



# Poland

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Hostel Mleczarnia (p401)
- » Castle Inn (p365)
- » Wielopole (p381)
- » Grand Hotel Lublinianka (p389)

## Why Go?

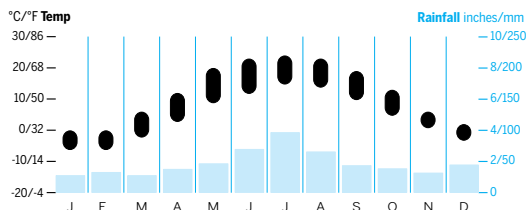
If they were handing out prizes for 'most eventful history', Poland would be sure to get a medal. The nation has spent centuries at the pointy end, grappling with war and invasion. Nothing, however, has succeeded in suppressing the Poles' strong sense of nationhood and cultural identity. As a result, centres such as bustling Warsaw and cultured Kraków exude a sophisticated energy that's a heady mix of old and new.

Away from the cities, Poland is a diverse land, from its northern beaches to its magnificent southern mountains. In between are towns and cities dotted with ruined castles, picturesque squares and historic churches.

Although prices have steadily risen in the postcommunist era, Poland is still good value for travellers. As the Polish people work on combining their distinctive national identity with their place in the heart of Europe, it's a fascinating time to visit this beautiful country.

## When to Go

### Warsaw



**May–Jun** Indulge in the asparagus season, when restaurant menus feature this vegetable.

**Jul–Aug** Hit the beaches on Poland's long, sandy Baltic coast.

**Sep** Walk in the Tatra Mountains, bedding down in a cosy hikers' refuge.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Złoty (zł)
- » **Language** Polish
- » **Money** ATMs all over; banks open Monday to Friday
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, Canada, New Zealand and Australia

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 312, 685 sq km
- » **Capital** Warsaw
- » **Country code** 48
- » **Emergency** Ambulance 999, fire 998, police 997

## Exchange rates

Australia	A\$1	3.42zł
Canada	C\$1	3.22zł
Euro Zone	€1	4.18zł
Japan	¥100	3.47zł
New Zealand	NZ\$1	2.74zł
UK	UK£1	4.95zł
USA	US\$1	3.27zł

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 200zł
- » **Two-course meal** 50zł
- » **Museum entrance** 10zł
- » **Beer** 6–9zł
- » **City transport ticket** 3zł

## Resources

- » **Polska** ([www.poland.travel](http://www.poland.travel))
- » **Poland.pl** ([www.poland.pl](http://www.poland.pl))

## Connections

Poland offers plenty of possibilities for onward travel. The country is well connected by train: among its useful connections are direct services to Berlin from both Warsaw (via Poznań) and Kraków; to Prague from Warsaw and Kraków; and to Kyiv in Ukraine from Warsaw and Kraków (via Przemyśl and Lviv). Trains also link Warsaw to Minsk in Belarus and Moscow in Russia, and Gdańsk to Kaliningrad in Russia and Berlin in Germany. International buses head in all directions, including eastward to the Baltic States. From southern Zakopane, it's easy to hop to Slovakia via bus, or even minibus. And from the Baltic coast ports of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Świnoujście, ferries head to various ports in Denmark and Sweden.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

Spend a day exploring Warsaw with a stroll around the Old Town and a stop at the Warsaw Rising Museum for a glimpse of the city's wartime history. The next day, head to historic Kraków for three days, visiting the beautiful Old Town, striking Wawel Castle, the former Jewish district of Kazimierz and Wieliczka's impressive salt mine. Take a day trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi German concentration and extermination camp. Afterwards, head to Zakopane for two days for some mountain air.

### Two Weeks

Follow the above itinerary, then travel to Wrocław for two days, visiting its unique Panorama. Progress north to Gothic Toruń for a day, then onward to Gdańsk for two days, exploring the attractive architecture and bars of the Old Town and visiting the monuments at Westerplatte. Wind down with a couple of days at the seaside in Sopot.

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Żurek** This hearty sour soup includes sausage and hard-boiled egg.
- » **Barszcz** This famous soup comes in two varieties: red (with beetroot) and white (with wheat flour and sausage).
- » **Bigos** Extinguish hunger pangs with this thick sauerkraut and meat stew.
- » **Placki ziemniaczane** These filling potato pancakes are often topped with a meaty sauce.
- » **Szarlotka** Apple cake with cream is a Polish classic.
- » **Sernik** Baked cheesecake – weighty but tasty.
- » **Piwo** Poland's beer is good, cold and inexpensive, and often served in colourful beer gardens.
- » **Wódka** Try it plain, or ask for *myśliwska* (flavoured with juniper berries).
- » **Herbata z rumem** Tea with rum is the perfect pick-me-up after a heavy day of sightseeing.