

# Poland Country Support Pack



[www.polandnetwork.org.uk](http://www.polandnetwork.org.uk)

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Poland Country Support Pack. This Pack has been developed by members of the Poland Network together with assistance from Leaders in both The Scout Association and Girlguiding UK who have travelled with young people to Poland. The Pack is intended for Leaders who are considering or have decided to take young people to Poland. It has been (hopefully!) produced in a non-biased format, providing Leaders with information to allow them to make informed choices on all aspects of their visit to Poland.

### How to use this Country Support Pack

The Pack is split into individual sections covering all aspects of planning a visit to Poland. However, it is not intended as a general resource on organising a visit abroad as much of that information already exists. It will try and give Leaders quality information from other Leaders who have been involved with visits and expeditions to Poland in the recent past and who have learnt from their experiences.

At the end of the pack we have supplied a form for you to complete after you have returned from your visit to Poland. The form is intended to assist the Poland Network in keeping the Country Support Pack up-to-date and relevant for future users. We hope that you find the Pack useful and any comments that you have will be greatly received.

The Poland Network would like to take this opportunity to thank you for using the Pack and wishes you well in the planning of your visit to Poland.

### With thanks

This second edition of the Poland Country Support Pack would not have been possible without input from members of the Poland Network and the International Offices of The Scout Association and Girlguiding UK. Particular credit for this edition is given to Fraser Dodds who played a key role in developing new content and for consolidating content from earlier editions produced by Brian Richmond.

### Why take Scouts or Guides to Poland?

There are many reasons for becoming involved in a partnership with Poland, just as there are for any other country in the world. But contact with Poland and its people in general and Scouts and Guides in particular will bring many advantages:

- A fresh challenge to achieve new targets in your Scouting/Guiding, in an international context.
- Fun and enjoyment whilst doing it.
- A chance to be part of the development of the community, both in Poland and the United Kingdom.
- Helping in the development of Scouting and Guiding at both home and in Poland.
- Providing many new programme opportunities for all youth programmes sections in both The Scout Association and Girlguiding UK.
- A visit to a different country, giving an opportunity for personal development of all concerned with something of an unknown quantity!
- A chance to generate good publicity for Scouting/Guiding in your area and to bring members of the Movements together.

Whatever reason matches yours, please take time out to think about why a partnership with Poland may be a good thing for your group to be involved in.

### Making a Start

You have made possibly the most difficult decision: to make a start! You will now want to make some progress, here are a few suggestions:

- Contact the Assistant County/Area County Commissioner (International) or County International Advisor. They will be pleased to advise generally and may be able to put you in touch with others with experience of Poland. DO NOT forget that (as mentioned later) you will need to complete the relevant authorisations for visits to Poland in the same way that you do for any other country.
- Speak to someone who has already been to Poland, especially if they have had contact with Scouts/Guides there. Quite a large number of people have significant contacts with Poland and usually they are only too pleased to help. There is a Network of those who support Polish Scouting/Guiding, which holds regular meetings and publishes a newsletter, (subscription details are to found at the end of the guide) where you can obtain new and the latest information. Your Assistant County/Area Commissioner (International) or County International Adviser can usually tell you about this.
- Arrange for a special meeting of your Group to talk about what you want to do (and why) and agree the details. Someone who has already been to Poland could well give a short talk or Slide/Photograph show at this meeting.
- Talk to parents and other supporters so that they understand what is planned and can see why it is worthwhile.
- Make contact with Poland to start the ball rolling. You can approach possible contacts via the Poland Network. If you have made contact direct, perhaps through email or the web, please verify that your contact is an authentic 'Scout/Guide' by checking with the Poland Network. Face to face contact is helpful. At this stage, as always, remember that this will be a two way partnership. We in the United Kingdom are not trying to impose British Scouting/Guiding onto Poland and we always need to be tactful and recognise that Polish Scouting and Guiding is a very well established Association. The key thing we bring is the hand of friendship and the invitation to participate in Scouting/Guiding activities with a United Kingdom/Polish flavour.
- Make sure your Polish contact knows the number, ages and interest of the people in your group.
- Find out about the economic and political developments in Poland.
- Try to learn a few words of Polish, especially 'please' and 'thank you'. Support may be available from local schools and colleges, or from Polish communities in your local area.

Even at this early stage, use the opportunity to involve your County/ Area or District Public Relation Officer to ensure good positive coverage of 'sharing' and 'learning together' with Polish Scouts/Guides.

# Communication

## Telephone contact

If you are calling Poland from the UK, the country code for Poland is 48. If you were planning to dial 022 123 1234, which is a local Polish number, you would have to dial 00 48 22 123 1234. Note the '00' that prefixes the country code '48' and that the '0' in the local code is dropped.

If you are calling back to the UK from Poland, the country code for the UK is 44. If you were planning to dial 01234 567890 from the UK you would have to dial 00 44 1234 567890. Note the '00' that prefixes the country code '44' and that the '0' in the local, or STD, code is dropped.

## Email

If you are making arrangements for your trip, direct with people in Poland, you will find that email is particularly useful. People in Poland have good access to email, although connections are often slow, so it's best not to send very large files back and forward.

Remember that if you are communicating via email in English, this may often require to be translated at the Polish end, so don't expect an immediate response! Be patient, but do follow up if you don't hear anything. If you get really stuck and don't seem to be getting any response, make contact with the Poland Network and they may be able to help by liaising with ZHP direct.

## In Poland

### Public telephones

Public 'phones seem to be in plentiful supply. On closer inspection, especially in rural areas, you may find that public 'phones are not always in full working order - a bit like home! If in doubt, head for the nearest Post Office where they often have 'phone booths inside that tend to be in working order, although queues to use them are not uncommon.

