

Pilgrim shrines

Pilgrim places belong to the most frequently visited destinations in Poland. Especially during religious celebration. Pilgrimages are journeys of believers to the holy places called sanctuary. Pilgrimage is a form of celebration and it has both religious and psychological meaning.

Sanctuaries in Poland are mostly historical objects. They were the places of preserving the Polish nationality during the partition in 19th century.

However the pilgrims have got many characteristics of tourist movement. The believers follow the pilgrim paths and trails to the destinations with the both religious and tourist infrastructure. Some of the religious places are located in the popular tourist areas (Święta Lipka- Mazuria).

Sanctuary

Sanctuary is usually a complex of buildings having firstly religious and charitable attributes. It has also patriotic and artistic characteristics. There are usually hospices for pilgrims in the area of sanctuaries and/or pensions around it.

There are often religious celebrations, services, festives, processions which increase the tourist movement.

The pilgrim places are often visited as a interesting sightseeing. Some of them are even regarded as a main attraction in terms of its value.

Poland belongs to one of the most active countries in Europe in terms of christian pilgrimage movement. Polish are estimated to account for 20% of the total pilgrims. There are about 500 sanctuaries all over Poland. 85 % of them are dedicated to our Lady. 200 of them are crowned by the Vatican.

Jasna Góra (Częstochowa- Upper Silesia) is the most popular sanctuary in Poland. It houses the famous picture of Our Lady taken to the monastery of Paulin monk order from Ruthenia in 1382. There are up to 5 million visit to Jasna Góra every year.

The second strongly visited place is **Licheń** close to Konin. There is a biggest church in Poland there built 2004. Therefore it attracts many tourists.

Łagiewniki in Kraków is the third most important sanctuary. It was built in 2002 it is connected with the cultivation of Jesus merciful. It attracts strongly international pilgrims.

The second important group of sanctuaries are those in **Kalwaria Zebrzydowska** (Lesser Poland), **Saint Ann Mount** (Opolskie region) and **Niepokalanów**

Jasna Gora - Sanctuary of Our Lady of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa

The sanctuary on Jasna Gora is a monastic complex of the Pauline Fathers in Czestochowa. The order arrived there in 1382 and was given a small church on Jasna Gora hill. They placed the painting of Our Lady with the Child. The painting is supposed to have been made by Lukasz the Evangelist on a piece of wood, taken from the table at which the Holy Family sat, prayed and had its meals. Recent research show that the painting was initially a byzantine icon of the "Hodgetria" type, dated back to 6th - 9th century. In 1430 a group of thieves from Czech, Morawy and Slask broke into the church, slashed the face of the Virgin Mary, threw the painting on the ground causing its break into three pieces.

