

Poland

A flat, fertile nation in the centre of Europe, often surrounded by conquest-happy empires, can expect life to be turbulent at times. And that's been the experience of Poland, as it's grappled with centuries of war, invasion and foreign occupation. Nothing, however, has succeeded in suppressing the Poles' strong sense of nationhood and cultural identity, as exemplified by the ancient royal capital of Kraków, with its breathtaking castle, and bustling Warsaw, with its painstaking postwar reconstruction of its devastated Old Town.

Although early euphoria at joining the EU has subsided into a more realistic expectation of membership, there's a distinct sense of confidence and optimism in the big cities, and among young people in particular. As a result, regional centres such as urbane Gdańsk, cultured Wrocław and lively Poznań exude a cosmopolitan energy that's a heady mix of old and new.

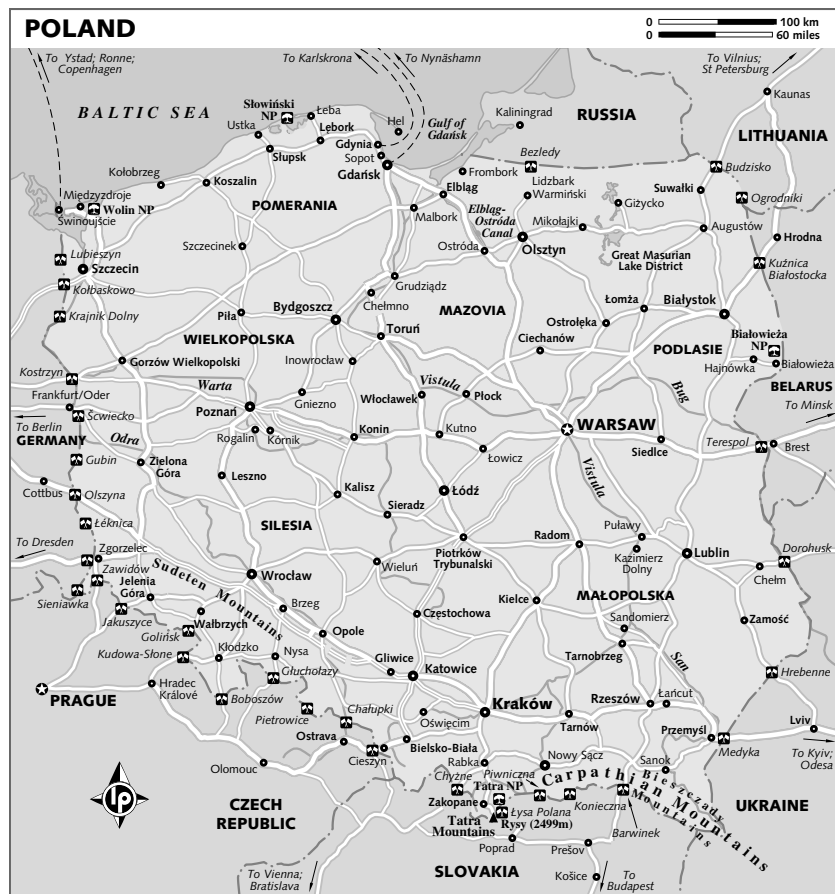
Away from the cities, Poland is a diverse land, from its northern sandy beaches and magnificent southern mountains to the lost-in-time forests of the east. And everywhere there are seldom-visited towns to discover, with their own ruined castles, picturesque squares and historic churches.

Poland is still good value for travellers and has a transport system that makes it easy to get around. As Poland continues to reconcile its rediscovered European identity with its hard-won political and cultural freedoms, it's a fascinating time to visit this beautiful country.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 312, 685 sq km
- **Capital** Warsaw
- **Currency** zloty; €1=3.98zł; US\$1=3.13zł; UK£1=5.92zł; A\$1=2.35zł; C\$1 = 2.81zł; A¥100=2.68zł; NZ\$1=2.06zł
- **Famous for** Chopin, Copernicus, Marie Curie, Solidarity, vodka
- **Official Language** Polish
- **Phrases** *dzień dobry* (good morning/afternoon), *dziękuję* (thank you), *proszę* (please), *Gdzie jest dworzec autobusowy/kolejowy?* (Where's the bus/train station?)
- **Population** 38 million
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 48; international access code ☎ 00
- **Visas** not required for EU citizens; US, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian citizens do not need visas for stays of less than 90 days





HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the beauty and history of Kraków's **Wawel Castle** (p561)
- Meet European bison and other magnificent fauna at **Białowieża National Park** (p559)
- Soak up the cosmopolitan vibe of **Gdańsk** (p597) and take a dip in the Baltic at nearby **Sopot** (p602)
- Enjoy the skiing or hiking life of the **Tatra Mountains** (p574)
- Discover Warsaw's tragic wartime history at the **Warsaw Rising Museum** (p553)

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Spend a day exploring Warsaw with a stroll round the Old Town and a

stop at the Warsaw Rising Museum. The next day, head to Kraków for three days, visiting the Old Town, Wawel Castle, and Wieliczka. Take a day trip to Oświęcim, then head on to Zakopane for two days.

- **Two Weeks** Follow the above itinerary, then on the eighth day travel to Wrocław for two days. Progress north to Toruń for a day, then onward to Gdańsk for two days, exploring the Old Town and visiting Westerplatte. Wind down with a couple of days at the seaside in Sopot.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Poland's weather can be unpredictable. Summer is usually warm and sunny, with July the

hottest month, but it's also the season with the highest rainfall. Spring and autumn are pleasantly warm but can also be wet. Snow can fall anywhere in Poland between December and March, lingering until April or even May in the mountains.

The tourist season runs roughly from May to September, peaking in July and August. Many Polish families go on holidays during these two months, so transport is crowded and accommodation limited. Most theatres and concert halls are also closed at this time. From midautumn to midspring, outdoor activities are less prominent and many camping grounds and youth hostels are closed. See the climate charts on p911, for more information.

HISTORY

Poland's history started with the Polonians (People of the Plains). During the early Middle Ages, these Western Slavs moved into the flatlands between the Vistula and Odra Rivers. Mieszko I, Duke of the Polonians, adopted Christianity in 966 and embarked on a campaign of conquest. A papal edict in 1025 led to Mieszko's son Bolesław Chrobry (Boleslaus the Brave) being crowned Poland's first king.

Poland's early success proved fragile, and encroachment from Germanic peoples led to the relocation of the royal capital from Poznań

to Kraków in 1038. More trouble loomed in 1226 when the Prince of Mazovia invited the Teutonic Knights to help convert the pagan tribes of the north. These Germanic crusaders used the opportunity to create their own state along the Baltic coast. The south had its own invaders to contend with, and Kraków was attacked by Tatars twice in the mid-13th century.

The kingdom prospered under Kazimierz III 'the Great' (1333–1370). During this period of rebirth, many new towns sprang up, while Kraków blossomed into one of Europe's leading cultural centres.

When the daughter of Kazimierz's nephew married the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jagiełło, Poland and Lithuania were united as the largest state in Europe, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The Renaissance was introduced to Poland by the enlightened King Zygmunt during the 16th century, as he lavishly patronised the arts and sciences. By asserting that the Earth travelled around the sun, Nicolaus Copernicus revolutionised the field of astronomy in 1543.

The 18th century was a period of disaster and decline for Poland. First it was subject to Swedish and Russian invasions, and at century's end it faced partition by surrounding empires. In 1773 Russia, Prussia and Austria seized Polish territory in the First Partition; by the time the Third Partition was completed in 1795, Poland had vanished from the map of Europe.

Although the country remained divided through the entire 19th century, Poles steadfastly maintained their culture. Finally, upon the end of WWI the old imperial powers dissolved, and a sovereign Polish state was restored. Very soon, however, Poland was again at war. Under the command of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, Poland defended its eastern territories from long-time enemy Russia, now transformed into the Soviet Union and determined to spread its revolution westward. After two years of impressive fighting by the outnumbered Poles, an armistice was signed, retaining Vilnius and Lviv within Poland.

Though Polish institutions and national identity flourished during the interwar period, disaster soon struck again. On 1 September 1939, a Nazi blitzkrieg rained down from the west; soon after, the Soviets invaded

HOW MUCH?

- **Night in a hostel** 45zł
- **Night in a midrange double room** 200zł
- **Three-course restaurant meal for two** 120zł
- **Postcard** 1zł
- **Postage stamp** 3zł

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol** 3.75zł
- **Litre of water** 2zł
- **Beer** 5-7zł
- **Souvenir T-shirt** 35zł
- **Street snack (zapiékanka, a toasted roll with cheese, mushrooms and tomato sauce)** 2-5zł

TOP FIVE REMNANTS OF COMMUNISM

It's been less than two decades since the end of communist rule in Poland, but evidence of the era is fading fast. If you want to delve into the days of the Eastern Bloc, check out these remains.

- Nowa Huta – Everyone visits Kraków for its medieval splendour, but there's another side to the former royal capital that few tourists see. Catch a tram to the eastern suburb of Nowa Huta for a glimpse of the planned 'workers' paradise' district, built in the 1950s to counter the influence of the city's religious and intellectual elite.
- Stadion Dziesięciolecia – Just over the river from central Warsaw is the 10th Anniversary Stadium, constructed in the 1950s from the rubble of buildings destroyed in WWII. Initially the jewel in communist Poland's sporting crown, it was abandoned as a sporting venue in the 1980s, and now houses a huge open-air market.
- Warszawa Centralna – Opened by communist bigwigs in 1975, Warsaw's massive main train station was seen as a triumph of modern socialism over the inefficient structures of the past. However, current opinion is mixed. Many travellers have experienced the disorientating sensation of traversing its labyrinthine corridors, and Poles have pondered whether it should be torn down.
- Gdańsk Shipyards – Constructed after WWII, this sprawling industrial site north of Gdańsk's Old Town was originally known as the Lenin Shipyards. It hit the international headlines as the birthplace of the Solidarity trade union in 1980, and became the hub of the decade-long struggle to overthrow the communist system.
- Milk bars – The *bar mleczny* is a humble institution which survived the regime that founded it. Milk bars were conceived by the communist government as low-cost cafeterias for workers, serving basic vegetarian dishes. Nowadays they're a living reminder of the era, and a great place to find straightforward, unfussy Polish food.

Poland from the east, dividing the country with Germany. This agreement didn't last long, as Hitler soon transformed Poland into a staging ground for the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Six million Polish inhabitants died during WWII (including the country's three million Jews), brutally annihilated in death camps. At the war's end, Poland's borders were redrawn yet again. The Soviet Union kept the eastern territories and extended the country's western boundary at the expense of Germany. These border changes were accompanied by the forced resettlement of more than a million Poles, Germans and Ukrainians.

Peacetime brought more repression. After WWII, Poland endured four decades of Soviet-dominated communist rule, punctuated by waves of protests, most notably the paralysing strikes of 1980–81, led by the Solidarity trade union. Finally, in the open elections of 1989, the communists fell from power and in 1990 Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa became Poland's first democratically elected president.

The postcommunist transition brought radical changes, which induced new social

hardships and political crises. But within a decade Poland had built the foundations for a market economy, and reoriented its foreign relations towards the West. In March 1999, Poland was granted full NATO membership, and it joined the EU in May 2004.

Despite a strong economy, the nation swung to centre-right parties in the 2005 parliamentary elections, partly in reaction to continuing high unemployment, government spending cuts and corruption scandals. The new political tone was underlined a few weeks later by the presidential election victory of Lech Kaczyński, well known for his social conservatism.

PEOPLE

For centuries Poland was a multicultural country, home to large Jewish, German and Ukrainian communities. Its Jewish population was particularly large, and once numbered more than three million. However, after Nazi genocide and the forced resettlements that followed WWII, the Jewish population declined to 10,000 and Poland became an ethnically homogeneous country,

with some 98% of the population being ethnic Poles.

More than 60% of the citizens live in towns and cities. Warsaw is by far the largest urban settlement, followed by Łódź, Kraków, Wrocław, Poznań and Gdańsk. Upper Silesia (around Katowice) is the most densely inhabited area, while the northeastern border regions remain the least populated.

Between five and 10 million Poles live outside Poland. This émigré community, known as 'Polonia', is located mainly in the USA (particularly Chicago).

Poles are friendly and polite, but not overly formal. The way of life in large urban centres increasingly resembles Western styles and manners. In the countryside, however, a more conservative culture dominates, evidenced by traditional gender roles and strong family ties. In both urban and rural settings, many Poles are devoutly religious.

The Poles' sense of personal space may be a bit cosier than you are accustomed to – you may notice this trait when queuing for tickets or manoeuvring along city streets. When greeting each other, Polish men are passionate about shaking hands. Polish women often shake hands with men, but the man should always wait for the woman to extend her hand first.

RELIGION

Roman Catholicism is the dominant Christian denomination, adhered to by more than 80% of Poles. The Orthodox church's followers constitute about 1% of the population, mostly living along a narrow strip on the eastern frontier.

The election of Karol Wojtyła, the archbishop of Kraków, as Pope John Paul II in 1978, and his triumphal visit to his homeland a year later, significantly enhanced the status of the church in Poland. The country was proud of the late Pope: even now his image can be seen in public places and private homes throughout the country.

The overthrow of communism was as much a victory for the Church as it was for democracy. The fine line between the Church and the state is often blurred in Poland, and the Church is a powerful lobby on social issues. Some Poles have grown wary of the Church's increasing influence in society and politics, but Poland remains one of Europe's most religious countries, and packed-out churches are not uncommon.

ARTS Literature

Poland has inherited a rich literary tradition dating from the 15th century, though its modern voice was shaped in the 19th century, during the long period of foreign occupation. It was a time for nationalist writers such as the poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), and Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916), who won a Nobel prize in 1905 for *Quo Vadis?* This nationalist tradition was revived in the communist era when Czesław Miłosz was awarded a Nobel prize in 1980 for *The Captive Mind*.

At the turn of the 20th century, the avant-garde 'Young Poland' movement in art and literature developed in Kraków. The most notable representatives of this movement were the writer Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907), also famous for his stained-glass work; the playwright Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), commonly known as Witkacy; and the Nobel laureate Władysław Reymont (1867–1925). In 1996, Wisława Szymborska (b 1923) also received a Nobel prize for her ironic poetry.

Music

The most famous Polish musician was undoubtedly Frédéric Chopin (1810–49), whose music displays the melancholy and nostalgia that became hallmarks of the national style. Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–72) injected a Polish flavour into 19th-century Italian opera music by introducing folk songs and dances to the stage. His *Halka* (1858), about a peasant girl abandoned by a young noble, is a staple of the national opera houses.

Visual Arts

Poland's most renowned painter was Jan Matejko (1838–93), whose monumental historical paintings hang in galleries throughout the country. Wojciech Kossak (1857–1942) is another artist who documented Polish history; he is best remembered for the colossal painting *Panorama of Raclawicka*, on display in Wrocław (p584).

A long-standing Polish craft is the fashioning of jewellery from amber. Amber is a fossil resin of vegetable origin that comes primarily from the Baltic region, and appears in a variety of colours from pale yellow to reddish brown. The best places to buy it are Gdańsk, Kraków and Warsaw.

Polish poster art has received international recognition; the best selection of poster galleries is in Warsaw and Kraków.

Cinema

Poland has produced several world-famous film directors. The most notable is Andrzej Wajda, who received an Honorary Award at the 1999 Academy Awards. Western audiences are probably more familiar with the work of Roman Polański, who directed critically acclaimed films such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chinatown*. In 2002 Polański released the incredibly moving film *The Pianist*, which was filmed in Poland and set in the Warsaw Ghetto of WWII. The film went on to win three Oscars and the Cannes Palme d'Or. The late Krzysztof Kieślowski is best known for the trilogy *Three Colours Trilogy*.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

Poland covers an area of 312,677 sq km, approximately as large as the UK and Ireland put together, and is bordered by seven states and one sea.

The northern edge of Poland meets the Baltic Sea. This broad, 524km-long coastline is spotted with sand dunes and seaside lakes. Also concentrated in the northeast are many postglacial lakes – more than any country in Europe except Finland.

The southern border is defined by the mountain ranges of the Sudetes and Carpathians. Poland's highest mountains are the rocky Tatras, a section of the Carpathian Range it shares with Slovakia. The highest peak of the Polish Tatras is Mt Rysy (2499m).

The area in between is a vast plain, sectioned by wide north-flowing rivers. Poland's longest river is the Vistula (Wisła), which winds 1047km from the Tatras to the Baltic.

Wildlife & National Parks

About 28% of Poland is covered by forest and, admirably, up to 130 sq km of new forest is planted each year. Some 60% of the forests are pine trees, but the share of deciduous species, such as oak, beech and birch, is increasing.

Poland's fauna includes hare, red deer, wild boar and, less abundantly, elk, brown bear and wildcat. European bison, which once inhabited Europe in large numbers, were brought to the brink of extinction early in the 20th century and a few hundred now live in Białowieża

National Park. The Great Masurian Lakes district attracts a vast array of bird life, such as storks and cormorants. The eagle, though rarely seen today, is Poland's national bird and appears on the Polish emblem.

Poland has 23 national parks, but they cover less than 1% of the country. No permit is necessary to visit these parks, but most have small admission fees. Camping in the parks is sometimes allowed, but only at specified sites. Poland also has a network of less strictly preserved areas called 'landscape parks'. About 105 of these parks, covering 6% of Poland, are scattered throughout the country.

FOOD & DRINK

The cheapest place to eat Polish food is a *bar mleczny* (milk bar), a no-frills, self-service cafeteria, popular with budget-conscious locals and backpackers alike. Up the scale, the number and variety of *restauracja* (restaurants) has ballooned in recent years, especially in the big cities. Pizzerias have also become phenomenally popular with Poles. And though Polish cuisine features plenty of meat, there are vegetarian restaurants to be found in most cities.

Menus usually have several sections: *zupy* (soups), *dania drugie* (main courses) and *dodatki* (accompaniments). The price of the main course may not include a side dish – such as potatoes, fries and salads – which you choose separately (and pay extra for) from the *dodatki* section. Also note that the price for some dishes (particularly fish and poultry) is often listed per 100g, so the price will depend on the total weight of the fish or meat.

Poles start their day with *śniadanie* (breakfast); and the most important and substantial meal of the day, *obiad*, is normally eaten between 2pm and 5pm. The third meal is *kolacja* (supper). Most restaurants open from mid-morning until midnight, though milk bars and snack bars are open from early morning.

Staples & Specialities

Various cultures have influenced Polish cuisine, including Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian and German. Polish food is hearty and filling, abundant in potatoes and dumplings, and rich in meat.

Poland's most famous dishes are *bigos* (sauerkraut with a variety of meats), *pierogi* (ravioli-like dumplings stuffed with cottage cheese, minced meat, or cabbage and wild

mushrooms) and *barszcz* (red beetroot soup, better known by the Russian word *borscht*).

Hearty soups such as *żurek* (sour soup with sausage and hard-boiled eggs) are a highlight of Polish cuisine. Main dishes are made with pork, including *golonka* (boiled pig's knuckle served with horseradish) and *schab pieczony* (roast loin of pork seasoned with prunes and herbs). *Goląbki* (cabbage leaves stuffed with mince and rice) is a tasty alternative.

Placki ziemniaczane (potato pancakes) and *naleśniki* (crepes) are also popular dishes.

Drinks

Poles claim the national drink, *wódka* (vodka), was invented in their country. It's usually drunk neat and comes in a number of flavours, including *mysliwska* (flavoured with juniper berries), *wisniówka* (with cherries) and *jarzębiak* (with rowanberries). The most famous variety is *żubrówka* (bison vodka), flavoured with grass from the Białowieża Forest. Other notable spirits include *krupnik* (honey liqueur), *śliwowica* (plum brandy) and *goldwasser* (sweet liqueur containing flakes of gold leaf).

Poles also appreciate the taste of *zimne piwo* (cold beer); the top brands, found everywhere, include Żywiec and Okocim, while regional brands are available in every city.

WARSAW

📞 022 / pop 1.69 million

Poles and visitors alike agree: Warsaw (Warszawa in Polish, vah-shah-vah) is different. The business centre of Poland, its postcommunist commercial character is symbolised by capitalist towers rivalling the Stalinist-era Palace of Culture for prominence on the skyline. A spin-off from all this international trade is the city's excellent array of dining, entertainment and nightlife options.

The city's tumultuous past is reflected in its present-day appearance. The beautiful Old Town district was devastated in WWII but reconstructed with unerring accuracy, and is the most attractive part of the city. The nearby Royal Way, and the former Royal Parks, are also pleasant places to linger. Other districts feature communist-era concrete blocks and are less agreeable.

With its many museums, galleries and entertainment options, Warsaw can keep visitors

occupied for several days. As it's also Poland's central transport hub, the capital makes a good base for short trips into the surrounding countryside.

HISTORY

The Mazovian dukes were the first rulers of Warsaw, establishing it as their stronghold in the 14th century. The city's strategic central location led to the capital being transferred from Kraków to Warsaw when Poland and Lithuania were unified in 1569.

Although the 18th century was a period of catastrophic decline for the Polish state, Warsaw underwent a period of prosperity during this period. Many magnificent churches, palaces and parks were built, and cultural and artistic life blossomed. The first (short-lived) constitution in Europe was instituted in Warsaw in 1791.

In the 19th century Warsaw declined in status to become a mere provincial city of the Russian empire. Following WWI, the city was reinstated as the capital of a newly independent Poland and once more began to thrive. Following the Warsaw Rising of 1944 the city centre was devastated, and the entire surviving population forcibly evacuated. Upon war's end, the people of Warsaw returned to the capital, and set about rebuilding its historic heart.

ORIENTATION

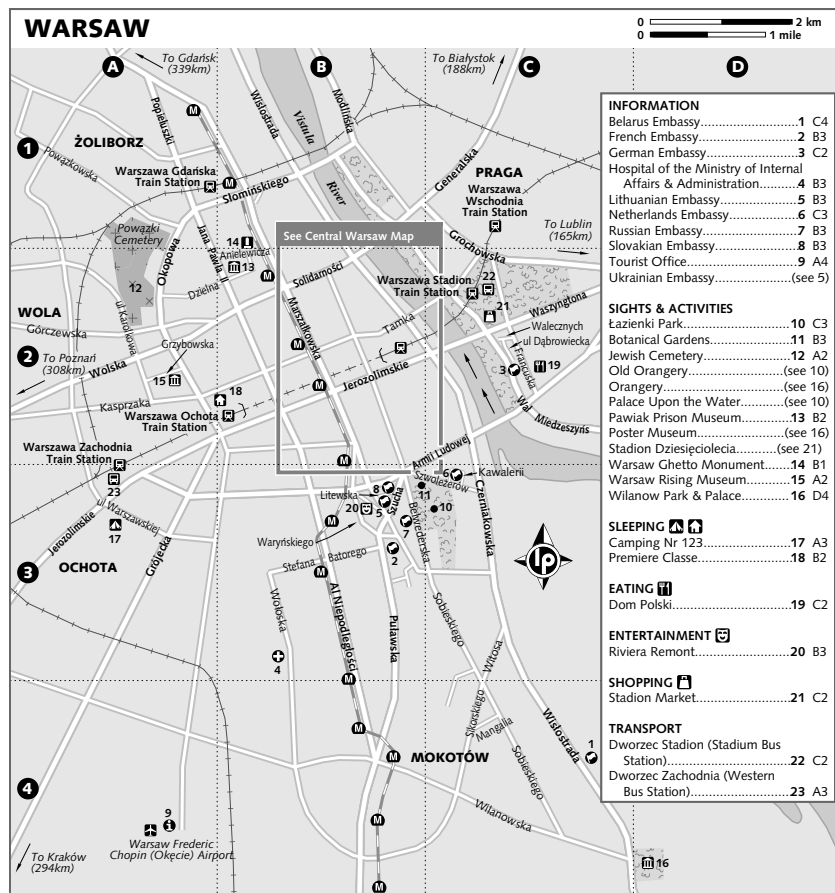
The Vistula River divides Warsaw into two very different areas. The western left-bank sector features the city centre, including the Old Town, the historic nucleus of Warsaw. Almost all tourist attractions, as well as most tourist facilities, are on this side of the river. The eastern part of Warsaw, the suburb of Praga, has no major sights and sees few tourists.

If arriving by train, Warszawa Centralna station is, as the name suggests, within walking distance of the city centre and major attractions. If you arrive by bus at Dworzec Centralny PKS station, hop on a train from the adjoining Warszawa Zachodnia station into the centre. From the Dworzec PKS Station, you can catch a train to Warszawa Centralna from the Stadion train station.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

American Bookstore (Map p550; ☎ 827 48 52; ul Nowy Świat 61) Offers a wide selection of Lonely Planet titles, English publications and maps.



EMPIK Megastore Galeria Centrum (Map p550; ☎ 551 44 86; ul Marszałkowska 116/122); ul Nowy Ewiat (Map p550; ul Nowy Świat 15/17) For a large array of foreign newspapers and magazines, with several other branches around town.

Emergency

Ambulance ☎ 999

Fire ☎ 998

Police ☎ 997, from mobiles ☎ 112

Internet Access

Expect to pay around 9zł to 10zł per hour for internet access in Warsaw. Several convenient but dingy internet cafés are also located within Warszawa Centralna train station.

Casablanca (Map p550; ☎ 828 14 47; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-2am

Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Enter around the corner off ul Oboźna.

Internet Café (Map p550; ☎ 826 60 62; ul Nowy Świat 18/20; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun)

Verso Internet (Map p550; ☎ 831 28 54; ul Freta 17; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

Enter from the back of the building, off ul Świętojeńska.

Medical Services

Apteka Grabowskiego (Map p550; ☎ 825 69 86; Warszawa Centralna train station) An all-night pharmacy.

CM Medical Center (Map p550; ☎ 458 70 00; 3rd fl, Marriott Hotel, ul Jerozolimskie 65/79) Offers specialist doctors, carries out laboratory tests and makes house calls.

Dental-Med (Map p550; ☎ 629 59 38; ul Hoża 27) A central dental practice.

Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs & Administration (Map p548; ☎ 602 15 78; ul Wołoska 137) A hospital preferred by government officials and diplomats.

Money

Foreign-exchange offices (*kantors*) and ATMs are easy to find around the city centre. *Kantors* open 24 hours can be found at the Warszawa Centralna train station, and either side of the immigration counters at the airport, but exchange rates at these places are about 10% lower than in the city centre. Avoid changing money in the Old Town, where the rates are even lower. The following places change major-brand travellers cheques, offer cash advances on Visa and MasterCard, and have ATMs that take just about every known credit card.

American Express (Map p550; Marriott Hotel, ul Jerozolimskie 65/79)

Bank Pekao (Map p550; Krakowskie Przedmieście 1)

Bank Pekao has a dozen branches in the city, including one next to the Church of the Holy Cross.

PBK Bank (Map p550; ground fl, Palace of Culture & Science Bldg)

PKO Bank (Map p550; plac Bankowy 2).

Post

Main post office (Map p550; ul Świętokrzyska 31/33;

☎ 24hr)

Tourist Information

Each tourist office provides free city maps and free booklets, such as the handy *Warsaw in Short* and the *Visitor*, sells maps of other Polish cities, and helps book hotel rooms. They also sell the Warsaw Tourist Card (one/three days 35/65zł), which gives free or discounted access to museums, and includes public transport and discounts at some theatres, sports centres and restaurants.

Free monthly tourist magazines worth seeking out include *Poland: What, Where,*

When, What's Up in Warsaw and *Welcome to Warsaw*. The comprehensive monthly *Warsaw Insider* (8zł) and *Warsaw in Your Pocket* (5zł) are also useful.

Official tourist organisation (☎ 9431; www.warsawtour.pl) Has several branches, including: Royal Way (Map p550; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 39; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Apr) Central office; Okęcie and Etiuda airport arrivals halls (Map p548; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr); main hall of Warszawa Centralna train station (Map p550; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr).

Warsaw Tourist Information Centre (Map p550; ☎ 635 18 81; www.wcit.waw.pl; pl Zamkowy 1/13; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun May-Sep; 9am-6pm Mon-Thu, 9am-8pm Fri, 10am-8pm Sat, 11am-8pm Sun Oct-Apr) Helpful privately-run tourist office in the Old Town.

Travel Agencies

Almatur (Map p550; ☎ 826 35 12; www.almatur.pl; ul Kopernika 23)

Orbis Travel (Map p550; ☎ 827 72 65; ul Bracka 16)

Has branches all over Warsaw, as well as at the airport.

Our Roots (Map p550; ☎ 0501 23 61 17; ul Twarda 6)

Warsaw's primary agency for anyone interested in tours about local Jewish heritage.

Trakt (Map p550; ☎ 827 80 68; www.trakt.com.pl; ul Kredytowa 6) Guided tours of Warsaw and beyond, in English and several other languages.

SIGHTS Old Town

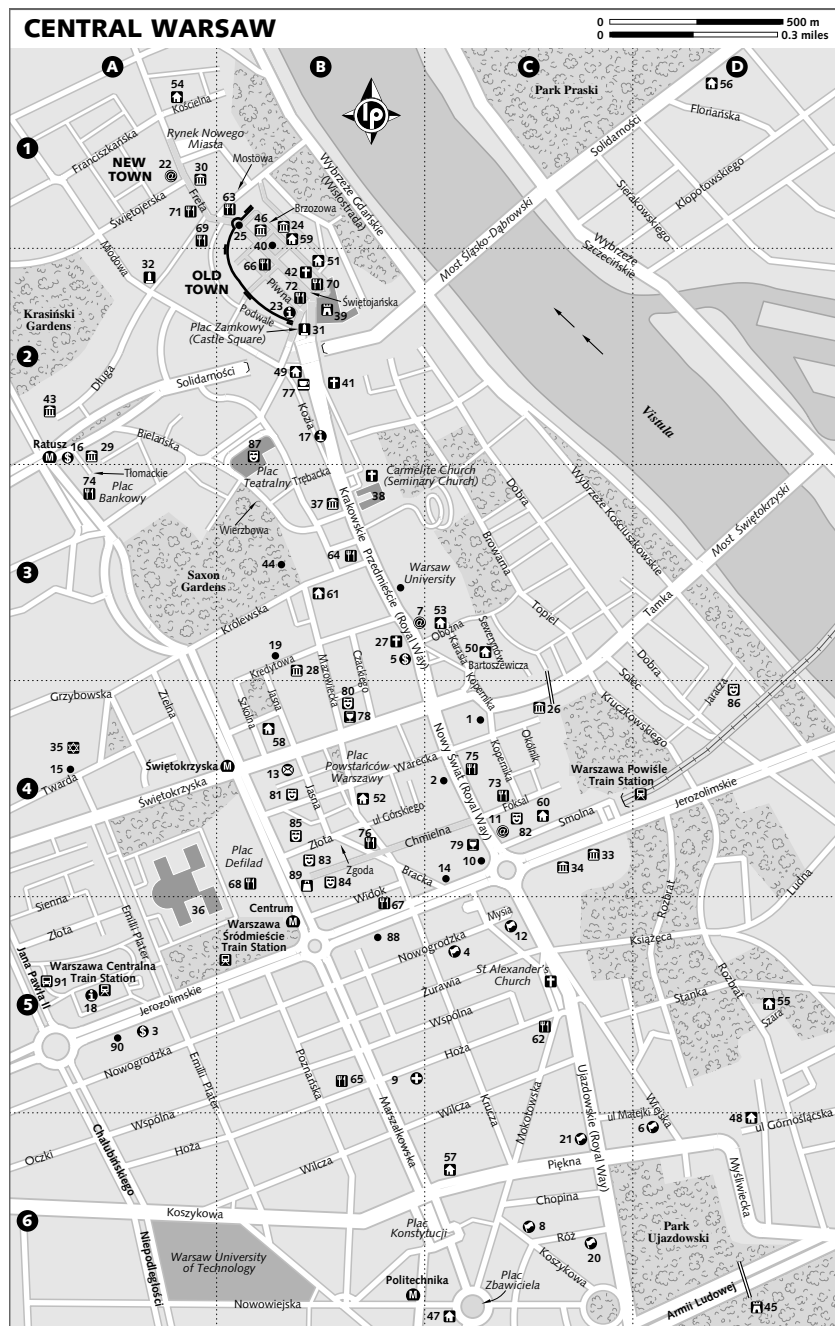
The main gateway to the Old Town is **Plac Zamkowy** (Castle Square). All the buildings here were superbly rebuilt from their foundations after WWII, earning the Old Town a place on Unesco's World Heritage List. Within the square stands the **Monument to Sigismund III Vasa**, who moved the capital from Kraków to Warsaw.

The dominant feature of the square is the massive 13th-century **Royal Castle** (Map p550;

WARSAW IN TWO DAYS

Wander through the **Old Town** (above), and tour the **Royal Castle** (above), having lunch afterwards at **Karczma Gessler** (p547). Walk along the **Royal Way** (p551), dropping into the **Chopin Museum** (p552) en route. Take the lift to the top of the **Palace of Culture & Science** (p552) for views of the city, before promenading through the nearby **Saxon Gardens** (p552).

