



# YOUR PATHWAY THROUGH POLAND

NAVIGATE TO HER HEART AND BE AWAKENED BY HER SOUL

**BY THE MOTOROAMERS**



# 1 INTRODUCTION

*“The soul of Poland is indestructible... she will rise again as a rock, which may for a spell be submerged by a tidal wave, but which remains a rock.”* **Winston Churchill**

Poland is, without doubt, a country full of deep values, character and unwavering strength given its scars from historical wrong-doings. It is this fortitude that has created the Poland we are privileged to travel to today and that will give you so much more than a holiday. It will offer you a chance to have an experience that will alter your life forever,

Come to Poland, take roads that lead to somewhere, uncover the history that is buried beneath the soil and hunt out the truth. Leave behind your Instagram selfie stick and see beyond the facade of the tourist shine and learn about a culture that has evolved to make Poland a force to be reckoned with.

# ABOUT THIS CAPTIVATING GUIDE

After nearly two months in Poland in the summer 2018, we fell in love with this country that was little known to us.

With a somewhat transactional spirit we planned our trip, initially with the intention of simply crossing through en route to Lithuania and Latvia. Although circumstances changed our plans and Poland suddenly became so much more than just a passage.

So this eBook aims to capture our experiences and share with you how to navigate your own pathway through this country. We hope it will enable you to connect to the depth that is Poland's soul, like it did for us. See its scars, the battle lines and the fight for independence that has become Poland's subtle emblem.

We offer you our 58 day road-trip, divided up into four distinct routes, each one sharing our personal highlights. We have documented each of our camping overnights, with pictures and co-ordinates, and summarised some practical tips about how to create your own personal pathway through this amazing land.

If Poland is on your 'wish list' or perhaps you've never really considered it at all - until now, then we hope this short guide will inspire you to head this way and enrich your lives with its beauty.

*Photo; Łódź cathedral*



## Who are we?

Formally, we are Karen and Myles; digital nomads who are inspired to discover the world with the freedom and choice that this travelling lifestyle has gifted us.

More lovingly we are known as ***The Motoroamers*** and in March 2016 we packed up and packed in our life in England for a gap year of travel whilst we sold property. The grand plan was to put down our roots in UK's south-west and find the 'good life', once we had sown our travel seeds.

With visions of a small-holding, donkeys, chickens and soil tarnished fingernails put aside, we hit the road in our motorhome Scoobie. We were ready for adventures and exploration that would soothe our curious spirits and satiate our inner-adventurer. Yet a few weeks into our trip we discovered that this was the life we wanted permanently and that 'going back' was not an option. So from that moment on, 'home' became the place where Scoobie's tyres rested. We found love in every dawn, each new vista cleansed our eager eyes and fed our desire to live with freedom, fearlessness and choice.

In our first year with our trusty stead, a Pilote 740 (7.5m), we visited 10 countries and covered 12,000 miles; from Spain to Slovenia, to France, Belgium and Netherlands. A rich array of adventures that tempered our need to feel alive after too many decades of corporate stress and burn-out. Spring 2017 heralded a new set of adventures as we began an epic journey into uncharted territory for us. The idea was to travel across to Greece and then follow a natural passage through the eastern borders of Bulgaria and Romania. What incredible cultures and natural wonders these countries had to offer. So young on the European stage and yet a whole new set of experiences for the eager traveller.

Eastern Europe has been a firm favourite of ours ever since, with its cheap cost of living, incredible architecture, history and welcoming residents. Beyond the relative safety of western Europe, the east is opening up so many new adventures as we move beyond our comfort zones.

This book captures our experiences and whilst we realise it is not a conclusive coverage of Poland, we have shared our personal highlights.

We hope you enjoy our virtual tour.



*Karen, Myles and Scoobie*



[www.motoroaming.com](http://www.motoroaming.com)



## 2 WHY POLAND?

What do we know about Poland? Perhaps we know about sauerkraut and dumplings and may be, in truth not much more. I have little recollection of Poland appearing in our history or geography lessons at school, nor have I heard it represented much on the global stage or travel scene. So in many ways, its presence, or lack of it, intrigued us and drew us in.

Let us see if we can share just some of the reasons that Poland should be on your list and to entice you to book your virgin visit or come back for seconds.



Officially the Republic of Poland, this central European country sits with its northern fringes on the Baltic Sea offering rich pickings for oceanic trade. Whilst in the south, it rubs shoulders with its neighbours Czech Republic, Ukraine and Slovakia separated by majestic mountains.

Founded in 1025, what was then the Kingdom of Poland has been fighting for independence most of its life. With invasions from Sweden, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Poland has over the centuries, suffered enormous losses in infrastructure and its population as invaders tried to stake their claim.

And it feels like battles are a synonymous part of Polish culture as they assert their rights, fight for their territories and protect themselves against persecution and dominance. Yet they are winning. Despite the greatest atrocities against man imaginable during World War 2, Poland is standing tall; it is rebuilding its demolished cities. It is standing firm alongside its values of worthiness and independence and is subtly showing the world that it counts and is rising again.

We have seen so many examples of the Phoenix Rising from the Ashes in this



country that has touched our hearts as we begin to understand their valiance against destruction and adversity.

Poland is a proud and noble nation, supported by its faith and self-belief - and despite their historical scars that run deep, cities offer a landscape that belies their traumas.

Places such as Wrocław, Kraków, Lublin, Sandomierz and Warsaw present brightly coloured facias and picturesque market squares that look like something out of a Disney animation. Streets of cobbled pathways that lead always to somewhere, even if we know not where, yet they all hide the scars of a yesteryear.

Elegant cathedrals cast their shadow like a comfort blanket over the streets below and the countryside is full of self-sufficient villages that function without the need of security reigns tying them to the nearest metropolis. Traditional dwellings made from wood and asbestos roof tiles are slowly being replaced by brightly painted houses that defy the communistic grey blandness of the Soviet occupation - Poland is healing and it is growing.

The Polish landscape is painted with acres of farmers' fields and crops of golden corn that are not punctured by industry and factories. Orchards are aplenty, planted with fruit trees and bushes laden with berry abundance - a winter store cupboard if ever we've seen one.

Charming folklore traditions that still today are a part of the cultural foundation of this fine country, telling stories of Poland's forefathers and life before the world became tainted with digital modernisation.

And let's not forget the reign of Mother Nature in the creation of this Polska land. She has cast her magic and gives you unexpected joys

by the way of subterranean salt-mines, rolling hills covered with luscious pine forests, unique geological formations that enthrall and gorges and valleys that proudly display the most magnificent castles, working synchronistically with nature to create a defence system that we can only marvel at.

The giant Carpathian mountains that look like a painting on the southern horizon, provide both a natural border to its Slovak neighbour as well as a sanctuary to bears, wolves and lynx. And rivers and lakes with their crystal blue hue reflected by the summer skies all contribute to this enigmatic jigsaw.

Poland is a country with a buoyant economy that is praised by many as being the strongest and fastest growing system of its post-Communist neighbours.

This country is starting to blossom and, released from its historical shackles, shows a resilience and fortitude that run deep through its core. It may not be on many people's travelling radar just yet, although it should be, as it has more gifts than Santa Claus.

If you love hiking, history, city breaks, climbing, kayaking, cycling, culture, photography, geology and visiting UNESCO sites, then a road trip to Poland will not disappoint.

Have we tempted you yet? If so, then read on...



### 3 ROUTE 1 - SOUTH WEST POLAND

The next four Chapters give you a detailed insight into our routes through Poland and the highlights we found along the way.

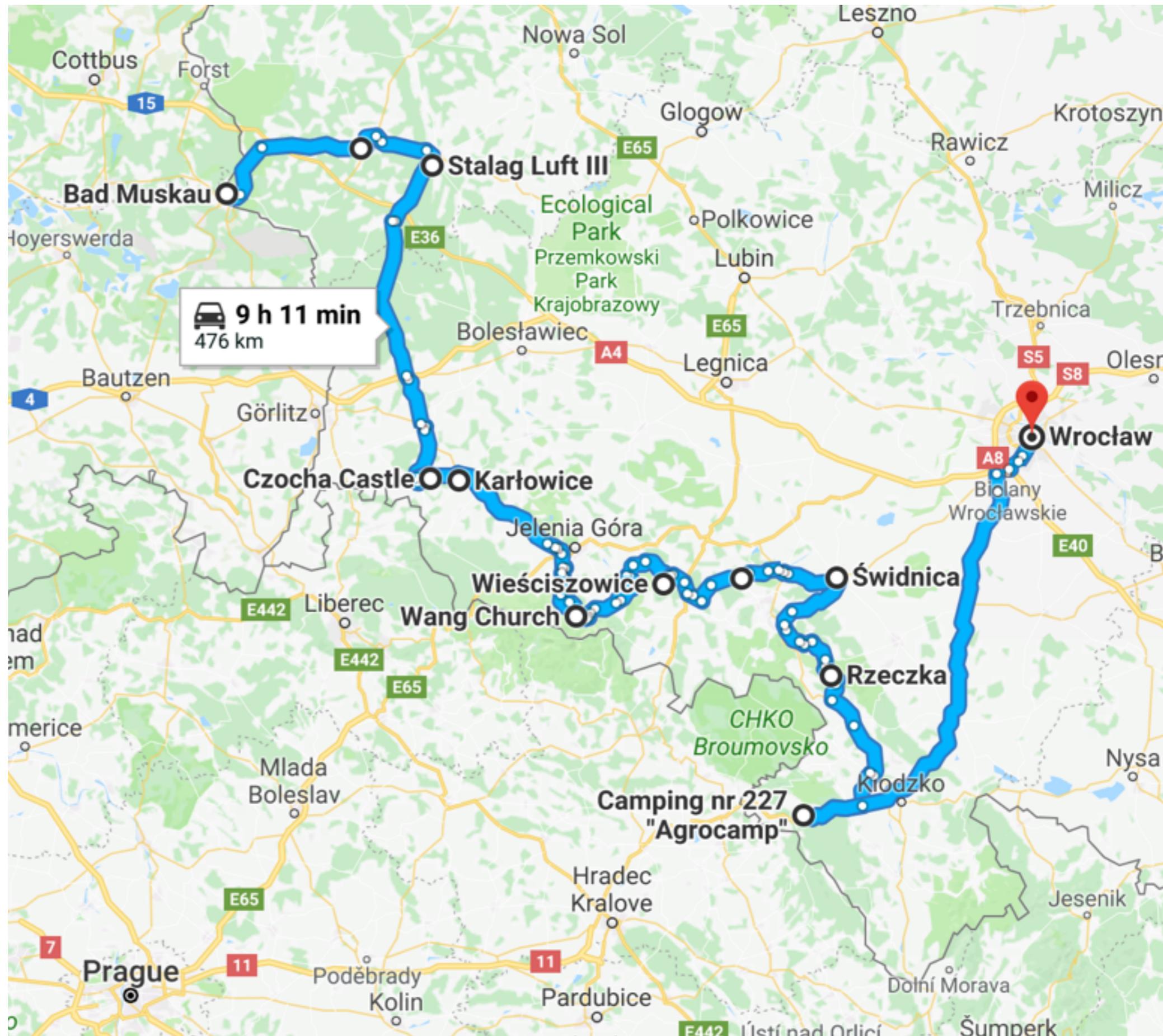
In addition we offer you our camping spots with co-ordinates and help you experience Poland through the Motoroamer's eyes. We realise there is so much more of Poland than we have seen, although we want to inspire you to find your own pathway through this luscious land.

## Route 1

### Bad Muskau - Wrocław

Must-sees;

- \* Kromlau Rhododendron Park and Devil's Bridge
- \* Bad Muskau UNESCO park
- \* Stalag Luft 3 Museum
- \* Czocha Lake and castle
- \* Wang Temple, Karpacz
- \* Church of Peace, Swidnica
- \* Rzciczka Caves - Hitler's Secret Tunnels
- \* Stołowe National Park
- \* Wrocław





Tunnel Harry memorial at Stalag Luft 3 Museum - Żagań

## STALAG LUFT 3 - THE GREAT ESCAPE

Not more than 30 miles from the German border you will find Żagań; a town that is more famous for its Army than its architecture. Not in the slightest bit distracted by the presence of a Tesco supermarket, we travelled 3 miles south to a wild camping spot we had found online. To our surprise we had stumbled upon the Prisoner of War Camp - Stalag Luft 3 Museum and home to the 1944 Great Escape, on which the film of 1963 was based.

