



H.E. Mr. Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki Prime Minister of Poland



H.E. Mr. Andrzej Sebastian Duda President of the Republic of Poland



H.E. Mr. Jacek CzaputowiczMinister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland

Cordially Congratulations on **101th Anniversary** OF REPUBLIC OF POLAND







Editorial



October 2019

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Mian Fazal Elahi

oland is a market with huge potential, not yet explored enough by Pakistani business, which tends to focus mainly on the EU Countries. Poland offers an interesting alternative, having less competition and at the same time

People-to-people relations are important for the people of both countries to have a better knowledge of each other's culture, customs and beliefs. That improves bilateral relations by making an individual better understand potential business or

H.E. Mr Piotr A. Opaliński Ambassador of the Republic of Poland emphasized for better understanding can result in closer ties and cooperation between two countries. In order to achieve this goal we will continue to organise events during which we will present Polish culture to Pakistani audience, like a 'jugalbandi' of Polish and Pakistani musicians. He also added that we would also like to introduce some of the polish literature translated into Urdu to local readers.

dialogue. Kashmir issue should be resolved peacefully and the present military tension between the two neighboring countries is a potential threat to the stability of the region. The UN and the world community to take immediate notice on the lockdown of the Indian occupied Kashmir entered in its 4th month which is against human rights.

Diplomatic ties have continued to go strength to strength most notably in military cooperation. Republic of Poland is celebrating its 101th anniversary of Poland's Independence Day. We congratulate you from the core of our heart to our brotherly country its people and government of Poland on the behalf of entire Pakistani Nation.

offering an easy access to the rest of European markets.

political partners for the future agreements and ventures.

Poland also supports solution of Kashmir issue through diplomatic channels and

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The articles, columns, Opinions are published in Magazine in good faith. However, the contents of these writings may not necessarily match the views of the Editor/Publisher/Organization.

Mian Assad ullah

Important Announcement

It has been announced for the general information that Mr. Mian Assad Ullah has been appointed as Editor In Chief of the Monthly "Diplomatic Focus" for the UK/EU Edition. He is entitled to participate official /non-officials diplomatic(engagements, events, national days, social evenings/gatherings, press conferences/interviews and can be contacted for all kinds of stuff including articles, supplements and advertisements etc). It is requested to all Diplomatic missions and government high officials of UK, please contact with Mr. Mian Assad Ullah on His mailing address, 4 Ipswich Road, SW17 9RH, London. Cell number:+44-7961005954/ 2087694850, Email: uk.diplomaticfocus@gmail.com, assadmian1@gmail.com















H.E. Mr. Andrzej Sebastian Duda President of the Republic of Poland



H.E. Mr. Mateusz Jakub MorawieckiPrime Minister of Poland

BIOGRAPHY of H.E. Mr Piotr A. Opaliński, **Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary** of the Republic of Poland in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Mr Piotr Opaliński has been fascinated by the Orient, its culture, history, and present-day for over forty years. He has spent a quarter of a century in Central and Southern Asia - from attending university to experiencing the charm and challenges of everyday life.

After completing his M.A. in Oriental philology at Tashkent State University, he gained experience in diplomacy and public administration in Warsaw, at the Polish Institute of Foreign Affairs and the National School of Public Administration, and in the Hague at the Clingendael Institute of International Relations.

Mr. Opaliński went through each level of diplomatic service from expert to ambassador ad personam, working in the departments of Asia, Africa and the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as the chargé d'affaires in Bangladesh (1991-1997), in Angola and Tanzania (2007), as the consul and deputy head of mission in Pakistan and Afghanistan (1999-2005), and as the deputy head of mission in India (2008-2014).

He was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit for his achievements in diplomatic service and contribution to the development of relations between Poland and countries in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

His goals as the Polish ambassador to Pakistan include promoting cooperation between both countries in all areas - the economy, trade, politics, culture, and education.

In his spare time Mr. Opaliński enjoys listening to fusion music, in which the East combines with the West, and reading Urdu poetry by the likes of Mirza Ghalib, Mir Tagi Mir and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. He is an avid photographer and an amateur tennis player.

He speaks English, Russian, Hindi, and Urdu.





Polish-Pakistani relations have always been friendly, positive & respectful

H.E. Mr Piotr A. Opalinski

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

our Excellency! First of all, I, on behalf of 'Diplomatic Focus' appreciate your efforts for enhancing the bilateral relations and praise your role as an Ambassador of Poland to Islamic Republic of Pakistan . I am also thankful to you for giving us time out of your busy schedule.

DF: Excellency! You have been serving for the last several years as ambassador here in Pakistan, What would be your experience as an Ambassador here in Pakistan and I would like to know historical relationship between the two countries?

Poland and Pakistan are seemingly divided by geographical distance, but contacts between the current lands of Pakistan and Poland go back to the European Middle Ages. Later, throughout the 19th century, many Polish travelers visited the region. During WWII thirty thousand Polish

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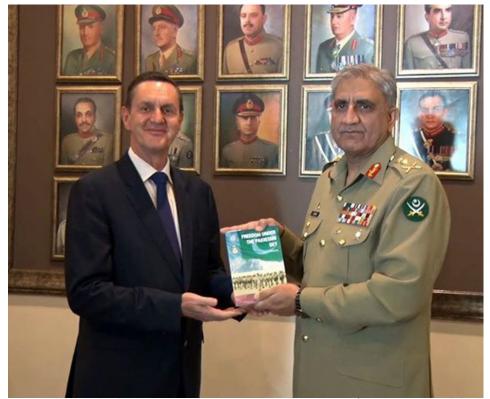


refugees were granted shelter in Karachi.

Polish-Pakistani relations have always been friendly, positive, and respectful and currently we enjoy excellent enhancement in all areas. There is an ongoing political dialogue as well

as growing economic exchange, which turnover has exceeded half a billion Euro. Especially notable are the areas of energy and exploration of natural resources, in which Polish companies have been engaged in Pakistan for over 20





years. Poland and Pakistan have engaged in military cooperation as well, beginning with Air Commodore Władysław Turowicz and dozens of Polish pilots, who helped create Pakistan Air Force following the country's independence in 1947. Nowadays there is a scope for a noteworthy level of defense cooperation between Polish and Pakistani armament producers.

DF: Your Excellency! As we know that culture is very important factor when it comes to bilateral ties enhancement, what kind of Cultural ties Poland has offered to Pakistan?

Polish culture is indeed rich and from Pakistani perspective can be very interesting. Nowadays, an increasing number of Pakistanis travel and study in Poland. Just as they brought cricket to Poland, so it is hoped that with time they will bring back an ever greater appreciation for Polish culture. There are several ways of promoting a country's culture, but it remains ever necessary to keep in mind the customary context of the recipient country.



In this regard, one of the aspects, which both typifies and connects Poland and Pakistan, is probably music. Whether we look at the cheerful and animated folk tradition or genteel concert halls, music has always played an outsized role in Polish society. From the lively and spirited traditional rhythms of Oberek, Mazur, and Krakowiak, to the dignified Polonez, to the refined creations of composers like Chopin, Szymański, Penderecki, and Kilar, the world of Polish music holds immense value at all levels of complexity. A recent collaboration album of Karolina Cicha and Shafqat Ali Khan - "Music Without Borders" - which blends traditional Polish and Pakistani sounds, showcases how well our two cultures fit together in this regard. This sort of natural, organic cooperation does more to promote Polish music in Pakistan, than

POLISH

Embassy is **Providing Quality** Education, Counselling and **Medical Care** for the Children of **PAKISTAN**

a merely imported work would.

Another aspect is the conspicuous love for food, which both nations hold. Having evolved thousands of kilometers away in a completely different climate, Polish cuisine bears little resemblance to the flavors found in Pakistan, but it is equally rich. In general, it is hearty and heavy in its use of butter, cream, and eggs. One need only walk through a major street of any city in Poland to notice the abundance: Szarlotka apple pie, Rosół – chicken broth, Zrazy wołowe - beef roll, Piernik - marmalade gingerbread, Oscypek – smoked cheese, Kremówka – cream pie, Pierogi – stuffed dumplings, Pączki – doughnuts, Zapiekanka - roasted baguette, Śledzie – marinated herring, Kopytka – sweet dumplings, Mizeria - cucumber salad, Faworki -





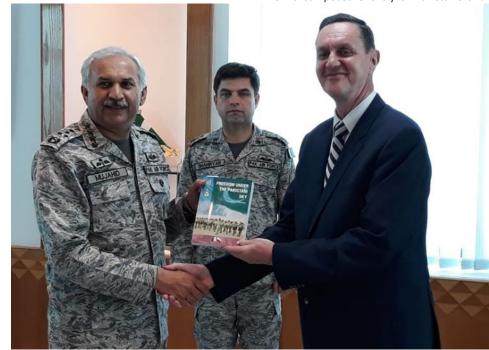
fried pastry, Barszcz – beetroot soup, Sernik -cheesecake, Budyń ¬¬– custard pudding, Kluski - Silesian dumplings, Makowiec - poppy-seed cake, Gołąbki – cabbage rolls, Krówki – fudge candies. Poles are enthralled by good food, whose profusion is closely related to strong familial ties and a deep sense of hospitality, not unlike the one found in Pakistan. We promote both by presenting Polish cuisine in all its wealth during gastronomical events in Islamabad.

DF: Your Excellency! Is Embassy of Poland working on any projects regarding education and medical health care programs in Pakistan?

Ambassador Opalinski said, in the area of development cooperation Poland was directly working with Pakistani partners local organisations capable of a very efficient implementation of the projects. Some of the best examples of educational projects supported i.e. by the Polish Embassy were the primary schools in Kaghan Valley and Bari Imam area of Islamabad. They are providing quality education, counselling and medical care for the children.

