

EP escape2poland
your perfect



What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'Poland'? We browsed through a number of internet forums to find out more about the main associations with Poland. Results? Rich (and often turbulent) history, beautiful women, delicious food and friendly people.

Poland has in fact a lot more to offer and we warmly invite you to see for yourself all the beautiful places of this unique country. Every traveller has different needs and this e-book has been designed to answer all your questions about Poland, provide crucial travel information and enchant with little-known facts and curiosities.

We hope that the e-book will provide you with everything you need to arrange and enjoy your stay. So leave behind the mundane everyday life and escape to Poland with us!

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Diversity of Polish Landscape

The Polish landscape is very diverse due to the many elements that have formed it over millions of years. Volcanoes, glaciers, water and wind have created beautiful scenery across the whole area of Poland, starting from the mountains in the south through the central lowlands to the Lake District - Masuria and **Baltic Sea** - in the north.

The whole of southern Poland is covered with mountains and **Bieszczady** are the highlands in the south east of Poland which are probably the best place for those who enjoy hill walking in wild nature.

On the Mountain's Top

Tatra Mountains, this part of the Carpathian Mountains is the highest in central Europe, providing alpine landscape. Inhabited by a small ethnic group called „the highlanders” (gorale) it gives you an unforgettable opportunity to get to know their customs and the way they keep their culture alive. You will be pleasantly surprised by their hospitality and openness.

The **Sudeten Mountains** are famous for their picturesque scenery and knights tournaments organized in castles situated there.

Among Water and Greenery

The lowlands stretch over the whole of central and northern Poland. These lands are beautifully decorated by winding rivers and the unspoilt flora of National Parks.

Furthermore there are beautiful lakes and stretches of coastline in the north of Poland. The Masurian Lake District has some of the most romantic landscapes in Poland.

The Baltic Sea shore stretches for over 300 km in the north of Poland and provides very diverse scenery, from wide sandy beaches to high rocky cliffs.



Magical Krakow

Krakow's inhabitants never fully came to terms with the fact that the city is no longer the capital of Poland and they still consider it to be more influential than Warsaw. Be as it may, Krakow is undoubtedly one of the most important towns in Poland. It is a place where national culture and tradition flourished and where the rich history of the country is still visible in every corner. Krakow is Poland's most popular tourist destination, with over 8 million people visiting the city each year. No wonder it was chosen to be Travelers' Choice® 2012 Winner by TripAdvisor users.

When should I visit?

Krakow is open to tourists throughout the whole year, regardless of the weather and season. Autumn and spring give you a chance to see the city in its calmer, more peaceful attire, when the centre is not yet crowded with people. For those who love winter, Krakow provides charming views of snowy paths and ice sparkling on the banks of **Vistula river**, as well as a number of cosy places where you can warm yourself up with a hot drink. However, if you prefer to experience culture through festivals and the city see bustling with people, you should come to Krakow during

the summer holidays – the most interesting events take place in June, July and August.

If you want to experience the Jewish culture, you should check in to Krakow from June 28th to July 7th – that's when the **Jewish Culture Festival** takes place. There are many activities to attend: concerts, exhibitions and movie screenings take place all around Kazimierz district.

The other event worth mentioning has its origins in the pre-Christian culture of Slavic Poland. It's called Wianki, Polish for 'garlands', and it takes place on the 23rd of June, **Kupala night**. The original Kupala night was celebrated as the eve of Midsummer's Night and served as a celebration of health and abundant harvest. The rites included dancing around enormous bonfires and jumping over the flames to ensure protection from illnesses. At the end of the night, young girls wove garlands of flowers, put a candle inside and let them flow with the current of the river with lit candles inside of them. Nowadays the traditions are still kept alive (although not fully believed in) and all volunteers can participate in garland competition or visit St. John's Fair (June 29th – July 1st). The fair incorporates presentations of old craftsmanship, various workshops, combat and archery shows and numerous stalls with traditional food and handicraft.

Where should I stay?

Choosing a hotel is an important part of every trip, since an uncomfortable bed or a filthy bathroom can put you in a bad mood for the whole stay. Fortunately, most of Krakow hotels place big emphasis on the high standard of their services space. Of course most people prefer to stay in a place close to the city centre. Although there are numerous hotels situated in the area of the **Old Town**, you should remember that the heart of Krakow can become quite a noisy place in the evening, especially during the weekend. This doesn't mean that you have to choose between good location and a good night's sleep. You can avoid nuisances by looking for reviews and tourists' opinions online before checking in to the chosen hotel.

If you want to browse through some accommodation offers, you can check them here.



Where should I eat?

So do you want to go to a nice, beautifully decorated restaurant, pay a reasonable price for a delicious meal? In Krakow it's not that difficult since the centre of the city offers a wide selection of places that already have a good opinion among the visitors. You can choose from different standards, cuisines and interiors – everything to one's liking.

Dominikańska 2

Most of the meals served in Dominikanska 2 have their roots in traditional Polish cuisine, but you can also taste some less known Italian specialties there. The delicious food is accompanied by Cracovian interiors and romantic ambiance of the place. Dominikanska 2 is a place that will satisfy every customer and welcome you with great hospitality and care. If you are an Escape2Poland customer, you can get a 10% discount for the whole menu.

Miód i Wino

If you want to feel the atmosphere of the 16th century Poland, that's the place to go. This exceptional spot gives you a chance to taste the traditional Polish meals and indulge yourself with excellent liquors. This restaurant will take you to the golden times of Polish gentry, when dining was a ritual that bonded people together.

Panorama

It's an exclusive restaurant with modern, unusual atmosphere, offering delicious European food. Its location on the top of a tall building provides unique views of panorama of Krakow and Wawel Castle. In summer season the great attraction of the restaurant is barbecue on the terrace of the restaurant. Escape2Poland customers are offered a 15% discount.

If you want more options, you can check our ranking of Top 10 Krakow Restaurants.



Don't forget! In Polish restaurants tipping isn't obligatory, but it's nice to show gratitude for good service by giving the waiter a tip 10% of the bill. It is also important to remember that if you say „thank you” right after paying, the waiter will think you don't want to receive change! So if you don't wish to overtip, thank the waiter when you've already received your change and you're ready to leave.