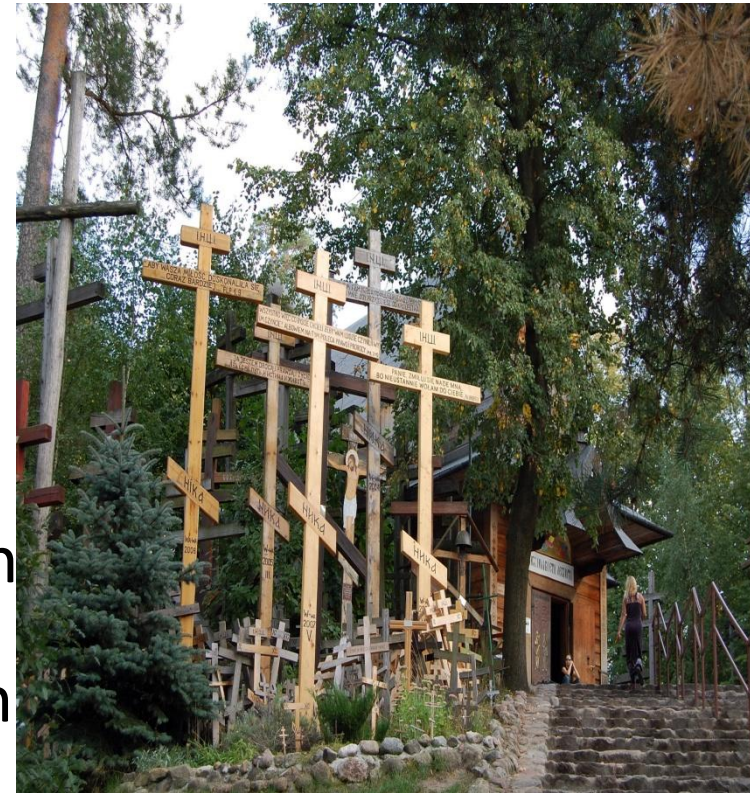
Painting is also supposed to have saved the sanctuary from the Swedes' invadion in 1655. On 18th of November 1655, an army of 3000 soldiers led by general Miller stood in front of the walls of the monastery and ordered the monks to surrender. Jasna Gora's prior father Augustyn Kordecki decided to defend the place, having just 170 soldiers, 20 noblemen and 70 monks. 40-day battle ended with a polish victory, which is attributed to divine care and intervention. The place gained its significance on the 1st of April 1656 when King Jan Kazimierz made the Lviv Vows on Jasna Gora. Another attacks and robberies of the monastery took place during the years following Poland's Partition and under the Nazi occupation, during the World War II.

The stronghold on Jasna Gora has been surrounded by a wall since 1624 and the only possible way of entrance was through the eastern gate. The construction of the wall, initiated by king Zygmunt III Waza, was started in 1620 while the fortifications were designed by king's architect Andree dell' Aqua, basing on italian and dutch designs. Monastery's tower, which makes the whole complex visible from kilometers away, was built between the year 1617 and 1622. There are 516 stairs leading up and a cross with a raven holding a loaf of bread (Pauline Fathers' coat of arms) on the top of the construction.. The wonderful painting is located in the chapel of Our Lady of Jasna Gora.



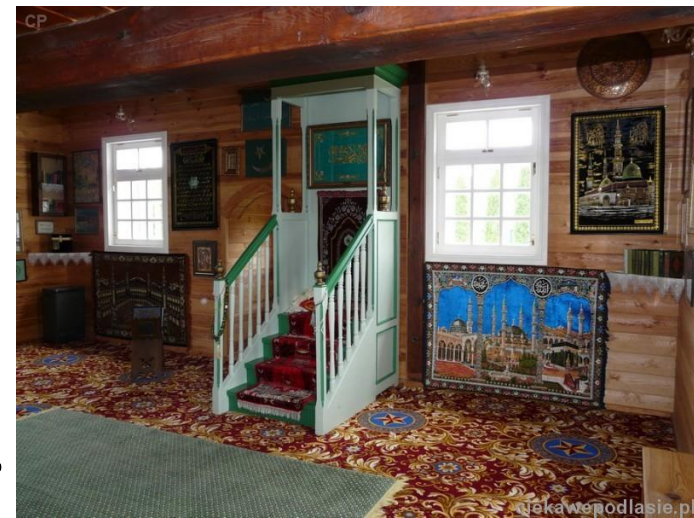
Orthodox church sanctuaries in Poland

Orthodox church believers are distinctive religious group in Poland. They concentrate mostly east part of Poland. The most attractive ones is **Grabarka Mount** next to Siemiatycze (Podlasie region). Most of pilgrims coming there take crosses with them and they install them on the mount. You can find thousands of crosses there. Therefore the mount is sometimes called cross mount. The next sanctuary is located in **Jablęcza** – small village by the Bug river and **Supraśl** (Podlasie region) with collection of beautiful icons. There is also located **Mount Jawor** in Lesser Poland close to Polish-Slovakian border.