The next day, visit the **Warsaw Rising Museum** (p553) in the morning, followed by lunch at one of the many restaurants along ul Nowy Świat. Spend the afternoon exploring **Łazienki Park** (p552), before sipping a cocktail at **Sense** (p556). Finish off the day with a visit to the nightclub district around ul Mazowiecka, or enjoy a performance at **Teatr Wielki** (p557).



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American Express.....3 A5	Apteka Grabowskiego.....(see 18)	National Museum.....34 C4	Nożyk Synagogue.....35 A4	London Steakhouse.....67 B5	MarcPol Supermarket.....68 B4
Australian Embassy.....4 C5	Bank Pekao.....5 B3	Palace of Culture & Science.....36 A5	Potocki Palace.....37 B3	Podwale Piwna Kompania.....69 A1	Puszkini.....70 B2
Canadian Embassy.....6 D6	Casablanca.....7 B3	Radziwiłł Palace.....38 B3	Royal Castle.....39 B2	Restauracja Pod Samsonem.....71 A1	Restauracja Przy Zamku.....72 B2
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Main Post Office.....13 B4	Orbis Travel.....14 C4	Ujazdów Castle.....45 D6		Demmers Teahouse.....77 B2	Paparazzi.....78 B4
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☑ 657 21 70; plac Zamkowy 4; adult/child 18/12z, free Sun; ☑ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Apr), also reconstructed after the war. The highlight of the sumptuously decorated rooms is the Senators' Ante-chamber, where landscapes of 18th-century Warsaw by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto's nephew) are on show.

From the castle, walk down ul Świętojańska to Warsaw's oldest church, the 15th-century Gothic **St John's Cathedral** (Map p550; ul Świętojańska 8; admission 1zr 1zł; ☑ 10am-1pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat). This street continues to the magnificent **Rynek Starego Miasta** (Old Town Market Square).

Off the square is the **Warsaw Historical Museum** (Map p550; ☑ 635 16 25; Rynek Starego Miasta 42; adult/child 6/3zł, free Sun; ☑ 11am-6pm Tue & Thu, 10am-3.30pm Wed & Fri, 10.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun). At noon it shows an English-language film depicting the wartime destruction of the city.

Nearby is the **Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature** (Map p550; ☑ 831 76 91; Rynek Starego Miasta 20; adult/child 5/4zł, free Sun; ☑ 10am-3pm Mon, Tue & Fri, 11am-6pm Wed & Thu, 11am-5pm Sun), featuring exhibits on Poland's most revered literary figure and other leading writers.

Walk west for one block to the **Barbican**, part of the medieval city walls. North along ul Freta is the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Museum** (Map p550; ☑ 831 80 92; ul Freta 16; adult/child 6/3zł; ☑ 10am-

4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), which features modest displays about the great lady, who, along with husband Pierre, discovered radium and polonium, and laid the foundations for radiography, nuclear physics and cancer therapy.

Heading southwest, you'll reach the **Monument to the Warsaw Rising** (Map p550; cnr ul Długa & ul Miodowa). This striking set of statuary honours the heroic Polish revolt against German rule in 1944.

Not far away, the **State Archaeological Museum** (Map p550; ☑ 831 15 37; ul Długa 52; adult/child 8/4zł, free Sun except 3rd Sun of month; ☑ 9am-4pm Mon-Thu, 11am-6pm Fri, 10am-6pm Sun) is located in a 17th-century former arsenal.

Royal Way (Szlak Królewski)

This 4km route links the Royal Castle with Łazienki Park (see p552) via ul Krakowskie Przedmieście, ul Nowy Świat and al Ujazdowski. Bus 180 stops at most places along this route and continues to Wilanów Park (Map p548). Bus No 100 also runs on Saturday and Sunday from May to September, between plac Zamkowy and Łazienki Park.

Just south of the Royal Castle is the ornate 15th-century **St Anne's Church** (Map p550; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 68; ☑ daylight hr), with impressive views from its **tower** (adult/child 3/2zł;

☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). About 300m further south is **Radziwiłł Palace** (Map p550; not open to the public), the residence of the Polish president. Opposite, **Potocki Palace** (Map p550; ☎ 421 01 25; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 15/17; admission free; ☞ 10am-8pm) houses a contemporary art gallery.

To the west are the **Saxon Gardens** (admission free; ☞ 24hr). At the entrance is the small but poignant **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** (Map p550), though it's not open to the public. The ceremonial changing of the guard takes place here at noon on Sunday.

South of the tomb is the **Ethnographic Museum** (Map p550; ☎ 827 76 41; ul Kredytowa 1; adult/child 8/4zł, Wed free; ☞ 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 11am-6pm Wed, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). It displays Polish folk costumes, and regional arts and crafts.

Back along the Royal Way is the 17th-century **Church of the Holy Cross** (Map p550; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 3; ☞ erratic). Chopin's heart is preserved in the second pillar on the left-hand side of the main nave. It was brought from Paris, where he died of tuberculosis aged only 39. If you want to know more, head along ul Tamka to the small **Chopin Museum** (Map p550; ☎ 827 54 71; ul Okólnik 1; adult/child 10/5zł, free Wed; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 12-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun May-Sep; 10am-2pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Thu Oct-Apr). On show are letters, handwritten musical scores and the great man's last piano.

East of the junction of ul Nowy Świat and al Jerolimskie is the **National Museum** (Map p550; ☎ 621 10 31; al Jerolimskie 3; adult/child 12/7zł, incl temporary exhibitions 19/12zł, museum free Sat; ☞ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-6pm Thu), with an impressive collection of Greek and Egyptian antiquities, Coptic frescoes, medieval woodcarvings and Polish paintings; look out for the surrealistic fantasies of Jacek Malczewski. Next door is the **Museum of the Polish Army** (Map p550; ☎ 629 52 71; al Jerolimskie 3; museum adult/child 6/3zł, grounds free; ☞ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr), with army vehicles outside and miscellaneous militaria within.

Go south along al Ujazdowskie and cross busy ul Armii Ludowej. Over the road is the cutting-edge **Centre for Contemporary Art** (Map p550; ☎ 628 12 72; al Ujazdowskie 6; adult/child 12/6zł, free Thu; ☞ 11am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 11am-9pm Fri). It's housed in the reconstructed **Ujazdów Castle** (Map p550), originally built during the 1620s. Further down (towards the south) are the small **Botanical Gardens** (Map p548; ☎ 553 05 23; adult/child 4.50/2.50zł; ☞ 10am-8pm).

Łazienki Park

This large, shady and popular **park** (admission free; ☞ daylight hr) is best known for the 18th-century **Palace upon the Water** (Map p548; ☎ 621 62 41; adult/child 12/9zł; ☞ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun). It was the summer residence of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the last king of Poland, who was deposed by the Russian army and confederation of Polish magnates in 1792. The park was once a royal hunting ground attached to Ujazdów Castle.

The **Old Orangery** (Map p548; ☎ 621 62 41; by reservation only adult/child 6/4zł) contains a sculpture gallery and an 18th-century theatre. Between noon and 4pm every Sunday from May to September, piano recitals are held among the rose gardens.

Wilanów Park

Another magnificent **park** (Map p548; ul Wisłostrada; admission free; ☞ 9.30am-dusk) lies 6km southeast of Łazienki Park. Its centrepiece is the splendid **Wilanów Palace** (Map p548; ☎ 842 07 95; adult/child 20/10zł, free Thu; ☞ 9am-4pm Mon & Thu-Sat, 9am-6pm Wed, 9am-7pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-4pm Wed-Mon Oct-May), the summer residence of King Jan III Sobieski, who ended the Turkish threat to Central Europe by defeating the Turks at Vienna in 1683. In summer, be prepared to wait. The last tickets are sold two hours before closing time.

In the well-kept park behind the palace is the **Orangery** (Map p548; admission fee varies with exhibitions; ☞ 9.30am-3.30pm Wed-Mon), which houses an art gallery. The **Poster Museum** (Map p548; ☎ 842 26 06; adult/child 8/5zł, free Wed; ☞ noon-3.30pm Mon, 10am-3.30pm Tue-Sun) in the former royal stables is a repository of Poland's world-renowned poster art.

To reach Wilanów, take bus 180 from anywhere along the Royal Way.

Palace of Culture & Science

Massive, brooding and inescapable, this **towering structure** (Map p550; ☎ 656 76 00; plac Defilad; ☞ 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri-Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-6pm Sep-May) has become an emblem of the city, as it's slowly rehabilitated from its Stalinist past. It has a particularly sinister aspect at dusk, though it's also a handy landmark. The Palace was built in the early 1950s as a 'gift of friendship' from the Soviet Union, and is still one of Europe's tallest buildings (234m).

The **observation terrace** (adult/child 20/15zł; ☞ 9am-6pm) on the 30th floor provides a

panoramic view, though it can be very cold and windy up there.

Warsaw Rising Museum

This impressive **museum** (Map p548; ☎ 626 95 06; ul Grzybowska 79; adult/child 4/2zł, free Sun; ☞ 10am-6pm Wed, Fri-Sun, 10am-8pm Thu) commemorates Warsaw's insurrection against its Nazi occupiers in 1944, which was destined to end in defeat and the destruction of much of the city and its population. The Rising was viciously suppressed by the Germans (while the Red Army stood by on the opposite bank of the Vistula), with more than 200,000 Poles dying by its conclusion.

The moving story of the Rising is retold here via photographs, exhibits and audiovisual displays. The centrepiece is a massive memorial wall emitting a heartbeat and selected audio recordings. At the end of the journey there's a replica 1944 café, underlining the fact that life went on, even in the worst days of the struggle. Captions are in Polish and English. Catch trams 8, 12, 22 or 24 from al Jerolimskie, heading west.

Jewish Heritage

The suburbs northwest of the Palace of Culture & Science were once predominantly inhabited by Jewish Poles. During WWII the Nazis established a Jewish ghetto in the area, but razed it to the ground after crushing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943.

The **Warsaw Ghetto Monument** (Map p548; cr ul Anielewiczka & ul Zamenhofa) remembers the Nazis' victims via pictorial plaques. The nearby **Pawiak Prison Museum** (Map p548; ☎ 831 13 17; ul Dzielna 24/26; admission free; ☞ 9am-5pm Wed, 9am-4pm Thu & Sat, 10am-5pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sun) was a Gestapo prison during the Nazi occupation. Moving exhibits include letters and other personal items.

The most poignant remainder is Europe's largest **Jewish Cemetery** (Map p548; ul Okopowa 49/51; admission 4zł; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1pm Fri, 9am-4pm Sun). Founded in 1806, it has more than 100,000 gravestones. Visitors must wear a head-covering to enter, and it's accessible from the Old Town on bus 180.

The **Jewish Historical Institute** (Map p550; ☎ 827 92 21; ul Tomackie 3/5; adult/child 10/5zł; ☞ 9am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 11am-6pm Thu) has permanent exhibits about the Warsaw Ghetto, as well as local Jewish artworks. Further south is the neo-Romanesque **Nożyk Synagogue** (Map p550; ☎ 620 43 24; ul Twarda 6; admission 3.50zł; ☞ 10am-8pm

Sun-Thu, 10am-4pm Fri), Warsaw's only synagogue to survive WWII.

A walking tour of Jewish sites is detailed (in English and with a map) in the free pamphlet, *Jewish Warsaw*, available from tourist offices.

SLEEPING

Not surprisingly, Warsaw is the most expensive Polish city for accommodation, though there's a number of reasonably priced hostels around town. The tourist offices can help find a room.

Budget

Smolna Youth Hostel No 2 (Map p550; ☎/fax 827 89 52; ul Smolna 30; dm 36zł, s/d 65/120zł) Very central and very popular, though there's a midnight curfew. However, the light tidy dorms have a reasonable amount of space, the tiled bathrooms are clean, and there's a lounge and kitchen area. Note that guests are separated into dorms according to gender, and reception is up four flights of stairs.

Okki Doki (Map p550; ☎ 826 51 12; www.okkiodoki.pl; plac Dąbrowskiego 3; dm 45zł, s/d 110/145zł) There are no drab dorms here. Each is decorated thematically using the brightest paints available; try the Communist (red with a big image of Lenin). Lower bunks have good headroom, and the shared bathrooms are clean and bright. The hostel also has a bar, free washing machine and kitchen, and hires out bikes.

Hostel Helvetia (Map p550; ☎ 826 71 08; www.hostel-helvetia.pl; ul Kopernika 36/40; dm 45zł, s/d 110/150zł; ☎) Bright hostel with an attractive combined lounge and kitchen. Dorms have lockers available, and some rooms feature bicycle-related images in deference to the cycling-enthusiast owner. Unsurprisingly, the hostel hires out bikes. Enter from the street behind, ul Sewerynow.

Nathan's Villa Hostel (Map p550; ☎ 622 29 46; www.nathansvilla.com; ul Piękna 24/26; dm 45zł, s/d 130/160zł; ☎) Nathan's is the standard by which all Warsaw hostels should be judged. A sunlit courtyard leads to well-organised dorms, while private rooms are comfortable and decorated with monochrome photographs of Polish attractions. The kitchen is well set up, and there's a free laundry, a book exchange, and games to while away rainy days.

Hostel Kanonia (Map p550; ☎ 635 06 76; www.kanonia.pl; ul Jezuitska 2; dm 55zł, s/d 140/180zł; ☎) Housed in a historic building in the heart of the Old

Town, accommodation is mostly in dorms, with only one dedicated double room. Some rooms have picturesque views onto the cobblestone streets, and there's a pleasant dining room with basic kitchen facilities.

Dom Gościnnie (Map p550; ☎ 628 42 61; www.sezam.pw.edu.pl; ul Górnośląska 14; s/d 90/140zł, ste from 180zł; P ☎) If you want to enjoy the pleasures of the city centre without sleeping there, this accommodation in the peaceful embassy area is a good choice. Rooms have simple furnishings and plain carpets, but there's plenty of cupboard space and a kitchen.

Camping Nr 123 (Map p548; ☎ 823 37 48; ul Warszawskiej 1920r 15/17; tents 12zł, plus per person 12zł; P ☎) Set in extensive grounds near the Dworzec Zachodnia bus station, cabins (40zł per person) are also available and there's a tennis court nearby.

Midrange

Hotel Praski (Map p550; ☎ 818 49 89; www.praski.pl; al Solidarności 61; s 147-210, d 160-230zł; P) The rooms of this inexpensive hotel vary in size, but have attractive high ceilings and comfortable beds. Bathrooms are clean, red carpets add old-fashioned charm, and some rooms have views of Praski Park. It's an easy walk across the river to the Old Town.

Premiere Classe (Map p548; ☎ 624 08 00; ul Towarowa 2; d from 179zł; P ☎) If you're not bothered too much by room size, this modern hotel makes a good base. Rooms are small but bright, and neatly set up with modern furnishings. Friendly staff are a plus. Guests can use the restaurant, bar and fitness centre in the neighbouring sister hotels.

Hotel Powiśle (Map p550; ☎ 621 03 41; www.hotel.powisle.oit.pl; ul Szara 10a; s/d 160/180zł; P) If Agatha Christie had set one of her mysteries in Poland, she would have chosen somewhere like this accommodation, pleasantly reminiscent of an old-fashioned country hotel. Although it's slightly scuffed, the generous use of wood panelling and the out-of-date carpets make for a comforting old-world feel. There's a bar and restaurant on site.

City Apartments (Map p550; ☎ 825 39 12; www.hotel.inwarsaw.pl; ul Nowowiejska 1/3; apt from €60-120) A range of apartments are on offer here, from the Old Town to the city centre. They provide privacy and space, and allow for some cost-cutting via the fully equipped kitchen facilities. Although, as always happens with these places, you won't find every utensil you need.

Sofitel Victoria (Map p550; ☎ 657 80 11; www.sofitel.com; ul Królewska 11; d/ste from €70/200; P ☎) The very model of a modern business hotel, with a spacious marble foyer, and a lounge area housing a small library of books on Polish culture and history. The rooms are conservatively decorated, with gleaming bathrooms. The cheaper doubles are great value.

Old Town Apartments (Map p550; ☎ 887 98 01; www.warsawshotel.com; Rynek Starego Miasta 12/14; apt from €80) These modern renovated apartments lend you the pleasant illusion of being a local. Décor is bright and contemporary, most apartments have washing machines, and all have fully operational kitchens. Some can house up to six people.

Hotel Harenda (Map p550; ☎ 826 00 71; www.hotel.harenda.com.pl; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; s/d/ste from 250/270/460zł; P ☎) Boasts a great location just off the Royal Way, although the green-and-brown colour scheme may deter some; the Harenda's rooms are neat and clean, with solid timber furniture. There's an old-fashioned feel to the hotel's interiors, and an expensive antique shop just off the foyer if retail therapy is required.

Top End

Dom Literatry (Map p550; ☎ 828 39 20; www.fundacjadl.com; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 87/89; s/d 220/370zł) Within a grand historic building, this accommodation features rambling halls and staircases bedecked with pot plants and sizeable paintings. There are a maze of comfortable rooms, many of which have excellent views of the Old Town and the Vistula. Don't, however, expect too much English from the friendly staff.

Hotel Gromada Centrum (Map p550; ☎ 582 99 00; www.gromada.pl; plac Powstańców Warszawy 2; s/d from 320/350zł; P ☎) Centrally located, the Gromada is a great launching pad for exploring the central city. Upstairs from the funky green foyer, however, the featureless brown-carpeted corridors stretch out into the distance like an optical illusion. The rooms are plain, but clean and spacious.

Hotel Le Regina (Map p550; ☎ 531 60 00; www.leregina.com; ul Kościelna 12; d/ste from €250/600; P ☎) It's not cheap, but the Le Regina is a jaw-dropping combination of traditional architecture and contemporary design. The enormous rooms feature king-size beds with headboards of dark, polished

wood. Deluxe rooms also have timber floors, and terraces with courtyard views. All rooms sport spectacular bathrooms with marble benchtops.

EATING

The most recent revolution to conquer the Polish capital has been a gastronomic one. A good selection of restaurants can be found in the Old Town and around ul Nowy Świat.

Polish

Bar Pod Barbakanem (Map p550; ☎ 831 47 37; ul Mostowa 27/29; mains 8-12zł; ☎ 8am-5pm) Opposite the Barbican, this popular former milk bar survived the fall of the Iron Curtain and continues to serve cheap, unpretentious food in an interior marked by tiles: on the floor, walls and tabletops. Fill up while peering out through the lace curtains at the passing tourist hordes.

Zgoda Grill Bar (Map p550; ☎ 827 99 34; ul Zgoda 4; mains 18-35zł; ☎ 10am-11pm) A bright, informal place serving up cheap and tasty Polish standards. If you're not in the mood for Polish, there are Turkish, Italian and Mexican places just along the street.

Dom Polski (Map p548; ☎ 616 24 32; ul Francuska 11; mains 26-64zł; ☎ noon-midnight) This classy restaurant, in its yellow stucco building set back from the street, is perennially popular with tour groups and out-of-towners looking for tasty food and reasonable prices. It's worth the walk over the bridge.

Restauracja Przy Zamku (Map p550; ☎ 831 02 59; plac Zamkowy 15; mains from 32-80zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) An attractive, old-world kind of place with hunting trophies on the walls and attentive, white-aproned waiters. The top-notch Polish menu includes fish and game and a bewildering array of entrées – try the excellent hare pâté served with pickles and cranberry sauce.

Karczma Gessler (Map p550; ☎ 831 44 27; Rynek Starego Miasta 21/21a; mains 50-120zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) The décor of this romantic cellar is spectacular, with exposed timber beams and lots of rustic items such as cart wheels about the place. The food is pricey but impressive. Some dishes (such as the whole goose) can be shared by three.

Café Design (Map p550; ☎ 828 57 03; ul Krakowie Przedmieście 11; mains 69-79zł; ☎ 10am-11.30pm) Classy eatery serving tradition-inspired Polish cuisine in an ultramodern venue on the Royal Way, with circular platforms supporting

tables below sleek wooden panelling. English-language newspapers and magazines are at hand, and mains include dishes involving rabbit, duck, lamb and deer.

International

Dziki Ryż (Map p550; ☎ 621 50 15; ul Hoża 54; mains 18-25zł; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) This hidden gem serves a range of Asian dishes, covering Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai cuisine. Though small (just six tables), it has loads of personality, with dark timber surfaces, bamboo place mats and Japanese newspapers plastering the walls. Red and green curries lead the way on the menu, including tofu versions, though they've been toned down for Polish palates.

Restauracja Pod Samsonem (Map p550; ☎ 831 17 88; ul Freta 3/5; mains 18-30zł; ☎ 10am-11pm) Situated in the New Town, and frequented by locals looking for inexpensive and tasty meals with a Jewish flavour. Interesting appetisers include Russian pancakes with salmon, and 'Jewish caviar'. Spot the bas relief of Samson and the lion above the next door along from the entrance.

Tam Tam (Map p550; ☎ 828 26 22; ul Foksal 18; mains from 20zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Housed in a subterranean 'African-style' place with a street-level bar. The varied menu includes pasta, goulash and kebabs, and a big list of teas and coffees. There's occasional live music in the evenings.

Podwale Piwna Kompania (Map p550; ☎ 635 63 14; ul Podwale 25; mains 21-55zł; ☎ 11am-1am) The restaurant's name (The Company of Beer) gives you an idea of the lively atmosphere in this eatery just outside the Old Town's moat. The menu features lots of grilled items and dishes such as roast duck, Wiener schnitzel, pork ribs and roasted pork knuckle. There's a courtyard for outdoor dining.

London Steakhouse (Map p550; ☎ 827 00 20; al Jerolimskie 42; mains 32-66zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) You'll find it hard to convince yourself you're in London, but it's fun to spot the UK memorabilia among the cluttered décor, while being served by waitresses wearing Union Jack neckties and miniskirts. Steaks dominate the menu, which also includes fish and chips. There's roast beef and Yorkshire pudding on weekends.

Adler Bar & Restaurant (Map p550; ☎ 628 73 84; ul Mokotowska 69; mains 35-50zł; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 1pm-midnight Sat & Sun) A tiny oasis in the concrete

jungle, housed within a curious circular building. Service is impeccable and a good variety of Polish and Bavarian *nouvelle cuisine* is on offer. Try the ice-meringue with strawberry mousse.

Puszkin (Map p550; ☎ 635 35 35; ul Świętojańska 2; mains 48-87zł; ☎ noon-midnight) An upmarket Russian restaurant where waiters in Cossack outfits serve up traditional dishes such as caviar, sturgeon and wild boar in opulent surrounds.

Vegetarian

Vega (Map p550; ☎ 828 64 28; ul Nowy Świat 52; soups 5zł, mains 5-20zł; ☎ 11am-8pm) Cheap and delicious vegetarian food from a place tucked away in a courtyard. Try the *naleśniki* (crepes wrapped around a variety of fillings). There's also a good number of vegan items on the menu.

Tukan Salad Bar (Map p550; ☎ 531 25 20; plac Bankowy 2; mains from 5zł; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) This place has several outlets around the capital offering possibly the widest choice of salads in Poland. As the name suggests, look for the toucan on the door. This branch is hidden from the street in the arcade running parallel.

Self-Catering

The most convenient places for groceries are the **MarcPol Supermarket** (Map p550; plac Defilad) in front of the Palace of Culture & Science building, and the **Albert Supermarket** (Map p550; Galeria Centrum, ul Marszałkowska) close by.

DRINKING

Sense (Map p550; ☎ 826 65 70; ul Nowy Świat 19; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Thu, noon-3am Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) A very modern venue with a mellow atmosphere. Comfortable banquettes sit beneath strings of cube-shaped lights, and there's an extensive wine and cocktail list, with some drinks measured in a 'Palace of Culture' (a tall scientific beaker). Try the house speciality, ginger rose vodka. There's also a food menu if you're hungry.

Paparazzi (Map p550; ☎ 828 42 19; ul Mazowiecka 12; ☎ noon-1am) This is one of Warsaw's flashiest venues, where you can sip a bewildering array of cocktails under blown-up photos of Hollywood stars. It's big and roomy, with comfortable seating around the central bar, and does a good line in bar food, including some tasty salads.

Pub Harenda (Map p550; ☎ 826 29 00; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; ☎ 9am-3am) Located at the back

of Hotel Harenda, this pub is often crowded. However, it's a friendly, atmospheric place – the front section feels like a wood cabin out in the forest. There's dance music on weekends.

Demmers Teahouse (Map p550; ☎ 828 21 06; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 61/63; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) On the Royal Way, Demmers has a staggering array of teas to try.

ENTERTAINMENT Nightclubs

There's no shortage of good clubs in Warsaw. Explore ul Mazowiecka, ul Sienkiewicza and the area around ul Nowy Świat for more nightclub action.

Enklawa (Map p550; ☎ 827 31 51; ul Mazowiecka 12; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed-Sat) Funky red-and-orange space with comfy plush seating, mirrored ceilings, two bars and plenty of room to dance. Check out the long drinks list, hit the dance floor or observe the action from a stool on the upper balcony. Wednesday night is 'old school' night, with music from the '70s to '90s.

Foksal 19 (Map p550; ☎ 829 29 55; ul Foksal 19; ☎ bar 5pm-1am Mon-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat, nightclub 11pm-5am Fri & Sat) Ultramodern playpen for Warsaw's bright young things. Downstairs is a cool drinking zone with a backlit bar, subdued golden lighting and comfy couches. Upstairs is the nightclub – a blue-lit contemporary space with DJs playing a variety of sounds.

Hybrydy (Map p550; ☎ 822 30 03; ul Złota 7/9; ☎ 9pm-3am) This joint has been going for decades, and features all sorts of live music most nights.

Riviera Remont (Map p548; ☎ 660 91 11; ul Waryńskiego 12; ☎ Jun-Sep) A popular, cheap student club offering regular live music.

In Łazienki Park (p552), piano recitals are held every Sunday from May to September, and chamber concerts are staged in summer at its Old Orangery.

Free jazz concerts also take place in the Old Town Market Square on Saturday at 7pm in July and August.

Theatre

Advance tickets for most theatrical events can be bought at **ZASP Kasy Teatralne** (Map p550; ☎ 621 93 83; al Jerolimskie 25; ☎ 11am-6.30pm Mon-Fri) or the **EMPIK Megastore** (Map p550; ☎ 551 44 43; ul Marszałkowska 104/122).

Teatr Ateneum (Map p550; ☎ 625 73 30; ul Jaracza 2) This place leans towards contemporary Polish-language productions.

Teatr Wielki (Map p550; ☎ 692 02 00; www.teatrwielki.pl; plac Teatralny 1) Wielki hosts opera and ballet in its grand premises.

Filharmonia Narodowa (Map p550; ☎ 551 71 11; ul Jasna 5) Classical-music concerts are held here.

Cinemas

To avoid watching Polish TV in your hotel room, catch a film at the central **Kino Atlantic** (Map p550; ☎ 827 08 94; ul Chmielna 33) or **Kino Relax** (Map p550; ☎ 828 38 88; ul Złota 8). Tickets cost around 18zł.

SHOPPING

Stadion Market (Map p548; al Jerolimskie; ☎ dawn-around noon) This huge bazaar is situated within a former stadium in the suburb of Praga. It's busiest on weekends – beware of pickpockets.

Galeria Centrum (Map p550; ul Marszałkowska 104/122) A sprawling modern shopping mall in the city centre.

There are also plentiful antique, arts and crafts shops around Rynek Starego Miasta in the Old Town, so brandish your credit card and explore.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The **Warsaw Frédéric Chopin airport** (Map p548; www.lotnisko-chopina.pl) is more commonly called Okęcie airport. Domestic arrivals and departures occupy a separate part of the same complex. The separate Etiuda terminal mostly handles discount airlines.

The useful tourist office is on the arrivals level of the international section. There's also a tourist office at the Etiuda terminal.

At the arrivals level there are ATMs and several *kantors*. There are also car-rental companies, a left-luggage room and a newsagent where you can buy public transport tickets.

Domestic and international flights can be booked at the **LOT office** (Map p550; ☎ 9572; al Jerolimskie 65/79), or at any travel agency. Other airline offices are listed in the *Welcome to Warsaw* magazine, and on p616.

Bus

Warsaw has two major bus terminals for PKS buses. **Dworzec Zachodnia** (Western Bus Station; Map p548; al Jerolimskie 144) handles domestic buses heading south, north and west of the capital, including six daily to Częstochowa (30zł),

seven to Gdańsk (50zł), four to Kraków (39zł), seven to Olsztyn (32zł), eight to Toruń (35zł), three to Wrocław (46zł), and three to Zakopane (54zł). This complex is southwest of the city centre and adjoins the Warszawa Zachodnia train station. Take the commuter train that leaves from Warszawa Śródmieście station.

Dworzec Stadion (Stadium Bus Station; Map p548; ul Sokola 1) adjoins the Warszawa Stadion train station. It is also easily accessible by commuter train from Warszawa Śródmieście. Dworzec Stadion handles some domestic buses to the east and southeast, including 20 daily to Lublin (25zł), five to Białystok (23zł to 29zł), 12 to Zamość (37zł), and seven to Kazimierz Dolny (22zł).

Polski Express (Map p550; ☎ 844 55 55; www.polskiexpress.pl) operates coaches from the airport, but passengers can get on or off and buy tickets at the kiosk along al Jana Pawła II, next to the Warszawa Centralna train station. Polski Express buses travel to Białystok (34zł, one daily), Częstochowa (50zł, two daily), Gdynia, via Gdańsk (72zł, two daily), Kraków (67zł, one daily), Lublin (34zł, seven daily), Szczecin (80zł, two daily) and Toruń (48zł, 12 daily).

International buses depart from and arrive at Dworzec Zachodnia or, occasionally, outside Warszawa Centralna. Tickets are available from the bus offices at Dworzec Zachodnia, from agencies at Warszawa Centralna or from any of the major travel agencies in the city, including Almatour.

Train

Warsaw has several train stations, but the one that most travellers will use is **Warszawa Centralna** (Map p550; Warsaw Central; al Jerolimskie 54). Refer to the relevant destination sections in this chapter for information about services to/from Warsaw.

Warszawa Centralna is not always where trains start or finish, so make sure you get on or off promptly; and guard your belongings against pickpocketing and theft at all times.

The station's main hall houses ticket counters, ATMs and snack bars, as well as a post office, newsagents and a tourist office. Along the underground mezzanine level leading to the platforms are a dozen *kantors* (one of which is open 24 hours), a **left-luggage office** (☎ 7am-9pm), lockers, eateries, outlets for local public transport tickets, internet cafés and bookshops.

Tickets for domestic and international trains are available from counters at the station (but allow at least an hour for possible queuing) or, in advance, from any major Orbis Travel office (p549). Tickets for immediate departures on domestic and international trains are also available from numerous, well-signed booths in the underpasses leading to Warszawa Centralna.

Some domestic trains also stop at Warszawa Śródmieście station, 300m east of Warszawa Centralna, and Warszawa Zachodnia, next to Dworzec Zachodnia bus station.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The cheapest way of getting from the airport to the city centre is bus 175, which leaves every 10 to 15 minutes for the Old Town, via ul Nowy Świat and the Warszawa Centralna train station. If you arrive in the wee hours, night bus 611 links the airport with Warszawa Centralna every 30 minutes.

The taxi fare between the airport and the city centre is from 30zł to 35zł. Official taxis displaying a name, telephone number and fares can be arranged at the official taxi counters at the international arrivals level. Unauthorised 'Mafia' cabs still operate and charge astronomical rates.

Car

Warsaw traffic isn't fun, but there are good reasons to hire a car for jaunts into the countryside. Major car-rental companies are listed in the local English-language publications, and include **Avis** (☎ 650 48 72; www.avis.pl), **Hertz** (☎ 650 28 96; www.hertz.com.pl) and **Sixt** (☎ 650 20 31; www.sixt.pl). For more details about car hire see p617.

Public Transport

Warsaw's public transport operates from 5am to 11pm daily. The fare (2.40zł) is valid for one ride only on a bus, tram, trolleybus or metro train travelling anywhere in the city.

Warsaw is the only place in Poland where ISIC cards get a public-transport discount (of 48%).

Tickets are available for 60/90 minutes (3.60/4.50zł), one day (7.20zł), three days (12zł), one week (24zł) and one month (66zł). Buy tickets from kiosks (including those marked 'RUCH') before boarding, and validate them on board.

A metro line operates from the Ursynów suburb (Kabaty station) at the southern city limits to Plac Wilsona, via the city centre (Centrum), but is of limited use to visitors. Local commuter trains head out to the suburbs from the Warszawa Śródmieście station.

Taxi

Taxis are a quick and easy way to get around – as long as you use official taxis and drivers use their meters. Beware of unauthorised 'Mafia' taxis parked in front of top-end hotels, at the airport, outside Warszawa Centralna train station and in the vicinity of most tourist sights.