DF: Your Excellency! In addition to my previous question, what kinds of incentives are offered by Poland for the Pakistani Students? What are the numbers of students studying on the basis of scholarship programme in Poland?

Poland has emerged as an attractive study destination only recently, and our mutual educational ties are still developing. This is a slow process and such connections take long to develop. Lately, we have seen a steady increase in the number of Pakistanis at top Polish institutions of higher learning. Poland offers many opportunities for Pakistani students, who are already performing well in their respective fields of study. It is interesting to mention, that they set up a cricket team - Warsaw Kings which is composed entirely of Pakistanis and













represents Poland in European competitions.

Several prominent Polish universities have also established direct links with Punjab University and Quaid-e-Azam University. Since Poland is part of the Bologna process, its educational model is unified with the rest of Europe. It has three stages - bachelor's, master's, doctoral - and uses the ECTS system, which is why while studying in Poland it is easy to continue education elsewhere in Europe as well.

DF: Your Excellency! Business and trade has become vital for countries these days. What incentives have you taken to improve the trade between the two countries?

Absolutely. Polish companies internationalizing quickly and moving into foreign markets with a spring in their step. The aforementioned Polish Oil and Gas Company, PGNiG, plans to expand its operations in Pakistan and increase its commitment to developing the local gas market. Polish companies are also eyeing joint mineral exploration ventures with Pakistani partners. Moreover, there is an interest in Pakistan's green energy business and food processing sector.

DF: Your Excellency! From your résumé we came to know you have speaking skills on different languages and you are also interested in Urdu poetry. Who is your favorite poet?

In my spare time I enjoy listening fusion music, in which the East combines with the West. I also read Urdu poetry by the likes of Mirza Ghalib, Mir Tagi Mir and Allama Muhammad Igbal.

DF: What is your opinion and remarks, on "Freedom under the Pakistani Sky" by Polish author Mrs. Anna T. Pietraszek?

Mrs Anna Pietraszek has written a marvelous piece of work, inviting the reader for a breathtaking journey in time and space. The story that is not only phenomenal, opening for us the pages of the unknown history of Polish presence in Pakistan over last seventy years, but also colorful, reviving images and arousing curiosity with emotion. It talks about elegant residences in Pakistani cities, small villages of Hindukush and Karakorum, daring expeditions into the highest mountains, lasting friendships between Poles and Pakistanis. I am deeply convinced that this book will constitute a special contribution to popularization – both in Poland and in Pakistan – of the exceptional pages in the history of our nations, filled with joint achievements and lasting friendship.

DF: Your Excellency! People to people contact are very necessary to further deep rooting the trade as well bilateral relations between the two countries? My question is exchange of trade delegations is a very effective means in finding the trade potential and exportable products between the two countries?



Trade delegations are indeed important for this purpose. It is difficult and cumbersome to gauge the potential of a market, a product or a business venture from afar. Moreover, economic exchange between firms and countries does not rely on numbers alone. It is crucial to build mutual trust and understanding with foreign firms and their representatives in order to create solid partnerships. Business with reliable partners, whom one knows personally, incurs lower oversight costs, creates fewer problems, and allows parties to explain and smooth things over rather than bring every issue before a commercial court. Deeper ties of this sort prepare the ground for a serendipitous discovery of further possibilities of cooperation and an opening up of new business avenues, which were not initially projected.

DF: Your Excellency, how do you see the role of Pakistan on regional and international level?

Talking about the regional and international

situation, the Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process and its efforts in facilitating the talks between the US leadership and Taliban. Poland wholeheartedly supports peaceful resolution of the protracted conflict in Afghanistan, to the benefit, stability and development of the whole region.

DF: Thank you very much H.E. Mr Piotr A. Opaliński thank you for the interview and team of Diplomatic Focus wish you all the best for your future?

You're most welcome. It was my pleasure







H.E. Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland

BIOGRAPHY OF PROFESSOR JACEK CZAPUTOWICZ

Professor Jacek Czaputowicz graduated from the Warsaw Central School of Planning and Statistics. He completed his Ph.D. thesis in political science at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences PAN. He obtained his habilitation in humanities at the University of Warsaw's Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. He also completed postgraduate studies at foreign universities (Oxford, among others).

In the 1970s and 1980s he was an activist of the democratic opposition. His activities had him interned on 13 December 1981 (he was released on 25 November 1982) and imprisoned in 1986 (he was released after seven months on amnesty). In 1988-1990 he was a member of the Civic Committee to the Chairman of the Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity (NFZZ Solidarność).

He joined the MFA in 1990. He was Deputy Director and then Director of the Consular and Emigration Department in 1990-1992. From 1998 to 2006 he was Deputy Head of the Civil Service. In 2006-2008 he was in charge of the Department of Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning at the MFA. From 2008 to 2012 he headed the National School of Public Administration. From January to September 2017 he was at the helm of the MFA's Diplomatic Academy. He took charge of legal and treaty affaires as MFA undersecretary of state in September 2017.

In 2007, Jacek Czaputowicz was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and in February 2017 he was decorated with the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity for his achievements in advancing Poland's independence and sovereignty and ensuring respect for human rights in the Polish People's Republic.

He is the author of over 100 articles and academic monographs, including: Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja (Theories of international relations. Criticism and systemization), 2007: Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe. Współczesne koncepcje (International security. Modern concepts), PWN 2012; Suwerenność (Sovereignty), PISM 2013, Teorie integracji europejskiej (Theories of European Integration), PWN 2018. He is a researcher at the Institute of European Studies at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University of Warsaw, specialising in European integration studies.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz of Poland Attends the 2nd Meeting of Poland-China

Noting this year marks the 70th anniversary of

the establishment of China-Poland diplomatic relationship, Wang Yi said that Poland is one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China and bilateral relations have withstood the tests of the changing international situation and always developed forward. President Xi Jinping paid a successful visit to Poland in 2016 and elevated China-Poland relations to comprehensive strategic partnership with President Andrzej Duda, charting the course for future development of bilateral relations.

Wang Yi expressed that the current international situation is full of instabilities and uncertainties. China-Poland relations not only embrace important opportunities of inheriting the past and ushering in the future, but also face many changes and challenges. The Chinese side attaches great importance to the important role Poland plays as a major country among Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) as well as in the European Union (EU). China stands ready to work with the Polish side to follow the goals set by the leaders of the two countries, carry forward traditional friendship, calibrate the right course, build cooperation consensus, tap into greater potential, open up new space for and inject new impetus into bilateral relations, and push China-Poland comprehensive strategic partnership to run at the forefront of China-CEEC relations.

First, maintain the stability of relations between the two countries. The two sides should strengthen strategic communication, maintain high-level exchanges and exchanges at various levels and in various fields, cement political mutual trust, and respect and give consideration to each other's core interests and major concerns, so as to create sound conditions for elevating the development of China-Poland relations.

Second, strengthen mutual benefit of bilateral cooperation. The two sides should give full play to the cooperation opportunities of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, align respective development strategies, focus on boosting infrastructure construction and production capacity, and jointly build a high-level Eurasian transport corridor so as to contribute to the global interconnectivity partnership. The two sides should also positively cultivate new growth points of nuclear power, environmental protection, aerospace and scientific and technological innovation, and so on. The Chinese market is open to Poland, and China is willing to import more Polish products to mitigate trade imbalance. The Chinese side encourages its enterprises to invest and operate in Poland and hopes the Polish side will offer them a fair, open and non-discriminatory business environment.

Third, enhance strategic significance of China-Poland



multilateral cooperation. China and Poland, as the initiators and the two largest countries of China-CEEC cooperation mechanism, should continue to give full play to the guiding role, and promote this cross-regional cooperation for more practical results. As important emerging economies, China and Poland should uphold multilateralism with a clear stance, well safeguard the rules-based multilateral trading system, join hands to tackle global challenges including climate change, and strengthen communication and coordination on international and regional affairs, in a bid to boost stability and prosperity of Eurasia.

Jacek Czaputowicz expressed his congratulations on the 70th anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China, and noted that Poland is really proud to be one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China and is satisfied with the long-term and sound development of bilateral relations. The Polish side will continue to comply with the one-China principle and properly handle Taiwan-related issues and other issues. The Polish side stands ready to enhance exchanges and constantly deepen mutual trust with the Chinese side. Poland, located in the heartland of Europe, is willing to actively take part in the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, become a hub of Eurasian interconnectivity, enhance the level of China-Europe freight trains, and expand exports to China. Poland welcomes investments from Chinese enterprises, and will treat enterprises of all countries according to international laws and business principles. Poland will not exclude Chinese enterprises or adopt any discriminatory measure against them. The Polish side is ready to play an active role in promoting CEEC-China cooperation and the development of EU-China relations. The two sides also exchanged in-depth views on international and regional issues of common concern.

2019 index of Economic Freedom



oland's economic freedom score is 67.8, making its economy the 46th freest in the 2019 Index. Its overall score has decreased by 0.7 point, with a plunge in the score for judicial effectiveness not fully offset by improvements in investment freedom and fiscal health. Poland is ranked 23rd among 44 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is below the regional average but above the world average.

Poland's positive economic reputation was earned through structural reforms: trade

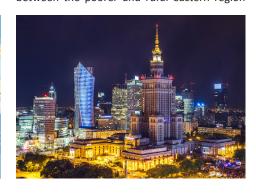
liberalization, low taxes, and business-friendly regulations. Enthusiasm for reform has waned

in recent years amid political and policy uncertainty that has contributed to currency volatility and weakened rates of investment. Challenges include deficiencies in road and rail infrastructure, a rigid labor code, a weak commercial court system, government red tape, and a burdensome tax system for entrepreneurs. Reforms are also needed to buttress the independence of the judiciary and reduce opportunities for corruption.

