg and Sopot are health resorts of international standing. They are widely known for their attractive beaches and entertainment. You can't fail to have an excellent time there.

Morning: the fresh fragrance of the nearby pine forests. Peace and quiet broken only by the murmur of the sea and the whisper of seagulls' wings. It feels so good to start the day with a swim in the sea.

Noon: beach time. Later, many afternoon attractions to choose from, such as a game of golf or a ride on horse back or another sporting activity. There are endless ways to relax here.

Evening: Entertainment by the best performers and DJs. Some events last till the wee small hours of the morning.

Mysterious Amber

Many amber-diggers try their luck along the beaches of the Gulf of Gdańsk. Baltic gold was known and valued by the ancient Romans. It still is very sought after, appreciated for its beauty and 'mysterious' qualities.

Amber originates in the resin of pine trees which over thousands of years has solidified. Polished and set in silver, amber adds a sparkle of beauty and glamour. Considered to be a source of positive energy, it is often worn for health reasons.



Sea, Lakes and Forests

Masuria – the Land of a Thousand Lakes

There are too many attractions in Masuria to be able to enjoy all of them during just one holiday. There are literary thousands of lakes and water routes, many yacht marinas, equestrian clubs, plenty of friendly fishing villages and a lot of taverns for sailors.

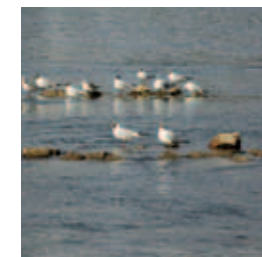
Crystal clear waters promise pleasant swimming, and the numbers of fish species tempt anglers. Most lakes in this region are small or medium sized, hidden deep in the forest, with high banks or waterfronts overgrown with rushes, teeming with a variety of aquatic birds. Some of the lakes such as Lakes Śniardwy and Mamry, are very large. Others, like Lake Wigry, have extraordinary shapes. Still others, like the small Lake Jaczno, enchant visitors with the wonderful colour of their waters (malachite green).

Not far from the Masurian lakes is the Suwałki Region Lakeland with its smaller but equally charming lakes and picturesque water courses. This region is ideal for those seeking peace and quiet. Here you can still find uninhabited islands where you can try your hand at a Robinson Crusoe style of life!

Man's Brief Passage

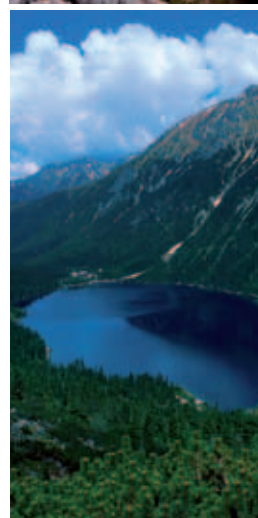
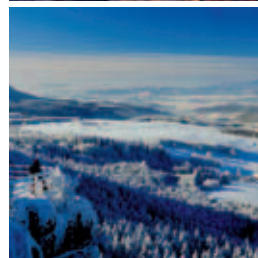
The Białowieża Forest transcends the boundaries of Poland... and time. The vegetation and wild life in the forest has remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years. There are stretches of untouched, dense woodlands, uncharted marshes and pristine forest meadows. Man's brief passage has not tainted the forest and if he goes carefully, and on foot, the forest readily reveals its secrets to him. Here is a chance to hear the "hooting" of the black grouse and to catch a glimpse of its magnificent plumage, and watch its masterly choreographed mating dance, a displaylong remembered.

The Białowieża Forest is also the natural habitat of the bison. This 'King of the forest' has the size and weight to match its name. Over one thousand kilograms. A lot of weight just from eating grass... For those who prefer other modes of transport there are several options available, for example, biking, horse-drawn buggies or a trip in a narrow-gauge railway train, a special attraction for children.



Polish forests are accessible to everyone. Manywell marked tourist trails lead to the best sites, andnumerous camping grounds can accommodate hikerswho wish to put up their tents, build a bonfireand grill a piece of Polish sausage.