MAZOVIA & PODLASIE

After being ruled as an independent state by a succession of dukes, Mazovia shot to prominence during the 16th century, when Warsaw became the national capital. The region has long been a base for industry, the traditional mainstay of Poland's second largest city, Łódź. To the east of Mazovia, toward the Belarus border, lies Podlasie, which means 'land close to the forest'. The main attraction of this region is the impressive Białowieża National Park.

ŁÓDŹ

☎ 042 / pop 785,000

Łódź (pronounced woodge) became a major industrial centre in the 19th century, attracting immigrants from across Europe. Little damaged in WWII, it's a lively, likeable city with attractive Art Nouveau architecture, and the added bonus of being well off the usual tourist track. It's an easy day trip from Warsaw.

Many of the attractions – and most of the banks, *kantors* and ATMs – are along ul Piotrkowska, the main thoroughfare. You can't miss the bronze statues of local celebrities along this street, including pianist Arthur Rubenstein, seated at a baby grand. The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 638 59 55; www.cityoflodz.pl; ul Piotrkowska 87; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) hands out free tourist brochures, including the useful *1-2-3 Days in Łódź*.

The **Historical Museum of Łódź** (☎ 654 03 23; ul Ogrodowa 15; adult/child 7/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue & Thu, 2-6pm Wed, 10am-2pm Fri-Sun) is 200m northwest

of plac Wolności, at the northern end of the main drag. Also worthwhile is the **Museum of Ethnography & Archaeology** (☎ 632 84 40; plac Wolności 14; adult/child 6/4zł, free Tue; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, 11am-6pm Thu, 9am-4pm Wed, Fri-Sun).

Herbst Palace (☎ 674 96 98; ul Przędzalniana 72; adult/child 7/4.50zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, noon-5pm Wed & Fri, noon-7pm Thu, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) has been converted into an appealing museum. It's accessible by bus 55 heading east from the cathedral at the southern end of ul Piotrkowska. The **Jewish Cemetery** (www.jewishlodzecemetery.org; ul Bracka 40; admission 4zł, free first Sun of month; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9am-3pm Fri Apr-Oct, 9am-3pm Sun-Fri Nov-Mar) is one of the largest in Europe. It's 3km north-east of the city centre and accessible by tram 1 or 6 from near plac Wolności. Enter from ul Zmienna.

The tourist office can provide information about all kinds of accommodation. The **youth hostel** (☎ 630 66 80; www.youthhostel.lodz.wp.pl; ul Legionów 27; dm from 30zł, s/d from 45/70zł; ☎) is excellent, so book ahead. It features nicely decorated rooms in a spacious old building, with free laundry and a kitchen. It's 250m west of plac Wolności.

The **Hotel Savoy** (☎ 632 93 60; www.hotelsavoy.pl; ul Traugutta 6; s/d from 87/200zł) is well positioned just off central ul Piotrkowska. Don't be put off by the scuffed corridors and stencilled door numbers: they conceal spacious, light-filled rooms with gleaming bathrooms.

Around the corner, the **Grand Hotel** (☎ 633 99 20; www.orbis.pl; ul Piotrkowska 72; s/d from 280/357zł) offers a touch of faded, if overpriced, *fin-de-siècle* grandeur.

Opposite the Grand, **Puenta** (☎ 630 80 87; ul Piotrkowska 65; mains 14-32zł; ☎ noon-10pm) is a brightly decorated restaurant, full of locals and visitors having a good time. The menu includes pasta, salads and a good selection of chicken and fish dishes. **Esplanada** (☎ 630 59 89; ul Piotrkowska 100; mains 35-60zł) is an excellent *belle époque*-style eatery serving quality Polish cuisine, sometimes accompanied by live folk music.

LOT (☎ 630 15 40; ul Piotrkowska 122) flies the 20-minute hop to Warsaw nine times a week. From the Łódź Kaliska train station, 1.2km southwest of central Łódź, trains go regularly to Wrocław (110 zł), Poznań (79 zł), Toruń (31 zł) and Gdańsk (46 zł). For Warsaw (29zł) and Częstochowa (23 zł), use the Łódź Fabryczna station, 400m east of the city centre. Buses go in all directions from the bus terminal, next to the Fabryczna train station.

BIAŁOWIEŻA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 085

Once a centre for hunting and timber-felling, Białowieża (Byah-wo-vyeh-zhah) is now Poland's oldest national park. Its significance is underlined by Unesco's unusual recognition of the reserve as both a Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site. The forest contains 120 species of birds, along with elk, wild boars and wolves. Its major drawcard is the magnificent European bison, which was once extinct outside zoos, but has been successfully reintroduced to its ancient home.

The logical visitor base is the charming village of Białowieża. The main road to Białowieża from Hajnówka leads to the southern end of Palace Park (the former location of the Russian tsar's hunting lodge), then skirts around the park to become the village's main street, ul Waskiewiczza. At the western end of this street is the **post office** (☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat).

Money can be changed at the Hotel Żubrówka, but not travellers cheques or anything as exotic as Australian dollars. The hotel also has an ATM by the entrance, and public internet access for the scary rate of 10zł per half-hour.

You'll find the **PTTK (Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze) office** (Polish Tourist Country Lovers Society; ☎ 681 22 95; www.pttk.bialowieza.pl; ul Kolejowa 17; ☎ 8am-4pm) at the southern end of Palace Park. Serious hikers should contact the **National Park Office** (☎ 682 97 02; www.bpn.com.pl; ☎ 9am-4pm) inside Palace Park. Most maps of the national park (especially the one published by PTOP – Północnopodlaskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków, North Podlaskan Bird Protection Society) detail several enticing hiking trails.

Sights & Activities

A combined ticket (12zł) allows you entry to the museum, the bison reserve and the nature reserve. Alternatively, you can pay for each attraction separately.

The elegant **Palace Park** (admission free; ☎ daylight hr) is only accessible on foot, bicycle or horse-drawn cart across the bridge from the PTTK office. Over the river is the excellent **Natural & Forestry Museum** (adult/child 10/5zł; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), with displays on local flora and fauna, and beekeeping.

The **European Bison Reserve** (Rezerwat Żubrów; ☎ 681 23 98; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 9am-4pm) is an open-plan zoo containing many of these

mighty beasts, as well as wolves, strange horselike tarpans and mammoth żubrońs (hybrids of bison and cows). Entrance to the reserve is just north of the Hajnówka-Białowieża road, about 4.5km west of the PTTK office – look for the signs along the *zebra żubra* (bison's rib) trail, or follow the green or yellow marked trails. Alternatively, catch a local bus to the stop at the main road turn-off (2.50zł) and walk a kilometre to the entrance, but ask the driver first if the bus is taking a route past the reserve.

The main attraction is the **Strict Nature Reserve** (adult/child 6/3zł; ☹ 9am-5pm), which starts about 1km north of Palace Park. It can only be visited on a three-hour tour with a licensed guide along an 8km trail (195zł for an English- or German-speaking guide). Licensed guides (in many languages) can be arranged at the PTTK office or any travel agency in the village. Note that the reserve does close sometimes, due to inclement weather.

A more comfortable way to visit the nature reserve is by horse-drawn cart, which costs 162zł in addition to guide and entry fees (three hours) and holds four people. Otherwise, it may be possible (with permission from the PTTK office) to visit the reserve by bicycle (with a guide).

The Dom Turysty PTTK hires out bikes (25zł per day), as do several other hotels and pensions.

Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of homes along the road from Hajnówka offering private rooms for about 40/70zł for singles/doubles.

Paprotka Youth Hostel (☎ 681 25 60; www.paprotka.com.pl; ul Waszkiewicza 6; dm from 16zł, d 50zł; ☑ ☹ ☒) One of the best in the region: the rooms are light and spruce, with high ceilings and potted plants; the newly renovated bathrooms are clean; and the kitchen is excellent. There's a washing machine as well.

Dom Turysty PTTK (☎ 681 25 05; dm from 24zł, d/tr from 66/111zł; ☑) Inexpensive accommodation inside Palace Park. It has seen better days, but the position and rates are hard to beat. It has a pleasant restaurant with a bison-head motif.

Pensjonat Gawra (☎ 681 28 04; fax 681 24 84; ul Poludn-łowa 2; d 60-120zł; ☑) A quiet, homely place with large rooms lined with timber in a hunting lodge style, overlooking a pretty garden just behind the Hotel Żubrówka. The doubles

with bathrooms are much more spacious than those without.

Pensjonat Unikat (☎ 681 27 74; ul Waszkiewicza 39; s/d/tr from 80/100/160zł; ☑ ☹ ☒) A bit too fond of dead creatures' hides as décor, but good value with its tidy wood-panelled rooms, one of which is designed for disabled access. The restaurant offers specialities such as Belarus-style potato pancakes, and has a menu in both German and English.

Hotel Żubrówka (☎ 681 23 03; ul Olgi Gabiec 6; s/d/ste from 280/320/450zł; ☑ ☹ ☒) Just across the way from the PTTK office, this is the town's best hotel. It's eccentrically decorated with animal hides, a working miniature water wheel, and pseudo cave drawings along the corridors. Rooms are predictably clean and comfortable, and there's a café, restaurant and nightclub on the premises.

Getting There & Away

From Warsaw, take the express train from Warszawa Centralna to Siedlce (1½ hours), wait for a connection on the slow train to Hajnówka (two hours), and then catch one of the nine daily PKS bus services to Białowieża (5zł, one hour). Two private companies, Oktobus and Lob-Trans, also run fairly squeeze minibuses between Hajnówka and Białowieża (5zł, one hour, five to seven daily). For the latest timetable information, check out www.turystyka.hajnówka.pl/ctprb/english/

Five buses a day travel from the Dworzec Stadion station in Warsaw to Białystok (23zł to 29zł, four hours), from where two buses travel to Białowieża (15zł, three hours). You may need to stay overnight in Białystok to catch the connecting services. Polski Express also runs one daily bus between Białystok and Warsaw (34zł, 3½ hours).

MAŁOPOLSKA

Małopolska (literally 'lesser Poland') is a historic region covering all of southeastern Poland, from the Carpathian Mountains along the nation's southern borders, to the Lublin Uplands further north. It's a beautiful area, within which the visitor can spot remnants of traditional agricultural life. The biggest attraction, however, is the former royal capital, Kraków, and the majestic Tatra Mountains to the city's south.

KRAKÓW

☎ 012 / pop 758,000

A city founded upon the defeat of a dragon is off to a promising start when it comes to attracting visitors, and Kraków doesn't disappoint. As it was the royal capital of Poland until 1596, Kraków is packed with beautiful buildings and streets dating back to medieval times. The city's centrepiece, Wawel Castle and Cathedral, is a stunning reminder of the city's luck in avoiding major damage in WWII.

Just outside the Old Town lies Kazimierz, the former Jewish quarter, its silent synagogues reflecting the tragedy of the recent past. The district's tiny streets and low-rise architecture make it an interesting place to explore.

As the nation's biggest tourist drawcard, Kraków is also replete with diversions of a more modern variety, with hundreds of restaurants, bars and other venues tucked away in its laneways and cellars. Though hotel prices are above the national average, and visitor numbers high in summer, this vibrant, cosmopolitan city is an essential part of any tour of Poland.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK Megastore (Map p562; ☎ 429 42 34; Rynek Główny 5; ☹ 9am-10pm) Sells foreign newspapers, magazines, novels and maps.

Księgarnia Hetmańska (Map p562; ☎ 430 24 53; Rynek Główny 17) An impressive selection of English-language books, including non-fiction on Polish history and culture.

Jarden Jewish Bookshop (Map p564; ☎ 429 13 74; ul Szeroka 2) Located in Kazimierz.

Sklep Podróżnika (Map p562; ☎ 429 14 85; ul Jagiellońska 6; ☹ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Sells a wide selection of regional and city maps, as well as Lonely Planet titles.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café U Luisa (Map p562; ☎ 617 02 22; Rynek Główny 13; per hr 4zł; ☹ 10am-10pm)

Klub Garinet (Map p562; ☎ 423 22 33; ul Floriańska 18; per hr 4zł; ☹ 9am-midnight)

MONEY

Kantors and ATMs can be found all over the city centre. It's worth noting, however, that many *kantors* close on Sunday, and areas near the Rynek Główny and the main train station

offer terrible exchange rates. There are also exchange facilities at the airport.

Bank Pekao (Map p562; Rynek Główny 32) Cashes travellers cheques and provides cash advances on MasterCard and Visa.

POST

Main post office (Map p562; ul Westerplatte 20; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, 9-11am Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Kraków Card (www.krakowcard.com), available from tourist offices, includes travel on public transport and entry to many museums for 45/65zł for two/three days.

Two free magazines, *Welcome to Cracow & Małopolska* and *Visitor: Kraków & Zakopane* are available at tourist offices and some travel agencies and upmarket hotels. The *Kraków in Your Pocket* booklet is also very useful.

Tourist Information Centre (Map p562; ☎ 421 77 87; www.karnet.krakow.pl; ul Św. Jana 2; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) Central city-run agency giving assistance to visitors.

Małopolska Tourism Information Centre (Map p562; ☎ 421 77 06; www.mcit.pl; Rynek Główny 1/3; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Oct-Mar) Helpful privately run tourist office centrally located in the Cloth Hall.

Tourist office (Map p562; ☎ 433 73 10; Rynek Główny 1; ☹ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar) In the Town Hall Tower.

Tourist office (Map p562; ☎ 432 01 10; ul Szpitalna 25; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Near the main train station, this place is smaller and less harried.

Tourist office (Map p564; ☎ 422 04 71; ul Józefa 7; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) In Kazimierz, providing information about Jewish heritage and local attractions.

Sights & Activities

WAWEL HILL

Kraków's main draw for tourists is **Wawel Hill** (Map p562; grounds admission free; ☹ 6am-8pm May-Sep, 6am-5pm Oct-Apr). South of the Old Town, the hill is crowned with a castle and cathedral, both of which are enduring symbols of Poland.

You can choose from several attractions within the castle, each requiring a separate ticket, valid for a specific time. There's a limited daily quota of tickets for some parts, so arrive early if you want to see everything.

Within the magnificent **Wawel Castle** (Map p562; ☎ 422 51 55; www.wawel.krakow.pl) are the **State Rooms** (adult/child 14/8zł, free Mon; ☹ 9.30am-moon Mon, 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat,



INFORMATION		Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Painting.....		Orient Ekspres.....	
Bank Pekao.....	1 B3	28 B3	53 B4
British Consulate.....	2 A3	Historical Museum of Kraków.....	29 B3	Pod Aniolami.....	54 B4
Cracow Tours.....	3 B3	Lost Wawel.....	30 B6	Restauracja Chlopskie Jadlo.....	55 B3
EMPIK Megastore.....	4 B3	Museum of Oriental Art.....	31 B5	Restauracja Pod Gruszką.....	56 B3
French Consulate.....	5 B4	St Andrew's Church.....	32 B5	Smak Ukraiński.....	57 B5
German Consulate.....	6 B4	St Anne's Church.....	33 A3	DRINKING	
Internet Café U Luisa.....	7 B4	St Mary's Church.....	34 B3	Café Camelot.....	58 B3
Klub Garinet.....	8 B3	Town Hall Tower.....	35 B3	Paparazzi.....	59 C4
Księgarnia Hetmańska.....	9 B4	Treasury & Armoury.....	36 B6	Piwnica Pod Złotą Piją.....	60 C3
Main Post Office.....	10 C4	Wawel Castle.....	37 B6	Pod Papugami.....	61 B3
Maloposka Tourism		SLEEPING		ENTERTAINMENT	
Information Centre.....	11 B3	Cracow Hostel.....	38 B4	Black Gallery.....	62 C3
Police Station.....	12 B3	Greg & Tom Hostel.....	39 C2	Filharmonia Krakowska.....	63 A4
Post Office.....	13 D2	Hotel Alexander.....	40 A2	Franciscan.....	64 B3
Sklep Podróznika.....	14 B3	Hotel Amadeus.....	41 C3	Kino Pasaż.....	65 B4
Tourist Information Centre.....	15 B3	Hotel Saski.....	42 B3	Kino Sztuka.....	66 B3
Tourist Office.....	16 C2	Hotel Wawel.....	43 B4	Lubu-Dubu.....	67 C4
Tourist Office.....	17 B3	Hotel Wit Stwosz.....	44 C3	Piano Rouge.....	68 B3
US Consulate.....	18 B4	Jordan Tourist Information & Accommodation.....	45 C2	Stary Teatr.....	69 B3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Wielopole Guest Rooms.....		Teatr im Słowackiego.....	
Almatyr.....	19 B3	46 C4		70 C3	
Archaeological Museum.....	20 B5	EATING		TRANSPORT	
Barbican.....	21 C2	Bombaj Tandoori.....	47 C4	Biuro Turystyki i Zakwaterowania Wawelturn.....	
Church of SS Peter & Paul.....	22 B5	Casa della Pizza.....	48 C4	Bus 192 to Airport.....	
Cloth Hall.....	23 B3	Green Way Bar Vegetariański.....	49 C3	Bus Terminal.....	
Czartoryski Museum.....	24 C2	Gruzińskie Chaczapuri.....	50 C3	LOT Office.....	
Dominican Church.....	25 B4	Ipanema.....	51 C3	Minibuses to Wieliczka.....	
Florian Gate.....	26 C2	Metropolitan Restaurant.....	(see 42)	Pol-Tur.....	
Franciscan Church.....	27 B4	Nostalgia.....	52 A3	(see 39)	

10am-3pm Sun) and the **Royal Private Apartments** (adult/child 18/13zł; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). Entry to the latter is only allowed on a guided tour; you may have to accompany a Polish language tour if it's the only one remaining for the day. If you want to hire a guide who speaks English, French or German, contact the onsite **guides office** (☎ 429 33 36).

The 14th-century **Wawel Cathedral** (Map p562; adult/child 10/5zł; ☎ 9am-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 12.15-3.45pm Sun) was the coronation and burial place of Polish royalty for four centuries, and houses **Royal Tombs**, including that of King Kazimierz Wielki. The **bell tower** of the golden-domed **Sigmund Chapel** (1539) contains the country's largest bell (11 tonnes).

Ecclesiastical artefacts are displayed in the small **Cathedral Museum** (Map p562; adult/child 5/2zł; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Sun).

Other attractions include the **Museum of Oriental Art** (adult/child 6/4zł, free Mon; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon, 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun); the **Treasury & Armoury** (adult/child 14/8zł, free Mon; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon, 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun); the **Lost Wawel** (adult/child 6/4zł, free Mon; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon, 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat,

10am-3pm Sun), a well-displayed set of intriguing archaeological exhibits; and the atmospheric **Dragon's Cave** (Map p562; admission 3zł; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct). Go here last, as the exit leads out onto the riverbank.

OLD TOWN

The focus of the Old Town is **Rynek Główny** (Main Market Square), Europe's largest medieval town square (200m by 200m). At its centre is the 16th-century Renaissance **Cloth Hall** (Sukiennice; Map p562). Downstairs is a large **souvenir market** and upstairs is the **Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Painting** (Map p562; ☎ 422 11 66; adult/child 8/5zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-6pm Wed & Fri), with famous works by Jan Matejko.

The 14th-century **St Mary's Church** (Map p562; Rynek Główny 4; adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 11.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) fills the northeastern corner of the square. The huge main altarpiece by Wit Stwosz (Veit Stoss in German) of Nuremberg is the finest Gothic sculpture in Poland, and is opened ceremoniously each day at noon. Every hour a *hejnał* (bugle call) is played from the highest tower of the church. The melody, played in medieval times as a warning call, breaks off abruptly to symbolise the

moment when, according to legend, the throat of a 13th-century trumpeter was pierced by a Tatar arrow.

West of the Cloth Hall is the 15th-century **Town Hall Tower** (Map p562; ☎ 422 99 22, ext 218; admission 4z; ☎ 10.30am–6pm May–Oct), which you can climb. The **Historical Museum of Kraków** (Map p562; ☎ 422 15 04; Rynek Główny 35; adult/child 5/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 9am–4pm Wed & Fri–Sun, 10am–5pm Thu) has paintings, documents and odds and ends relating to the city.

From St Mary's Church, walk up (northeast) ul Floriańska to the 14th-century **Florian Gate**. Beyond it is the **Barbican** (Map p562; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10.30am–6pm Apr–Oct), a defensive bastion built in 1498. Nearby, the **Czartoryski Museum** (Map p562; ☎ 422 55 66; ul Św Jana 19; adult/child 9/6zł, free Thu; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue & Thu, 10am–7pm Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am–3pm Sun) features an impressive collection of European art, including Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine*. Also on display are Turkish weapons and artefacts, including a campaign tent from the 1683 Battle of Vienna.

South of Rynek Główny, plac Wszystkich Świętych is dominated by two 13th-century

monastic churches: the **Dominican Church** (Map p562; ul Stolarska 12; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm) to the east and the **Franciscan Church** (Map p562; plac Wszystkich Świętych 5; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm) to the west. The latter is noted for its stained-glass windows.

To the south, you'll find the **Archaeological Museum** (Map p562; ☎ 422 75 60; ul Poselska 3; adult/child 7/5zł; ☎ 9am–2pm Mon–Wed, 2–6pm Thu, 10am–2pm Fri & Sun), with displays on local prehistory and ancient Egyptian artefacts, including animal mummies.

Continuing south along ul Grodzka is the early 17th-century Jesuit **Church of SS Peter & Paul** (Map p562; ul Grodzka 64; ☎ dawn–dusk), Poland's first baroque church. The Romanesque 11th-century **St Andrew's Church** (Map p562; ul Grodzka 56; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri) was the only building in Kraków to withstand the Tatars' attack of 1241.

KAZIMIERZ

Founded by King Kazimierz the Great in 1335, Kazimierz was originally an independent town. In the 15th century, Jews were expelled from Kraków and forced to resettle in a small pre-

scribed area in Kazimierz, separated by a wall. The Jewish quarter later became home to Jews fleeing persecution from throughout Europe.

By the outbreak of WWII there were 65,000 Jewish Poles in Kraków (around 30% of the city's population), and most lived in Kazimierz. During the war the Nazis relocated Jews to a walled ghetto in Podgórze, just south of the Vistula River. They were exterminated in the nearby **Plaszów Concentration Camp**, as portrayed in Steven Spielberg's haunting film *Schindler's List*.

Kazimierz's western Catholic quarter includes the 14th-century Gothic **St Catherine's Church** (Map p564; ul Augustian 7; admission free; ☎ only during services), with an imposing 17th-century gilded high altar, while the 14th-century **Corpus Christi Church** (Map p564; ul Bożego Ciała 26; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat) is crammed with baroque fittings. The **Ethnographic Museum** (Map p564; ☎ 430 55 63; plac Wolnica 1; adult/child 6.50/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon, 10am–3pm Wed–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun) in the Old Town Hall has a collection of regional crafts and costumes.

The eastern Jewish quarter is dotted with synagogues. The 15th-century **Old Synagogue** is the oldest Jewish religious building in Poland. It now houses the **Jewish Museum** (Map p564; ☎ 422 09 62; ul Szeroka 24; admission 6zł; ☎ 10am–2pm Mon, 9am–4pm Wed & Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am–5pm Fri), with exhibitions on Jewish traditions.

Not far away, the **Galicja Museum** (Map p564; ☎ 421 68 42; www.galicjajewishmuseum.org; ul Dajwór 18; adult/child 7/5zł; ☎ 9am–8pm) features an impressive photographic exhibition, depicting modern-day traces of southeastern Poland's once thriving Jewish community.

A short walk north is the small 16th-century **Remuh Synagogue** (Map p564; ☎ 422 12 74;

ul Szeroka 40; adult/child 5/2zł; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri), still used for religious services. Behind it, the **Remuh Cemetery** (admission free; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri) boasts some extraordinary Renaissance gravestones. Nearby, the restored **Izaak's Synagogue** (Map p564; ☎ 430 55 77; ul Jakuba 25; admission 7zł; ☎ 9am–7pm Sun–Fri) shows documentary films about life in the Jewish ghetto.

It's easy to take a self-guided walking tour around Kazimierz with the booklet *Jewish Kazimierz Short Guide*, available from the Jarden Jewish Bookshop (see p561).

WIELICZKA SALT MINE

Wieliczka (vyeh-leech-kah), 15km southeast of the city centre, is famous for the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** (☎ 278 73 02; www.kopalnia.pl; ul Daniłowicza 10; adult/child 65/55zł, 20% discount after 6pm & Nov–Feb; ☎ 7.30am–7.30pm Apr–Oct, 8am–5pm Nov–Mar). It's an eerie world of pits and chambers, and every single element from chandeliers to altarpieces was hewn by hand from solid salt. The mine is included on Unesco's World Heritage List.

The highlight of a visit is the richly ornamented **Chapel of the Blessed Kinga**, a church measuring 54m by 17m, and 12m high. Construction of this underground temple took more than 30 years (1895–1927), resulting in the removal of 20,000 tonnes of rock salt.

The obligatory guided tour through the mine takes about two hours (a 2km walk). Tours in English (July to August) operate half-hourly from 8.30am to 6pm; from September to June they're approximately hourly from 9am to 5pm. There are at least two tours a day in German, and more frequently in July and August. If you're visiting independently, you must wait for a tour to start. Last admission to the mine is shortly before closing time.



THE LAJKONIK OF KRAKÓW

As you're walking through Kraków's mighty market square, you may see a street performer dressed as a man riding a richly decorated horse, with a pointed hat on his head. This is an everyday version of the Lajkonik, the central figure of an annual parade through the city.

Exact details of the Lajkonik's origin are hard to pin down, but one story involves a Tatar assault on Kraków in 1287. A group of raftsmen discovered the tent of the commanding khan on a foray outside the city walls, and dispatched the unsuspecting Tatar leader and his generals in a lightning raid. The raftsmen's leader then wore the khan's richly decorated outfit back to the city.

To commemorate the victory, each year on the first Thursday following Corpus Christi (May or June), a colourful parade takes place. Starting from the Premonstratensian monastery in Zwierzyniec, the elaborately costumed Lajkonik marches through Kraków's streets to the Main Market Square (Rynek Główny), accompanied by folk musicians. In the square, the Lajkonik prances in a lively fashion, recreating the Cracovian citizens' joy when the siege was lifted.

Minibuses to Wieliczka town depart every 10 minutes between 6am and 8pm from a location on ul Starowiślna, near the main post office in Kraków, and drop passengers outside the salt mine (2.50zł). Trains between Kraków and Wieliczka (3.80zł) leave every 45 minutes throughout the day, but the train station in Wieliczka is a fair walk from the mine.

Tours

The following companies operate tours of Kraków and surrounding areas:

Almatu (Map p562; ☎ 422 46 68; Rynek Główny 27)

Arranges various outdoor activities during summer.

Cracow Tours (Map p562; ☎ 422 40 35; www.cracow.tours.pl; Rynek Główny 41) Inside Orbis Travel, offering city tours, and tours of Auschwitz and the salt mines.

Crazy Guides (☎ 0888 68 68 71; www.crazyguides.com) Offers entertaining tours of the city's communist-era suburbs, in restored East German cars.

Jarden Jewish Bookshop & Tourist Agency (Map p564; ☎ 421 71 66; www.jarden.pl; ul Szeroka 2)

The best agency for tours of Polish Jewish heritage. Its showpiece, 'Retracing Schindler's List' (two hours by car), costs 65zł per person. All tours require a minimum of three and must be arranged in advance. Tours are in English, but French- and German-speaking guides can be arranged.

Sleeping

Kraków is unquestionably Poland's major tourist destination, with prices to match. Booking ahead in the busy summer months is recommended.

BUDGET

Bling Bling (☎ 634 05 32; www.blingbling.pl; ul Pędzichów 7; dm 45zł, d/tr 120/180zł; ☑) Comfortable hostel north of the Old Town, offering inexpensive, good quality accommodation. High ceilings make the dorms feel spacious, though the lounge is a little dark. Laundry available.

Cracow Hostel (Map p562; ☎ 429 11 06; www.cracow.hostel.com; Rynek Główny 18; dm 45-60zł; ☑) Budget accommodation is hard to find in the centre of the Old Town, but this place is perched high above the market square, with an amazing view of St Mary's Church from the roomy but comfortable lounge. There's also a kitchen and washing machine.

Greg & Tom Hostel (Map p562; ☎ 422 41 00; www.gregtomhostel.com; ul Pawia 12; dm 50zł, d/tr 120/150; ☑) This well-run hostel is spread over two locations; the private rooms are a 10-minute walk away on ul Warszawska. The staff are friendly, the rooms are clean, and laundry facilities are

included. Note that reception is up four flights of stairs, and the private rooms are above a (seemingly peaceful) massage parlour.

Nathan's Villa Hostel (☎ 422 35 45; www.nathansvilla.com; ul Św. Agnieszki 1; dm/d from 50/160zł; ☑ ☑) The best hostel in town is conveniently located between the Old Town and Kazimierz. Comfy rooms, sparkling bathrooms, free laundry and a friendly atmosphere make this place a big hit with backpackers. The addition of a cellar bar, mini-cinema and pool table have kept Nathan's ahead of the pack.

Dizzy Daisy (☎ 292 01 71; www.hostel.pl; ul Pędzichów 9; dm/d/tr 60/160/210zł; ☑) A modern chain-hostel with great facilities and light, clean rooms, frequented by an international crowd of party people. Laundry and kitchen are available.

Camping Nr 46 Smok (☎ 429 83 00; ul Kamedulska 18; per person/tent 15/19zł; ☑) It's small, quiet and pleasantly located 4km west of the Old Town. To get here from outside the Kraków Główny train station building, take tram 2 to the end of the line in Zwierzyniec and change for any westbound bus (except No 100).

MIDRANGE

An agency offering decent rooms around town is **Jordan Tourist Information & Accommodation Centre** (Map p562; ☎ 422 60 91; www.jordan.krakow.pl; ul Pawia 8; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun; s/d around 110/130zł).

Sodispar Service Apartments (☎ 0602 247 438; www.sodispar.com.pl; ul Lubelska 12; apt €30-140) Several comfortable, modern apartments sleeping up to four people, north of the Old Town. Cheaper rates are available for longer stays.

Apropo (☎ 0506 102 924; www.apropo.info; ul Karmelicka 36; d/tr 150/225zł) Set of comfortable rooms within a fully renovated old apartment, with access to shared bathrooms, a light-filled kitchen and laundry facilities. It's in a convenient location not far from the Old Town.

Tournet Pokoje Gościnne (Map p564; ☎ 292 00 88; www.accommodation.krakow.pl; ul Miodowa 7; s/d/tr from 140/180/220zł) This is a neat *pension* in Kazimierz, offering simple but comfortable and quiet rooms. The bathrooms, however, are tiny.

Hotel Royal (Map p562; ☎ 421 35 00; www.royal.com.pl; ul Św. Gertrudy 26-29; s 140-210zł, d 220-300zł, tr 300-330zł, ste 300-360zł; ☑) Impressive Art Nouveau edifice with loads of old-world charm, just below Wawel Castle. It's split into two sections: the higher-priced two-star rooms are cosy, and far preferable to the fairly basic one-star rooms at the back.

Hotel Abel (Map p564; ☎ 411 87 36; www.hotelabel.pl; ul Józefa 30; s/d/tr 170/230/260) Reflecting the character of Kazimierz, this hotel has a distinctive personality, evident in its polished wooden staircase, arched brickwork and age-worn tiles. The comfortable rooms make a good base for exploring the historic Jewish neighbourhood.

Wielopole Guest Rooms (Map p562; ☎ 422 14 75; www.wielopole.pl; ul Wielopole 3; s/d from 190/280zł; ☑ ☑ ☑) Smart and simple modern rooms in a renovated block on the eastern edge of the Old Town, with narrow beds but spotless bathrooms. One room is designed for disabled access, and breakfast is only included for stays of two nights or more.

Hotel Wit Stwoszc (Map p562; ☎ 429 60 26; www.wit-stwoszc.com.pl; ul Mikołajska 28; s/d/tr €75/86/99, ste €130) In a historic town house belonging to St Mary's church, and decorated in a suitably religious theme. Rooms are compact and simply furnished, but tasteful and attractive.

TOP END

Hotel Saski (Map p562; ☎ 421 42 22; www.hotelsaski.com.pl; ul Sławkowska 3; s/d/ste 295/360/450zł; ☑) The Saski occupies a historic mansion, complete with a uniformed doorman, rattling old lift and ornate furnishings. The rooms themselves are comparatively plain, though some singles are surprisingly spacious.

Hotel Wawel (Map p562; ☎ 424 13 00; www.hotel.wawel.pl; ul Poselska 22; s/d 260/380zł; ☑) Ideally located just off busy ul Grodzka, this is a pleasant place offering tastefully decorated rooms with timber highlights. It's far enough back from the main drag to avoid most of the noise.

