



Poland

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

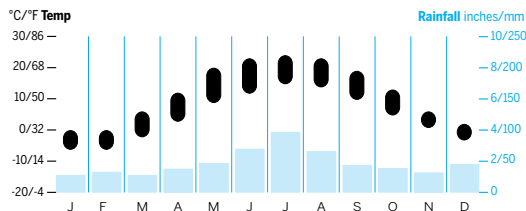
If they were handing out prizes for 'most eventful history', Poland would score a gold medal. The nation has spent centuries at the pointy end of history, grappling with war and invasion. Nothing, however, has succeeded in suppressing Poles' strong sense of nationhood and cultural identity. As a result,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

Away from the cities, Poland is surprisingly diverse, from its northern beaches to a long chain of mountains on its southern border. In between, towns and cities are dotted with ruined castles, picturesque market squares and historic churches.

Although prices have steadily risen in the postcommunist era, Poland is still good value. As the Poles continue to reconcile their distinctive national identity with their location at the heart of Europe, it's a fascinating time to pay a visit.

When to Go

Warsaw



May–Jun Stately Kraków returns to life after a long winter.

Jul–Aug A brief but hot summer is good for swimming in the Baltic Sea or hiking in the mountains.

Sep–Oct Warm and sunny enough for an active city break to Warsaw.



Poland Highlights

- 1 Kraków** (p289)
Experiencing the beauty and history of the Old Town.
- 2 Wrocław** (p299)
Enjoying the city's student-fuelled party vibe.
- 3 Auschwitz-Birkenau** (p295)
Remembering the victims of the Nazi German genocide.
- 4 European Solidarity Centre** (p306)
Reliving Poland's inspirational anticommunist struggle in Gdańsk.
- 5 Zakopane** (p297)
Skiing or hiking the Tatra mountains from this alpine resort.
- 6 Museum of the History of Polish Jews** (p285)
Being dazzled by the museum in Warsaw.

WARSAW

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Once you've travelled around Poland, you realise this: Warsaw is different. Rather than being centred on an old market square, the capital is spread across a broad area with diverse architecture: restored Gothic, communist concrete, modern glass and steel.

This jumble is a sign of the city's tumultuous past. Warsaw has suffered the worst

history could throw at it, including virtual destruction at the end of World War II – and survived. As a result, it's a fascinating collection of neighbourhoods, landmarks and fine museums charting its culture and history.

It's not all about the past, however, as Warsaw's restaurant and entertainment scene is the best in Poland. This gritty city knows how to have fun.