Polish Mountains

The Secrets of the Mountains and the Passing of Time

The Karkonosze Range is part of the Sudety Mountains and the enchanted land of Lower Silesia. From the top of Mt Śnieżka (1,602 m), overlooking the Polish side of the Sudety Mountains, there is a splendid view of the natural and man-made wonders of this land. The network of signposted tourist trails (2,500 km) is well developed, but there are many secret places which will delight explorers and treasure seekers, especially collectors of precious minerals. The Bear's Cave has more than 3 km of labyrinths, corridors and chambers, marble mines as well as many places as yet unvisited by man. The Karkonosze Range is 350 million years old. It is difficult to imagine such a long period of time and the beginnings of these mountains – it is easier to wander these mountains, trying to fathom the secrets of all the time that has passed.

The Tatras and the Podhale Region

A panoramic view of the granite Tatras can be seen from the Podhale, Orawa and Spisz regions. You might get the impression that the foothills are trying to climb the Tatra high peaks. The Podhale region is dotted with small villages. Many have wooden churches and all of them have houses built in the unique Highland style, typical of the local culture which draws inspiration from nature. Everyone is fascinated by Zakopane, a town situated between high mountain meadows and the rocky Tatra summits. Zakopane attracts mountain trekkers, skiers, artists and people who love to enjoy themselves. It's only a stone's throw from Zakopane to the High Tatras. And from the Tatras – as the old Highland saying goes – nothing can be too far away!

Remote but Friendly

The Bieszczady are among the least populated mountainous areas in Europe. People live here in a few villages and small towns. Settlements are separated from each other by vast areas of wilderness, gently undulating mountains and high mountain meadows known as poloniny. Lake Solina brings a change to the scenery – a large sailing centre, with tourist trails leading hikers through beech forests and hilltops, past lonely Eastern Orthodox wooden churches and small country cemeteries shaded by linden trees. Today, the mountains welcome nature lovers and tourists who often ride through the Bieszczady on horseback.

The tradition of sheep grazing is still alive in the Kościeliska and Chochółowska Valleys. These white flocks are guarded by sheepdogs. A junior shepherd is called juhas, a senior one – baca. Góralki (Highland women) tend cows and Górale (Highland men) tend sheep. Why? No one knows.

A Photo-Safari

Take some of the Biebrza home with you

A magical landscape is presented by the Biebrza flood waters and its multicoloured, marshy meadows. This land can be visited by raft, kayak or on foot. In the eyes of bird-watchers and nature lovers, the colours of the setting sun reflected in the streams change the Biebrza marshes into an extraordinary luminous theatre. Visitors should not forget to have their cameras ready as these unforgettable sights are worth taking home!

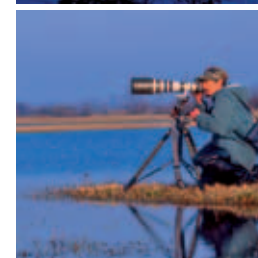
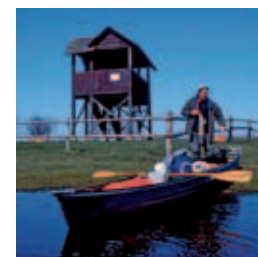
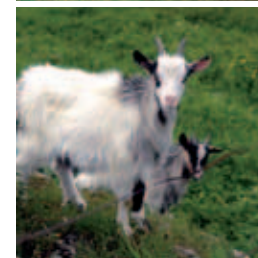
Photo Safari

Photography enthusiasts set out on a 'photo safari' to the forest very early in the morning. There, properly camouflaged, they wait long hours for the animals to appear. They have to use every trick in the book to get a good shot! And if they are patient something usually comes along.

Lake Ślowskie near Zielona Góra has such crystal-clear waters that its underwater world can be seen easily, even when the bottom of the lake is 12 metres deep. Cormorants build nests on one of the islands. Make sure you have plenty film and lots of digital memory to capture the magnificence of these rare and beautiful birds in their natural habitat.

