



Poland



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

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MARKET, OLD TOWN SQUARE (P53), WARSAW



BISONS, BIAŁOWIEŻA NATIONAL PARK, P109

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Itineraries



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-long 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 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 the Wawel Royal Castle, a second day around the former Jewish quarter of Kazimierz and the third day with a side trip to the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** (if you have kids in tow) or the memorial and museum of **Auschwitz-Birkenau**.



2
WEEKS

The Big Three: Kraków, Warsaw & Gdańsk

This tour visits Kraków and Warsaw before heading to 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 Rynek Underground museum and, naturally, St Mary's Basilica. The second day will be taken up with the sights of the Wawel Royal Castle. Spend the third day exploring the former Jewish quarter 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 sights of the Old Town and stroll down 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, at either the brash but popular beach resort of **Sopot** or the quieter, more refined strand on the **Hel Peninsula**.



4

WEEKS Along the Vistula

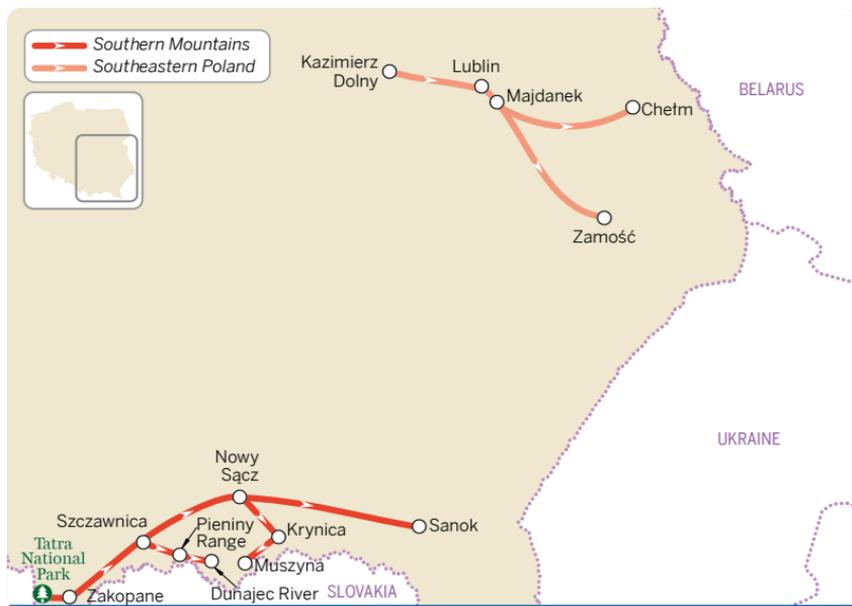
The Vistula is Poland's greatest river, winding its way from the foothills of the country's southern mountain range to the Baltic Sea. It's played a key role in Poland's very identity, as it passes through – or close to – many of its oldest and most important settlements.

Ideally suited to roaming, this tour is 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 the memorial and museum at **Auschwitz-Birkenau** in Oświęcim. From Kraków, make your way by bus to beautiful **Sandomierz**, one of Poland's undiscovered delights, 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 – now a popular weekend retreat – of **Kazimierz Dolny**, before hitting **Warsaw** and indulging in its attractions 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 **Chelmno**, **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.



1 WEEK Southern Mountains

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 in the mountain resort of **Zakopane**, easily reached by bus from Kraków. Allow 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** (or more for 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 **Muszyňa**, 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.

1 WEEK Southeastern Poland

The southeastern corner of Poland 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 **Chełm**, best known for its underground Chalk Tunnels. It also has some very worthwhile Jewish heritage sights and restaurants.

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 perfectly preserved 16th-century Renaissance town has a lively central square, which hosts summertime concerts and music fests.

1
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.

3
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.

Start in **Kraków** for convenience's sake, but head 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 **Przemysł**. Continue on to **Chełm** to see the underground chalk tunnels and then to the big-city comforts of **Lublin**.

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

From here is a wealth of parklands: the **Biebrza** and **Wigry National Parks**, and the **Great Masurian Lakes**, all with excellent hiking and boating possibilities.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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

Kraków, Małopolska, Carpathian Mountains Prague-based journalist and freelance writer Mark Baker first visited Poland as a student in the mid-1980s while the country was still part of the Eastern bloc and has returned many times over the years. He has worked as a writer and editor for the Economist Group, Bloomberg News and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In addition to contributing to the Lonely Planet guide to *Poland* and writing Lonely Planet's pocket guide

to *Kraków*, he's the author of Lonely Planet guides to *Prague & the Czech Republic*, *Romania & Bulgaria*, *Slovenia* and the Baltic countries. Mark also wrote the Planning and Survival sections of this book.



Marc Di Duca

Gdańsk & Pomerania, Warmia & Masuria Marc has been criss-crossing the post-Communist world for the past quarter of a century, the last decade as a full-time travel writer. The author of several guides to Poland, the country's north is one of his favourite corners of Eastern Europe. When not stalking Copernicus across the white sand of the Baltic, packing on pounds with cheesecake and Polish pizza and attempting to ask for railway tickets to Szczecin, Marc lives

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Read more about Marc at:

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Tim Richards

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