What should I do?

Krakow is a paradise for insatiable tourists – you can visit a myriad of attractions and you will never have enough. The only problem is to wisely choose the places to go to - there are some sites that are an absolute must. One of them is the city's **Main Market Square**. Built in 1257, it became the biggest market place in Europe with the square footage of 200 m². Nowadays it's still the heart and soul of the city, as well as a beautiful reminder of the golden times of Poland.

One of the most important buildings in the square is **St. Mary's Basilica**, raised in the early 13th century. The sanctuary is particularly famous for Veit Stoss's altarpiece, the biggest wooden altarpiece in the world.

After visiting the basilica, you can take a short walk to the most vibrant part of the Square – the monument of Adam Mickiewicz. This is the best spot to meet up with your friends, as well as make some new ones. There is always something going on „under Adam”, as the Cracovians often say. Conjurers, dancers, musicians, living statues, comedians, even skateboarders – you could say the Mickiewicz monument attracts all the city's talent. At the end of your trip, you should pay a visit to the **Cloth Hall (Sukiennice)** located in the middle of the Square and get yourself a beautiful hand-made souvenir to commemorate your stay in Krakow.



Did you know?

At every full hour a trumpet signal is played from the top of St. Mary's Basilica. It is called Hejnał Mariacki and it traditionally breaks off mid-stream to commemorate the 13th century trumpeter who was shot in the throat by an arrow while playing the alarm before the Mongol attack on Krakow. The hejnał is also broadcasted on the national radio.



Don't forget to go to the **Rynek Underground Museum**, which is placed literally... under the Market Square. The exhibition called 'In the Footsteps of Krakow's European Identity' is a multimedia show that takes you on a journey through the long and fascinating history of Krakow. The mystical, dark ambience of the Rynek Underground's chambers makes the trip even more unforgettable,

Wawel Castle in another place that simply cannot be missed. The number of national treasures gathered in this palace is astounding, starting with goblin tapestries, going through the coronation sword called Sczerbiec along with other memorabilia of Polish monarchs and then ending with the unique Wawel Cathedral with burial chambers housing the tombs of outstanding Polish kings, saints, artists. Once

you've seen the whole castle, go to the Dragon's Den, a limestone cave situated on the **Wawel Hill**. The cave is particularly interesting due to a metal statue of the dragon guarding it. The dragon, commonly known as Smok Wawelski, is one of the most popular symbols of Krakow and Poland in general. Every couple of minutes it noisily breathes out fire and if you don't have much time to wait, you can always send a text message to the number written on the statue – the dragon will immediately breathe fire especially for you!

If you are interested in the Jewish heritage of the city, you should visit two spots: **Kazimierz district** and **Schindler Factory Museum**. Kazimierz is a district where the Jewish community lived from the 13th century up to the beginning

of World War II. After the war the district was forgotten, but fortunately the rich history and culture of Polish Jews experienced a revival at the end of the 20th century. The most important spots in the district are the Old Synagogue, which now houses the Jewish History Museum, and Remuh Cemetery, also known as the Old Jewish Cemetery. While Kazimierz is fully emerged in the past with its old buildings and antiques, Schindler's Museum gives you a more modern approach to history. The museum is situated in the old factory run by Oscar Schindler and tells the fascinating story of the man himself as well as of dozens of people who he managed to save from the Holocaust.

If you want to see all the best of Krakow, try the Krakow Sightseeing Tour or the Schindler's List Tour.



Schindler factory museum is a step back in time. We walked through the old streets of Krakow and listened to the stories of real people who happened to live during the war. It was a deeply moving experience and gave us a unique taste of history. Unforgettable!

Janet



Auschwitz Birkenau Concentration Camp

The Auschwitz/Birkenau complex was the biggest concentration camp in the areas occupied by Nazi Germany with 1.3 million people, mostly of Jewish origin, estimated to have died there during World War II. Situated in the city of Oswiecim, Auschwitz will forever be remembered as a place of cruel treatment of prisoners and of inhumane medical experiments conducted by doctor Joseph Mengele. A visit to the camp is a deeply moving experience, yet it constitutes an extremely powerful cautionary tale for the future generations.

The guides at the Auschwitz Museum are extremely knowledgeable and as you walk around the old brick buildings, barracks, gas chambers and crematorium, they will provide you with all the information necessary to understand how the camp operated and how the prisoners dealt with living in those hopeless conditions. The tour gives you an insight to the darkest times in human history, but it also teaches you a valuable lesson about the most important values in life.

Auschwitz & Birkenau is the best kept concentration camp in the world. It has been preserved in its original shape to present the true history with no embellishments. During your visit you will notice that some parts of the camp have been demolished. These are the doings of the Nazis who tried to destroy any evidence of their deeds once they realised they had already lost the war.



Wieliczka Salt Mine

Wieliczka is a small town situated about 13 km to the southeast of Krakow and it owes its fame to the salt mine located underneath the city.

Wieliczka mine used to be one of the oldest salt mines in operation – it had been producing salt from as early as 13th century up to the year 2007, when the mining was finally discontinued.

The interior of the mine is one of a kind and it incorporates a number of altars, sculptures and underground lakes, not to mention a whole chapel carved from salt. As you

walk around the chambers and corridors of the mine you start to realise that this place exemplifies development – not only of the mining processes and technologies, but also of the society itself. Many great men have visited the site throughout the ages, including Nicolaus Copernicus, Frederic Chopin, Dmitri Mendeleev, Robert Baden-Powell and Bill Clinton. Thanks to the site's unique history and importance, Wieliczka was registered as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is important to remember that the tour around the mine is not a short and easy one, since you have to walk approximately 800 stairs and the whole tour lasts over 2,5

hours. You should also take something warm to wear – even if you visit in the middle of summer, the underground world of Wieliczka is always chilly, with the constant temperature of 14°C.

It is worth mentioning that the unique microclimate of Wieliczka Salt Mine has natural healing properties and many people stay in Wieliczka Health Resort to cure their allergies and respiratory ailments. So you can be sure that a visit to the mines will give you not only unforgettable views and lots of memories, but also an opportunity of taking a deep, healthy breath.