Best Photo Opportunities:

- Słowiński National Park – shifting dunes, 50 meters high
- Mouth of the Warta River joining the Oder – rare migratory birds, aquatic species
- Biebrza Marshes – picturesque landscape of marshes and fascinating flora
- Bieszczady Mountains – mating season of red deer in the autumn, packs of wolves in the winter
- Białowieża Forest – bison and Europe's oldest trees
- Tatras – high mountain landscapes, chamois, mountain goats



Sailing and Kayaking

On the Trail of the Great Masurian Lakes

As the majority of the lakes are interconnected by a network of rivers and canals, the Great Masurian Lakes can be crossed without ever leaving one's kayak or sailing boat. This water route, Europe's longest, is known as the Trail of the Great Lakes. It can be entered from the marinas of Mikolajki, Ruciane, Nida or Węgorzewo. This excursion requires a well trained team, a good boat and fair winds. Only then will you be able to navigate to your heart's content. The trip on the lakes can become more like an adventure at sea, as there is a 100 kilometre cruise ahead of you through continuously changing landscapes, rivers and lakes, until you finally reach the end at the largest Polish lake, Lake Śniardwy. Poland's deepest lake, Lake Hańcza (108 m) is the source of a river, which, together with the Augustów Canal, creates an 80-kilometre long route, with more than 18 locks, amidst beautiful, natural scenery.

A cruise along the Elbląg Canal can be very exciting. Built some 150 years ago, this 62-kilometre long canal is still admired for its sophisticated technology and faultless workmanship. It has two locks and five original slipways which help carry heavy boats across dry land on rail-mounted trolleys to bridge the gap between waterways on different levels. At one point the difference in height is as much as 25 metres.

After an enjoyable cruise, stop for a rest in one of the many Masurian country inns and try the European white fish, which, according to the locals, tastes better here than anywhere else in Europe.

Sailing Boats Faster Than the Wind

Ice-boats, winter sailing vessels, fly over the smooth, glittering, white surface of the frozen Masurian lakes. They look like sleighs with sails attached and can fly along at speeds of up to 100 kms, if the wind is right. A fantastic and exciting exploit! Imagine a sailing boat moving faster than a motor boat!

The difference in water levels between both ends of the Elbląg Canal is about a hundred meters. Cruising this canal you might feel that at times you are ascending a waterfall!



On Water, Cycling, or on Horseback

The Dunajec Gorges

A Highland raft is made of five wooden dug-outs lashed together. This is how tourists travel down the Dunajec River rapids. It is the best way of admiring the picturesque sights of the Pieniny Mountains where the river traverses sections of breathtaking beauty.

The lime peaks looming overhead soar up to 300 metres. The Dunajec meanders and it often becomes difficult to follow the direction of the water-course. Fortunately, Highland helmsmen know how to manage their fragile rafts, bringing them safely to their final destination. The end of the trip is reached after three hours of a great and unforgettable adventure.

Everyone Loves Horses

Horse-back riding can be enjoyed in all the regions of the country. Equestrian centres, riding clubs and stud farms offer a variety of breeds, from ponies and well formed horses known as huculy, to the best Arab thoroughbreds.

A stud-farm is located at Książ castle in Lower Silesia. The stud is famous for its excellent horses as well as for special training programmes for children. Take a lesson in the castle riding school or enjoy a buggy ride in the environs.

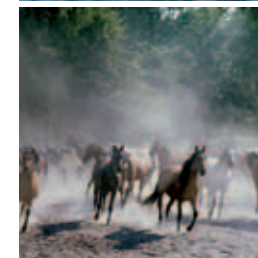
So take a ride on the beach, on a lake waterfront or down a valley in the Bieszczady Mountains. Pure adventure and exhilaration!

Always with the Wind

Cycling trails are marked out along the Oder River from Szczecin to Wrocław. These lead through dense forests, along river banks and down the streets of many small, old towns, and always with the wind.

Those who would rather go against the wind will find many opportunities in the Tatras and the Karkonosze Mountains. There, the biking trails are so steep that they better be "climbed" with a bicycle than on foot.

The final section of the European bicycle route R-1 runs through Poland to Russia. It begins in Calais (France) and continues through Holland, Germany and Poland.





Games for Everyone

In the Underground Labyrinths

Names such as Złoty Stok (Golden Slope) and Góry Złote (Golden Mountains) will stir the imagination of gold prospectors. Abandoned for many years, these ancient gold mines have never ceased to attract throngs of people. Weekend prospectors hope that there maybe just something left behind for them. The Kościeliska Valley in the Tatras boasts several dozen caves. A few are open to tourists, but the majority are reserved for experienced potholers. In the Lubusz Region near Świebodzin, there is an underground fortress from the time of the Second World War. Approximately thirty kilometres of tunnels connect huge underground shelters, bunkers, artillery positions and other military facilities. Today, around 30 thousand bats, representing 12 species, live in this wartime subterranean complex. Narrow and twisting corridors of a former chalk mine can be visited in Chelm near Lublin. Those who are brave and curious enough can enjoy this intriguing world located deep beneath the town's busy streets.

