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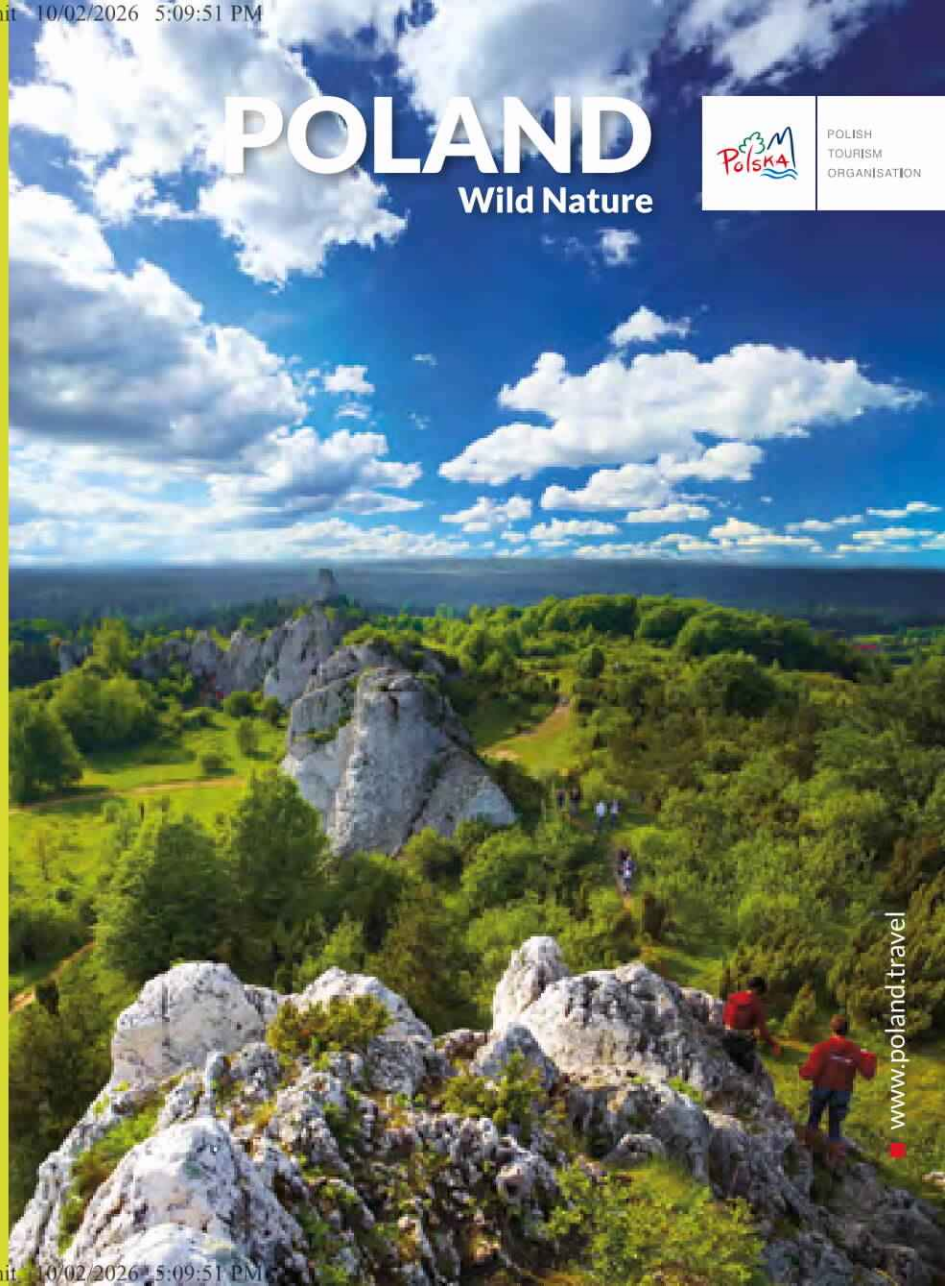
POLAND
Wild Nature

POLISH TOURISM ORGANISATION



www.poland.travel

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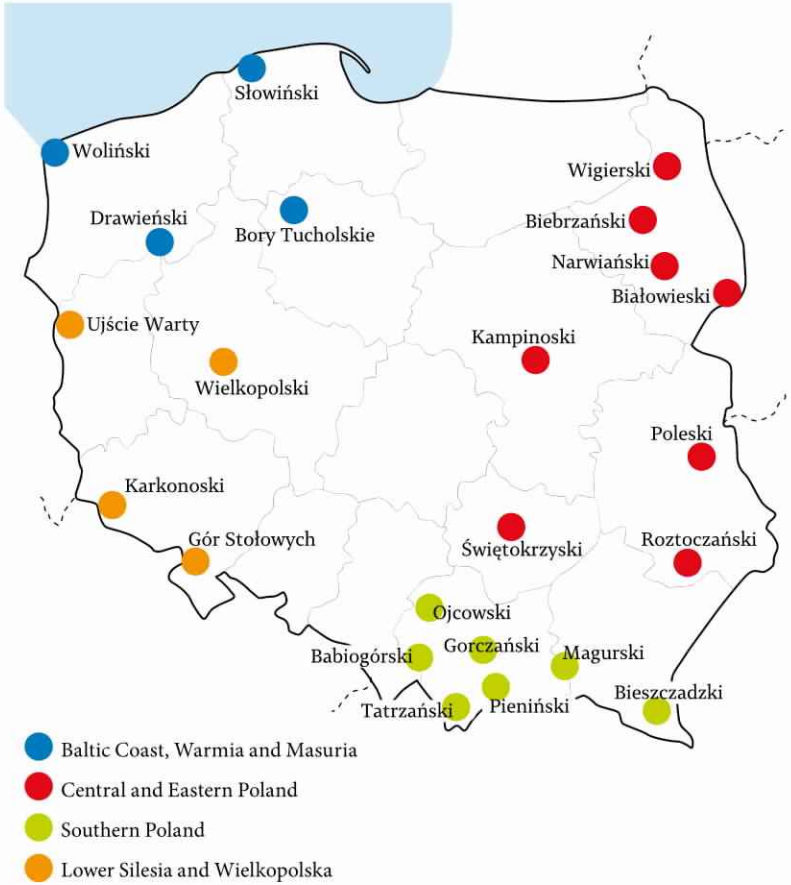
Wonders of Polish Nature

Many sites of nature in Poland are unique, not only across Europe but the globe as well. Here, nature and culture live in harmony.



Poland is a verdant country. Even its towns and cities are full of greenery! There are wonderful nature sites and areas in every corner of the country. The monadnocks in the Owl Mountains (Góry Sowie) were formed during the formation of our planet. Białowieża Forest is Europe's last virgin forest, where you can encounter the European bison now rescued from extinction. Poland has picturesque rivers and plenty of lakes. Masuria, known as the land of lakes, came 14th in the New 7 Wonders competition. The Wieliczka Salt Mine's deposits are a natural phenomenon, and the mine itself is a world cultural monument on UNESCO's World Heritage list. The rock salt deposits here have been mined continuously since the Middle Ages. ▶

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Poles love horses. We are especially proud of the stud farm in Janów Podlaski. Here, the prices of Arabian horses reach staggering heights during the world-famous Pride of Poland auction.

▶ Inland waters are full of fish, while numerous species of birds nest in the meadows and forests. White storks arrive here in such numbers that they have become the symbol of Polish nature, just like the willows shrouded in legends that inspire many artists. It is worth exploring the world of Polish nature actively – by doing sports either recreationally or competitively, on land, water or in the air, all year round. In our temperate European climate, in addition to the typical spring, summer, autumn and winter there are two extra seasons: early spring and early winter. Each of the six seasons paints nature with its own special charm.

www.gorysowie.com.pl

www.mazury.travel

www.poland.travel/en

www.portal.warmia.mazury.pl/en/tourism

www.janow.arabians.pl/en

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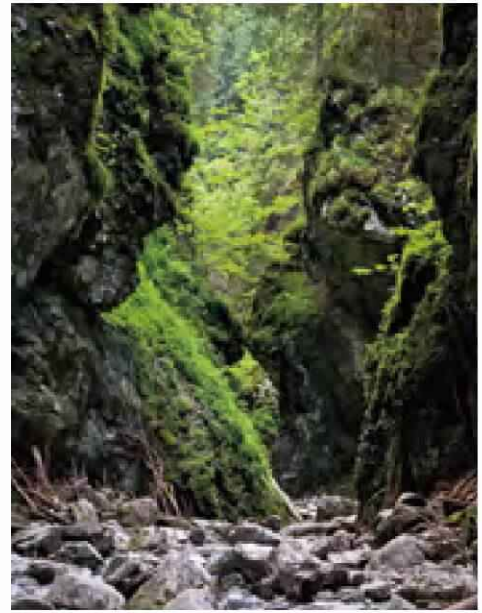
Active Leisure amidst Beautiful Nature

Breathtaking natural landscapes, peace and quiet, and the pure air of Polish national parks create ideal conditions for sports.

