

# 1. Region of Warmia and Mazury

The beauty of the region is the charming and picturesque greenery, more than 2000 lakes and a large area of forests. That's why our region is called *The land of thousand lakes* (Inspired by tales of One Thousand and One Nights).

The area of Warmia and Mazury are in fact two historic provinces, joined into one because of their location close to each other. They are located in northern Poland, near the border with Russia and east of the lower Vistula River. Region is a paradise for sailors, joined into several sailing routes, it offer excellent conditions not only for sailing, but also canoeing and other water sports. Once there, you can find historical signs dating back to the times of the Crusader Knights, Prussian rule and World War II.

## **Links:**

- <http://www.warmia.mazury.pl/index.php?lang=en>
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/poland/warmia-and-masuria>
- <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/web/geography/regions/warmia/link.shtml>
- <http://www.en.atrakcje.olsztyn.pl/>

## 1.1 History of region

### **Warmia (Varmia)**

This historic region in the North of Poland was ceded to Poland from Prussia in 1466 by the Crusader Knights, later passed to Prussia in 1772, and reverted to Poland after the second World War.

Through the Yalta Conference and Potsdam Conference of 1945 the victorious Allies divided East Prussia into the two parts now known as Oblast Kaliningrad (in Russia) and the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (in Poland). People was evacuated or fled the advancing Red Army in 1945. Prior to the Potsdam Conference, during the Soviet 1945 offensive in winter (Vistula–Oder Offensive) Red Army overrun Warmia, killing and raping local population, without any regards towards age nor ethnic origin. Following the Potsdam Conference agreements the Soviets and then Polish administration expelled most of those Warmia-Germans to Western part of Germany under the Allied rule, unless in the Polish voivodeship they declared themselves Polish speakers. Only a small minority of Germans of Poland remained in Warmia as a result of World War II.

Olsztyn is the largest city in Warmia and the capital of the Warmian-Masurian Voivedeship. During the 1945-46 Warmia was part of the *Okreg Mazurski* (Masurian District). In 1946 a new voivodeship was created and named the Olsztyn Voivodeship, which encompassed entire Warmia and Masurian counties. In 1975 this voivodeship was redistricted and thus survived until the new redistricting and renaming in 1999 as Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship.

The majority of present inhabitants of Warmia are descendants of Poles who either were the Warmiaks or migrated from other parts of Poland after 1945. The Catholic character of Warmia has been preserved in the architecture of its villages and towns, as well in folk customs and roadside chapels.

### **Mazury (Masuria)**

A gently undulating, forested, lightly inhabited area with an amazing number of postglacial lakes - perhaps as many as 3,000. It is a favorite destination for Poles in summer. In the early Middle Ages it was populated by a Western Baltic people who went by the name

"Prussians." In their effort to convert the natives to Christianity at the end of a sword, the German Crusader Knights depopulated the area which became part of their state. Later, as Royal Prussia, the area became a vassal of the Polish Crown but the population was predominately German, in time becoming the East Prussian province of Germany.

Region was reverted to Poland in 1945. Soon after the political reforms of 1956, Masurians were given the opportunity to join their families in West Germany. The majority (over 100 thousand) gradually left and also after the improvement of German-Polish relations by the in the 1970s more than 55,000 persons from Warmia and Masuria moved to Western Germany in between 1971 and 1988, today approximately between 5,000 and 6,000 native Masurians still live in the area, about 50 percent of them members of the German minority in Poland, the remaining half is ethnic Polish. As the Polish journalist Andrzej K. Wróblewski stated, *the Polish post-war policy succeeded in what the Prussian state never managed: the creation of a German national consciousness among the Masurians.*

Currently Warmia and Mazury form a single province. The biggest difference between this two regions visible in the landscape was that, on Warmia can find many roadside chapels as always have lived here more Catholics than on Mazury which were more diverse religiously - Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, etc. Clean environment and multicultural region of Warmia and Mazury (the largest the country's minority concentration) offer a high potential for the development of Business tourism industry and agrotourism.