Sleigh Dogs

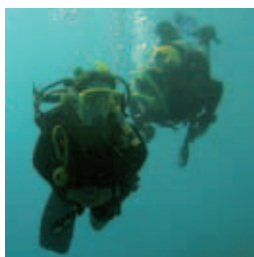
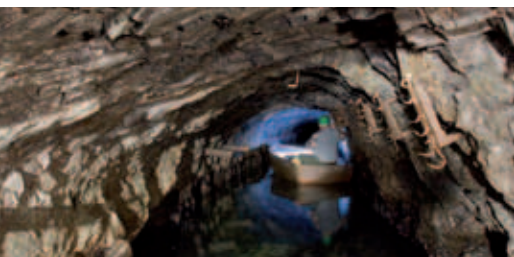
For sleigh racing, competitors depend upon the dogs' endurance and the strength in their own legs. Every year, the best dogs come to the Młociny Wood near Warsaw and to Zawoja in the Żywiec Beskid region to take part in an international race. Spectators like to look at the Alaskan malamutes and Siberian huskies, and meet their handlers, who need to be fast to keep up with their dogs.

Caravanning

Million of campers travel across the world in their caravans. They come from all the continents and form a great international caravanning family. There are special camping grounds for caravanning enthusiasts located in the most interesting regions of Poland.

You Can See More Under Water...

Many beginners as well as experienced divers are attracted to the lake at Bytów near Gdańsk. Here, you can dive to the depth of 33 meters. More difficult and deeper descents are possible in the nearby coastal waters of the Baltic Sea, but they are only accessible to more experienced divers.



Summer and Winter Games

Fun and Games for All

Family holidays on a farm are fun combined with a new experience. There is always an enjoyable and useful job for everyone. You can discover the secret recipes of the local cuisine, drive a tractor or mow grass with a scythe, a task that has to be done very careful since a scythe can be very sharp. And for those who still believe that milk comes from supermarkets, try milking a cow.

Summer Games

There is an old proverb which says that music draws people together. This is best illustrated at an event which takes place in Dobre Miasto in the Masurian region, a venue for families from all over the world to revel in the playing of music! Another wonderful family event is the Gold Prospectors World Championship held at Złotoryja, where the streets 'are paved with gold'. Other explorers, who like the thrill of exploring for amber, 'Baltic Sea gold', can meet at the Amber Prospectors World Championships at Stegna near Gdańsk.

Winter Games

The time for kulig or winter sleighing cavalcades comes when the snow starts crunching under your shoes. This snowy adventure begins when small sleighs are attached to a large sleigh drawn by a pair of horses. A kulig with torches, lighting a road lined with mountain spruces, is an experience to be remembered for a long time. During the Highland carnival at Bukowina Tatrzańska, you can enjoy kumoterki, skiing races with competitors towed by horses, and a number of other events which attracts thousands of spectators and many brave competitors. The annual Piast Race in the Karkonosze attracts a few thousand ski racing enthusiasts of all ages, the youngest 3 years old and the oldest participants over 70.



Cultivating Your Health and Good Look

Health Valley

The health resorts located in the Kłodzko Valley have very special atmospheres created by their mild and invigorating microclimates, strongly mineralised water springs and scenic landscapes. The spas of Kudowa Zdrój, Polanica Zdrój and Duszniki Zdrój are filled with bathers in summer and in winter. The pure and unpolluted air of these spas, situated 400 metres above sea level, will work wonders on your health. The treatment is even more effective when aided by the beautiful music played during the annual Chopin Festival at Duszniki.

Entertainment is Good for you

Krynica Zdrój is very popular with theatre and opera artists. Here, you can appreciate the special nature of a health resort in which entertainment and treatment go hand in hand. Mud baths and treatment massages in the morning, a leisurely walk to the pump house at noon where you can drink mineral waters of subtly different flavours and properties, and in the evening, a concert or cabaret show. Entertainment is also good for your health.