Cycling is possible in the Tuchola Forest (Bory Tucholskie), Ujście Warty, Białowieża (Białowieski), Gorce (Gorczański), Kampinos (Kampinoski), Karkonosze (Karkonoski), Magura (Magurski), Ojców (Ojcowski), Polesie (Poleski), Roztocze (Roztoczański), Słowiński, Świętokrzyski, Wigry (Wigierski) and Wolin (Woliński) National Parks. **Horseback riding** can be enjoyed in the Kampinos, Roztocze and Wolin National Parks. **Backcountry skiing** is an option in the Białowieża, Kampinos and Roztocze National Parks. Why not try **birdwatching** in the Białowieża, Biebrza (Biebrzański), Bieszczady (Bieszczadzki) or Narew (Narwiański) National Parks? **Rock climbing and caving** are possible in the Tatra (Tatrzański) National Park, and **kayaking** in the Tuchola Forest, Biebrza, Drawno (Drawieński), Narew, Pieniny (Pieniński), Wigry (Wigierski) and Wolin National Parks. You can go **sailing** in the Wigry and Wolin National Parks, or **fishing** in the Drawno, Wigry or Wolin National Parks.

www.eurovelo.com/en

Poland is worth exploring by bicycle. International EuroVelo cycling routes are highly recommended.



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National Parks:
Nature's Enclaves

Poland's 23 national parks are particularly valuable natural resources, important for scientific, social, cultural and educational reasons.

The largest is the Biebrza (Biebrzański) National Park, and the smallest, Ojców (Ojcowski) National Park. In all of them, the whole of nature is protected. Most of the parks operate within the Natura 2000 European ecological network, which is in place for the protection of birds and their habitats. In these restricted nature reserves, nature itself is the host. Human intervention is almost completely excluded. Each park is surrounded by a buffer zone where human activity, especially economic, is restricted. Hiking trails, scenic viewpoints, campsites and parking areas in the parks are marked. UNESCO has listed the Białowieża (Białowieski) National Park, the last virgin forest in Europe, as a World Heritage Site, and another 10 parks have been listed as biosphere reserves. They are: the Tuchola Forest Biosphere Reserve, the Słowiński Biosphere Reserve, the Western Polesie Biosphere Reserve, the Lake Łuknajno Biosphere Reserve, the Kampinos Forest Biosphere Reserve, the Białowieża Biosphere Reserve, the Karkonosze Biosphere Reserve, the Babia Góra Biosphere Reserve, the Tatra Biosphere Reserve, the East Carpathian International Biosphere Reserve. The purpose of these sites included in the international MaB (Man and the Biosphere) programme is the engagement of local communities in activities serving environmental protection, culture and environmental education.

www.parkinarodowe.edu.pl

www.polen.travel/de/nationalparks/

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Polish Flora Changes Its Hues
with the Passing of the Seasons

Dominating the Polish landscape, flowers and trees are the most spectacular.

Flowers change the colours of fields and meadows every month from early spring until late autumn. The arrival of spring is foreshadowed by snowdrops popping their heads through layers of white snow. They are soon followed by clumps of colourful crocuses. The rare, protected edelweiss blossoms in the Tatra Mountains, and summer fields of golden wheat and barley are brightened by red poppies. The meadow saffron, also known as the autumn crocus, graces fields with its subtle pink blossom once summer is over. Leaves create magical images in forests and on trees as they gradually change colour throughout the growing season. When the snow melts away, budding leaves turn the treetops bright green only to change into luscious foliage in summer. In autumn, trees go through the whole palette of yellows, reds and browns. The period justly called the "golden Polish autumn" is a truly marvellous phenomenon. The warm colours of the trees, the scent of falling leaves and sunlight peering through them create a natural masterpiece.

Summer fields of golden wheat and barley are brightened by red poppies.

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Wonderful World of Animals

The complete picture of Polish fauna encompasses 36,000 animal species.

As many as 19 Polish national parks have an animal in their logotype. That particular animal is usually under protection and the park is its preferred habitat.

Among all those animals you can find the largest European mammals: bears, elk and bison. Moving with astonishing agility, the Tatra chamois graze on highland pastures laced with stony runs. The silence of granite mountaintops is sometimes pierced with the high-pitched warning whistle of the marmot. In autumn, the cries of fighting deer sound in the woods. In wintertime, you can hear wolves howling. Birdwatchers will be captivated by the sight of the white-tailed eagle hovering majestically overhead, or by cranes and herons wading in the water. In summertime, colourful butterflies swarm over verdant meadows. No other place can rival the meadows in the Pieniny mountain range when it comes to butterflies: over half of all species living in Poland can be found within this relatively small territory.

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Polish Roads:
Willows and Storks

It takes just a drive of a few dozen miles to realise that the Polish landscape is serenely gorgeous. Its most characteristic features are stork nests and rows of willows.

The willow is the most distinctive Polish tree. Painters of the Romantic era made the slender branches of the weeping willow hanging over water the symbol of the Polish landscape. Travelling around the country, you will inevitably see rows of willows. Formerly, willows were planted along dirt roads.

Poles love storks and believe they bring good luck. Storks like Poland, and traverse thousands of miles every spring to nest here. Building their nests on rooftops, utility poles or in tall trees, they do not shy away from human settlements. Their nests are often near roads where you can easily spot them. Before migrating for the winter, storks gather in fields and marshes to feed together. Just imagine hundreds of birds in one place, showing off their unusual habits. The experience is amazing!

www.bociany.pl

www.podlaskiszlakbociani.pl/en

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Welcome to the Polish Village!

Polish agritourism farms tempt guests with holidays amid unspoiled nature. You can find relaxation in simple rural conditions or at luxury multi-star facilities.

More than a thousand farms provide not only accommodation but also delicious, healthy, homemade meals made from their own, often organic produce. Many of them organise workshops in handicrafts and cookery, yoga classes and other activities such as local excursions, mushroom picking, watching animals (mainly birds), fishing or horseback riding. During summertime, when villages smell of harvested hay, you can drive a quad bike. In winter, you can enjoy a traditional *kulig* sleigh ride party ending by a campfire with music and drinks of fruit liqueur or mulled wine, ride a snowmobile or drive a dog sled. At the end of April and September in the foothills (mainly the Podhale and Żywiecczyzna regions), you can witness colourful festivities revolving around sheep grazing.

During summertime, when villages smell of harvested hay, you can drive a quad bike. In winter, you can enjoy a traditional *kulig* sleigh ride party, ride a snowmobile or drive a dog sled.

www.agritourism.pl

www.poland.travel/en

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Golf:
Beautiful Courses without the Crowds

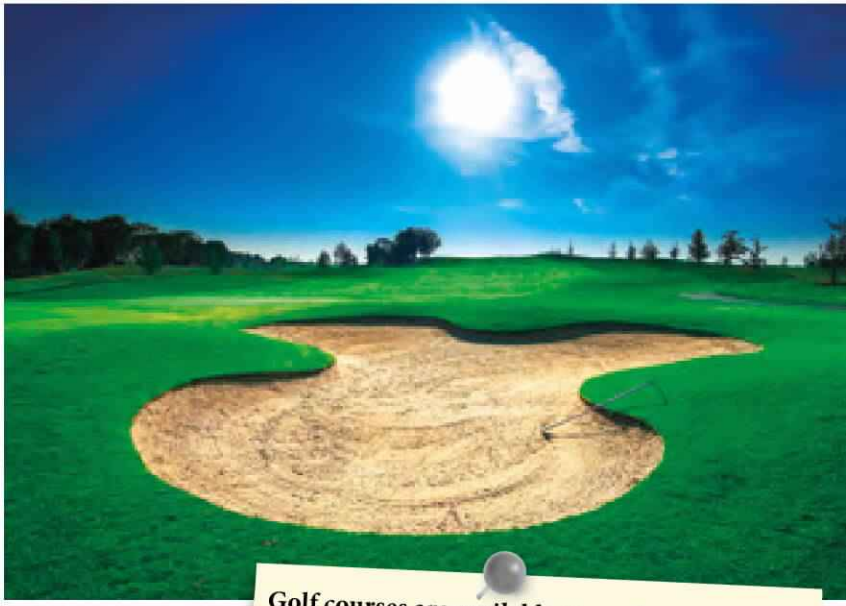
www.pzgolf.pl/en

www.golf.aia.pl

Interest in golf has begun growing only recently in Poland but the sport is expanding very quickly. Golf courses blend nicely into natural surroundings in every region.

There are 63 golf clubs in Poland with beautiful, modern courses, some designed by prominent designers known and respected around the world. One was designed by Gary Player, one of the world's greatest golfers and a recognised South African golf-course designer who upholds a strict environmental policy.

Golf courses are now available everywhere in Poland: from the Baltic Sea to the Tatra Mountains, near large cities and in the countryside – all surrounded by fantastic wildlife. There are more than a dozen championship 18-hole courses, a number of 9-hole courses, driving ranges, putting greens and simulators. During the golfing season, there are still five times fewer players per golf course in Poland than in Spain or in Scandinavia. This means it is easier to take part in a tournament or play recreationally without crowds.



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Advanced windsurfers can face the challenges posed by the squalls and cold waters of the open sea.

Water Sports:
Acrobatics on the Waves

In addition to sailing, windsurfing is also very popular in Poland. And there is an increasing interest in kitesurfing and wakeboarding.