Mining for good deals? Try this Wieliczka Salt Mine Tour.



Warsaw – the Phoenix City

Poles' opinions on their capital city seem to be divided. Some claim that it's the only city that deserves to be the capital and are proud of its rapid modernisation. Others say that Warsaw is just pretending to be like other major western capital cities and consider its inhabitants to be extremely conceited. Truth be told, however, both of these

opinions are a bit exaggerated. Warsaw manages to combine modern design with historical sites in a truly masterful way. What makes it even more impressive is that it had to be literally rebuilt from scratch – in 1945, right after the fall of Warsaw Uprising, 85% of the city's buildings were completely destroyed.

All Warsaw inhabitants were so shocked seeing their beloved capital destroyed that everyone wanted to help rebuild the city. Mothers with their children, school students and elderly people, everyone wanted to lay at least one brick of the newly growing city.

When should I visit?

Choosing best to visit Warsaw depends mainly on what you expect to see. Winters welcome the tourists with incredible decorations of the **Nowy Swiat** and **Krakowskie Przedmiescie** streets. It's called the Warsaw Illumination and consists of thousands of lights hung on lanterns, trees and buildings. It is a view to die for and a perfect surrounding for a romantic date. There are some people,

Unlike Krakow, where the festivals tend to stick tightly to the history, Warsaw has a very modern and contemporary approach to culture. The city has an exceptionally wide offer for all the movie buffs, film festivals take place all year round. One of the events worth recommending is **Planete Doc Review**, a documentary film festival ranked among the most important ones in Europe, usually organised in May. May is also the month when the **Night of Museums** is held. It is a night when most of the city's museums



however, who think that snow is nothing but a nuisance in an urban surrounding and those are advised to come to Warsaw in the summer, considering the fact that most of the interesting events in the city start popping up in May.

are open to all visitors, free of charge, until the morning hours. Everyone can also participate in other events, all accompanied by the dim lights of the city lanterns, making the whole experience even more magical.

The ambitions of Warsaw to be like western European cities don't mean that the city entirely forgot about its history. One of the greatest reminders of what the city used to be like is **Singer Festival**, the festival celebrating Jewish culture that used to thrive in Warsaw before the outbreak of World War II. So if you want to learn something about the heritage of our capital city, be sure to visit Warsaw at the beginning of September.

Where should I stay?

As the capital of the country, Warsaw concentrates on providing international guests with top-notch service and the highest possible standard of accommodation. Luckily, this doesn't mean that tourists on budget have nothing to do there – the city offers places for a good night's sleep for everyone, regardless of how thick their wallet is.

Need some more accommodation options? You can see the best that Warsaw has to offer here.



How to save up to 40% on hotels ?

Warsaw is a great place for weekend breaks! There are many business hotels which are not so crowded during the weekend so you can get a huge discount for Friday or Saturday night! Check our amazing deals for luxury 5* Hyatt Regency Hotel !

Where should I eat?

When you're in Warsaw, finding a restaurant isn't a problem – the amount of various places to eat is really impressive, especially in the centre. If you take a walk along Nowy Swiat (probably the most popular street in Warsaw), you will pass dozens of restaurants, either Polish, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Italian or American. You are going to be spoilt for choice!

Rozbrat 20

Address: st. Rozbrat 20

Rozbrat 20 is considered to be one of the best restaurants in Warsaw. It is located near the western bank of Vistula river, in a very green and peaceful part of Warsaw, but still close to the city centre. The restaurant offers French cuisine and ensures the highest standard of service. Its only drawback is that it's relatively expensive, however, the prices are adequate to the level of professionalism of the cooks and the staff. It's the best place for a one-of-a-kind, romantic dinner.

U Fukiera

Address: Rynek Starego Miasta 27

U Fukiera is opus magnum of Magda Gessler, Poland's most famous chef, often dubbed the „Polish answer to Gordon Ramsay“. No wonder that the restaurant enjoys immense popularity and was visited by a number of celebrities and politicians, such as Jacques Chirac, Queen Sofia of Spain, Roman Polanski or Catherine Deneuve. The dishes served at U Fukiera are mainly based on Polish traditional cuisine,

but always come with a twist. The interiors are full of bric-a-bracs and flowers, making the visit quite a unique experience.

Trattoria Rucola

Address: st. Miodowa 1, st. Francuska 6

Trattoria Rucola is said to serve the best pizza in Warsaw. Thanks to that, the restaurant is often visited by both locals and tourists, so you might not be able to get in without table reservation. If you are a fan of Italian cuisine, this place will be perfect for you – all the dishes are delicious and the staff is exceptionally friendly and helpful.

What should I do?

Warsaw is a very intriguing city – it seems to be a strange combination of old, run-down buildings and ultramodern skyscrapers, yet all these differences come together in great harmony creating a truly unique urban landscape. Sightseeing the city is a bit like a chaotic travel through centuries that surprises you all the time.

There is one building in the city that definitely stands out. It's **the Palace of Culture and Science**, a controversial relic of the socialist Poland (it was funded in 1952 by USSR as a gift to the Polish nation).

Some people say it should be demolished, just like the statues of Stalin and other Soviet creations. Yet, throughout the years the Palace gained itself a lot of advocates, saying

that the building has become a popular landmark of the city, if not one of its most crucial symbols. This way or another, the magnitude of the Palace is still impressive today and tourists can admire the panoramic view of Warsaw from the top floor.





Did you know?

The Palace of Culture and Science was built in a very particular Stalinist style. In the surroundings of Warsaw it might seem like quite a unique design but there are several buildings, located in post-communist countries like Russia, Ukraine or Kazakhstan, that look strikingly similar (e.g. Triumph Palace or Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow, Hotel Družba in Prague). The Soviet architects were greatly influenced by the simplicity and solidity of Manhattan Municipal Building, built in New York in 1912.