Recharged and Rejuvenated – Simply a New Life



The Benefits of Water Therapy

On the Coast and Underground

All year round, bathers arrive at health resorts located on the Baltic Sea Amber Coast. They reserve high quality medical treatment in modern and comfortable sanatoriums. Kołobrzeg is a well-known place for the treatment of muscular motor problems. Your health will be further improved after an invigorating walk on the beaches and the refreshing breeze of the iodine rich sea air.

In the famous Wieliczka Salt Mine, the 'sea breeze' still lingers one hundred metres below ground thanks to the unique microclimate in the mine chambers. The iodine rich air in the underground sanatorium is good for your health and well-being.

Reserve your place for a New Life

Reserve a place at one of Poland's 'beauty farms' before all those calories start weighing you down. Many people are very happy to come despite the 'pitiless' instructors who make their patients' workout hard or the 'heartless' doctors who refuse them even the tiniest dessert! It may sound strange but nonetheless all these 'tormented' patients leave happy and smiling. Just as those who come here for plastic surgery.

Recharged and Rejuvenated – Simply a New Life



Knightly Traditions

Book your next holiday in an old Polish castle and find out how Kings “lived happily ever after”.

To the Last Ounce of Energy

A weekend in a Medieval castle can be great fun for those who are not in a hurry. Before the festivities commence, troubadours chant their songs. But take your time; first watch the jousts, as a spectator or even join in as a participant. You may be surprised, but more and more visitors are ready to try their hand at this sport.

During the famous tournaments at the Golub-Dobrzyń castle, knights in heavy armour fight it out with heavy swords... to the last drop of their energy. There is always a pretty lady amongst the spectators who knows how to reward the most chivalrous of competitors.

A Holiday with Ghosts

Although the palace at Moszna near Opole has 99 turrets, the breadth of architectural styles in which it was built is not as extensive. The palace is like a fantastic flower carved in stone standing amidst the flower beds. Azaleas and rhododendrons are in full bloom, the music of Vivaldi in the background. The stud farm nearby was built in one, albeit Mauritanian, style. Ghosts are also around somewhere. People say they are lost among all those 99 turrets.

Revellers, Watch this Space!

Have you ever considered a New Year party in a palace, wearing a period costume, enjoying that special night as never before? You might like to know that in Niepołomice near Cracow there is a fine Renaissance Royal Castle ...

Just Think! A New Year Party in a Royal Castle... in Poland!



Variety of Choice

Barefoot in the Morning Dew

The best way of enjoying the early morning is to take a barefooted walk through a meadow full of flowers. Dew-covered, cool grass under your feet and the sun warming your face – the best way to start a beautiful day!

A Variety of Choice

The many activities to be enjoyed outdoors include horseback riding, fishing, bird watching and watching wildlife in its natural environment.

Why not volunteer to help out in farm chores, or simply sit under a pear-tree and listen to the stillness of the countryside?

Stars Shining Bright

A camp fire barbecue, dinner under the glittering stars, frogs croaking in the distance, owls hooting... Experience life, one step closer to nature ...

Intricate Patterns

Folk artists are very busy people in the autumn.

They carve figures of saints in wood, decorate furniture, paint on glass, embroider tablecloths and make delicate lacework.

The beautiful work of lace-makers from Koniakowa and Bobowa is well known and admired worldwide. Is it true that lace-making is not difficult to learn?

Songs from the Highlands

The Beskid Culture Week never fails to attract huge crowds. Many little towns and villages in the region of the Silesian Beskid stage folk carnival shows, craft fairs and dance workshops. The winter Highland carnival in Bukowina Tatrzańska is a most colourful and enjoyable experience for all. Do not miss the specialties of the local cuisine. Bon appétit!

Four Seasons of the Year – Four Ways to Discover the Taste of Life



Let's Meet in Poland

Poland is an ideal place for the organisation of many different types of conferences and attractive incentive programmes. Business people, especially those participating in incentive meetings, will feel comfortable in an environment equipped with the latest hi tech facilities and surrounded by the ambience of traditional Polish hospitality. Anyone seeking exceptional, unique and unconventional conditions for the organisation of business meetings will be very satisfied with facilities in Poland. Professional assistance in the organisation of such meetings is provided by experienced Polish companies.

