Poland: unique and exceptional.
Poland - a country full of surprises

Poland, nestling in Central Europe, offers many more attractions than can be included in any advertising folder. Those that we are going to present here are but a small fraction of the surprises awaiting visitors. Everyone probably knows that you can lie on a beach in Poland. But do they know that we have the largest sand dunes in Central Europe and one of the most accessible locations for windsurfing? The fact that Poland is a country with a rich history is well known. But is it known that the world’s largest Gothic fortress is also in Poland, where the reconstruction of the largest battle in Medieval Europe takes place? Poland also has one of the oldest health resorts on the Old Continent, the biggest graduation towers, the largest network of ponds in Europe and the world’s oldest oil well. Is that still not enough? We also have Europe’s longest wooden pier, the biggest medieval latrine and the largest Jewish cemetery on the European continent. Poland is a paradise for lovers of nature, adventurers, sportsmen and those who just want to relax. There are also enough facilities to satisfy the business person. What else do we have? Hope… the hope that you will come to see all these attractions for yourself. Consider yourself invited to Poland!

Polish Tourist Organisation
THE POMERANIA AND KUJAWY REGIONS 4-9
1. The Largest Gothic Fortress in Europe Malbork Castle
2. Europe’s Largest Graduation Towers Ciechocinek
3. The Latrine with a Castle Kwidzyn
4. The Largest Sand Dunes in Central Europe Slowinski National Park
5. The Longest Wooden Pier in Europe Sopot
6. The Wind Rages on Hel The Bay of Puck

THE WARMIA AND MASURIA REGIONS 10-14
7. Masuria – A Natural Wonder Great Masurian Lakes
8. The Largest Battle of Medieval Europe Grunwald
9. Two Remarkable Monuments of Technology The Augustów Canal and the Elbląg Canal
10. One of the Most Beautiful Canoe Trails Krutyń

THE WIELKOPOLSKA AND LUBUSKIE REGIONS 15-16
11. One of the Largest Music Festivals on the Old Continent "Bus-stop Woodstock" Kostrzyn on the Odra
12. The Only Park in the World on Both Sides of a State Border Mużakowski / Muskauer Landscape Park
13. The Underground City The Miedzyrzecz Fortified Region

THE MAZOVIA AND ŁODZ REGIONS 17
14. The best in every respect Warsaw

THE POPLASIE AND LUBELSKIE REGIONS 18-22
15. Record Depths Lake Hańcza
16. The Best Preserved Magnaia Residence in Poland The Palace in Kozłówka
17. Bird Kingdom Biebrza National Park
18. Where Kings Once Hunted Bialowieża National Park
19. The Ideal City Zamość

SILESIA 23
20. One of the Oldest Spas in Europe Ladek Zdroj

THE MALOPOLSKI, SWIETOKRZYSKI, AND CARPATHIAN REGIONS 24-29
21. The Polish Wild East Bieszczady
22. The Only One Such Calvary Kalwaria Zabkowicka
23. The Centre of Winter Sports The Tatra Mountains
24. Conference in Wieliczka The Wieliczka Salt Mine
The Largest Gothic Fortress in Europe

Malbork Castle

There are many Teutonic castles in Poland, but this one is unique. It was built on an area of 21 hectares, on a plan similar to a rectangle and is 250 metres wide and almost 700 metres long with a volume of 250,000m³. It is surrounded by massive walls, separated by moats and guarded by towers, gates and drawbridges. Malbork, the largest Gothic fortress in Europe became the seat of the Grand Master in 1309 and from 1324 also the capital of the State of the Teutonic Knights. The castle was designed to stir up admiration and inspire respect and to this day leaves a tremendous impression on the more than 400,000 tourists that visit it every year.

Visitors can view the chambers where the knights slept, feasted or prepared for armed expeditions. They can admire the open lattice-work, supported only on one column and sixteen wall supports, of the ribbed vaulted ceiling in the Summer Refectory and the most impressive interior room of the castle, the Great Refectory. Visitors smile when they see the ceramic crouching devil, which with his anguished face, points the way to the latrine tower. Being one of the world’s largest castles, Malbork is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List and is also considered a unique work of late Gothic architecture.