Background

Poland helped to bring down the Soviet Union in 1989, joined NATO in 1999, and became a member of the European Union in 2004. The conservative and Euroskeptic Law and Justice Party won a parliamentary majority in 2015, and former Minister of Finance Mateusz Morawiecki became prime minister in 2017. The government continues to clash with the EU over mandatory migrant quotas. Encouraged by a strong manufacturing sector and infrastructure investment, Poland has become the EU's eighth-largest economy, although it is somewhat constrained by labor shortages in such key sectors as construction and information technology. Tensions exist between the poorer and rural eastern region







of the country and the more prosperous and industrialized western region.

Rule of Law View Methodology

The right to acquire and dispose of property is protected by law, and the judiciary is independent, but frequent complaints about the slow and sometimes politicized judiciary have diminished confidence in the government's ability to uphold property rights. Allegations of corruption occur most frequently in government procurement, where regulations or permits are alleged to have been issued to benefit particular companies.

Government Size View Methodology

The top income tax rate is 32 percent, and the corporate tax rate is a flat 19 percent. Other taxes include value-added and property taxes. The overall tax burden equals 33.6 percent of total domestic income. Over the past three years, government spending has amounted to 41.3 percent of the country's output (GDP), and budget deficits have averaged 2.3 percent of GDP. Public debt is equivalent to 51.4 percent of GDP.

Regulatory Efficiency View Methodology

Modernization of the regulatory environment has facilitated the transition to a marketoriented economy. The nonsalary cost of employing a worker is relatively high. Unions exercise considerable influence on contract termination and other labor issues. Poland has been the largest recipient of EU subsidies, but the European Commission has threatened to freeze its subsidies unless Poland cooperates with the "founding values of the EU."

Open Markets View Methodology

The combined value of exports and imports is equal to 102.8 percent of GDP. The average applied tariff rate is 2.0 percent. Poland implements a number of EU-directed nontariff trade barriers including technical and productspecific regulations, subsidies, and quotas. A new investment promotion law was adopted in 2018. The financial sector continues to expand. FTSE Russell has upgraded the Polish stock market to "developed market" status.

Poland top of the class in the EU

Poland's GDP in the second quarter of 2017 increased by 3.9% year on year, and increased by 1.1%, when comparing quarter to quarter, results from the quick estimate made by the Central Statistical Office (GUS).

"These data indicate that the Polish economy is in a growth phase," Władysława Jastrzębska, an economist at the University of Rzeszow, told PAP with regard to the GUS figures. In her opinion, this trend will continue until the end of the year. "The next year should also be good for the Polish economy," the expert says, although it will be subject to further investment in modern production.

"Innovation policy is no doubt very important. These are prerequisites that could sustain a fairly high GDP growth rate in the future,"

Jastrzębska says. "The GUS data are a good result. The second half of the year may be even better, and throughout the year, growth will be close to 4 per cent," says Janusz Szewczak, the deputy chairman of the parliamentary Public Finance Committee.

"The opposition announced an economic downturn, the imbalance of the budget. It is exactly the opposite," he adds. Estimates provided by Eurostat also point to how healthy the Polish economy is.

They show that GDP in the euro zone increased by 2.2% in the second quarter of 2017 and by 0.6% quarter on quarter. Against this backdrop, Poland is performing excellently and is top of the class in the EU, analysts say.

Source: Dziennik Gazeta Polska

Poland 3rd on the list of the 20 best countries to invest in

Poland came in 3rd place on the ranking of the top 20 countries for investment published by U.S. News & World Report. The ranking is based on 8 attributes: entrepreneurship, dynamism, corruption, economic stability, favourable tax environment, innovation, skilled labour and technological expertise.

The list is part of the comprehensive 2018 Best Countries ranking, released by U.S. News.

The authors surveyed over 21,000 people in about 80 countries around the world. In the part focused on investment, U.S. News took into account scores primarily from more than 6,000 business decision makers.

Why Poland?

According to the ranking, the World Bank predicts that the Polish economy will be in good condition despite regional problems caused by Brexit and the refugee crisis in Europe. Moreover the Polish trade economy is closely tied to Germany. The assembly plants of many

automotive concerns operate in Poland. Polish government supports the aerospace sector, as well as the electronics and energy industries believing that these sectors will provide opportunities for further development.

List of the 20 best countries to invest in

1. Philippines 2. Indonesia

3. Poland 4. Malaysia

5. Singapore 6. Australia 7. Spain 8. Thailand

9. India 10. Oman

11. Czech Republic 12. Finland

13. Uruguay 14. Turkey

15. Ireland 16. Netherlands

17. United Kingdom18. Brazil

20. Chile 19. France

Sources: usnews.com, businessinsider.com



How Poland's 'Golden Age' of economic growth is going unreported



By Eglé Fredriksson

During the current global economic slowdown, Poland stands out as a European growth champion. With an uninterrupted pace of high growth averaging 4.2% per annum between 1992-2019, Poland is steadily catching up with Western Europe and has become the seventh largest economy in the EU with a total GDP of €524 billion. Considering its population of 38 million, scarred by a turbulent history and post-EU entry emigration bleed, we think that Poland's remarkable growth engine is not receiving the attention it deserves.

The strength and resilience of the Polish economy can be attributed to its large domestic market, early and deep economic reforms and prudent policies, with consistent EU strategy being the top priority, serving as an important discipline for political and economic integration. A vibrant entrepreneurial landscape of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) benefiting from a large domestic market and strong competitive advantages in neighbouring European countries is also an important source of growth.

Large inflows of immigrants from Ukraine and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries have supported the labour market,

exports' competitiveness, the real estate market and domestic consumption. Poland's resilience was proven during the financial crisis of 2008/09 when it was the only EU country to avoid recession. Since 1989, Poland has increased its GDP per capita almost eightfold to \$15,431 (€13,558).

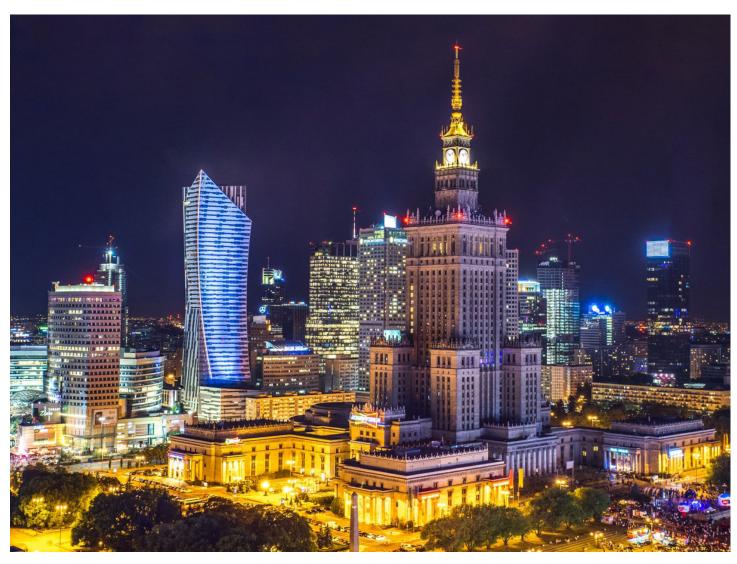
Strong domestic consumption

One of the most important features of the Polish economy is its large domestic consumer market, comprising 61% of GDP, exceeding the EU average and, in this respect, being more reminiscent of the US. In fact, household consumption, driven by a strong labour market and wage growth of more than 5%, is expected to continue to be one of the main drivers of the Polish economy in the mid-term. The government's policy of significant increases in social transfers is fuelling this growth even further. Family 500+, an important government programme introduced in 2016, has added about 2 to 3% to disposable income per year. In 2019, a new wave of social payments was announced, including an extension of the Family 500 +, amounting to 1.7% of GDP and expected to boost consumption by over 3% in 2020. By extending the Family 500+ programme, a family with two children and average net salaries of £864 per earner will see their incomes rise an additional 7% per month.

Moreover, people under the age of 26 will not pay income taxes, pensioners will see rising pensions and the general population will pay lower income taxes by 1%. Importantly, these transfers do not jeopardize the country's solid fiscal position with the budget deficit at less than 2% of GDP. These policies are clearly positive for consumption and the retail, real estate, leisure, healthcare and education sectors. This year, we see year-to-date (YTD) retail trade growth in Poland averaging 7% with a potential to accelerate further. As investors, what we like even more is the e-commerce part of consumption, growing by 15% between 2008-2018. We see the asset-light e-commerce platforms of the largest internet company in the country, Wirtualna Polska, growing by over 20% in 2018.

Infrastructure spending

In terms of infrastructure investments, Poland has been the biggest beneficiary of EU funds from 2007 to 2013 and 2014 to 2020, with €102 billion and €106 billion of funds received and to be received respectively for each period. We expect Poland to continue receiving net EU funds at a pace of around 0.8% of GDP per year,



even beyond 2020.

The construction and real estate sectors are booming, driven by infrastructure projects as well as growing business activities and expansion of global service centres in Poland, with international companies such as IBM, Citi Group, Credit Swiss and Capgemini relocating part of their operations to Poland. Yields in the real estate sector have declined to record a low of 5% and we see increasing sizes of deals for business office skyscrapers reaching €400-600 million with yields at, or even below, 5% which are approaching Western European levels. Several real estate companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange benefit from these opportunities and show increasing, high double-digit, dividend yields and rising rental revenues.

