



Directory A–Z	414
Transport	422
Language	432
Index	443
Map Legend	455



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Mark Baker

Marc Di Duca, Tim Richards

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to Poland	2
17 Top Experiences	6
Need to Know	14
First Time	16
If You Like	18
Month by Month	20
Itineraries	23
Outdoor Activities	28
Eat Like a Local	36
Regions at a Glance	41



UNDERSTAND POLAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

Poland Today	380
History	382
Jewish Heritage	398
The Arts	402
Landscape & Wildlife	408



➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

WARSAW46

Old Town 49

New Town 50

Citadel 51

South of the Old Town 52

Financial District 55

Former Jewish Ghetto 55

South of

Al Jerozolimskie 58

Praga 60

Outside the Centre 60

AROUND WARSAW 79

Kampinos National

Park 79

Żelazowa Wola 79

MAZOVIA & PODLASIE80

WESTERN MAZOVIA 82

Łódź 82

Łowicz 89

Płock 91

NORTHERN &

EASTERN MAZOVIA 94

Pułtusk 94

SOUTHERN PODLASIE 95

Białystok 96

Tykocin 98

Biebrza National Park ... 100

Narew National Park ... 101

Kruszyniany & Bohoniki .. 101

Białowieża National

Park 102

AUGUSTÓW-
SUWAŁKI REGION 105

Augustów 105

Suwałki 109

Around Suwałki 110

KRAKÓW 112

Wawel Hill 115

Old Town 117

West of the Old Town 124

Kazimierz 124

Podgórze 127

Outer Kraków 128

MAŁOPOLSKA 147

THE KRAKÓW-
CZĘSTOCHOWA
UPLAND 149

Ojców National Park ... 149

Częstochowa 150

THE MAŁOPOLSKA
UPLAND 155

Kielce 155

Świętokrzyski National

Park 158

THE SANDOMIERZ
VALLEY 159

Sandomierz 159

THE RADOM PLAIN 162

Radom 162

THE LUBLIN UPLAND ... 164

Lublin 164

Kazimierz Dolny 171

Chełm 176

Zamość 178

Zwierzyniec & Roztocze
National Park 183

CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS 185

TATRAS 187

Zakopane 187

CARPATHIAN

FOOTHILLS 193

Wadowice 193

Tarnów 193

Rzeszów 197

Przemyśl 201

BIESZCZADY 204

Sanok 204

Lesko 207

Ustrzyki Dolne 209

Ustrzyki Górne 209

Wetlina 211

Cisna 211

BESKID NISKI 212

Krosno 212

Dukla 214

Biecz 216

BESKID SĄDECKI 217

Nowy Sącz 217

Krynica 219

Around Krynica 221

Muszyňa 222

Around Muszyňa 223

PIENINY 223

Szczawnica 223

Dunajec Gorge 224

Niedzica 225

On the Road

SILESIA227

WROCLAW.....229

AROUND WROCLAW240

Trzebnica 240

Sobótka & Mt Ślęza 240

LOWER SILESIA240

Zielona Góra241

Świdnica 242

Książ..... 244

SUDETES MOUNTAINS...245

Jelenia Góra 245

Karkonosze National
Park 249

Szklarska Poręba 249

Karpacz251

Kłodzko 252

Kudowa-Zdrój 255

Bystrzyca Kłodzka 256

UPPER SILESIA.....257

Nysa 258

Opole 260

Katowice 263

Pszczyna 266

Oświęcim..... 268

WIELKOPOLSKA....270

POZNAŃ 272

AROUND POZNAŃ.....285

Kórnik..... 285

Rogalin..... 285

Wielkopolska National

Park 286

Morasko..... 286

EASTERN

WIELKOPOLSKA..... 287

Gniezno 287

Biskupin..... 290

SOUTHEASTERN

WIELKOPOLSKA.....292

Kalisz 292

Gołuchów..... 293

GDAŃSK

& POMERANIA295

GDAŃSK.....298

AROUND GDAŃSK..... 317

Sopot317

Hel Peninsula321

Kashubia 322

LOWER VISTULA.....324

Toruń 324

Golub-Dobrzyń..... 330

Chełmno 332

Grudziądz 333

Kwidzyn 334

Malbork 335

Elbląg 338

Frombork..... 339

NORTHERN & WESTERN

POMERANIA342

Łeba 342

Stowiński National

Park 343

Ślupsk 344

Ustka 346

Darłowo 347

Kołobrzeg 348

Świnoujście.....351

Szczecin..... 353

WARMIA

& MASURIA..... 360

THE OLSZTYN

REGION362

Olsztyn..... 362

Olsztynek..... 365

Grunwald..... 366

Ostróda 366

Elbląg-Ostróda Canal... 367

Lidzbark Warmiński.... 368

Święta Lipka 368

THE GREAT

MASURIAN LAKES..... 369

Kętrzyn.....371

Węgorzewo372

Giżycko.....373

Mikołajki.....376

Łuknajno Reserve.....377

Poland



Gdańsk

Poland's metropolis of the north (p298)