### How to find a 'phone

In town, look for the post office. Invariably, you'll find 'phone kiosks inside and outside the building. If you're out in a rural area, most Telekomunikacja Polska (tp) 'phones can be easily identified by the blue fibreglass bubble that acts as shelter to the user. The actual 'phones themselves are also blue.

### Where to Buy a Card

Cards can be easily purchased in different values from post offices and newspaper kiosks.

### Using a Telephone Card

- Break off the top left corner of the new card.
- Lift the receiver and wait for the dial tone.
- Insert the card when 'Wloz Karte / Insert Card' appears on the display. The amount of credit (kredyt) remaining on the card is displayed.
- Dial the number and wait to be connected.
- After your call, the card will be automatically ejected. In some older 'phones, the card must be ejected by turning a handle.
- If the 'phone is not working 'Uskodzony / Out of Order' will be displayed.

### Tones

- Upon lifting the receiver, if there is a continuous tone this is the dialling tone.
- After the number has been dialled, and if the number is not engaged, you should hear a short tone followed by a longer intermittent tone

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- A short, rapidly repeating tone means that the number being called is engaged

### **Mobile GSM coverage**

Mobile GSM coverage across the whole of Poland is excellent, with a number of different networks operating. If you are planning to use your own mobile when in Poland, check with your service provider before you leave that your type of package allows calls to be made and received in Poland. Often, service providers in the United Kingdom have reciprocal arrangements in place with their counterparts in Poland.

### **Post**

Letters can take some time in getting through, so check your address very carefully. You may want to send hard copies of fax or email messages but be careful not to confuse your partners by providing unnecessary duplication. Main Post Offices in Poland are usually open from 8.00am to 8.00pm weekdays and in large cities some post offices stay open 24 hours. The mail boxes like ours are red.

### **Travellers**

An increasing number of British companies have links with Poland. If you have access to business people travelling to Poland, they may be able to carry mail by hand in both directions and will be able to post items internally, making it less likely for mail to go astray.

### **Advance Visit**

A number of visits abroad have benefited from an advance visit, allowing both parties to meet beforehand. This enables the finer details of programme and other arrangements to be seen 'on site'. It also creates an opportunity for you to meet the people with whom you will be dealing with. There is nothing more reassuring than, having made it through the confusion of baggage reclaim and customs, to see a Polish face you know emerge from the crowds to greet you. In certain circumstances it is useful to invite one of your partner group over to the United Kingdom as a substitute to one of your party visiting Poland. This could be coupled with meeting parents and supporters of the visit.

### **Important Note**

One important note is that British people often seem to be overcautious when viewed by other cultures, not just the Polish. We tend to expect rapid responses and confirmations which do not take into account the possible difficulties which our Polish counterpart's experience, the watch word has to be patience. Agree a process with your Polish counterparts and ensure that they know what type of response you want and when!

### When to go

A key factor must be the weather. Make sure you know the likely temperature ranges in the area you are planning to visit. If you are planning to enjoy contact with Polish Scouts/Guides, you will need to consider school holiday periods.

- **Spring**  
Arguably the ideal season for some serious hiking in Poland's mountainous border regions, as the days tend to be bright - if not showery.
- **Summer**  
The tourist high season sees plenty of sun, particularly on the Baltic coast where temperatures are consistently around 24°C.
- **Autumn**  
This is the best time to come if you're planning to see the whole spread of the country's attractions.
- **Winter**  
The temperatures drop rapidly, icy Siberian winds blanketing many parts of the country with snow for anything from 1 to 3 months.

### What to Do

Somebody in your local group has suggested Poland as a possible location for a visit or maybe they have suggested an activity to form an International link, and Poland would be a good place to carry it out. However you come to the decision, you now have to plan your programme. It is quite easy to go to the travel agent, book flights and a coach tour staying in hotels and then come back to the United Kingdom, having learnt a lot about Polish sights and hotels. But to get the real benefit, as with all visits abroad, you need to meet up with the local people and find out about Poland from the inside instead of being a mere onlooker. Polish Scouts and Guides are just waiting to make friends with other Scouts/Guides and really enjoy showing you around as well as having you stay in their homes. The cost of your visit can vary significantly depending on the choice of activities and where you stay. In all your dealings, the watchword is to be flexible.

### Where to Go

The Poles delineate their country's attractions as 'the mountains, the sea and the lakes', their emphasis firmly slanted to the traditional, rural heartlands. To get the most out of your time, it's perhaps best to follow their preferences. The mountains - above all the Carpathian range of the Tatras - are a delight, with a well established network of hiking trails; the lakes provide opportunities for canoeing and a host of other outdoor pursuits; and the dozen or so National Parks retain areas of Europe's last primeval forest, inhabited still by bison, elk, wolves, bears and eagles. Yet you will not want to miss the best cities - Krakow, especially - nor a ramble down rivers like the Wisla for visits to Teutonic castles, ancient waterside towns and grand, Polish country mansions, redolent of a vanished aristocratic order. Unless you're driving to Poland, you're likely to begin your travels with one of the three major cities: Warsaw, Krakow or Gdansk. Each provides an immediate immersion in the fast pace changes of the 1990s and a backdrop of monuments that reveal the complexities of the nation's history.

- **Warsaw**  
Warsaw (Warszawa), the capital, had to be rebuilt from scratch after the war, and much of the city conforms to the stereotype of Eastern European greyness, but the reconstructed Baroque palaces, churches and public buildings of the historic centre, the burgeoning street markets and the bright shop fronts of Poland's new enterprise culture are diverting enough.
- **Krakow**  
Krakow, the ancient royal capital, however is the real crowd puller for Poles and foreign visitors alike, rivalling the Central European elegance of Prague and Vienna. This is the city where history hits you most powerfully, in the Royal Wawel complex, in the fabulous open space of the Rynek, and in the one-time Jewish quarter of Kazimierz.