The New Economy

Poland also managed to find robust innovative sources of growth in the 'New economy.' One of the fastest growing sectors is video game development. The success of CD Projekt, now a company with a market capitalisation of over €5bn surging almost ten-fold over the last 3 years, triggered an impressive growth in the number of video game developers in the country. Currently, there are over 300 game developing companies operating in Poland and over 20 are listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

Risks to growth

What are the risks to this Polish growth story? The most widely cited sources of economic headwinds include deteriorating demographics, ageing population and emigration. Nevertheless, since 2014, around 1-1.3 million Ukrainians arrived in Poland to work, and together with the inflow from CIS countries, the number of immigrants has reached 2 million, remarkably the highest immigration inflow in absolute numbers for any EU country. According to estimates from the National Bank of Poland, Ukrainian immigrants have a positive impact of 0.3-0.9% on GDP per year. In terms of external risks, exports to Germany and the EU could be under pressure amid concerns around escalating trade wars and a eurozone slowdown. However, it is important to note that despite its proximity, Poland is less susceptible to a German slow-down than its Central and Eastern European (CEE) peers.

'Golden age' of growth

Currently, Polish equity valuations are at the lowest level in seven years, around ten times price earnings. Together with a solid Earnings Per Share (EPS) growth of 8.7% forecasted between 2018 and 2021, and a potential for improving dividend yield from the current 2.5% to above 4%, the Polish market offers an attractive proposition to investors. While we might be close to the peak of the macro cycle, sharp deceleration of the economy is unlikely due to the strong domestic growth drivers in place. The timing might be right for investors to finally capitalise on what the World Bank, in atypically ornate rhetoric, has termed the Polish "golden age" of growth.

Eglé Fredriksson is Portfolio Advisor at East Capital, advising on the Baltic Strategy and Eastern Europe mandates





Developing national military capabilities is an indispensable component of Poland's security policy. The armed forces offer not only the requisite capabilities to defend the country and meet allied commitments, they are also a vital tool for pursuing Polish foreign policy goals. Their operational effectiveness in carrying out tasks both at home and abroad enhances Poland's credibility and high standing. Moreover, it facilitates the promotion of Polish interests abroad. The Strategic Defence Review, currently underway, will help to identify priority areas in the development of Poland's armed forces and thus ensure that these forces stand ready to enact Poland's security policy.

In parallel with developing its own military potential, Poland will continue measures to reinforce Allied military presence along NATO's eastern borders. The measures will include political and diplomatic steps to fully implement decisions taken at the Newport and Warsaw Summits, and to continue these policies at subsequent summits, as well as initiatives aimed at providing Allied forces in the territory of the Republic of Poland with adequate logistics and infrastructure facilities.

Poland will maintain the size and structure of its military budget in line with allied commitments, as a necessary step in attaining strategic goals set out in its security policy. Poland needs a robust and modern defence industry, with strong ties to allied industries. In order to enhance its defence capabilities, Poland will work closely with like-minded countries and will seek to strengthen strategic alliances - both bilaterally and within NATO and the EU (especially the European Defence Agency). In this regard, it will be paramount

that Poland actively participate in EU security initiatives stemming from the 2016 European Union Global Strategy. The sustainable growth of the European defence industry should lead to a qualitative improvement in the defence capabilities of EU countries; at the same time, it should not detract from Member States' own defence policy competencies as set out in the Treaties.

Source: Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021





National day of Poland celebrated

To celebrate the National Independence Day of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Armed Forces Day, Ambassador Piotr Opalinski and Mrs Jolanta Opalinski hosted a reception at the Marriott Hotel. The event was co-hosted by Defence Attache Col. Bogdan Obuchowski and attended by diplomats; members of the Diplomatic Defence Corps; Pakistani armed forces officers and civilians of note, while the guest of honor was Minister of Defence Production, Zubaida Jalal Khan. The cake cutting ceremony took place after the national anthems of both countries had been played.















Special Supplement on Poland





Special Supplement on Poland





Credibility and Global Obligations

redibility constitutes one of the preconditions of an effective foreign policy defined as the readiness to take action in line with one's professed values and undertaken commitments. High credibility may boost a country's international status and its ability to form coalitions. To strengthen its credibility on the international stage, Poland will need to engage politically, economically, and sometimes even militarily, in processes taking shape both in its immediate neighbourhood, and on a global scale.

Poland's non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2018-2019 is a step toward strengthening its international credibility. Poland aims to bolster the rules-based global order in the spirit of solidarity, responsibility, and commitment. Poland is prepared to make significant contributions to conflict prevention and resolution around the world. An important element of these efforts will be our country's return to UN peacekeeping missions. Sending Polish troops to faraway countries where Poland has no direct interests is a difficult and often unpopular decision. But Poland participates in such international operations to advance the cause of human rights and democratic freedoms, and to raise its international standing in security matters. When we stand in solidarity with those in need, we do so in Poland's best tradition of idealism in international relations.

Credibility can also be enhanced by meeting commitments in humanitarian and development aid, and by taking part in the global partnership to advance the international community's goals. Today, 800 million people live in extreme poverty; millions more are victims of hostilities, natural disasters, and climate change. To improve their lot, and to create conditions conducive to the growth of prosperity in the world, Poland will implement its Development Cooperation Programme for 2016-2020 and will support efforts to further the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account both domestic conditions and partner countries' needs and priorities.

Poland will adopt a flexible development assistance mechanism to meet its partners' needs and priorities, both immediate and longterm. Development cooperation should also serve the interests of every one of its actor. Poland will support private entrepreneurship in partner countries and Polish businesses would do well to support development projects. Poland will also encourage closer private sector engagement in development cooperation.

Poland sees the solution to the ongoing migration crisis in Europe in initiatives combining humanitarian assistance, development assistance, military operations, and effective border protection. The crisis calls for a European response that builds on individual countries' capabilities. By pursuing the idea of flexible solidarity, Poland will participate in EU efforts aimed at tackling problems at their roots. This approach will apply to all areas: humanitarian assistance to refugees, development assistance to African and Middle Eastern countries, newly-shaped EU trade policy instruments, and support for structural reforms in countries fighting the socalled Islamic State.

Consular services also provide a number of tools that enhance Poland's credibility. These involve primarily the protection of Polish citizens and the rights of Polish minorities abroad, especially in Germany, Lithuania, and Belarus. They also include a flexible visa policy and local border traffic – both of which reaffirm Poland's openness to cooperation with Eastern European societies.

If it is to effectively carry out these humanitarian, development, and consular tasks, Poland must possess a robust network of diplomatic and consular posts. This is why the Polish state will seek to strengthen this network, or at least reverse the negative trend in this regard.

The efficacy of Polish foreign policy is contingent on the quality of its diplomacy and - more broadly - its government administration. But it also builds on the capabilities and contributions of local governments and NGOs, active not only in Poland's immediate neighbourhood, but also in distant parts of the world. Poland will increasingly tap into their potential.

Source: Polish foreign policy strategy 2017-2021





Polish providing ostering growth, prosperity to its citizens, and bolstering the country's international economic standing are some of the key goals of Poland's foreign policy. As such, Poland will seek international support for the implementation of the Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with prospects until 2030) and the Plan for Responsible Development, complete with its five pillars:

- 1 Reindustrialization
- 2 Development of innovative companies
- 3 ensuring capital for development
- 4 Foreign expansions
- 5 Social and regional growths

The ambitious plan to accelerate Poland's growth will take place at a time of profound social and economic changes in modern-day societies, including the digital revolution, urbanisation leading to a growing number of megacities, demographic shifts in Africa, and ageing societies in Europe and Asia. More and newer resources will be needed to meet the challenges of a growing and ageing – global population.

Poland's economic prospects will largely depend on the course taken by the European Union. Our country will be greatly affected by what happens to the Eurozone, Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, energy and climate policy, and the plan to create a Single European Transport Area. The EU single market is highly susceptible to hidden and indirect protectionist mechanisms, in the form of welfare legislation and practices which lead to a fragmentation of the single market and reduce competition. Poland is determined to maintain unity within the EU and to avoid internal divisions over economic governance. The integrity of the EU single market is a crucial precondition for economic growth in both Poland and Europe. Poland will strive to expand the single market, especially in unfinished areas (services) and novel areas (the digital market).

Poland will support measures aimed at strengthening a transparent decision-making process and the democratic mandate in the functioning of EU institutions. Poland will take efforts to truly put into practice the four fundamental freedoms - the freedom of movement of people, goods, capital, and services. These freedoms have been increasingly subject to limitations that carry the risk of eroding the EU's foundations. It is in Poland's interest to actively participate in the debate on the future of European integration. The fact that Poland benefits from European integration will continue to serve as the bedrock of our position. Nevertheless, we do not turn a blind eye to the EU's flaws. The most serious threat to EU stability is the prospect of transforming the Union into a project based on a bureaucratic elite who are not subject to democratic oversight. The continuing transfer of power to the EU level – via majority voting in ever more areas – threatens to deprive Member States of their sovereignty. Hence, when it comes to European integration, Poland will be

guided by the following principle: the degree of integration shall be determined by the degree of support provided to it by the citizen-voter.

Energy constitutes an important dimension of Polish activity within the EU. Poland faces a singular challenge when it comes to obtaining advantageous terms from the Clean Energy for All Europeans package - especially regarding the country's freedom in shaping its energy mix and using coal as part of that mix. Poland should also retain the capacity to manage its own energy grid to ensure energy security. Furthermore, Poland will support the development of the Energy Union through its continued efforts to liberalise the EU market, diversify supply sources, and develop transit infrastructure. Central Europe would especially benefit from projects along the North-South axis that enable the transit of natural gas between the Baltic Sea region and the Balkans, and that provide access to Norwegian deposits. The expansion of supraregional energy interconnectors would, for instance, lead to greater use of the LNG Terminal in Świnoujście.

It is in the EU interest for national energy systems to rely on Member States' own resources and generation capacities. Therefore, the EU should uphold technological neutrality when it comes to Member States' decisions on energy sector development and ensure contract transparency. These rules must also apply to non-EU suppliers wishing to operate in the single market.