## 1.2 Land of Thousand Lakes

The Warmia and Mazury Region is all about forests, lakes, and pure air - this is how inhabitants of other parts of Poland perceive the Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship. They recognize the region as a perfect asylum, and escape from stressful life and everyday rush. The Land of Great Masurian Lakes is a candidate of Poland in the World's New 7 Wonders of Nature Plebiscite.



<http://mazury.travel/natura/pojezierze-ilawskie-skarby-natury>

- **Environment:** clean, ecological with good environmental conditions for the health resorts and spa, the region belongs to the complex "Polish Green Lungs". Wooded

areas represent 29% the total area of the province. State Parks, about 230 nature reserves and very much natural monuments (nearly 4,000 objects). Region is rich in many species of animals and birds (storks, swans, cormorants, grouse, bison, moose and beaver)

- **The landscape:** more than 3,000 lakes, including the Great Lakes - the finalists global competition for the New 7 Wonders of Nature and Jeziorak Lake - one of the seven New Wonders of Poland, numerous parks and nature reserves, large forests, historic architecture. Total surface waters are 6.3% of the region, which is more than two times more than the average in other regions of the country
- **Good conditions for sports and recreation:** a number of shipping routes (channels together with the lakes form a network of trails with a length of about 200 km), favorable conditions for biking and cycling and downhill, a sailing centers and scuba diving, a broad network of local centers of winter sports - including skiing as well as ice boats, a large number of studs and riding schools (best known in Kadyny and Gałkowie), and other numerous recreational facilities

### 1.3 Cultural heritage and attractions

#### ❖ You should visit monuments and places such as:

- **Gothic Castles Route**  
The Warmia and Mazury is worth noting the medieval castles. Worth to visit are gothic castles in Olsztyn (now houses the Museum of Warmia and Mazury), Nidzica, Ostróda, Lidzbark Warmiński and Kętrzyn. It should also note the fourteenth-century Crusader castle in Ryn - there is now a hotel, which can be visited with a guide. More information: [www.szlak.zamkigotyckie.org.pl/](http://www.szlak.zamkigotyckie.org.pl/)
- **Frombork Cathedral Hill**  
This place is a monument of the highest class. Although it was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt, retains the basic elements of medieval architectural assumptions. The Cathedral Hill is worth a visit for the unique gothic Metropolitan Cathedral, built in the second half of the fourteenth century. In its neighborhood are the former residence of the bishop. Special significance of this place raise the historical traditions and character Nicolaus Copernicus, who was buried in the this cathedral.  
Visitors can also visit the Museum of Nicolaus Copernicus, which is housed in the former palace of the bishops of Warmia (near the cathedral). The Museum exhibits Copernicus's astronomical instruments, the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century sundials and seventeenth-century maps of the sky by Johannes Hevelius. More at: [www.frombork.art.pl](http://www.frombork.art.pl)
- **Open air museum** of old regional architecture and technical monuments from XVIII/XIX century in **Olsztynek**. Rural buildings, comes from the area of East Prussia and are collected together in one place in order to preserve vanishing architecture. The museum consists of 66 buildings of wooden folk architecture.



<http://ro.com.pl/wiekowy-skansen-w-olsztynku/>

- **Viaducts in Stańczyki** - One of the biggest bridges in Poland, built in the early twentieth century as part of the railway infrastructure, connecting Gołdap and Żytkiejmy. The first trains began to run in 1927, during World War II cargo trains transported the stones used to build Hitler quarter in Gierłoż, near Kętrzyn. After the war the railway was dismantled, and the bridge became a tourist attraction. In recent years, have also been used for bungee jumping (currently prohibited).
- **Fields of Grunwald** In the southern part of the Municipality of Grunwald you can find Grunwald fields with Museum of the Battle of Grunwald and Victory Monument. Every 14<sup>th</sup> of July on this field is staging a Polish – Crusaders battle.
- **Boyen fortress** built in the mid-nineteenth century under the Prussian King Frederick William IV of Prussia defended access to the East. Was located in an excellent strategic location on the broad pass between lakes Niegocin and Kisajno, which was the most convenient place to cross the line of the Great Masurian Lakes.
- **Wolf's Lair (Wilczy Szaniec) in Gierłoż – near Kętrzyn**  
During World War II, Hitler's headquarters in Gierłoż was a place of the failed assassination on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1944. Construction of this place began in 1940 and in 1944 in the Wilczy Szaniec was located almost 200 buildings, including barracks, power plants, heating plants and shelters with walls 4-5 meters thick. Besides Adolf Hitler, had arrived to this headquarter representatives of countries cooperating with the Germans (France, Japan and Italy) and subordinate leaders of the Third Reich, including Hans Frank – General Governor of the occupied Polish territories. At the end of 1944, fell the order to blow Wilczy Szaniec, in January 1945 the Russians occupied buildings. Currently, the area Wolf's Lair is made available to the public. More: [www.wolfschanze.pl](http://www.wolfschanze.pl)