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- **Gdansk**

Gdansk, the largest of the Baltic ports and home of the legendary shipyards, presents a dynamic brew of politics and commerce against a townscape reminiscent of mercantile towns in the Netherlands. German and Polish influences abound in the north of the country, most notably in the austere castles and fortified settlements constructed by the Teutonic Knights at Malbork, Chelmno, and other strategic points along the River Wisla - as the Vistula is known in Poland. Toru- is one of the most atmospheric and beautiful of the old Hanseatic towns here.

Over in the east, numerous minority communities embody the complexities of national boundaries in Central Europe. The one-time Jewish centre of Bialystok, with its BelaPoland minority, is a springboard for the eastern borderlands, where onion-domed Orthodox churches stand close to Tartar mosques. Further south, beyond Lublin, a famous centre of hasidic Jewry, and Zamosc, with its magnificent Renaissance centre, lie the homelands of Ukrainians, Lemks and Boyks - and a chance to see some of Poland's extraordinary wooden churches.

In the west, ethnic German populated regions of the divided province of Silesia, where Wroclaw sustains the dual cultures of the former German city of Breslau and the Ukrainian city of Lviv, whose displaced citizens were moved here at the war's end. The other main city in western Poland is the quintessentially Polish Poznan, revered as the cradle of the nation, today a vibrant and increasingly prosperous university town.

Despite its much publicised pollution problems, Poland has many regions of unspoilt natural beauty, of which none is more pristine than Bialowieza forest, straddling the BelaPoland border; the last virgin forest of the European mainland, it is the habitat of the largest surviving herd of European Bison. Along the southern borders of the country lie the wild Bieszczady Mountains - all of them excellent walking country, interspersed with less demanding terrain. North of the central Polish plain, the wooded lakelands of Mazury and Pomerania are as tranquil as any lowland region on the continent, while the Baltic coast can boast not just the domesticated pleasure of its beach resorts, but also the extraordinary desert-like dunes of the Slowinski Park - one of a dozen National Parks.

# Travel

## Flying

Flying is undoubtedly the fastest and easiest way to travel. Poland has a number of airports, with perhaps the busiest being Warsaw (WAW) and Krakow (KRK). These two in particular are directly accessible from the United Kingdom. The flight time from London is approximately two hours to either Warsaw or Krakow.

Travelling with young people by air can sometimes be a stressful experience for the Leaders of the party. Many young people may not have flown before and may be unsure of what lies ahead. An airport can be a very daunting place for people who are not used to it so as a Leader you must take extra care with your party.

### LOT Polish Airlines

During the summer timetable - 30 March to 25 October - LOT Polish Airlines flies three times daily from London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal One to Warsaw; once a day from Manchester (MAN) Terminal One to Warsaw and once a day from London Gatwick (LGW) North Terminal to Krakow.

For information, check-in with LOT Polish Airlines at London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal One is with bmi British Midland. At London Gatwick (LGW) North Terminal check-in is with Avience and at Manchester, check-in is with GlobeGround.

When planning your flights to Poland, you can check out the latest LOT Polish Airlines timetable online at <http://www.lot.com/>. Alternatively, you can call 0845 601 0949 for more information.

LOT Polish Airlines provides internal domestic travel in Poland, and this can be a viable option for small groups. Generally, flights are operated by EuroLot and although the aircraft are small they offer a quick and reasonable transfer from Warsaw to many points throughout the country. These flights can be booked online through the LOT Polish Airlines website. Please note that the website gives the option to specify the country in which tickets should be processed. If your group is looking to save a bit of money, opt to have the tickets processed in Poland and collect them at the LOT Polish Airlines office inside Warsaw Airport. This method usually ensures that you can obtain the tickets much cheaper than if processed in London, for example.

You will find the LOT Polish Airlines office in the domestic terminal. To reach the domestic terminal you should exit the international terminal heading towards the bus stops and then turn to the right. The domestic terminal is about 100 metres ahead of you.

### British Airways

During the summer timetable - March to October - British Airways flies three times daily from London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal One to Warsaw.

### Departing from London Heathrow

London Heathrow (LHR) Airport has four very busy terminals. At the time of writing, both British Airways and LOT operate from Terminal One. If you have a large group, it's always helpful to arrive in good time for check-in.

### Departing from London Gatwick

London Gatwick (LGW) Airport has a North and South Terminal. At the time of writing, LOT Polish Airlines is operating from the North Terminal. If your group is planning to depart from London Gatwick (LGW) Airport, be sure to check what Terminal is being used and advise members of your Group accordingly.

The check-in area can be found upstairs.

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Access to the lounge is through passport control where you will be required to pose for a digital photograph before proceeding to the baggage security check. This can be found along the wall facing you as you enter the concourse and on first impressions seems not to be correct. Above the doorways there are electronic signs indicating "All Departures" and it is normal for only one or two doors to be open giving the impression that you are in the wrong place. The queue system here is non directive so it would be advisable for you to gather your group and move as one body.