Europe’s Largest Graduation Towers

Ciechocinek

At first glance the construction resembles a roof or an upside-down ship. These are Europe’s largest graduation towers, built of logs and wicker twigs. They were erected in the early 19th century when the brine springs located in the vicinity of Ciechocinek were used for distilling salt. The salt thickened in the tightly woven wicker twigs. It was also noted that the salt-infused air rising over the graduation towers had healing properties. Soon, baths for bathing in salt water were installed in the local taverns and salt began to be used commercially for medicinal purposes. Today, Ciechocinek is the biggest Polish spa located in the lowlands with a dozen or so sanatoria, resorts and spa hospitals with equipment for health and body regeneration.
The land stretching between Leba and Rowy is one of the most unusual locations on the Polish coast. Water, sand and wind have formed a unique landscape here over millions of years. Waves deposit around 160,000 tons of sand on every kilometre of this coastline every year whilst the wind moves it towards the land and buries everything in its path forming dunes. The mountains of sand of the Slowinski National Park, included on the UNESCO list of World Biosphere Reserves, are the largest sand dunes in Central Europe. Some of them, such as the Gora Lacka with a height of 43 metres, are pushed by the wind between 5 and 10 metres each year.

The Largest Sand Dunes in Central Europe

It is rare that the least representative room in a castle is of such a size. The latrine in the Castle in Kwidzyn looks like it was built for a giant. The dansker, the name for a medieval toilet tower, is removed from the castle itself. It is about 54m away, but connected to it by a long porch supported on high columns so that the odours coming from the latrine would not irritate the noses of the castle residents. The Kwidzyn dansker is considered the most attractive in Poland and it is also the largest in Europe. The castle itself was built between 1320 and 1347 and looks like it was just added to the latrine. It is worth a visit because of its collection of religious art, local handicrafts and an ornithological exhibit.
Sopot is beautiful and elegant and so is its pier. It is wooden with white railings and ornate curved lanterns which are crowned with charming spheres. The pier is 511.5m long and is the longest wooden construction of this type in Europe. Visitors walk along it to enjoy the sea air which is full of ozone, iodine, oxygen and salty moisture which can beneficially affect their health. There has been a pier here for 184 years; the first one was built in 1827 and was only 36m long and 1.5m wide. This pier was disassembled before each winter and reassembled again in spring but each time it was rebuilt longer and wider by a few metres. In 1927 it was decided to leave the pier intact for winter. Since that time it has had to face storms, ice floes and frost. It only collapsed once in the winter of 1947/48 as waves smashed it to matchwood. Fortunately, it was rebuilt and still serves the health resort visitors.

If you want to begin your adventures in wind or kite surfing in Poland you should try the Bay of Puck. The shallow waters stretching along the Hel Peninsula and then reaching far into the bay are an ideal location to take your first steps on a sailboard. Advanced surfers will also not be bored. A light surge, prevailing westerly winds that blow along the shore and warm waters make this a paradise for all windsurfing enthusiasts. There are also numerous campsites, schools, rental facilities and sports equipment outlets. This means that the Bay of Puck is one of the most accessible locations to practise wind and kite surfing in whole of Europe. Experienced surfers can test their skills on the open sea on the other side of the Hel Peninsula while the rest can relax on the beach.
Masuria – A Natural Wonder