Hotel Alexander (Map p562; ☎ 422 96 60; www.alex.hotel.pl; ul Garbarska 18; s/d 340/400zł; ☑ ☑ ☑) The Alexander is a bright and very modern place, offering standard three-star comfort. It's on a shabby but quiet street just west of the Old Town. One room is designed for disabled access.

Hotel Amadeus (Map p562; ☎ 429 60 70; www.hotel-amadeus.pl; ul Mikołajska 20; s/d €156/166, ste €240; ☑ ☑ ☑) Everything about this hotel says 'class'. The rooms are tastefully furnished, though singles are rather small given the price. One room has disabled access, and there's a sauna, a fitness centre, and a well-regarded restaurant. While hanging around the Amadeus' foyer, you can check out photos of famous guests.

Eating

Kraków is a food paradise, tightly packed with restaurants serving a wide range of international cuisines.

One local speciality is *obwarzanki* (ring-shaped pretzels powdered with poppy seeds, sesame seeds or salt) available from street vendors dozing next to their barrows.

POLISH

Restauracja Pod Gruszką (Map p562; ☎ 422 88 96; ul Szczepańska 1; mains 12-55zł; ☎ noon-midnight) A favourite haunt of writers and artists, this upstairs establishment is the eatery that time forgot, with its elaborate old-fashioned décor featuring chandeliers, lace tablecloths, age-worn carpets and sepia portraits. The menu covers a range of Polish dishes, the most distinctive being the soups served within small bread loaves.

Restauracja Chłopskie Jadło (Map p562; ☎ 429 51 57; ul Św. Jana 3; mains 12-80zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Arranged as an old country inn with wooden benches and traditional music, and serving tasty Polish food. Try the *zurek* (sour soup) with sausage and egg, for a light but filling meal. There are some vegetarian options on the menu, but brace yourself for the meat products hanging off the walls.

Nostalgia (Map p562; ☎ 425 42 60; ul Karmelicka 10; mains 13-36zł; ☎ noon-11pm) A refined version of the traditional Polish eatery, Nostalgia features a fireplace, overhead timber beams, uncrowded tables and courteous service. Wrap yourself around Russian dumplings, pork loins in green pepper sauce, or veggie options such as potato pancakes. In warm weather there's an outdoor dining area.

Pod Aniołami (Map p562; ☎ 421 39 99; ul Grodzka 35; mains 25-60zł; ☎ 1pm-midnight) This eatery 'under the angels' offers high-quality Polish food in a pleasant cellar atmosphere, though it can get a little smoky. Specialities include the huntsman's smoked wild boar steak.

INTERNATIONAL

Gruzińskie Chaczapuri (Map p562; ☎ 0509 542 800; cnr ul Floriańska & ul Św. Marka; mains 10-18zł; ☎ 10am-midnight) Cheap and cheerful place serving up tasty Georgian dishes. Grills, salads and steaks fill out the menu, and there's a separate vegetarian selection with items such as the traditional Georgian cheese pie with stewed vegetables.

Bombaj Tandoori (Map p562; ☎ 422 37 97; ul Mikołajska 11; mains 11-32zł; ☎ noon-11pm) The Bombaj

Tandoori is the best curry house in Kraków, with friendly staff and a lengthy menu of Indian standards. The four-person set menu (85zł) is excellent value, and there's also a takeaway and local delivery service.

Casa della Pizza (Map p562; ☎ 421 64 98; Mały Rynek 2; mains 12-32zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) This unpretentious place is away from the bulk of the tourist traffic, with a menu of pizzas and pasta. The downstairs bar section is the Arabian-styled Shisha Club, serving Middle Eastern food.

Orient Ekspres (Map p562; ☎ 422 66 72; ul Stolarska 13; mains 15-48zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) Hercule Poirot might be surprised to find this elegant eatery here, well off the route of its railway namesake. The food is mainly Polish, with some international additions, accompanied by wine by the glass. Mellow music and candlelight make it a good place for a romantic rendezvous.

Smak Ukraiński (Map p562; ☎ 421 92 94; ul Kanonizacja 15; mains 15-50zł; ☎ 11am-9pm) This Ukrainian restaurant presents authentic dishes in a cosy little cellar decorated with provincial flair. Expect lots of dumplings, *borscht* and waiters in waistcoats.

Café Alef (Map p564; ☎ 421 38 70; ul Szeroka 17; mains 16-45zł; ☎ noon-11pm) This is a quaint place in the heart of Kazimierz, with gilt-edged mirrors and lace tablecloths. It offers an array of Jewish-inspired dishes such as chicken *knedlach* (dumplings) and stuffed goose neck.

Ipanema (Map p562; ☎ 422 53 23; ul Św. Tomasza 28; mains from 16zł; ☎ noon-11pm) A banana palm as décor may seem out of place in Poland, but this bright place pulls it off. The Brazilian menu features steaks, grills and a range of interesting Afro-Brazilian dishes.

Metropolitan Restaurant (Map p562; ☎ 421 98 03; ul Stawkowska 3; mains 22-68zł; ☎ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, 7.30am-10pm Sun) Attached to Hotel Saski, this place has nostalgic B&W photos of international locales plastering the walls, and is a great place for breakfast. It also serves pasta, grills and steaks, and luxurious items such as honey and orange roasted leg of duck.

VEGETARIAN

Momo (Map p564; ☎ 0609 685 775; ul Dietla 49; mains 4-12zł; ☎ 11am-8pm) Vegans will cross the doorstep of this Kazimierz restaurant with relief – the majority of the menu is completely animal-free. The space is decorated with Indian craft pieces, and serves up subcontinental soups, stuffed pancakes and rice dishes, with a great

range of cakes. The Tibetan dumplings are a treat worth ordering.

Green Way Bar Vegetariański (Map p562; ☎ 431 10 27; ul Mikołajska 14; mains 10-15zł; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun) The Green Way offers good value vegetarian fare such as veggie kofta, enchiladas and salads.

Drinking

There are hundreds of pubs and bars in Kraków's Old Town, many housed in ancient vaulted cellars, which get very smoky. Kazimierz also has a lively bar scene, centred on plac Nowy and its surrounding streets.

Paparazzi (Map p562; ☎ 429 45 97; ul Mikołajska 9; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 4pm-4am Sat & Sun) If you haven't brought any reading material with you to this bar, look up – the ceiling is plastered with pages from racy tabloid newspapers. It's a bright, modern place, with black-and-white press photos covering the walls. The drinks menu includes cocktails such as the Polish Express, built around vanilla vodka. There's also inexpensive bar food.

Le Scandale (Map p564; ☎ 430 68 55; plac Nowy 9; ☎ 8am-3am) Smooth Kazimierz drinking hole with low black leather couches, ambient lighting and a gleaming well-stocked bar. Full of mellow drinkers sampling the extensive cocktail list.

Transilvania (Map p564; ☎ 0692 335 867; ul Szeroka 9; ☎ 10am-3am) The Transilvania is another convivial place in Kazimierz, with a vampire theme going on. Check out the portrait of Vlad the Impaler over the bar.

Pod Papugami (Map p562; ☎ 422 82 99; ul Św. Jana 18; ☎ 1pm-2am Mon-Sat, 3pm-2am Sun) This is a vaguely 'Irish' cellar pub decorated with old motorcycles and other assorted odds and ends. A good place to hide from inclement weather, with its pool table and tunnel-like maze of rooms.

Piwnica Pod Żółtą Pipą (Map p562; ☎ 421 94 66; ul Floriańska 30; ☎ noon-midnight) Less claustrophobic than other cellar bars, with lots of tables for eating or drinking. Decent bar food and international beers on tap.

Café Camelot (Map p562; ☎ 421 01 23; ul Św. Tomasza 17; ☎ 9am-midnight) For coffee and cake, try this genteel haven hidden around an obscure street corner in the Old Town. Its cosy rooms are cluttered with lace-covered candlelit tables, and a quirky collection of wooden figurines featuring spiritual or folkloric scenes.

Entertainment

The comprehensive Polish-English booklet *Karnet* (3zł), published by the Tourist Information Centre (see p561), lists almost every event in the city.

NIGHTCLUBS

Piano Rouge (Map p562; ☎ 431 03 33; Rynek Główny 46; ☎ noon-3am) A sumptuous cellar venue decked out with classic sofas, ornate lampshades and billowing lengths of colourful silk. There's live jazz every night from Wednesday to Sunday.

Łubu-Dubu (Map p562; ☎ 423 05 21; ul Wielopole 15; ☎ 4pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat) The name of this place (*wooboo-dooboo*) is as funky as its décor. This grungy upstairs joint is an echo of the past, from the garish colours to the collection of objects from 1970s Poland. A series of rooms creates spaces for talking or dancing as the mood strikes.

Alchemia (Map p564; ☎ 421 22 00; ul Estery 5; ☎ 9am-3am) This Kazimierz venue exudes a shabby-is-the-new-cool look with rough-hewn wooden benches, candlelit tables and a companionable gloom. It hosts regular live music gigs and theatrical events through the week.

Black Gallery (Map p562; ul Mikołajska 24; ☎ noon-6am) Underground pub-cum-nightclub with a modern aspect: split levels, exposed steel frame lighting and a metallic bar. It really gets going after midnight. It also has a more civilised courtyard.

Frantic (Map p562; ☎ 423 04 83; ul Szewska 5; ☎ 6pm-4am) Occupying vast brick cellars, Frantic is trendy, attractive and popular with foreigners.

THEATRE

Stary Teatr (Map p562; ☎ 422 40 40; www.stary-teatr.pl; ul Jagiellońska 5) The best-known venue, Stary offers quality theatre.

Teatr im Słowackiego (Map p562; ☎ 422 40 22; plac Św. Ducha 1) This grand place, built in 1893, focuses on Polish classics and large productions.

Filharmonia Krakowska (Map p562; ☎ 422 94 77; ul Zwierzyniecka 1) Hosts one of the best orchestras in the country; concerts are usually held on Friday and Saturday.

CINEMAS

Two convenient cinemas are **Kino Sztuka** (Map p562; ☎ 421 41 99; nr Św. Tomasza & Św. Jana), and the tiny **Kino Pasaż** (Map p562; ☎ 422 77 13; Rynek Główny 9). Tickets cost from 11zł.

Getting There & Away

For information on travelling from Kraków to Zakopane, Częstochowa or Oświęcim (for Auschwitz), refer to the relevant destination sections later.

AIR

The **John Paul II International airport** (www.lotnisko-balice.pl) is more often called the Balice airport, after the suburb in which it's located, about 15km west of the Old Town. The airport terminal hosts several car-hire desks, along with currency exchanges. You can buy tickets for bus 192 to the city centre from the newsagency upstairs.

LOT flies between Kraków and Warsaw several times a day, and offers direct flights from Kraków to Frankfurt and Munich. Bookings for all flights can be made at the **LOT office** (Map p562; ☎ 422 42 15; ul Basztowa 15).

A range of other airlines, including budget operators, connect Kraków to cities in Europe. There are direct flights to and from London via British Airways, Centralwings (April to October), Easyjet, Sky Europe and Ryanair. Dublin is serviced by Ryanair (May to October), Sky Europe and Aer Lingus.

BUS

If you've been travelling by bus elsewhere in Poland, Kraków's modern main **bus terminal** (Map p562; ul Bosacka 18) will seem like a palace compared to the usual facility. It's located on the other side of the main train station from the Old Town. However, bus services are limited to regional centres of minimal interest to travellers, as well as Lublin (40zł, four daily), Zamość (42zł, five daily), Warsaw (39zł, four daily), Wrocław (42zł, four daily) and Cieszyn (18zł, 10 daily) on the Czech border.

A daily Polski Express bus to Warsaw also departs from the bus terminal (67zł), but takes eight hours to reach the capital.

TRAIN

The lovely old **Kraków Główny train station** (Map p562; plac Dworcowy), on the northeastern outskirts of the Old Town, handles all international trains and most domestic rail services. The railway platforms are about 150m north of the station building.

Each day from Kraków, 10 fast trains head to Warsaw (43zł, 2¼ hours). There are also 10 fast trains daily to Wrocław (41zł, 3¾ hours), six to Poznań (48zł, six hours), two to Lublin

(44zł, five hours), and eight to Gdynia, via Gdańsk (101zł, 7¼ hours).

Advance tickets for international and domestic trains can be booked directly at the station or from Cracow Tours (p566).

OŚWIĘCIM

☎ 033 / pop 48,000

Few place names have more impact than Auschwitz, which is seared into public consciousness as the location of history's most extensive experiment in genocide. Every year hundreds of thousands visit Oświęcim (osh-fyen-cheem) to learn about the infamous Nazi death camp's history, and to pay respect to the dead.

Established within disused army barracks in 1940, Auschwitz was initially designed to hold Polish prisoners, but was expanded into the largest centre for the extermination of European Jews. Two more camps were subsequently established: Birkenau (Brzezinka, also known as Auschwitz II), 3km west of Auschwitz; and Monowitz (Monowice), several kilometres west of Oświęcim. In the course of their operation, between one and 1.5 million people were murdered in these death factories – about 90% of these were Jews.

Auschwitz

Auschwitz was only partially destroyed by the fleeing Nazis, so many of the original buildings remain as a bleak document of the camp's history. A dozen of the 30 surviving prison blocks house sections of the **State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau** (☎ 844 81 00; www.auschwitz.org.pl; admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm May & Sep, 8am-5pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Mar & Nov, 8am-3pm Dec-Feb).

About every half-hour, the cinema in the **visitors centre** at the entrance shows a 15-minute documentary film (admission 3.50zł) about the liberation of the camp by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945. It's shown in several languages throughout the day; check the schedule at the information desk as soon as you arrive. The film is not recommended for children under 14 years old. The visitors centre also has a cafeteria, bookshops, a *kantor* and a left-luggage room.

Some basic explanations in Polish, English and Hebrew are provided on site, but you'll understand more if you buy the small *Auschwitz Birkenau Guide Book* (translated into about 15 languages) from the visitors centre.

An English-language tour (26zł per person, 3½ hours) of Auschwitz and Birkenau leaves at 11am daily, with others starting at 10am, 1pm and 3pm if there's enough demand. Tours in German or Polish commence when a group of seven or eight can be formed; otherwise, tours in a range of languages can be arranged in advance. But make sure you receive your allotted time; some guides tell you to wander around Birkenau by yourself and to make your own way back to Auschwitz.

Birkenau

Birkenau (admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm May & Sep, 8am-5pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Mar & Nov, 8am-3pm Dec-Feb) was actually where the murder of huge numbers of Jews took place. This vast (175 hectares), purpose-built and grimly efficient camp had more than 300 prison barracks and four huge gas chambers complete with crematoria. Each gas chamber held 2000 people and electric lifts raised the bodies to the ovens. The camp could hold 200,000 inmates at one time.

Although much of the camp was destroyed by retreating Nazis, the size of the place, fenced off with barbed wire stretching almost as far as the eye can see, provides some idea of the scale of this heinous crime. The viewing platform above the entrance provides further perspective. In some ways, Birkenau is even more shocking than Auschwitz and there are far fewer tourists.

Sleeping & Eating

For most visitors, Auschwitz and Birkenau are an easy day trip from Kraków. The cafeteria in the visitors centre is sufficient for a quick lunch.

Centrum Dialogu i Modlitwy (☎ 843 10 00; www.centrum-dialogu.oswiecim.pl; ul Kolbego 1; camp sites from 22zł, r per person with shared bathroom from 88zł; ☒) This place is 700m southwest of Auschwitz. It's comfortable and quiet, and the price includes breakfast. Rooms with private bathroom cost slightly more, and full board is also offered.

Getting There & Away

From Kraków Główny station, 12 mostly slow trains go to Oświęcim (10zł, 1½ hours) each day, though more depart from Kraków Płaszów station.

Far more convenient are the 16 buses per day to Oświęcim (8zł, 1½ hours), which depart from the bus station in Kraków, four of which

terminate at the museum. For the others, get off at the final stop, 200m from the entrance to Auschwitz. The return bus timetable to Kraków is displayed at the Birkenau visitors centre.

Every half-hour from 11.30am to 4.30pm between 15 April and 31 October, buses shuttle passengers between the visitor centres at Auschwitz and Birkenau (buses run later to 5.30pm in May and September, and until 6.30pm from June to August). Otherwise, follow the signs for an easy walk (3km) or take a taxi. Auschwitz is also linked to the town's train station by buses 24, 25, 28 and 29 every 30 to 40 minutes.

Most travel agencies in Kraków offer organised tours of Auschwitz (including Birkenau), from 100zł to 150zł per person. Check with the operator for exactly how much time the tour allows you at Auschwitz, as some run to a very tight schedule.

CZĘSTOCHOWA

☎ 034 / pop 251,000

Częstochowa (chen-sto-ho-va), 114km northwest of Kraków, is an attractive pilgrimage town, dominated by the graceful Jasna Góra monastery atop a hill at its centre. The monastery, founded by the Paulites of Hungary in 1382, is the home of the Black Madonna, and owes its fame to a miracle. In 1430 a group of Hussites stole the holy icon, slashed it and broke it into three pieces. Legend has it that the picture bled, and the monks cleaned the retrieved panel with the aid of a spring, which rose miraculously from the ground. Though the picture was restored, the scars on the Virgin's face were retained in memory of the miracle.

The Madonna was also credited with the fortified monastery's resistance to the Swedish sieges of the 1650s. In 1717 the Black Madonna was crowned Queen of Poland.

From the train station, and adjacent bus terminal, turn right (north) up al Wolności – along which are several internet cafés – to the main thoroughfare, al Najświętszej Marii Panny (simplified to al NMP). At the western end of this avenue is the monastery and at the eastern end is plac Daszyńskiego. In-between is the **tourist office** (☎ 368 22 60; al NMP 65; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) and several banks and *kantors*.

Sights

The **Paulite Monastery on Jasna Góra** (☎ 365 38 88; www.jasnagora.pl; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk) retains

the appearance of a hilltop fortress. Inside the grounds are three **museums** (donations welcome; ☎ 9am-5pm): the **Arsenal**, with a variety of old weapons; the **600th-Anniversary Museum** (Muzeum Sześćsetlecia), which contains Lech Wałęsa's 1983 Nobel Peace Prize; and the **Treasury** (Skarbiec), featuring offerings presented by the faithful.

The **tower** (☎ 8am-4pm Apr-Nov) is the tallest (106m) historic church tower in Poland. The baroque church beneath is beautifully decorated. The image of the Black Madonna is on the high altar of the adjacent chapel, entered from the left of the church aisle. It's hard to see, so a copy is on display in the **Knights' Hall** (Sala Rycerska) in the monastery. Note that the Madonna is sometimes concealed by a silver cover; if so, check with the on-site information office for the next scheduled uncovering. It's quite an event, as priests file in, music plays and the image slowly emerges.

On weekends and holidays expect long queues for all three museums. The crowds in the chapel may be so thick that you're almost unable to enter, much less get near the icon.

In the Town Hall the **Częstochowa Museum** (☎ 360 56 31; al NMP 45; adult/child 4/3zł; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 11am-5.30pm Wed, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) features an ethnographic collection and modern Polish paintings.

Festivals & Events

The major Marian feasts at Jasna Góra are 3 May, 16 July, 15 August (especially), 26 August, 8 September, 12 September and 8 December. On these days the monastery is packed with pilgrims.

Sleeping & Eating

Youth Hostel (☎ 324 31 21; ul Jasnoogórska 84/90; dm 20-36zł; ☎ Jul-Aug) This hostel, two blocks north of the tourist office, has modest facilities. Look for the triangular green sign on the building's wall.

Dom Pielgrzyma (☎ 377 75 64; ul Wyszyńskiego 1/31; dm 23zł, s/d from 70/100zł) A huge place behind the monastery, it offers numerous quiet and comfortable rooms, and is remarkably good value.

Plenty of **eateries** can be found near the Dom Pielgrzyma. Better restaurants are dotted along al NMP.

Restaurant Cleopatra (☎ 368 01 01; al NMP 71; mains 10-18zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) The cheerfully out-of-place Cleopatra, near the tourist office, serves pizzas, kebabs and sandwiches among pillars painted with ancient Egyptian designs.

Bar Viking (☎ 324 57 68; ul Nowowiejskiego 10; mains 6-40zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) About 200m south of the Częstochowa Museum is a friendly place with a good range of dishes, including vegetarian choices.

Getting There & Away

Every day from the **bus terminal** (al Wolności 45) nine buses go to Kraków (14zł to 34zł), five travel to Wrocław (21zł to 29zł), eight head for Zakopane (30zł to 41zł) and seven depart for Warsaw (30zł to 46zł).

From the impressive **train station** (al Wolności 21) five trains a day go to Warsaw (38zł, 3½ hours). There are also three daily trains to Gdynia via Gdańsk (55zł, nine hours), four to Łódź (30zł, two hours), one to Olsztyn (52zł,

7½ hours), one to Zakopane (26zł, six hours), four to Kraków (29zł, two hours) and two to Wrocław (32zł, three hours).

ZAKOPANE

☎ 018 / pop 30,000

Nestled at the foot of the Tatra Mountains, Zakopane is Poland's major winter sports centre, though it's a popular destination year-round. It may resemble a tourist trap, with its overcommercialised, overpriced exterior, but it also has a relaxed, laid-back vibe that makes it a great place to chill out for a few days, even if you're not intending to ski or hike.

Zakopane also played an important role in keeping Polish culture alive during the long years of foreign rule in the 19th century. Many

artistic types settled in the town, including composer Karol Szymanowski and the writer and painter, Witkacy. Witkacy's father, Stanisław Witkiewicz, was inspired by traditional local architecture to create the famous Zakopane style. Some of his buildings still stand.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Widmo (☎ 206 43 77; ul Galicy 6; per hr 4.50zł; ☎ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun)

MONEY

Dozens of *kantors* can be found along the main streets. There are several banks along the pedestrian mall.

Bank Pekao (☎ 201 40 84; al 3 Maja 5)

Bank BPH (☎ 201 49 09; ul Krupówki 19)

POST

Main post office (ul Krupówki)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 201 22 11; ul Kościuszki 17; ☎ 8am-8pm Jun-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-May) Helpful English-speaking staff provide advice, and sell hiking and city maps. The centre can also arrange rafting trips down the Dunajec River (see p576).

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Centrum Przewodnictwa Tatrzańkiego (Tatra Guide Centre; ☎ 206 37 99; ul Chałubińskiego 42/44; ☎ 9am-3pm) Able to arrange English- and German-speaking mountain guides.

Księgarnia Górską (ul Zaruskiego 5) In the reception area of the Dom Turysty PTTK, this is the best place for regional hiking maps.

Orbis Travel (☎ 201 50 51; ul Krupówki 22) Offers the usual services, as well as accommodation in hotels and *pensions*. Also has an in-house *kantor*.

Sights & Activities

Check out exhibits about regional history, ethnography and geology at the **Tatra Museum** (☎ 201 52 05; ul Krupówki 10; adult/child 5/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun May-Oct, 9am-4pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun Nov-Apr), along with displays on local flora and fauna. Head southwest to **Villa Koliba** (ul Kościeliska 18), the first design (1892) by Witkiewicz in the Zakopane style. Fittingly, it now houses the **Museum of Zakopane Style** (☎ 201 36 02; adult/child 5/4zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun).

About 350m southeast is **Villa Atma** (ul Kaspruciej 19) with its **Szymanowski Museum** (☎ 201 34 93; adult/child 5/3zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Wed, Thu, Sat &

Sun, 10am-6pm Fri), dedicated to the great musician who once lived there. There are piano recitals here in summer.

The **Tatra National Park Natural Museum** (☎ 206 32 03; ul Chałubińskiego 42a; admission free; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat), near the Rondo en route to the national park, has some mildly interesting exhibits about the park's natural history.

A short walk northeast up the hill leads to **Villa Pod Jedlami** (ul Koziniec 1), another splendid house built in the Zakopane style (the interior cannot be visited). Perhaps Witkiewicz's greatest achievement is the **Jaszczurówka Chapel**, about 1.5km further east along the road to Morskie Oko.

Mt Gubałówka (1120m) offers excellent views over the Tatras and is a popular destination for tourists who don't feel overly energetic. The **funicular** (tickets adult/child 8/6zł, return 14/10zł; ☎ 9am-9pm May-Sep, 8am-7pm Oct-Apr) covers the 1388m-long route in less than five minutes, climbing 300m from the funicular station just north of ul Krupówki.

Sleeping

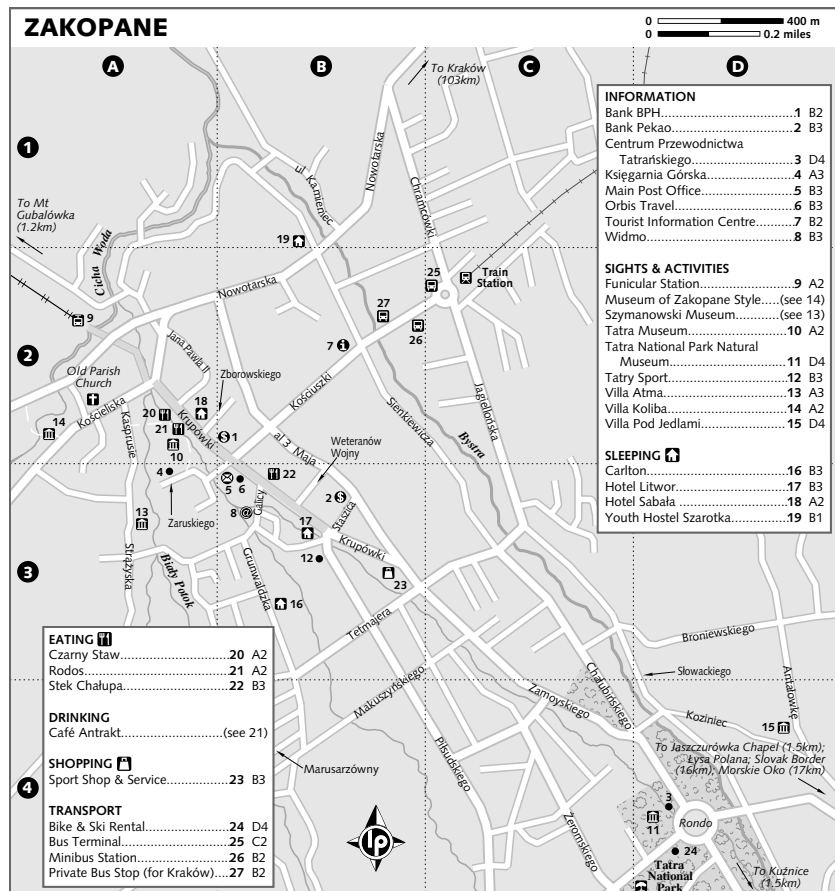
Given the abundance of private rooms and decent hostels, few travellers actually stay in hotels. The tourist office usually knows of great bargains in guesthouses.

Some travel agencies in Zakopane can arrange private rooms, but in the peak season they may not want to offer anything for less than three nights. Expect a double room (singles are rarely offered) to cost about 70zł in the peak season in the town centre, and about 50zł for somewhere further out.

Locals offering private rooms may approach you at the bus or train stations; alternatively, just look out for signs posted in the front of private homes – *noclegi* and *pokoje* both mean 'rooms available'.

Like all seasonal resorts, accommodation prices fluctuate considerably between low season and high season (December to February and July to August). Always book accommodation in advance at these peak times, especially on weekends. The following rates are for high season.

Youth Hostel Szarotka (☎ 201 36 18; www.szarotka.ptsm.republika.pl; ul Nowotarska 45; dm/d 35/90zł; ☎ ☎) This friendly, homely place gets packed in the high season. There's a kitchen and washing machine on site, and bed linen costs 5zł extra. It's on a noisy road about a 10-minute walk from the town centre.



Carlton (☎ 201 44 15; www.carlton.pl; ul Grunwaldzka 11; s/d/tr90/180/270z; 📍) Good value *pension* in a grand old house away from the main drag, featuring light-filled rooms with modern furniture. There's an impressive shared balcony overlooking the road, and a big comfy lounge lined with potted plants.

Hotel Sabala (☎ 201 50 92; www.sabala.zakopane.pl; ul Krupówki 11; s/d/ste from 275/370/480z; 📍) Built in 1894 but thoroughly up-to-date, this striking timber building has a superb location overlooking the picturesque pedestrian thoroughfare. It offers cosy, attic-style rooms, and there's a sauna and solarium on the premises. A candlelit **restaurant** (mains 12-42zł) has views of street life.

Hotel Litwor (☎ 202 42 00; www.litwor.pl; ul Krupówki 40; s/d 425/575zł, ste from 600zł; 📍) This sumptuous four-star place, with large, restful rooms, has all the usual top-end facilities, including a gym and sauna. A discount applies to advance bookings. It also has an excellent restaurant serving classy versions of traditional dishes.

Eating & Drinking

The main street, ul Krupówki, is lined with all sorts of eateries.

Czarny Staw (☎ 201 38 56; ul Krupówki 2; mains 11-35zł; 🕒 10am-1am) Offers a tasty range of Polish dishes, including fish, much of it cooked before your very eyes on the central grill. There's a good salad bar, and live music most nights.

Rodos (ul Krupówki 6; mains 13-29zł; 🕒 9am-10pm) If you need a break from Polish food served by waiters in Tatra costume, this Greek eatery provides a good range of kebabs, gyros and pasta dishes, in a space decorated with Mediterranean scenes and the odd off-theme prop from the Middle East.

Stek Chatupa (☎ 201 59 18; ul Krupówki 33; mains 16-36zł; 🕒 11am-11pm) Big friendly barn of a place, with homely décor and waitresses in traditional garb. The menu features meat dishes, particularly steaks, though there are vegetarian choices among the salads and *pierogi*.

Café Antrakt (☎ 201 73 02; ul Krupówki 6; 🕒 11am-midnight) A mellow venue for an alcoholic or caffeine-laden drink, hidden away above Rodos with an ambient old-meets-new décor. It occasionally hosts live jazz.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (ul Chramcówki), fast PKS buses run to Kraków every 45 to 60 minutes

(13zł, 2½ hours). Two private companies, Trans Frej (www.trans-frej.com.pl, in Polish) and Szwagropol (www.szwagropol.pl, in Polish), also run comfortable buses (15zł) at the same frequency. These private buses leave from a stop along ul Kościuszki in Zakopane, and from the bus terminal in Kraków. At peak times (especially weekends), buy your tickets for the private buses in advance from counters outside the departure points in Zakopane. Tickets are also available in Kraków for Trans Frej buses from **Biuro Turystyki i Zakwaterowania Waweltur** (Map p562; ul Pawia 8) and for Szwagropol buses from **Pol-Tur** (Map p562; ul Pawia 12). The minibus station opposite the bus terminal is most useful for journeys to towns within the Tatra Mountains.

From Zakopane, PKS buses also go once daily to Lublin (57zł, six hours), Sanok (35zł, 6½ hours), Oświęcim (23zł) and Przemyśl; and four times daily to Warsaw (54zł, eight hours). At least one bus daily heads to Poprad in Slovakia (19zł). PKS buses – and minibuses from opposite the bus terminal – regularly travel to Lake Morskie Oko and on to Polana Palenica. To cross into Slovakia, get off this bus/minibus at Łysa Polana, cross the border on foot and take another bus to Tatrzańská Lomnica in Slovakia.

From the **train station** (ul Chramcówki), trains for Kraków (19zł, 3½ hours) leave every two hours or so, but avoid the slow train, which takes up to five hours. Between one and three trains a day go to Częstochowa, Gdynia via Gdańsk, Lublin, Łódź and Poznań, and five head to Warsaw.

TATRA MOUNTAINS

☎ 018

The Tatras, 100km south of Kraków, are the highest range of the Carpathian Mountains. Roughly 60km long and 15km wide, this mountain range stretches across the Polish-Slovak border. A quarter is in Poland and is mostly part of the Tatra National Park (about 212 sq km). The Polish Tatras contain more than 20 peaks over 2000m, the highest of which is Mt Rysy (2499m).

Cable Car to Mt Kasprowy Wierch

The **cable car** (return adult/child 30/20zł; 🕒 7am-9pm Jul-Aug, 7.30-5pm Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Feb) from Kuźnice (3km south of Zakopane) to the summit of Mt Kasprowy Wierch (1985m) is a classic tourist experience enjoyed by Poles

and foreigners alike. At the end of the trip, you can get off and stand with one foot in Poland and the other in Slovakia. The one-way journey takes 20 minutes and climbs 936m. The cable car normally shuts down for two weeks in May and November, and won't operate if the snow and, particularly, the winds are dangerous.

The view from the top is spectacular (clouds permitting). Two chairlifts transport skiers to and from various slopes between December and April. A small cafeteria serves skiers and hikers alike. In summer, many people return to Zakopane on foot down the Gąsienicowa Valley, and the most intrepid walk the ridges all the way across to Lake Morskie Oko via Pięćciu Stawów, a strenuous hike taking a full day in good weather.