Water sport schools operate all along the coast. In the Bay of Puck, where the waters are calm and temperatures mild, schools offer rental equipment and classes for adults and children. Just like so many Polish athletes, sailors and windsurfers who train so diligently and are successful in races all over the world, advanced amateurs can face the challenges posed by the squalls and cold waters of the open sea. There are many camping sites and former fishing villages now converted into pleasant resorts between Władysławowo and Hel. In winter, the vast and shallow bay turns into a huge ice rink with more and more iceboats and ice-kiting enthusiasts every year.

www.gohel.pl

www.pomorskie.travel/en/Water_adventures

www.windsurfing.pl

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Sailing:
Without Limits

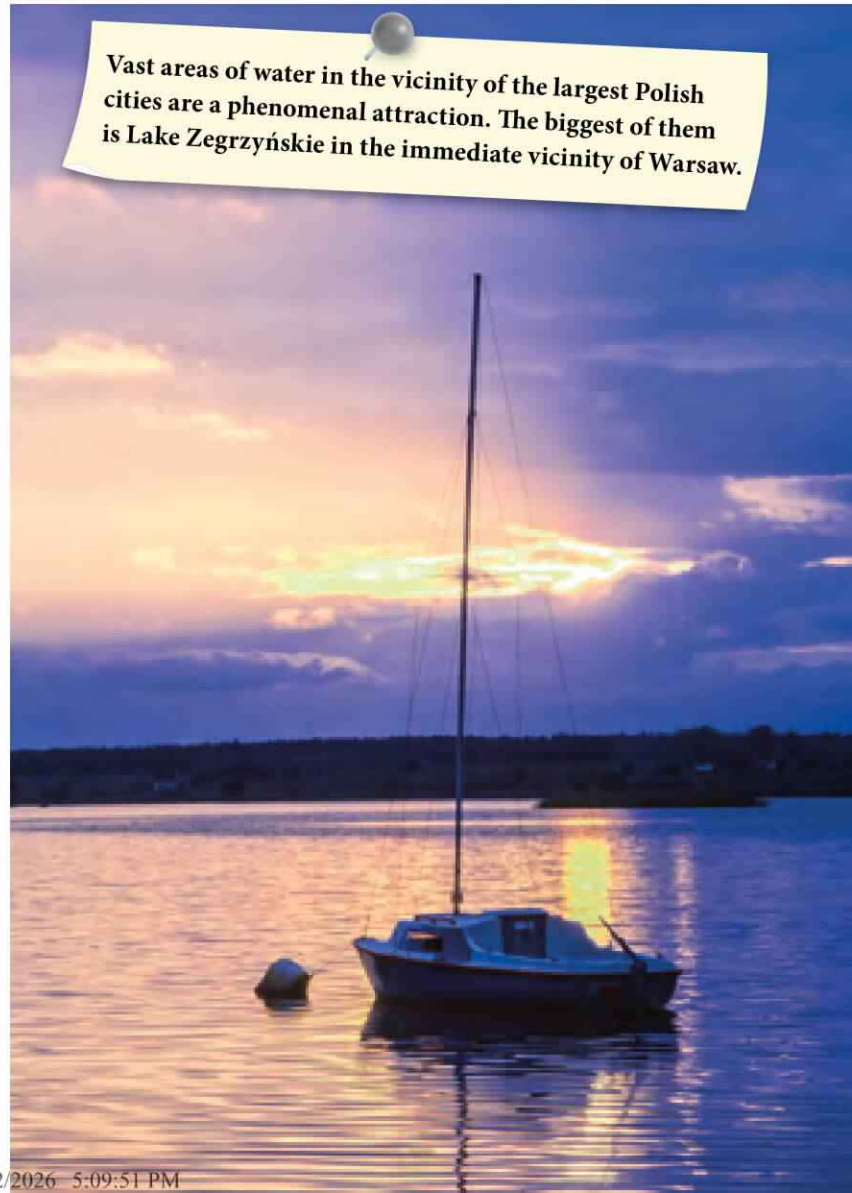
Poland has access to the sea and thousands of lakes. Navigable rivers and canals connect to the network of Western water routes.

Sailors love Masuria: a land of thousands of lakes, large and small, interconnected by waterways, wrapped in forests. The biggest attractions of the region are the Great Lakes. They are connected by an 88 km waterway, which makes them ideal for several-day cruises. Along the waterway you will find modern, friendly marinas, harbours and places to spend the night – from campsites to luxury hotels.

Vast areas of water in the vicinity of the largest Polish cities are a phenomenal attraction. The biggest of them is Lake Zegrzyńskie, a man-made reservoir in the immediate vicinity of Warsaw and an ideal place for a short break on the water, in a sailboat. In winter, iceboat enthusiasts abound on its frozen surface. A longer, more arduous trip for the more ambitious is to sail across the entire country, along its rivers and canals, which gives participants the chance to admire wildlife.

www.portalzeglarski.com

warsawtour.pl/node/1971



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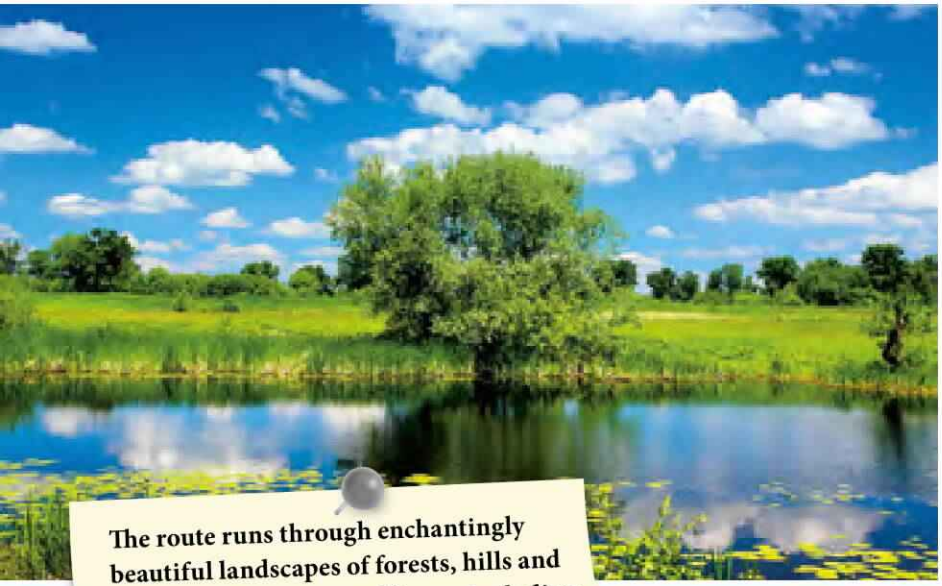
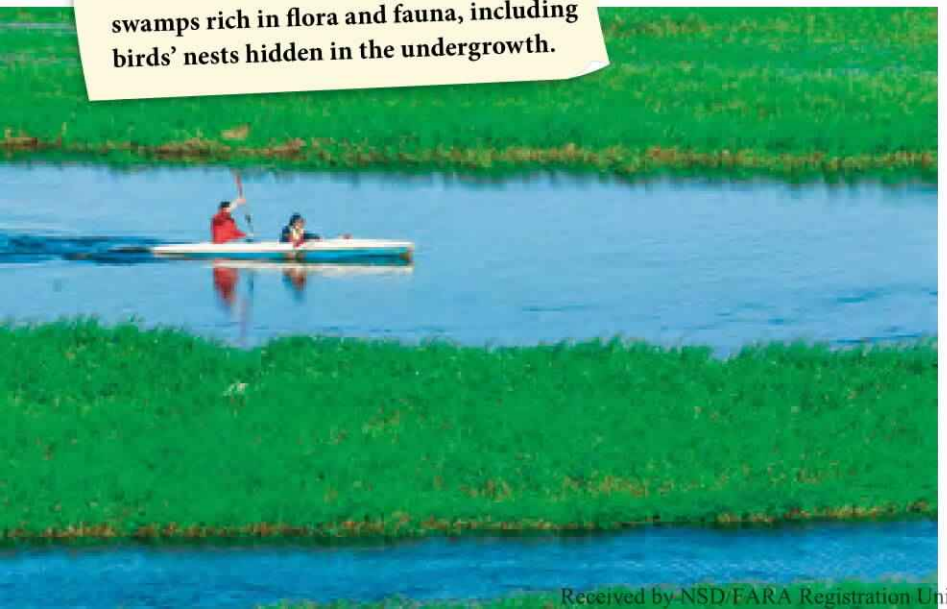


The route runs through enchantingly beautiful landscapes of forests, hills and swamps rich in flora and fauna, including birds' nests hidden in the undergrowth.



Canoeing on Polish Rivers

Travel the many beautiful watercourses by dinghy or kayak. Canoeing is beneficial to your health and close contact with wildlife provides extraordinary excitement.

The River Krutynia in Masuria will take your breath away. Together with several other streams and lakes, it creates a 102 km long rowing route. It is not very difficult, so even in the company of inexperienced kayakers you can still enjoy it. The route runs through enchantingly beautiful landscapes of forests, hills and swamps rich in flora and fauna, including birds' nests hidden in the undergrowth.