Great Masurian Lakes

There are a countless number of lakes in Masuria. Some are larger or smaller; others are shallower or deeper, some with simple, others with well-developed shorelines. The Masurian Lake District is a unique location, not only on a Polish but also on a European scale. The lakes are connected by rivers, canals and locks which create one of the longest navigable waterways in Europe. You could continuously sail from one body of water to another for more than 10 days. That is approximately how long it would take to cover the entire 111km long route and leading through, amongst others, the largest Polish lake, Sniardwy. Some of the lakes are crowded, full of happy, singing sailors, whilst others belong to the world of plants and animals, such as Luknajno Lake, which has been included in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. That is why the Great Masurian Lakes are also a paradise for lovers of nature, ornithologists and anglers. Masuria is the only Polish candidate that has applied for the status of one of the 7 New Wonders of the World.
The earth trembles. The air is filled with the disturbed neighing and snorting of dozens of horses. Cannon shots are heard a halls of arrows fly through the sky. Then the ranks of knights begin to run across the field towards the enemy line. Flags flutter in the wind, the rumbling of horses’ hooves is heard and shortly there will be the clash of swords and the dull thump of axes. This is a reconstruction of the largest battle of Medieval Europe which takes place each year in the fields close to the village of Grunwald. The united Polish, Lithuanian and Ruthenian armies, under the command of King Władysław Jagiello, defeated the armies of the Teutonic Order. It is hard to imagine what Europe would look like if the outcome of the battle had been different. It is also hard to imagine how the battle actually looked like until you have seen its largest reconstruction for yourself in Poland.

Here are two canals, two monuments of technology and two major tourist attractions. The Augustów Canal is 101.3 km long connecting the Biebrza River with the Neman River and is the longest technological achievement in Poland. It was created to bypass the Prussian Empire which imposed such high tariffs on the carriage of goods that using the waterways through its territory became completely unprofitable. The canal connected the Biebrza River with the Neman River so that cargo could be carried by rivers in Lithuania and Latvia to the port of Ventspils on the Baltic Coast. The transportation of goods carried on through the Augustów Canal until the 1990’s, after which time it became a tourist attraction. While rowing or sailing in an artificial river is perhaps not the most interesting activity, passing through locks which raise and lower the water level by 3.5 metres can be a very exciting experience.

The Elblag Canal, which connects Elblag to the remote corners of Warmia and Masuria, provides a completely different experience. Here, to overcome the differences in water levels between the various bodies of water, the ships are carried... over grass. They glide amongst the green hills on platforms which run on railway tracks mounted on the inclined slopes. The Elblag Canal has now been in operation for almost 150 years which in itself is a world record. It is also currently the longest navigable canal in Poland, at nearly 83 km long.

The Largest Battle of Medieval Europe
Grunwald

The Augustów Canal and the Elblag Canal

The earth trembles. The air is filled with the disturbed neighing and snorting of dozens of horses. Cannon shots are heard a halls of arrows fly through the sky. Then the ranks of knights begin to run across the field towards the enemy line. Flags flutter in the wind, the rumbling of horses’ hooves is heard and shortly there will be the clash of swords and the dull thump of axes. This is a reconstruction of the largest battle of Medieval Europe which takes place each year in the fields close to the village of Grunwald. The united Polish, Lithuanian and Ruthenian armies, under the command of King Władysław Jagiello, defeated the armies of the Teutonic Order. It is hard to imagine what Europe would look like if the outcome of the battle had been different. It is also hard to imagine how the battle actually looked like until you have seen its largest reconstruction for yourself in Poland.

Here are two canals, two monuments of technology and two major tourist attractions. The Augustów Canal is 101.3 km long connecting the Biebrza River with the Neman River and is the longest technological achievement in Poland. It was created to bypass the Prussian Empire which imposed such high tariffs on the carriage of goods that using the waterways through its territory became completely unprofitable. The canal connected the Biebrza River with the Neman River so that cargo could be carried by rivers in Lithuania and Latvia to the port of Ventspils on the Baltic Coast. The transportation of goods carried on through the Augustów Canal until the 1990’s, after which time it became a tourist attraction. While rowing or sailing in an artificial river is perhaps not the most interesting activity, passing through locks which raise and lower the water level by 3.5 metres can be a very exciting experience.

The Elblag Canal, which connects Elblag to the remote corners of Warmia and Masuria, provides a completely different experience. Here, to overcome the differences in water levels between the various bodies of water, the ships are carried... over grass. They glide amongst the green hills on platforms which run on railway tracks mounted on the inclined slopes. The Elblag Canal has now been in operation for almost 150 years which in itself is a world record. It is also currently the longest navigable canal in Poland, at nearly 83 km long.