After sightseeing the reminder of the communist era, we can move on to an older, more antique part of the city – **the Old Town**. But is it really that old? Unfortunately, most of what you can see on the **Old Market Square** and around is just a reconstruction. Warsaw suffered a massive devastation during the events of World War II (and Warsaw Uprising in particular) and in 1945 the oldest district of the city consisted mainly of rubble and ashes instead of the 13th century townhouses. The total destruction, however, didn't leave the Varsovians in despair. They decided to rebuild the city from scratch. Nowadays we can admire the Old Town as it used to be like before the war – colourful and vibrant. You can visit the magnificent **Royal Castle**, take a photo of the statue of Warsaw Mermaid located in the Market Square and then take a long walk around

the narrow streets and proceed to the **Barbican**, one of few remaining parts of the complex network of historic fortifications that once encircled Warsaw.



Combine visiting antique spots of the city with more contemporary venues that are usually lively and bustling with people. One of such places is the Nowy Swiat (street New World). It is a part of the Royal Route, an important thoroughfare that once led from the Royal Castle to the King's residence in Wilanow. The street owes its popularity to numerous bars and restaurants, as well as beautiful architecture, for example the Warsaw University campus and the statue of Nicolai Copernicus, which is one of Warsaw's main "meet-up" places. At the southern end of Nowy Swiat you can walk around the **Three Crosses Square**, stunning visitors with the neoclassicist architecture of St. Alexander Church. The square also hosts a number of exclusive retail shops, which makes it an important place for businessmen and wealthy Varsovians.

If you're a nature lover you should visit **Royal Lazienki Park (Lazienki Krolewskie)**. It's a 76-hectare park, located in the very heart of Warsaw. This huge park-and-palace complex was designed in the 17th century and was the most favourite residence of King Stanisław August Poniatowski. The central part of the park houses the Royal Palace and a small amphitheatre. You cannot miss visiting the Chopin monument, which in reality is much bigger than it seems to be on the photographs, the Orangery housing a tropical garden along with a restaurant and beautiful Mysliwiecki Palace. All this is just the peak of the iceberg – a proper visit to Lazienki might fill up the whole day. Remember to bring a little snack, not just for you, but also for the squirrels and peacocks living in the park - they can be quite cheeky at times!

Sadly, the history of Warsaw incorporates not only its great days as a royal city, but also the tragic events of World War II. One of the places that commemorates those dark times is the **Monument to Ghetto Heroes**. It's located in a square between Karmelicka and Zamenhofa streets, where the main bunker of the Jewish Fighting Organization used to be situated. The monument is a tribute to those who lost their lives in the Ghetto Uprising of 1943. Interestingly, it was built from the granite that Nazis imported from Sweden, planning to build their own victory monument. The site of the former ghetto will also house the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews which is currently under

construction and is planned to be opened in 2013.

As far as war-related museums are concerned, there is a place in Warsaw that is an absolute must-see. It's the immensely popular **Warsaw Uprising Museum**. The museum was opened on 60th anniversary of the outbreak of fighting in the capital and is visited by over half a million visitors each year. You might wonder what makes this place stand out – it's mainly the use of contemporary technology and an impressive collection of memorabilia, along with photographs, films and sound recordings. As you walk through the exhibition halls, you are led along all the stages of the uprising, from its enthusiastic beginning until

the tragic finale. The museum is a truly fascinating journey through history presented in a very approachable way. History enthusiasts should also drop into **Pawiak Museum**. Pawiak is a former prison which was infamous for extremely cruel treatment of prisoners. During the so called „roundups“ Poles who got caught by the Nazis were taken to Pawiak for questioning. The majority of them never returned home and were transported to extermination camps all over Poland.

If you want to see Warsaw in all its glory, you can take one of our unique Warsaw Tours.





Zakopane – the winter capital of Poland

Zakopane is the most popular mountain resort in Poland and one of the busiest towns in the country. Yet, besides a few exceptions, it managed to avoid turning to a tourist trap and to maintain a very unique atmosphere. Discovered by the public in 19th century, it quickly became a popular place among the country's artists and intellectuals. No wonder they found inspiration there - the town is situated in the foothills of the Tatras, providing all visitors with spectacular, breath-taking views. Even though over the years Zakopane changed from a small sheep-herding community to a

fashionable spa resort, much of the rural culture was left intact, peeking out mostly from the architecture, as well as the cuisine and handicraft. Keeping local customs alive is very important for the ethnic group that constitutes the majority of Zakopane's inhabitants – the mountaineers (pl. Górale). They are a bit like Tyroleans in Austria – they are an integral part of our country, yet they manage to maintain their own culture, which can be heard in the way they speak and seen in the way they dress. They are also the most hospitable and friendly people you can meet.



Did you know?

Zakopane was visited by each and every one of Polish Noble Prize winners: Henryk Sienkiewicz, Władysław Reymont, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Czesław Miłosz, Wisława Szymborska, Lech Wałęsa.

When should I visit?

As a winter capital of Poland, Zakopane has the most to offer when there is a lot of snow around. The town is a perfect base for skiing, hiking, snowboarding and all other sorts of winter sports you can think of. In the meantime you can rest by taking a walk through **Krupowki street** and go to one of many cosy cafés to get a hot drink. If you are a fan of ski jumping, do visit Zakopane at the time when it hosts a FIS World Cup competition. Watch out for the tickets – they always sell out incredibly fast since Poles are crazy about ski jumping.

Zakopane, however, doesn't die once the snow has melted and has a lot to offer to those who love mountains regardless of the season. The summer views are just as spectacular and the weather is perfect for taking a cycling trip, mountaineering or just strolling around. Another advantage of the summer in Zakopane is that the town is considerably less crowded, during the winter season the number of people coming to Zakopane might be a bit of a nuisance at times.

Where should I stay?

As a fashionable and popular resort, Zakopane's accommodation offer incorporates a lot of top-notch, luxurious hotels, but there are also many budget options, especially a bit further from the city centre. Regardless of the price, most of the Zakopane hotels will offer you great service and comfortable rooms, as well as a design based on the traditional mountaineers' architecture.



It is also important to remember that even though any sort of accommodation at Krupowki Street might seem incredibly attractive, such central location might be very noisy. Being the busiest and most commercial street, Krupowki St is often swarming with people, especially at weekends, so if you prefer cosier and more silent ambience, we wouldn't recommend staying right in the centre.

Where should I eat?