Once through, you will find an information point directly in front of you exit. This makes for an excellent meeting point for everyone to gather while all of your party passes through the security check. The departure lounge is well catered with shops, bars and restaurants and while the seating on the lower level is normally always full there are always seats to be found upstairs above Boots the chemists. Once the gate has been called, normally gate 45, you will have about a five minute walk to reach it. It is extremely important that everyone is carrying their own boarding passes at this point as you will pass through a boarding card check where each traveller will be compared with the photograph that was taken of them at Passport control to ensure that boarding passes have not been exchanged within the departure lounge. On arrival at the departure gate you will board a bus which will take you the short distance to the aircraft. Occasionally the airport staff will ask specific seat numbers to board the bus first and thus ease the congestion on the plane so particular attention should be given to any announcements given at the gate.

### Arriving in Krakow

On arrival at Krakow (KRK) Airport you will be transported to the terminal building by bus. This journey is all of 30 seconds and will drop you at the door of the arrivals hall. Krakow (KRK) Airport is small and you will see the baggage claim area behind passport control. Care should be taken when choosing which queue to join as there are different booths for different passport holders. EU passport holders can normally use all of the booths apart from the first booth which is dedicated to Polish passport holders.

From here it is a short walk through customs to the main concourse of the airport. The main hall is long and thin and when you exit from Customs most of the busier area will be to your right hand side, where the check-in desks are located. To the left you will find car rental firms, tour desks and so on. It is usually quieter here, which makes for a good meeting point.

Krakow (KRK) Airport is situated about 30 minutes bus travel from Krakow city centre and a bus operates from a stance just outside the terminal building and to the right. The bus will cost approximately 3Zł and tickets can be purchased from the driver. It may be advisable if you are wishing to use the bus that you consider that the bus is a standard service bus with about 36 seats and while your party may be less than 36 the bus is extensively used by the general public.

### Arriving in Warsaw

When you enter the terminal building passport control is just around the corner. There are 8 passport control booths and while not all of them will be open it is usual to find about 5 of them in use. Care should be taken however when choosing which queue to join as there are different booths for different passport holders. EU passport holders can normally use all of the booths apart from the first booth which is dedicated to Polish passport holders. The baggage reclaim area is situated behind the passport control and further to the right is the main exit through customs. The arrivals hall can be quite busy so it would be advisable to hold your group in the baggage hall until everyone has got their bags before proceeding through customs.

Warsaw (WAW) Airport is situated approximately 25 minutes bus journey from the city centre but is well catered for by public service buses. Bus number 175 departs from outside the terminal building and will cost 2.40Zł which stops outside the main train station in Warsaw (Warsawska Centralna). Tickets for the bus can be purchased from the newsagent adjacent to the exit. If travelling from the train station to the airport, tickets can be purchased in the newsagents adjacent to the tourist information centre on the main concourse of the station.

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### General Information

More information on flying to Poland can be found at either the British Airways, bmi British Midland or the LOT Polish Airlines websites. All these websites provide the facility to download the entire timetable for all flights and although this may be too much information for people only travelling to one country, at the beginning of the timetable you will find a whole host of information about flying, where to buy tickets etc., which may prove helpful.

- <http://www.ba.com>
- <http://www.lot.com>
- <http://www.flybmi.com>

### Overland Travel

Trains (24-36hours) are only marginally cheaper, unless you're under 26, in which case you can buy a discount BIJ ticket or an Inter-Rail pass. At around £100, return buses - run mainly for the benefit of Polish émigrés - are an overlooked bargain. Taking around 27hours, they are sometimes quicker than the train. Eurolines provide a service departing from London Victoria Coach Station to a number of locations in Poland. An option worth considering if money is really tight is to get a cheap flight to Berlin and continue from there by train. By car, its an all motorway 1000 kilometre run to the Polish border from the channel tunnel or ferry ports, via Belgium, Holland and Germany - a surprisingly fast haul, but best covered over two days.

Many coach companies may offer continental travel, but remember that you may have to pay the cost of the drivers' accommodation and food during the visit. There are some advantages to coach travel (including cost and flexibility), but you must make sure that you use a reputable company with back up facilities.

If you wish to take your own transport, a Minibus for example, there are European Union Regulations, concerning vehicles constructed to carry more than nine persons including the driver, dealing with drivers' hours, rest periods and record keeping obligations. If you are using your group minibus, it is vital to ensure that it is in excellent condition before you leave the United Kingdom. Care should be taken not to overload the minibus, either with people, luggage or equipment. Make sure that you have enough drivers for your journey, especially if it is longer than a few hours or involves driving overnight. Please remember to check with your insurance company for any other extra cover that you might require. Also check with your ACC/AAC International or County International Adviser for the latest information regarding travelling abroad with a mini bus.

### Travel in Poland

Internal travel by train and bus is quite reliable. The main operators are PKP (Polish National Railways) and PKS (Polish National Buses).

#### PKP

PKP is the train service that operates throughout Poland. There is over 16,450 miles of railway lines in Poland so it's quite feasible to get around a lot of the country by rail, but note that some non-express trains can be very busy. Good express trains run between major cities, with a few non-stop express trains between Warsaw and Gdansk/Gdynia as well as Poznan and Krakow. Rail fares are good value an example of cost is a journey from Katowice to Warsaw which is approx two hours on an express train and will cost about 80Złt. If you are planning to travel on any express service it's a recommended that you book in advance.

In second class carriages, you will find that you will share a compartment with seven others. The compartment has plenty storage space above the seats, even for some of the bulkiest of items. In some cases, it is easy to transfer large items like bulky rucksacks and tents through the compartment window. If you plan to do this, co-ordinate the group as trains will tend to arrive and depart on time!

#### Poland Network

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Restaurant cars and trolley services are good. Prices are okay, and food cooked to order in restaurant cars is often excellent.

Travelling first class is also quite reasonable by our standards and often worth paying the extra on very busy services.

Most stations also have left luggage facilities. The larger stations have coin operated lockers and older stations still have offices.