Malbork Castle

Monster mother ship of the Teutonic Order (p335)

Baltic Beaches

Hedonistic, genteel or just relaxing (p342)

Toruń

Magnificently preserved walled Gothic city (p324)

BERLIN

GERMANY

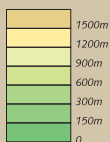
Wrocław

Artfully rebuilt WWII survivor (p229)

Karkonosze National Park

Hire a mountain bike and head out (p249)

ELEVATION



PRAGUE

CZECH REPUBLIC

Auschwitz-Birkenau

Unsettling but deeply moving (p268)

Olomouc

Top Experiences >



Wolf's Lair

Hitler's hidden wartime headquarters (p375)

Great Masurian Lakes

Heaven for sailing and water sports (p369)

Białowieża National Park

One of Europe's last vestiges of primeval forest (p102)

Warsaw

Elegant palaces that will surprise (p46)

Częstochowa

Join throngs of Black Madonna pilgrims (p150)

Kraków

Heady blend of history and architecture (p112)

Kazimierz

Everything from grungy to glam nightlife (p141)

Tatra Mountains

Awe-inspiring yet approachable peaks for hikers (p187)



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Mark Baker

Coordinating Author; Warsaw, Mazovia & Podlasie, Malopolska, Carpathian Mountains

Mark first visited Poland in the mid-1980s. At the time he was a grad student in Eastern European studies at Columbia University in New York, and he was smitten by the friendliness of the people, the bizarre politics, the history and the vodka. Now permanently based in Prague and working as a freelance travel writer, he remains enchanted with the country and has the chance to visit and write about Poland frequently. In addition to Lonely Planet *Poland*, Mark is co-author of the Lonely Planet's *Prague* and *Romania* guides. When he's not on the road writing, he teaches Central European History at Anglo-American University in Prague.

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Gdańsk & Pomerania, Warmia & Masuria Marc has spent nigh on 20 years criss-crossing the former communist world, the last seven of them as a travel guide author. A respected writer on Central and Eastern Europe, Marc has penned two guides to Poland for major UK publishers and a pocket guide to Gdańsk, a city that remains one of his favourite European stop-offs. Research for this edition of Lonely Planet's *Poland* involved munching through perilous

amounts of *zapiekaniki* ('Polish pizza') in dodgy milk bars, stalking Copernicus 500km along the Baltic coast and successfully buying a train ticket to Szczecin. *Poland* is Marc's 16th Lonely Planet guide.

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Tim Richards

Kraków, Silesia, Wielkopolska Tim taught English in Kraków in the 1990s and was fascinated by the massive post-communism transition affecting every aspect of Polish life, and by remnants of the communist era. He's returned to Poland repeatedly for Lonely Planet, deepening his relationship with this beautiful complex country. When he's not on the road for Lonely Planet, Tim is a freelance journalist in Melbourne, Australia, writing mostly about travel and the arts. In

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide the starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One Week Essential Poland

Poland's a big country with lots to see, so travellers with limited time will have to choose their destinations carefully. For first-time visitors, especially, the places to start are the capital, Warsaw, and the country's most popular city, Kraków. For a week tour, budget roughly three days in each, and a day for travel.

Warsaw is an eye-opener, a scintillating mix of postwar Soviet-style reconstruction and a lovingly restored Old Town, with Baroque and Renaissance architecture.

Leave at least a day for museum-hopping, particularly to the breathtaking **Warsaw Rising Museum** or newer attractions like the **Frédéric Chopin Museum** and the **Museum of the History of Polish Jews**.

From Warsaw, the former royal capital of **Kraków** is a 180-degree turn. If Warsaw is 'old overlaid on new', Kraków is new on top of ancient. Spend a day in the **Old Town** and **Wawel Castle**, a second day around the former Jewish ghetto of **Kazimierz** and the third day with a side trip to the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** (if you have kids in tow) or the **Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial & Museum**.



Two Weeks

The Big Three: Kraków, Warsaw & Gdańsk

This tour is similar to the 'Essential Poland' tour, but adds the ravishing Baltic port city of Gdańsk. Though the tour can be done in 10 days, adding extra days allows for more travel time (needed to bridge the long distances) and a chance to tack on some more day trips.