The Largest Battle of Medieval Europe
Grunwald

Two Remarkable Monuments of Technology
The Augustów Canal and the Elblag Canal

The earth trembles. The air is filled with the disturbed neighing and snorting of dozens of horses. Cannon shots are heard a halls of arrows fly through the sky. Then the ranks of knights begin to run across the field towards the enemy line. Flags flutter in the wind, the rumbling of horses’ hooves is heard and shortly there will be the clash of swords and the dull thump of axes. This is a reconstruction of the largest battle of Medieval Europe which takes place each year in the fields close to the village of Grunwald. The united Polish, Lithuanian and Ruthenian armies, under the command of King Władysław Jagiello, defeated the armies of the Teutonic Order. It is hard to imagine what Europe would look like if the outcome of the battle had been different. It is also hard to imagine how the battle actually looked like until you have seen its largest reconstruction for yourself in Poland.

Here are two canals, two monuments of technology and two major tourist attractions. The Augustów Canal is 101.3 km long connecting the Biebrza River with the Neman River and is the longest technological achievement in Poland. It was created to bypass the Prussian Empire which imposed such high tariffs on the carriage of goods that using the waterways through its territory became completely unprofitable. The canal connected the Biebrza River with the Neman River so that cargo could be carried by rivers in Lithuania and Latvia to the port of Ventspils on the Baltic Coast. The transportation of goods carried on through the Augustów Canal until the 1990’s, after which time it became a tourist attraction. While rowing or sailing in an artificial river is perhaps not the most interesting activity, passing through locks which raise and lower the water level by 3.5 metres can be a very exciting experience.

The Elblag Canal, which connects Elblag to the remote corners of Warmia and Masuria, provides a completely different experience. Here, to overcome the differences in water levels between the various bodies of water, the ships are carried... over grass. They glide amongst the green hills on platforms which run on railway tracks mounted on the inclined slopes. The Elblag Canal has now been in operation for almost 150 years which in itself is a world record. It is also currently the longest navigable canal in Poland, at nearly 83 km long.
One of the Most Beautiful Canoe Trails: Krutynia

It is neither the longest nor the widest, yet the unremarkable 100 km long Krutynia River is considered the most beautiful canoe trail in Poland. Kayaking enthusiasts are enchanted by its lazy flow, mild meanders and lush vegetation. The river flows from Lake Warpunskie and ends in Lake Beldany, passing on its way through a dozen or so other bodies of water and the Piska Forest. It is an ideal location for the start of a canoeing adventure because of its calm nature and its improvement towards tourism. It is considered one of the friendliest waterways in Poland. It takes between 5 and 8 days to navigate the entire waterway.

One of the Largest Music Festivals on the Old Continent: “Bus-stop Woodstock”, Kostrzyn on the Odra

Since 1995, Poland has had its own Woodstock Festival. This was when the first music festival called “Bus-stop Woodstock” was held. The event was organised to thank volunteers for their work during the Polish charity event, the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (Wielka Orkiestra Swiatecznej Pomocy). The first festival attracted more than 30,000 people who watched performances by the leading stars of Polish entertainment and several lesser known bands. After several years the festival had become established one of the most important musical events both in Poland and in Europe. Many Polish and world-renowned bands participate at each staging of this event. The recent 17th “Bus-stop Woodstock” attracted a record number of music fans, around 700,000. Since 2004 the festival has taken place near Kostrzyn on the Odra, close to the Polish-German border. This totally free event attracts not only huge numbers of young Polish people but also a large foreign audience, primarily from Germany. The festival has become known for not separating the audience from the stage by barriers, and also for the group mud baths involving the young festival-goers. This year the festival has been acknowledged as the third best organised festival in Europe! It is also one of the biggest musical events on the Old Continent.
The Underground City The Miedzyrzecz Fortified Region

The triangular concrete posts that resemble the teeth of a mechanical monster guard the entrance to the underground city. It is not a set designed for a science fiction movie but the Miedzyrzecz Fortified Region. There are barracks, food stores, ammunition magazines, power stations and even a railway station. All were electrified, with running water and ventilation but built 40 metres underground. The bunkers with steel reinforced walls were connected 28km of underground passages. The underground defence system was built by order of Hitler in the years between 1934 and 1938 and is considered to be the longest in the world. While visiting, an additional attraction is the 30,000 or so bats, which have colonised this place because of its favourable microclimate.

