



Warmia & Masuria

POP 4.1 MILLION

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Pensjonat Mikołajki (p385)
- ➔ Hotel Willa Port (p375)
- ➔ Hotel Wileński (p372)
- ➔ Zajazd Pod Zamkiem (p381)

Best Lakes

- ➔ Lake Śniardwy (p378)
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- ➔ Lake Łuknajno (p385)
- ➔ Lake Mamry (p381)

Why Go?

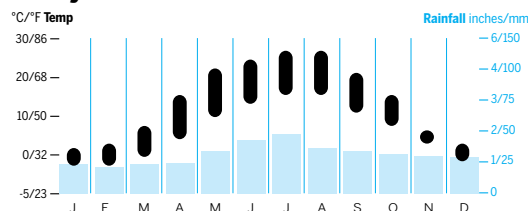
There's something in the water in these two northeast regions bordering the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad – mostly hundreds of sailors, windsurfers and kayakers who come to make a splash in the Great Masurian Lakes, which dominate the landscape. There's more aqua fun to be had here than in the rest of the country put together, and if water sports are your thing, this is your place.

Away from the lakes, one of the world's most intriguing canal trips – the Elbląg-Ostróda experience – and countless rivers, wetlands and swamps mean you're never far from a soaking in these parts. The Łyna and Krutynia Rivers are kayaking bliss, and Warmia even boasts a small stretch of Baltic coastline.

When you've had your fill of water fun, the region has bags of red-brick architecture left by the Warmian Bishops and is home to Hitler's wartime hideout, the Wolf's Lair – one of Europe's most significant WWII sites.

When to Go

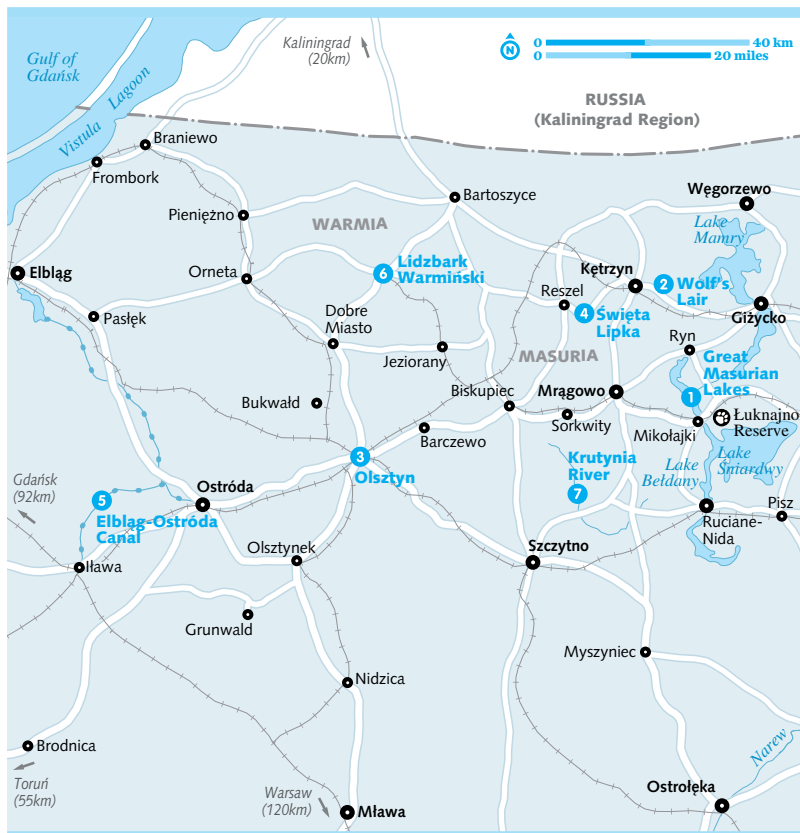
Olsztyn



Jan Cross lakes in Masuria on a pair of skis, when the whole region turns to ice.

Aug Join the pilgrimage to Święta Lipka during the Feast of the Assumption.

Oct See the lakes reflect the fiery autumnal shades of the region's many forests.



Warmia & Masuria Highlights

- 1 Joining the yachting set for a tour of the **Great Masurian Lakes** (p378).
- 2 Scrambling around the **Wolf's Lair** (p380), Hitler's secret wartime bunker.
- 3 Doing a spot of cobblestone-surfing in **Olsztyn's Old Town** (p371).
- 4 Joining the faithful throngs at **Święta Lipka** (p377), a major place of Polish Catholic pilgrimage.
- 5 Wondering at the spectacle of boats travelling over dry land on the **Elbląg-Ostróda Canal** (p376).
- 6 Exploring the halls of Lidzbark Warmiński's mammoth Gothic **Castle** (p376), the architectural highlight of the region.
- 7 Paddling along the **Krutynia River** (p373) in a kayak.

History

Despite being lumped together administratively today, Warmia and Masuria have always been separate entities, and their histories, though broadly similar, are largely independent.

Warmia is imaginatively named after its original inhabitants, the Warmians, who were wiped out by the Teutonic Knights in

the 13th century, after which the Knights set up a Teutonic province. For more than five centuries this was largely an autonomous ecclesiastical state run by all-powerful Catholic bishops.

The Warmian diocese was the largest of four that were created by the papal bulls of 1243. Though administratively within the Teutonic state, the bishops used papal pro-