Source: Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021



oland's international connectivity - through trade, investment, migration, communications, and transport - is among the highest in Europe, which helps the country's firms become more productive through knowledge and technology transfers, says a new World Bank report, "Critical Connections: Promoting Economic Growth and Resilience in Europe and Central Asia."

"Our analysis shows that increased international integration, through a network of connections, facilitates the transfer of technology and ideas between countries, firms, and people - which is essential for boosting long-term growth and shared prosperity," says David Gould, World Bank Lead Economist for the Europe and Central Asia region and lead-author of the report.

Poland is listed among the most connected countries in Europe, mainly because of its strong infrastructure transport links, which spur international trade of goods and services. During its economic transition, Poland also boosted its links with Germany, the best connected country in Europe. Additionally, Poland leveraged its growing ties to Germany to develop connections with that country's trading partners and expand trade to broader markets within Europe and beyond.

The new World Bank report measures connectivity by creating a new indicator, the Multidimensional Connectivity (MDC) index, that combines

several channels of international connections, including: trade, FDI, migration, information and communication technology (ICT), and transport links. According to the report, the best connected sub-regions are Western Europe, followed by Northern, Central, and Southern Europe. The Western Balkans, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus have the lowest levels of overall connectivity.

"The 'neighborhood effect' of bordering Germany has helped Poland integrate into German networks and thus participate in global value chains. To maximize their exposure to international knowledge flows and benefit from integration, countries should maintain low barriers to international transactions, keep minimal constraints on inward and outward FDI and participate in deep multilateral trade agreements that support integration of services markets. Adopting international best practice for standards governing product markets, worker protections, and the environment would also encourage international connectivity.

POLAND -INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ECONOMY

Warsaw Stock Exchange reopening

OECD affiliation 1996 European Union affiliation 2004 Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) affiliation 2015

Beggining of economic changes in CEE 1989 WTO affiliation 1995 NATO affiliation 1999 Schengen Zone affiliation 2007



Reasons to Study in Poland



1. TRADITION

oland's traditions of academic education goes back to 1364 when King Casimir the Great established the Cracow Academy, known today as the Jagiellonian University. The Cracow Academy, being one of the oldest in the world, took after academies in Bologna and Padua, and was the second university in Central Europe after Prague. About two centuries later, in 1579, King Stefan Batory transformed the existing Jesuit College in Vilnius into the Vilnius Academy and in 1661 Jan Casimir, King of Poland, transformed the Jesuit College into the Lvov Academy. Thus, by the end of the 17th century, the Poland and Lithuania Kingdoms had three flourishing universities providing academic education to both national and international students.

2. MODERNITY

Poland is a modern and dynamic member of the European Union where education really counts. Over the last year, the country has grown more popular among international students and its universities have been

developing international curricula, contributing to the rise of foreign students to more than 70.000. Poland - with its over 400 universities, more than 800 programmes taught in English, its safety, fast-growing economy and modern cities, its good education and lifestyle - can no longer be overlooked when deciding where to study abroad.

3. BOLOGNA PROCESS

Poland plays an active part in the Bologna Process. Owing to the introduction of threestage education modelled on Bachelor/Master/

Doctoral studies as well as the European Credit Transfer System, both Polish students and foreigners studying in Poland stay fully mobile and can continue their education elsewhere in the European Union. Within just the Erasmus Program that has been going on for over 20 years now, over 43,000 foreign students have come to study in Poland while almost 100,000 students from Poland have taken part of their education in another country within the European Union. Foreign students coming to Poland can expect the most attractive and diversified education opportunities meeting





high European standards. They can study medicine, biotechnology or engineering, but also art and business. The diploma awarded to them upon graduation is recognised not only Europe-wide but also in key countries of the world.

4. HIGH QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Polish higher education system is well developed. The quality of the education provided is monitored and regularly evaluated. The main Polish institutions in charge of quality assurance in higher education are: the Polish Accreditation Committee, the General Council for Science and Higher Education and the Conference of Rectors of the Academic Schools in Poland. There are over 5000 courses available in Poland and each of them has had to gain the Polish Accreditation Committee's

approval. Among them there are a number of fields of study that have received the grade: excellent. The list of excellent fields of study is available at the Polish Accreditation Committee website: http://www.pka.edu.pl/?q=en/oceny.

COMPETITIVE COSTS OF LIVING

AND STUDYING

Compared to other EU countries, the tuition fees in Poland are highly competitive and the costs of living are a fraction of what a foreign student would have to spend in other European







TOURISM IN POLAND



Everything you should see and do on a trip to

ith the Foster + Partner designed 310m Varso Tower set to be completed in 2020, Warsaw is on track to displace London as home to the tallest building in the European Union. Closer to the ground, a youthful energy is also transforming this 700-year-old survivor into an ideal location for a central European city break.

A respect for history

Eighty years ago Nazi Germany aimed to wipe Warsaw from the face of the earth - a goal that was very nearly achieved by the end of WWII. However, Varsovians are nothing if not tenacious, and out of the rubble and ashes it is miraculous what has survived - some of which is now preserved in the city's top museums.

Start in the Old Town, itself a remarkable reconstruction of how this part of Warsaw looked in the 17th and 18th centuries. Here, the innovative Museum of Warsaw displays thousands of eclectic objects, each illuminating different aspects of the city's history. The museum has several other branches scattered around the Old Town that are worth searching out as well as the equally impressive Praga Museum of Warsaw over on Warsaw's east side across the Vistula River.

Next, deep dive into the city's darkest days at the exceptional Warsaw Rising Museum. Housed in a former tram power station, this museum forensically covers the heroic but doomed uprising against the German occupation in 1944 via an immersive range of interactive displays, including archival films and personal accounts.

Also leaving practically no stone unturned on a millennium of Jewish life in Poland is the award-winning POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The multimedia permanent exhibition shows how much Jewish culture enriched Poland, before Europe's largest Jewish community was practically annihilated during WWII. The museum's stunning contemporary building, designed by Finnish architectural firm Lahdelma & Mahlamäk, is a sight in its own right and stands amid a park at the heart of the former Jewish ghetto.

Amazing architecture

From medieval churches and revamped art nouveau market halls such as Hala Koszvki, to a flying saucer shaped former railway ticket office that's now a cafe, Warsaw puts on quite the architectural show. Many of the city's most historic buildings, including the Royal Castle, are restorations or total recreations, but they are no less impressive for that.

During the Communist era socialist realist style went off the scale for the Marszałkowska Residential District (MDM) with its chiselled heroic worker reliefs and giant pair of candelabra on Plac Konstytucji, as well as the monolithic Palace of Culture & Science, a 1950s 'gift' from the USSR to Poland. To see some of the vast complex's grand interior architecture, join the guided tour offered by Creatours whose booth is next to the ticket office for the observation terrace.

In recent years trendy café/bar/theatre and gallery Studio Teatrgaleria has spearheaded a cultural project to make better use of part of the somewhat forlorn Plac Defilad that

surrounds the complex. Between May and August, in front of the Palace's main eastern entrance, events such as film screenings and concerts are mounted. In winter rent ice skates and work your way around the ice rink that is set up in front of the northern entrance. Other noteworthy contemporary buildings include the Copernicus Science Centre, a fun and hugely popular interactive learning experience; and Warsaw University Library, with monumental copper panels on its facade symbolising the pages of books. In summer the library also offers a rooftop garden from which to relax and take in the views.

The great outdoors

Since 2014 Warsaw has run an architecture award; the 2018 winner was the Vistulan Boulevards, an imaginatively landscaped promenade that has refocussed attention on the river that splits the city. On the Vistula's east bank footpaths lead through riverside woods to Rusałka Beach, a favourite spot for Varsovians to relax and work on their tans in the warmer months - and one of several beaches along the river.

The former royal hunting ground of Łazienki Park has been transformed over the centuries to include themed gardens, palaces, an ornamental lake and an amphitheatre. It's home to the Chopin Monument, a fabulous art nouveau bronze statue beside which free piano recitals by award-winning musicians are held every Sunday between mid-May and September. Another pleasure for nature lovers is the 45-hectare Wilanów Park surrounding Wilanów Palace, 12km southeast of the city centre. Baroque Italian gardens, a Renaissanceinspired rose garden and an English-style landscape park are all part of Wilanów's design. Even in winter the park is still worth visiting as it is transformed nightly by coloured illuminations.

Art and design

While out at Wilanów don't miss the Poster Museum in the palace's renovated stable block. Polish poster designers have gained international acclaim for their original works: some wonderful examples are displayed in the regularly changing exhibitions here, and you can buy classic images in its shop. Back in the city centre, Galeria Plakatu Polskiego has the best selection of original and reproduction posters for sale.

Several centuries of outstanding Polish art and design are on display at the National Museum. The eye-popping collection here covers everything from Medieval religious icons to dazzling decorative arts. The museum's Polish Design Gallery displays iconic pieces such as Ćmielów porcelain, 1960s fabric prints and Teresa Kruszewska's 1973 'Tulip' armchair;













Art is not restricted to galleries in Warsaw - it can be found in the form of giant Communist era mosaics that decorated the side of the buildings, as well as the contemporary counterpart of painted murals. The old industrial buildings and tenements of Praga, in particular, have become a favoured canvas for street artists, thanks to events such as Street Art Doping. Preserving another Varsovian art form is the Neon Museum, a vibrant retirement home for iconic communist-era neon signs. The Museum of Modern Art is also doing its bit to make sure art has a profile outside of formal gallery walls. While the institution awaits its permanent home to be built on the north side of Plac Defilad, it has a temporary exhibition space at the Museum on the Vistula: the exterior of this pavilion is covered by 1600 sq m work by Sławomir Pawszak, Poland's largest painting. Another of the museum's projects is Bródno Sculpture Park, which brings to Warsaw's north eastern suburbs contemporary works by the likes of Paweł Althamer, Youssouf Dara and Olafur Eliasson.