The Only Park in the World on Both Sides of a State Border

Muzakowski / Muskauer Landscape Park

Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau liked to live with gusto. He spent a fortune on travel, women, and... a park. In the early 19th century, inspired by English-style gardens, he decided to create a perfect landscape around the family estate in Bad Muskau. He used the natural topography of the valley of the Nysa River and the curve of Europe’s largest terminal moraine that cut the river. Natural ponds, ravines, streams and glades were connected by a network of horse trails and footpaths. Footbridges, bridges, arbours and observation decks were also added. For 30 years the Prince sponsored the development of his garden, but his visionary project has never been completed. In spite of this, the Muzakowski/Muskauer Landscape Park is one of the most remarkable examples of garden art of 19th century in Europe. Also, because the new Polish-German border after World War II was demarcated through this area, it is the only cross-border park in the world. In 2004 it was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.
Warsaw is not only the administrative and governmental hub of the country but, the largest Polish city, is also a centre of business and finance and the economic lungs of the country. After completing your business, Warsaw has much to offer in the form of interesting relaxation. Warsaw was rebuilt after the World War II, which almost razed the capital to the ground. It is now proud of its historical city centre being included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This is the only reconstruction in the world of a historical urban layout included in this list. Warsaw is also the “greenest” European capital. The largest Polish river, the Vistula, runs through its centre which, even within the city limits, has unregulated banks, natural beaches, bays and marshes at certain sections. Ignored over the years, the river has recently become one of the city’s major attractions. Promenades, beaches and cycle tracks have sprung up and restaurant boats and floating hotels now moor along its riverbanks. Warsaw has also one of Europe’s largest roof gardens on top of its new University Library, and in 2008 the Wilton Square metro station was recognised as the prettiest in the world. One of the world’s top ten hostels, the Oki Doki, can also be found here. Warsaw is one of two European capitals neighbouring a national park. Half an hour’s drive from the city centre stretches the Kampinoski Forest National Park, with 38,544 hectares of protected forests, inland dunes, marshes and meadows. Among the 1370 species of plants, 115 bryophytes and 146 lichens, there are many endemic and relict plant species. There is a chance to see a Eurasian elk or lynx or to spot lesser-spotted or white-tailed eagles. In addition to the rich abundance of wildlife in the forest and its surroundings, there are also many reminders of important historical events such as national uprisings and resistance battles.
In the 150 years during which the Zamoyski family occupied Kozlowka they built the most opulent and the most magnificent manor house in Poland. Most of the collections have survived the turmoil of war so visitors get the impression its inhabitants have only just stepped out for a moment. Kozlowka is the best-preserved aristocratic residence in the country. The interiors of the palace, which has been called “Little Versailles”, have been decorated with great splendour. Many of the trappings are copies of Versailles fireplaces, sculptures and fittings. The 19th century curtains and valances of silk damask and embroidered velvet make up the largest collection in Poland. The walls of the palace are barely visible beneath the paintings which include originals painted by Matejko, Bacciarelli, Lampi, Franciszek Smuglewicz, Leopold Horowitz and Giovanni Paolo Pannini and copies of female nudes by Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck and Correggio. Each room has a different name, colour and design. In total there are more than 17,900 items which include nearly 1000 paintings, 600 gilded frames, 50 huge mirrors and over 50 lambrequins and drapes. The 19 hectare park which surrounds the palace also matches it for splendour. In 1994 the Gallery of Social Realism was opened in the buildings of the former coach-house. The collision of these two worlds is staggering, but thanks to this enterprise you can get to know and compare these two completely different eras which have since passed into history.