Rowers often choose water routes in north-eastern Poland, in the Masuria and Suwałki regions. Trips down the Rospuda and Biebrza rivers are extremely picturesque. On the other hand, the River Czarna Hańcza is recommended for experienced rowers. It leads across Poland's deepest lake. The most beautiful mountain rivers appreciated by kayakers are the River Nysa Kłodzka in the Sudetes and the Dunajec and Białka rivers in the Tatra Mountains.

www.masuria-canoeing.com

www.rospuda.pl

www.sorkwity.pttk.pl

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Fishing:
Fish Are Biting Here!

Clean water and more than 120 species of freshwater fish encourage fishing.

There are countless fisheries in Poland. Fishing is permitted in mountain rivers with their rapid current, slower lowland rivers, natural lakes and reservoirs, on fish farms, and even in the protected Drawa (Drawieński), Wigry (Wigierski) and Wolin (Woliński) National Parks. Seaside resorts can arrange a boat fishing excursion to catch cod inhabiting the Baltic Sea. In rivers, fishermen can catch a true giant, the two and a half metre long sheatfish (catfish). There are lively trout in the rapid streams, and roach in the River Dziwna, where this fish is the most numerous in the world. In bays and on wooded promontories along the River Dziwna, you can fish only to the sound of wind in the trees. This reverie is broken only by the movement of your fishing float.

www.poland.travel/en

www.wedkuje.pl

www.wedkarstwomorskie.org

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Birdwatching:
Welcome to the Kingdom of Birds

Rare species of birds can be observed throughout Poland, in all natural environments.

The Biebrza Marshes (Bagna Biebrzańskie) are the most valued region for observing birds. Thousands of tourists from all over the world flock here every spring to observe and photograph the life and customs of numerous wonderful flying species. In the wetlands and meadows, nothing disturbs the eternal rhythm of nature. Therefore, many species of birds, including predators and water fowl, feel at home here. Travelling by kayak or raft through the Biebrza Marshes, you can get closer to the birds. The Biebrza Valley is the nesting place of a few thousand aquatic warblers. It is the largest concentration of these rare birds in the world. Similar species can be observed on the River Wkra and Lake Łuknajno. Białowieża Forest is the best place for watching woodpeckers and owls, while the confluence of the Odra and Warta rivers serves fans of geese and ducks; the hills of the Roztocze region, fans of southern and steppe species, and the Bieszczady Mountains, admirers of predators like eagles and hawks. Birds can even be observed in cities and towns: in Warsaw alone, you can regularly see about 180 different species of birds.

In the wetlands and meadows, nothing disturbs the eternal rhythm of nature.

www.biebrza.com/en

www.birdwatching.pl

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Hunting:
Face-to-Face with Wild Animals

Extensive wild animal sanctuaries, a pristine environment and freedom of movement make Poland the dream destination for tourists who enjoy hunting.

Polish forests attract hunters from all over the world. Hunting enthusiasts who combine the emotions of a hunter with thorough observation of wild, beautiful nature appreciate what Poland has to offer. Here you can hunt deer, wild boar, hare and many species of birds. The most valuable trophies are deer antlers and boar tusks. For a hunter to succeed, not only a sharp eye is required but also knowledge of animals and their environment.

Hunting was once the pastime of kings. Polish rulers, however, were among the first in the world to issue edicts protecting the most popularly hunted species. In the same manner, today's hunting involves efforts to protect endangered animals. Therefore, hunting seasons for different animals, using different weapons, and the principles which allow you to take a shot are defined in detail in Polish law. Please keep that in mind.

www.pzlow.pl

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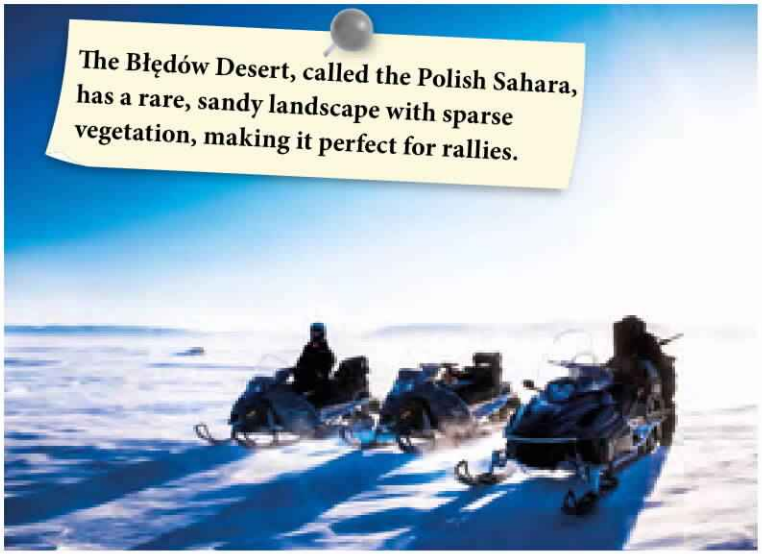
Driving on Snow and Sand

Poland has beautiful, diverse landscapes inviting one and all to engage in active forms of tourism. Dog sledding, rallies, fun on quad bikes, ski trail trips – you choose!

The snow crunches under your feet, the wind gusts around, and you can hear the wolves howling. Drive a dog sled as if you were in Alaska! The climate and landscape of the Bieszczady Mountains are perfect for mushing. In winter, the dogs pull not only sleds but also skiers, and when there is no snow – small carriages or bikes.

Admirers of motor sports are tempted by Poland's deserts, which are great places to experience extreme adventure. The Błędów Desert (Pustynia Błędowska), called the Polish Sahara, has a rare, sandy landscape with sparse vegetation, making it perfect for rallies.

Poland is dominated by lowlands, which promotes cross-country skiing and ski trips. In March, thousands of professionals and amateurs participate in an international race called Bieg Piastów.



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www.bieg-piastow.pl

www.polskieszlaki.pl/pustynia-bledowska.htm

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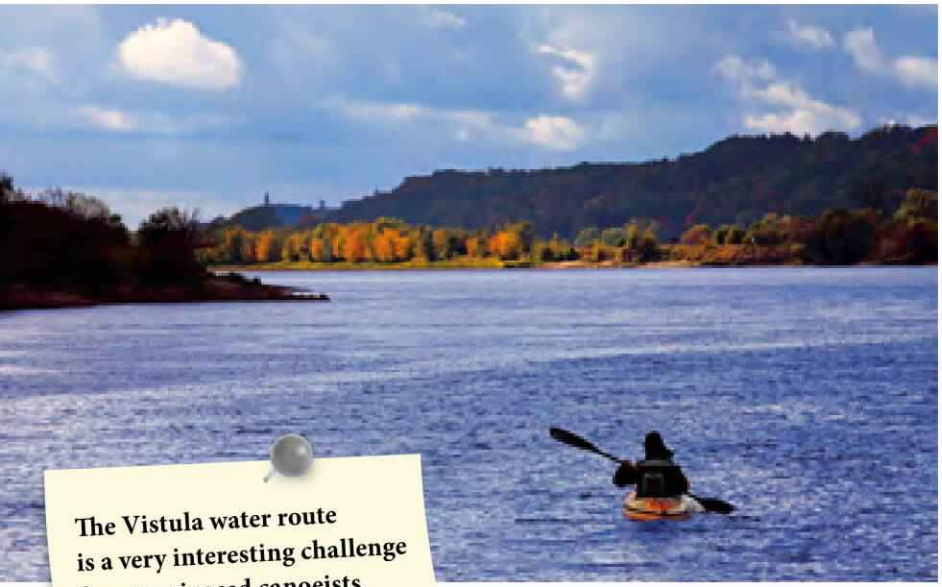
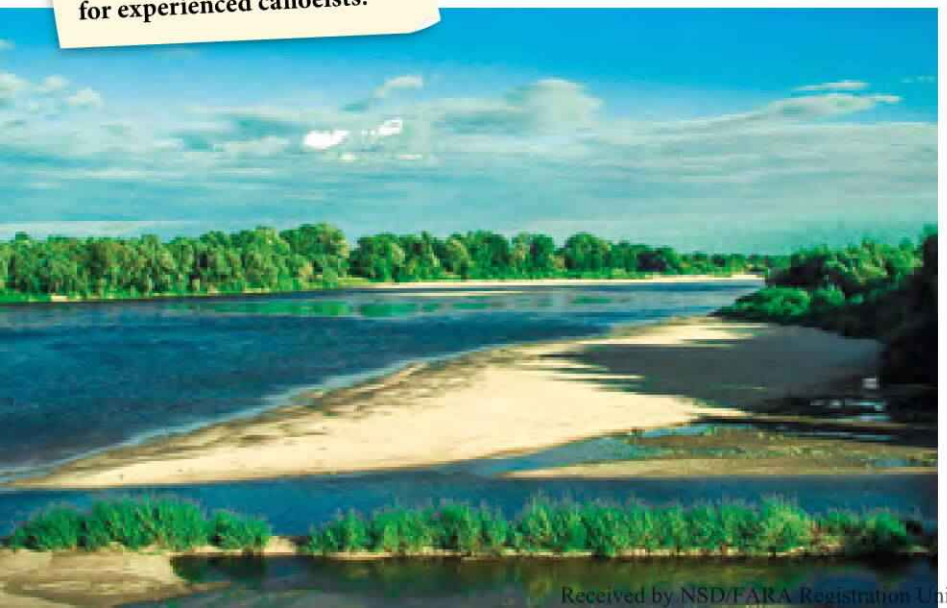


The Vistula water route is a very interesting challenge for experienced canoeists.