Eat, drink and be merry

Having fed your mind and soul with the best of Warsaw it's now time to feed your stomach. Whatever your budget you won't be disappointed. Milk bars (bar mleczny) are super cheap, self-service canteens that are a hangover from communist times. These serve hearty Polish food, mainly vegetarian or dairybased, hence the name. The best of these operations, such as Prasowy, have given their proletarian decor a contemporary makeover. If you're in town on a weekend get over to Hala Gwardii. This 1902 art nouveau market hall once hosted boxing matches; it's back to selling food and drink, though now in the shape of hipster street-food outlets, craft beer bars and third wave coffee kiosks.

If you'd prefer a traditional style Polish restaurant, romantic Dom Polski in chic Saska Kępa is a great example. For something more contemporary, and to experience local chefs working at the top of their game, book ahead for Bez Gwiazdek or Zoni both of which offer menus that provide give historical and regional Polish recipes a modern twist.

Zoni is part of Koneser, a multiple use complex that's the latest chapter in the hip revamp of Praga. Top brands of Polish vodka were once produced in the handsome red brick buildings here, as you'll discover at the interactive Polish Vodka Museum. Take the tour here and you learn all you need to know about the spirit finishing up, of course, with a tasting of three types of vodka: na zdrowie (cheers)!





ustling beaches and promenades vibrant with life, deserted dunes, steep cliffs and white sand—the Baltic coast will suit everyone's taste. Where to go sunbathing? Here are our tips.

"Polish coastline is stunningly attractive because of its diverse landscape—dunes alternating with cliffs. Scenic beaches lie next to the Woliński and Słowiński National Parks, on the Hel Peninsula, and the Vistula Spit. The wild beach in Leba, on the outskirts of the Słowiński National Park, is my favourite, but I also like beaches on the Hel, especially along the seacoast between Jurata and the town of Hel," says Marta Chełkowska, Director of the Department of Tourism and Promotion at the Pomerania Province Marshal's Office and President of the Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organisation, whom I asked for advice when making a list of Poland's loveliest beaches.

We set off on a tour of Polish beaches from the westernmost tip of the coastline, the isles of Uznam and Wolin. Here Swinoujscie reigns supreme, leading past and present rankings. Its beach stretches for almost 10 kilometres (3.7km on Uznam and 6km on Wolin Isles), and it's also the widest natural Polish beach (over 200m in places). With water temperature reaching 25 degrees Celsius in summer-rare for the Baltic Sea-and its shallow seabed, the beach is a major tourist attraction. Its water cleanness and safety have been attested by the Blue Flag, an international certificate awarded for the tenth consecutive time in 2015.

Miedzyzdroje on Wolin Isle, dubbed "Polish Cannes," boasts its own Walk of Fame along the waterfront promenade, with handprints of Polish actors and filmmakers, in the fashion of its Hollywood original. The resort has a beautiful sandy beach divided by a 395-metre pier offering a view of the cliffs. Visitors to the nearby Woliński National Park are welcomed to take a walk along its routes, like the 19-km long "red" trail with a stop for a scenic view on Kawcza Gora, which runs along the seashore and cuts through the beach to Miedzyzdroje.

Going farther east, we reach Trzesacz, with its unique high cliffs changing into dunes and white sandy beaches. The village is famous for its Gothic church (turn of the 15th century) which used to stand in its centre, but now hangs 'suspended' on a high cliff that is being washed away by the sea. If you are looking for a ride in a historical carriage along the picturesque Gryfice - Pogorzelica route, you can hop on the train at the village station of the Gryfice Narrow Gauge Railway.

Next stops are Ustka and Leba, situated along the central coastline. Ustka is divided in half by a port canal; its eastern beach bustles with life along the promenade, while its western beach is more secluded. The sand here is fine, delicate and ... there's more of it every year because the town has been extending its beach by adding sand extracted from the port canal. Off season, Ustka draws many amber hunters.

In nearby Leba, the wide sandy beach is shielded by a strip of pine forest. The Słowiński National Park, a UNESCO biosphere reserve and one of Europe's biggest clusters of mobile dunes, stretches westwards of the town's outskirts.

Now we head for the Hel Peninsula, with such resorts as Chalupy (the capital of Polish naturists), Jastarnia, Jurata and Hel. The sand here is white and fine, and the beaches vast. With shallow waters and strong winds, the Hel Peninsula is Poland's top windsurfing spot. There's a railway line and a bike trail that run along the peninsula.

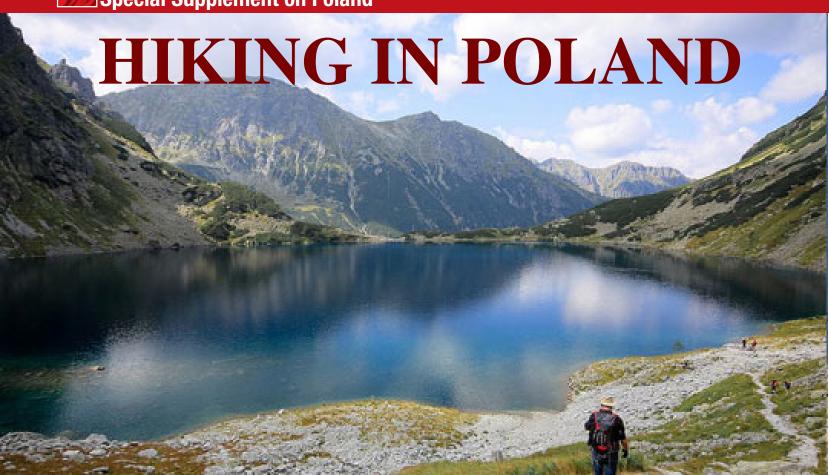
A long and wide beach in Jastarnia, separated from the town by a belt of dunes overgrown with pines, is another tourist attraction worthy of mention.

Hel, a former fishing settlement located on the tip of the peninsula, is surrounded by white sandy beaches on three sides. Beaches closer to Gdansk Bay have good facilities, while those lying north of the town of Hel, on the open sea, offer a more pristine landscape.

The 4.5 km long beach in Sopot, one of the best kept on Gdansk Bay, can be admired from Europe's longest wooden pier (511.5 m).

Poland's seacoast runs to the east as far as the Vistula Spit, a narrow strip of land separating Gdansk Bay and the Vistula Lagoon, overgrown with pine and beech wood. Its most scenic resort is Krynica Morska, with a promenade, a lighthouse, stylish guesthouses and a sandy beach.

NELLY KAMIŃSKA



n Poland, hill-walkers will find a network of some 15,000 miles of marked trails, including some of the Polish sections of the trans-European routes.

Favourites among the walking routes includes the dunes, lakes and forests of the seaside Slowinski National Park, the high peaks of the Tatra Mountains, the most eastern of the Alpine mountains, which frame the horizon at the mountain resort of Zakopane in southern Poland and the Sudety Mountains where the Polish, German and Czech borders meet and the region is rich in castles, caves and wildlife.

Walking trails in and around Zakopane range from winding paths suitable for leisurely strollers to rocky ridges and high mountain treks for the more adventurous hikers. The small country inns capture the Polish way of life along the trails in the Carpathian highlands near the Slovakian and Ukrainian borders. Specialist walking tour operators offer a three country tour which in Poland includes Krakow and Kazimierz, in Slovakia the Tatra Mountains and in Hungary the Tokaj vineyard country. Hikers can walk all the way to the summit of the highest peak of the Rysy at 8,197ft, the highest peak in Poland or to Teryho Chata in Slovakia at 6,609ft, a mountain shelter built more than 100 years ago or to the base of Mount Gerlachovsky also in Slovakia at 8,710ft the highest peak in the Tatra Mountains.

HIKING IN **POLAND GUIDE BIESZCZADY**

1. Wyzna Pass – Polonina Wetlinska Mountain Wetlina (2 hours)

Hikers' favourite, the trail is steep, but well-maintained. Most of the tourist traffic concentrates on the eastern slope of Połonina Wetlińska, near the Chatka Puchatka shelter. The fastest and easiest approach is from the Wyżna Pass, located on the southern slope.

2. Wyzna Pass - Mala Rawka - Wielka Rawka-Kremenaros - Ustrzyki Gorne (4-5 hours)

The trail takes you from Wyżna Pass through Mała Rawka to Wielka Rawka. It follows to Kremenaros, which is where the Polish, Ukrainian and Slovakian borders meet, and ends in Ustrzyki Górne.

3. Wolosate - Tarnica - Halicz - Rozsypaniec -Wolosate (8 hours)

Reaching some of the highest peaks in one day may be challenging, but worth it. Running through picturesque valleys, the trail takes you through Tarnica and Halicz to Rozsypaniec, where you can enjoy peace and quiet until you reach Wołosate.

4. Berehy Gorne – Połonina Carynska – Ustrzyki Gorne (4 hours)

The massif of Carynska Mountain is one of the easiest climbs, even if the ascents vary from gentle to disastrously steep. Starting at Berehy Górne, the trail takes you to Caryńska Mountain Peak, which offers the stunning view of Tarnica Nest.

5. Pszczeliny – Bukowy Berd – Tarnica Wolosate (7 hours)

One of the most interesting and moderately challenging trails. It starts in Pszczeliny and follows through Bukowy Berd to Tarnica and Wołosate.

7. Komancza – Duszatyn – Duszatyn Lakes – Chryszczata – Zebrak Pass – Wolosan – Cisna (9

The relatively easy trail leads through the forest for the main part. The highlights include some forest hamlets, the old narrow gauge pathway and the UPA troops battlefields.