Practical and Comfortable

Guests who cannot rest away from work should consider one of the conference centres located in stately homes. The special ambience in these very interesting interiors can add new vitality and refresh projects to obtain better business results.

International Deals

The majestic palace at Baranów Sandomierski houses a modern conference centre equipped with state of the art facilities. Baroque interiors designed by Italian masters, a French style garden, musical concerts and Old Polish cuisine make the venue a very special place. It would be very difficult to find a more congenial environment where important international agreements could be negotiated.

Time to Rest

Conference centres have all the necessary facilities for business applications: Internet, well-equipped rooms, professional staff and outstanding cuisine. And after work, there is time to relax. The choice of activities is wide.

Poland - an excellent choice For every season and any time of the day!



Enjoy Polish Traditional Dishes

Entering a Polish home, whether you are an old friend or a stranger, you will be greeted with warm hospitality and a sumptuous meal. "A Guest in the house, God in the house", as the old Polish proverb says. Just looking at the menu can make your mouth water. For centuries Polish cuisine has been the arena of competing influences from France and Italy, along with what was from more exotic tables: Jewish, Armenian, Lithuanian, Cossack, Hungarian and Tartar.

Traditional Polish cuisine combines the refined and elegant tastes introduced to Poland by the French court of Henri de Valois – the first elected Polish King, with the wild, mysterious flavours of the Lithuanian forests, the sweet aroma of the dishes served for the Jewish Sabbath supper, and the fierce, rare taste of steak Tartar – originally made by the horsemen in Genghis Khan's army who used to place slices of raw beef under their saddles to tenderise the meat. Locally made dishes specific to different parts of Poland will also spoil you for choice. Fresh water fish is a favourite dish in the north of Poland where there is an abundance of lakes. From the sandy plains of Mazovia in central Poland comes *żurek* – a sour rye soup, and the Eastern belt is known for the world famous *pierogi*.

Wielkopolska in Western Poland will treat you to aromatic duck dishes; Suwalszczyzna in the north-east corner of Poland offers the best potato dishes and Podhale at the foot of the Tatra Mountains is famous for *kwaśnica* – sauerkraut soup and *oscypek* – sheep's milk smoked cheese. Wherever you go, you can enjoy delicacies that for centuries have been made from produce harvested in the fields, meadows, forests, lakes and rivers of Poland.





Republic of Poland

Area: 312,000 sq km.

Location: Central Europe.

Poland borders on Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia. Its northern border – 500 km long – runs along the Baltic Sea coast.

Population: 38,000,000.

Flag: White and red.

Official language: Polish.

Capital city: Warsaw.

Other major cities: Łódź, Krakow, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Katowice, Lublin. Climate: Temperate, the average temperature in July is 19°C (67°F), but there are many summer days when temperatures rise to 30°C (86°F). The best time of the year for practising winter sports is between January and March.



Public holidays and work-free days

Non working days are Saturdays, Sundays, and following holidays:

New Year's Day (Jan. 1st), the Easter (Easter Sunday and Monday are moveable holidays), Labour Day (May 1st), the anniversary of the Constitution of May Third (May 3rd), Corpus Christi (Thursday, movable feast), Feast of the Assumption (Aug. 15th), All Saint's Day (Nov. 1st), National Independence Day (Nov. 11th), Christmas Holidays (Dec. 25th and 26th).



Where to stay?

All hotels are classified and their categories range from inexpensive to luxurious.

- Rooms can be booked by telephone or Internet:
www.discover-poland.pl, www.hotelsinpoland.com,
www.polhotels.com, www.hotelspoland.com, www.polhotel.pl,
www.warsawshotel.com, www.visit.pl, www.orbisonline.pl,
www.pph.com.pl
- Many historic and old buildings (palaces, castles, manors, mills) have been adapted for tourist purposes tel. +(48 22) 412 50 13, +48 507 842 552, www.goscinniezabytki.pl
- Booking of rural B&B accommodations:
tel. +(48-52) 398 14 34, mobile +(48-602) 459 137,
www.agritourism.pl, www.agroturystyka.pl, federagg@wp.pl
- Youth hostels: tel. +(48-22) 849 81 28, fax 849 83 54,
www.ptsm.org.pl
- Camping: tel./fax +(48-22) 810 60 50, www.pfcc.eu
- Polish Tourist Country Lovers' Association: www.pttk.pl.