Allow at least four days for **Kraków**, one of the most perfectly preserved medieval cities in Europe. As with the 'Essential Poland' tour, spend the first day meandering around Kraków's delightful **Old Town**. Don't miss the new **Rynek Underground** museum and the chance to see a da Vinci masterpiece, *Lady with an Ermine*, at the **Czartoryski Museum**. The second day will be taken up with the sights of **Wawel Castle**. Spend the third day exploring the former Jewish ghetto of **Kazimierz**. For the last day, plan a side trip to either the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** or **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. If you have an extra day, consider the mountain resort of **Zakopane**, two hours away by bus.

Take the train to **Warsaw** and plan to stay put another three to four days. The extra day leaves more time to see the city's amazing museums, as well as to enjoy the sites of the **Old Town** and stroll down the elegant **ul Nowy Świat**. If you're up for a night of drinking, the gritty dive-bar hood of **Praga** beckons from across the Vistula. A more sedate pleasure involves a walk through lovely **Łazienki Park**. For day trips, consider **Wilanów Palace**, 6km south of the centre, or a full-day journey to the former Nazi-German extermination camp at **Treblinka**.

From Warsaw, take the train to **Gdańsk** and prepare to be dazzled by the stunningly restored **Main Town**, which, like Warsaw, was reduced to ruins in WWII. Proceed down the **Royal Way** and don't miss the **Amber Museum**. Then there's the waterfront district and pretty **ul Mariacka**.

If it's summer and you're lucky enough to get a warm day, spend your last full day on the water, either at the brash but popular beach resort of **Sopot**, or the quieter, more refined strand on the **Hel Peninsula**.



Four Weeks Along the Vistula

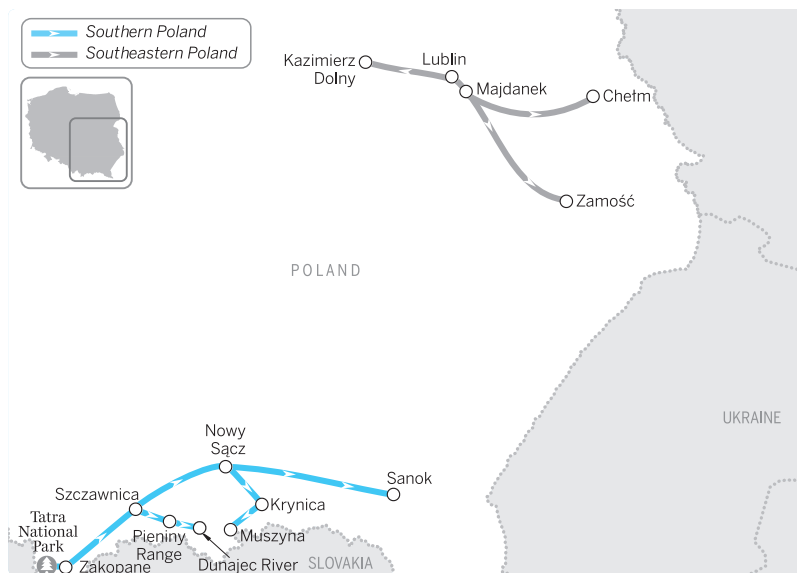
The Vistula is Poland's greatest river, winding its way from the foothills of the country's southern mountain range to the Baltic Sea. It's played a key role in the country's very identity, as it passes through – or close to – many of Poland's oldest and most important settlements.

This tour is ideally suited to roaming, for visitors who are not on a strict timetable and are looking for an unusual approach to Poland's core. The four-week schedule assumes that you rely on buses (train services to many of these towns have been cut back in recent years). Naturally, if you have your own wheels, you could cover the terrain in three weeks or even less.

Begin upstream with two or three days at the former royal capital of **Kraków** and take a day tour to **Auschwitz-Birkenau** in Oświęcim. From Kraków, make your way by bus to beautiful **Sandomierz**, one of Poland's undiscovered gems, with its impressive architectural variety and position on a bluff overlooking the river. From here, it's worth taking a detour, again by bus, to the Renaissance masterpiece of **Zamość**, a nearly perfectly preserved 16th-century town.

Back on the path along the Vistula, stop in at the former artists colony – a now popular weekend retreat – of **Kazimierz Dolny**, before hitting **Warsaw** and indulging in its delights for a few days. Next, call in at **Płock**, Poland's art nouveau capital, then follow the river into Pomerania and through the heart of medieval **Toruń**, another nicely preserved Gothic town that also boasts being the birthplace of stargazer Nicolaus Copernicus.