8. Cisna - Jaslo - Fereczata - Smerek (6-7



hours)

Steep and monotonous at first, the trails compensates for the effort with excellent views at Jasło. It takes in the World War I trenches, as well as an old cemetery and a former Orthodox Church site on the way back from Smerek.

HIKING IN POLAND GUIDE - SUDETY

Mountain ranges, national parks, historic places, underground tourist trails, lakes and gorges - the Sudetes have it all. Stretching along the Polish-Czech border, the Sudetes offer the most geologically varied landscape. To the north, they form gently rolling foothills - the Sudetes Foothills, while more to the south they get increasingly bigger with the highest peak Sniezka at 1602 metres. They are subdivided into several mountain ranges, such as the Table Mountains, the Izera Mountains and some others.

The Izera Mountains

Swieradow Zdroj – Stog Izerski – Szklarska Poreba (4.5 hour) - The trail leads from Swieradow Zdroj, through Stóg Izerski, to Szklarska Poręba. It takes in also Łużec Mountain, Wysoka Kopa Massive, a quartz mine, and Wysoki Kamien peak.

Szklarska Poreba - Szrenica - Sniezne Kotly -Sniezka (4.5 hours) - The first section of the trail leads through Szrenica to Śnieżne Kotły and takes in the view of Kamienczyk Waterfall in the Sudetes. Through Dom Slaski mountain shelter, it ascends to the peak of Śnieżka, which takes another half an hour.

The Owl Mountains

Sokola Pass - Wielka Sowa (1 hour) - Starting in Sokola Pass, the trail takes in the view of the stunning Table Mountains, Owl Mountains and Wałbrzych Mountains. Initially fairly easy, the ascent gets increasingly difficult, full of rocks and scars. Wielka Sowa peak is where a number of other trails begin, leading through other amazing Sudeten landscapes.

The Table Mountains

Karlow - Bledne Skaly (2 hours) - The trail leads through the most characteristic mountain area of the Sudetes. The Table Mountains are gigantic sandstone slabs rising some 250 meters over the surrounding valleys. Million



years of erosion have created spectacular rock formations, which resemble rock labyrinth. Paying entrance fee is required.

Snieznik Massive

Miedzygorze - Snieznik (3 hours) - The trail from Miedzygorze to Snieznik leads through the Na Sniezniku mountain shelter. Here, a number of other trails begin, such as the red trail, leading to Black Mountain (another 2 hours), or a yellow trail, leading to Bear Cave (2.5 hour).

The thrilling heights and breathtaking scenery attract thousands of tourist every year. The highlights include the Dunajec River Gorge in Pieniny National Park and the Homole Ravine, as well as a number of popular peaks, such as the Three Crowns, Okrąglica, Sokolica, Czertezik and Castle Mountain, offering the view of the meandering Dunajec, the Slovakian Tatras, Sromowce Niżne, and Red Monastery on the Slovakian border.

In the whole region you find a multitude of hiking paths that bring you close to nature. There are hiking trails on different levels, from easy walks along the foothills to the high mountain walks. For safety reasons, you may consider going on a guided tour with a professional guide.

HIKING IN POLAND GUIDE - PIENINY

The thrilling heights and breathtaking scenery attract thousands of tourist every year. The highlights include the Dunajec River Gorge in Pieniny National Park and the Homole Ravine, as well as a number of popular peaks, such as the Three Crowns, Okrąglica, Sokolica, Czertezik and Castle Mountain, offering the view of the meandering Dunajec, the Slovakian Tatras, Sromowce Niżne, and Red Monastery on the Slovakian border.

Trails

In the whole region you find a multitude of hiking paths that bring you close to nature. There are hiking trails on different levels, from easy walks along the foothills to the high mountain walks. For safety reasons, you may consider going on a guided tour with a professional guide.

Weather

The climate in Pieniny is mild. It is colder on



north-facing slopes and valley bottoms, and warm and more humid on south-facing hillsides. In summer you can expect the temperatures between 13 - 16 degrees, while in winter they can drop below 30 degrees, yet it is elevation that influences the temperature most. On mountain tops it may be chilly even in summer and you may expect thick layers of snow.

Mountain clothing and equipment

You need less coverage for a quick hike in summer than you need for an extended hike in the middle of winter. In general, you should wear clothes that wick away moisture from your skin while preventing precipitation from getting you wet. Consider taking a rain coat, sun glasses, a flashlight, a pocketknife, a map and the first aid kit.

Mountain hazards

The Pieniny can be potentially dangerous if you are not careful enough. Most accidents happen due to bad visibility resulting from bad weather or darkness, snow, rock falls and lightning. A common hazard is rain and wind as the conditions become slippery, while the strong wind may make people stumble. Due to the abundance of wildlife in the Pieniny you also run the risk of encountering wild animals or being stung by adders or insects.





Polish Food, Drink and Culinary Tradition

leliczka and Bochnia near Kraków. Historically, Polish forests have been abundant in wild game and were home to honey producing bees. This made Polish cuisine rich in venison, and Polish honey was sought after product throughout the Europe.

Today, honey making is experiencing a renaissance, and many excellent small and large apiaries produce honey of exceptional quality in a variety of flavors. It generally served with cottage cheese.

The nature's bounty is evident in much of Polish cooking. The most commonly used cereals are wheat and rye, which for centuries have been used for baking fantastic Polish breads. Our recipes are also known for using fish.

A wide variety of vegetables was introduced to the Polish table by the Italian-born Polish queen Bona Sforza. They are served raw as a salad or boiled and topped with breadcrumbs browned in butter. Our achievement, however, is the impressive selection of soups – over 200 varieties – and pickles. Pickled cucumbers are one of the symbols of Polish cuisine.

Today, young chefs are combining the rich, centuries-old traditions of Polish cuisine with contemporary culinary trends, creating unique but typically Polish flavors. They select the best Polish products from environmentally-friendly regions where traditional farming methods are still in use.

We invite you to start your Polish culinary

adventure with exploring some of the most trending gastronomic regions such as Pomerania (Gdańsk) and Silesia (Katowice), and cities of Kraków, Łódź, Poznań, Warsaw, and Wrocław. You are also welcome to become more familiar with our regional delicacies, recipes, and flavors from the articles in the section below. Smacznego! Enjoy!

7 MEALS YOU SHOULD TRY WHEN VISITING POLAND

When thinking of Polish food, there are a few staples that immediately come to mind, like bigos or pierogi. From meaty stews to delightful treats, discover some more traditional foods you can try in Poland.

Traditional Polish pierogi

Pierogi can be served with a soup, as a starter or a main course, sprinkled with fried onion and bacon, or as an accompaniment to the main course. Favourite fillings include cottage cheese with potatoes, cabbage and mushrooms, seasoned meat with onion or any other filling you have to hand.

Sour cucumber soup

Nothing warms up the belly like the Polish cucumber soup. It is a consistent and tasty dish with lots ingredients like bacon, sour pickled cucumbers, leek, carrots, celery, pepper, parsnip and many more. It can be prepared one day ahead and it will stay fine if kept in the refrigerator and heated before serving.

Polish beef tripe

A traditional Polish meat stew that looks like a dense soup, made of cleaned strips of beef tripe and vegetables. Uncommonly tasty, it is eaten with fresh bread or roll.

Schabowy

Schabowy is Poland's national dish. It is a kind of a pork chop, traditionally coated in egg and breadcrumbs, and fried in hot oils with onion. Often served with the classic sides of grated beetroot or sauerkraut and mashed potatoes, it is undeniably delicious.

Kaszanka - the Polish black pudding

Kaszanka is a kind of Polish sausage filled with buckwheat and pork meat. Similar to the English blood pudding, it can be crunchy on the outside when grilled or fried. Because of the buckwheat filler it has pleasant non-pasty texture.

Jellied carp

Jellied carp is a traditional dish in Poland at Christmas. Best made a day in advance, it is made of a cooked carp and vegetables covered with jelly. When the jelly sets, it is ready to serve.

Bigos - the Polish hunter's stew

Bigos or the Polish hunter's stew is a hearty, long-simmered meat and sauerkraut stew, made of any combination of pork, beef, game, poultry and vegetables. This single pot dish is usually made during long winter days or for special occasions.



isitors might head to Poland for many reasons. Heritage, family ties and castles are all big draws, but there is no denying the fact that the rich culture of Poland is also a highlight of any trip to the country. Music, arts and crafts are all tangible representations of the heritage and culture that Poland has to offer.

One of the best ways to truly understand the history and culture of Poland is by spending time in some of its many museums. Poland's museums vary in subject, as well in size ranging from those housed in grand structures to smaller museums that focus in-depth on just one or two aspects of culture. For example, The Historical Museum of the City of Kraków provides a well-structured and exciting look at the development of the city over the years. One particular part of the museum that can't be missed is the Underground Market Square Exhibition, located under the market square, which gives visitors a one-of-a-kind opportunity to look at life in Kraków as it evolved throughout the centuries.

As might be expected from the birthplace of Chopin, Poland is a place where music is appreciated, and travelers can enjoy it in The Grand Theatre of Warsaw, for example, is a sprawling building with a rich history. It was completely devastated during World War II but was eventually restored and now hosts operas and ballets year-round. The Polish National Opera performs works by Polish composers as well as classic operas. The renowned Warsaw Ballet Company also presents here.

Art has a particular way of capturing moments in time and portraying events, scenes, and feelings in ways that people can relate to. Poland's many art galleries are a precious resource of paintings, sculptures, and other handmade crafts. Of particular interest is the Polish pottery. Better known as Bolesławiec Pottery or Polish Stoneware, this pottery is a unique item that hails from Poland's Silesia region.

While there are some suggestions that pottery has been made in the Silesia region of Poland since the 7th century, the first documentation of production was from the end of the 14th century. The fine white clay was collected from between the Bóbr River and Kwisa River, and eventually, pottery becomes the area's coming onto the scene, guilds were formed to regulate the process and ensure a perfect final product. This step in the 16th century was the key to making a name for Polish stoneware throughout Europe.