If you buy a return ticket, your trip back is automatically reserved for two hours after your departure, so buy a one-way ticket to the top (19zł) and another one down (14zł), if you want to stay longer. Mt Kasprowy Wierch is popular; so in summer, arrive early and expect to wait. PKS buses and minibuses to Kuźnice frequently leave from Zakopane.

Lake Morskie Oko

The emerald-green Lake Morskie Oko (Eye of the Sea) is a popular destination and among the loveliest lakes in the Tatras. PKS buses and minibuses regularly depart from Zakopane for Polana Palenica (30 minutes), from where a road (9km) continues uphill to the lake. Cars, bikes and buses are not allowed up this road, so you'll have to walk, but it's not steep (allow about two hours one way). Alternatively, take a horse-drawn carriage (32/25zł uphill/downhill, but very negotiable) to within 2km of the lake. In winter, transport is by horse-drawn four-seater sledge, which is more expensive. The last minibus to Zakopane returns between 5pm and 6pm.

Hiking

If you're doing any hiking in the Tatras get a copy of the *Tatrzańskie Park Narodowy* map (1.25,000), which shows all hiking trails in the area. Better still, buy one or more of the 14 sheets of *Tatry Polskie*, available at Księgarnia Górská in Zakopane (p573). In July and August these trails can be overrun by tourists, so late spring and early autumn are the best times. Theoretically you can expect better weather in autumn, when rainfall is lower.

Like all alpine regions, the Tatras can be dangerous, particularly during the snow season (November to May). Remember the weather can be unpredictable. Bring proper hiking boots, warm clothing and waterproof rain gear – and be prepared to use occasional ropes and chains (provided along the trails) to get up and down some rocky slopes. Guides are not necessary because many of the trails are marked, but can be arranged in Zakopane (see p573 for details) for about 230zł per day.

There are several picturesque valleys south of Zakopane, including the **Dolina Strążyska**. You can continue from the Strążyska by the red trail up to **Mt Giewont** (1909m), 3½ hours from Zakopane, and then walk down the blue trail to Kuźnice in two hours.

Two long and beautiful forested valleys, the **Dolina Chochołowska** and the **Dolina Kościeliska**, are in the western part of the park, known as the Tatra Zachodnie (West Tatras). These valleys are ideal for cycling. Both are accessible by PKS buses and minibuses from Zakopane.

The Tatra Wysokie (High Tatras) to the east offer quite different scenery: bare granite peaks and glacial lakes. One way to get there is via cable car to **Mt Kasprowy Wierch**, then hike eastward along the red trail to Mt Świnica (2301m) and on to the Zawrat pass (2159m) – a tough three to four hours from Mt Kasprowy. From Zawrat, descend northwards to the Dolina Gąsienicowa along the blue trail and then back to Zakopane.

Alternatively, head south (also along the blue trail) to the wonderful **Dolina Pięćciu Stawów** (Five Lakes Valley), where there is a mountain refuge 1L hours from Zawrat. The blue trail heading west from the refuge passes **Lake Morskie Oko**, 1½ hours from the refuge.

Skiing

Zakopane boasts four major ski areas (and several smaller ones) with more than 50 ski lifts. **Mt Kasprowy Wierch** and **Mt Gubałówka** offer the best conditions and most challenging slopes in the area, with the ski season extending until early May. Lift tickets cost 10zł for one ride at Mt Kasprowy Wierch, and 2zł on the much smaller lift at Mt Gubałówka. Alternatively, you can buy a 10-ride card (70zł Mt Kasprowy Wierch, 18zł Mt Gubałówka) which allows you to skip the queues. Purchase your lift tickets on the relevant mountain.

Ski equipment rental is available at all facilities except Mt Kasprowy Wierch. Otherwise, stop off on your way to Kuźnice at the **ski rental** place near the Rondo in Zakopane. Other places in Zakopane, such as **Tatry Sport** (ul Piłsudskiego 4) and **Sport Shop & Service** (ul Krupówki 52a), also rent ski gear.

Sleeping

Tourists are not allowed to take their own cars into the park; you must walk in, take the cable car or use an official vehicle owned by the park or a hotel or hostel.

Camping is also not allowed in the park, but eight PTTK mountain refuges/hostels provide simple accommodation. Most refuges are small and fill up fast; in midsummer and midwinter they're invariably packed beyond capacity. No one is ever turned away, however, though you may have to crash on the floor if all the beds are taken. Do not arrive too late in the day, and bring along your own bed mat and sleeping bag. All refuges serve simple hot meals, but the kitchens and dining rooms close early (sometimes at 7pm).

The refuges listed here are open all year, but some may be temporarily closed for renovations or because of inclement weather. Check the current situation at the Dom Turysty PTTK in Zakopane or the regional **PTTK headquarters** (☎ 018-443 74 57) in Nowy Sącz.

The easiest refuge to reach from Zakopane is the large and decent **Kalatówki Hotel** (☎ 206 36 44; s/d/tr from 46/90/111zł), a 40-minute walk from the Kuźnice cable-car station. About 30 minutes beyond Kalatówki on the trail to Giewont is **Hala Kondratowa Hostel** (☎ 201 91 14; dm 20-22zł). It's in a great location and has a great atmosphere, but it is small.

Hikers wishing to traverse the park might begin at the **Roztoka Hostel** (☎ 207 74 42; dm 22-30zł), accessible by the bus or minibus to Morskie Oko. An early start from Zakopane, however, would allow you to visit Morskie Oko in the morning and stay at the **Morskie Oko Hostel** (☎ 207 76 09; dm from 40zł), or continue through to the **Dolina Pięciu Stawów Hostel** (☎ 207 76 07; dm from 25zł). This is the highest (1700m) and most scenically located refuge in the Polish Tatras.

DUNAJEC GORGE

An entertaining and leisurely way to explore the Pieniny Mountains is to go **rafting** on the Dunajec River, which winds along the Polish-Slovak border through a spectacular and deep gorge.

The trip starts at the wharf (Przystan Fli-sacka) in Kały, 46km northeast of Zakopane, and finishes at the spa town of Szczawnica. The 17km (2½ hours) raft trip operates between May and October, but only starts when there's a minimum of 10 passengers.

The gorge is an easy day trip from Zakopane. In summer, 10 PKS buses to Kały leave from the bus station. Alternatively, catch a regular bus to Nowy Targ (30 minutes) from Zakopane and one of six daily buses (one hour) to Kały. From Szczawnica, take the bus back to Zakopane or change at Nowy Targ. Each day, five buses also travel between Szczawnica and Kraków.

To avoid waiting around in Kały for a raft to fill up, organise a trip at any travel agency in Zakopane or at the tourist office. The cost is around 60zł to 70zł per person, and includes transport, equipment and guides.

SANOK

☎ 013 / pop 40,000

Nestled in a picturesque valley in the foothills of the Bieszczady Mountains, Sanok has been subject to Ruthenian, Hungarian, Austrian, Russian, German and Polish rule in its eventful history. Although it contains an important industrial zone, it's also a popular base for exploring the mountains.

The helpful **PTTK office** (☎ 463 21 71; www.pttk.sanok.com.pl; ul 3 Maja 2; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), near the market square, is the best place to find brochures on Sanok's attractions. There's also a tourist information desk inside **Orbis Travel** (☎ 463 28 59; ul Grzegorza 4; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). There's a **Bank Pekao** (cnr ul Grzegorza & ul Kościuszki) nearby, and you can check email at **Prox** (☎ 464 22 50; ul Kazimierz Wielkiego 6; per hr 3.50zł) further west.

Sanok is noted for its unique **Museum of Folk Architecture** (☎ 463 16 72; ul Rybickiego 3; adult/child 9/6zł; ☎ 8am-6pm May-Oct, 8am-2pm Nov-Apr), which features architecture from regional ethnic groups. Walk north from the town centre for 2km along ul Mickiewiczza and ul Białogórska, then cross the bridge and turn right. The **Historical Museum** (☎ 464 13 66; ul Zamkowa 2; adult/child 10/7zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue & Wed, 8am-3pm Thu & Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; 8am-3pm Mon, Thu & Fri, 9am-5pm Tue & Wed, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) is housed in a 16th-century castle and contains an impressive collection of Ruthenian icons.

Sanok's surrounding villages are attractions in their own right, as many have lovely old

churches. The marked **Icon Trail** takes hikers or cyclists along a 70km loop, passing by 10 village churches, as well as attractive mountain countryside. Trail leaflets and maps (in English, German and French) are available from the PTTK and Orbis offices.

Convenient budget accommodation is available at **Hotel Pod Trzema Różami** (☎ 463 09 22; trzyroze@ooh.pl; ul Jagiellońska 13; s/d/tr 80/100/120zł; ☎ ☎), about 300m south of the main square. Further south (another 600m) and up the scale is **Hotel Jagielloński** (☎ /fax 463 12 08; ul Jagiellońska 49; s/d/tr/ste from 90/110/130/140zł; ☎ ☎), with distinctive wooden furniture, parquet floors and a very good **restaurant** (mains 14-35zł). Another comfortable option is **Hotel Sanvit** (☎ 465 50 88; www.sanvit.sanok.pl; ul Łazienna 1; s/d/tr 115/135/165zł, ste from 155zł; ☎ ☎ ☎), just west of the square, with bright, modern rooms, shining bathrooms and a restaurant.

Karczma Jadło Karpackie (☎ 464 67 00; Rynek 12; mains 8-20zł; ☎ 9am-10pm) is an amenable, down-to-earth bar and restaurant on the main square. A good place to have a drink, alcoholic or otherwise, is **Weranda Caffè** (☎ 069 741 936; ul 3 Maja 14; ☎ 10am-10pm), a cosy café-bar with a fireplace, and outdoor seating in summer.

The bus terminal and adjacent train station are about 1km southeast of the main square. Four buses go daily to Przemysł (11zł, two hours), and one to Zakopane (35zł, 6½ hours). Buses also head regularly to Kraków and Warsaw. Train journeys to these destinations, however, may require multiple changes.

PRZEMYSŁ

☎ 016 / pop 68,000

Everything about Przemysł (*psheh-mishl*) feels big: its sprawling market square, the massive churches surrounding it, and the broad San River flowing through the city.

Luckily the area of most interest to visitors – its sloping and well-preserved **Rynek** (Market Square) – is compact and easily explored. The **tourist office** (☎ 675 16 64; www.parr.pl; Rynek 26; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) is on the northwest corner of the square as it stretches down toward the river. Check your emails at **Blue Net** (☎ 678 55 62; ul Słowackiego 14; per hr 3zł), along the main road on the eastern edge of the Old Town.

About 350m southwest of the Rynek are the ruins of a 14th-century **castle** (ul Zamkowa), built by Kazimierz Wielki. The **Regional Museum** (☎ 678 33 25; plac Czackiego 3; adult/child 5/3zł;

☎ 10.30am-5pm Tue & Fri, 10am-2pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun) houses a splendid collection of Ruthenian icons and Austro-Hungarian militaria, and a dry display of local archaeological finds. It's about 150m southeast of the Rynek.

For variety, visit the curious **Museum of Bells and Pipes** (☎ 678 96 66; ul Władycze 3; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Tue & Fri, 10am-2.30pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 12.15-3.45pm Sun Apr-Oct) in the old Clock Tower, where you can inspect several floors worth of vintage bells, elaborately carved pipes and cigar cutters (the city has long been famous across Poland for manufacturing these items). From the top of the tower, there's a great view of town.

Back in the Rynek, the **Museum of the City of Przemysł** (☎ 678 65 01; Rynek 9; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Tue & Fri, 10am-2pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun) showcases furniture, photographs and other items from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Przemysł has a wide selection of inexpensive accommodation, including the central **Dom Wycieczkowy Podzamcze** (☎ 678 53 74; ul Waygarta 3; dm 20-24zł, d/tr 58/72zł), on the western edge of the Old Town. Its rooms have seen some wear, but have recently been repainted, and the largest dorm is decked out with potted plants and a TV. **Hotelik Pod Basztą** (☎ 670 82 68; ul Królowej Jadwigi 4; s/d/tr from 49/59/79zł) is just below the castle. Rooms are a little old-fashioned, with shared bathrooms, but many have castle or city views. The one 'superior' room boasts a spectacular balcony overlooking the Old Town.

More comfort is available at **Hotel Europejski** (☎ 675 71 00; ul Sowińskiego 4; s/d/tr 90/120/140zł) in a renovated old building facing the attractive façade of the train station. An impressive staircase leads to simple, light rooms with high ceilings and modern bathrooms.

Restauracja Karpacka (☎ 678 90 57; ul Kościuszki 5; mains 8-18zł; ☎ 10am-10pm), just west of the tourist office, is an old-fashioned eatery featuring bow-tied waiters, a timber ceiling and yellow stucco walls. It serves a good range of Polish standards, and Ukrainian *borscht* in a nod to the neighbours just down the road.

Another worthy place to eat is **Restauracja Pienica Mieszkańska** (☎ 675 04 59; Rynek 9; mains 8-25zł; ☎ 11am-11pm), in the same building as the city museum. Its cellar setting is decorated with mini-chandeliers and lace tablecloths. The bourgeoisie platter (three kinds of meat) will interest ardent carnivores, and there's a reasonable selection of soups and fish dishes.

From Przemysł, buses run to Lviv (95km) in Ukraine six times a day and regularly to all towns in southeastern Poland, including Sanok (11zł, two hours, four daily). Trains run regularly from Przemysł to Lublin, Kraków and Warsaw, and stop here on the way to/from Lviv. The bus terminal and adjacent train station in Przemysł are about 1km northeast of the Rynek.

LUBLIN

☎ 081 / pop 358,000

Lublin is a city resonant with important moments in Polish history. In 1569 the Lublin Union was signed here, uniting Poland and Lithuania; and at the end of WWII, the Soviet Union set up a communist government

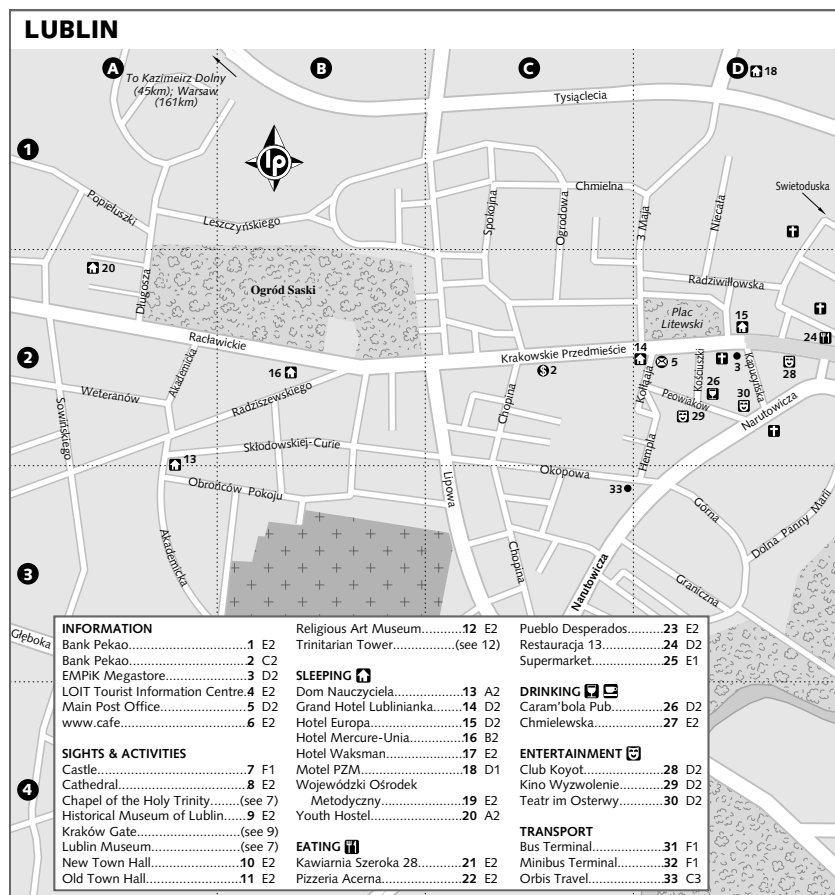
in Lublin, prior to the liberation of Warsaw. Throughout history the city has faced numerous invasions by warlike neighbours, though today its beautifully preserved Old Town is a peaceful blend of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque architecture.

Information

Plenty of ATMs can be found on ul Krakowskie Przedmieście, and at several *kantors* along ul Peowiaków.

Bank Pekao (ul Królewska 1) Changes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on Visa and MasterCard. There's a branch at ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 64.

EMPIK Megastore (Galeria Centrum, 3rd fl, ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 16) Maps, books and international newspapers are available here.



LOIT Tourist Information Centre (☎ 532 44 12; www.lublin.pl; ul Jezuitcka 1/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Apr) Has helpful English-speaking staff, and lots of free brochures, including the city walking-route guide *Tourist Routes of Lublin*. It also sells maps of various Polish and Ukrainian cities.

Main post office (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 50) **www.cafe** (☎ 442 35 80; 3rd fl, Rynek 8; per hr 3zł; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Sights

CASTLE

The substantial castle, standing on a hill northeast of the Old Town, has a dark history. It was built in the 14th century, then was rebuilt as a prison in the 1820s. During the

Nazi occupation, more than 100,000 people passed its doors before being deported to the death camps. Its major occupant is now the **Lublin Museum** (☎ 532 50 01; www.zamek-lub lin.pl; ul Zamkowa 9; adult/child 6.50/4.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun). On display are paintings, silverware, porcelain, wood-carvings and weaponry, mostly labelled only in Polish. Check out the alleged 'devil's paw-print' on the 17th-century table in the foyer, linked to an intriguing local legend.

At the eastern end of the castle is the gorgeous 14th-century **Chapel of the Holy Trinity** (adult/child 6.50/4.50zł, incl museum 10/6zł; ☎ 9am-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4.45pm Sun), accessible via the museum. Its interior is covered with polychrome Russo-Byzantine frescoes painted in 1418 – possibly the finest medieval wall paintings in Poland.

OLD TOWN

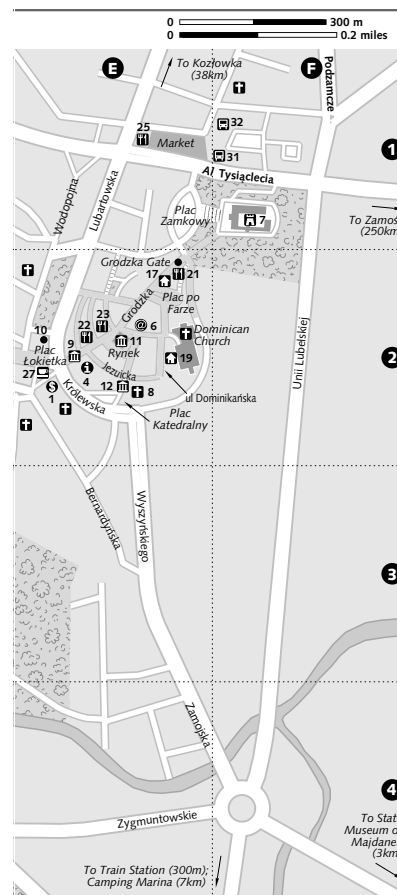
The compact historic quarter is centred on the **Rynek**, the main square surrounding the neoclassical **Old Town Hall** (1781). The **Historical Museum of Lublin** (☎ 532 60 01; plac Łokietka 3; adult/child 3.50/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun), displaying documents and photos, is inside the 14th-century **Kraków Gate**, a remnant of medieval fortifications. Daily at noon, a bugler plays a special tune atop the **New Town Hall** opposite the gate. (If you're a bugling addict, don't miss the annual **National Bugle Contest** on 15 August.)

For an expansive view of the Old Town, climb to the top of the **Trinitarian Tower** (1819), which houses the **Religious Art Museum** (☎ 743 64 33; plac Katedralny; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar). Nearby is the 16th-century **cathedral** (plac Katedralny; ☎ dawn-dusk) and its impressive baroque frescoes. The painting of the Virgin Mary is said to have shed tears in 1949, so it's a source of pride and reverence for local believers.

MAJDANEK

About 4km southeast is the **State Museum of Majdanek** (☎ 744 26 40; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm May-Sep, 8am-3pm Oct-Apr). It commemorates one of the largest Nazi death camps, where some 235,000 people, including more than 100,000 Jews, were massacred. Barracks, guard towers and barbed wire fences remain in place; even more chilling are the crematorium and gas chambers.

A short explanatory film (admission 2zł) can be seen in the visitors centre, from which



a marked 'visiting route' (5km) passes the massive stone **Monument of Fight & Martyrdom** and finishes at the domed **mausoleum** holding the ashes of many victims.

Trolleybus 156 from near the Bank Pekao along ul Królewska goes to the entrance of Majdanek.

Pick up the free *Tourist Routes of Lublin* guide, which includes a *Heritage Trail of the Lublin Jews* chapter, from the tourist office, if you want to walk along the marked **Jewish Heritage Trail** around Lublin.

Sleeping BUDGET

Youth Hostel (☎ fax 533 06 28; ul Długosza 6; dm/d/tr 19/50/75zł) Modest but well run. Simple rooms are decorated with potted plants, and there's a kitchen and a pleasant courtyard area with seating. Bed linen costs 6zł extra and it's 100m up a lane off ul Długosza.

Wojewódzki Ośrodek Metodyczny (☎ 532 92 41; www.wodn.lublin.pl; ul Dominikańska 5; dm 45zł) This place in an atmospheric Old Town building has rooms with between two and five beds. It's good value and often busy, so book ahead. Look for the sign 'Wojewódzki Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli' outside.

Dom Nauczyciela (☎ 533 82 85; www.oupislublin.republika.pl; ul Akademicka 4; s/d/tr from 90/106/189zł) Value-packed accommodation in the heart of the university quarter, west of the Old Town. Rooms have old-fashioned décor but are clean, with good bathrooms. Some rooms have views over the city, and there are bars and eateries nearby.

Camping Marina (☎ 745 69 10; fax 744 10 70; ul Krężnicka 6; per tent 8zł, cabins from 55zł; ☔ May-Sep) Lublin's only camping ground is serenely located on a lake about 8km south of the Old Town. To get there take bus 17, 20 or 21 from the train station to Stadion Sygnał and then catch bus 25.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Motel PZM (☎ 533 42 32; ul Prusa 8; s/d from 120/160zł; ☎ ☔) This car-friendly accommodation is housed in an uninspiring concrete pile, but it's handy for the bus station. The rooms have recently been renovated, with new furniture and freshly tiled bathrooms.

Hotel Waksman (☎ 532 54 54; www.waksman.pl; ul Grodzka 19; s/d 180/200zł, ste from 240zł; ☎ ☔) This small gem is excellent value for its quality and location. Just within the Grodzka Gate in the

Old Town, it offers elegantly appointed rooms with different colour schemes, and an attractive lounge with tapestries on the walls. One room has a waterbed.

Hotel Europa (☎ 535 03 03; www.hoteleuropa.pl; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 29; s/d 290/380zł; ☎ ☔ ☑) Central hotel offering smart, thoroughly modernised rooms with high ceilings and elegant furniture, in a restored 19th-century building. Two rooms are designed for disabled access, and there's a nightclub downstairs.

Hotel Mercure-Unia (☎ 533 72 12; www.orbis.pl; al Racławickie 12; d from 245zł; ☎ ☔ ☑) This business hotel is big, central and convenient, and offers all modern conveniences, though it's lacking in atmosphere. There's a gym, bar and restaurant on the premises.

Grand Hotel Lublinianka (☎ 446 61 00; www.lublinianka.com; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 56; s/d from 300/340zł; ☎ ☔ ☑) The swankiest place in town includes free use of a sauna and Turkish bath. The cheaper (3rd floor) rooms have skylights but are relatively small, while 'standard' rooms are spacious and have glitzy marble bathrooms. One room is designed for disabled access, and there's a good restaurant downstairs.

Eating & Drinking

There's a supermarket located near the bus terminal.

Pizzeria Acerna (☎ 532 45 31; Rynek 2; mains 10-24zł; ☔ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) The Acerna is a popular eatery on the main square, serving cheap pizzas and pasta in its subterranean dining area.

Pueblo Desperados (☎ 534 61 79; Rynek 5; mains 10-27zł; ☔ 9am-10pm Mon-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Takes a reasonable stab at Mexican cuisine in its tiny sombrero-decorated premises off the Old Town's central square. The usual suspects (burritos, tacos) are on the menu, along with Corona beer and so-called Mexican pizzas.

Restauracja 13 (☎ 532 29 19; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 13; mains 10-26zł; ☔ 9am-midnight) Cosy orange-hued dining option with high-backed chairs and curious 'thumbprint' patterns on the walls. Serves a good range of Polish dishes (and pizzas), and there's an extensive drinks list.

Kawiarnia Szeroka 28 (☎ 534 61 09; ul Grodzka 21; mains 15-40zł; ☔ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri-Sun) An evocative place with timber bench seating and a flagstone floor, offering good

Jewish and Polish cuisine. There's a terrace at the back and regular live *klezmer* bands in the evenings playing traditional Jewish music (15zł extra).

Chmielewska (☎ 743 72 96; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 8; ☔ 10am-10pm) Charming old-fashioned café that looks like it dropped in from a bygone century. The menu is full of classic Polish cakes such as *sernik* (cheesecake) and *szarlotka* (apple pie), with a wide selection of coffee, tea and alcoholic drinks.

Caram'bola Pub (☎ 534 63 80; ul Kościuszki 8; ☔ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) This pub is a pleasant place for a beer or two. It also serves inexpensive bar food, including the ubiquitous pizzas.

Entertainment

Club Koyot (☎ 743 67 35; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 26; ☔ 5pm-late Sat-Thu, noon-late Fri) This club is concealed in a courtyard and features live music or DJs most nights.

Kino Wyzwolenie (☎ 532 24 16; ul Peowiaków 6; adult/child 15/13zł) If you'd prefer a movie to music, this is a classic 1920s cinema in a convenient location.

Teatr im Osterwy (☎ 532 42 44; ul Narutowicza 17) Lublin's main theatrical venue which features mostly classical plays.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (al Tysiąclecia), opposite the castle, buses head to Białystok (24zł, three daily), Kraków (38zł to 46zł, two daily), Łódź (33zł, three daily), Olsztyn (65zł, one daily), Toruń (63zł, one daily) and Zakopane (43zł, five daily). Six buses also go daily to Przemysł (14zł), 12 head to Zamość (13zł) and more than two dozen travel to various destinations within Warsaw (30zł, three hours). From the same terminal, Polski Express offers seven daily buses to Warsaw (34zł, three hours). Private minibuses head to various destinations, including Warsaw (30zł, 2½ hours, every half-hour), from bus stops north and west of the bus terminal.

The **Lublin Główny train station** (plac Dworcowy) is 1.2km south of the Old Town and accessible by bus 1 or 13. When leaving the station, look for the bus stop on ul Gazowa, to the left of the station entrance as you walk down the steps (not the trolleybus stop). Alternatively, trolleybus 150 from the station is handy for the university area and the youth hostel. At least a dozen fast trains go daily to Warsaw

(32zł, 2½ hours) and two fast trains travel to Kraków (46zł, five hours). Buy tickets from the station or **Orbis Travel** (☎ 532 22 56; www.orbistravel.com.pl; ul Narutowicza 33a).

Around Lublin KOZŁÓWKA

The hamlet of Kozłówka (*koz-woof-kah*), 38km north of Lublin, is famous for its sumptuous late-baroque **palace**, which houses the **Museum of the Zamoyski Family** (☎ 852 83 00; www.muzeumzamoyskich.lublin.pl; adult/child 24/12zł; ☔ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Dec). It features original furnishings, ceramic stoves and a large collection of paintings.

Even more interesting is its incongruous **Socialist-Realist Art Gallery** (adult/child 5/3zł; ☔ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Dec), decked out with numerous portraits and statues of communist-era leaders. It also features many idealised scenes of farmers and factory workers striving for socialism.

You can stay in the **palace rooms** and on an 'agrotourist' **farm** (☎ 852 83 00). Contact staff in advance about availability and current costs.

From Lublin, two buses head to Kozłówka each morning, usually on the way to Michów. Only a few buses return directly to Lublin in the afternoon, so check the timetable before visiting the museum. Alternatively, you can catch one of the frequent buses to/from Lubartów, which is regularly connected by bus and minibus to Lublin.

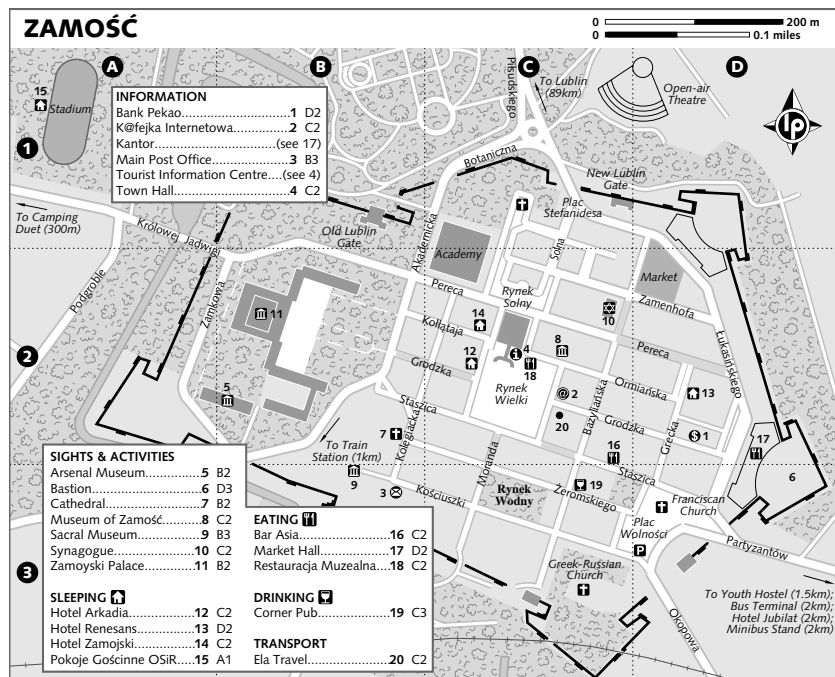
ZAMOŚĆ

☎ 084 / pop 67,000

While most Polish cities' attractions centre on their medieval heart, Zamość (*zah-moshch*) is pure Renaissance. It was founded in 1580 by Jan Zamoyski, the nation's chancellor and commander-in-chief. Designed by an Italian architect, the city was intended as a prosperous trading settlement between Western Europe and the region stretching east to the Black Sea.

In WWII, the Nazis earmarked the city for German resettlement, sending the Polish population into slave labour or concentration camps. Most of the Jewish population of the renamed 'Himmlerstadt' was exterminated.

The splendid architecture of Zamość's Old Town escaped destruction in the war's latter stages, and was added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 1992.



Information

There's a *kantor* in the Market Hall.

Bank Pekao (ul Grodzka 2) Has an ATM, cashes travellers cheques and gives advances on Visa and MasterCard.

K@fejka Internetowa (☎ 639 29 32; Rynek Wielki10; per hr 3zł) internet access.

Main post office (ul Kościuszki) Near the cathedral.

Tourist information Centre (☎ 639 22 92; Rynek Wielki 13; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-Apr) This helpful office in the town hall sells *Along the Streets of Zamość* (2zł; in English, German and Italian) and the glossy *Zamość – A Short Guidebook* (8zł), along with a good stock of maps.

Sights

Rynek Wielki is the heart of Zamość attractive Old Town. The impressive Italianate Renaissance square (exactly 100m by 100m) is dominated by the lofty, pink **Town Hall** and surrounded by colourful arcaded burghers' houses, many adorned with elegant designs. The **Museum of Zamość** (☎ 638 64 94; ul Ormiańska 30; adult/child 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is based in two of the loveliest buildings on the Rynek and houses interesting exhibits, including

paintings, folk costumes, archaeological finds and a scale model of the 16th-century town.

Southwest of the square is the mighty 16th-century **cathedral** (ul Kolegiacka; ☎ dawn-dusk), which hosts the tomb of Jan Zamoyski in the chapel to the right of the high altar. The **belfry** (1zł; ☎ May-Sep) can be climbed for good views of the historic cathedral bells and the Old Town. In the grounds, the **Sacral Museum** (admission 1zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-Apr) features various robes, paintings and sculptures.

Zamoyski Palace (closed to the public) lost much of its character when it was converted into a military hospital in the 1830s. Today it's used for government offices. Nearby, the **Arsenal Museum** (☎ 638 40 76; ul Zamkowa 2; adult/child 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) holds an unremarkable collection of cannon, swords and fire-arms. To the north of the palace stretches a beautifully landscaped **park**.

Before WWII, Jewish citizens accounted for 45% of the town's population (of 12,000) and most lived in the area north and east of the palace. The most significant Jewish

architectural relic is the Renaissance **synagogue** (☎ 0608 409 055; ul Pereca 14; admission 2zł; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, by appointment Oct-Apr), built in the early 17th century. Until recently it was used as a public library, but is now empty and awaiting transformation into a museum. In the meantime you can visit and see its original wall and ceiling decoration.