For information and reservations, please visit: <http://www.pkp.com.pl/>

### **PKS**

PKS is the national service bus company. Service buses are the most common means of transport for local Poles as they are generally much quicker than taking the train. Fares are normally paid to the driver if the route is through rural landscapes with tickets being bought at newsagents and RUCH kiosks on urban routes.

Most drivers will be very accommodating for groups waiting at a bus stop and if you have large amounts of baggage they will normally open the side lockers for this purpose. On some of the older coaches the side lockers do not have any doors and it is expected that if you have baggage that you place it in here before boarding the bus.

PKS bus stops are clearly marked and have a round PKS sign above each one. The timetables are displayed on all bus stops.

### **Hire Coach**

If you are linked with a Polish group and planning to travel around Poland, your Polish colleagues will probably be able to locally source coaches or mini-buses for hire, usually at very good rates. However, it is good to discuss your expectations in advance, as not all vehicles will be to the same standard.

### **Hire Car**

Driving in Poland is relatively straightforward and shouldn't present any major problems. The road network is vast and travel between major population centres is quite fast. Many of the main roads have crawler lanes for slower and older vehicles, allowing faster vehicles to pass. The Poles enjoy overtaking at close quarters so beware!

Generally speaking, in the country, the roads can be exceptionally quiet. However, drivers should look out for cyclists, horse drawn carts, farm animals, tractors and other slow moving farm machinery as well as pedestrians.

Many rural roads are not well maintained and in heavy downpours, they can be treacherous. If you get caught in a downpour, you might benefit from pulling over until the worst passes. Few rural roads benefit from good white line marking, reflective 'cats-eyes' and road edge markings. This, coupled with heavy rain, can make roads dangerous.

Traffic police do set up speed traps, particularly at the weekend when many Poles take to the road to visit extended family. Be sure to adhere to speed limits. If you do happen to be pulled over, and the Police indicate that you have been speeding, they can issue an on-the-spot fine. If you don't believe that you were speeding, ask that you be taken to the nearest police station for the situation to be discussed and the fine to be dispensed! The maximum fine is 500 zloty.

Maximum speed limits are: in built-up areas 60 kmh (37 mph); motorways 130 kmh (80mph); express roads (specially signed) 110 kmh (68 mph); outside built up areas 90 kmh (56 mph).

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Many traffic lights have green arrows which permit filtering to the right on a red light as long as there are no pedestrians crossing the road. Be sure to inform your Guides or Scouts of this. Vehicles on roundabouts have priority, and in town, trams definitely have priority.

At most road junctions there will be zebra crossings at each of the roads. Pedestrians can use these at anytime so beware that although you may have a green light to turn you will still need to stop in the middle of the turn if people are on the crossing.

Obtaining fuel for your vehicle is very easy and the major suppliers all have a presence in Poland. In addition, some home-grown suppliers also have extensive networks of petrol stations across the country. Some are self service and others are still assisted. Lead free petrol is easy to obtain, and generally, fuel prices are much lower than in the United Kingdom.

If you have a hire car or a car with an unusual registration plate, it is often advised to park in a secure car park. For a small charge, you can have the vehicle watched, which is one way of minimising the risk of theft of or from the vehicle.

### Travelling in Towns and Cities

Public transport in the large towns and cities is very good and not expensive. Buses and trams are the main forms of transport although Warsaw now also boasts a Metro. Most local services operate between 5.30am and 11.00pm. The big population centres also have some night services but these are usually a bit more expensive.

Tickets (bilety) can be purchased from machines at bus and railway stations, but more often than not, are obtained from the infamous green and yellow RUCH kiosks which are located close to bus and tram stops. Tickets are not normally available from the driver. Once you board the bus or tram, you need to validate your ticket by punching it in one of the designated punch boxes. When you change vehicles, you must punch a new ticket. If you're travelling with sizeable baggage, such as a rucksack, you should purchase a ticket for this too.

All day and one week tickets can normally also be purchased from the kiosk or at the ZTM Transport Authority in Warsaw. The offices can be found at: pl. Unii Lubelskiej or ul. Senatorska 37.

### Travel Agents

There are a few specialist Polish travel agents operating in the United Kingdom that will be able to assist with your plans. One very good travel agent that has good experience of catering for Scout and Guide visits to Poland is:

Trans-Continental Travel Services Ltd  
615 Great Western Road  
Glasgow  
G12 8HX

Tel: 0141 334 2155  
Fax: 0141 357 4485  
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### Accommodation

Many people will have a few misconceptions on how Polish people live and how rich or poor the country is. While it is still true that Poland is developing from the old regime most people will be amazed at just how quickly the changes have been implemented and are still being implemented.

Accommodation within Poland can be split between Registered Scout and Guide Centers and non-Scout and Guide centres.

#### Scout and Guide Centres

Zwiazek Harcerstwa Polskiego (The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association) has Centres just like many Scout and Guides Centres that you have ever stayed in any other country! Many of the Centres are now run with more of a business emphasis so it's not unusual to see families and other groups using them as bases for summer holidays etc.,. Booking ahead is a must. Details of some of the main Centres can be found in Where to Stay in Europe which can be found at: <http://www.scout.org/wtsie/>. Some centres that have been used by members of the Poland Network include:

- **Hos**  
This is a small site close to the centre of Warsaw. It can be accessed by public transport from the town centre. It has basic indoor accommodation for small numbers and ample camping ground if you're looking for a camping opportunity in the capital city.
- **Perkoz**  
Perkoz is a beautiful sailing centre in the Mazurian Lake District, near Olstyn, and provides excellent facilities to groups of all sizes. Needless to say, sailing and water activities are in plentiful supply as well as forest trails. Good meeting facilities are also available. Perkoz can be very busy in summer so advance booking is essential.
- **Makow Podhalanski**  
This is an independent hostel which is run by a Scout Leader. The local Scout Group also meets in one of the rooms in the hostel. It caters for groups of up to 40 in number. The centre is situated in a village with the same name and offers basic living accommodation. It consists of one large building split into four levels with bunk beds in dormitories. Each dormitory holds about eight beds although there are one or two rooms with fewer beds that might suit a mixed group. The centre can provide all meals but these must be ordered and paid for at the beginning of your stay. The centre offers cheap and practical accommodation for a larger group of any age range although the warden prefers if one group occupies the whole building rather than just some of it.
- **Glodowka**  
This is a main Scout and Guide Centre serving the area around the south of Poland near the Tatra mountains. ZHP, the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association, uses this centre for running training courses and conferences for their Leaders. The centre is situated about 15 kilometres from the main town of Zakopane with stunning views over the Tatra mountains and over to Slovakia.

The centre is comprised of two buildings, each offering sleeping accommodation in small rooms with about four to six beds per room. There is a large camping area which during the summer months is used for large army style tents which are available at a cheaper price than the indoor accommodation.

A small café and meeting rooms are available, as well as a large dining area, volleyball court and outdoor chapel. A local PKS bus stop is located at the entrance to the centre and runs services to Zakopane.

The service here is excellent, and the location of the centre will make for a memorable stay.

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- **Poraj**  
This is a centre located on the edge of a large dam. The centre specialises in water activities although other activities are available. Accommodation comprises of one main block consisting of approximately 30 beds in 8 rooms and a large camping ground.
- **Korskiew**  
Korskiew is situated within easy reach of Krakow and is frequently used by groups wishing to visit Krakow and the surrounding area. Accommodation comprises of one large building with approximately 40 beds in 10 rooms, 8 chalets each with 4-6 beds and a camping ground suitable for hike style tents.

## Non-Scout Registered sites

Fortunately for youth groups visiting Poland today there is still some accommodation from the older days and while they may not be five star, they offer attractive discounted rates. These buildings are generally found off the beaten track and finding contact people for them can be difficult. If you are planning an advance visit then it may be possible to meet up with a Polish speaker and travel around in search of these interesting places. If you are successful in finding a suitable place then you should be prepared to barter a little on the price of the accommodation. It will be usual for the owners to offer a price for bed/breakfast and evening meal and sometimes to stipulate how many meals they are cooking.

Members of the Poland Network have stayed in a small number of both Scout and Guide and non-Scout and Guide Centres and will be only too pleased to offer their advice if asked.

### Food and Drink

As with all countries Poland has some food that people will not recognise initially and will try and stay clear of. Any old ideas of eastern European countries only ever eating stewed cabbage is a long lost idea.

In most cases, Poles eat what we would class as a continental breakfast which would normally consist of bread or rolls with a selection of cheese, ham and sometimes sausage. Lemon tea is sometimes served with breakfast although coffee is drunk as well.

The mid-day meal is again what we would class as continental with most Poles having a main meal at this time. Poles enjoy their meat and as such you will find most meals will be of a meat basis. Common meals are pork in a light batter, Chicken or beef slices in a gravy. The evening meal or supper will normally be served cold and will be very similar to the breakfast.

Polish supermarkets are identical to those in the United Kingdom. Tesco and Giant are now opening up across the country. If you have a large party in a rural environment you may find it difficult to source a well stocked supermarket. All of the small towns have a local shop but the level and variety of stock is variable. They are very handy for last minute purchases. If you are catering for yourself, consideration should be given to where you purchase your supplies. If you have a large group, emptying the local shop of all its supplies will not go down very well with the locals!

Water is generally safe to drink from the tap although it is still good practice to check with locals before using it. If there is any doubt, bottled water can be bought at all supermarkets for a reasonable rate. Most small towns and villages have a bar where you can drink and purchase alcohol. In some cases it is normal to find the local shop has a table in the corner and this acts as the local bar. The legal drinking age is 18 but in rural areas it is quite normal for people under 18 to be served, a situation that any group Leader should be aware of in advance.

### Health, Welfare and Safety

It is easy to get paranoid over such matters in Poland, but it is wise to take sensible precautions. Before travelling consult your GP for the latest medical advice and organise any vaccinations required. These should be free of charge from your local GP, but some are known to make a charge for this service.

Take a good first aid kit to meet normal incidents and you should consider if you should include disposable needles and condoms. Midges and insects can be a major problem and you should take a good supply of repellent and cut down on the use of perfumed soaps and deodorant sprays.

Reciprocal arrangements between Poland and Britain mean that British travellers are entitled to free basic medical care in the country; there is, however, a charge for certain imported drugs and for some specialised treatments. It is important to carry your NHS card and Form E111, available free from your Post Office, as proof of your entitlement to free treatment; without it you will probably end up paying the full cost. However, these arrangements do not cover everything, and it is advisable to have adequate private health and travel insurance. For Scout groups, Scout Insurance Services are recommended; the policy provides repatriation in the event of a major health problem or accident. Details of the insurance package are supplied with the Visits Abroad Folder which is obtainable from your Assistant Area/County Commissioner (International).

Polish cities are probably no more dangerous than any other European cities, but it is sensible to take normal precautions with young people especially if they cannot speak the language. Your Polish hosts will want to be with you most of the time and will provide confidence in moving around the country. Watch out for pick pockets particularly near tourist places; do not create temptation by flashing around money and expensive cameras. On a bureaucratic level, Polish nationals are still supposed to carry some form of ID with them; you should always keep your passport with you, even though you are unlikely to get stopped unless you're in a car; Western number plates provide the excuse for occasional unprovoked spot checks - particularly late at night, when the police tend to think you'll turn out to be a Pole travelling in a stolen vehicle.

