



# Poland

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Hostel Mleczarnia (p837)
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## Why Go?

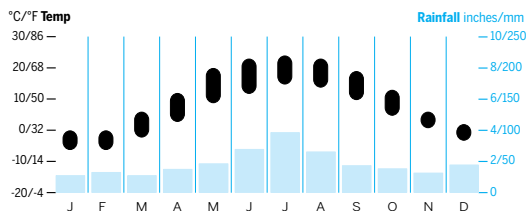
If they were handing out prizes for 'most eventful history', Poland would be sure to get a medal. The nation has spent centuries at the pointy end of history, grappling with war and invasion. Nothing, however, has succeeded in suppressing the Poles' strong sense of nationhood and cultural identity. As 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 Hit** Hit the bars and museums of lively Kraków before it's swamped by the summer crowds.

**Jul & Aug Check** out 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, UK, 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

Due to its central position, Poland offers plenty of possibilities for onward travel. The country is well connected by train: there 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 Lviv). Trains also link Warsaw to Minsk in Belarus and Moscow in Russia, and Gdańsk to Kaliningrad in Russia, as well as Berlin. International buses head in all directions, including eastward to the Baltic countries. 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. The next day, head to historic Kraków for three days, visiting the beautiful Old Town, Wawel Castle, and the former Jewish district of Kazimierz. Take a day trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former German concentration and extermination camp. Afterwards, head to Zakopane for two days for some mountain air.

### Two Weeks

Follow the above itinerary, then on the eighth day 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 museums and bars of the Main Town and visiting the magnificent castle at nearby Malbork.

## Essential Food & Drink

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