The Vistula:
Queen of Polish Rivers

Flowing from south to north, the River Vistula divides Poland in two; wild and pristine in some places, it flows through urban areas in others.

The Vistula's headwaters form on the woody slopes of the Beskid Mountains. The waters of the Vistula serve as a mirror for the most important Polish cities, running through Kraków (with the former seat of Polish kings, the Wawel Castle), and Warsaw, Poland's capital. Here on the west side of the city, at the top of the river escarpment, are the most beautiful and important buildings in Warsaw. The cultural and sports life of the capital is also based near the river, as visitors admire the Vistula's wild landscape and untamed power.

The Vistula also flows through Toruń, a city of thousands of mostly Gothic brick buildings. The river ends its run in the north, near Gdańsk, flowing into the Baltic Sea. Although mostly unengineered, the Vistula is navigable for 940 km. The Vistula water route is a very interesting challenge for experienced canoeists.

www.wislawarszawska.pl

www.wislawarszawa.pl/en

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Beaches and Amber:
Charm of the Polish Coast

The Baltic Sea coastline is 770 km long. The waves carry amber inshore to the wide, beautiful sandy beaches running along it.

You can feel really free on Poland's coastal beaches. Next to man-made resort beaches there are wild, often bare sections of coast where you can freely walk, run, or even ride horses. Along the beautiful, diverse Baltic Coast, coastal towns are often separated from the beaches by wild dunes and picturesque cliffs. Over 40 metres high, moving dunes with their ever-changing forms are unique in Europe. Fifty metre high cliffs on Cape Rozewie fall into the sea, and the hill on the island of Wolin is nearly 100 metres high. Poland holds World Championships in collecting amber, the priceless treasure of the Baltic Sea.
Seals are visitors to the shoals in the Vistula estuary. Basking in the sun, they rest here after their months-long sea journeys.

www.slowinskipn.pl/en

www.ambermuseum.eu/en

www.amber.com.pl

Poland holds World Championships in collecting amber, the priceless treasure of the Baltic Sea.

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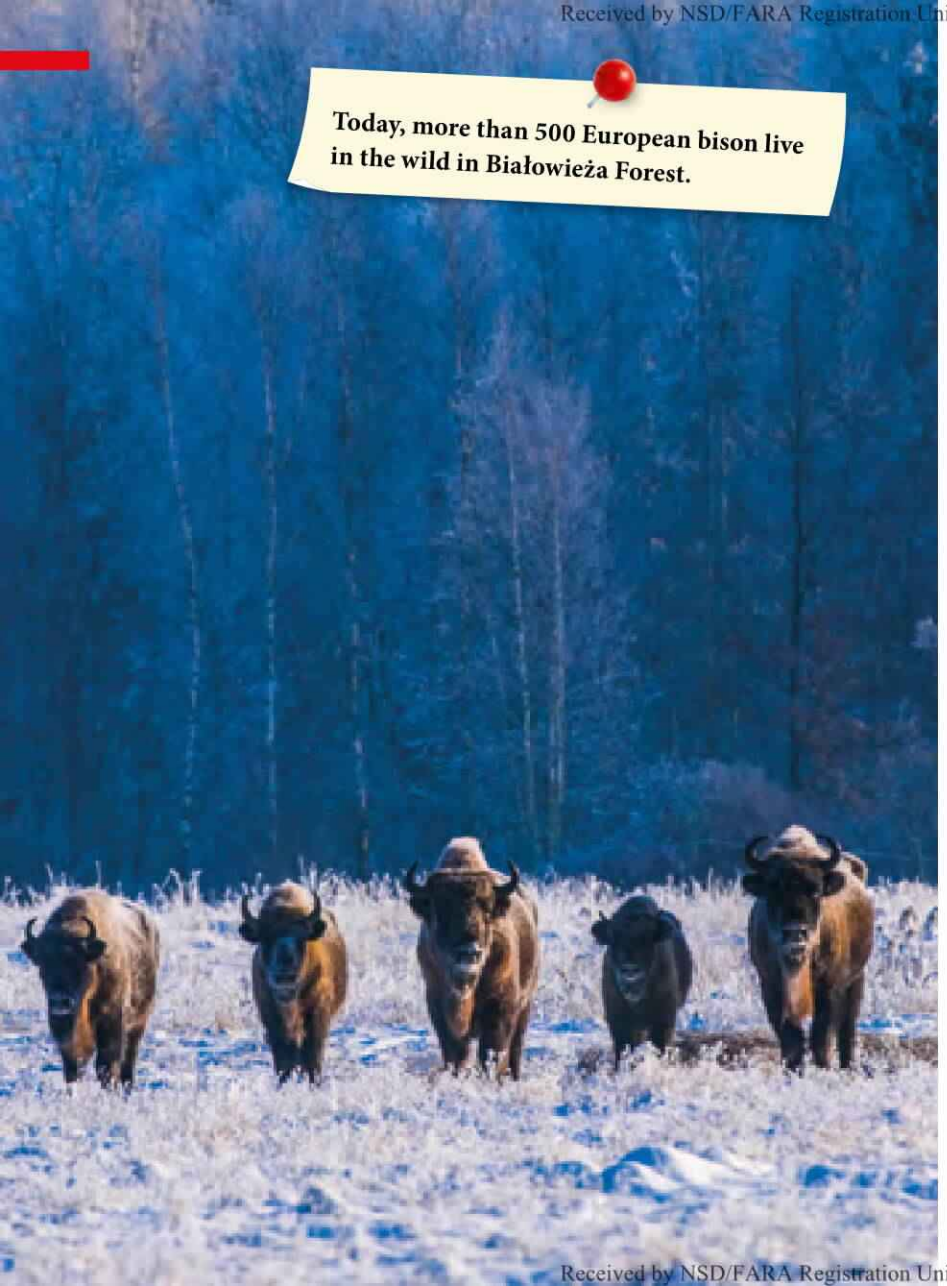

Today, more than 500 European bison live in the wild in Białowieża Forest.

Białowieża:
Europe's Last Primeval Forest

Białowieża is located in the geographical centre of the pristine, virgin forest known as Białowieża Forest (Puszcza Białowieska). The village is a tourist centre, but even it retains a forest-like ambiance.

The European bison, Europe's biggest mammal rescued from extinction, is the king of this virgin forest. The last bison living in the wild was shot in 1919. These wonderful mammals have been reproduced on a local breeding farm and brought back from extinction. Today, more than 500 individuals live in the wild in Białowieża Forest.

Untamed nature and forest wildlife are best observed from a four kilometre long educational trail that meanders through the marshy terrain. The accompanying plaques describing natural wonders, phenomena and species introduce visitors to the exciting, exceptional world of nature. The Trail of Royal Oaks twists among monumental trees (some even 500 years old) bearing the names of Polish kings.

bpn.com.pl/index.php?lang=en

www.bialowieza-info.eu/en/gallery.php

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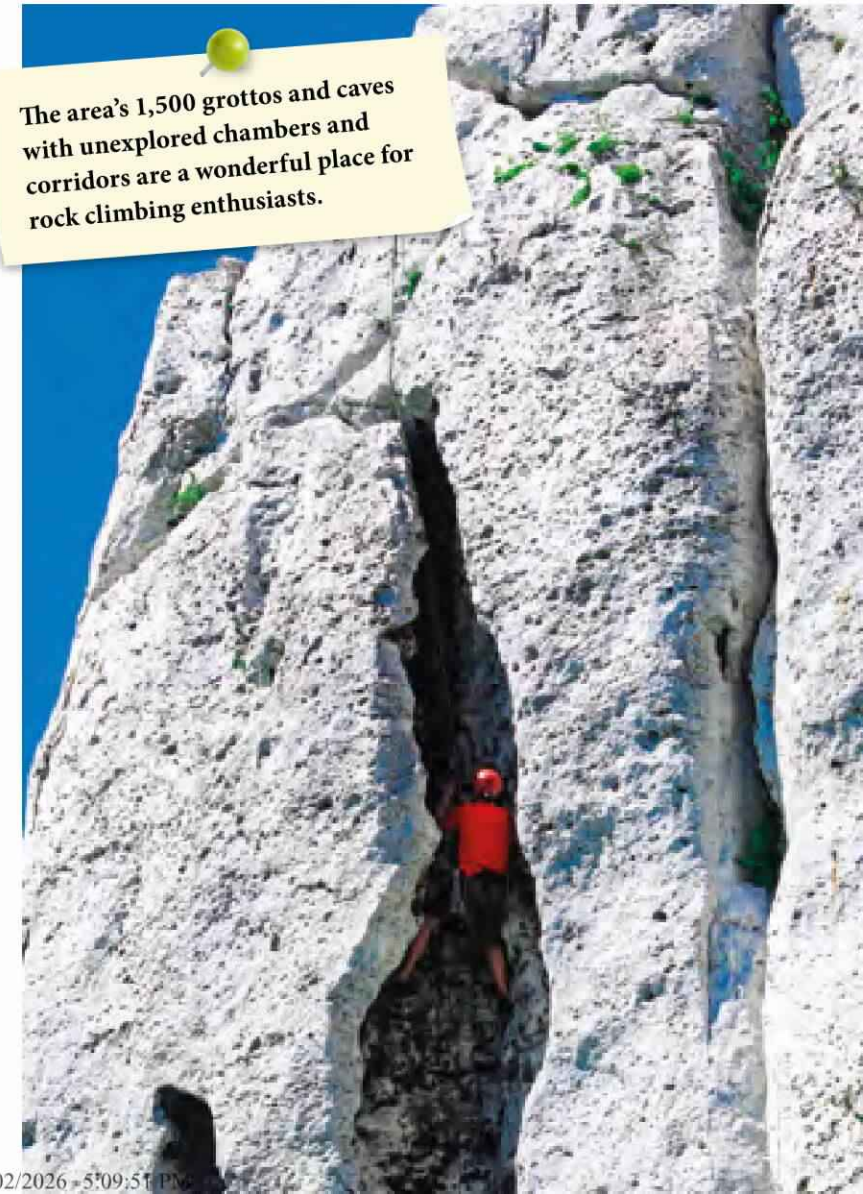
Kraków-Częstochowa Upland:
Magical Land of Rocks

Mysterious caves, castles on cliffs and breathtaking natural surroundings make the Upland an ideal place for active holidays.