# Money

## Basics

The Polish unit of currency is the zloty, which literally means 'Golden'. Zloty is generally abbreviated to Zł. The smaller unit is the groszy, and 100 groszy is equivalent to 1 zloty.

Bank notes are issued in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 zloty. All of these notes depict portraits of important Polish kings. Coins are issued in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 groszy as well as 1, 2 and 5 zloty. All coins feature an emblem of the Polish eagle on the reverse side.

These notes and coins have been in circulation since the mid-1990's. For a short period of time, these notes and coins circulated with higher denomination notes that were being phased out, that equated to the value of the new notes. It is important to recognise that these older notes are no longer in circulation and are worthless. If you happen to be offered any notes that look well worn and depict figures that don't look like important Polish kings, kindly refuse them.

When ordering Polish currency ensure that you request lower denominations of notes. Most places will refuse to take any note above 50Zł as they are likely not to have any change to give you back. Even a 50Zł note is met with some form of reluctance.

## Deposits and Electronic Transfers

If you have booked a Polish Scout and Guide Centre or Campsite for the duration of your stay in Poland, you may be asked for a deposit in advance. If you are planning to undertake an advance visit to view the Centre or Campsite, you will be able to make a deposit in cash. If you do this, be sure to ask for a receipt and written confirmation of what you have paid and the terms of the balance.

If you're not undertaking an advance visit, another way to secure your accommodation is to pay by electronic transfer directly into the account of the Centre or Campsite that you will be visiting. The Centre or Campsite should be able to supply these details and your bank in the United Kingdom should be able to assist in making the electronic payment. Note that there is normally a small charge for making a transfer in this way.

## Ordering Polish Currency in the United Kingdom

Most high street banks will allow you to order Polish currency (Zloty) in advance. Don't be surprised if your bank has never heard of the currency or never been asked to order it. Some banks will deny that they can order it, but if you persuade them to check, often they realise that it can actually be done! If ordering money through a bank check what arrangements are in place on your return for exchanging Zloty back into Sterling. Some banks will take the Zloty from you but will not credit you with Sterling until they have sold the Zloty. This process can take up to three weeks which could cause problems in finalising the books for your expedition as well as having your group out of pocket for quite some time. Most high street travel agents will obtain Zloty in two working days and will exchange back into Sterling immediately on your return.

In addition to high street banks, you will find that the currency exchange bureaux at London Heathrow Airport (LHR) Terminal One, London Gatwick Airport (LGW) North Terminal and Manchester Airport (MAN) Terminal One will be able to provide Polish currency.

## Obtaining Polish Currency in Poland

It is good practice when travelling with a group to take a variety of payment methods, including some local currency, traveller's cheques and credit card.

For safety and security, travellers' cheques are certainly best, but note that changing them at small rural banks can be time consuming, as there may be little experience of handling them. At worst, it may be impossible. If you have the opportunity to change traveller's cheques, it is often more advisable to do this

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in towns or cities, or at the airport, where they are well versed in dealing with them. It is quite normal when in the process of changing traveller cheques that you will be sent from one room to another and from one person to another. In some of the banks you must get authority from a manager who will take your travellers cheques from you and give you a piece of paper which you must then take to the cashier to obtain the cash. All of this takes some time so be prepared to wait! If you are cashing a large sum, you may prefer to ask for this to be done in a private side office.

You will note that different types of traveller's cheques are available. Thomas Cook traveller's cheques are often refused in Poland as they look unfamiliar. In most cases, American Express traveller's cheques are readily recognised and accepted. In addition, you might be asked if you would prefer taking US Dollar or UK Sterling traveller's cheques. It's certainly the case that many years ago, there was more likelihood of US Dollar traveller's cheques being more readily accepted, but now, American Express UK Sterling traveller's cheques are more common from visitors from the United Kingdom. If you do have Thomas Cook traveller's cheques and have problems changing these, there are Thomas Cook offices in Warsaw and Krakow. Similarly, American Express has offices in Warsaw and Krakow. Using these offices will often incur no charge.

The American Express Office in Warsaw can be found at Krakowskie Przedmiescie 11, Warsaw. The 'phone number is: 635 20 02

If you are really stuck, larger hotels will accept traveller's cheques but often the commission is greater than if you were changing them at the bank. If you are in a large town or city like Warsaw or Krakow, do not use 'operators' in the street, offering good exchange rates, as they may be using counterfeit money.

If members of your group happen to have UK bankcards bearing the Cirrus logo, then they should be able to use them in normal cash withdrawal machines, like they would at home. Cash withdrawal machines are known as bankomats and if they accept Cirrus cards, they will bear the Cirrus logo. Remember, it's wise to familiarise yourself with the currency before using such machines. Whilst they can provide instruction in English, they won't translate Zloty values into Pound Sterling values! Note that the charge for using bankomats in this way incurs a small charge, similar to that which would be levied if you were changing traveller's cheques in a bank. This isn't a particularly good way of paying the way for your group, but is handy to know, for you and the members of the group for personal expenditure.

In addition, most bankomats and larger shops will accept major credit cards.

## The Euro

If you are travelling over land to Poland, through Eurozone countries, be sure to have a handy supply of Euros to pay for meals and other incidentals. These can be ordered in the same way as Zloty, from your local high street bank.

## Tipping

It is customary to provide a tip of 10% for meals and other occasions when service has been good. When paying for goods or at a restaurant, you will notice a small plate or dish sitting beside the till. It is customary to place your money in this dish and the shopkeeper will place your change here. If you are leaving a tip then leave the amount here.