How to Pay?

The Polish currency is the zloty (PLN). You can pay using other currencies e.g. Euro, after you have come to an agreement with the vendor, but this is not always the case. Most transactions are done in zloty. Money can be changed at banks or exchange counters (Kantor). Credit cards are accepted in most shops and for services in the whole of Poland. Cash dispensers of the different banks are available 24/24 in cities and towns. The official money is the zloty divided into 100 groszy. Polish money is in circulation as coins and banknotes. Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 groszy and 1, 2, 5 zloty. Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 zlotys.



Customs regulations

Customs rules and procedures are similar to those prevailing in the majority of EU countries. Detailed information is available from the Ministry of Finance, tel. +(48-22) 694 31 94, www.mf.gov.pl.



Air

There are airports in Poland in the following cities: Warsaw, Krakow, Gdańsk, Katowice, Łódź, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Wrocław and Bydgoszcz. LOT Polish Airlines is Poland's national carrier. In order to find the necessary information, all travellers planning to come to Poland and move around the country by air should visit the LOT website: www.lot.com. In addition, there are other carriers, including budget airlines such as Easy Jet – www.easyjet.com, Germanwings – www.germanwings.com, WizzAir – www.wizzair.com, Ryanair – www.ryanair.com, Norwegian – www.norwegian.no, Aer Lingus – www.aerlingus.com



Train

Poland has a well-developed rail network. Major Polish cities are interconnected by Intercity express trains running between European cities. The national railway network is administered and serviced by the Polish State Railways (PKP). All necessary information can be found on the PKP website: www.pkp.pl, www.intercity.pl, www.rozklad-pkp.pl and tel. +48 42 194 36.



Bus

Any place in Poland can be easily reached on the extensive network of national and local roads. Coach services are operated throughout the year by state and private bus companies across the country.



Taxi

Taxi stands are marked with the TAXI sign. Taxis are best be booked by telephone. Higher rates are charged for travel out of city limits, on Sundays and holidays; a special night fare is applied between 10 pm and 6 am.



Traffic regulations

These are compatible with the regulations in EU countries. Speed limits on Polish roads are:

- 50 km/h for all vehicles in built-up areas;
- 90 km/h on two lane roads;
- 110 km/h on expressways;
- 130 km/h on motorways;
- Headlights must be switched on at all times while driving.



Useful telephone numbers

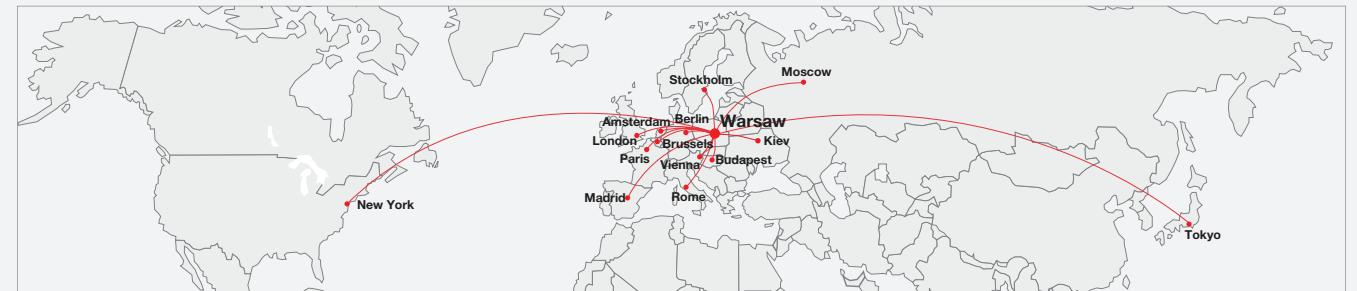
Nationwide toll-free 24 hour emergency phone numbers are:

- Ambulance 999,
- Fire Brigade 998,
- Police 997. Mobile Phone Assistance 112,

Tourists can use the following emergency number during the summer season:

- 800 200 300, +48-608 599 999.

Branches of the Polish Tourist Organisation Abroad



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