The Best Preserved Magnate Residence in Poland
The Palace in Kozlowka

In the 150 years during which the Zamoyski family occupied Kozlowka they built the most opulent and the most magnificent manor house in Poland. Most of the collections have survived the turmoil of war so visitors get the impression its inhabitants have only just stepped out for a moment. Kozlowka is the best-preserved aristocratic residence in the country. The interiors of the palace, which has been called “Little Versailles”, have been decorated with great splendour. Many of the trappings are copies of Versailles fireplaces, sculptures and fittings. The 19th century curtains and valances of silk damask and embroidered velvet make up the largest collection in Poland. The walls of the palace are barely visible beneath the paintings which include originals painted by Matejko, Bacciarelli, Lampi, Franciszek Smuglewicz, Leopold Horowitz and Giovanni Paolo Pannini and copies of female nudes by Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck and Correggio. Each room has a different name, colour and design. In total there are more than 17,900 items which include nearly 1000 paintings, 600 gilded frames, 50 huge mirrors and over 50 lambrequins and drapes. The 19 hectare park which surrounds the palace also matches it for splendour. In 1994 the Gallery of Social Realism was opened in the buildings of the former coach-house. The collision of these two worlds is staggering, but thanks to this enterprise you can get to know and compare these two completely different eras which have since passed into history.

Record Depths
Lake Hancza

The lake bed is sandy and the water is crystal clear, but very cold. Lake Hancza is therefore very popular with swimming enthusiasts in the Suwalki Lake District. It also attracts like a magnet those interested in diving because Lake Hancza is Poland’s deepest lake. Here you can dive purely for the skill of diving and the thrill to hang for just a moment in the infinite depths. Slowly descend down vertical walls, which resemble mountain cliffs and ravines or in other places, sandy sea cliffs. There are also areas of boulder deposits, small canyons, rock shelves and caves inhabited by whiskered burbots. The bottom disappears in the darkness of the 108 metre deep abyss.

Scuba Hancza
Hancza Highroad
Blaskowizna 3a
tel. +48 601 271 822
http://scubahancza.com.pl
Where Kings Once Hunted

Bialowieza National Park

Huge felled trees covered in moss, a thicket of green, tangled vegetation and the grunts of wisents, the Bialowieza Forest allows you to travel back hundreds of years to the days when the crowned heads of Europe once hunted here. The oldest Polish national park protects the last patch of the lowland mixed natural forest. Nothing now is planted, cut, or picked. Only nature rules here. In Bialowieza the oldest oaks are around 500 years old. Among the extremely rich flora there are about 3,000 different species of fungi, more than 700 species of vascular plants and 270 lichens. Among the wildlife, there are more than 9000 different species of insects, 350 of birds and 58 of mammals. Despite research that has been conducted over many years it is still estimated that barely half the fauna of the Bialowieza has been discovered to date. The wisent is the king of the Park, living here in the wild in a herd numbering about 350 head. In 1977 the park was included in the UNESCO list of World Biosphere Reserves and, since 1999, is the only Polish nature reserve on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Bialoweza National Park
Park Palacowy 11, Bialowieza
tel. (+48) 85 682 97 00, www.bpn.com.pl

Bird Kingdom

Biebrza National Park

The Biebrza National Park, which covers almost 59,000 hectares of land around the unregulated Biebrza River, is not only the largest national park in Poland but also one of Europe's largest marsh and peat areas. The marshes, reed fields and rushes are home to over 265 different species of birds, of which 160 nest here. In spring the swollen river overflows its banks and floods the surrounding fields creating huge floodplains. At that time tourists flock to Biebrza from all around the world to catch sight of the aquatic warbler, the ruff, the great snipe, the black grouse and the short-eared owl. Bird-watchers can use the wooden observation towers, the footbridges and the walking and bicycle trails. They can also observe the wild animals from a canoe, a raft or even a balloon. The Biebrza marshes are also a great place to catch sight of a paddling elk. After World War II the last remaining herd of elk in Poland, numbering only a few head, lived here by the Biebrza River. Today, this region is inhabited by nearly 600 of these animals.