## **Emergency Procedures**

Prepare for the unexpected because the unexpected will almost certainly happen. Consider the benefits of a carefully documented plan and itinerary with contact telephone numbers, an emergency contact in the United Kingdom is essential and remember that back home, benefit from some news by telephone when sons and daughters are abroad. Lodge a copy of your programme with your Assistant Area/County Commissioner (International) or your County International Adviser.

Travel arrangements prepared in advance and booked in Britain are strongly recommended.

It is well to be self sufficient whilst travelling in terms of food and cooking equipment and whilst it is impossible to carry food for a two week visit you will find that two or three days supply of food will meet the occasional food shortage. Don't forget tea, coffee and powdered milk.

In a serious medical emergency your travel insurance can be relied upon and full details of the repatriation and medical services will be provided with your travel insurance documentation. For other emergencies the British Consul is available in Warsaw. They can replace lost papers (though it useful to carry the photocopies of passports to make this process easier) and arrange for the transfer of monies from Britain but they are not money lenders.

In the event of an emergency, it is useful to have a set of photographs of the individual members of the party so that you can pass on a good likeness to the authorities if necessary. Also to help it might be a good idea to record passport and national health numbers of your party and kept somewhere safe.

Emergency Services Telephone numbers:

- Police 997
- Fire 998
- Ambulance (Public) 999

Please note that you shouldn't expect anyone at these numbers to be able to speak English.

Remember - Don't panic and put into operation your well laid plans!

## Useful Phrases

English	Polish
<b>UNITS</b>	<b>JEDNOSTKI</b>
brownie/ cub	zuch
cub pack	szostka zuchowa
cub leader	drużynowy
patrol member/ scout	harcerz
patrol	zastęp
patrol leader	zastępowy
assistant patrol leader	podzastępowy
ranger/ rover	harcerz starszy
troop / group	drużyna
troop leader	drużynowy
commissioner	naczelnik?
district	hufiec/ chorągiew
sea scout/ guide	wodniak
handicapped scout	nieprzetarty szlak
scouting	harcerstwo
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>SPRZET</b>
axe	toporek/ siekiera
saw	pila
spade	łopata
knife	noz
cord	sznur
rope	lina
anorak	palatka
rain wear	stroj przeciwdeszczowy
rubber boots (Wellies!)	gumiaki
cutlery	sztucce
machete	Kosa
matches	zapalki
neckerchief	chusta
woggle	pierscien
uniform	mundur
patrol pennant	proporzec
flag	flaga
map	mapa
compass	kompas
mattress	materac
sleeping bag	spiwor
rucksack/ backpack	plecak
torch	latarka
tent	namiot
tarpaulin/ canvas	plandeka
camp cooker	kuchnia polowa
sledge	sanki
heater	piecyk

# Feedback Form

This form is designed to help the Poland Network update this Country Support pack. The success of the pack is determined on the regular input of past visits. The Poland Network is interested in what problems you had in organising and running your expedition. The form takes the same format of as the pack and will help update each section with practical advice.

### Why take Guides or Scouts to Poland

What was the aim of your visit abroad? Why did you go and what did you hope to achieve?

### Making a Start

How did you get started with planning your visit to Poland? What additional support, if any, do you feel might have helped?

### Communication

Did you experience any challenges in communicating with your Polish partners?

### When to go

Why did you choose to go on the dates that you selected?

### Travel

Detail below how you travelled to and from Poland. Detail below the good points on selecting this method as well as any difficulties that you encountered.

### Accommodation

Detail below the accommodation you chose in Poland. Detail below the good points on selecting this accommodation as well as any difficulties that you encountered.

### Food and Drink

Detail below what you thought of the food in Poland. Also, detail how you catered for your group and mention any of the good points associated with this method as well as any difficulties that you encountered.

### Health, Welfare and Safety

Detail below any problems or advice that you can give to add to the pack.

### Money

Detail below how your group managed their money while in Poland.

### Emergency Procedures

Detail below any problems or advice that you can give to add to the pack.

# Poland Network

## What is the Poland Network?

The Poland Network is an informal grouping of Scout Leaders, Guiders and others that have been to Poland or have an interest in the country. Individuals involved with the Poland Network can be found across the whole of the United Kingdom.

### Aim:

The Poland Network operates within the Aim and Objectives of The Scout Association, and seeks to develop partnerships and friendships with the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association.

### Objectives:

To do this, the Network aims to actively:

- Involve young people in every aspect of it's activities
- Promote the exchange of good ideas, good practice, knowledge and experience
- Encourage projects and activities in co-operation with Polish Scouting and Guiding
- Develop an understanding of the heritage, culture and people of Poland

The Poland Network normally meets two or three times a year and provides support to groups planning visits to Poland, as well as organising and facilitating activities of it's own making including Explorer Belt expeditions, Study Visits, attendance at Polish Jamborees and so on.

## How do I join the Poland Network?

The Poland Network is registered as a National Scout Fellowship. Individuals wishing to join the Poland Network should complete a Poland Network Registration Form. Please note, for individuals who are currently members of Girlguiding UK, you will be regarded as an Honorary Member, thereby allowing you to not have to become a member of The Scout Association. For individuals under 18 years of age who wish to be involved with the activities of the Poland Network, you should also complete the Poland Network Registration Form but note that you will not be regarded as a full member. However, upon your eighteenth birthday, you will be invited to formally join the Poland Network if you are also a member of The Scout Association, or to become an Honorary Member if you are a member of Girlguiding UK.

For more information, please contact the Secretary of the Poland Network:

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