We have made it a bit of a mission to learn more about the World Wars after finding Myles' Great Grandad's grave just outside Ypres. And so to find this important museum that we were going to call home, felt a bit synchronistic.

For a mere 5PLN (£1 per person) you can get entry to the museum and a video about the POW Camp, which is very informative. You can for free, also go into the replica 104 hut, where the plans for the Great Escape were hatched and with a short walk or cycle into the woods you can find the site of the tunnel which has been turned into a memorial site.

What an incredible place to remember the men who lived, survived and died in this camp. As always a very humbling experience.

We stopped on the waste ground next to the museum for a couple of days.

## CZOCHA LAKE/CASTLE

Who doesn't love a lakeside view bordered by the elegance of a castle?

For us we will always gravitate towards water as it provides us with such a restorative vibe. And what a choice Czochoa was. Albeit a man-made reservoir, we couldn't help than to love its blueness, the way the setting sun struck the side of our camper and the opportunity to get our kayak out on the water.

With an eclectic campsite that had just a handful of spots suitable for campers, we pitched up for four days. The weather was divine and so allowed plenty of swimming, and to watch the butterflies feed off the damp sand at the water's edge was idyllic - just what these wandering nomads needed.

The castle, which is only a 10 minute cycle away is truly delightful. A mini cityl within its defence walls, this was a grand place indeed. We took a tour for 20PLN - (£4 per person) which we bought by mistake as it was just a Polish guide, although it was interesting to see its role in WW2.





## WANG TEMPLE - KARPACZ

Hidden away in the mountains that flirt with Czech Republic, we found this haven of loveliness.

Who would have thought that a Norwegian wooden stave church would have found itself in the deep south-west of Poland?

Still it's true; this magnificent church that originates from Valdres in Norway was brought over to Poland in 1842 and is one of the most popular tourist sites in southern Poland.

There are a couple of nice campsites near-by and the road up to the church is narrow although very doable with a motorhome/RV. There's a coach park which is the only suitable one for longer vehicles and costs 20PLN (£4.00) for 2hrs.

Driving down to the valley floor you will go through Karpacz, which is a buzzy ski resort, offering the chance for summer and winter activities. We never really considered Poland as Ski destination although with this region and Zakopane in the Tatras there are plenty of opportunities and a mere 254 resorts to choose from.



## Coloured Lakes of Wielka Kopa

# THE COLOURED LAKES AND SWIDNICA - CHURCH OF PEACE

Trip Advisor has its place for sure and with a bit of research I came across some reviews of Poland's Coloured Lakes, hidden in the forest of this Lower Silesia region.

These old quarry pits that were mined for pyrite, closed in 1925 and were filled in with water. Over time, Mother Nature has taken her role in creating chemical reactions from the rock beds below. Each one has a different colour; purple, yellow, azure and green and although not the largest lakes or the most breathtaking thing we have ever seen, they were a very charming diversion.

There is the possibility of camping up in the forest, just a five minute walk to the lakes. It's a primitive spot, although for 30PLN (£6) it looked ok. If you just want to park up for the lake walk, then it's just 10PLN (£2).

The hiking up to the azure lake is a tough one and not disabled friendly, so do make sure you have good footwear and are fit enough to do this walk. It will test your thighs, knees and lung capacity!

Then there was Swidnica. Whilst our stop over wasn't very salubrious and we nearly left early after a less than peaceful night's sleep, we were glad we made the effort to see this UNESCO protected Church of Peace.

There are only two of these churches left in Poland and are renowned for being the largest timber framed religious buildings in Europe. This 17th century masterpiece was built under very strict regulations; it had to be constructed within 12 months, not have a bell tower and be made from only natural materials. So their three hundred year history is a remarkable testimony to the character of the craftsmen.



Inside the building the opulence defies the external simplicity as the Baroque artwork is breathtaking.

Every colour of the rainbow has been built into the internal architecture of this beautiful church and is most definitely worth going inside - however you feel about churches.

A stunning building worth the small entrance fee (1PLN – 20p).





The Owl Mountains landscape

## THE OWL MOUNTAINS & HITLER'S SECRET TUNNELS

Deep in the mountains of the Sudetes you will find a dark secret that is over 70 years old. The Owl Mountains may well be a beautiful rolling landscape that appeals to hikers and sports enthusiasts, although there is something more sinister about this region.

Like so many other areas of Poland, Hitler has had a hand in shaping these precious lands and so, yet again, we find ourselves adding another jigsaw piece to our World War education.

The Owl Mountains are renowned for the Riese Project, which was a huge Nazi undertaking back in 1943 to construct a network of tunnels. The tunnels, dug out by Prisoner of War inmates many of

whom perished in appalling underground conditions, were never actually finished. With the end of the war, came the end of the construction and with it the caves' true purpose also died.

There are rumours that, the tunnels which have the guise of underground cities, were to store Hitler's gold bullion and treasures – a somewhat controversial suggestion or that there were there to store arms and build a super bomb.

We can continue to surmise their role in Hitler's master-plan, although today these tunnels have been secured and opened up to the public by way of a memorial to the thousands who lost their

lives. With kilometres of rock drilled away to create these tunnels, we walked through them trying to understand their mystery and conjure up our own interpretation of their place in Europe's evil perpetrator.

Of the seven tunnels, three of them are open to the public; We visited the Complex Rzeczka (also known as Walimskie Drifts) near Walim, where there is a cemetery to honour those who died creating the tunnels.

It is a very well thought-out tour for 45 minutes although you will need an audio set for the translation. It gives you a great experience of the conditions the prisoners had to work in and leaves you to ponder on their purpose.

For 16PLN per person we joined the tour and 12PLN for an audio set. (£5.60 all in per person).

Complex Ozówka is the other major tourist destination, which we believe offers a similar tour albeit a larger tunnel.

A completely unique perspective of Hitler's World War influence, which we were not expecting. We found a super free spot at the foot of the mountains just 10 minutes drive from the Rzeczka.





## STOŁOWE NATIONAL PARK - GEOLOGY GENIUS

In the Sudete Mountains you will find the Stołowe National Park, which was one of my 'must see' destinations as I researched this Silesia region. On the map it seems a bit out of the way, although you will not be disappointed by your diversion here.

The mountains are not akin to their angular Alpine relatives across the border; they are more curvaceous, undulating and soft, with forests and acres of golden wheat fields caressing the landscape. It just warms your heart and forces you to submit to its beauty.

Camped at an eclectic site just on the edge of the National Park, we were in a good position to travel with the van and we had two main destinations in our sights.

One was the **Labyrinth at Błędne Skały** and the other was the forest at **Szczeliniec Mały** just outside Karlów.

The geology here is just incredible and I have never seen rock formations like it; well not this side of the Atlantic anyway.

Boulders that look like they have been thrown together by giants playing tiddlywinks, offers us a safe playground to hike through, enabling a completely unique experience. With labyrinths, plunging caverns reaching into the earth and animated rock characters, you will be blown away by this geological genius.

Both destinations are easy to reach with a camper and with road tolls, entry tickets and car parks, the whole day only cost us £16.

You can read more detail about our love for these artistic mountains over on our blog by clicking [here](#).





## WROCLAW - BEST EUROPEAN DESTINATION 2018

Also you might like our little video to give you a real bird's eye view of what both hikes were like. [Click here to watch](#).

Wrocław has made a very fast entry onto our Top 5 Best Cities of Europe - and we've seen a few. For me, I ran out of superlatives to describe both the face and the soul of Poland's 4th largest city.

The capital of the Silesia region stole our hearts, even before we had got to grips with its history, which is deeply embedded into every rebuilt pavement, every facade in the Rynek - market square and in every furrowed brow of Polish residents.

Aside of the aesthetic brilliance of this place after the tragedy of the 1944 **80 day Siege**, this city has grace and resilience at its core.

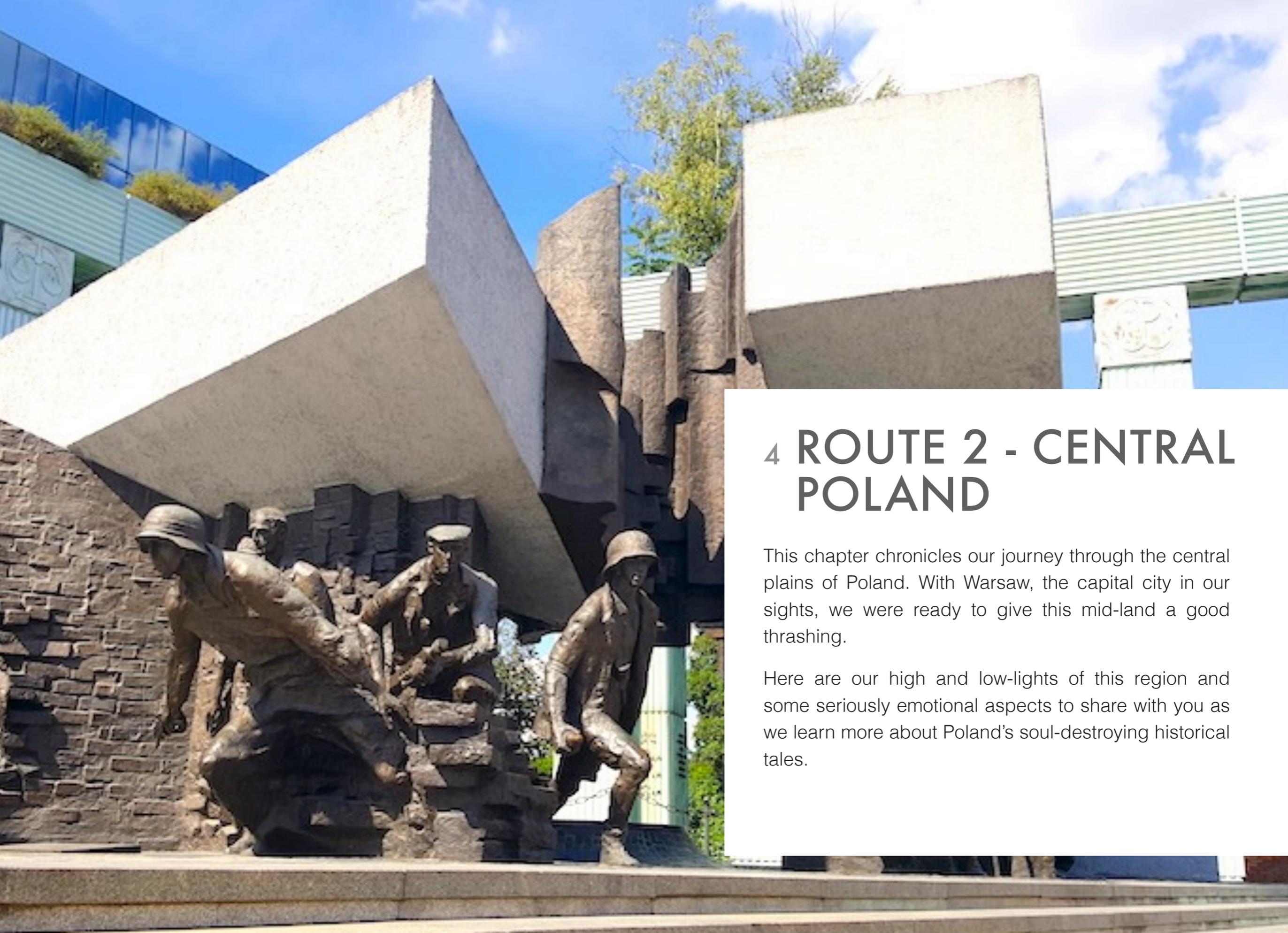
It is the truest example of a Phoenix rising from the ashes that we have ever seen. 70% of this city was demolished and yet it has returned to its former glory with an artistry that simply demands your admiration.