On the eastern edge of the Old Town is the antiquated but bustling **Market Hall** (Hala Targowa). Behind it is the best surviving **bastion** from the original city walls.

Sleeping BUDGET

Youth Hostel (☎ 627 91 25; ul Zamoyskiego 4; dm 12-16zł; ☎ Jul & Aug) You can find this hostel in a school building 1.5km east of the Old Town, not far from the bus terminal. It's basic but functional and very cheap.

Pokoje Gościnne OSiR (☎ 638 60 11; ul Królowej Jadwigi 8; dm 23.50zł, s/d/tr 90/125/150zł; ☎) Located in a sprawling sporting complex a 15-minute walk west of the Old Town, and packed with old trophies and students playing table tennis. Rooms are plainly furnished, clean and comfortable, although the bathrooms fall short of the ideal.

Camping Duet (☎ 639 24 99; ul Królowej Jadwigi 14; s/d/tr 70/85/110zł; ☎) About 1.5km west of the Old Town, Camping Duet has neat bungalows, tennis courts, a restaurant, sauna and Jacuzzi. Larger bungalows sleep up to six.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Arkadia (☎ 638 65 07; www.arkadia.zamosc.pl; Rynek Wielki 9; s/d/tr 100/150/180zł; ☎) With just seven rooms, this compact place offers a pool table and restaurant in addition to lodgings. It's charming but shabby, though its location right on the market square is hard to beat.

Hotel Jubilat (☎ 638 64 01; hoteljubilat@hoga.pl; ul Kardynała Wyszyńskiego 52; s/d 134/173zł; ☎) An acceptable, if slightly drab, place to spend the night, right beside the bus station. It couldn't be handier for late arrivals or early departures, but it's a long way from anywhere else. It has a restaurant and fitness club.

Hotel Renesans (☎ 639 20 01; hotelrenesans@hoga.pl; ul Grecka 6; s/d 139/198zł; ☎) It's ironic that a hotel named after the Renaissance is housed in the Old Town's ugliest building. However, it's central and the rooms are comfortable enough, if you can ignore the brown-patterned carpets.

Hotel Zamojski (☎ 639 25 16; www.orbis.pl; ul Kollataja 2/4/6; s/d/ste 192/285/415zł; ☎) The best joint in town is situated within three connected old houses, just off the square. The rooms are modern and tastefully furnished, and there's a good on-site restaurant and cocktail bar, along with a fitness centre.

Eating & Drinking

There are a few cheap fast-food outlets in the Market Hall.

Bar Asia (☎ 639 23 04; ul Staszica 10; mains 5-8zł; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) For hungry but broke travellers, this popular-style place is ideal. It serves cheap and tasty Polish food including several variants of *pierogi*, in a plain space with lace tablecloths and potted plants.

Restauracja Muzealna (☎ 638 73 00; ul Ormiańska 30; mains 8-18zł; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-9pm Sun) Subterranean restaurant in an atmospheric cellar below the main square, bedecked with ornate timber furniture and portraits of nobles. It serves a better class of Polish cuisine at reasonable prices, and has a well-stocked bar.

Corner Pub (☎ 627 06 94; ul Żeromskiego 6; ☎ 11am-11pm) This cosy Irish-style pub is a good place to have a drink. It has comfy booths and the walls are ornamented with bric-a-brac such as antique clocks, swords and model cars.

Getting There & Away

Buses are usually more convenient and quicker than trains. The **bus terminal** (ul Hrubieszowska) is 2km east of the Old Town and linked by frequent city buses, primarily route Nos 0 and 3. Daily, one or two fast buses go to Kraków (40zł, four hours), four to Warsaw (37zł, five hours) and nine to Lublin (13zł, two hours).

Quicker and cheaper are the minibuses that travel every 30 minutes between Lublin and Zamość (10zł, 1½ hours). They leave from the minibuses stand opposite the bus terminal in Zamość and from a disorganised corner northwest of the bus terminal in Lublin. Check the changeable timetable for departures to other destinations, including Warsaw and Kraków.

From the train station, about 1km southwest of the Old Town, several slow trains head to Lublin (about four hours) every day and one plods along to Warsaw (six hours). **Ela Travel** (☎ 638 57 75; ul Grodzka 18) sells international bus and air tickets.

SILESIA

Silesia (Śląsk) has a history of ethnic and political flux, having been governed by Polish, Bohemian, Austrian and German rulers. After the devastating Mongol invasion of Europe in the 13th century, Silesia's rulers welcomed German immigration to rebuild population numbers, unwittingly foreshadowing future tensions between Poles and ethnic Germans. After two centuries as part of Prussia and Germany, the territory was largely included within Poland's new borders after WWII.

Nowadays Upper Silesia is the nation's industrial heart, while Lower Silesia is a fertile farming region centred on Wrocław. Along the region's southwestern edge run the Sudeten Mountains, forming the border with the Czech republic.

The industrial zone around Katowice has limited attraction for visitors. However, Wrocław is a beautiful historic city with lively nightlife, and the Sudeten Mountains draw hikers and other nature lovers.

WROCLAW

☎ 071 / pop 639,000

When citizens of beautiful Kraków enthusiastically encourage you to visit Wrocław (*wrots-wahf*), you know you're onto something good. The city's beautiful Old Town is a gracious mix of Gothic and baroque styles, and its large student population ensures a healthy number of restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

Wrocław has been traded back and forth between various rulers over the centuries, but began life in the year 1000 under the Polish Piast dynasty and developed into a prosperous trading and cultural centre. In the 1740s it passed to Prussia, under the German name of Breslau. Under Prussian rule, the city became a major textile manufacturing centre, greatly increasing its population.

Upon its return to Poland in 1945, Wrocław was a shell of its former self, having sustained massive damage in WWII. Though 70% of the city was destroyed, sensitive restoration has returned the historic centre to its former beauty.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK Megastore (☎ 343 39 72; Rynek 50) For the widest choice of foreign-language newspapers and magazines.

Księgarnia Podróżnika (☎ 792 30 65; ul Wita Stwosza 19/20) The best place for maps and guidebooks.

INTERNET ACCESS

Dr Joystick (☎ 322 14 88; ul Staramylnska 2a; per hr 3zł; ☎ 10.30am-10.30pm)

W Sercu Miasta (☎ 342 46 75; ul Przejście Żelaznicze; per hr 5zł; ☎ 24hrs) Down a laneway in the middle of the Rynek.

MONEY

There are *kantors* through the city centre and a number in the bus and train stations.

Bank Pekao (ul Olawska 2) Offers the usual financial services.

POST

Main post office (Rynek 28; ☎ 6.30am-8.30pm)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 344 31 11; www.wroclaw.pl; Rynek 14; ☎ 9am-9pm May-Sep, 9am-8pm Oct-Apr) Provides a variety of free brochures and maps and sells souvenirs.

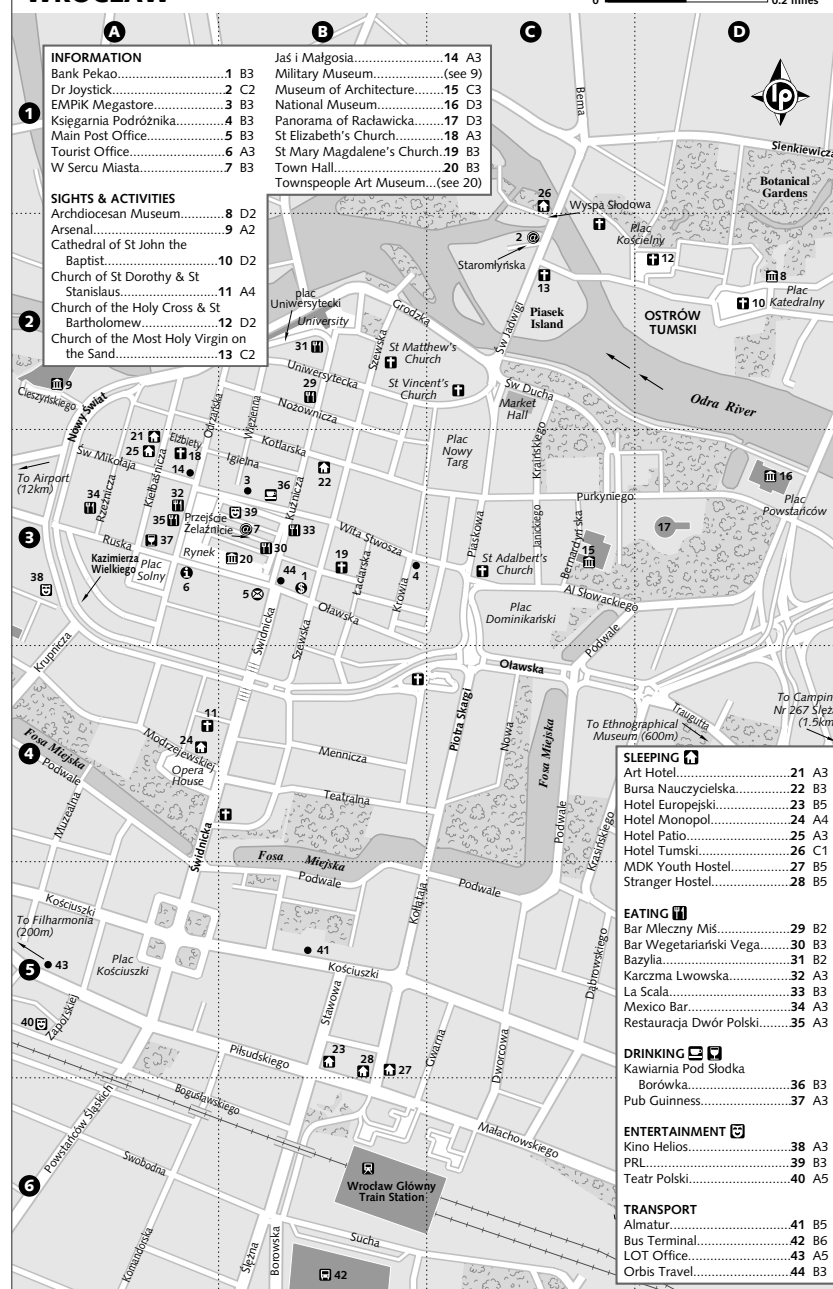
Sights

Wrocław's pride and joy is the giant **Panorama of Racławicka** (☎ 344 23 44; ul Purkyniego 11; adult/child 20/15zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr), a 360-degree painting of the 1794 Battle of Racławice, in which the Polish peasant army, led by Tadeusz Kościuszko, defeated Russian forces intent on partitioning Poland. Created by Jan Styka and Wojciech Kossak for the centenary of the battle in 1894, the painting is an immense 114m long and 15m high, and was brought here by Polish immigrants displaced from Lviv after WWII. Due to the communist government's uneasiness about glorifying a famous Russian defeat, however, the panorama wasn't re-erected until 1985, in a circular building east of the Old Town. Obligatory tours (with audio in English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and other languages) run every 30 minutes from 9am to 4.30pm April to November, and 10am to 3pm from December to March. The ticket also allows entry to the National Museum on the same day.

Located nearby, the **National Museum** (☎ 343 88 39; plac Powstańców Warszawy 5; adult/child 15/10zł, free Sat; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Fri & Sun, 10am-6pm Sat) exhibits Silesian medieval art, and a fine collection of modern Polish painting. Entry is included with a ticket to the Panorama.

In the centre of the Old Town is the **Rynek**, Poland's second-largest old market square

WROCLAW



(after Kraków). The beautiful **Town Hall** (built 1327–1504) on the southern side plays host to the **Townpeople Art Museum** (☎ 347 16 90; adult/child 7/5zł, free Wed; ☎ 11am–5pm Wed–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun), with stately rooms on show, and exhibits featuring the art of gold and the stories of famous Wrocław inhabitants.

In the northwestern corner of the Rynek are two small houses called **Jaś i Matgosia** (ul Św. Mikołaja) linked by a baroque gate (closed to the public). Behind them is the monumental 14th-century **St Elizabeth's Church** (ul Elżbiety 1; admission 5zł; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 11am–5pm Sat, 1–5pm Sun May–Oct, 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1–7pm Sun Nov–Apr) with its 83m-high tower, which you can climb for city views. The southwestern corner of the Rynek opens into **plac Solny** (Salt Square), once the site of the town's salt trade and now home to a 24-hour flower market.

One block east is the Gothic **St Mary Magdalene's Church** (ul Łaciarska; admission free; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Sat) with a Romanesque portal from 1280 incorporated into its southern external wall. Further east, the 15th-century former Bernardine church and monastery encompasses the **Museum of Architecture** (☎ 344 82 78; ul Bernardyńska 5; adult/child 7/5zł; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, noon–6pm Thu, 11am–5pm Sun).

West of the Rynek is the **Arsenal**, a remnant of the town's 15th-century fortifications. It now houses the **Military Museum** (☎ 347 16 96; ul Cieszyńskiego 9; adult/child 7/5zł, free Wed; ☎ 11am–5pm Wed–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun), with the usual collection of old weapons.

North of the river is **Ostrów Tumski** (Cathedral Island), a picturesque area full of churches, though it's no longer an island (an arm of the Odra River was reclaimed during the 19th century). Here you'll find the Gothic **Cathedral of St John the Baptist** (plac Katedralny; ☎ 10am–8pm except during services). Uniquely, there's a lift to whisk you to the top of the **tower** (adult/child 4/3zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat) for superb views. Next door is the **Archdiocesan Museum** (☎ 327 11 78; plac Katedralny 16; adult/child 3/2zł; ☎ 9am–3pm Tue–Sun). Nearby are the charming **Botanical Gardens** (☎ 322 59 57; ul Sienkiewicza 23; adult/child 7/5zł; ☎ 8am–6pm), where you can chill out among the chestnut trees and tulips.

West from the cathedral is the two-storey Gothic **Church of the Holy Cross & St Bartholomew** (plac Kościelny; ☎ 9am–6pm), built between 1288 and 1350. Cross over the small bridge to the 14th-century **Church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary on the Sand** (ul Św. Jadwigi; ☎ erratic) with its lofty

Gothic vaults and year-round nativity scene. Classical music concerts are often held in these two venues.

To the southeast of the Old Town is the **Ethnographical Museum** (☎ 344 33 13; ul Romualda Traugutta 111; adult/child 5/4zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun, 11am–4pm Thu) and to the south is the **Church of St Dorothy & St Stanislaus** (ul Świdnicka; ☎ dawn–dusk), a massive Gothic complex built in 1351.

Sleeping BUDGET

MDK Youth Hostel (☎ 343 88 56; mdkkopernik.wp.pl; ul Kółkątą 20; dm/d from 22/29zł) Not far from the train station, this is a basic, recently renovated place, located in a grand mustard-coloured building. Some dorms are huge and beds are packed close together. It's almost always full, so book ahead.

Stranger Hostel (☎ 344 12 06; www.thestrangerhostel.com; ul Kółkątą 16; dm 50zł; ☎ ☎) A tatty old staircase leads up to Wrocław's best budget accommodation. Dorms are set in renovated apartment rooms with ornate lamps and decorative ceilings. Bathrooms are shiny clean, and guests have free access to a kitchen and washing machine. There's a games console and a DVD projector for rainy days.

Bursa Nauczycielska (☎ 344 37 81; ul Kotlarska 42; s/d/q 50/90/104zł) A basic but clean hostel with shared bathrooms, ideally located just one block northeast of the Rynek. There's a lot of brown in the colour scheme, but the rooms are quite cosy.

Camping Nr 267 Śleza (☎ 372 55 11; ul Na Grobli 16/18; per person/tent 14/3zł, d/tr bungalows 60/90zł; ☎) On the bank of the Odra, 2km east of the Old Town. Take tram 5 to plac Wróblewskiego from the train station and walk about 1km further east.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Monopol (☎ 343 70 41; www.orbis.pl; ul Modrzewskiej 2; s 122–182zł, d 164–264zł; ☎) Adolf Hitler was a frequent visitor, but don't let that put you off: Marlene Dietrich and Pablo Picasso stayed here too. It's an attractive old-fashioned hotel with marble pillars and carved woodwork in the foyer, though the cheapest rooms are fairly basic. The buffet breakfast makes it good value for the price and location.

Hotel Europejski (☎ 343 10 71; www.odratourist.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 88; s/d 195/205zł; ☎) Very handy for the train station. The pricier 'renovated'

rooms are large and comfortable, though the décor's a bit dated.

Old Town Apartments (Map p550; ☎ 022-887 98 00; www.warsawshotel.com; Rynek Starego Miasta 12/14, Warsaw; apt 250–420zł) Warsaw-based agency with modern, fully furnished one-bedroom apartments around Wrocław's main square. Weekly rates are available.

Hotel Tumski (☎ 322 60 99; www.hotel-tumski.com.pl; Wyspa Słodowa 10; s/d/ste 230/320zł/480zł; ☎) This is a neat hotel in a peaceful setting overlooking the river, offering reasonable value for money. It's ideal for exploring the lovely ecclesiastical quarter, and there's a good restaurant attached.

Hotel Patio (☎ 375 04 00; www.hotelpatio.pl; ul Kiełbaśniczna 24; s/d/ste from 280/310/395zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) Pleasant lodgings a short hop from the main square, and actually within two buildings linked by a covered sunlit courtyard. Rooms are clean and light, sometimes small but with reasonably high ceilings. There's a restaurant, bar and hairdresser on site.

Art Hotel (☎ 787 71 00; www.arthotel.pl; ul Kiełbaśniczna 20; s/d/ste from 320/360/430zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Super-elegant accommodation in a renovated apartment building. Rooms feature tastefully restrained décor, quality fittings and gleaming bathrooms. Within the arched brick cellar is a top-notch restaurant, and there's a fitness room to work off the resultant calories.

Eating & Drinking

Bar Mleczny Miś (☎ 343 49 63; ul Kuźnicza 45–47; mains 3–12zł; ☎ 7am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–5pm Sat) In the university area, this classic cheap-eats cafeteria is basic but popular with frugal university students. Look for the bear above the sign.

Bazyliia (plac Uniwersytecki; mains 4–9zł; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 7.30am–8pm Sat) Inexpensive and bustling modern take on the classic *bar mleczny*, in a curved space with huge plate-glass windows overlooking the venerable university buildings. The menu has a lot of Polish standards such as *bigos* and *gołąbki*, and a decent range of salads and other vegetable dishes.

Bar Wegetariański Vega (☎ 344 39 34; Rynek 1/2; mains 5–12zł; ☎ 8am–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat) This is a cheap cafeteria in the centre of the Rynek, offering veggie dishes in a light green space. Good choice of soups and crepes.

Mexico Bar (☎ 346 02 92; ul Rzeźnicza 34; mains 11–39zł; ☎ noon–midnight) Compact, warmly lit restaurant featuring sombreros, backlit masks and a chandelier made of beer bottles. There's

a small bar to lean on while waiting for a table. All the Tex-Mex standards are on the menu, but book at least two days ahead for a table on weekends.

Karczma Lwowska (☎ 343 98 87; Rynek 4; mains 20–37zł; ☎ noon–midnight) Has a great spot on the main square, with outdoor seating in summer, and offers the usual meaty Polish standards in a space with a rustic rural look. It's worth stopping by to try the beer, served in ceramic mugs.

La Scala (☎ 372 53 94; Rynek 38; mains 23–75zł; ☎ 10am–midnight) Offers authentic Italian food and particularly good desserts. Prices are high, but you're paying for the location. There's a cheaper trattoria at ground level.

Restauracja Dwór Polski (☎ 372 48 96; Rynek 5; mains 35–45zł; ☎ noon–midnight) This eatery is a classy place to sample good-quality Polish cuisine on the main square, in a rather grand room with silver candelabra and white table-cloths.

Pub Guinness (☎ 344 60 15; plac Solny 5; ☎ noon–2am) No prizes for guessing what this pub serves here. A lively, fairly authentic Irish pub, spread over three levels on a busy corner. The ground-floor bar buzzes with student and traveller groups getting together, and there's a restaurant and beer cellar as well. A good place to wind down after a hard day's sightseeing.

Kawiarnia Pod Słodką Borówką (☎ 343 68 56; Rynek 45; ☎ 9am–10pm) If you're after a heart-starter, try the *kawa* (coffee) and cakes here. Nice cherry pie, and an odd collection of old hats along the wall.

Entertainment

Check out the bimonthly *Visitor* (free and in English) for details of what's on in this important cultural centre. It's available from the tourist office and upmarket hotels.

PRL (☎ 342 55 26; Rynek Ratusz 10; ☎ noon–3am) The dictatorship of the proletariat is alive and well in this tongue-in-cheek venue inspired by communist nostalgia. Disco lights play over a bust of Lenin, propaganda posters line the walls, and red menace memorabilia is scattered through the maze of rooms. Descend to the basement – beneath the portraits of Stalin and Mao – if you'd like to hit the dance floor.

Teatr Polski (☎ 316 07 77; ul Zapolskiej 3) Wrocław's main theatrical venue stages classic Polish and foreign drama.

Filharmonia (☎ 342 20 01; www.filharmonia.wroclaw.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 19) This place hosts concerts of classical music, mostly on Friday and Saturday nights.

Kino Helios (☎ 781 55 70; www.heliosnet.pl; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 19a) If you're after a movie head to this modern multiplex screening English-language films.

Getting There & Away

Orbis Travel (☎ 343 26 65; Rynek 29) and **Almatur** (☎ 343 41 35; ul Kościuszki 34) offer the usual services. If you're travelling to/from Wrocław at the weekend, you'll be in competition with thousands of itinerant university students, so book your ticket as soon as possible.

AIR

Every day, LOT flies four to seven times between Wrocław and Warsaw, once between Wrocław and Frankfurt-am-Main, and once to Munich. Tickets can be bought at the **LOT office** (☎ 342 51 51; ul Piłsudskiego 36). There's also a Direct Fly flight to Gdańsk on weekdays.

The airport is in Strachowice, about 12km west of the Old Town. Bus 406 links the airport with Wrocław Główny train station and bus terminal, via the Rynek.

BUS

The **bus terminal** (ul Sucha 11) is south of the main train station. Several PKS buses go daily to Warsaw (37zł, five hours), Poznań (22zł to 35zł, 2½ hours), Częstochowa (22zł, three hours) and Białystok (66zł, seven hours). For most travel, however, the train is more convenient.

TRAIN

The **Wrocław Główny station** (ul Piłsudskiego 105) was built in 1856 and is a historical monument in itself. Every day, fast trains to Kraków (42zł, 3¾ hours) depart every one or two hours, and several InterCity and express trains go to Warsaw (88zł, six hours), usually via Łódź. Wrocław is also regularly linked by train to Poznań (32zł, 3½ hours), Częstochowa (32zł, 3½ hours, four daily), Szczecin (47zł, five hours, 10 daily), and Lublin (52zł, 9½ hours, two daily).

SUDETEN MOUNTAINS

The Sudeten Mountains (Sudety) run for over 250km along the Czech-Polish border. The Sudetes feature dense forests, amazing

rock formations and deposits of semiprecious stones, and can be explored along the extensive network of trails for **hiking** or **mountain biking**. The highest part of this old eroded chain is Mt Śnieżka (1602m).

Szklarska Poręba, at the northwestern end of the Sudetes, offers superior facilities for **hiking** and **skiing**. It's at the base of Mt Szrenica (1362m), and the town centre is at the upper end of ul Jedności Narodowej. The small **tourist office** (☎ 075-754 77 40; www.szklarskaporeba.pl; ul Pstrowskiego 1) has accommodation information and maps. Nearby, several trails begin at the intersection of ul Jedności Narodowej and ul Wielki Sikorskiego. The red trail goes to Mt Szrenica (two hours) and offers a peek at Wodospad Kamieńczyka, a spectacular waterfall.

Karpacz to the southeast has more nightlife on offer, though it attracts fewer serious mountaineers. It's loosely clustered along a 3km road winding through Łomnica Valley at the base of Mt Śnieżka. The **tourist office** (☎ 075-761 86 05; www.karpacz.com.pl; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 25a) should be your first port of call. To reach the peak of Mt Śnieżka on foot, take one of the trails (three to four hours) from Hotel Biały Jar. Some of the trails pass by one of two splendid postglacial lakes; Mały Staw and Wielki Staw.

The bus is the fastest way of getting around the region. Every day from Szklarska Poręba, about five buses head to Wrocław and one train plods along to Warsaw (55zł, 12 hours). From Karpacz, get a bus to Jelenia Góra, where buses and trains go in all directions.

For the Czech Republic, take a bus from Szklarska Poręba to Jakuszyce, cross the border on foot to Harrachov (on the Czech side) and take another bus from there.

WIELKOPOLSKA

Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) is the region where Poland came to life in the Middle Ages, and is referred to as the Cradle of the Polish State. As a result of this prominent role, its cities and towns are full of historic and cultural attractions.

The royal capital moved from Poznań to Kraków in 1038, though Wielkopolska remained an important province. Its historic significance didn't save it from international conflict, however, and the region became part

of Prussia in 1793. Despite intensive Germanisation, Wielkopolska rose against German rule at the end of WWI and became part of the reborn Poland. The battles of WWII later caused widespread destruction in the area.

Poznań, the region's major city, is well known for its regular trade fairs dotted throughout the calendar. It's also home to attractive architecture and museums, and the surrounding countryside is good for cycling and hiking.

POZNAŃ

☎ 061 / pop 577,000

No-one could accuse Poznań of being too sleepy. Between its regular trade fairs, student population and visiting travellers, it's a vibrant city with a wide choice of attractions.

It grew from humble beginnings, when 9th-century Polanian tribes built a wooden fort on the island of Ostrów Tumski. From 968 to 1038 Poznań was the de facto capital of Poland. Its position between Berlin and Warsaw has always underlined its importance as a trading town, and in 1925 a modern version of its famous medieval trade fairs was instituted. The fairs, filling up the city's hotels for several days at a time, are the lynchpin of the city's economy.

Poznań has a beautiful Old Town at its centre, with a number of interesting museums, and a range of lively bars, clubs and restaurants. It's both a cosmopolitan place with an active cultural scene, and a good transport hub from which to explore the region.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK Megastore (☎ 852 66 90; plac Wolności) Offers the largest choice of foreign magazines and newspapers.
Globtroter Turystyczna (ul Żydowska) Excellent for maps and Lonely Planet guidebooks.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café Bajt (☎ 853 18 08; ul Zamkowa 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

A few of the *kantors* in the city centre are shown on the map; there's also one in the bus terminal and another (open 24 hours) in the train station.

Bank Pekao (ul Św. Marcin 52/56) Probably the best place for travellers cheques and credit cards. There's another branch at ul 23 Lutego.

POST

Main post office (ul Kościuszki 77; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

City Information Centre (☎ 851 96 45; ul Ratajczaka 44; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Handles bookings for cultural events.

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 852 61 56; Stary Rynek 59; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) Helpful.

Sights

OLD TOWN

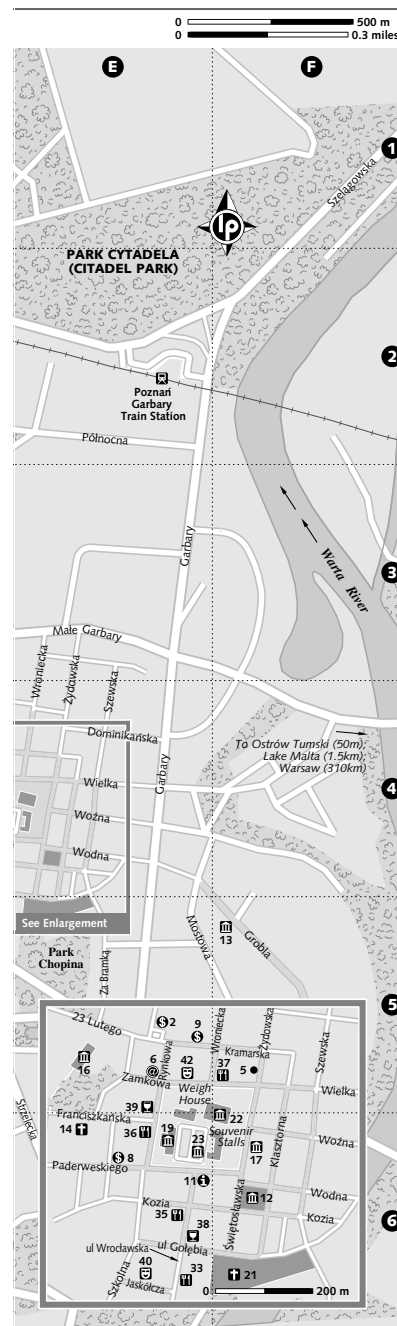
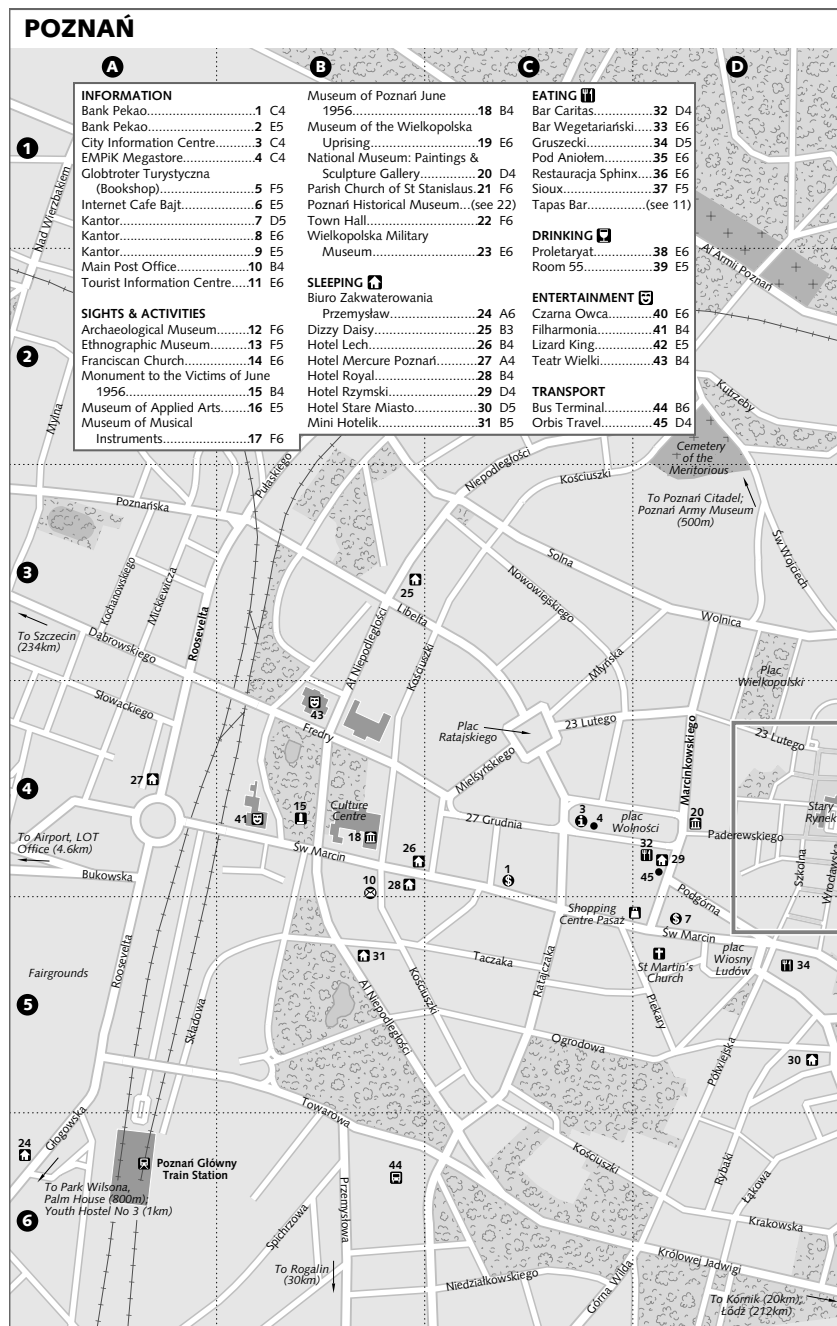
If you're in the attractive **Stary Rynek** (Old Market Square) at noon, keep an eye out for the goats in the Renaissance **Town Hall** (built 1550-60). Every midday two metal goats above its clock butt their horns together 12 times, echoing an improbable centuries-old legend of two animals escaping a cook and fighting each other in the town hall tower. Inside the building, the **Poznań Historical Museum** (☎ 852 56 13; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon & Tue, 11am-6pm Wed, 9am-6pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sun) displays splendid period interiors.

Also within the square are the **Wielkopolska Military Museum** (☎ 852 67 39; Stary Rynek 9; adult/child 3.50/2.20zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) and the **Museum of Musical Instruments** (☎ 852 08 57; Stary Rynek 45/47; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), along with the **Museum of the Wielkopolska Uprising** (☎ 853 19 93; Stary Rynek 3; adult/child 4/2zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-6pm Wed, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun), which details the conflict in the region between German and Polish fighters after WWI.