Muslim mosques in Poland

Poland seem to be strongly catholic country. However there is a long-existing muslim minority in Poland. These are the descendants of Tatars living in easter part of Poland since 4 ages. They still cultivate their religion. They have their own mosques in **Bohoniki** and **Kruszyniany** (Podlasie region) built of wood in XIX century. They are they aim of many tourist visits.



Jewish shrines

However there are not that many Jewish living in Poland recently there used to be the traces of vurnelable past of that minority all over Poland. Jewish from abroad come and visit shrines of famous cadics in Kraków, Leżajsk, Bobowa, Nowy Sącz, Kock, Koniecpol and Kielce.

Classification of sightseeings of Poland

The practical function of classification of Polish sightseeings is encompasses their usage in maps, guide-books etc.

B. Mikułowski and J. Wyrzykowski while preparing their *Atlas Turystyczny Polski* prepared a scale of measuring their value based on the ones used in Michelin guide-books and Poliglot:

***- highly interesting attractions, often main destination

** - important attractions, worth to curve on the way to the destination

* - other attractions

Specialistic values

Places of specialistic value from the tourist point of view are those which are not aim of mass tourism (like those of leisure and sightseeing importance). Just limited groups of tourists are interested in specialistic attractions.

Activity in specialistic values needs physical and physical skills, some training and it sometimes needs some formal certifications of the course as made.

The specialistic values are identified in the natural environment. These are the same areas which were often qualified for leisure and/or sightseeing attractions.

- We scan them once more for their attractiveness for special activities (outdoor activities) like sailing, surfing, canoeing, kite-surfing, fishing, riding horse, walking, climbing, speleology, hunting, off-roading.
- As far as the outdoor activities are named sailing, canoeing and fishing are the most popular. The other activities can be named as elit ones since very limited number of practisers are involved like in the case of diving.

Sailing and canoeing

Poland has a quite dense network of rivers and lakes available for water sports. Apart from natural rivers and lakes there is a network of channels and artificial lakes. The total length of the main 159 rivers is 19,9 km. They have got different characteristics. The rivers in the south part of Poland lead through mountainous area. They are fast with many cruvings and steep. The rivers of central and north of Poland are rather floating slowly since they area is falt. The rivers of the Pomerania region lead through small hills therefore they are once more fast.



There are 9296 lakes of the area of more than 1 ha in Poland. Their total area is 3169, km². They are located mostly north of Poland in the stripe of Pomerania and Mazury lake District. 81% of all lakes are located there.

They are mostly long and thin glacial lakes. They are often interconnected. However the most are small lakes of the area less than 5 ha.

The biggest lakes in Poland are Sniardwy, Mamry, Lebsko and Dabie. As far as water tourism is concerned the lakes connected with one another located in Mazury region are most popular. They are strongly attractive in terms of sailing, canoeing and fishing.