The Kraków-Częstochowa Upland can be traversed on foot, on horseback, by bicycle or quad bike. It can be admired from a glider or a hot air balloon gondola. The area's 1,500 grottos and caves with unexplored chambers and corridors are a wonderful place for rock climbing enthusiasts. In the Prądnik River Valley, in the Ojców (Ojcowski) National Park, you can admire Pieskowa Skała, the only fully restored castle in the region; the Wierzchowska Górna and Nietoperzowa caves with fantastic dripstone (stalactites and stalagmites), and King Władysław the Short's Cave that is surrounded by dark legends. The tallest in Poland, the 25-metre-high monadnock called Hercules' Club (Maczuga Herkulesa) is the distinctive symbol of the Upland. Many sport and recreational events are held here, including splendid tournaments in Ogrodzieniec, the biggest castle ruins in Poland.

www.orlegniazda.pl/en-US

www.jura.info.pl/index.php?lang=eng



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The Dunajec winds through mountain cliffs, forming seven grand loops with sharp bends.

The Dunajec River Gorge:
A Crazy Ride

From May to September, highlanders' rafts travel down the Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny mountain range. The winding riverbed breaking through spectacular scenery makes a person take pause.

This is one of the most beautiful routes in Europe. The Pieniny range is a land of limestone cliffs, dense forests and colourful meadows cut by the Dunajec, a wild river that winds through mountain cliffs, forming seven grand loops with sharp bends. At its narrowest point, the river gorge is 100 metres wide. The river current varies, and the river bed is up to 10 metres deep. In the deeper areas, the waters calm down, and in the shallows, they froth on boulders. The most impressive face of Mount Sokolica falls directly into the Dunajec in a 300-metre drop. During the "crazy ride on the Dunajec", narrow canoes are tied together as rafts of yore. Spruce branches on the bow protect against the waters of the pitching and yawing rapids. Traditionally dressed raftsmen deftly manoeuvre the rafts.

www.pieniny.com/en

www.flisacy.com.pl

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Thermal Baths in Podhale:
Relax amid Fabulous Scenery

Thermal waters in the Podhale region are not only a source of green energy, they also attract enthusiasts of thermal baths and family relaxation.

Surrounded by glistening snow, steamy pools under a starry sky tempt you into relaxing after a day in the mountains. A hot bath helps the body unwind, especially after hours of skiing. The Podhale thermal waters gush forth from a depth of over 1.5 km. The baths have an ideal temperature of 37 degrees Celsius. In Zakopane, you can swim whilst admiring the majestic Mount Giewont. Also in the Zakopane region, there are thermal pools in Bukowina Tatrzańska, Białka and Szaflary. Thermal baths in Podhale are not just swimming pools: they provide attractions for children, slides for the older ones and paddling pools for younger children. There are separate quiet zones where the cosy atmosphere quickly restores vitality. There are spa facilities, saunas, bubble baths and massages. Podhale offers many guesthouses, luxury hotels and diverse attractions.

www.chocholowskietermy.pl

www.infobasen.pl

www.termabania.pl

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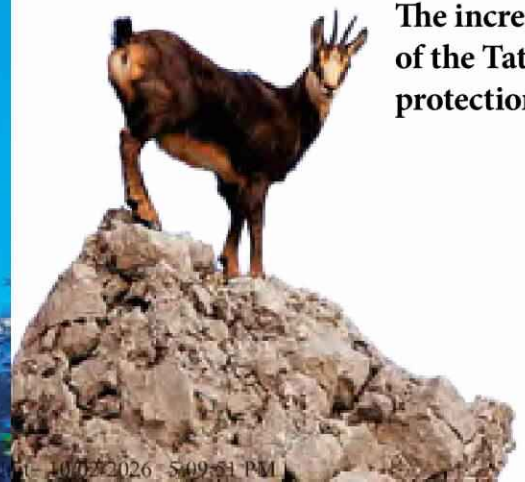
The Tatras:
Legendary Mountains

The Tatra Mountains' soaring, rocky peaks delight visitors. With their rough ridges and mighty faces, they are the only alpine mountains in Poland, and the highest in the whole 2,000 km long arc of the Carpathian Mountains.

The mountain massif towers over the surrounding terrain by 600 to 1,500 metres, creating the impression of a massive rock island. The highest peak on the Polish side of the Tatras is Mount Rysy at 2,499 metres. Rocky, glacier-formed cirques with deep lakes ornament the highest part of the mountains. The limestone part of the massif is full of caves.
The Wielka Śnieżna Cave with 24 km of corridors is one of the largest in the world. The incredibly rich flora and fauna of the Tatra Mountains are under protection of the Tatra (Tatrzański) National Park. This is the only habitat of chamois and marmots in Poland. Nature and the culture of the highlanders living in the foothills of the Tatras inspire artists of all kinds, and Zakopane is the undisputed winter capital of Poland.



The incredibly rich flora and fauna of the Tatra Mountains are under protection of the Tatra National Park.

www.tatry.pl

tatry.tpn.pl

www.topr.pl

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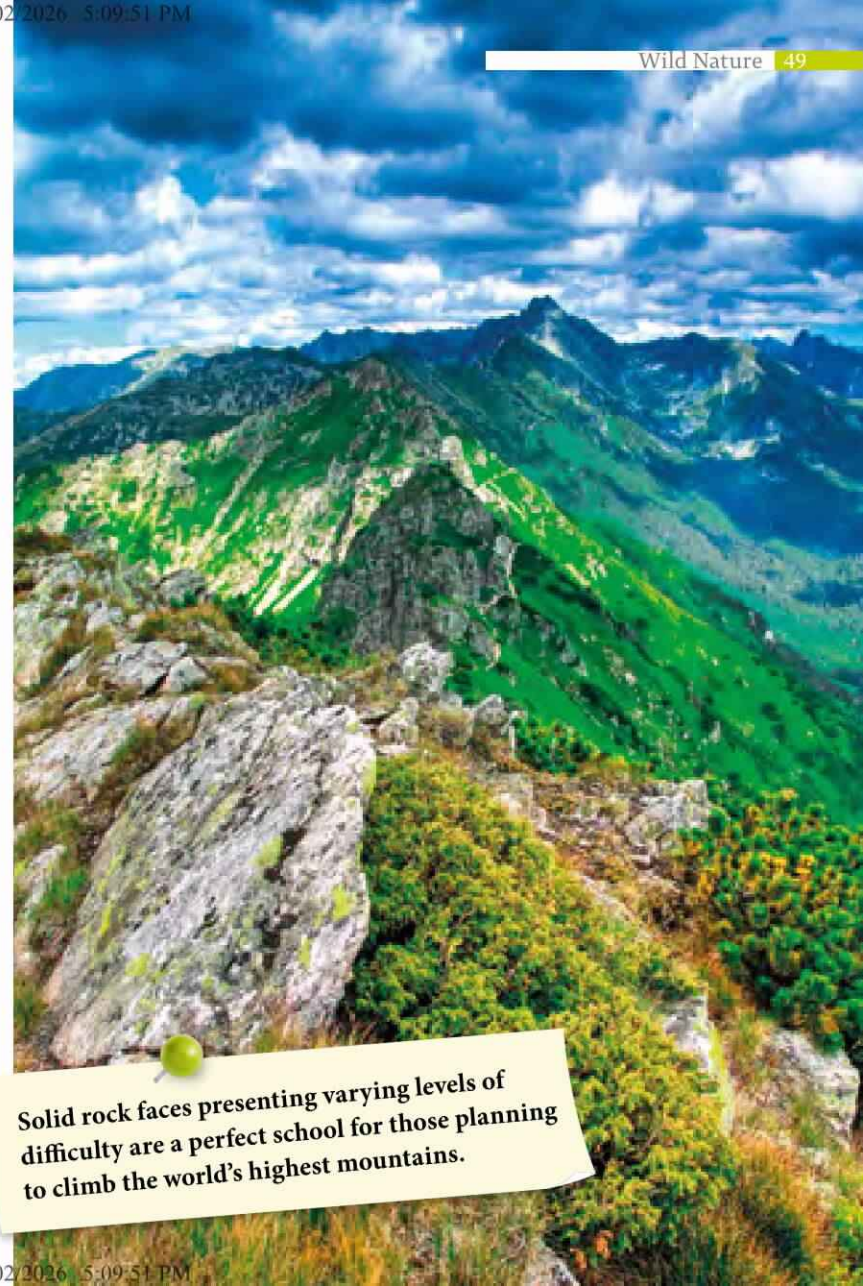
Climbing:
From Poland to the Roof of the World

There are two different types of climbing in Poland: mountaineering and sport climbing. In the former case, the scene is the Tatras. In the latter, there are picturesque rocks and artificial walls.