The main square looks like something out of a Disney film and is the real heart of the city, yet all around its islands, waterways and parkland, you will find untold treasures just waiting to delight you. Read more about our memorable exploration [here](#) and watch our Wrocław City Tour video [here](#).

With multi-media fountains that dance to Madonna or Chopin, artwork that expresses liberation and over 300 gnomes, (yes your heard right) Wrocław has everything.

It really does deserve more than a day to really understand its rebirthing from its World War terror and Communist suppression.

We stayed at Wrocław Camping for £20 per night, which was 4 miles from the centre and easily doable with bikes or trams. You have to see it to believe it.



## 4 ROUTE 2 - CENTRAL POLAND

This chapter chronicles our journey through the central plains of Poland. With Warsaw, the capital city in our sights, we were ready to give this mid-land a good thrashing.

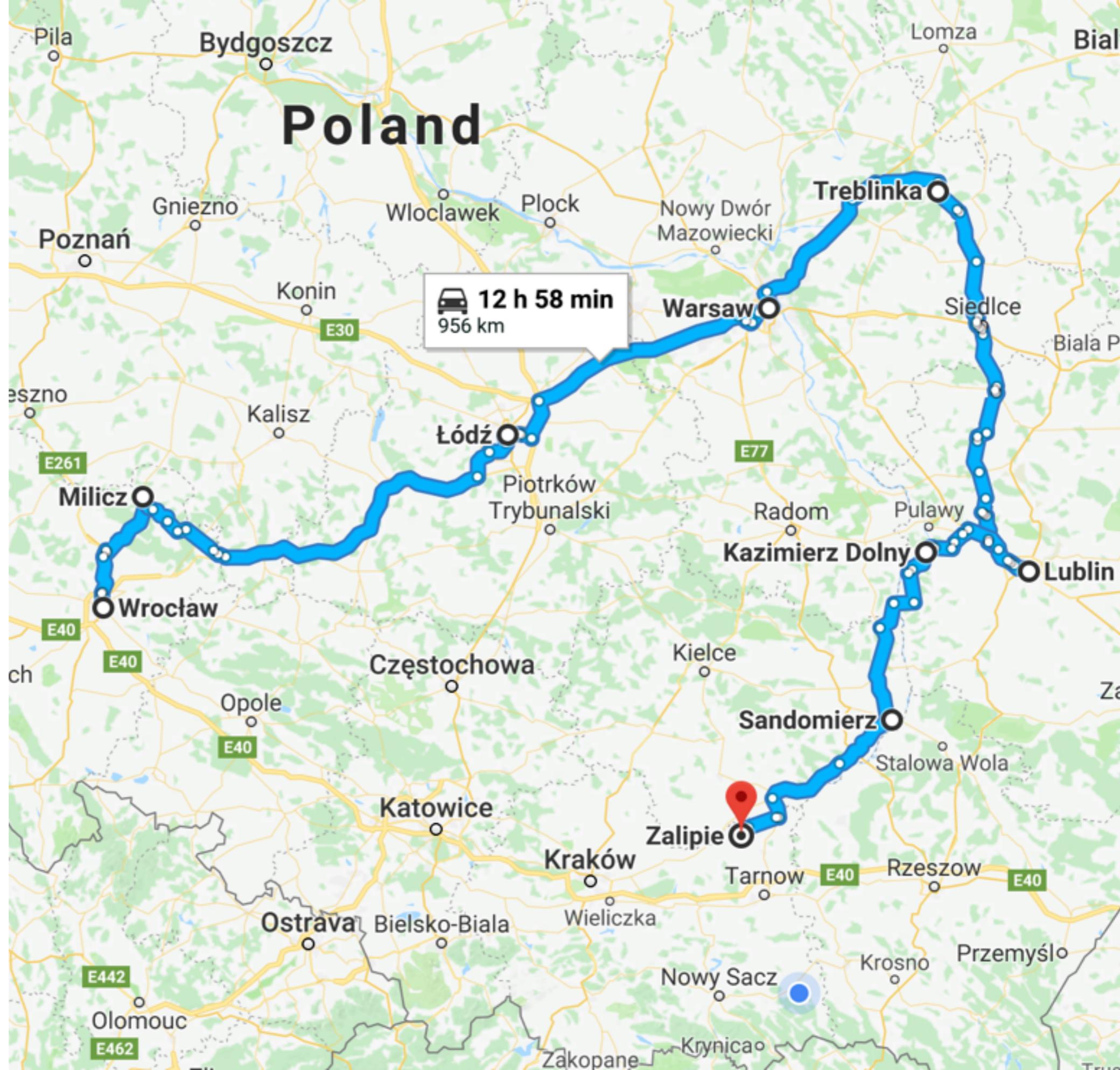
Here are our high and low-lights of this region and some seriously emotional aspects to share with you as we learn more about Poland's soul-destroying historical tales.

## Route 2

### Wrocław - Zalipie

Must-sees;

- \* Street art of Łódź
- \* Warsaw Old Town and Uprising Museum
- \* Treblinka Concentration Camp Memorial
- \* Kazimierz Tree Root Gorge and Wailing Wall
- \* Sandomierz Old Town
- \* Zalipie Painted Village





## MILICZ - NATURE RESERVE

After a really busy travelling time, we were looking for somewhere to rest our bones for a few days and as is our won't, we gravitated yet again towards water.

We found Milicz and its wetland area where a little car park in the middle of the Reserve was a place to call home for a couple of days. Although the locals are not best pleased about the creation of this area, due to fishing and activity restrictions, we found it delightful with plenty of cycle routes to explore it. In a region that is a bit flatter than its surrounding neighbours, this was a lovely spot to break up our journey.

For a sneak preview of our wild spot for a couple of nights, check out our little drone video [here](#).





Łódź Cathedral

## ŁODZ - CAPITAL OF CULTURE AND ART

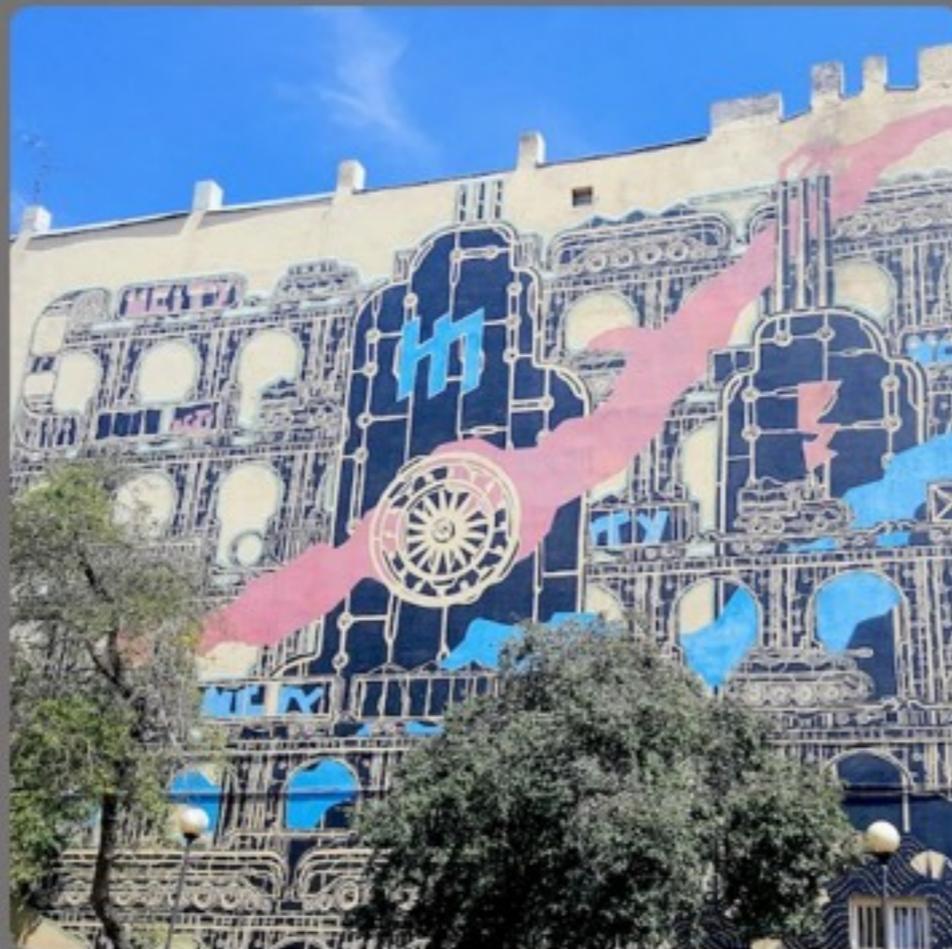
We made a conscious decision to choose Łódź over Poznań, partly because of the distance and partly because the sound of the art and culture scene really appealed to us - well me in truth.

After the high of Wrocław though, sadly Łódź (pronounced Wooge) just didn't do it for us. You know sometimes how you just don't feel a place? Well this is Łódź for us. It is a city built on a historical textile industry which has since disappeared. In its place, regenerated factories are now museums, restaurants and shopping malls. Deeper into the veins of the city, you will find Europe's second longest commercial street reaching nearly 3 miles in length, which is beautifully pedestrianised. Piotrkowska Street offers you elegant buildings with intricate facias and all the shops you can imagine. This main artery though just felt a bit depersonalised and the culture

and creative art just didn't match our expectations. The street art that we did find, was amazing, although the artistry we hoped for really didn't materialise.

Camping here is also tricky – there are no campsites within the city or close by. So we found a couple of car parks to stop overnight; one in the south about 8 miles away at Rzgów and the other only 3 miles north of the city, outside a parkland and cemetery. The latter was super convenient for catching a tram straight into town for just 50p per person covering a 20 minute journey.

So Łódź was not our favourite, although travel has taught us to appreciate all perspectives of a country, which cannot all be beautiful.





## WARSAW'S WONDERS

Warsaw, capital city of Poland is relatively young compared to its European counterparts. And they have WW2 to thank for that - a city devastated by persecution and untold horrors. Yet today, the blend of the Old Town with a rising financial district where tower blocks rise from the ground like a sapling into a newly planted forest, is ever present.

Yet as you wander the streets, turn the corners of this stalwart of a city, you will find so many gems - like a treasure hunt, your clues give you an ever more revealing perspective of this fascinating place.

There is so much to explore and with so few crowds, even in the height of summer, you can wonder at a leisurely pace. You will be

enriched by palaces, cathedrals, the daily 11.15am bugle call from the Royal Castle, Chopin playing benches, free classical music concerts, fountains, memorials to the Jewish who fell at the Ghetto, Marie Curie museum and the Copernicus Science museum. And that's all before you reach the Uprising Museum at the other end of town, the city parks and Tomb to the Unknown Soldier.

The Uprising Museum is very interesting to understand the plight of the Polish Jews in the city, the horrendous conditions of the Ghetto and their attempt to defeat their captors from August to October 1944. It's free to get in on Sundays - although expect queues. Every other day the price is 25PLN (£5) per person. You can check out their website [here](#).

There are a couple of options for camping; we stayed at Camping Kaputy, which is about 10 miles west of the town, which has a bus service and is a lovely ACSI site. Alternatively you can park in a city centre secured parking, which is underneath the Old Town walls and is a five minute walk to the main Rynek - market square.

A great inner city parking for cars and motorhomes, where you can stay overnight. It has easy access from the outer ring road and only 6PLN for an hour and 124PLN for 24hrs. It could be a bit noisy though as it is alongside the main road.

Warsaw is most definitely worth a visit - for culture, history, entertainment, knowledge and appreciation. Check out our city tour by clicking [here](#).



*Pictures; Top: Ariel view of Warsaw Old Town. Middle: The Mermaid in the Rynek. Bottom: Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*



Memorial stone - "Never Again"

## TREBLINKA - WORLD WAR 2 CONCENTRATION CAMP - MEMORIAL

Treblinka, a seemingly lost world, hidden in the forest, out of sight although never out of mind. A place that invokes the stirring of emotion from deep within the belly of any visitor intent on learning more about the war's atrocities, the holocaust and on paying their respects to the multitudes of people who died mercilessly here.