A visit to Polish mountains is a chance to taste regional food that is made from fresh and natural ingredients of the highest quality. There is also one speciality that is an absolute must – it's **oscypek**, a cheese made from sheep's milk.

Chata Zbójnicka

Address: st. Jagiellońska

Chata Zbójnicka is decorated in a traditional mountaineers' style and offers equally unique atmosphere, created by cosy interiors, dim lights and wonderful smell of food. In order to get in you have to knock on the door until you're eventually invited – and then the fun begins. The restaurant serves mainly traditional meals and is said to serve the best mutton in Poland.

Tuberoza

Address: st. Piłsudskiego 31

This charming and a bit underrated restaurant will take you to the atmosphere of the Interbellum, when Zakopane was a favourite place of the artistic cream of the crop. The interiors are very elegant and each meal is prepared with patience and care. If you need a place for a peaceful, relaxed dinner, you should definitely visit Tuberoza.



Karczma Przy Kominku

Address: st. Zubka 13

Just like many Zakopane restaurants, Przy Kominku concentrates mainly on serving regional meals and providing a hospitable, friendly atmosphere. What makes it stand out, however, is its location – you can find it on the peak of **Gubałówka**, the closest mountain to Zakopane. The mountain, obviously, offers breath-taking views of the Tatras, so it is really a great place to enjoy a meal. If you don't feel like hiking, don't worry – you can reach Gubałówka by a cable car or a funicular.



Tradition is sound and kicking in Zakopane! During the first weekend after the 6th of January a Mountainer festival take place in Zakopane and surrounding villages. Especially fascinating is the kumoterki race. Kumoterki is small, but beautifully decorated sleigh. The biggest prize of the race is the life-long respect the winner can enjoy among fellow mountaineers.

What should I do?

Zakopane might be a relatively small city, but it still gives its visitors a practically unlimited repertoire of attractions and places to go. The most popular choice is the Krupowki Street – the busiest place in the whole town, always bustling with people regardless of the season and weather. Even though squeezing through the crowd might be slightly tiring at times, Krupowki St is still a must during a visit to Zakopane. You can find a selection of restaurants there, buy souvenirs and try local specialities, for example oscypek cheese. An evening walk around Krupowki is also highly recommended – the lanterns' dim light creates a

sort of magical, cosy atmosphere and makes Krupowki seem like a place out of this world.

Zakopane's architecture is truly one-of-a-kind and presents a vital part of the Mountaineers' tradition. Therefore, it is quite important to visit some of the most popular and beautiful buildings designed in what is now called the "Zakopane style". You can find examples of it on basically every street of the city, but there are a few that deserve special attention. One of those places is "Dom Pod Jedlami" (A House under Firs), a beautiful villa built at the end of 19th century. Unfortunately, it is impossible to visit the

interiors since it's a private property. It is also important to visit **Villa Koliba**, the first building designed by Stanisław Witkiewicz, the creator of this particular architectural style. Since 1993 Villa Koliba has been housing The Museum of Zakopane Style.

Zakopane owes its incredible popularity not only to the city's attraction themselves, but also to its breath-taking,



picturesque surroundings. One of those unique places is Gubałówka. It's one of the most often visited tourist attractions, thanks to commanding views of the Tatras that can be admired from its peak. Those who cannot or simply don't feel like climbing mountains shouldn't be alarmed - Gubałówka is easily accessible as you can use either a cable car or a funicular to get on top.

Being in the area of the mountainside near Zakopane, it is important to remember to see **Kasprowy Wierch**. The mountain has been incredibly popular since the beginning of the 20th century. A cable car reaching Kasprowy's peak was built in 1935 and is now one of the oldest rope ways in Europe. At the top station there are restaurants and tourist information points, as well as several ski lifts reaching a number of different destinations. Even though the cable car isn't the only means of getting to the top of Kasprowy – there are also two chairlifts that can be used – all of the tourists still need to brace themselves with patience as standing in the line for the tickets might last as much as 3 hours during the busiest season. The views, however, are worth it.

Morskie Oko, the largest of a the lakes located in Tatras, is another site that simply cannot be missed. A walk to the lake isn't a short one – it takes about 2 hours and no motorized vehicles are allowed on the road. It is, however, possible to rent a horse-drawn cart. The long walk itself is quite pleasant and a bit of fatigue is compensated by the magnificent view of the lake, as well as some of the sites that are close to the route leading to Morskie Oko – for example Wodogrzmoty Mickiewicza (Mickiewicz's Water



Did you know?

Morskie Oko is a place beloved by Poles and many people want their visit to be remembered, but some of the tourists tend to cross the line. Numerous visitors throw coins into the lake, believing that it will "bring them back there someday", as well as make them lucky. Each year the lake is cleaned up and as much as 25kg of coins is pulled out from the bottom. So if you don't want Morskie Oko to lose its original clarity and beauty, keep it clean. And as far as good luck goes, crossing your fingers will do just fine!

Thunders). This complex of waterfalls owes its name to the immensely loud sound of water hitting the hard rocks and it's worth stopping by for a minute.

Every tourist, and ski jumping fans in particular, will surely enjoy a visit to **Wielka Krokiew** – the biggest Polish ski jumping venue that has already witnessed dozens of important sporting events, as well as numerous victories of Poland's favourite sportsman – Adam Malysz. You can visit the place any time you wish, but we highly recommend attending a ski jumping competition, if you come in the right time. It's a big, happy celebration with hundreds of people dressed in red and white enjoying themselves and it's amazing to see how the Poles come together and just have fun.



About Gdansk

Gdansk is over 1000 years old. The town stems from a mutual Polish-German history, and its former membership in the Hanseatic league make it one of the best known Polish cities in Europe. Beautiful architecture and its Baltic climate are only two of the most important advantages among the city. Gdansk was also an eyewitness to the great political transformations started in 1980 by Lech Walesa that brought an end to the communist era in eastern Europe.

Gdansk History

First mention of settlement in this area dates back 997 and this is the contractual year of Gdansk's founding. During the centuries the city was passing between Polish and German hands. Great location on the Gdansk Bay and connection with the centre of country through the Vistula river made the city one of the most important trading points. That's why Gdansk was for some time the richest city in the Polish Republic.