Soon after Toruń, the river heads directly for the sea. In former times, the Vistula's path was guarded by one Teutonic Knight stronghold after another. Today, these Gothic gems silently watch the river pass by. You can see the Knights' handiwork at **Chełmno**, **Kwidzyn** and **Gniew**, but the mightiest example resides at **Malbork**, on the banks of one of the river's side arms. End your journey in the port city of **Gdańsk**, where the river meets the sea.



One Week Southern Poland

Poland's southern border is lined with mountains end to end. This itinerary is ideal for walkers who want to escape the city. Though this trip can be done in a week, bus transport can be spotty in parts.

Start this journey in the mountain resort of **Zakopane**, which is easily reached by bus from Kraków. Reserve at least a day to see the town's historic wooden architecture and the **Museum of Zakopane Style**, and another for a walk into the **Tatras**. Allow more than a day if you want to do a longer trek.

From here you'll have to make some tough choices. We like the **Pieniny** range, east of the Tatras. The spa town of **Szczawnica** makes a good base for hikes, as well as biking and the ever-popular rafting ride down the **Dunajec River**.

From Szczawnica, the medium-sized city of **Nowy Sącz** offers urban comforts, or opt for **Krynica** or **Muszyna**, two popular spa resorts and good jumping off points for more hikes.

A long bus ride from Nowy Sącz brings you to **Sanok**, with its amazing skansen (open-air ethnographic museum) and access to the 70km **Icon Trail** and its wooden churches.

One Week Southeastern Poland

The southeastern corner of the country is seldom explored and a good place to see the country off the beaten path. Begin in **Lublin**, whose Old Town has been much spruced up in recent years, with some great places to see and eat. Don't miss **Lublin Castle** or the chance to clamber up the **Trinitarian Tower** for a commanding view of the countryside. Spend a half-day at the enormous **Majdanek** concentration camp on the outskirts of the city.

Use Lublin as a base to explore nearby **Chełm**, which is best known for its kid-friendly underground **Chalk Tunnels**. It also has one of the best restaurants in the region, **Restauracja Gęsia Szyja**.

Lublin also makes a nice base for visiting the popular riverside artists' retreat at **Kazimierz Dolny**. The town is filled with museums and charming galleries, and the surrounding fields and forests make for a perfect day out on a bike or on foot.

From Lublin, head south to the self-proclaimed (with justification) 'Pearl of the Renaissance': **Zamość**. This is a perfectly preserved Renaissance town from the 16th century, with a lively central square that hosts concerts and music fests throughout the summer.



One Week Cities of the West

Western Poland is borderland territory, straddling a region hotly contested between Poland and Germany over the centuries. **Wrocław**, with its good transport connections, makes a logical start and merits at least two days. This was the former German city of Breslau, and the architecture retains a Germanic flavour with a Polish pulse. After WWII, Wrocław was repopulated by refugees from Poland's eastern lands lost to the Soviet Union, giving the city an added ethnic dimension.

From here make your way to **Poznań**, a thriving commercial hub with an intoxicating mix of business and pleasure, the latter fortified by a large student population. It was in Poznań that the Polish kingdom got its start a millennium ago.

After Poznań the beautifully preserved Gothic town of **Toruń** is a short bus or train ride away. It boasts enchanting red-brick architecture and gingerbread cookies.

Finish the tour in either **Gdańsk** or **Szczecin**, the latter adding a gritty contrast to the architectural beauty of the other cities.

Three Weeks Eastern Borderlands

Poland's eastern border region feels especially remote. Indeed, this swath of natural splendour is largely cut off from the day-to-day goings on in the rest of Poland. This itinerary will appeal to wanderers who prefer the solitude of nature to the hustle-bustle of the big city.

The trip starts in **Kraków** for convenience sake, but make your way quickly to **Sanok**, with its skansen and icon museum, and then head deeper into the **Bieszczady National Park**. Turn north and take the back roads to the Renaissance town of **Zamość**, via **Przemyśl**. Continue on to **Chełm** to see the underground chalk tunnels and then to the big-city comforts of **Lublin**.

Strike out north through the rural backwaters to the **Białowieża National Park**, and its primeval forest and bison herd. Head north again to the provincial city of **Białystok** and to the tiny hamlet of **Tykocin**, with its unforgettable synagogue.

From here there's a wealth of parklands, including the **Biebrza** and **Wigry** national parks, with their endless hiking and kayaking possibilities. Head west for more boating in the **Great Masurian Lakes**.

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