My research found Treblinka Extermination Camp some time ago, and after visiting Warsaw and understanding more about the Ghetto and Uprising, it felt an absolute must. A must because for almost 1 million people, this was to be their final destination, wrapped up in the vial guise of 'resettlement'.

Although the Camp was razed to the floor immediately by the Nazi's at the end of the war, it has been turned into a memorial site now. And the shocking image of hundreds of stones in the field of the gas chambers, each one representing a European community that lost their people, really takes you aback.

The sombre forest where there is no sound nor life is eerie and the ash-coloured soil beneath your feet gives you a sense of what must have happened here. It is a haunting place to visit and to pay your respects. Read more about our visit by clicking [here](#). We stayed in the museum car park overnight.

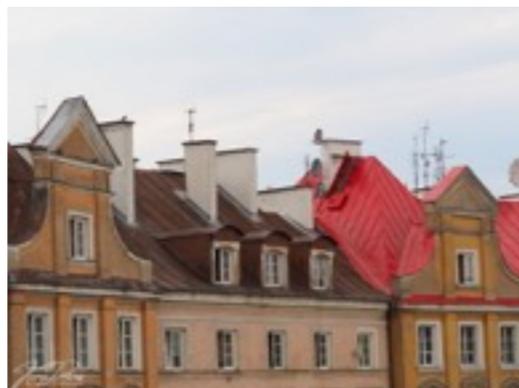
# LITTLE OLD LUBLIN

We arrived at Lublin with a practical need to get some admin jobs done, so in truth I'm not sure that we really took full advantage of the town and its surround area. Plus there was a lot of development work going on outside the Old Town walls, which didn't make for a pretty perspective.

Although the Old Town and castle has plenty of history and charm that sitting down with a beer in the Rynek allows you to absorb.

There is a great car park about five minutes walk to the castle and Old Town gates, which for 3PLN you could stay at overnight, although perhaps a bit noisy with its main road position. We found home about 20 minutes drive away in the forest, that gave us a bit of peace and seclusion.

Not far from Lublin you have the [Majdanec Concentration Camp](#) museum that has 70 historical buildings to visit and pay your respects at. For 90 minutes you can take an individual tour of the museums and buildings and get a sense of the tragedy that rained down here, like so many other camps in Poland.





Kazimierz Dolny - Wailing Wall memorial

## KAZIMIERZ DOLNY

Kazimierz Dolny sits on the edge of the river Wisła, Poland's longest and largest river, which runs from Barania Góra in the western Carpathian Mountains all the way to Gdańsk at the Baltic Sea.

A charming little town that was vital to the Polish economy as part of the grain trade in 16th Century, only to decline when grain was no longer a commodity. Worse was to come when the whole town was burnt to the ground in 1656 at the hands of Sweden. Yet 250 years later, it recovered, as prosperous residents from Warsaw built property here and it emerged as a Spa town. WW2 saw it reduced to cinders once again, although since its rebuild in 1994, the town has become a popular destination for visitors, especially artists as they present their wears to the world.

There are so many things to see here; the Three Crosses that are a memorial to those that perished in the plagues, the pretty town and its cobbled streets and the Wailing Wall memorial. Just two minutes out of the town, you will find a commemoration to the Jewish Cemetery that was demolished by the Nazis so they could build a path to their Gestapo offices in the town. This Wall honours the Jews and returns the gravestones to their rightful place.

You also must visit the gorges of the region, especially Tree Root Gorge, which is small, yet delightfully formed. We stopped overnight at wild spot a little way up the river, watching the ferry to and fro.



Check out our drone footage of our wild spot at river Wisła. Could have stayed there forever. Click [here](#).



Tree Root Gorge, Kazimierz Dolny



The Wailing Wall Jewish memorial, Kazimierz Dolny

# SANDOMIERZ

Just down the river from Kazimierz Dolny is another important historical town - Sandomierz.

Sandomierz is the oldest and one of the most important towns in Polish history with evidence of life here traced back to Neolithic times.

Since then Sandomierz has been recognised as an important administration centre and classed as significant as Kraków and Wrocław in 12th Century.

If you want to find a town that has constantly risen to the challenges of its enemies, then you need look no further. With attacks over the centuries from Sweden, Lithuania, Russia and Germany, this little treasure has stuck a proverbial two fingers up at their opponents and reinvented itself time and time again.

Today the preserved architecture and stunning buildings pay testimony to the town's resilience and defiance, as its market square and Town Hall ooze independence and pride.

Sandomierz aside of its grand cathedral, five churches, synagog and Poland's oldest school founded in 1602, stakes its claim to have the best preserved city gate in Poland.

There is a campsite right at the foot of this lofty town, that with a short walk up the hill puts you right in the centre of this stunning piece of history and its Rynek.



Sandomierz's Town Hall, Cathedral and artwork





## Zalipie, Painted Village of Poland

### ZALIPIE

If you want to see through a cultural window into Poland's folklore soul, then you must visit Zalipie. It is in the middle of nowhere about 60 miles from Kraków and 15 minutes drive from Tarnów.

History and tradition have been honoured here for the last 100 years. It started when the local women painted their houses to cover up the smoke stained walls from their stoves, using the most basic of resources. And now this practice has evolved into a kaleidoscope of colour inside and out of these ancient village homes.

Everything you can image is painted here; doors, windows, wells, buckets, bee hives, trees, tables, walls, kennels and farm doors. And that's without mentioning the Fire Station and Church.

An art that honours folklore at its best and keeps alive a folklore practice that was simple in its execution and now attracts visitors from all over the country. It is a must see...

We asked if we could stay the night behind the museum,, tucked out of the way of the world and they were happy for us to do so.

Zalipie - Painted Village



*Karen Davies*



## 5 ROUTE 3 KRAKÓW

Visiting Kraków is a must and as long as you time it wisely around the hordes that come to this popular European city destination, then you will have a fine time for two or three days.

Yet there is so much more than a city to see whilst you are in this area that gives you a real sense of what Poland has to offer. For example, did you know that Poland has a desert? This and so many more treasures are awaiting you outside of Kraków's city draw.

Check out our [10 Day Kraków Itinerary](#) post for more info on each of these fabulous areas.





Panorama of Kraków's Cloth Hall

## KRAKÓW CITY TOUR

Resplendent in its Renaissance, Gothic and Medieval architecture, Kraków is the throbbing heart of Poland's cultural soul. Unlike many of its city cousins, Kraków remained relatively unscathed during WW2, because the Germans took it under its wing as a *urdeutsche Stadt* (ancient German city). There was though still treachery hidden in the street's shadows, especially in the Ghetto of the Kazimierz Jewish Quarter. Yet strangely, even the Soviets left it well alone in their Communist dominance and no one knows why specifically.

Still we can be grateful that Kraków was preserved, as today we can marvel at its ancient and modern spirit.

There are plenty of attractions to see whilst you are here; The Underground City in the Rynek; Schindler's Factory Museum, or may

be you fancy joining an evening concert of classical music in the Cloister of Dominican Fathers for 12PLN.

Whether you choose to walk around Kraków's embracing parks, visit Wawel Castle, sup a flavoured beer or two in the Rynek - Market Square or rub shoulders with the musicians and artists at the Barbican, you will certainly pick up the vibe here.

There is the normal Hop-on Hop-off bus that takes you around the main sights or, if the romantic in you needs appeasing, then why not take in the sights by one of the elegant horse-drawn carriages. Whichever way you experience Kraków, be experienced it must. Check out our city tour video footage [here](#).

We stayed at Camping Adam, Camping Smok & El Camp.

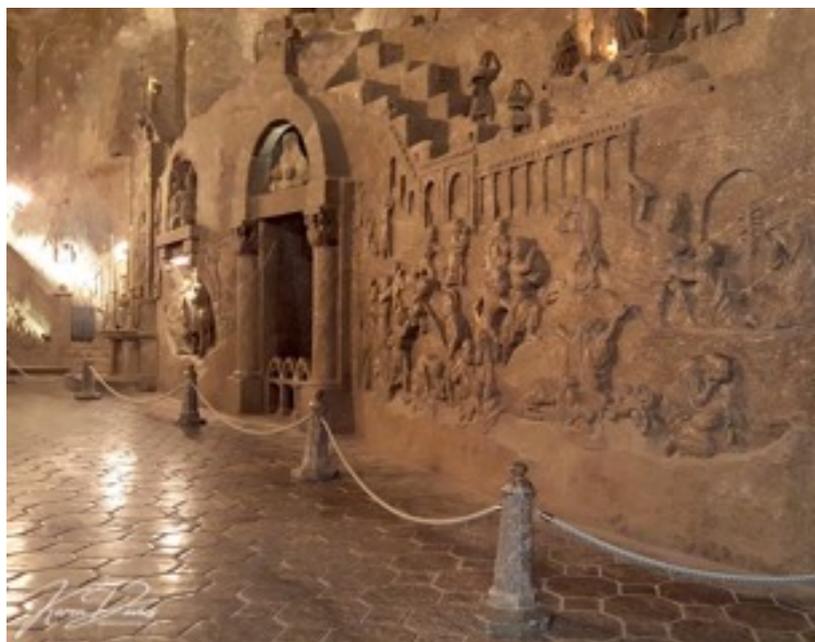


# WIELISCZKA SALT MINES

You can't visit Kraków without taking a trip into the suburbs to visit the most unique world I have ever seen. An underground city buried 327m beneath the earth.

Wieliczka Salt-mines, a UNESCO World Heritage site, holds over 700 years of history and in a 2-3 hour guided tour for only 94PLN you enter into the belly of this darkened salt oasis. Once at the bottom, which in fact is only level 1 of 9, you find there are no suffocating tunnels to crawl through. Instead you will be wowed by the 2 miles of marble-like walls and floors that would look at home in any grand palace.

The Salt-mines are an exhibition of life, art, history and a monument to a Polish way of life that has become unique on a global scale. Marvel at the salt chandeliers, the Biblical rock carvings, an altar in the Cathedral and a larger than life sculpture of Pope John Paul II.



On the surface, Wieliczka is a charming town with its castle, mining shafts and Rynek where you will find the most mesmerising 3D painting of the famous Mine Cathedral.





Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp Railway Line

## AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU EXTERMINATION CAMPS

Finding the right words for this moving experience is hard. Auschwitz is by no means an easy visit, nor is it an attraction, despite how some people might treat it with their Instagram poses. It is however, an important trip to make to honour those who endured camp life and perished under a regime of terror and persecution.

You cannot walk around these two museums and not be touched by the ghosts that linger in the huts that still stand or hear the deathly silence of those who arrived on the 'Resettlement' trains. Although the crowds at Auschwitz are not well organised and can stifle a meaningful visit, the museum is excellent. Tickets are free if you can arrive early or late in the day. To join a group you must pay 45PLN and be prepared to queue if you haven't already booked your tickets online. Read more about our experiences [here](#).

For a genuine space where you can collect your thoughts and feel the world through the victims' souls, Birkenau is the truest memorial I have experienced. A standing testament to the lives and deaths of 1941-44 where their memories will never be erased. This place will change you forever and is a stark exploration of the horror they endured.





Rabsztyn Castle, Eagle's Nest Route, Kraków

## EAGLE'S NEST ROUTE

Just minutes north of Kraków you will find route 794, which takes you on a journey through Poland's Jurassic Upland – a protected region that is home to undulating hills, forest, a desert and outcrops of limestone rocks that puncture the earth. On top of that, grand castles dot the land in royal stature, It is an area rich with walks, cycle routes and photographic opportunities.

From Kraków north to Częstochowa, the Eagle's Nest Route offers 12 Royal & 22 Knights' Castles and 10 Defensive Watchtowers. Each will tell you Medieval tales of battles and warriors, whilst on the other side, Mother Nature will share her own compelling scenery and ancient geology. The route totals 100 miles and we travelled as far as *Zamek Ogrodzieniec* in one day; having visited *Korzkiew* and *Rabsztyn* en route. On our return journey to Kraków we then

dropped in to see *Pieskowa Skała* and the Hercules Rock and then to the *Ojców National Park* where you find stunning hiking country, a castle and a classic Polish Wooden Church built in a stream.