Gdansk Today

Nowadays it's also very important from a tourist's point of view. Thanks to amazing architecture and an extremely interesting history, Gdansk is often visited by tourists from all over the world. If you want to see one of the most important and richest cities from the medieval age that was also a place where World War II began and where the communist era came crashing down Gdansk is simply a MUST!

What should I do?

Take a stroll along the **Royal route of Gdansk** to admire its outstanding Gothic architecture. Once you reach the port make sure you try Polish fish and chips and buy some amber jewellery for your beloved one. Continue to see the Neptune Fountain and if you are interested in the marine history of Gdansk, pop into the **Gdansk Maritime Museum**. Part of the museum has a unique architecture. It is a crane that once used to serve as a lift for goods transported to the port. When you feel your legs have had enough, take a towel and enjoy the beach and the sea. Be careful though, The **Baltic Sea** can get chilly even in the summer season!



Legend has it that the famous Goldwasser liquor was created by Neptune himself. One of the most characteristic spots in Gdansk is the **Neptune fountain**. Legend has it that the local **Goldwasser** liquor was created by Neptune himself. It is believed that the Roman god was so annoyed by people constantly throwing coins into the fountain that he smashed the coins with his trident. The golden specks of the coins can now be found in the famous liquor.

Once you have explored Gdansk take a fast rail to **Sopot**, the most popular Polish seaside resort. Sopot is the favourite place of sun and sea lovers, but a visit in the winter provides unique photo opportunities of catching the beach covered in snow and furious waves.

Sopot offers also a one of a kind architecture. The **Crooked House** is a building at Monte Cassino Street that attracts an eye with irregularly shaped walls and windows creating an impression of a modern witch hut. The house looks especially fascinating after the dark when its illuminated with lights.

To get the best views of the sun setting over the waves take a walk on the Sopot pier, the longest pier in Europe!



Gdansk used to be a multinational and religiously tolerant city. Among its inhabitants were Germans, Englishmen, Dutchmen, Jews and others. The cemetery of the Lost Cemeteries is a monument that commemorates Gdansk inhabitants whose tombs were destroyed during or after World War II.



Polish History

Poles are very proud of their turbulent history. It is a history of victorious battles and bold insurrections commemorated in national monuments and annual celebrations.

It is also a history of an oppressed nation who had to face conquerors, partitions and foreign rulers. Due to its central location it has been invaded by Turks, Russians, Swedish and others and even disappeared from the world map

for over 100 years. On 11th Nov 1918 it finally regained independence.

World War II Poland destroyed Poland immensely and the rebuilding of cities engaged all the citizens. Despite the communist regime which prevailed after the war, Poland was step by step improving its economy. Only in 1989

owing to the charismatic leader of Solidarity Party, Lech Walesa, communism fell and Polish people could finally breathe the refreshing air of freedom.

Poland is now a modern and fast developing country, actively participating in leading world organisation such as United Nations, NATO and European Union.

Poland's Old Royal families

Polish history begins with the semi-legendary ruler Mieszko I, who in AD 965 united the Polanie tribe of the Warta valley with neighbouring groups.

The descendants of Mieszko I, members of the Piast dynasty, established an independent administration and tightened the relationship between all the tribes, including Pomerania (lands in the north).

German Order of Teutonic Knights to help him in fighting the Prussians. They not only helped to conquer Prussia but also very quickly established their own state in this land. Soon the Order attacked and massacred the population of the great Gdansk port in Pomerania and for the next century threatened Poland from the north.

The last king of the Piast dynasty, Kazimierz III Wielki (The Great), reformed the Polish administration, codified Polish



The 13th century was for Poland a time of growth due to great numbers of immigrants who arrived from Western Europe. Most of them were Jews looking for a country of religious tolerance. Coming to Poland they brought new tools and new ideas about trade and commerce. Krakow became the cultural and educational centre of Poland. In 1226, Duke Konrad of Mazovia (central lands) invited the

law and secured the Polish borders with stone castles. He died in 1370 and it is thought that his rule strengthened the Poles' belief that their country belonged to Western Europe.

After Kazimierz's death, the Polish throne went to the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Wladyslaw Jagiello, who married the

Polish queen Jadwiga. Poland and Lithuania made a union which helped both countries in their fight with the German Order of Teutonic Knights. Poland's first big victory over the Order was at Grunwald in 1410, but this did not change the situation which was only finally resolved by the 1454-66 War. Gdansk finally gained the status of a free city.

An elective monarchy

After the death of the last Jagiellon king, Poland became the Republic of Nobles. This meant that from this time on Polish kings were elected for life by an assembly of the whole nobility, from landlords owing villages and great amounts of land to the owners of a few acres of arable land.

In fact, Poland in the 17th-century had a large electorate, which was not equalled by any other European country until the end of the 19th-century.

In the second half of the 17th-century the Turks ran a campaign to conquer lands in central and western Europe. In 1683 they surrounded Vienna with forces of 140,000 soldiers; whereupon Austria asked Jan III Sobieski for help. The Polish emperor sent 29,000 men to Vienna and on the 12th September 1683 one of the most important battles in European history took place. If the Turks had won, Islam would probably have become the dominant religion in all of central Europe. However, Poland won the battle and the Turks retreated to the East.

Partition and fight for independence

After the victories in the 17th century Poland was mentally and economically exhausted. This allowed Russia to extend their influence in Poland, and this in turn caused the Polish revolt against Russia in 1768. The rebellion came to an end with the First Partition of Poland in 1772.

After this the Poles embarked on a wide programme of political and economic reform which ended with the first European constitution in 1791. Soon afterwards Russia invaded Poland, leading to the Second Partition in 1793. A year later General Kosciuszko launched a national uprising which gave hope to the people after his first few victories over the Russian army, especially after the Battle of Raclawice. Unfortunately the Russians sent extra forces to Poland and Kosciuszko's insurrection was crushed in 1795. In the same year the Polish king had to abdicate and Poland was obliterated from the map of Europe.

