

Original Poland: discovering the most curious travel itineraries

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Among the **most fascinating destinations to see** at all costs, **Poland** occupies a special place in the hearts of many tourists; it is because of the attractive towns and cities which are full of life, the **beaches on the Baltic Sea**, which are always full, the contrasts between the silent, steep forests and the particularly lively urban life, the splendour of the medieval architecture, the typically Soviet-style urban planning, the variety of gastronomic delights. The fact is that those who **visit Poland**, especially for short stays, are always delighted.

Seeing Poland from another point of view is not hard; there are many curious itineraries available.

For the most romantic tourists, Northern Poland is an ideal destinations **for unforgettable holidays**. What can you admire in this area, which has risen up on countless occasions, after going through some decidedly hard times?

Land of a thousand lakes

The lakes of Mazuria are unanimously considered to lie in one of the most beautiful areas of the Old World, where wilderness reigns unopposed: 12 canals, 3 locks and 8 rivers connect 45 lakes. The landscapes are breath-taking, to say the least. The 11 nature reserves are amazing. Special mention should be made of the **Luknajo Lake Reserve**, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1977. With more than 1000 swans and many rare bird species, these reserves are to be admired.

Anyone who loves hiking will certainly love this area. And if you're into outdoor sports, you'll be spoilt for choice, with golf, rowing and sailing. And those who love cycling, you should know that the **Polish cycle paths** are unquestionably the best; at night, in fact, they light up blue, thanks to the presence of a special material that contains phosphorous particles. A real spectacle for the eyes.

Teutonic castles

The **Teutonic castles** are medieval fortresses that are considered to be tangible evidence of the skills of the 14th century bricklayers and architects. Visiting these castles in the winter season certainly has its charm, because the snow ends up covering them. However, summer is perhaps the ideal season to enjoy them the most.

Of them all, **Malbork Castle** is the best known. This Gothic fortress, which was built of brick, was originally a convent. Later, due to its strategic position, directly on the Nogat River, it ended up becoming a fortress to all intents and purposes, as barges and merchant ships were able to access it without any particular difficulty.

Malbork Castle was destroyed several times. However, the reconstruction work has recovered numerous rooms and the ancient frescoes; so, anyone who loves castles and stories of fortresses will find Malbork Castle a joy.

Gdansk

The sixth largest city in Poland is certainly one of the richest in international history. Every year, its decidedly troubled past attracts waves of tourists, who also appreciate the architectural beauties of **Gdansk** and its rich cultural heritage. This port city is the **world capital of amber**, which is known as the **gold of the Baltic Sea**. A tour of the **Amber Museum** is a must, at all costs. If you want to see more, it is also worth visiting one of the numerous workshops, where this precious fossil resin is transformed into unique items of jewellery.

The **Royal Route** is definitely worth a visit, especially if you are a history buff, given that, although it is short in length, it has always been used to perfection by Polish rulers to make triumphant entrances during official visits.

The picturesque facades of the buildings on either side of the Royal Route, are admired in silence, because of their unmistakable pastel colour. The bombardments during World War II destroyed these buildings, but they have been rebuilt just as they were at the time, to bring back the splendour of the past.

For those who want to take a **tour of Gdansk** and see Poland under different eyes, one stop that can be considered a must is **Arthur's Court**, the hub of the social life of the city and of political meetings among the nobles and rich merchants of the past. The Flemish style on the outside and the typically Gothic style on the inside combine perfectly.

An alternative stop on the tour of Gdansk is **Mariacka Street**; visiting this street means surrounding yourself with a magnificent past of small businesses and craft shops, where it is really worth buying one or more souvenirs.

Frombork

This is the town where **Nicolaus Copernicus**, the Polish astronomer, mathematician, doctor, jurist, scientist and governor, spent the last years of his life. In this typically rural town, you can organise a history tour, to admire the **astronomer's house**, the museum dedicated to him, and the splendid gothic cathedral where, especially in summer, wonderful classical music concerts are organised, with Fryderyk Chopin, the composer "in residence".

Torun

In terms of gastronomy, Poland is appreciated for its many traditional products. Leaving aside the **pierogi**, which remind many of ravioli, we should mention Torun, the gothic town where the **Pierniki** (or **gingerbread**) **Museum** is located. The recipe for gingerbread is very old, as they have been making it since medieval times. You can watch up-close, and with the help of interactive processes, learn all the secrets of the Polish confectionery industry and the tricks on how to put this delicious **gingerbread** on your table. On the tour of Torun, it goes without saying that warm gingerbread is the typical souvenir.

Krakow

In the south of Poland, there is **Krakow**, the nation's cultural centre because of its renowned libraries and famous universities, not to mention its 28 museums/art galleries and theatres.

Going through Krakow means getting a close-up look at the culture of Polish Jews. The **Podgorze Ghetto** is one of the most famous of all, although it was never one of the largest. However, it was certainly one of the most influential cultural centres in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it is in Poland that one of the most famous Jewish communities resides.

The traces in Krakow are clearly visible: just think of the **synagogues** and the **Jewish cemetery**. Seeing close-up the places where the film Schindler's List was filmed makes you reflect. Finally, to enter into the heart of the ghetto, you have to come from **Mostowa Street**. The route is full of history, with traces of a past that is truly horrific to remember, and that can never be erased.

Auschwitz

To learn in detail about the sad history of the Holocaust and the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, the **visit to the concentration camp of Auschwitz** is a must. Initially, it was only built to accommodate political prisoners. We all know what happened then. When tourists come to these places, they are forced to make a number of stops, which are essential for them to catch their breath. Going into the crematoria and gas chambers is a moving experience. Not everyone can stomach it.

There are many unique and curious travel itineraries to experienced Poland, this beautiful country, which is so full of history.

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