The **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 852 82 51; ul Wodna 27; adult/child 6/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) contains Egyptian mummies and displays on the prehistory of western Poland.

The 17th-century **Franciscan Church** (ul Franciszkańska 2; ☎ 8am-8pm), one block west of the Rynek, has an ornate baroque interior, complete with wall paintings and rich stucco work. Above the church, on a hill, is the **Museum of Applied Arts** (☎ 852 20 35; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), featuring glassware, ceramics, silverware and clocks.

The nearby **National Museum: Paintings & Sculpture Gallery** (☎ 856 80 00; al Marcinowski 9; adult/child 10/6zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, 9am-5pm Wed, 10am-4pm Thu, 10am-5pm Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) displays mainly 19th- and 20th-century Polish paintings.



Two blocks south of Stary Rynek is the large, pink, baroque **Parish Church of St Stanislaus** (ul Golebia 1; 🗺 erratic) with monumental altars built in the mid-17th century. A short stroll southeast is the **Ethnographic Museum** (📞 852 30 06; ul Grobla 25; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł; free Sat; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), presenting a collection of woodcarving and traditional costumes.

The 19th-century Prussian **Poznań Citadel**, where 20,000 German troops held out for a month in February 1945, lies about 1.5km north of the Old Town. The fortress was destroyed by artillery fire but a park was laid out on the site, which incorporates the **Poznań Army Museum** (📞 820 45 03; al Armii Poznań; adult/child 4/2zł; free Fri; 🕒 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun).

In a park in the new city centre, the moving **Monument to the Victims of June 1956** commemorates the dead and injured of the massive 1956 strike by the city's industrial workers, which was crushed by tanks. Next door in the Cultural Centre; there's more detail in the **Museum of Poznań June 1956** (📞 852 94 64; ul Św. Marcin 80/82; adult/child 2/1zł; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed or by arrangement).

In **Park Wilsona**, 1km southwest of the train station, is the **Palm House** (📞 865 89 07; ul Matejki 18; adult/child 5.50/4zł; 🕒 9am-4pm Thu-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun). This huge greenhouse (built in 1910) contains 17,000 species of tropical and sub-tropical plants.

Ostrów Tumski is 1km east of the Old Town (take any eastbound tram from plac Wielkopolski). This river island is dominated by the monumental, double-towered **Poznań Cathedral** (ul Ostrów Tumski), originally built in 968. The Byzantine-style **Golden Chapel** (1841) and the **mausoleums** of Mieszko I and Boleslaus the Brave are behind the high altar. Opposite the cathedral is the 15th-century Gothic **Church of the Virgin Mary** (ul Panny Marii 1/3).

Some 2.5km east of the Old Town is **Lake Malta**, a favourite weekend destination for Poles. It holds sailing regattas, outdoor concerts and other events in summer, and in winter there's a ski slope in operation. To get to the lake, take tram 1, 4 or 8 from plac Wielkopolski.

Sleeping

During trade fairs, the rates of Poznań's accommodation dramatically increases. A room may also be difficult to find, so it pays to book ahead. Prices given here are for outside trade-fair periods.

BUDGET

Check out **Biuro Zakwaterowania Przemysław** (☎ 866 35 60; www.przemyslaw.com.pl; ul Głogowska 16; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; s/d from 43/65zł, apt from 150zł), an accommodation agency not far from the train station. Rates for weekends and stays of more than three nights are cheaper than the prices quoted here.

Youth Hostel No 3 (☎ 866 40 40; ul Berwińskiego 2/3; dm 25zł) Cheap lodgings about a 15-minute walk southwest of the train station along ul Głogowska, adjacent to Park Wilsona. It's a basic 'no frills' option, but fills up fast with students and school groups. There's a 10pm curfew.

Dizzy Daisy (☎ 829 39 02; www.hostel.pl; al Niepodległości 26; dm/s/d 30/50/100zł; ☎) This is one of the most comfortable hostels in town, with free laundry and no curfew. Outside July to August, however, it has limited places for travellers, as it's also used as student quarters.

Mini Hotelik (☎ 863 14 16; al Niepodległości 8a; s/d from 54/107zł) Like it says on the label, this is a small place in an old building between the train station and the Old Town. It's basic but clean, with colourfully painted chambers. Some rooms share a bathroom. Enter from ul Taylora.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Lech (☎ 853 01 51; www.hotel-lech.poznan.pl; ul Św. Marcina 74; s/d 162/244zł) Hotel Lech has standard three-star décor, but rooms are relatively spacious and the bathrooms are modern. Flash your ISIC card for a discount.

Hotel Stare Miasto (☎ 663 62 42; www.hotelstaremiasto.pl; ul Rybaki 36; s/d 195/295zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) Elegant value-for-money hotel with a tasteful chandeliered foyer and spacious breakfast room. Rooms can be small, but are clean and bright with lovely starched white sheets. Some upper rooms have skylights in place of windows.

Hotel Rzymiski (☎ 852 81 21; www.rzymiskihotel.com.pl; al Marcinkowskiego 22; s/d 210/270zł) Offers the regular amenities of three-star comfort, and overlooks plac Wolności. The décor has a lot of brown, and rooms aren't quite as grand as the elegant façade suggests, but they're a decent size.

Hotel Royal (☎ 858 23 00; www.hotel-royal.com.pl; ul Św. Marcina 71; s/d 320/420zł; ☎) This is a gorgeous place set back from the main road. Rooms have huge beds and sparkling bathrooms.

Hotel Mercure Poznań (☎ 855 80 00; www.orbis.pl; ul Roosevelta 20; s/d from €122/142; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) In a

gigantic modern building just off a busy main road, this hotel offers all the expected facilities for business travellers, including a fitness centre, restaurant and bar. It's handy for the train station, and two rooms have disabled access.

Eating & Drinking

Bar Vegetariański (☎ 821 12 55; ul Wrocławska 21; mains from 5zł; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat) This cheap vegetarian eatery is in a cellar off the main road, bedecked with plant life around the walls, and offers the usual meat-free dishes.

Bar Caritas (☎ 852 51 30; plac Wolności 1; mains 8-15zł; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun) You can point at what you want without resorting to your phrasebook at this cheap and convenient milk bar. There are many variants of *naleśniki* on the menu.

Gruszecki (☎ 850 89 42; plac Wiosny Ludów 2; mains 15-38zł; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun) Inside the Kupiec Poznański shopping centre, this small place serves a surprisingly wide range of dishes, including steaks, fish, pasta, fried snails and that perennial favourite, liver in raspberries. It also does more conventional breakfasts.

Pod Aniołem (☎ 852 98 54; ul Wrocławska 4; mains 16-28zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Pleasant pub with arched brick ceilings and candlelit tables, serving a range of cheap and filling Polish fare such as dumplings, salads and grilled meats.

Restauracja Restaurant Sphinx (☎ 852 80 25; Stary Rynek 77; mains 16-50zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) The Sphinx is a branch of the ubiquitous kebab-and-cabbage chain, offering reasonable-value grills and salads, and a menu in English. Be prepared for ancient Egyptian décor, colourful lampshades and lots of fairy lights.

Sioux (☎ 851 62 86; Stary Rynek 93; mains 22-58zł; ☎ noon-11pm) As you'd expect, this is a 'Western'-themed place, complete with waiters dressed as cowboys. Bizarrely named dishes such as 'Marinated Fist of Dancer with Wolves' (pork steak) are on the menu, along with lots of steaks, ribs, grills and tacos.

Tapas Bar (☎ 852 85 32; Stary Rynek 60; mains 28-45zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Atmospheric place dishing up authentic tapas and Spanish wine, in a room lined with intriguing bric-a-brac including jars of stuffed olives, a cactus and a model elephant. Most tapas dishes cost 16zł to 18zł, so forget the mains and share with friends.

Proletariat (☎ 851 32 15; ul Wrocławska 9; ☎ 1pm-2am Mon-Sat, 3pm-2am Sun) Small red communist nostalgia bar with an array of socialist-era gear on the walls, including the obligatory bust of Lenin in the window, and various portraits of the great man and his comrades. Play 'spot the communist leader' while sipping a boutique beer from the Czarnków Brewery.

Room 55 (☎ 855 32 24; Stary Rynek 80/82; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) One of several trendy places on the main square to enjoy a drink and something to eat. Features melow red chairs and banquettes, with a mezzanine area for observing the beautiful people below.

Entertainment

Lizard King (☎ 855 04 72; Stary Rynek 86; ☎ noon-2am) Simultaneously happening and laid-back, this venue is easily spotted by the big guitar on its outside wall. Friendly crowds sit drinking and eating in the split-level space, casting the occasional glance at the lizard over the bar. There's live music later in the week, usually from 9pm.

Czarna Owca (☎ 853 07 92; ul Jaskółca 13; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat) Literally 'Black Sheep', this is a popular club with nightly DJs playing a mix of genres including R&B, house, pop and rock. There's a dance mix on weekends and a retro night on Thursday.

Teatr Wielki (☎ 852 82 91; ul Fredry 9) is the main venue for opera and ballet, while not far away, the **Filharmonia** (☎ 852 47 08; ul Św. Marcina 81) offers classical concerts at least every Friday night.

Getting There & Away

LOT flies five times a day between Warsaw and Poznań. There are flights from Poznań to Frankfurt and Munich most days; and LOT and SAS fly daily to Copenhagen. Tickets are available from the **LOT office** (☎ 849 22 61; airport) or from **Orbis Travel** (☎ 851 20 00; al Marcinkowskiego 21). The airport is in the western suburb of Ławica, 7km from the Old Town and accessible by bus 59 or 78.

The **bus terminal** (ul Towarowa 17) is a 10-minute walk east of the train station. Bus services are relatively poor, but buses do travel from Poznań five times a day to Łódź, twice a day to Toruń and twice a day to Wrocław.

The busy **Poznań Główny train station** (ul Dworcowa 1) offers services to Kraków (48zł, 6½ hours, 11 daily), Szczecin, some of which continue to Świnoujście (34zł, two hours,

18 daily), to Gdańsk and Gdynia (43zł, five hours, seven daily), Toruń (30zł, 3½ hours, three daily) and Wrocław (32zł, 3½ hours, 15 daily). More than 20 trains a day also head to Warsaw, including nine express (78zł, five hours) and eight InterCity services (86zł, three hours).

POMERANIA

Pomerania (Pomorze) had spent a millennium being fought over by Germanic and Slavic peoples, before being returned to Poland after WWII. The region covers a large swathe of territory along the Baltic coast, from the German border in the west, to the lower Vistula Valley in the east. The major urban centres are western Szczecin, and Gdańsk on Poland's northern coast. A sandy coastline stretches between them, a popular destination for holidaymakers in summer. The attractive Gothic city of Toruń lies inland, within a belt of forests and lakes.

TORUŃ

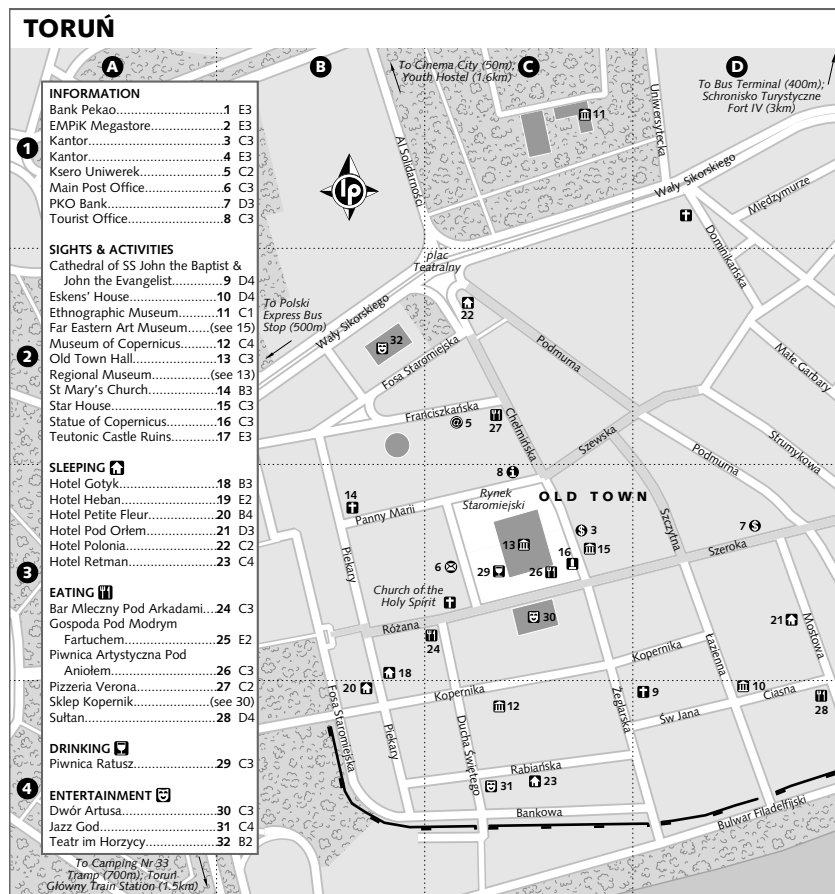
☎ 056 / pop 211,000

The first thing to strike you about Toruń is its massive red-brick churches, looking more like fortresses than places of worship. The city is defined by its striking Gothic architecture, which gives its Old Town a distinctive appearance.

Toruń is also famous as the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus, a figure you cannot escape as you walk the streets of his home town – you can even buy gingerbread men in his likeness. The renowned astronomer spent his youth here, and the local university is named after him.

Historically, Toruń is intertwined with the Teutonic Knights, who established an outpost here in 1233. Following the Thirteen Years' War (1454–66), the Teutonic Order and Poland signed a peace treaty here, which returned to Poland a large area of land stretching from Toruń to Gdańsk. In the following centuries, Toruń suffered a fate similar to that of the surrounding region: Swedish invasions and German domination until the early 20th century.

Toruń was fortunate to escape major damage in WWII, and as a result is the best-preserved Gothic town in Poland. The Old Town was added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 1997.



Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK Megastore (☎ 622 48 95; ul Wielkie Garbary 18)

INTERNET ACCESS

Ksero Uniwersytetu (☎ 621 92 79; ul Franciszkańska 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat)

MONEY

ATMs can be found along ul Różana and ul Szeroka. A couple of handy *kantors* are shown on the map.

Bank Pekao (ul Wielkie Garbary 11)

PKO Bank (ul Szeroka)

POST

Main post office (Rynek Staromiejski; ☎ 7am-9pm)

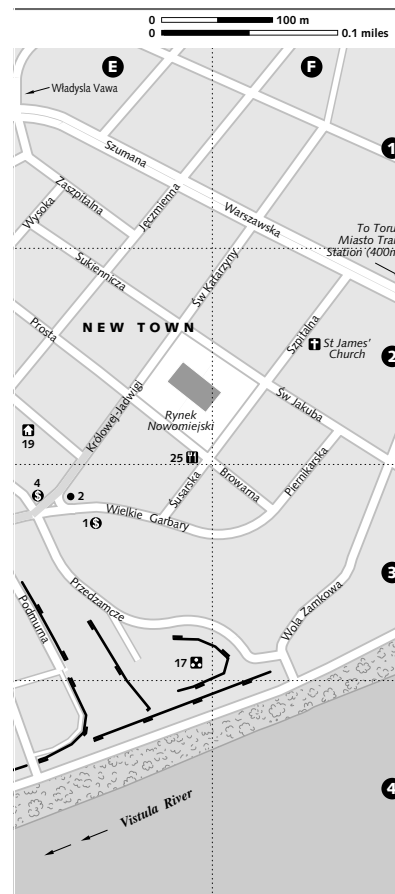
TOURIST INFORMATION

The free, glossy *Toruń Tourist & Business Guide*, available from most decent hotels, advertises local eateries and nightclubs.

Tourist office (☎ 621 09 31; www.it.torun.pl; Rynek Staromiejski 25; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon & Sat, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sun May-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon & Sat, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri Sep-Apr) Very helpful.

Sights

The starting point for any exploration of Toruń is the **Rynek Staromiejski** (Old Town Market Square), the focal point of the Old Town. The **Regional Museum** (☎ 622 70 38; www.muzeum.torun.pl; Rynek Staromiejski 1; adult/child 10/6zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr) sits within the massive 14th-century **Old Town Hall**, featuring a



fine collection of 19th- and 20th-century Polish art. Other displays recall the town's guilds, and there's an exhibition of medieval stained glass and religious paintings. Climb the 40m-high **tower** (adult/child 10/6zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr, 10am-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) for great views.

In front of the Town Hall is an elegant **statue** of Copernicus. Look for other interesting items of statuary around the square, including a dog and umbrella from a famous Polish comic strip, and a fabled violinist who saved Toruń from a plague of frogs.

The richly decorated, 15th-century **Star House**, with its baroque façade and spiral wooden staircase, contains the **Far Eastern Art Museum** (☎ 622 70 38; Rynek Staromiejski 35; adult/child 7/4zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun).

Just off the northwestern corner of the square is the late-13th-century **St Mary's Church** (ul Panny Marii; ☎ dawn-dusk), a Gothic building with magnificent 15th-century stalls.

In 1473, Copernicus was born in the brick Gothic house that now contains the dry **Museum of Copernicus** (☎ 622 70 38; ul Kopernika 15/17; adult/child 10/7zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr), with replicas of the great astronomer's instruments.

One block east is the **Cathedral of SS John the Baptist & John the Evangelist** (ul Żeglarska; adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct), founded in 1233 and completed more than 200 years later, with its massive **tower** (adult/child 6/4zł) and bell.

Behind the church, the **Esken's House** (☎ 622 70 38; ul Łazienna 16; adult/child 7/4zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) is a disappointing affair displaying old photographs, a few swords and archaeological finds, labelled in Polish. Further east are the ruins of the **Teutonic Castle** (☎ 622 70 39; ul Przedzamcze; adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 9am-8pm), destroyed in 1454 by angry townsfolk protesting against the knights' oppressive regime.

In a park just north of the Old Town is the **Ethnographic Museum** (☎ 622 80 91; ul Waly Sikorskiego 19; adult/child 8/5zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), showcasing traditional customs, costumes and weapons.

Sleeping

Budget lodgings are a distance from the Old Town, but in summer extra student accommodation opens its doors to travellers. Check with the tourist office for updated details.

BUDGET

Camping Nr 33 Tramp (☎ 654 71 87; www.tramp.mosir.torun.pl; ul Kujawska 14; camping per person 8zł, tents 5-10zł, d/tr/q 60/75/75zł; ☎ May-Sep) The cabins here are basic and it's alarmingly close to the train line. It's a five-minute walk west of the main train station.

Schronisko Turystyczne Fort IV (☎ 655 82 36; www.fort.torun.pl; ul Chrobrego 86; dm 17-23zł) Atmospherically located in an old Prussian fort, with long, solid brick corridors built to withstand sieges, and leading to plain, barrack-like dorms. Although inconvenient for town, it's an easy ride on bus 14 from the bus terminal or main train station.

Youth Hostel (☎ 659 61 84; ul Św. Józefa 22/24; dm 20zł) Offers plain but bright facilities

overlooking parkland, 1.6km northwest of the centre. Catch bus 11 from the main train station or Old Town, to the first stop on ul Św. Jozefa. Reception closes between 10am and 5pm daily, and there's a 10pm curfew.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Pod Orłem (☎ 622 50 24; www.hotel.torun.pl; ul Mostowa 17; s/d 110/140zł, apt 200zł; P ☒ ☑) This hotel is great value, and although the rooms are smallish, have squeaky wooden floors, and some contain poky bathrooms, the service is good and it's central. The foyer and corridors are fun with their jumble of framed pop-art images and old photos.

Hotel Polonia (☎ 657 18 00; www.polonia.torun.pl; plac Teatralny 5; s/d 150/180zł) The Polonia has smart, attractively furnished rooms with soothing green tones, high ceilings and good bathrooms, in a restored 19th-century building a short walk from the main square. The hotel also has its own *kantor*.

Hotel Gotyk (☎ 658 40 00; www.hotel-gotyk.com.pl; ul Piekary 20; s/d from 150/250zł) Housed in a fully modernised 14th-century building just off the main square, rooms are very neat, with ornate furniture and high ceilings, and all come with sparkling bathrooms.

Hotel Retman (☎ 657 44 60; www.hotelretman.pl; ul Rabińska 15; s/d 160/210zł) Relatively new accommodation offering spacious, atmospheric rooms with red carpet and solid timber furniture. Downstairs is a good pub and restaurant.

Hotel Petite Fleur (☎ 663 44 00; www.petitefleur.pl; ul Piekary 25; s/d from 190/250zł; ☑) Just opposite the Gotyk, the Petite Fleur offers fresh, airy rooms in a renovated old town house, some with exposed original brickwork and rafters. It also has a French cellar restaurant.

Hotel Heban (☎ 652 15 55; www.hotel-heban.com.pl; ul Małe Garbary 7; s/d/ste from 190/300/350zł; P ☒ ☑) This is a stylish, upmarket hotel occupying an historic 17th-century building in a quiet street. It also has a good restaurant, situated off a lavish foyer with painted wooden ceilings and a 24-hour bar.

Eating & Drinking

Bar Mleczny Pod Arkadami (☎ 622 24 28; ul Różana 1; mains 3-8zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) This classic milk bar is just off the Old Town Square, with a range of low-cost dishes. It also has a takeaway window serving a range of *zapiekanki* (toasted rolls with cheese, mushrooms and ketchup) and sweet waffles.

Pizzeria Verona (☎ 622 04 80; ul Chelmińska 11; mains 7-26zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) The Verona offers a big menu of pizzas, plus a few pasta and salad options. It's in a great cellar location with fairy lights, wicker lampshades and candles in old wine bottles. Don't attempt to descend the precipitous stairs if you've had a few too many beers.

Suftan (☎ 621 06 07; ul Mostowa 7; mains 8-12zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat) A splash of Middle Eastern cuisine in western Poland in a cheerful venue decorated with colourful lanterns and Arabic script. The menu contains pides, kebabs, shwarma and gyros, along with soups, salads and pizzas.

Gospoda Pod Modrym Fartuchem (☎ 622 26 26; Rynek Nowomiejski 8; mains 16-29zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) This is a very pleasant, unpretentious 15th-century pub on the New Town Square, once visited by Polish kings and Napoleon. It serves the usual meat-and-cabbage Polish dishes at reasonable prices.

Piwnica Ratusz (☎ 621 02 92; Rynek Staromiejski 1) This is a great place for a drink, offering outdoor tables in the square and a cavernous area downstairs.

Toruń is famous for its *pierniki* (gingerbread), which come in a variety of shapes, and can be bought at **Sklep Kopernik** (☎ 622 88 32; Rynek Staromiejski 6).

Entertainment

Piwnica Artystyczna Pod Aniołem (☎ 622 70 39; Rynek Staromiejski 1) Set in a splendid spacious cellar in the Old Town Hall, this bar offers live music some nights.

Jazz God (☎ 652 13 08; ul Rabińska 17; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat) This is a lively cellar bar with rock DJs every night from 9pm. On Sunday there's live jazz around 8pm.

Teatrim Horzycy (☎ 622 52 22; plac Teatralny 1) The main stage for theatre performances.

Dwór Artusa (☎ 655 49 29; Artus Court, Rynek Staromiejski 6) This place often presents classical music.

Cinema City (☎ 664 64 64; ul Czerwona Droga 1; tickets 15zł) A moviehouse showing current film releases in a 12-screen multiplex.

Getting There & Away

The **bus terminal** (ul Dąbrowskiego) is a 10-minute walk north of the Old Town, though it offers surprisingly few long-distance buses. **Polski Express** (ul Mickiewicza) has 12 buses a day to Warsaw (48zł, four hours) and two a day to Szczecin.

The **Toruń Główny train station** (al Podgórska) is on the opposite side of the Vistula River and linked to the Old Town by bus 22 or 27 (get off at the first stop over the bridge). Some trains stop and finish at the more convenient Toruń Miasto train station, about 500m east of the New Town.

From the Toruń Główny station, there are fast train services to Poznań (30zł, 3½ hours, six daily), Gdańsk and Gdynia (36zł, five hours, nine daily), Kraków (50zł, 6½ hours, six daily), Łódź (32zł, eight daily), Olsztyn (32zł, eight daily), Szczecin (45zł, five hours, direct twice a week), Wrocław (43zł, 4½ hours, two daily) and Warsaw (40zł, four hours, seven daily). Trains travelling between Toruń and Gdańsk often change at Bydgoszcz, and between Toruń and Kraków you may need to get another connection at Inowrocław.

GDAŃSK

☎ 058 / pop 462,000

Few Polish cities occupy such a pivotal position in history as Gdańsk. Founded more than a millennium ago, it became the focus of territorial tensions when the Teutonic Knights seized it from Poland in 1308. The city joined the Hanseatic League in 1361, and became one of the richest ports in the Baltic through its membership of the trading organisation. Finally, the Thirteen Years' War ended in 1466 with the Knights' defeat and Gdańsk's return to Polish rule.

This to-and-fro between Germanic and Polish control wasn't over – in 1793 Gdańsk was incorporated into Prussia, and after WWI became the autonomous Free City of Danzig. The city's envoys are where WWII began, when the Nazis bombarded Polish troops stationed at Westerplatte. Gdańsk suffered immense damage in the war, but upon its return to Poland in 1945, its historic centre was faithfully reconstructed.

In the 1980s, Gdańsk achieved international fame as the home of the Solidarity trade union, whose rise paralleled the fall of communism in Europe. Today it's a lively, attractive city that makes a great base for exploring the Baltic coast.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK Megastore (☎ 301 72 44; ul Podwale Grodzkie 8) Opposite the main train station.

INTERNET ACCESS

Jazz 'n' Java (☎ 305 36 16; ul Tkacka 17/18; per hr 5zł; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Rudy Kot (ul Garncarska 18/20; per hr 4zł; ☎ 10am-10pm)

MONEY

The *kantor* at the main train station is open 24 hours.

Bank Millennium (Old Town (ul Wały Jagiellońskie 14/16); Main Town (ul Długi Targ 14/16)) Has more branches at central locations.

Bank Pekao (ul Garncarska 23) Will provide cash advances on Visa and MasterCard.

POST

Main post office (ul Długa 22; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

PTTK office (☎ 301 13 43; www.pttk-gdansk.pl; ul Długa 45; ☎ 9am-5pm)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Almatu (☎ 301 24 24; Długi Targ 11)

Orbis Travel (☎ 301 45 44; ul Podwale Staromiejskie 96/97)

Sights

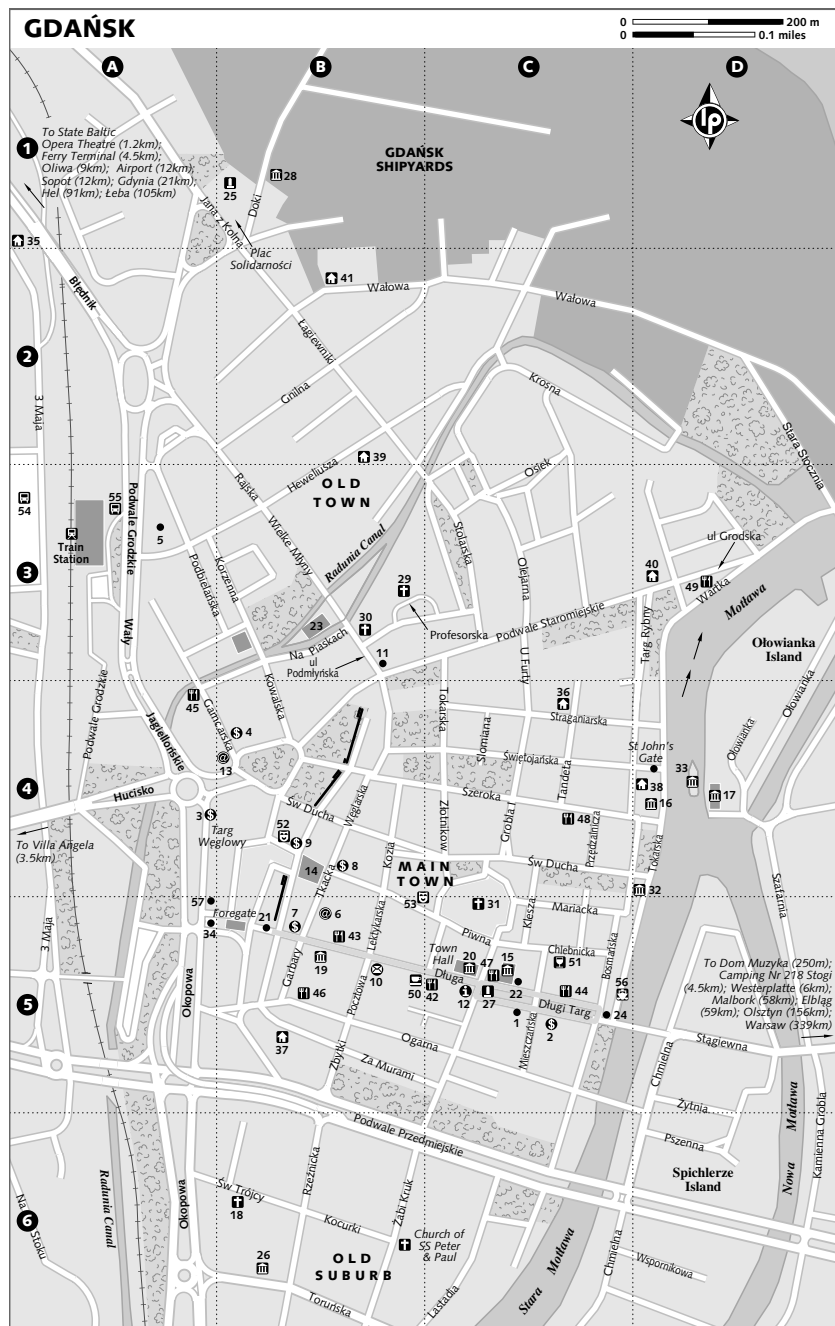
MAIN TOWN

Ul Długa (Long Street) and Długi Targ (Long Market) form the city's main historic thoroughfare, and are known collectively as the **Royal Way**. Polish kings traditionally paraded through the **Upland Gate** (built in the 1770s on a 15th-century gate), onward through the **Golden Gate** (1614), and proceeded east to the Renaissance **Green Gate** (1568).

Gdańsk History Museum (☎ 767 91 00; ul Długa 47; adult/child 8/4zł, adult/child incl Artus Court Museum & Dom Uphagena 12/6zł; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) is inside the towering Gothic **Main Town Hall**. On show are photos of old Gdańsk, and the damage caused during WWII.

Artus Court Museum (☎ 767 91 00; ul Długi Targ 43/44; adult/child 8/4zł, free Wed; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun), where merchants used to congregate, stands behind **Neptune's Fountain** (1633). The adjacent **Golden House** (1618) has a strikingly rich façade. Further west, the 18th-century **Dom Uphagena** (☎ 301 13 63; ul Długa; adult/child 8/4zł, free Sun; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) features ornate furniture.

North of the Green Gate is the 14th-century **St Mary's Gate**, which houses the **State Archaeological Museum** (☎ 301 50 31; ul Mariacka 25/26;



INFORMATION

Almatur.....	1	C5	Golden House.....	22	C5	EATING 🍴		
Bank Millennium.....	2	C5	Great Mill.....	23	B3	Bar Mleczny Neptun.....	42	C5
Bank Millennium.....	3	A4	Green Gate.....	24	C5	Café Ferber.....	43	B5
Bank Pekao.....	4	B4	Monument to the Shipyard Workers.....	25	B1	Grand Café Rotterdam.....	44	C5
EMPIK Megastore.....	5	A3	National Museum.....	26	B6	Green Way.....	45	A4
Jazz 'n' Java.....	6	B5	Neptune's Fountain.....	27	C5	Kansai.....	46	B5
Kantor.....	7	B5	Roads to Freedom Exhibition.....	28	B1	Piwnica Rajców.....	47	C5
Kantor.....	8	B4	St Bridget's Church.....	29	B3	Pod Łosiem.....	48	C4
Kantor.....	9	B4	St Catherine's Church.....	30	B3	Restauracja Kubicki.....	49	D3
Main Post Office.....	10	B5	St Mary's Church.....	31	C5	DRINKING ☕ 🍷		
Orbis Travel.....	11	B3	St Mary's Gate.....	32	D4	Maraska.....	50	B5
PTTK Office.....	12	C5	Soldek Museum Ship.....	33	D4	U Szkota.....	51	C5
Rudy Kot.....	13	B4	State Archaeological Museum.....	(see 32)		ENTERTAINMENT 🎪		
			Upland Gate.....	34	A5	Teatr Wybrzeże.....	52	B4
						Yesterday.....	53	B5

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Arsenal.....	14	B4	SLEEPING 🛏		
Artus Court Museum.....	15	C5	Baltic Hostel.....	35	A1
Central Maritime Museum.....	16	D4	Dom Aktora.....	36	C4
Central Maritime Museum.....	17	D4	Dom Harcerza.....	37	B5
Church of the Holy Trinity.....	18	B6	Hotel Hanza.....	38	D4
Dom Uphagena.....	19	B5	Mercure Hevelius Gdansk.....	39	B2
Gdańsk Crane.....	(see 16)		Supermarket.....	(see 14)	
Gdańsk History Museum.....	20	C5	Targ Rybny.....	40	D3
Golden Gate.....	21	B5	Youth Hostel.....	41	B2

adult/child 5/4zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun). It features an overly generous number of formerly diseased ancient human skulls, displays of amber, and river views from the adjacent **tower** (admission 2zł). Through this gate, picturesque **ul Mariacka** (St Mary's St) is lined with 17th-century burgher houses and amber shops.