As you go north, visit Poland's answer to the Sahara Desert. It is a unique landscape and not what you would expect in the middle of Poland. Although not naturally formed, *Błędowska Sands* is Central Europe's largest mass of sand and is hundreds of years old. It was created by years of deforestation back in in the Middle Ages and with over-farming the water table lowered so much that it could no longer support life. And so we have our little Polish Desert.

We stopped here for the night at the desert in our camper which is one of the most unique places we have stayed.

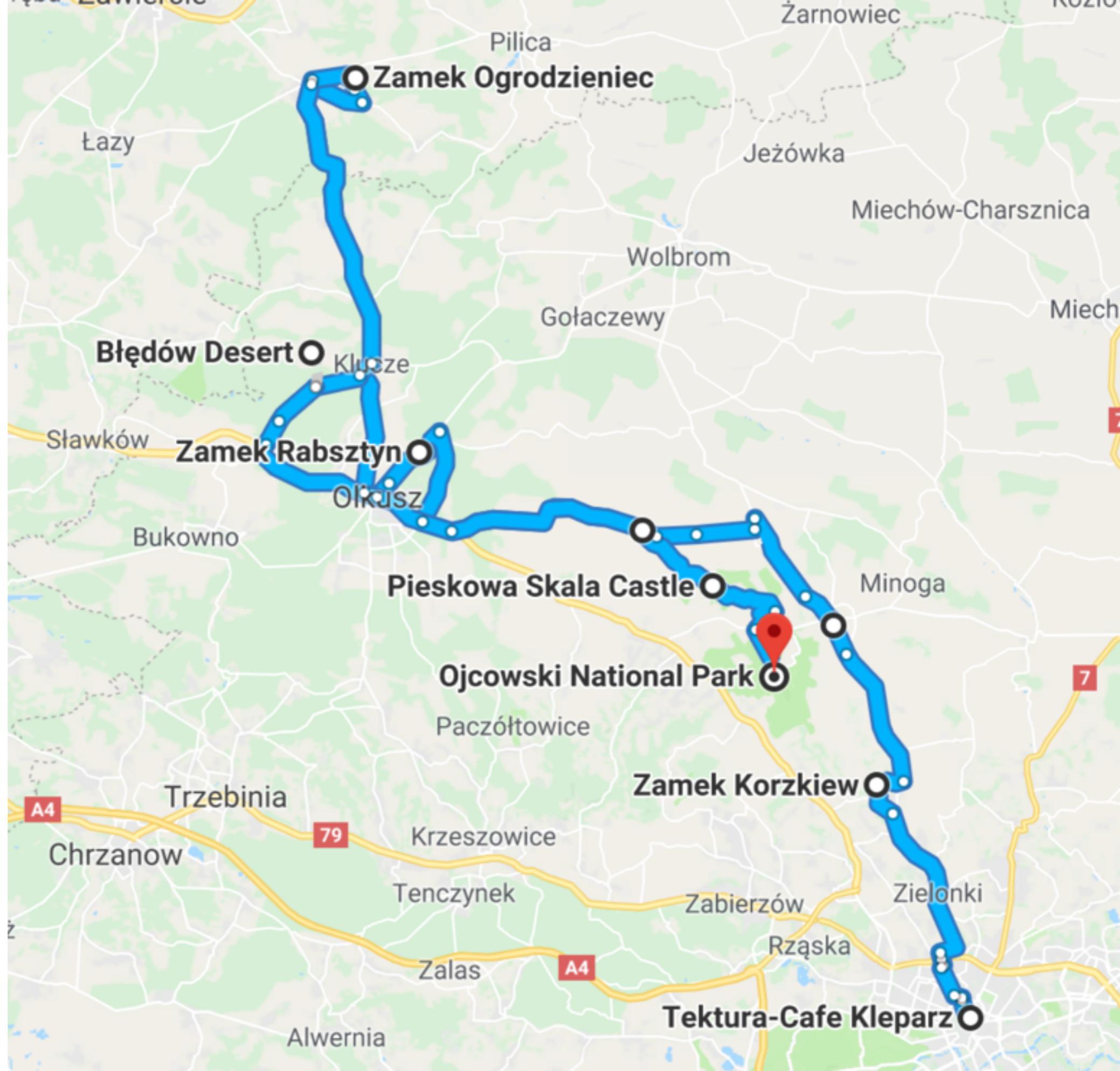
Pieskowa Skala Castle,  
Scoobie and Hercules,  
Rabsztyn Castle and the  
Desert sunset



## Eagle's Nest Route, north of Kraków.

Must sees are:

- \* Korzkiew Castle now a hotel
- \* Ojcowski valley
- \* Pieskowa Skała Castle and Hercules Rock
- \* Rabsztyn Castle
- \* Błędów Sands - desert
- \* Ogrodzieniec Castle



# MAŁOPOLSKA ROUTE OF THE WOODEN CHURCHES

Originating in the Medieval period, these wooden churches represent fabulous examples of church-building traditions of this time. Of the 74 churches dotted around this Małopolska region, 7 of them are UNESCO sites, often dating back as far as 1500s.

Each church has its own tale to tell and have unique designs both inside and out. They offer you such a provocative visit as you feel their tactile exteriors, breathe in their forest scented perfume and wonder at the intricate paintings and woodwork on the inside. It is a gallery of art all under one roof. Given their fragile construction, some of the churches have succumbed to fire; one of which is the church at Rzepiennik Suchy pictured to the right, which was struck by lightning in 1992. It has been under reconstruction ever since.

The Wooden Churches Route takes you through some of the most delightful Polish countryside - and whoever says that Poland is 'flat and boring' seriously need to get off the motorways and head over to this part of the country. At the foothills of the Tatra Mountains you get a real sense of country's geological provenance as Mother Nature begins to take our attention from Poland's scars.

For more information on the routes you can take to see these magnificent buildings, check out [this website](#) for an excellent interactive map. We stayed at a free, all-inclusive Aire in Sękowa (and an eclectic campsite at Klimkówka Lake).

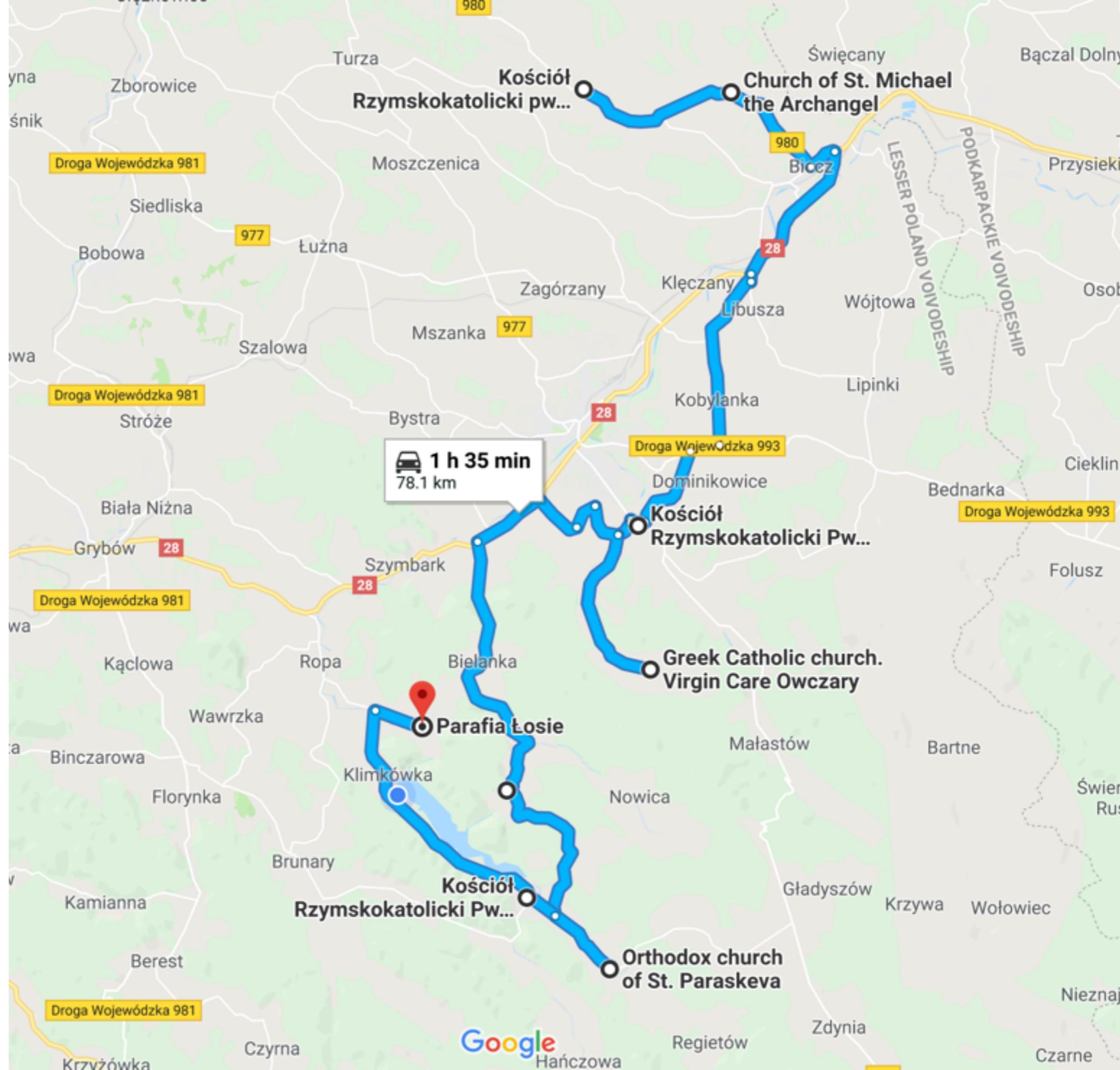


UNESCO Wooden  
Churches of Małopolska;

- Kwiaton
- Owczary,
- Binarowa,
- Sękowa



Our Wooden Churches  
Route - Małopolska





## 6 ROUTE 4 - TATRAS

Towering above the landscape and straddling Slovakia and Poland, the Tatras are an incredible sight. They are part of the magnificent arcing Carpathian Mountains that stretch from Romania to Czech Republic.

The gateway to the Polish Tatras is Zakopane, which is lovingly known as the Winter Capital of Poland although I think the summer season would contest this as crowds flock here. Outdoor activities thrive during the summer season, with hiking and cycling aplenty. Here are our highlights of this area.



Traditional Rafting at River Dunajec River Gorge

## Pieniny Mountains/Dunajec River Gorge

Our journey through the Tatras started in earnest when we planned to go to Dunajec river, which is home to some white water rafting - this always appeals to us after our New Zealand adventures at Phipiriki.

Leaving the Wooden Churches of Małopolska behind, much to Myles' relief, we headed for our beloved water. We decided against following Sat Nav, which took us down a main road - we always prefer the road-less travelled. So we meandered in tune with the river and watched it as it coursed its way from the Tatra Mountains towards the

Baltic Sea. Its sliver-grey waters hiding all sorts of mountain secrets I'm sure. If only we could have had a GoPro poo stick to record its journey from source to sea - what a tale that would have told.

The Pieniny Mountains that hug the Slovak border plays host to the most magnificent scenery. The river Dunajec, that releases its hold from the reservoir, snakes through the gorge it has carved for its very own pleasure. Metres above, unforgiving limestone rock covered in pine trees cast a shadow on the pale blue waters below. Traditional rafts, typical of 19th Century that used to make the journey north, now carry eager tourists, taking them on a gentle float through the gorge,



with some gentle white waters that elicit a few screams from nervous passengers.

The cycle route that weaves in and out of the bordering countries offers you a completely different view of this hidden delight and leaves you wanting more.

Where the Dunajec transforms from reservoir to raging river, you find the atmospheric Dunajec Castle at Niedzica, showcasing its 13th Century regal stature for all to see. This photogenic scene would look at home in any Disney animation.