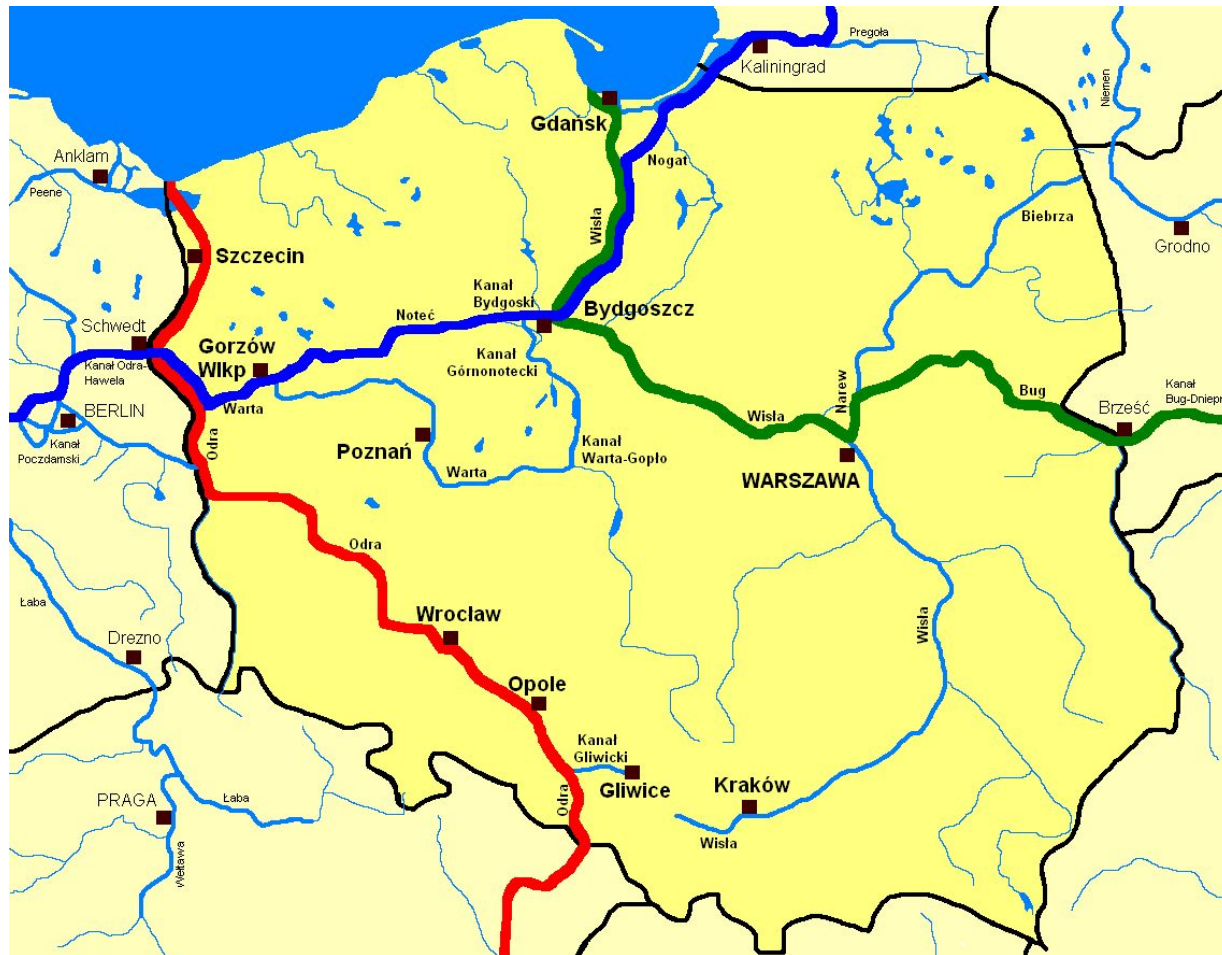
Artificial lakes are located mostly in Central and Southern part of the country. Therefore they fulfill the lack of natural lakes especially in the mountains. The most important are the artificial lakes larger than 2 000 ha; Otmuchowski, Nyski, Goczałkowicki, Turawski, Zegrzynski, Koronowski and Sulejowski. There are some regions all over Poland where artificial lakes are the only places for water sports there.



- The important natural parameters of water trails for tourism is clear water and air, calm, forests on the sides, view values. The water roads should have stated technical parameters- depth, wide, in order for different yachts, canoes and boats to get through easily.
- The lake sides should have infrastructure both to stay for night and to keep the yachts and other modes safely- marinas.

- The evaluation of the water roads and lakes for water activity was made in terms of canoeing and sailing since they require different depth of water.
- The water roads are divided into 3 categories:
 - International
 - Country
 - Regional
- Their importance is based on the intuitional value of natural enviroment in their countryside. The other important parameter is answer for the qestion : how many canoes or yachts can get through it in a certain time. There are two subcriteria- how many individual units can get through it and how many sets can get through.
- Therefore 118 canoe trails and sailing water roads were stated. The international routes are estimated highest. There are 15 of them