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wilczy\\_Szaniec\\_40.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wilczy_Szaniec_40.jpg)

#### ❖ What is worth to see?

##### ○ **Stork village in Żywkowo**

Żywkowo is the best known, stork village in Poland – on the roofs of nine farms located are about 60 stork nests. The village belongs to the so-called. Warmia and Mazury Stork Trail, which stretches along the Polish-Russian border. Tourists can also beat the two-mile nature trail, between Żywkowo and Toprzązyna. More at: [www.bociany.info](http://www.bociany.info)

##### ○ **Bunkers in Mamerki**

Located near Węgorzewo. Construction of facilities began in 1940 and was completed in 1944. The thickness of the walls of some bunkers reaches up to 7 feet! Objects have been blown up - in 1945, when the Wehrmacht had left them without a fight. To this day, preserved in excellent condition. More: [www.mamerki.com](http://www.mamerki.com)

##### ○ **Elk Narrow Gauge Railroad**

Leisurely journey into the world of history of Masuria and railways whistling and puffing and surrounded by clouds of smoke locomotive, the steam, will take travelers to the turbulent times of the borderland, where for centuries clashed ethnic and religious elements.

Elk Narrow Gauge Railway was built between 1910-1917. You can get it from Elk to turn-based or station Zawady-Tworku. The total length of the route is almost 50 km.

We also invite you to the National Railway Museum in Elk (Narrow Street Line 1). There you can see, among others historic rolling stock and Hall with locomotives.

More at: [www.mosir.elk.com.pl/ekw/](http://www.mosir.elk.com.pl/ekw/)

##### ○ **Elbląg Canal**

Technical sensation in the world - designed in the nineteenth century and is in use to this day. Channel combines several Masurian lakes with the Vistula Lagoon. 100-meter difference in water levels overcome with mucus and ramps. The latter are rail extraction device mechanically driven by the flow of water.

In 2007, in the ranking of the news paper "Rzeczpospolita" was selected as one of the Seven Wonders of Poland, next to the Wieliczka Salt Mine, Malbork Castle and Wawel Cathedral. More [www.zegluga.com.pl](http://www.zegluga.com.pl)



<http://polska.pl/polska/51,125333,11430302.html?i=0>

○ **Land of historical tribe Galind**

Land called Mazury Eden, refers to the tribe Galinds, which inhabited the area centuries before the Great Mazury Lakes. 20-acre land is located on a peninsula on Lake Beldany (near the village Iznota near Mikołajki).

In the land of Galinds can be found amber chamber, you can take part in feasts and banquets. Visitors can look forward also include cruises, staging an attack Galinds, seeking amber and kayaking. More at: [www.galindia.com.pl](http://www.galindia.com.pl)

○ **Wild animals park in Kadzidłowo**

The park is located in the "Puszcza Piska". Most of the animals are friendly and therefore it is possible to access certain species on their extensive paddocks and even feeding, stroking and enjoy up close. Due to the vastness of the area and its nature, visiting the park is only with guides who speak of individual animals, their biology, habits and the need for protection. In the park you can see, among others tarpans, fallow deer, wolves, Scandinavian wolves, moose and deer. More at: [www.kadzidlowo.pl](http://www.kadzidlowo.pl)

○ **Miniatures Park of Warmia and Mazury in Gierłoż**

At 30.000 square meters, visitors can see the most interesting sights of Warmia and Mazury, recreated in 1:25 scale miniatures including palaces in Drogosze and Sztynort, locks on the Mazury Canal, castles from Reszel and Lidzbark Warmiński and Nidzica, Boyen Fortress, the Basilica of the Holy Lipka, Olsztyn High Gate, the Bismarck Tower in Mrągowo, as well as the railway viaduct from Stańczyki, cottages from Mazury or windmill from Besi .