For a central base, why not make your home Camping Polana Sosny, which sits betwixt the castle and the river gorge, providing an excellent place to explore.

## Zakopane - Winter Capital of Poland

We had high hopes of Zakopane as everyone told us how beautiful it was. And nestled at the foot of the Tatra National Park, surely it was a match made in heaven! Alas heavenly can only be applied to this place during the spring and autumn as in the summer months thousands flock here. We always like to look beyond the crowds, although Zakopane really took us to the limits. The sheer volume of traffic, the road works and the people, like ants heading for their nest did not make for a pleasant experience.

Still always driven by making the best of an experience, we endeavoured to get a flavour of this Ski Resort town which more than hums during this busy season.



If you can bare to run the shopping gauntlet, then the famous pedestrian street **Krupówki** is worth a saunter; and whilst weaving around the crowds, look up and admire the roof line, it is quite amazing. From there, your natural progression is towards **Gubałówka Hill**, where with a short vernacular ride for 23PLN per person, you can get some terrific views and a few more tourist tat huts.

If you can time it right; very early morning or late afternoon, then the cable car ride from **Kuźnice** up to Poland's highest building and **Kasprowy Wierch** is probably a great attraction, although for us, the prospect of a 2 hour queue was just not worth the 69PLN pp investment.

So instead we took a hike up through the National Park for a small entrance fee of 5PLN each. The **Dolina Białego** is a stunning hike that, the higher you climb the more the crowds thin out, until you reach the pinnacle of the mountain at around 4000ft. Then at some point you need to come down, so descending the other side to **Dolina Strazyska** with the lure of refreshment at the bottom, makes a strenuous and exhilarating walk, with a round-trip of 8.5km.

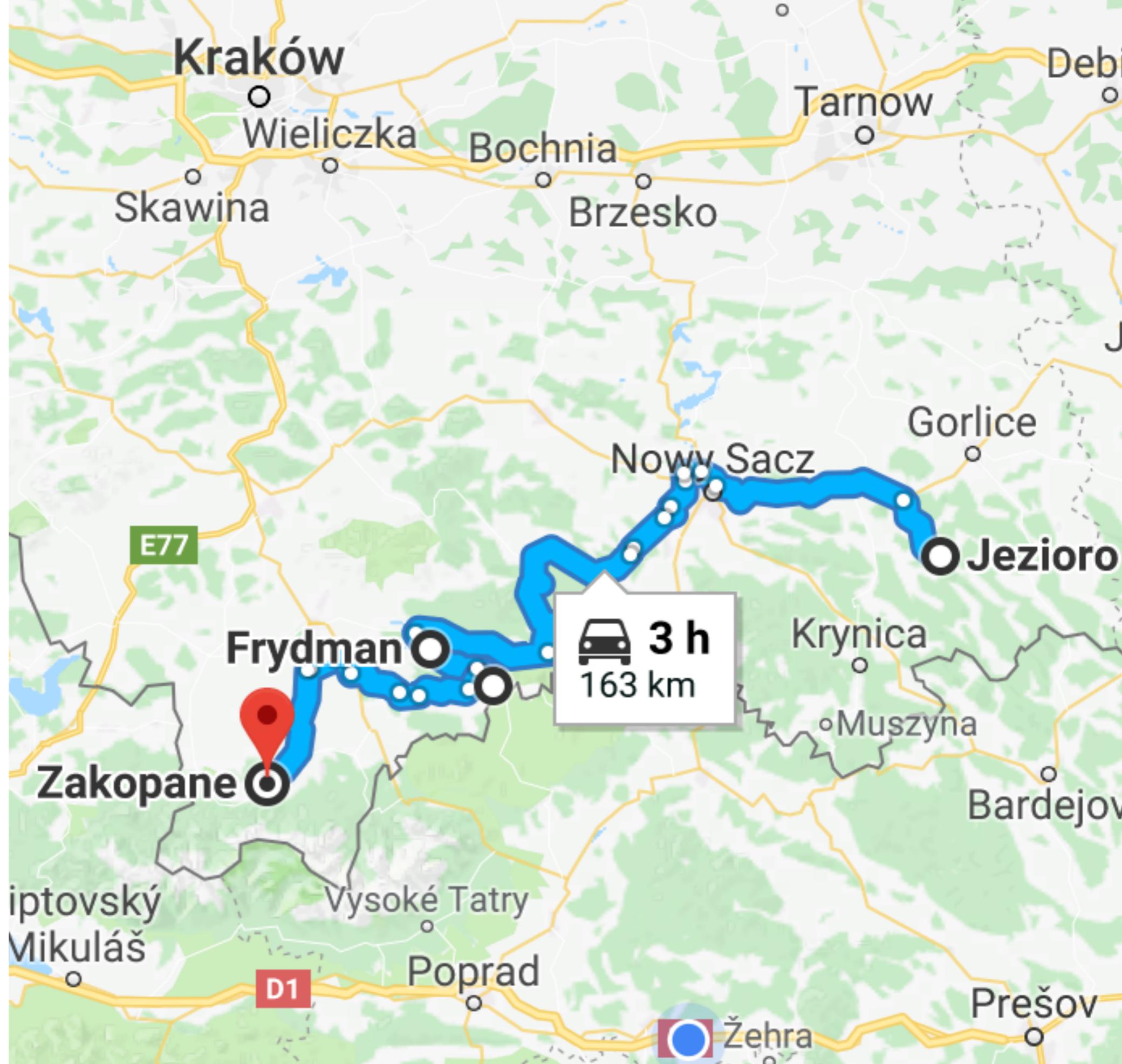
So many more of the hikes and highlights of the area just cannot be undertaken in August - so if you come here, avoid the silly season and come under the comfortable umbrella of the shoulder season to truly make the most of the precious mountain icon.

We stopped at Camping Pod Krokwią, which was in a fabulous position for hiking, with stunning views to boot.

Our Route from Klimkowa to Zakopane before crossing into Slovakia

Must sees;

- \* Losie Wooden Church
- \* Niedznica Castle
- \* Dunajec River Gorge
- \* Zakopane - in spring or autumn.





## 7 POLAND PRACTICALITIES

So now we have tempted you to visit this fair land that smiles on the outside yet still sobs on the inside, what of all the essential practicalities about your visit?

This chapter is devoted to all things Poland; from arriving, driving, sleeping, eating and generally living here.

We have a short section on the language, which we found incredibly difficult although have a separate eBook that might satisfy your curiosity more. [Click here.](#)



Maniowy Church, Tatra mountains, Małopolska

## Arriving

However you choose to arrive in Poland whether by “plane, train or automobile” to quote the famous film title, Poland offers you options.

From 2017 stats, Poland has 15 **airports** to choose from, the top six receiving the most traffic being Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk, Katowice, Warsaw Modlin and Wrocław.

If you choose to come by **train**, most northern European routes go through Berlin either to Gdańsk, Poznań or Warsaw. The

Transeuropean Express connects Poznań and Warsaw with both Paris and Moscow. And for countries south of Poland there is the PKP Intercity that connects Prague, Budapest, Vienna and Bratislava to numerous Polish cities. From here, there is a national network, although this is said to be in need of modernisation and investment.

If you are an EU citizen travelling by **car or camper**, then there are multiple entry points to Poland. From the south and west there are no longer any border crossing points, and you are free to cross without border controls at Lithuania. Although if you are travelling from

Belarus, Russian's province Kalingrad and Ukraine, you must check what the requirements are required for your own nationality.

## All things driving related

It might be a perception that Poland's roads, being part of central Europe would not be great. Although this is a myth. After seven weeks driving roughly 2000km (1200 miles) we came across very few bad roads, unlike other countries we've visited. In fact our own roads in England are in a worse condition.

On the whole driving here is comfortable and straightforward. The roads are on the narrow side and sometimes we have winced as a fast approaching lorry has made us breathe in, although these are the only instances where we have encountered any issues.

There have been no traffic jams and in fact, apart from the vehicles we've seen at campsites, we have seen only half a dozen other motorhomes.

Other drivers are fast and a little bit crazy, although if you have ever driven in Italy then our comparison is best described in the form of a curry; Italians would be a Vindaloo and the Polish would be a Madras; a bit spicy although not going to kill you.

The scenery en route, except for perhaps the central plains between Wrocław and Warsaw, is beautiful and so there is no driving fast. Take your time and enjoy everything around you.

## Road Signs

Most of the road signs speak for themselves, although there are a couple that are worthy of noting.



When you see this sign, it indicates entry into a village or town, enforcing a 50km (31mph) zone. Whilst no one else seems to adhere to it, we did see a number of speed cameras, so do beware.



The end of the speed restriction zone is represented by the image below.



Also you will see this sign KONIEC - at first I thought this was a warning sign, although it means END. So this one, for example, indicates that the danger of deer running into the road is over.



If you see the word **PŁATNY** on either a road sign or when parking, it means a fee is payable.

**Bezpłatny** conversely means no payment required.

## Toll Fees

Whilst talking fees, there are few motorways that require tolls and some are still being constructed. For vehicles *over* 3.5T you can apply in advance for a ViaBox through ViaToll where registration is free although a deposit is required for the box itself.

For all vehicles *under* 3.5T fees are payable at Toll Booths on the motorways themselves. Although we avoid motorways as much as possible we did use the A4 between Kraków and Katowice where we had to pay 10PLN (£2). There are signs saying that other motorways such as A4 into Kraków from the east is chargeable although there are no Toll Booths yet. We found the same in Warsaw.

So the bottom line is that Tolls are coming - they are not expensive although if you are under 3.5T and have to take the motorways, just watch out for the toll booths. For more information and the latest situation please check the [Tolls.eu](https://tolls.eu) website.

## Road Safety

A few rules are worth noting when driving in Poland:

- Drink driving carries heavy penalties - more so than UK.
- Dipped headlights are obligatory at all times.
- There are Speed Cameras, although not sure how many of them actually worked, although keep to speed limits.

For more information check out this [website](#).

## Everything Accommodation

There are plenty of accommodation options in Poland. Camping we'll come on to in a moment. Although worth a mention are the hotels, which certainly from the outside look amazing. They have put a great deal of investment into their tourist sector and you are not struggling for choice. You can also look for less formal types of accommodation which have a couple of names for you to look out for;

**Noclegi** - Accommodation

**Pokoje** - Rooms B&B Style

**Agrotourism** - Farms and ranches that offer accommodation in the countryside

For more information about accommodation options around Poland, check out [this website](#).

## Camping

On the surface, when you look at resources like [Search for Sites](#) there seem not to be a lot of campsites. around. Although in our research we found loads and whilst their standards vary, they are still charming and acceptable as long as you are self-sufficient. If you look on Google Maps you will find the following terminology;

- **RV Park** - this is very much encouraging motorhomes and campers to come and stay. Will have facilities albeit sometimes basic.

- **Camping nr XX** - these are official campsites that belong to the Polish Federation of Camping and Caravans. Each site has an assigned number and a star rating so you know what to expect. These sometimes offer a 10%



ACSI discount on production of your card even during the high season. For an interactive map of sites, click [here](#).

- **Pole namiotowe** - Sometimes these are just for tents, although not exclusively - just check out their websites first.
- **Campground** - A mixture of tents and caravans/campers with varied facilities

Camping is very cheap here ranging from 30PLN to 100PLN (£6 - £20). The latter tend to be in cities so we expected to pay a bit more, although given it was high season, compared to UK or Austria it is actually very reasonable.

Your fee is generally charged based on:

- A set price for the van
- The number of people in your party
- Whether you want electricity.

Some of the more official sites have washing machine facilities which vary in price; Camping Adam in Kraków washing was completely free, whilst at others it was 20PLN (£4).

## Wild camping in Poland

We had plenty of wild camping in Poland which seems to be tolerated. Except for the National Parks where it is illegal and you will be heavily fined. We did get some looks, which at first we thought were of disapproval. Although we realised that it is more intrigue as they don't see many motorhomes here and even less Brits. So don't be put off.

We picked up most of our wild spots from [Park4Nights](#). We felt very safe all the way through our trip except for one night at the Błędów Sands desert and we didn't feel so much unsafe as just a bit unsettled thanks to boy racers and some strange animal sounds we couldn't put our finger on.