International water routes



- ### Międzynarodowe drogi wodne w Polsce
- E30**
Dunaj (Bratysława) - Morze Bałtyckie (Szczecin)
 - E40**
Morze Bałtyckie (Gdańsk) - Morze Czarne (Odessa)
 - E70**
Atlantyk (Antwerpia) - Morze Bałtyckie (Kłajpeda)

International canoe routes in Poland

- Poprad river (Lesser Poland)
- Radunia river (Pomerania)
- Pasleka river (Mazury Region)
- Dunajec river (Lesser Poland)
- Krutynia river (Mazury region)
- Czarna Hancza river (Podlasie region)
- Brodnickie Lakes (Kuyavia-Pomerania)
- Brda River (Pomerania, Kuyavia-Pomerania)
- Wda (Pomerania)
- Drawa (West Pomerania)



International value lakes

- Big Mazury Lakes- Sniardy, Mamry, Ruciane-Nida
- Augustowski Channel (Podlasie Region)
- Ilawskie Lakes (Mazury region)
- Elblag-Ostróda Channel (Mazury region)

- The total length of the water routes of international importance 1614 km (14%), country importance 6764 km (58,5%) and regional ones 3182 km (27,5%).
- The lakes are estimated in the same ways as rivers. And therefore their area is bigger than 100 ha they are synonymus with sailing areas. Their total area encompass 3005 km². 47,% of them are of international attractiveness, and 21% are of country attractiveness, and 31% are regional.
- The limitation for motor water sports are zone of calm on most of the rivers and lakes.

Fishing

- The natural environment in Poland is fantastic for fishing. This activity is connected with excursions and leisure at river- or lake sides. It is regarded as a special outdoor activity.
- The lakes and rivers are territorially divided in 2 groups in terms of their availability for fishing.
 - Lowland
 - Mountains

In terms of their attractiveness we can distinguish high value areas, very important value ones and important. The criteria are the existence of the number of species in them and the landscape value and location close to the cities.

There are 7 areas of fishing attractiveness all over Poland. The total area is 9480 km². They are all located in Lake area districts north of Poland. Since the licence to catch fish is needed in Poland it is possible to estimate the number of persons interested in fishing for 600 thousand.

Fishing

The record pike caught with a fishing rod in Poland weighed over 24 kg, and the biggest carp was 3kg heavier. The anglers who caught them said that the fight took over five hours! In Poland, even the calm waters on the shores of a Mazurian lake can turn into an adventure.

There are many very good areas in Poland for fishing with more than 20 fish species which can be caught – others are protected:

- in the mountains – **trout, salmon,**
- in the lakes and rivers, - **pike, pikeperch, catfish** and **eels.**
- The rivers and lakes which are the richest in fish are found in the northern part of Poland.

Around the Baltic coast most of the fish can be found in small river deltas.

You can also fish in some of the man-made lakes in Poland, for example, Zalew Zegrzyński, not far from [Warsaw](#), Sulejowski, close to [Łódź](#) and Soliński in the [Bieszczady](#), and many others.

During the winter ice fishing is very popular especially on the lakes in the **Mazury**.

Hunting

- Hunters in Poland form a brotherhood with their own traditions, language and customs. As they say, they are not bloodthirsty killers, but 'selectioners', assisting in the natural balance of nature. It is worth becoming acquainted with their traditions, language and customs, even if you don't want to have anything to do with shooting the animals.

Poland is also a country of forests and meadows.

Poland's natural environment is excellent for organizing hunts and big-game hunting has rich, deeply rooted traditions.

Game is found in great abundance across the country, among these are the habitual, hares, boars, roe-deer, deer, foxes, ducks, partridges and pheasants.

Much less common animals which you can encounter are: moose, fallow deer and moufflon.

The areas richest in wild animals that can be hunted are in **the north east of Poland** (Mazury, Suwalszczyzna, and Podlasie). Here you have a great abundance of mostly deer.

The [Bieszczady](#) region is another typical hunting region.