The Miniature Park also hosts include Theme Picnics History. You can see such staged battle Wehrmacht and the Polish Army and the Red Army, you can even watch the customs of noble Poland and see what life was like ancient Slavs. More: [www.miniatury.com.pl](http://www.miniatury.com.pl)

○ **Western City Mrongoville in Mrągowo**

A fascinating artistic program, stunt shows, playing with cowboys, visiting the Indian village, Rancho Park Farm with animals, great fun, memorable experiences, and many other attractions for the whole family to everyday Mrongoville Wild West towns. The town is a great place for all explorers seeking adventure Wild West. On

the streets you can meet cowboys in the courtyard you can see demonstrations of western riding.

You can go to visit the Indian villages and take an active part in many exciting competitions, inspired by the life of the Wild West. More [www.mrongoville.pl](http://www.mrongoville.pl)

- **You want to skiing... so go to Mazury**

On Warmia and Mazury, you can also ... skiing. For skiers are waiting lifts in Lidzbark Warmiński (Krzyżowa Mountain), Orzysz (Station Okrągłe), Mrągowo (Góra Czterech Wiatrów), Rusi (near Olsztyn), Gołdapia (Piękna Mountain), Elbląg (Góra Chrobrego), and the Wzgórza Dylewskie. In Gołdapia children can also benefit with a toboggan run.

#### **1.4 Warmia and Mazury as multicultural region**

*"You need to know about everything to not accidentally destroy things worthy of preservation"*

Zofia Licharewa

Often you will find that many people do not know the difference between Warmia and Mazury, and knows very little about their history, which is very interesting, and somehow tragic. The historical background that led to the region was inhabited by many ethnic and national groups, including the Prussians, Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Dutch, Scottish, Swiss, French, Jews, Lemko, Ukrainians. Over the centuries, until it broke of nationalism, residents, regardless of nationality or religion lived in harmony. Year 1945 once again changed the nationality of the land and exchanged its people.

Currently Warmia and Mazury is "Little Homeland", which is associated with the beautiful landscape, good conditions of tourist facilities but worse is the identification with the past. New residents (after 1945 came Poles from Mazovia and Pomerania) overcame prejudice to anything what is a heritage of Crusader Knights and the Prussian and rebuilt the castles and other facilities. However, people cultivates some tradition typical of the region, may customs, holidays customs and folk culture disappear. Regional history in schools is only marginal. So who were living or came to region of Warmia and Mazury? Warmia was founded in the thirteenth century, during the conquest of old-Prussian made by the Order of German (in Polish literature, commonly referred to as "crusaders"). Old-Prussians were one of the three Baltic nations (except Lithuanians and Latvians), which became extinct in the late seventeenth century, leaving only its name - Prussia, which was adopted by the prince of Hohenzollern for his kingdom. In the fifteenth century, Warmia joined to the rebel cities struggling with the support of the Polish king against the Crusader Knights. Therefore after second Peace of Toruń in 1466 directly entered into the Polish Kingdom, while the rest of the Crusader state got the status of "Polish fief."

True peace came after the Prussian Homage in 1525, when the last Grand Master of the Crusader Order Albrecht von Brandenburg-Hohenzollern knelt before the Polish king on the Main Square in Kraków, and the Duchy of Prussia was transformed into secular kingdom, but with the Protestant religion as obligatory. Warmia itself lost half its population, which were at the beginning of the fifteenth century, almost exclusively Germans and old-Prussian. Polish element had the matter.