After the Napoleonic Era the Congress of Vienna decided to establish a small Polish Duchy with the Russian tsar as king (it lasted for only 8 years). This was not enough for Polish patriots, and this led to the two great Polish insurrections of 1830 and 1863. Both failed and caused further restrictions, that is to say dissolving Polish schools and institutions and forbidding the learning of the Polish language and history. In other words from that time on the Poles tried to keep at least Polish culture alive even though they had to forget about being an independent country.

World Wars

During the First World War German victories over Russia helped Poland to clear the country of the Russian army. Soon afterwards Germany was attacked by the Allies and its strongly weakened army was disarmed by Pilsudski's legions. Finally the country with no frontiers, no army and no treasury proclaimed its independence on 11th November 1918.

Only two years later Poland had to face Russian soldiers once again. The Red army was on the march to the West hoping that the proletariat revolution would cover the whole continent of Europe. They got to the line of the Vistula River and in August 1920 one of the most decisive battles of Europe began. Fortunately the Polish offensive was successful and the Soviets had to retreat.

Despite domestic conflicts, the Polish economy made significant progress in the period between the two world wars. Especially the second half of the 30's especially brought long expected results.

In September 1939 Poland was invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union from all sides. Despite the mutual defence pacts the Polish Allies did not react in any military way and after 35 days the last Polish fighting division was surrounded.

From the very beginning of the war the Poles started to create an underground army (the Home Army). In 1944 it numbered about 400,000 men. When the Red Army reached the River Vistula in Warsaw, the Home Army attacked the



Germans with the aim of liberating the capital of Poland before the arrival of the Soviet Army. The Warsaw Uprising lasted for 63 days and led to the complete destruction of the city as well as to the death of many people.

However, this tragic event stopped the Red Army from its march westwards for over two months and prevented them from reaching the River Rhine. If they had done so probably the whole country of Germany would have become Communist Republic.

Poland was the country most affected by the Second World War. All in all about 7 million Poles (including 3 million Polish Jews) were killed in combat or in various Soviet and/or German concentration camps and the whole country was completely destroyed.

Communist Poland

At the end of the war it was decided that Poland would be under the influence of the Soviet Union. This way the Poles inherited the Communist policy which was supposed to bring Poland: equality of citizens, affluence and peace. It appeared to be something completely different - people were lied to by propaganda about the country's improvements and achievements. In reality the Communist economy was very ineffective, the Poles were constantly lacking in food and were denied the right to show dissatisfaction with the politicians who ruled the country.



Due to such a bad situation the Poles revolted a few times against the Communist state. It started in 1956 but the real importance for later history was the Student protest in 1968. It provided a strong foundation for organising Polish opposition and caused the wave of public strikes in the largest Polish factories in the 70's and beginning of the 80's. These led to the founding of Solidarity with the leader Lech Walesa.

The Kremlin disapproved of the Solidarity movement and ordered the head of the Polish Communist Party to crush it. On 13 December 1981 General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law and the army started to occupy the country for the next 14 months. This event changed only two things: Solidarity became an underground organization and the people came to understand that no compromise could be reached with the rulers.

Within the next few years the Polish economy declined as well as the economy of all of the Eastern Block countries. It weakened the power of the ruling Communist Party and after the next wave of strikes in 1988 they started talks with the opposition at the „round table“. These talks gave people the right to a free press and the opportunity to take part in free elections. In effect, two years later the Polish Communist Party was dissolved and Poland embarked on political and economic reforms.



Poland now

The beginning of 90's was a time of great instability in Poland. This was caused by the young age of Polish democracy and what is more the fact that Poland had to transform its political and economic system in a very short period of time to join „Europe“ in the future. Although not all of the Polish reforms were successful Poland throughout the 90's was on the right track. This track had two goals: NATO (joined in 1999) and European Union (joined in May 2004).



Location & weather

Poland's location on the map of Europe is one of the factors that make this country an attractive tourist destination. You can choose between the seaside to the north of Poland, mountains to the south and a dozen of landscapes in between, including lake districts, lowlands and lush forests. Therefore, it doesn't matter whether you prefer bathing in the sea, mountaineering or sailing – you can do all these activities in Poland.

This varied landscape is a part of what contributes to the country's weather, which is about as diversified as the

views. Essentially, each of the four seasons in Poland is very distinct from one another.

Spring is usually quite rainy, but the temperatures are relatively high and the flowers are blooming everywhere.

Summer is exactly what you expect – high temperatures, sometimes coming up to 35°C, a lot of sun and minimal rainfalls.

Autumn tend to bring quite a lot of rain and it starts to get chilly outside, but all the leaves on the trees change their colours to yellow, orange and brown.

As for the winters, you can expect a lot of snow, with temperatures ranging from 0°C to as low as -20°C.

As you can see, it's important to take the seasonal weather changes into account when planning a visit to Poland. The best time to come to Poland is summer, when the weather is most predictable, and winter, if you want to go skiing. Each of the seasons, however, has a lot to offer and it's worth considering a spring or autumn trip to our country, especially because the prices are considerably lower than during the traditional tourist season.

Currency & ATMs

Polish currency is called Polish zloty (PLN) and is abbreviated to „zł”. 1 **zloty** equals 100 groszy (gr). Banknotes come in denominations of 200zł, 100zł, 50zł, 20zł and 10zł and coins in 5zł, 2zł, 1zł, 50gr, 20gr, 10gr, 5gr, 2gr and 1gr. It is useful to always have some small notes with you since smaller shops and restaurants may have trouble giving you change from the 200zł or 100zł banknotes.

Most of the towns in Poland, even the smallest ones, have at least one (usually more) ATM, the majority of which accept Visa cards and Master Cards. Before you arrive in Poland, contact your bank to check what are the ATMs that you can use without having to pay additional fees.



You can exchange your currency to zlotys in an exchange office which in Polish is called „kantór”. There are many of them in cities but finding them in smaller towns might be a problem. Kantors accept most of the major world currencies (the most popular ones are Euro, US dollar and UK pound) and exchange cash only.



Transport

Polish roads have earned themselves a bit of notoriety over the years, but recently the situation has improved and most of the routes are very comfortable to travel. Thanks to EURO 2012 and good economic situation of the country, Poland prides itself in a number of modern expressways. Please note, however, that most of those expressways are chargeable. It is also important to be careful while using less busy, unrenovated routes, as the holes in roads might be an unpleasant surprise.