When the King of Prussia, Frederick the Great, spotted the pottery, he insisted on having custom versions made for himself with emblems and family patterns, many of which are still used often to this day. In 1897, a ceramics school was founded in Bolesławiec, which taught the art of making Polish stoneware as well as the creative and artistic elements involved in painting the final products.

Those who are interested in learning more about Polish stoneware, seeing the many different varieties currently made in Poland, watching the artists at work, and shopping for unique pieces to take home as a souvenir may want to visit Bolesławiec. Each year, the town comes alive and welcomes visitors from around the world to celebrate the annual pottery festival. Typically taking place in August, the pottery festival lasts for five days and includes a range of different events.



oland is the largest of the East European countries which joined the EU in May 2004. Poland is comparable in size to Italy or Germany (in USA larger than New Mexico) and with a population of approximately 39 million (e.g. more than California) it ranks among the most influential and remarkable countries in central and Eastern Europe. Poland is a stable democracy with a truly fascinating history, great cultural heritage and several areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Many Polish tourist sights have already gained a worldwide reputation and are an absolute must to see if you consider a journey to this area: beautiful Krakow, inspiring Warsaw, romantic Gdansk, spiritual Czestochowa, shattering Auschwitz, the Tatra mountains.

Our approach to traveling will assure you both a secure and enjoyable stay, let us help you to discover our beautiful country.

Though our offer is aimed primarily at the famous spots we would like to draw your attention to the less densely populated areas which offer an unconventional, but seductive program.

POLAND IN NUMBERS

Administrative division

FOLAND IN NOINE	LING
Area	312 685 km2
Population	38.7 Mil.
Density/sq km	124 (km2)
Capital Mil.	Warszawa (Warsaw) 1.65

(wojewodztwa)				
Currency 1 Zloty (PLN) = 100 Groszy (1 EUR = aprox. 4 PLN)				
Time GMT+1h				
Religion Catholics others 7.9%	90.7 %, Orthodox 1.4%,			
Nationalities Poles 98.5 %, Ukrainians 0.6%, Germans 0.5, others 0.4%				
Life expectancy women	68 years men, 77 years			
Urbanization	65%			
Literacy	99%			
Tourism 14 million tourists visit Poland every year, Poland ranks 14th in the world as a tourist destination				

Border countries Germany (467 km), Czech Republic (790 km), Slovakia (538 km), Ukraine (529 km), Belarus (416 km), Russia (210 km), Lithuania (103 km), Baltic coastline (788 km)

Surface Poland consists mostly of lowlands, the lowest point – the village of Racki Elblaskie 1.8 meters below the sea level

Mountains On the Southern border, High Tatra (highest peak Rysy 2,499 m), Bieszczady, Beskid, Karkonosze, Gory Stolowe

Rivers the Vistula (Wisla) 1,047 km, the Odra, the Bug, the Warta

Lakes Sniardwy (Mazury)113,8 km2

SIZE IN COMPARISON

	3			1
RANK RANK	COUNTRY	'SIZE (IN K	M2)	WORLD
1	Ukraine	603700	43	
2	France	543958	47	
3	Spain	505992	50	
4	Sweden	446964	54	
5	Germany	357022	61	
6	Finland	338145	63	
7	Norway	323877	66	
8	Poland	312658	67	
9	Italy	301268	69	
10	Great Brit	ain	244100	76

POPULATION IN COMPARISON

RANK CO RANK	UNTRY PC	N (MLN)	WORLD		
1	Germany	82.1	12		
2	France	58.9	20		
3	Great Britain		58.7	21	
4	Italy	57.3	22		
5	Ukraine	50.7	23		
6	Spain	39.6	29		
7	Poland	38.7	30		
8	Romania	22.4	44		
9	Netherlands		15.7	56	
10	Greece	10.4	70		

16 provinces



This remarkable copy of the original castle blown up by the Germans in WWII is filled with authentic period furniture and original works of art. Highlights are the Great Apartments (rooms 1 to 9) including the magnificent Great Assembly Hall and the lavishly decorated Throne Room; King's Apartments (rooms 11 to 20) including the Canaletto Room, hung with 22 paintings by Bernardo Bellotto (1721-80), known in Poland as Canaletto; and the Lanckoroński Collection with two portraits by Rembrandt.

The mammoth red-brick castle began life as a wooden stronghold of the dukes of Mazovia in the 14th century. Its heyday came in the mid-17th century, when it became one of Europe's most splendid royal palaces. In 1918, after Poland regained independence, it became the residence of the president. Its reconstruction didn't get going until 1971 and took 13 years to complete.



Palace of **Culture & Science**

For over 60 years this socialist realist palace has dominated central Warsaw. A 'gift of friendship' from the Soviet Union, it was completed in 1955 and is, at 237m high, the tallest building in Poland - a title it will keep until the nearby 53-storey, 320m Varso Tower tops out in 2020. Among the many attractions at PKiN (as its full Polish name is abbreviated), the one not to be missed is the 30th-floor (115m) observation terrace.

To see some of PKiN's grand interior architecture, join the guided tour run by Creatours, whose booth is next to the ticket office for the observation terrace.

As its name indicates, PKiN is a vast recreation

for renovation), three theatres, a multiscreen cinema, a handful of museums and other tourist attractions. You'll find Warsaw's main tourist office here, too

In the past locals branded PKiN with one uncomplimentary moniker after another - the 'Elephant in Lacy Underwear', a reference both to the building's size and the fussy sculptures that frill the parapets and terraces, was one favourite put down. More recently, though, PKiN has become accepted and even embraced as a city icon.





Polish culture has a historical context, but it continues to evolve, incorporating old traditions with modern life. The culture of Poland developed as a result of its geography and connections to other countries, and it's rich thousand-year history.

The Poland of today continues the traditions and customs of this history with origins in the Slavic culture. There were even Byzantine and Ottoman influences. Approximately 95 percent of Poland's inhabitants are Roman Catholics, with about 75 percent attending church services regularly. This church affiliation has influenced the holidays and traditions that are such an important part of Polish culture.

Folk Costumes

Poland's folk costumes (stroje ludowe) are colorfully decorated and represent different regions of Poland. Men's and women's folk costumes are most often seen during holidays, weddings and festivals when dancers entertain audiences with traditional performances.

Regional costumes, which differ from each other, come from the historic regions of the country: Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Mazovia, Pomerania, Warmia, Masuria, Podlasie, Kujawy, and Silesia.

You will also see differences in the mode of dress related to marital status. In Krakow, for example, a careful observer may be able to ascertain from the style of head covering not only where in the country a woman is from, but her marital status. Traditionally, unmarried women wore flower wreaths and ribbons on their heads, while married women wore white kerchiefs.

Holidays

Since Poland's population is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, that means that many Polish holidays-from Easter to All Saints' Day and Christmas—follow Catholic traditions.

If you visit Poland during holiday periods, you get the chance to see authentic Polish life and come home with a memorable cultural experience.

National and religious holidays celebrated in Poland are marked by traditions, public celebrations, or days of rest and relaxation. If you're planning to travel to Poland, it's a good idea to find out about traditional holidays. Some of them may be familiar like Easter and Christmas but there are many uniquely Polish holidays too like Constitution Day and their Independence Day.

While some holidays in Poland offer special opportunities for visitors to learn about Polish culture, it is also important to note that traveling during these holidays may mean that shops and public offices are closed. Plan your trip accordingly to avoid unexpected delays and cancellations.

All Saints' and All Souls' Day

On this day, Poles reunite with family members to honor the deceased and place candles and flowers at grave sites.

All Saints' Day, observed on November 1st, is an important holiday celebrated in Poland and Lithuania, which were once one country.

All Saints' Day is followed by All Souls' Day (November 2nd), and it's the evening between these two days that past generations believed that the deceased would visit the living or return to their homes.

Christmas Traditions

Christmas celebrations in Poland occur on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, but large cities in Poland take advantage of this special time of year to decorate historic centers in lights, decorations and Christmas trees. Christmas markets add to the festive atmosphere.

In Poland, Advent is the beginning of Christmas Time and may be a time of fasting, at least giving up some favorite foods. There are many special masses held. This is the time when people clean their homes and decorate for Christmas.

Christmas Eve, which is more important than Christmas Day, is known as Wigilia and is a time for a special feast enjoyed only after the first star is seen in the evening sky. Gifts are open after dinner and many people go to Midnight

Easter Traditions

Easter in Poland is a special time of year, with religious observances and the celebration of the return of spring. City centers come alive with festivals and markets, and families uphold old customs by coloring eggs and attending church services.

Easter is one of the most important holidays in Poland. Holy Week is filled with traditions, special events, and special church services. Festivities start on Palm Sunday when palm branches get blessed

On Easter Saturday, Polish families bring baskets with bread, sausages, eggs, salt, and horseradish to church to be blessed. Each of these items has its own symbolic meaning.

On Easter Sunday after church, families enjoy a special Easter meal. Before the meal begins people take a small piece of blessed egg and exchange wishes. It is a season of renewal and

The Black Madonna: Poland's Holiest Relic

The Black Madonna, housed in a special chapel in Jasna Gora monastery, is Poland's most important religious icon. The Black Madonna is famous for her darkened skin and the two scars that are on her cheek. Every year, thousands of pilgrims flock to Jasna Gora to pray in the presence of this icon.

The Black Madonna icon is said to be painted on a panel that came from the table used by the Holy Family—or a copy of the original panel painted by Luke the Apostle. The dark tones of the Black Madonna's skin are attributed to a legend that involving a fire that damaged a monastery but left the icon unscathed except for the discoloration of the pigments of the painting.