The Tatra Mountains are alpine in character. Solid rock faces presenting varying levels of difficulty are a perfect school for those planning to climb the world's highest mountains. The ever-changing mountainous climate and the technical difficulties of overcoming these mountains present challenges even for experienced climbers. The most popular regions among seasoned climbers are on the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. The limestone cliffs can be reached by numerous and often extremely difficult ways. Poland has great climbing traditions: Poles were the first to reach the top of Mount Everest in winter, and two Poles are among the first five climbers to earn the Crown of the Himalayas.
Those eager to climb artificial walls with an instructor can choose one of the numerous clubs throughout the country.

www.wspinanie.pl

www.pza.org.pl



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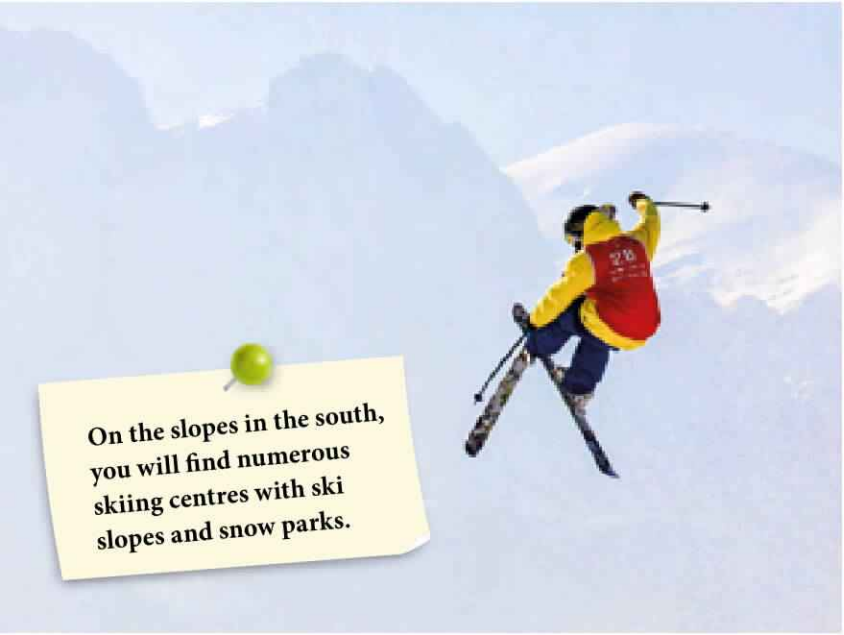

www.zakopane.eu/en

www.szczyrk.cos.pl

Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding

The mountains on Poland's southern border are amazing. From low to high, from gentle to soaring – in other words, very versatile.

In winter, everyone in Poland skis. Although the Tatra Mountains cannot compare in size and infrastructure to alpine ski resorts, skiing is very popular in Poland. On the slopes in the south, you will find numerous skiing centres with ski slopes and snow parks. They are so versatile that all ranks of skiers from beginners to advanced can find slopes that are right for them. In Szczyrk and Pilsko, there is a total of about 50 km of ski slopes with beautiful panoramas of the Tatras in the background. The ski trail from Mount Kasprowy Wierch is the most difficult and the longest in Poland – almost nine kilometres and a height difference of almost 1,000 metres. The most challenging route runs from Mount Nosal. The nearby village of Białka Tatrzańska with its wide, gentle slopes offers a totally different atmosphere. After skiing, there is a range of attractions for everyone.

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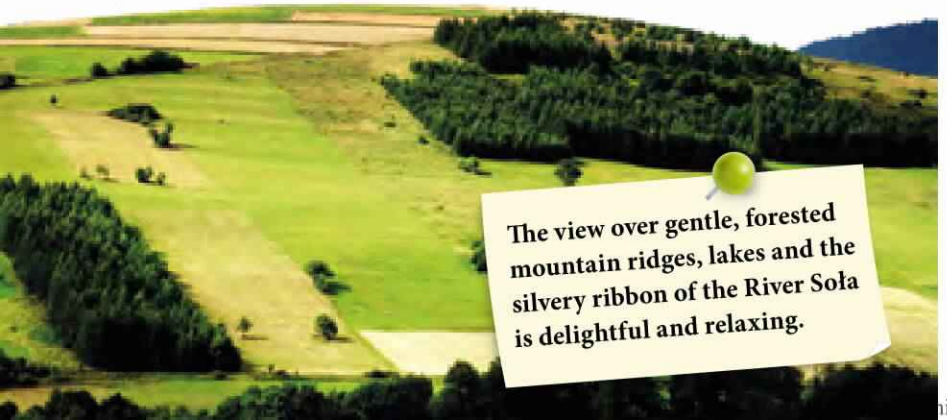
Paragliding:
Soaring High

Paragliders like colourful butterflies and gliders like swallows in flight are common sights above the Żywiec Valley.

The terrain and climate of the Żywiec Valley promote air sports. Since Mount Żar is quite isolated, you can take off safely. The River Soła crossing the valley from south to north creates a natural wind tunnel with relatively stable and strong winds. The formation of air currents is also affected by cold temperatures at the bottom of the valley and intense exposure of the Beskid mountain ridges to sunlight. The growing popularity of paragliding, which is easy to learn, opens the sky to all those who want to look at the world from a bird's eye perspective. The view over gentle, forested mountain ridges, lakes and the silvery ribbon of the River Soła is delightful and relaxing.

www.paralotniarstwo.pl

www.paralotnie.org



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Trees:
Witnesses of History

Sunbeams penetrate the canopy of ancient oaks, creating a magical atmosphere. In Rogalin near Poznań, by the River Warta, there are nearly 2,000 monumental oaks.

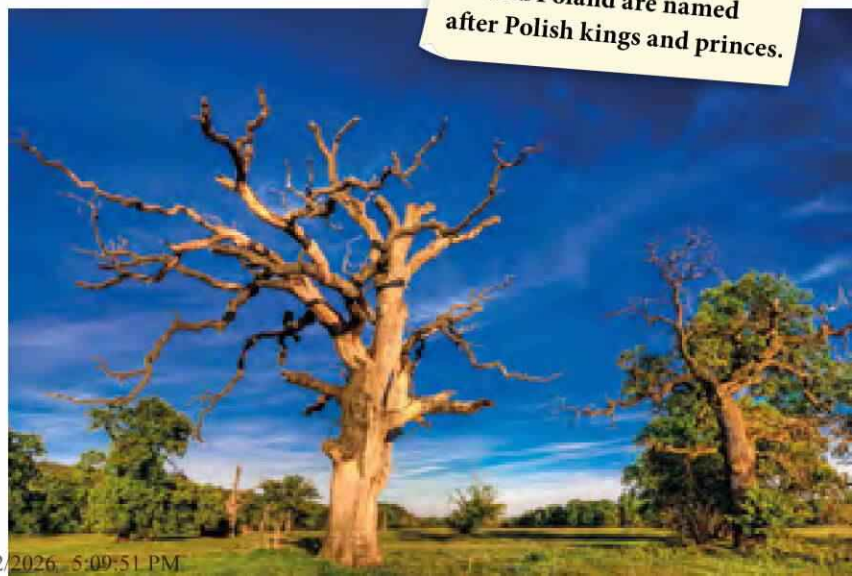
www.polska.travel/pl/parki-krajobrazowe/

www.poland.travel/en

The largest oak has a trunk circumference of 9.26 metres, and nearly 800 others, more than two metres. According to legend, they witnessed the birth of the Polish state. They have been estimated to be 500 or 600 years old. Venerable oaks scattered around Poland bear the names of kings and princes. The oldest is a 750-year-old oak called Chrobry in Piotrowice, Lower Silesia, with a trunk circumference of 9.92 metres. The most famous Polish tree, Bartek, a 650-year-old oak with a circumference of 13.4 metres at ground level, still grows in the village of Bartków in the Świętokrzyskie region.

Yews are even older, although less impressive. A yew in Henryków in Lower Silesia is 1,200 years old. Exceeding 50 metres in height, firs are Poland's tallest trees. The Tatra Mountains' Arolla pines (or Swiss pines) continue to enchant poets. A little pine on Mount Sokolica in the Pieniny range has captured photographers' attention for decades. Exposed to wind and frost, the sturdy pine has been holding onto the rocky ground for over 400 years.

Venerable oaks scattered around Poland are named after Polish kings and princes.



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Stołowe Mountains:
Magical Rock Maze

Solitary monadnocks, groups of rocks and outcrops create unexpected scenic vistas.