Otherwise there really are plenty of parking opportunities as long as you apply the normal wild camping code of ethics; respect, tidiness and responsibility.

## Cost of living

We have had the privilege of having some really cheap countries to call home over the last 2.5 years of travelling. And Poland would have to be one of our top 3 cheapest.

*Everything here is cheap.*

- Diesel @July 2018 is between 4.80PLN -5.04PLN (.96p - £1.00)
- LPG averaged around 2.15PLN (.43p). And LPG is everywhere. The tiniest garages sell it and was never a problem for us to fill up.

- Food bills averaged around 300PLN (£60 based on shopping for two of us including beer and wine) for 7-10 days worth of supplies.
- Wine is around 14PLN for a decent bottle of red (£2.80) and a decent medium beer averaged around 10PLN for four cans (50p per can).
- Eating out, even in cities is cheap. An meal with two main courses and 2 beers cost us around 70PLN. There is no 'see the tourist coming so let's charge a fortune' philosophy here. Just an honest 'trying to earn a living' attitude which is so refreshing.

We calculated our total spend during our 58 days and it amounted to £33.00 per day!

## Shopping

Buying food is so easy here. In all the main towns and cities of course you will always find a Tesco and Lidl. Sometimes an Aldi although not many, and generally Kaufland. There is a strong french connection here so you will also get Carrefour, Intermarché, Bricomarché and Castorama - particularly in the main cities.

All the shops take foreign cards although you will be asked if you want to pay in your own currency or in Złoty. For us, we have a pre-paid Caxton card, so we always paid in Złoty, pressing the X sign on the key pad. That way we didn't end up paying any additional commission charges.

There are some food stuffs to mention particularly because of their value for money. With our travels around Europe, we have

sometimes struggled to get certain cuts of meat either because they are not popular or they are just too expensive.

Here you can buy duck, pork joints, lamb, minced turkey/chicken and salmon fillets all for between 12-15PLN each. That works out at around £2.50-3.00 per item. That is just super cheap compared to UK let alone any other western European countries. Bare in mind that as a catholic country, shops are rarely open on a Sunday - even in cities, so don't let this catch you out.

## When to come/weather

Poland's weather is a temperate climate, influenced by the Polar air from Scandinavia and Russia, the sub-tropical thermals from the south and the oceanic influences from the west - and they all collide in Poland! So generally you get very cold winters and very warm summers. Although given the currents that converge here, it can be a bit hit and miss.

We had a number of 'bad' spells where we just had to hunker down and let the three day storm pass. There were some pretty full on thunderstorms that built after a period of intense heat, although they generally passed quite quickly. So be prepared for summer storms that seem to come out of the blue and build in some 'down time' because of weather influences.

Spring and autumn are great times to come although watch for the mountain region where snow and bad weather are more likely. Summer is gorgeous here with some really hot days and balmy nights - sometimes on the cool side especially in the mountains.

As a general rule, nowhere in Poland is crowded or busy even in the high season. The only two exceptions we found were in Kraków, where flocks of tourists hung out and the queues at Wieliczka Salt-mines and Auschwitz were simply crazy. The other place was Zakopane close to the Slovak border. It was full on busy in August with locals taking their vacations here. Everywhere else in Poland we encountered very few crowds - even in the capital Warsaw.

It's worth baring in mind that the schools break up in the last week in June until end of August, so there will be more activity around lakes, the coast, mountain attractions and campsites. Although we made sure that we arrived at a campsite on a Thursday to beat the weekend rush and only once didn't manage to get a pitch. So be mindful of this as you plan your travels.

## Animal Welfare

I am so happy to report that Poland differs from its eastern European cousins on this front. After the heart-break of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania where their welfare of dogs particularly is atrocious, Poland has little or no issues. Dogs are classed as pets or guard dogs and not a nuisance. So we never saw any strays anywhere, which was a huge relief.

## Getting by in Polish

Polish is one of the hardest languages aside of Hungarian. Although with a handful of phrases and Google Translate you can get by pretty well.

For our Travel Phrase Guidebook why not check out our free to download eBook - [Getting by in...](#)

In cities you will have no problems conversing in English, although in the countryside and the mountains where you will experience more of the authentic Polish culture, there is little or no English spoken. So these little phrases can really help. I've added the phonetic sounds to help;

English	Polish	Phonetic
Hello	Dzień Dobry	Gin Dobray
Goodbye	Do widzenia	Do vie zen ya
Please	Proszę	Prosha
Thank you	Dziękuję	Gin Ku ya
Can I	Czy mogę	Chey mo gay
Stay	Zostać	Zostach
Have	Mieć	Miech
Pay	Zapłacić	Zabwowchich
One night	Jedno/Jedna noce	Yedno/Yedna nosay
Price List	Cennik	Zennik
I don't understand	Nie rozumiem	Nay roseumiem
Do you speak English	Czy mówisz po angielsku	Chey movish po angi elsku

The locals really appreciate you having a go, even if you have to resort to Google Translate. Over time the phrases do become easier.

## Random Facts

- Cycling is well supported in Poland and there are generally cycle tracks in all major towns and cities. Most often cities will have a hire-a-bike scheme if you want to get around easily.
- Getting trams into a large town or city is standard across the country. You pay for the duration you need a ticket to travel. So if you want to get to multiple destinations over a period of say an hour, then buy a long duration ticket. Otherwise if you are just travelling into a town to walk around, I suggest you buy just a 20 minute ticket. They are 2.80PLN each.
- Be prepared to carry cash around with you everywhere. Whilst cards are accepted in most towns, restaurants, petrol stations and supermarkets, campsites prefer cash. Trams/buses/taxis require coins - so have plenty of cash options on you.
- If you are over 70 years old, you can travel for free on public transport.
- Dogs are also allowed to travel on buses and trams.
- Radio Zet.eu is a great station if you can find it around 103KKh. It plays 70% English/US music.
- We felt incredibly safe in Poland. Unlike some western European countries, we felt able to go into a shop together - albeit briefly - leaving the van temporarily unattended. There were few police

patrols and no security members in any of the supermarkets. It was incredibly refreshing.

- Poland is very much a back-to-nature type of place and so you will see families out at the weekend on bikes, walking and visiting attractions - so factor that in.
- Also it is so refreshing to see campsites both formal and informal allowing open campfires. No health and safety restrictions here. And in fact most places we went, there were fire pits for you to build your own fires. Just brilliant.
- Noticeable by their absence are cows and sheep. Until you get into the mountains where there were a couple; Daisy and Dolly I think were their names. You may see the odd one or two in a front garden, although nothing on a UK scale.
- Poland has an abundance of fruit orchards. If you come late spring through summer, you will see acres and acres of fruit trees laden with either early crops of apples, plums, the most enormous apricots I have ever seen and blueberries. The latter are often sold on the roadside in bucket loads.





## 8 CAMPSITE OPTIONS

When we set out for Poland and looked for camping options, we were a bit anxious about the lack of postings on the various internet resources.

Although once we had found our feet, campsites popped up everywhere even in the most out of the way places.

So we have pulled together a complete directory of the sites we stayed at with co-ordinates. We hope they are useful to you.



## Scoobie at Gródek nad Dunajcem

### 1. Stalag Luft 3 - Zagan. (51.59774, 15.29761)

This was a wild spot we found just across the border from Germany and happened to be right at the museum honouring the Prisoner of War camp famous for The Great Escape of March 1944.

### 2. Czocha Lake - Camping Plaža (51.03267, 15.29275)

This was a super site right by the lakeside with beautiful sunsets. You could get direct access to the lake for swimming and kayaking. The site was a bit old fashioned although had 10 touring spots and the people were lovely. Only 49PLN per night with EHU - about £10.



### 3. Karłowicka Dolina Campground - (51.02986, 15.38279)

This was an excellent site with a newly built complex with sauna (extra fee) and great showers. They had a mini farm and a bar-be-que area overlooking the Sudete Mountains. 60PLN per night for two with electricity. £12.



### 4. Camp 66 - Karpacz (50.7932, 15.7703)

This was a new site, just north of Karpacz Ski Resort and close to the Wang Temple, which is worth seeing. 50PLN exc EHU with ACSI discount made it about £9 per night.



### 5. Wild camping at Swidniki - (50.83098, 16.47612)

This wasn't the greatest of spots, although the best of the two in town. Nice lake with cycle paths, although by a road and where people would 'hang out'. Although worth being here for the Church of Peace UNESCO site.



### 6. Leśry Wild spot (50.6612, 16.4789)

Hidden in the Owl Mountains this was a lovely quiet spot tucked away in the valley surrounded by forest. It was a picnic car park and we had a peaceful night. Very close to Hitler's Project Riese caves.



### 7. Agrocamp 227 (50.40974, 16.381)

An eclectic site although perfect position for Stołowe National Park. 41PLN pn with EHU and with deer in the field opposite.



## 8. Camping Wrocław - (51.07576, 17.08922)

By Poland's standards this was expensive, although it was July and a city site, so we forgave it its 100PLN charge. It was a highly secure site with lovely facilities.



## 9. Parking Ruda Millicz (51.53309, 17.32672)

A wild spot we found thanks to Park4Nights. A quiet, hardstanding parking area close to the reservoirs and nature reserve with great cycling around the area. Also had portaloos open 24/7.



## 10. Rzgów Church parking (51.66402, 19.48937)

There is so little parking and indeed no camping in Łódź at all, so we settled for this free car park, which was a bit noisy with kids at the Skate Park at the end, although nothing troublesome.



## 11. Łódź Park overnight (51.75924, 19.45598)

A free night just north of the city with an excellent tram and bus network. A popular place for families to come although a surprisingly quiet night.



## 12. Camping Kaputy - Warsaw (52.2305, 20.7919)

A great site just 8 miles west of Warsaw. ASCI discount offered even in summer. Great spot attached to a hotel with plenty of pitches.



### 13. Secure Parking Warsaw (52.25011, 21.01568)

Fabulously central spot that you can park at by day and night. 6PLN per hour and 124PLN for 24hrs. Secure and easy to access.



### 14. Overnight, Treblinka Extermination Camp (52.6341, 22.05642)

After all the visitors had gone, we felt it was appropriate to arrive for the night. There are no barriers to go through and we had a quiet night. Get up early to explore the Camp before the coaches arrive. Water available and toilets through the day.



### 15. Forest parking outside Lublin (51.38399, 22.62859)

A Park4Night stop about 20 mins from Lublin. It was a delightful place to stop and we had two nights here. Toilets open 24/7.



### 16. Possible overnight at Lublin (51.24815, 22.57312)

Although we didn't stop over, you were allowed to for only 3PLN for an unlimited time. Right underneath the Old Town walls and castle.



### 17. Wild camping at Wisła River (51.351, 21.9838)

Totally could have stayed here longer. It was a spot right on the river's edge down a bit of a rough track. Only fishermen come here!



### **18. Camping Browarny (50.68009, 21.7548) Sandomierz**

An ASCI site where you get 10% discount making your stay 80PLN per night. It is positioned right underneath the Old Town walls so great access and reasonable facilities. Fine for a night.



### **19. Wild camping - Zalipie (50.23595, 20.8623)**

With the permission of the museum curator, we stayed out of the way opposite the Pre-school and, given it was holiday season, there were no problems staying here. No facilities though.



### **20. El Camp Aire - Kraków (50.0345, 19.87719)**

A Motorhome Dealer that has opened up part of its land to motorhomes. With services only 60PLN with access into the city.



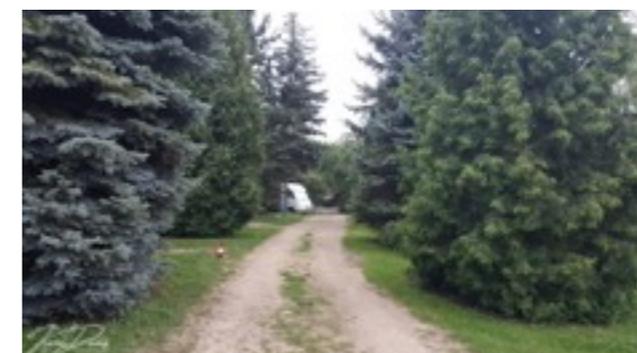
### **21. Camping Adam (50.04719, 19.90315)**

A small site attached to a hotel close to city centre. Has a tendency to be waterlogged after rain and very busy during the high season. Pitches all mixed shapes so not suitable for long vehicles over 8m. 94PLN pn with free washing machine and easy access to the city.