Hunting

- Hunting is one of the oldest activities of a man. You can not combine it with a hobby or sport what makes Poland one of the targets for international hunters.
- Hunting means managing of the number of animals in order the nature protection regulations. In terms of tourism hunting is connected with active outdoor activity in natural environment.
- Hunting is very specific and unique activity. There are ab. 100 000 licenced hunters all over Poland. And there come about 11 000 hunters from abroad every year. There are 200 companies specialising in arranging hunting activities. They mostly hunt for red deers, daniels, roe deers, elks, roe deers. And also small mamals as foxes, rabbits, pheasants and partridges. Some of the species are protected from hunting for years as wolfs, mufions and elks.
- The most attractive hunting areas are in Podlaskie region- Biebrzanski National Park, Warmia Region, Masovia and Lublin region./

Horseback riding

- **Horseback riding is one of the oldest, carefully cultivated traditions in Poland. It is worth looking at this phenomenon.**
- This process of erudition can begin during the most important and most prestigious European auction of **Arab blood stock horses** in Janow Podlaski, where among the bidders amongst many other wealthy celebrities, Charlie Watts, the Rolling Stones drummer, is regularly present. It is in Janów, where the famous bay El Paso stallion, one of the most expensive horses in history was sold for around one million dollars.
- Poland is famous not only for its pure blood Arabs horses. **Hucul horses** from Gladyszow, though inconspicuous, are very patient, gentle and brave. They are the cousins of the Polish ponies which can be seen in the [Roztocze National Park](#) and in the research station in Popielno in Mazury.

. Huculs are great therapists and they don't have any problems climbing the gentle hills of Lower Beskid.

Several day long meetings in a saddle are organised by many stud farms in Poland where there is an opportunity not only to commune with nature and the landscape but to approach wild animals. Horse scent does not frighten off the deer or roe-deer. Dozens of horse breeding farms in Poland teach the western type of horse riding which is much better and more comfortable for long distances.

Advanced riders can conquer Poland on their own, using the growing network of horseback trails on the Baltic coast (Białogóra), the forests of Wielkopolska (Wilczy Szlak) and in the Warmian hills (the region of Kierzbun). The 400 km long horse trail in Sudety zigzags between Łądek Zdrój and Karpacz and the summit of Śnieżnik can almost be reached by horse!

A trip like this to the countryside is an opportunity to experience one more pleasure connected with horses – a night sledding cavalcade lit by torches, with blankets on your laps and a thermos full of tea with alcohol. During the Highland carnival in Bukowina Tatrzańska, kumoterki races (small sledges once used to carry children to baptism) are a great attraction.

Horse-back riding has long traditions in Poland. There are a large number of clubs and horse-riding centers, of which about 400 are members of the Polish Riding Association (Warsaw, 29 Lektykarska St., tel. +48 22 639 32 40). Also many agro-tourist farms offer horse-back riding. Here they organize recreational horse-back riding tours and horse-riding holidays and camps. In summer you can take a carriage and in winter – a sleigh.

Amateurs of sightseeing from the saddle will also find something to their liking. Many centers organize one- and several days' horse rallies on especially marked trails. The longest and most beautiful are those in mountainous regions: **the Trans-Beskid Horse Trail** and **the Trans-Jurassic Horse Trail** (600 and 250 km). Practicing horse riding in Poland can be combined easily with sightseeing architectural historic sites. Many horse riding centers and studs are located in the vicinity or directly on the properties of beautiful historical manors and palaces, for example, Chlewiska (the 400-year old Palace of the Odrowąż family), Walewice (the 18th century Palace of Maria Walewska) and Kurozwęki.

The studs known worldwide for their purebreds are especially note-worthy: **Janów Podlaski** (Arab thoroughbreds), **Kętrzyn** (heavy horses), **Gładyszów** (hucul), **Książ** near Wałbrzych, **Bogusławice**, **Czerniew**, **Kozienice**, **Racot Łack** and **Sieraków**