Wind and water are the sculptors of rock formations from rock slabs lying one on top of another. The harder slab serves as the foundation, while others, less resistant to erosion, lie above. Rock mazes have emerged on the wide peaks of the Stołowe Mountains. On the highest mountain of the massif, Mount Szczeliniec Wielki (913 m above sea level), gorges up to 30 metres deep meander around rocks of fantastic shapes: the Camel, the Ape, the Elephant, the Dog's Head, Raven Rock, the throne of Liczyrzepa, the legendary ghost of the Sudetes. There is an equally appealing maze called Błędne Skały on the neighbouring mountain, and a tall rock known as the Bird is also close by. The Rock Mushrooms rise above another forest-covered massif. Only here can you see such extraordinary shapes of nature.

pngs.com.pl/index_gb.html

www.poland.travel/en

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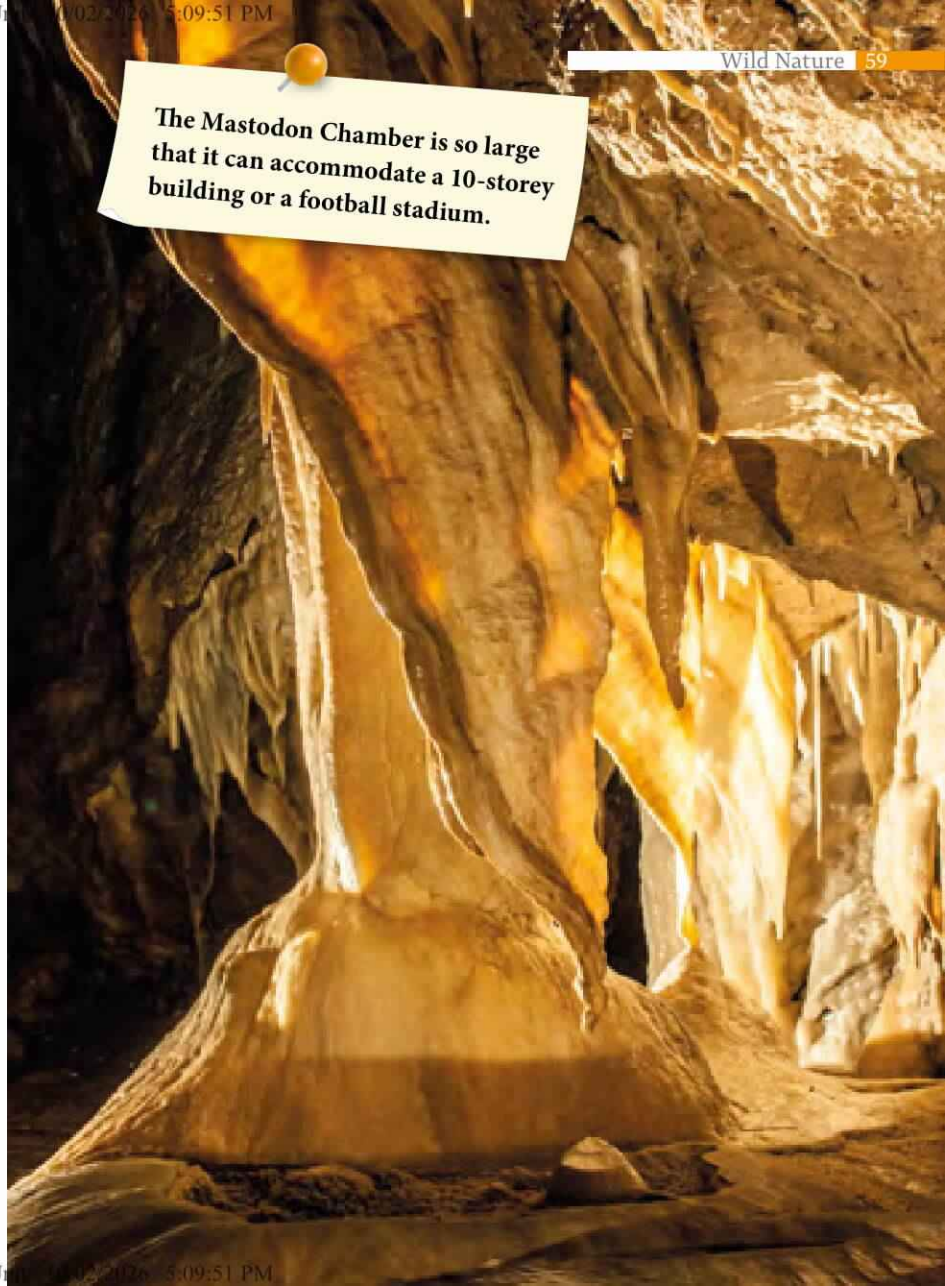
Bear Cave:
Monument of Prehistory

This cave in the Sudetes in south-western Poland impresses everyone with its rich and colourful stalactites and stalagmites. Nowhere else are there so many remains of cave animals to be found.

There are no equally beautiful stalactites and stalagmites in any Polish cave, and the cave's corridors are paved with prehistoric animal fossils which become invaluable research material for palaeontologists. Europe's largest underground chamber is here. The Mastodon Chamber is so large that it can accommodate a 10-storey building or a football stadium. However, only the 400-metre middle section is open to visitors. The entrance pavilion presents the lives of prehistoric animals: mainly bears, whose bones have been found in the cave in large quantities. Remains of a cave lion, cave hyena, wolf, marten, several species of bats, beaver, deer, wild boar, fox and many rodents have also been unearthed in the cave.

www.jaskinia.pl



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Dark-Sky Park:
Watching the Universe in Pure Starlight

In the Jizera Mountains you can observe stars with the naked eye. The sky here is nearly unaffected by artificial light.

The Jizera Mountain wilderness is free from industrial pollution and the wide mountain ridges protect it from the lights of any human settlement. The few original tourist trails and two scenic mountain hostels are now incorporated into the University of Wrocław's Astro-Izery Programme. This four and a half kilometre path connecting the hostels has been converted into the Solar System Model Educational Trail. The Sun, with its orbiting planets, is presented on a scale of 1:1 billion. The trail begins with a model of the Sun, and a model of Neptune completes it. The planets are presented on metal plates attached to different samples of Sudetes rock. The park attracts large numbers of amateur astronomers from around the world.

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www.izera-darksky.eu

www.ciemneniebo.pl/en

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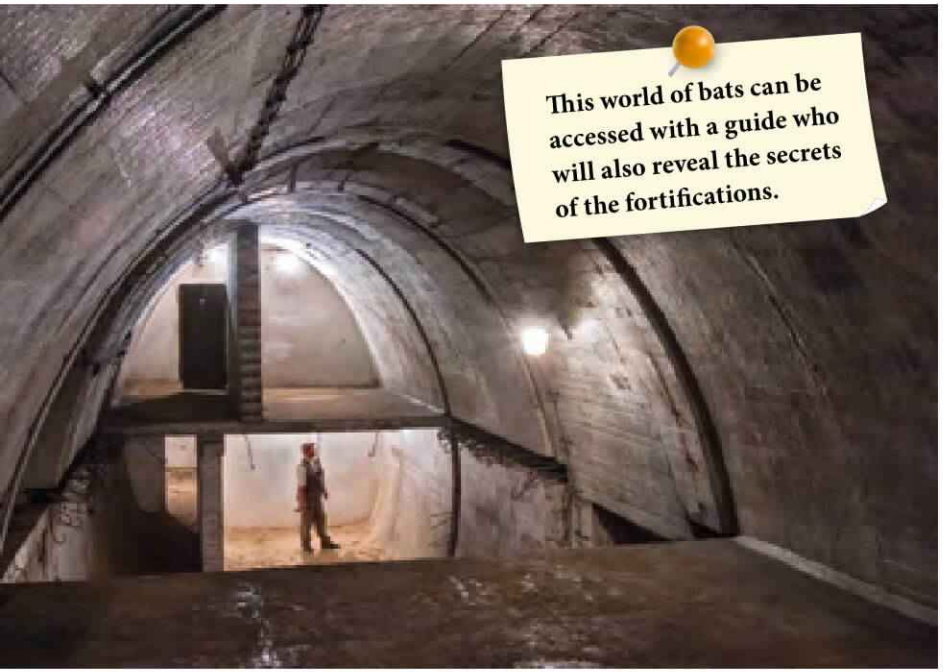

Międzyrzecz Fortification Region:
Bat Hibernaculum

The unused tunnels of the Międzyrzecz Fortification Region are the wintering grounds for thousands of bats. This is the largest hibernaculum of the winged mammals in Europe.

Thirty kilometres of underground tunnels in the Łagów Landscape Park constitute a part of the gigantic fortifications built on the eve of World War II by the Nazis in Brama Lubuska. Bats enjoy the conditions here: the stable temperature of about 9 degrees Celsius, the lack of light, the nooks and rough surfaces of the concrete slabs and walls. This world of bats can be accessed with a guide who will also reveal the secrets of the fortifications.

Bat banding has enabled researchers to establish that, during winter, more than 30,000 of these remarkable creatures representing 12 species live here, and to get here, some travel almost 300 kilometres. Protected bats hibernate here for almost 200 days a year.

www.bunkry.pl

www.bunkry.lubrza.pl

www.nietoperze.pl

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