### **22. Camping Smok (50.04733, 19.88063)**

ACSI site with a field below for longer vehicles and an upper tier with private pitches. 99PLN no EHU. A bus outside to Kraków.



### **23. Błędowska Desert parking (50.33636, 19.55008)**

In theory a really unique place to stay, which mid-week is probably ok, although on a Friday night we had some odd nocturnal activity that was a bit unsettling.

### **24. Overnight possibility Rabsztyn Castle (50.29973, 19.59245)**

We didn't stop overnight here, although you can. There are no facilities although plenty of spots to choose from underneath the castle.

### **25. Parking at Birkenau Death Camp (50.0357, 19.1842)**

One of the most sombre places we've ever parked at although perfect spot for timing your visit to Birkenau without any queues or crowds.

### **26. Parking Auschwitz Concentration Camp (50.02679, 19.19939)**

Parking dedicated to campers with EHU. 40PLN per night and 10PLN for electricity. Just a two minute walk to the museum entrance.

### **27. Parking for Salt-mines Wieliczka (49.98661, 20.05113)**

There are a couple of spots for campers, although this one was closer and hardstanding for 60PLN for 24hrs. No services.



### **28. Gródek nad Dunajcem Lake (49.73847, 20.72806)**

A wild spot by the lakeside, which wasn't very clean. Still a peaceful overnight here. Weekends probably busy as it was a parking area for pleasure craft.



### **29. Sękowa Aire (49.62649, 21.19396)**

On the route of the Wooden Churches of Małopolska, this was an all-inclusive Aire. Everything for free, beside a sports stadium. Five spots assigned to campers. Great facility.



### **30. Klimkowa RV Park - (49.55347, 21.0805)**

Although not really a true campsite, it was a field for caravans and tents to pitch up. Although that said it was great for us with a lakeside view and direct access to the beach for swimming or kayaking. 49PLN per night including EHU and services.



### **31. Camping Frydmen, (49.44249, 20.2384)**

Basically a big field with a toilet block and a small shop, although actually it was really atmospheric and it was quite endearing. 30PLN per night no EHU. Close to the reservoir and UNESCO church.



### **32. Camping Polana Sosny - Niedzka (49.40475, 20.33288)**

One of the nicest sites we stayed at, in the heart of the activities for the Dunajec river gorge. The castle, kayaking and cycling all from the comfort of the site. 49PLN per night no EHU.



### 33. Camping Ustup - Zakopane (49.3223, 19.98596)

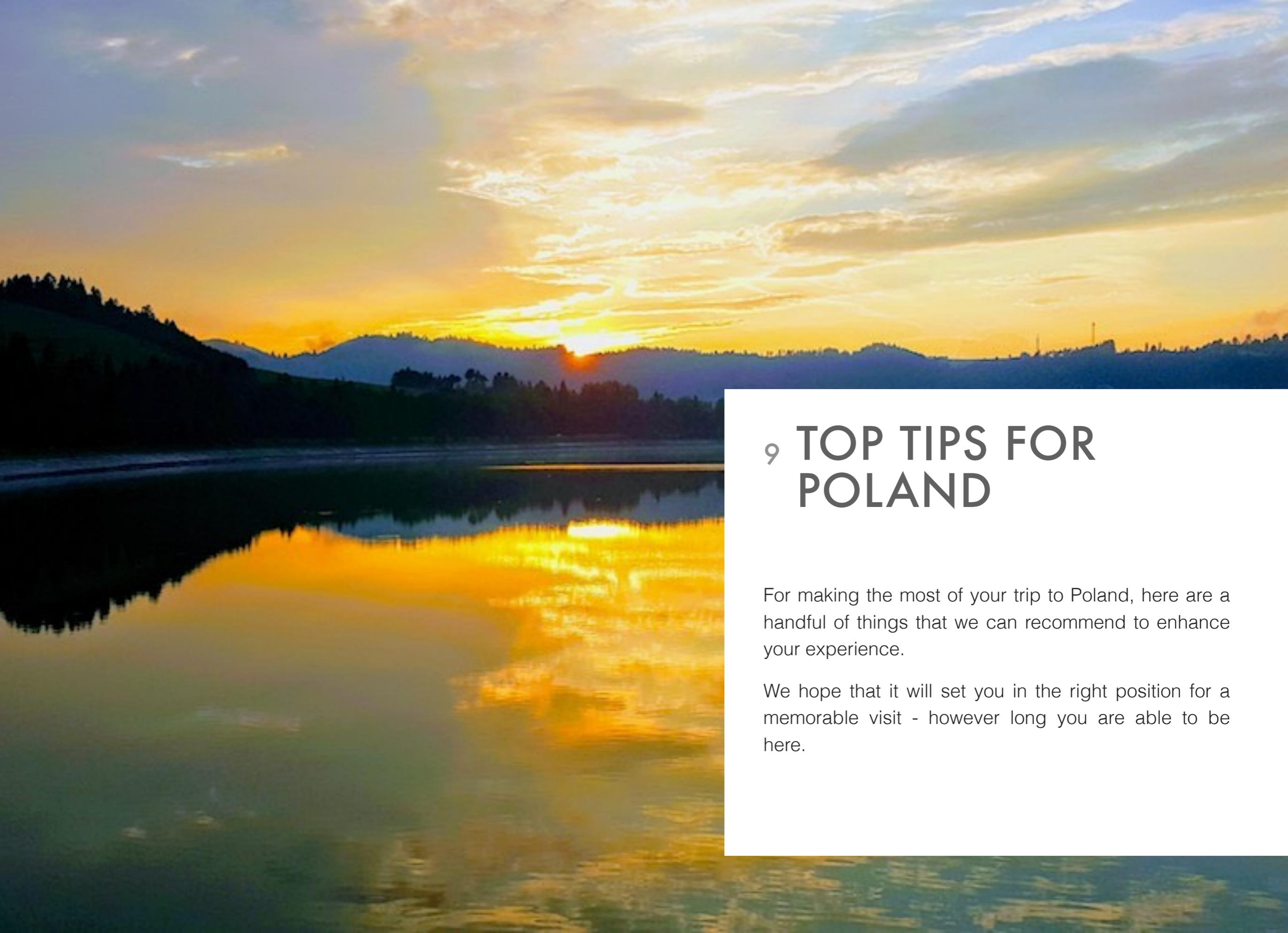
This was our least favourite site and we only stayed one night. We were packed in like sardines early August and it cost 85PLN for the pleasure. Too far away from everywhere and difficult cycling conditions. Warning of things to come in Zakopane - far too many people. I think he packed vans in for monetary gain as opposed to people's comfort. Camping Pod Krokwia the other side of the town was much better.



### 34. Camping Pod Krokwia (49.28281, 19.96932)

A super spot at the heart of Tatra hikes, cable cars and only 1 mile from town. It's a wide open space underneath the mountains with reasonable facilities, although a bit tired. 85PLN with EHU per night. It was even on the Tour de Pologne circuit. 10PLN for washing machine.





## 9 TOP TIPS FOR POLAND

For making the most of your trip to Poland, here are a handful of things that we can recommend to enhance your experience.

We hope that it will set you in the right position for a memorable visit - however long you are able to be here.



## Sunset over Błędów Sands

### TOP TIPS FOR POLAND

1. Come here from spring through to mid autumn for the best of the weather and scenery. Be prepared for busier places in top tourist resorts such as Krakow, Salt-mines, Auschwitz and Zakopane. Everywhere else is reasonably quiet - generally speaking.
2. Don't forget that the currency is Złoty and not Euro, so come prepared. There are plenty of ATM's around so getting access to cash isn't a problem.
3. Keep plenty of cash on you as many places, especially in out of the way towns, will only take cash not cards. All supermarkets, petrol stations and other large stores *do* accept credit cards.
4. Be prepared to throw yourself into the country's historical culture by experiencing at least one of the World War museums. It may be uncomfortable, although it is a significant part of their identity.
5. When you see *SKLEP*, it's a little convenience store, which sells a handful of helpful items if you can't find any other supermarkets. They are actually quite reasonably priced.
6. In our seven weeks in Poland we were delighted not to have had to endure infestations of midges. We have camped by rivers, lakes and reservoirs and not once have we suffered like some

- other countries we've visited. We have had the odd bite although nothing in comparison. So don't worry if you are susceptible.
7. If you are camping in Poland during their summer holidays, then ensure you get to a campsite by Friday lunchtime to ensure a spot. Although the sites were not overly busy, it's better safe than sorry especially in popular destinations like Kraków, Wrocław or Zakopane.
  8. Polish schools break up for their summer holidays at the end of June until end of August, so there will be an increase in traffic at hotspots around the country, especially lakes and rivers. They also have a winter break in addition to their Christmas holiday which is from mid January for five weeks. So if you come here to ski, then build this into your plans.
  9. Never fear about getting LPG. It is everywhere and is super cheap.
  10. If you are partial to a G&T - then make sure you have plenty of supplies of tonic. We struggled to get it here especially in Lidl.
  11. Learn some Polish basic phrases as English is not spoken everywhere. Alternatively take a translation app to help you converse. Don't forget our [Getting by in... Guide](#) that may offer some assistance.
  12. Do eat out here as it is very cheap. We didn't do as much as we would normally, although the food we have eaten has been very nice.
  13. Beer and wine are good quality and cheap here, so no need to stock up.
  14. If Vodka is your passion then you'll be in for a treat - it's sold everywhere in all sorts of fashions and flavours.
  15. Flavoured beers are the rage. Try a beer and ginger, it is phenomenal.
  16. If you love getting back to nature, Poland will be your kinda place. Open fires are very much a feature of the campsites, with fire pits created and bar-be-que areas as standard.
  17. Be prepared for a variety of campsite standards. We had some fantastic sites and we had some very eclectic - out of the way - type of sites, which we actually came to love. Some of them are rudimentary although always run by lovely people and are in lovely spots. The sites that are high class are generally new ones and have had a lot of money thrown at them.
  18. Euros are generally not accepted in Poland, unless you are close to the border.
  19. The internet is pretty good. We found it a bit flaky up in the mountains, although everywhere else we have been able to regularly get 4G.
  20. As with many countries that attract tourists, be careful with transport that involves working animals. Make sure that the animals look well cared for and are kept in the shade. Kraków horses. looked loved although we heard bad reports of the animals at Morskie Oko lake in Zakopane.
  21. And finally, our last tip is the most important. *You must come!* Poland is delightful and we have many beautiful memories. Come! Come soon!



## 10 CLOSING THOUGHTS

We had a very open mind and few expectations of Poland, given that we had anticipated it as a passing through country en route to Lithuania. Although we are so glad that our plans changed.

I've no doubt that Poland will stay a firm favourite of ours as we continue our travels and we hope that we have given you just a flavour of our delights. Perhaps you will fancy giving Poland a go. Or perhaps you feel inclined to come again and do a bit more exploring. Either way, safe and happy travels.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

If we had to find some words that would sum up our time in this diverse and deeply characterful land, they would be these, written for a recent blog I posted;

*Come to an unassuming land, that has scars deeper than the ocean and a spirit taller than any mountain, with a character that reaches right into your heart. A rainbow of colours seeps from every aspect of life, asserting their place in a modern world, which is so removed from the grey communism that sought to repress them. Poland calls to be put on the map, demands to be respected and asks for us to share in its glorious and complex culture.*

We have loved Poland and are grateful for all its experiences and memories. If you have any questions you can email us at [themotoroamers@gmail.com](mailto:themotoroamers@gmail.com) or check out the website for all our blogs and vlogs <https://www.motoroaming.com>

***Karen, Myles and Scoobie***