It was drastically changed. The reintroduction of decimated country came mainly from the south, ie from Mazovia, where huge crowds of people came, intentionally invoked by the authorities both Poland and Warmia. Involved in the reconstruction of the country was the administrator of the Bishopric Chapter in Olsztyn - Nicolaus Copernicus. Immigrants impose their culture and language for the former population of region, and within a few decades, there has been a complete polonization of southern area of Prussia. The expansion of the Polish

language only stopped by the invasion of the Tatars in 1656 year, who once again devastated the country.

The boundary between the Catholic Warmia and Protestant Duch of Prussia became more visible. People literally stopped talking to each other, and language of Mazovia, which was originally common for settlers, now began to separate. In Warmia (because the Catholicism and belonging to Poland) language was more or less involved in the overall development of the Polish language, although has developed a quite extraordinary dialect (warمیński). The Protestant population of Duch of Prussia had lost all connection with the motherland and her tongue stopped at a very archaic level of Polish language used in the sixteenth century in Mazovia. The result is a distinct people with their own language and their own culture. This people get a new name just at the early nineteenth century meaning "immigrants from Mazowsze", later translated into the area which they inhabited - Masuria.

The first partition of Polish, resulted in that Warmia became a part of the Kingdom of Prussia, what initially did not change the relationship of language in its southern part. Even 50 years after the partition talking German language on the street could only occur in Olsztyn, while in rural areas no one spoke or understood German. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when the process of Germanization in southern Warmia and Mazury started. While certainly accelerated by the deliberate steps of the German authorities, such as the reduction of the Polish language in schools, there was actually another reason - the construction of railways, and the exodus of people to the industrial centers of the west - to Berlin, and above all, to the Ruhr area. Both of these factors meant that at the first time people more intensively contacted the progressive civilization of the West, which was then completely dominated by Germans. It should be noted that the struggle for Polish nationality and Poland in the nineteenth and twentieth century didn't occur frequently at Warmia and Mazury, as in other regions of Poland. In Mazury it was not observed at all, because Masurians for religious reasons did not feel any ties with Poland.

In these times of progressive germanization the revelation of Mary in Gietrzwałd in 1877 took on great significance for the identity of people: the Blessed Virgin not only spoke Polish – She was speaking in warمیński dialect! It was even more important because this dialect slowly began to disappear. Despite the spread of the German language dialect remained for another decade. It survived even the Nazis, who tried to destroy all traces of Slavic region of Warmia and Mazury.

The final collapse began only after 1945, when the expulsion of the German population and the influx of Poles from different parts of the Polish led the Warmians and Masurians become foreigners in their own country. Officially they were considered Germanized forced, which now had to be polonized. However, the re-polonization not restore the old dialects, but it mean the imposition of a nationwide language. Besides, Poles who came here have recognize and treat bilingual from few decades residents of the region as Germans - the more so they didn't understand the dialect of Warmia.

These experiments resulted in the Masurians and Warmians finally and irretrievably feel as Germans - with all the consequences. When the communist government in the 70s of the XX century made easier for them to travel to Germany, they left the country. Unnoticed by both the German and Polish society, it was a time when it was a final destruction and oblivion of culture which existed for 400 years. Today in region there is no more Masurians, and most of the rest Polish Warmians considered themselves to be the German minority, but not all. Polish people who have moved here were educated as "Poles" for a long years without any regard for regional history or culture. Only recently it begins to remind the culture and language of Warmia, held are conferences, emerge books Warmia dialect, history, heritage. Can be found the memory about multiculturalism of region.

It was the biggest blow to the region, when an important aspect of integration was gone. Native-Warmians and Masurians for the newcomer population probably would be such contribution to the creation of a multicultural community.



<http://ro.com.pl/mendelsohn-pomoze-w-dialogu/>

<http://www.polskaniezwykla.pl/web/place/19303.olsztyn-cerkiew-opieki-matki-bozej.html>



[http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Gdansk\\_Baby\\_Pruskie.jpg](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Gdansk_Baby_Pruskie.jpg)

<http://www.przewodnik.e-mazury.com.pl/wiatraki-lakorz/>