The Tourist Information Centre of Biebrza
National Park
Osowiec-Twierdza 8
tel. +48-85 738 30 35
www.biebrza.org.pl

Biebrza Eco-Travel
Ul Kosciuszki 26/11, Goniadz
tel. +48-85 738 07 85
www.biebrza.com
The Ideal City Zamość

In the 16th century, in the furthest borders of Europe, “The Ideal City” was founded by Jan Zamoyski, Chancellor and Grand Hetman of the Crown, a powerful magnate and a brilliant politician. Zamość was built from scratch in the middle of nowhere. It was to bear witness to the power of its founder and was designed, down to the smallest detail, by its Italian architect Bernardo Morando. Designing Zamość as a city-fortress, Morando took into account all the needs of its residents and the need to ensure their safety. The city was also to serve as a centre of craft, trade, culture, art and science for the surrounding region. Construction work lasted more than 25 years. Because, in the history of European architecture, the design and construction of a city at the same time and in the same style is a unique phenomenon, the Old City of Zamość has been recorded on the UNESCO list of World Heritage. The distinction is even more justified as this also is the best preserved Renaissance city in Poland.

One of the Oldest Spas in Europe Lądek Zdrój

Medicinal springs rising in Lądek Zdrój were already being used in medieval times. The wall of the Renaissance St George’s building bears the year when it was built: 1498. On nearly every postcard from Lądek Zdrój, there is a circular building covered with a green dome. This is the Wojciech Neo-Baroque Natural Therapy Institute that was built in the 19th century in the shape of the Turkish Baths in Pest. Inside it has bathrooms with antique bathtubs, a pump room and an oval swimming pool covered with an ornate 39m high dome. In the past the Lądek Zdrój waters were primarily used by the crowned heads and highest ranking dignitaries of Europe which included the Prussian King Frederick the Great, Queen Louise, the wife of the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Tsar Alexander I and also John Quincy Adams. Only a few people know that Lądek Zdrój is not only the oldest spa in Poland but also the one with the oldest in Europe, older even than the famous spa in Baden-Baden.
The rust-yellow grass sways in the wind. These are undulating pastures – mountain meadows that grow on the treeless soft mountain peaks and ridges. As far as the eye can see, there is nothing but more and more mountains with dense forests at their base. The Bieszczady Mountains, which are located on the south-eastern fringes of Poland, are among the least populated areas in Europe. The most valuable parts are protected by the Bieszczady National Park, the kingdom of birds of prey, bears and wolves and listed on the UNESCO list of World Biosphere Reserves. It is a paradise for adventurers, avid hikers and horse riding enthusiasts for whom 120km of trails lead through the Bieszczady Mountains. For lovers of architecture this region has many old houses, painted churches, wooden Orthodox churches and the largest Museum of Folk Architecture in Poland.
What if a scientific conference or a business meeting were organised underground? This is possible in Wieliczka, one of the world’s oldest salt mines and the oldest mining site in Europe, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The largest and most beautiful room in the mine, St. Kinga’s Chapel, is carved at a depth of 101m. Its walls are decorated with bas-reliefs of grey salt and illuminated by five large chandeliers made of salt crystals. There is also a conference room with wireless Internet access and the possibility of using mobile phones. Catering underground provides sustenance for the delegates. After a busy working day, guests can relax exploring the mine by walking the tourist trail through salt corridors, labyrinths, galleries and caves. There is also overnight accommodation available underground.

The Wieliczka Salt Mine
Ul Danilowicza 10, Wieliczka
tel. + 48-12 278 73 02
www.kopalnia.pl

The Only One Such Calvary
Kalwaria Zebrzydowska
As one of the most important sanctuaries in Poland, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is also one of the most important religious architectural monuments. The pilgrimage complex includes the Baroque Basilica of Our Lady of Angels, a monastery and 42 chapels and churches and is the only Calvary (religious complex) in Europe that has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage. Most pilgrims come here for the main church ceremonies during Holy Week, when the Mystery of the Passion takes place, at which time the local clerics and pilgrims from the surrounding towns perform biblical scenes. In August the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is celebrated with processions. Both ceremonies have a long tradition which dates back to the 17th century and are staged very elaborately. An old custom is for services to be held on the Kalwaria paths during which the faithful go from chapel to chapel contemplating the mysteries of the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The route is about 5km long and takes between 5 and 7 hours to complete with a guide.

The Passion and Marian Sanctuary
Ul Bernardynska 46, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska
tel. (+48-33) 876 63 04
www.kalwaria.eu