The railway system is another thing that Poles love to complain about, but the truth is that compared to other countries, Polish trains are inexpensive, as well as relatively comfortable.

The quickest way to travel around Poland is, of course, by plane. This option, however, is advisable only in emergency situations, since the flights are quite expensive. Therefore it's often better to choose any other means of transport, since you will pay less and see more during the journey.



There are many convenient train connections between main Polish cities. You can book the tickets from e.g. Warsaw to Krakow or even to Berlin. Check all details here and discover Poland on your own way.

Traditional Polish Food

Traditional Polish cuisines are very tasty and delicious. The most common products used in the Polish kitchen are meats, cabbage, potatoes, sour cream, mushrooms and sausage. Traditional cuisine is generally demanding and Poles allow themselves a generous amount of time to prepare a meal. There are various of different dishes offered in Poland that have become the essential of the country.

Pierogi are a well know Polish dish all around the world. They often consist of dough filled with cheese, potatoes, onions, cabbage, mushrooms, or meat. Pierogi are served steaming hot boiled or fried and are mixed with sour cream.



Zurek, traditional Polish sour soup is one of the oldest soup in Poland. This sour rye soup consist of potato, white sausage, and egg. Sometime it is served it a bread loaf. Zurek is a popular dish served during the Easter holiday.

Bigos is a stew that is combined with cabbage, mushrooms, and various other meats such as polish sausage, pork, and bacon. Bigos is a dish that can be found in the menu of most traditional polish restaurants.

Flaki is a traditional Polish meat stew. It is very important throughout the Polish cuisine. Some common ingredients include beef tripe, beef, bay leaf, parsley, carrot, and a variety of different spices. Flaki is a very rare dish, but it can be found throughout various Polish restaurants.

Kotlet Schabowy is the most common dish that can be found on the Polish dinner table. It is a pork cutlet coated with breadcrumbs, usually served with boiled potato and salad made from cucumber and sour cream.

Golabki are favoured by everyone in Poland. Boiled cabbage leaves can be stuffed with beef or pork meat, onion and rice. They are then boiled or baked and covered with tomato sauce.

Golonka is a national dish of Poland that can be prepared in many ways. Golonka is a name for pork hocks. The hock is actually the ankle of the pig, it is boiled in beer and braised. They are delicious when served with sauerkraut, boiled potatoes, spicy mustard or horseradish.

Shopping

Opening and closing hours are not stated and may not apply to all Polish shops in the same way. The smaller enterprises usually open at 7 or 8 am and close at 6 pm. There are many supermarkets, usually of international chains, that have longer working hours (some are open even 24/7). Those supermarkets, naturally, offer a wider selection of products and most of them accept payments by credit or debit cards, which can not be guaranteed in smaller shops.

If you want to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, it is advisable to visit a market place. Some of them operate daily, some are open only on Sundays. Many of those markets sell not only food, but also clothes and various bric-a-bracs, turning into a sort of flea market.

It is also important to remember that during some national holidays shops can be opened only if the owners themselves stand behind the counter – meaning that all of the big shopping malls and most of smaller shops are closed. These holidays are:

- January 1st, 6th, Easter, May 1st, 3rd, first day of the Pentecost, August 15th, November 1st, 11 Christmas and Boxing Day (25th and 26th of December)



Do's and Don'ts

Some of the tourist guides have tried to portray Poland as a rigid, unfriendly country, with closed-minded people and no attractions or entertainment whatsoever. They couldn't be further from the truth! Poland is a country open for everyone and has demonstrated their friendliness during EURO 2012, when all guests were welcomed with equal hospitality. There are, however, some things that might get on a Pole's nerves and let's face it, it's always better to comply with other country's customs, otherwise you might be considered an ignoramus.

Do:

- try to use as many Polish words as you can. Poles love it when people take time to learn the most common phrases from their language. Don't worry if you mess something up, an effort is more important than result!
- read a bit about the history of Poland before you arrive. As much as they love reminiscing about the wonderful past, Poles are very sensitive about some of the historical subjects, such as years of occupation or uprisings, and it's better to omit them during conversation.
- open doors for women, if you are male. Being a gentleman is an important virtue in Poland and a woman can get offended if you ignore her and storm through the door without letting her come in first.



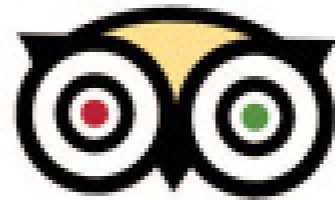
Be careful when travelling to Poland on Easter Monday which in Poland is called „Wet Monday“. Following the tradition of Slavic tribes, people all around the country sprinkle each other with water to symbolise purification. Among teenagers the sprinkling often changes into throwing buckets of water. Usually the most admired girl comes home soaking wet.

Don't:

- get involved into football-related discussions. It might be our national sport, but it's also a reason for endless arguments and rows. National league is a particularly touchy matter and each of the clubs has a set of ultras that don't accept rational arguments, so it's better to stay out of their way.
- give poor people change if they ask you for it on the street. Most of them will spend it on alcohol or cigarettes.
- worry about each and every Polish custom. Poles are very understanding when it comes to tourists and they won't get mad about an occasional faux pas. If you are nice and don't look down on people, they will treat you with equal respect and help you out when you need it



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Innovation

Our team has been so innovative and successful that in 2008 we started to help other companies to sell more on the Internet. Now amongst our clients in Poland are Sony, Samsung, Panasonic & many more. Without a doubt our company is the no. 1 on-line incoming tour operator in Poland.

Quality trips

TripAdvisor 5 star rating. 99,8 % client recommendation. Organisation of conferences and trips for such partners as the British Police, the British Army and many more British state organisations. We are the reliable partner you are looking for.

Support

Every year we pass part of our income to organize non-profit activities, in which we help others to understand the dramatic history of Poland. Recently, together with Auschwitz Museum and the British Embassy we gave an opportunity to British teachers to understand the difficult subject of the Holocaust so they share their knowledge with future generations.



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