At the end of ul Mariacka is the gigantic 14th-century **St Mary's Church** (adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 8am-8pm, except during services). Watch little figures troop out at noon from its 14m-high astronomical clock, adorned with zodiacal signs. Climb the 405 steps of the **tower** (adult/child 3/1.50zł) for a giddy view over the town. West along ul Piwna (Beer St) is the Dutch Renaissance **Arsenal** (1609), now occupied by a market.

Further north along the waterfront is the 15th-century **Gdańsk Crane**, the largest of its kind in medieval Europe and capable of hoisting loads of up to 2000kg. It's now part of the **Central Maritime Museum** (☎ 301 86 11; ul Oliwianka 9-13; one section 6zł, all four sections 14zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). The museum offers a fascinating insight into Gdańsk's seafaring past, including the **Soldek Museum Ship**, built here just after WWII.

OLD TOWN

Almost totally destroyed in 1945, the Old Town has never been completely rebuilt. However, among its gems are **St Catherine's Church** (ul Wielkie Młyny; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat), Gdańsk's oldest church (begun in the 1220s). Opposite, the **Great Mill** (ul Wielkie Młyny) was built by the Teutonic Knights in around 1350. It

used to produce 200 tonnes of flour per day and continued to operate until 1945.

Right behind St Catherine's is **St Bridget's Church** (ul Profesorska 17; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat). Formerly Lech Wałęsa's place of worship, the church was a strong supporter of the shipyard activists in the 1980s.

The soaring **Monument to the Shipyard Workers** (plac Solidarności) stands at the entrance to the Gdańsk Shipyards to the north. It was erected in late 1980 in memory of 44 workers killed during the riots of December 1970. Down the street is the evocative **Roads to Freedom Exhibition** (Solidarity Museum; ☎ 769 29 20; ul Doki 1; adult/child 6/4zł, free Wed; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun). Look out for the section of the Berlin Wall outside.

OLD SUBURB

The **National Museum** (☎ 301 70 61; ul Toruńska 1; adult/child 9/5zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is famous for its Dutch and Flemish paintings, especially Hans Memling's 15th-century *Last Judgment*.

Adjoining the museum is the former Franciscan **Church of the Holy Trinity** (ul Św. Trójcy; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat), built at the end of the 15th century.

OLIWA

Some 9km northwest is the lovely **Park Oliwki** (ul Cystersów), surrounding the towering **Oliwa Cathedral** (☎ 8am-8pm), built in the 13th century with a Gothic façade and a long, narrow central nave. The famous baroque organ is used for recitals each hour between 10am and 3pm Monday to Saturday in June, July and August. Nearby is the **Ethnographic Museum** (☎ 552 1271;

ul Cystersów 19; adult/child 8/5zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) in the Old Granary, and the **Modern Art Gallery** (☎ 552 12 71; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) in the former Abbots' Palace.

To reach the park, take the commuter train to the Gdańsk Oliwa station (2.80zł). From there, it's a 10-minute walk; head (west) up ul Poczty Gdańsk, turn right (north) along the highway and look for the signs (in English) to 'Ethnographic Museum' and 'Cathedral'.

WESTERPLATTE

WWII began at 4.45am on 1 September 1939, when the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* began shelling the Polish naval post at Westerplatte, 7km north of Gdańsk's Main Town. The 182-man Polish garrison held out against ferocious attacks for a week before surrendering.

The enormity of this event is marked by a hilltop **memorial** (free; ☎ 24hr), a small **museum** (☎ 343 69 72; ul Sucharskiego 1; admission 2zł; ☎ 8am-7pm) and **ruins** remaining from the Nazi bombardment.

Bus 106 (25 minutes) goes to the park every 15 minutes from a stop outside the main train station in Gdańsk. Alternatively, excursion boats (23/39zł one way/return) to and around Westerplatte leave from a dock near the Green Gate in Gdańsk between 1 April and 30 October.

Sleeping

If you're having trouble finding accommodation, check with the PTTK office. Also consider staying in nearby Sopot or Gdynia.

BUDGET

Youth Hostel (☎ /fax 301 23 13; ul Wałowa 21; dm/s/d from 12/25/50zł; ☎ ☎) Old-style hostel in a quiet, old building on the doorstep of the Gdańsk Shipyards, Lech Wałęsa's old stamping grounds. Rooms are brown and basic, but clean. Book ahead, particularly in summer. Smoking and drinking are strictly forbidden and there's a midnight curfew.

Dom Harcerza (☎ 301 36 21; www.domharcerza.prv.pl; ul Za Murami 2/10; dm 25zł, s/d/tr from 50/100/120zł) The rooms are small but cosy, and the bathrooms are clean at this place, which offers the best value and location for any budget-priced hotel. It's popular (so book ahead), and can get noisy when large groups are staying here. There's a charming old-fashioned restaurant on the ground floor.

Baltic Hostel (☎ 721 96 57; www.baltichostel.com; ul 3 Maja 25; dm 35zł, s/d 50/100zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) Aimed at the international budget traveller, this hostel near the train and bus stations has basic, newly-furnished rooms with high ceilings. Bathrooms are clean, and there's a homely light-filled lounge area with ceramic fish on the wall. The entrance is right at the end of the long brown apartment block, around to the right.

Targ Rybny (☎ 301 56 27; www.gdanskhostel.com; ul Grodzka 21; dm from 40zł, s/d/tr from 90/140/180zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) A popular modern hostel in a great central location overlooking the quay. It's a little cramped, but clean and sociable, with a comfy lounge area. It also offers bike rental.

Camping Nr 218 Stogi (☎ 307 39 15; www.camping-gdansk.pl; ul Wydmy 9; per person/tent 10/10zł, cabins 40-100zł; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) This camping ground is only 200m from the beach in the seaside holiday centre of Stogi, about 5.5km northeast of the Main Town. Tidy cabins sleep between two and five people, and facilities include a volleyball court and children's playground. Take tram 8 or 13 from the main train station in Gdańsk.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Apartments Poland (☎ 346 98 64; www.apartmentpoland.com; apt from €50) is an agency with renovated properties scattered through the Tri-City Area (Gdańsk/Sopot/Gdynia), including a number in central Gdańsk. Some are big enough for families or other groups. Be aware of the additional electricity charge when checking out, based on a meter reading.

Villa Angela (☎ 302 23 15; www.villaangela.pl; ul Beethowena 12; s/d/tr 175/210/285zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) Comfortable lodgings west of the centre, with spacious recently renovated rooms (some with balconies), good furniture and gleaming bathrooms. It's accessible by buses 130, 184 or 384, or night bus N6, from the main train station.

Dom Muzyka (☎ 300 92 60; www.dom-muzyka.pl; ul Łąkowa 1/2; s/d from 180/255zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Gorgeous white rooms with arched ceilings and quality furniture, inside the Music Academy some 300m east of the city centre. From July to August, a second wing of the building offers cheaper student-style accommodation. It's hard to spot from the street; head for the door on the city end of the courtyard within the big yellow-brick building.

Dom Aktora (☎ 301 59 01; www.domaktora.pl; ul Stragiarska 55/56; s/d/ste from 200/300/360zł) The Dom

Aktora is an historic and convenient place which is always popular, but it's a little old-fashioned in appearance.

Mercure Hevelius Gdańsk (☎ 321 00 00; www.orbis.pl; ul Heweliusza 22; s/d from 360/430zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Though the foyer still hints at its origins in the late Cold War days, this business-friendly hotel offers good quality rooms and facilities including a restaurant, bar and sauna. Two rooms are designed for disabled access, and some upper rooms have great views of the Old Town.

Hotel Hanza (☎ 305 34 27; www.hanza-hotel.com.pl; ul Tokarska 6; s/d 665/695zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) The Hanza is attractively perched along the waterfront near the Gdańsk Crane, and offers elegant, tasteful rooms in a modern building. Some rooms have enviable views over the river.

Eating & Drinking

For self-catering, visit the supermarket inside the former Arsenal facing Targ Węglowy.

Bar Mleczny Neptun (☎ 301 49 88; ul Długa 33/34; mains 2-10zł; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) This joint is a cut above your run-of-the-mill milk bar, with potted plants, lace curtains, decorative tiling and old lamps for décor.

Green Way (☎ 301 41 21; ul Garncarska 4/6; mains 7-10zł; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-7pm Sat & Sun) Popular with local vegetarians, this eatery serves everything from soy cutlets to Mexican goulash in an unfussy blue-and-yellow space.

Grand Café Rotterdam (☎ 305 45 80; Długi Targ 33/34; mains 12-27zł; ☎ 10am-2am) On the ground floor of the Dutch consulate, this café serves especially good savoury pancakes. It also has a good range of seafood dishes, including

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Café Ferber (☎ 301 55 66; ul Długa 77/78; mains 14-24zł; ☎ 8am-midnight) It's startling to step straight from Gdańsk's historic main street into this very modern café, dominated by bright red panels, a suspended ceiling and boxy lighting. The scarlet décor contrasts with its comfy brown armchairs, and the menu of breakfasts, soups and sandwiches is backed up by many variants of well-made coffee. There are English-language magazines on hand, and even the bathroom is ultramodern. At the time of research, an alcohol licence was in the works.

stir-fried mussels. It's a pleasant spot for an alfresco beer, and has a well-stocked cellar wine bar.

Kansai (☎ 324 08 88; ul Ogarna 124/125; mains 22-36zł; ☎ noon-10pm Tue-Sun) You'd expect fish to be served in a seaport, but Kansai adds an exotic twist by serving sushi in full-on Japanese ambience. Waiters are dressed in traditional robes, there's a samurai sword on the counter, and the menu has dishes made from tuna, salmon and butterfish, along with classic California rolls.

Restauracja Kubicki (☎ 301 00 50; ul Wartka 5; mains 25-43zł; ☎ 11.30am-11.30pm) The Kubicki is a decent midpriced place to try Polish food, especially seafood. It's one of the oldest eateries in Gdańsk, established in the Danzig days of 1918, and offers appropriately old-fashioned décor and service off a scenic laneway next to the river.

Pod Kosojem (☎ 301 76 52; ul Szeroka 52/54; mains 45-95zł; ☎ noon-10pm) This is one of Gdańsk's oldest and most highly regarded restaurants, and is particularly famous for its salmon dishes. Red leather seats, brass chandeliers and a gathering of gas lamps fill out the sombre interior.

Piwница Rajców (☎ 300 02 80; ul Długi Targ 44; mains 20-110zł; ☎ 10am-midnight) An excellent cellar-restaurant below a striking entrance that's topped by a statue of the god Mercury. The menu features some of the finest Polish cuisine to be had in Gdańsk, particularly wild boar, and extends to more exotic dishes such as springbok fillet.

U Szkota (☎ 301 49 11; ul Chlebnicka 9/12; ☎ noon-midnight) If you're in the mood to be served by buzz-cut Polish waiters dressed in kilts, this Scottish-themed venue is the place to go. The bar is small but cosy, with good-natured staff, and there's a decent selection of whiskies on the drinks list. The attached restaurant serves a largely Polish menu.

Maraska (☎ 301 42 89; ul Długa 31/32; ☎ 9am-9pm) The Maraska is a cosy teahouse with vintage wallpaper, framed pictures of yachts, and tea paraphernalia for sale. There's a good choice of desserts, and a counter selling chocolates and other sweets.

Entertainment

Yesterday (☎ 301 39 24; ul Piwna 50/51; ☎ 6pm-2am) Groovy cellar venue decked out in a 1960s theme, with colourful flower-power décor including cartoon characters and a fluorescent

portrait of Chairman Mao. DJs play a variety of sounds from 9pm every night, and there's the occasional live gig. Tuesday night is British music night.

State Baltic Opera Theatre (☎ 763 49 12; www.operabaltycka.pl; al Zwycięstwa 15) This place is in the suburb of Wrzeszcz, not far from the train station at Gdańsk Politechnika.

Teatr Wybrzeże (☎ 301 70 21; ul Św. Ducha 2) Next to the Arsenal is the main city theatre. Both Polish and foreign classics (all in Polish) are part of the repertoire.

Getting There & Away

For information about international ferry services to/from Gdańsk and Gdynia, see p617.

AIR

From Gdańsk, LOT has six to seven daily flights to Warsaw, two a day to Frankfurt, and one to Hamburg and Munich. Tickets can be bought at the **LOT office** (☎ 0801 703 703; ul Wały Jagiellońskie 2/4).

BOAT

Polferrys uses the **ferry terminal** (ul Przemysłowa) in Nowy Port, about 5km north of the Main Town and a short walk from the local commuter train station at Gdańsk Brzeźno. Orbis Travel and the PTTK Office in Gdańsk provide information and sell tickets.

Between 1 May and 30 September, excursion boats leave regularly from the dock near the Green Gate in Gdańsk for Sopot (35/51zł one way/return) and Gdynia (41/61zł) – and you can even go to Hel (61/92zł)! From the same dock, boats also head out to Westerplatte (23/39zł) between 1 April and 30 October.

BUS

The **bus terminal** (ul 3 Maja 12) is behind the main train station and connected to ul Podwale Grodzkie by an underground passageway. Every day there are buses to Olsztyn (26zł, seven daily), Toruń (27zł, two daily), and Warsaw (50zł, six hours, five daily), and one or two to Białystok and Świnoujście. Polski Express also offers buses to Warsaw (72zł, two daily).

TRAIN

The city's main train station, **Gdańsk Główny** (ul Podwale Grodzkie 1), is conveniently located on the western outskirts of the Old Town. Most long-distance trains actually start or finish at

Gdynia, so make sure you get on/off quickly here.

Each day more than 20 trains head to Warsaw, including eight express trains (82zł, 5½ hours) and five InterCity services (90zł, 3½ hours). There are fast trains to Olsztyn (32zł, three hours, nine daily), Kraków (115zł, eight hours, 13 daily), Poznań (45zł, five hours, seven daily), Toruń (37zł, three hours, eight daily) and Szczecin (47zł, 4½ hours, four daily). Trains also head to Białystok and Lublin three times a day.

Getting Around

The airport is in Rębiechowo, about 12km northwest of Gdańsk. It's accessible by bus 110 from the Gdańsk Wrzeszcz local commuter train station, or less frequently by bus B from outside the Gdańsk Główny train station. Taxis cost 40zł to 50zł one way.

The local commuter train, the SKM, runs every 15 minutes between 6am and 7.30pm, and less frequently thereafter, between Gdańsk Główny and Gdynia Główna stations, via Sopot and Gdańsk Oliwa stations. (Note: the line to Gdańsk Nowy Port, via Gdańsk Brzeźno, is a separate line that leaves less regularly from Gdańsk Główny.) Buy tickets at any station and validate them in the machines at the platform entrance.

AROUND GDAŃSK

Gdańsk is part of the so-called Tri-City Area including Gdynia and Sopot, which are easy day trips from Gdańsk.

Sopot

☎ 058 / pop 43,000

Sopot, 12km north of Gdańsk, has been one of the Baltic coast's most fashionable seaside resorts since the 19th century. It has an easy-going atmosphere and long stretches of sandy beach.

The **tourist office** (☎ 550 37 83; www.sopot.pl; ul Dworcowa 4; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep-May) is about 50m from the main train station. A short walk to the east of the station is **Gamer** (☎ 555 01 83; ul Chopina 1; per hr 4zł; ☎ 9am-10pm), an internet café.

From the tourist office, head down ul Bohaterów Monte Cassino, one of Poland's most attractive pedestrian streets, and past the church to Poland's longest pier (515m).

Opposite Pension Wanda, **Museum Sopotu** (☎ 551 22 66; ul Poniatowskiego 8; adult/child 5/3zł;

☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) has displays recalling the town's 19th-century incarnation as the German resort of Zoppot.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are no real budget options in Sopot, and prices increase during the busy summer season. Bistros and cafés serving a wide range of cuisines sprout up in summer along the promenades.

Hotel Eden (☎ 551 15 03; www.hotel-eden.com.pl; ul Kordeckiego 4/6; s 100-180zł, d 170-260zł, tr 320zł, q 340zł, ste 410zł; ☎) One of the less expensive places in town. It's a quiet, old-fashioned *pension* with high ceilings and old-fashioned furniture, overlooking the town park one street from the beach. The cheaper rooms don't have private bathrooms.

Willa Karat II (☎ 550 07 42; ul 3 Maja 31; s/d/tr 150/250/270zł) Cosy budget lodgings a few blocks from the beach, with light, spacious rooms and clean bathrooms, and plants decorating the corridors. There's a kitchen and dining area for guest use. From the train station, walk right along ul Kościuszki, then left along ul 3 Maja toward the coast.

Pension Wanda (☎ 550 30 38; fax 551 57 25; ul Poniatowskiego 7; s/d/tr from 200/300/410zł, ste from 360zł; ☎ ☎) The Wanda is a homely place with light, airy rooms, in a handy location about 500m south of the pier. Some rooms have sea views.

Zhong Hua Hotel (☎ 550 20 20; www.hotelchinski.pl; al Wojska Polskiego 1; s/d/ste 430/455/565zł; ☎ ☎) Attractive accommodation in a striking wooden pavilion on the seafront. The foyer is decked out in Chinese design, with hanging lanterns and beautiful timber furniture. The theme extends to the small but pleasant rooms, with views of the water.

The classy **Café del Arte** (☎ 555 51 60; ul Bohaterów Monte Cassino 53; ☎ 10am-10pm) is a great place to enjoy coffee, cake and ice cream surrounded by artistic objects in the combined café-gallery. At the same address is **Caipirinha** (☎ 555 53 80; ul Bohaterów Monte Cassino 53; mains 12-20zł; ☎ 10am-midnight), a bar and eatery serving light meals and plenty of cocktails. Its surrealistic 'melting' architecture is what sets this building apart; you really can't miss it.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the **Sopot train station** (ul Dworcowa 7), local commuter trains run every 15 minutes to Gdańsk Główny (2.80zł, 15 minutes) and

Gdynia Główna (1.20zł, 10 minutes) stations. Excursion boats leave several times a day (May to September) from the Sopot pier to Gdańsk, Gdynia and Hel.

Gdynia

☎ 058 / pop 254,000

Gdynia, 9km north of Sopot, was greatly expanded as a seaport after this coastal area (but not Gdańsk) became part of Poland following WWI. Less atmospheric than Gdańsk or Sopot, it's a young city with a busy port atmosphere.

From the main Gdynia Główna train station on plac Konstytucji, where there is a **tourist office** (☎ 721 24 66; www.gdynia.pl; ☎ 8am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr), follow ul 10 Lutego east for about 1.5km to the pier. At the end of the pier is the **Oceanographic Museum & Aquarium** (☎ 621 70 21; adult/child 11/7zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which houses a vast array of sea creatures, both alive and embalmed.

A 20-minute walk uphill (follow the signs) from Teatr Muzyczny on plac Grunwaldzki (about 300m southwest of the start of the pier) leads to **Kamienna Góra**, a hill offering wonderful views.

SLEEPING & EATING

Gdynia is probably best visited as a day trip, but it does have a vibrant restaurant scene. There are several milk bars in the city centre, and upmarket fish restaurants along the pier.

China Town Hotel (☎ 620 92 21; www.chinahotel.pl; ul Dworcowa 11a; s/d 100/130zł) Inexpensive lodgings can be found here, opposite the train station. The rooms are plain but serviceable for a night, though singles are very small. There's a sushi restaurant in the same building.

Hotel Antracyt (☎ 620 12 39; ul Korzeniowskiego 19; www.hotel-antracyt.pl; s/d from 170/240zł; ☎ ☎) This place is further south, on a hill in an exclusive residential area, with fine views over the water.

Willa Lubicz (☎ 668 47 40; www.willalubicz.pl; ul Orłowska 43; s/d 380/410zł; ☎) If you're looking for style you could try this quiet, upmarket place with a chic 1930s ambience at the southern end of town; Gdynia Orłowo is the nearest train station. Third-floor rooms have views of the sea.

Bistro Kwadrans (☎ 620 15 92; Skwer Kościuszki 20; mains 9-13zł; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat, noon-10pm Sun) One block north of the median

strip along ul 10 Lutego, this is a great place for tasty Polish food. It also serves up pizzas, including an improbable variant involving banana and curry.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Local commuter trains link **Gdynia Główna** station with Sopot and Gdańsk every 15 minutes (4zł, 25 minutes). From the same station, regular trains run to Hel (12zł) and Lębork (for Łeba). From the small **bus terminal** outside, minibuses also go to Hel (11zł) and Łeba, and two buses run daily to Świnoujście.

Stena Line uses the **Terminal Promowy** (ul Kwiatkowskiego 60), about 5km northwest of Gdynia. Take bus 150 from outside the main train station.

Between May and September, excursion boats leave regularly throughout the day to Gdańsk, Sopot and Hel from the Gdynia pier.

Hel

Never was a town more entertainingly named – English speakers can spend hours creating amusing twists on ‘to Hel and back’, or ‘a cold day in Hel’. In fact, this old fishing village at the tip of the Hel Peninsula north of Gdańsk is an attractive place to visit, and a popular beach resort. The pristine, windswept **beach** on the Baltic side stretches the length of the peninsula. On the southern side the sea is popular for **windsurfing**; equipment can be rented in the villages of Władysławowo and Jastarnia.

The **Fokarium** (☎ 675 08 36; ul Morska 2; admission 1zł; ☎ 8.30am–8pm), off the main road along the seafront, is home to endangered Baltic grey seals. It also has a good souvenir shop for those ‘I’m in Hel’ postcards to friends back home. The 15th-century **Gothic church** (ul Nadmorski 2), further along the esplanade, houses the **Museum of Fishery** (☎ 675 05 52; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue–Sun).

Visitors often stay in **private rooms** offered within local houses (mostly from May to September), at about 90zł per double. **Captain Morgan** (☎ 675 00 91; www.captainmorgan.hel.org.pl; ul Wiejska 21; d/tr 100/140zł) also offers plain, clean rooms, and good seafood in a quirky pub stuffed with maritime memorabilia.

To Hel, minibuses leave every hour or so from the main train station in Gdynia (11zł). Several slow trains depart from Gdynia daily (12zł), and from May to September from Gdańsk. Hel is also accessible by excursion boat from Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia.

Łeba

☎ 059 / pop 4100

Łeba (*weh*-bah) transforms from quiet fishing village to popular seaside resort between May and September. The wide sandy **beach** and clean water is ideal if you’re looking for a beach break.

From the train station, or adjacent bus stop, head east along ul 11 Listopada as far as the main street, ul Kościuszk. Then turn left (north) and walk about 1.5km to the better eastern beach via the esplanade (ul Nadmorska); if in doubt, follow the signs to the beachside Hotel Neptune.

The **tourist office** (☎ 866 25 65; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri May–Sep) is inside the train station. There are several *kantors* along ul 11 Listopada.

SŁOWIŃSKI NATIONAL PARK

Beginning just west of Łeba, this park stretches along the coast for 33km. It contains a diversity of habitats, including forests, lakes, bogs and beaches, but the main attraction is the huge number of massive (and shifting) **sand dunes** that create a desert landscape. The wildlife and birdlife is also remarkably rich.

From Łeba to the sand dunes, follow the signs from near the train station northwest along ul Turystyczna and take the road west to the park entrance in the hamlet of Rąbka. Minibuses ply this road in summer from Łeba; alternatively, it’s a pleasant walk or bike ride (8km). No cars or buses are allowed beyond the park entrance.

SLEEPING & EATING

Many houses offer private rooms all year round, but finding a vacant room during summer can be tricky. There are plenty of decent eateries in the town centre and along ul Nadmorska.

Hotel Wodnik (☎ 866 13 66; www.wodnik.leba.pl; ul Nadmorska 10; s/d from 232/363zł; ☎) One of several *pensions* along the esplanade on the eastern side of the beach.

Camping Nr 41Amber (☎ 866 24 72; www.ambre.leba.pl; ul Nadmorska 9a; per person/tent from 11/6zł; ☎) This is a decent camping ground, but bring mosquito repellent if you don’t want to be eaten alive.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The usual transit point is Lębork, 29km south of Łeba. In summer there are several daily trains between the two destinations (7zł). To

Lębork, slow trains run every hour or two from Gdańsk, via Gdynia, and there are buses every hour from Gdynia. In summer (June to August), two buses and two trains run directly between Gdynia and Łeba, and one train a day travels to/from Wrocław (55zł, 10 hours).

Malbork

☎ 055 / pop 42,000

Malbork Castle (☎ 647 08 00; www.zamek.malbork.pl; adult/child 25/15zł; ☎ 9am–7pm Tue–Sun May–Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Apr & Sep, 10am–3pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar) is the centrepiece of this town, 58km southeast of Gdańsk. It’s the largest Gothic castle in Europe, and was once known as Marienburg, headquarters to the Teutonic Knights. It was constructed by the Order in 1276 and became the seat of their Grand Master in 1309. Damage sustained in WWII has been repaired since the conflict’s end, and it was placed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 1997.

The **Youth Hostel** (☎ 272 24 08; gimnazjum@malbork.com; ul Żeromskiego 45; dm/d 20/46zł) is a reasonable budget option in a local school about 500m south of the castle. Bed linen costs an extra 5zł per person.

Hotel & Restaurant Zbyszko (☎ 272 26 40; www.hotel.malbork.pl; ul Kościuski 43; s/d from 140/210zł; ☎) is a fairly drab but conveniently located place along the road to the castle. The unremarkable rooms are serviceable for a night.

Hotel & Restaurant Zamek (☎ 272 33 67; biuro@hotelzamek.pl; ul Starościńska 14; s/d/ste 230/300/660zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) is inside a restored medieval building in the Lower Castle. The rooms are a bit old-fashioned, but the bathrooms are up-to-date and the restaurant has character.

The castle is 1km west of the train and bus stations. Leave the train station, turn right, cut across the highway, head down ul Kościuski and follow the signs. Malbork is an easy day trip by train from Gdańsk (10zł, 45 minutes). There are buses every hour to Malbork from Gdynia and five daily from Gdańsk. From Malbork, trains also regularly go to Toruń and Olsztyn.

SZCZECIN

☎ 091 / pop 415,000

Szczecin (*shcheh*-cheen) is the major city and port of northwestern Poland. Massive damage in WWII accounts for the unaesthetic mish-mash of new and old buildings in the city centre, but enough remains to give a sense of the pre-war days. The broad streets and

massive historic buildings bear a strong resemblance to Berlin, for which Szczecin was once the main port as the German city of Stettin. Szczecin may not have the seamless charm of Toruń or Poznań, but it’s worth a visit if you’re travelling to/from Germany.

The **tourist information office** (☎ 434 04 04; al Niepodległości 1; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat Jun–Aug, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri Sep–May) is helpful, as is the **cultural & tourist information office** (☎ 489 16 30; ☎ 10am–6pm) in the castle. The **post office** and most *kantors* are along al Niepodległości, the main street. There’s a handy internet café, **Portal** (☎ 488 40 66; ul Kaszubska 53; per hr 4zł; ☎ 24hr), in the side street opposite the tourist office.

The huge and austere **Castle of the Pomeranian Dukes** (ul Korsarzy 34; admission free; ☎ dawn–dusk) lies 500m northeast of the tourist office. Originally built in the mid-14th century, it was enlarged in 1577 and rebuilt after WWII. Its **Castle Museum** (☎ 434 73 91; adult/child 4/3zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun) explains the building’s convoluted history, with special exhibitions mounted from time to time.

A short walk down (south) from the castle is the 15th-century **Old Town Hall** (ul Mściwoja 8), which contains the **Museum of the City of Szczecin** (☎ 431 52 53; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 11am–6pm Tue, 10am–4pm Wed–Sun). Nearby is the charmingly rebuilt **Old Town** with its cafés, bars and clubs. Three blocks northwest of the castle is the **National Museum** (☎ 431 52 36; ul Staromłyńska 27; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am–4pm Thu, Sat & Sun).

Sleeping & Eating

Youth Hostel PTSM (☎ 422 47 61; www.ptsm.home.pl; ul Monte Cassino 19a; dm 16–18zł, d 44zł; ☎) This hostel has clean, spacious rooms and is located 2km northwest of the tourist office. Catch tram 1 north to the stop marked ‘Piotr Skargi’, then walk right one block. Bed linen costs 6zł extra.

Hotelik Elka-Sen (☎ 433 56 04; www.elkasen.szczecin.pl; al 3 Maja 1a; s/d 120/140zł; ☎) Simple, clean rooms in a basement location in the centre of town. Just south of the tourist office, enter from the side street.

Hotel Podzamcze (☎ 812 14 04; www.podzamcze.szczecin.pl; ul Sienna 1/3; s/d 185/235zł; ☎) This hotel is in a charming location near the Old Town Hall, with neat, well-maintained rooms and a small restaurant.

Haga (☎ 812 17 59; ul Sienna 10; mains 10–20zł; ☎ 11am–11pm) This informal place in the Old

Town produces Dutch-style filled pancakes from a menu listing more than 400 combinations.

Restauracja Stary Szczecin (☎ 433 62 30; plac Batorego 2; mains 18-85zł; ☞ noon-midnight) A more upmarket option serving a range of traditional Polish dishes in elegant surrounds.

Camping PTTK Marina (☎/fax 460 11 65; ul Przesztrębna 23; per person/tent 10/7.50zł, s/d/tr/q cabins 42/70/100/160zł; ☞ May-Sep; P) On the shore of Lake Dąbie – get off at the Szczecin Dąbie train station and ask for directions (2km).

Getting There & Away

LOT flies between Szczecin and Warsaw four times a day. Book at the **LOT office** (☎ 488 35 58; ul Wyzwolenia 17), about 200m from the northern end of al Niepodległości.

The **bus terminal** (plac Grodnicki) and the nearby **Szczecin Główny train station** (ul Kolumba) are located 600m southeast of the tourist office. Three bus services a day head for Warsaw (61zł, six hours), two via Poznań. Fast trains travel regularly to Poznań (37zł, four hours) and Gdańsk (47zł, 3½ hours), and expresses run to Warsaw (88zł, seven hours). Slow trains plod along every two hours to Świnoujście (16zł).

Advance tickets for trains and ferries are available from **Orbis Travel** (☎ 434 26 18; plac Zwycięstwa 1), about 200m west of the main post office.

WARMIA & MASURIA

Like much of northern Poland, Warmia and Masuria have changed hands between German and Polish rulers over the centuries. The countryside is a beautiful postglacial landscape dominated by 3000 lakes, linked to rivers and canals, which host aquatic activities like yachting and canoeing. This picturesque lake district has little industry, and as a result remains unpolluted and attractive, especially in summer.

OLSZTYN

☎ 089 / pop 173,000

Olsztyn (*ol-shtin*) is another city on the Copernicus trail, as the great astronomer once served as administrator of Warmia, commanding Olsztyn Castle from 1516 to 1520. From 1466 to 1772 the town belonged to the kingdom of Poland. With the first partition

of the nation, Olsztyn became Prussian Allenstein, until it returned to Polish hands in 1945.

Nowadays it's a pleasant city whose rebuilt Old Town is home to cobblestone streets, art galleries, cafés, bars and restaurants. As a busy transport hub, it's also the logical base from which to explore the region, including the Great Masurian Lakes district (p608).

The **tourist office** (☎ 535 35 65; www.warmia.mazury.pl; ul Staromiejska 1; ☞ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) is helpful. For money matters, try the **PKO Bank** (ul Pieniężnego).

For snail mail, go to the **main post office** (ul Pieniężnego); for cybermail, try **Klub Internetowy** (ul Kościuszki 26; per hr 3.50zł; ☞ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun) near the train station. Books and maps are sold at **EMPIK** (ul Piłsudskiego 16) inside the Alfa Centrum shopping mall.

Sights

The **High Gate** (Upper Gate) is the remaining section of the 14th-century city walls. Further west, the 14th-century **Castle of the Chapter of Warmia** (ul Zamkowa 2) contains the **Museum of Warmia & Mazury** (☎ 527 95 96; adult/child 6/4zł; ☞ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr). Its exhibits star Copernicus, who made some astronomical observations here in the early 16th century, along with coins and art.

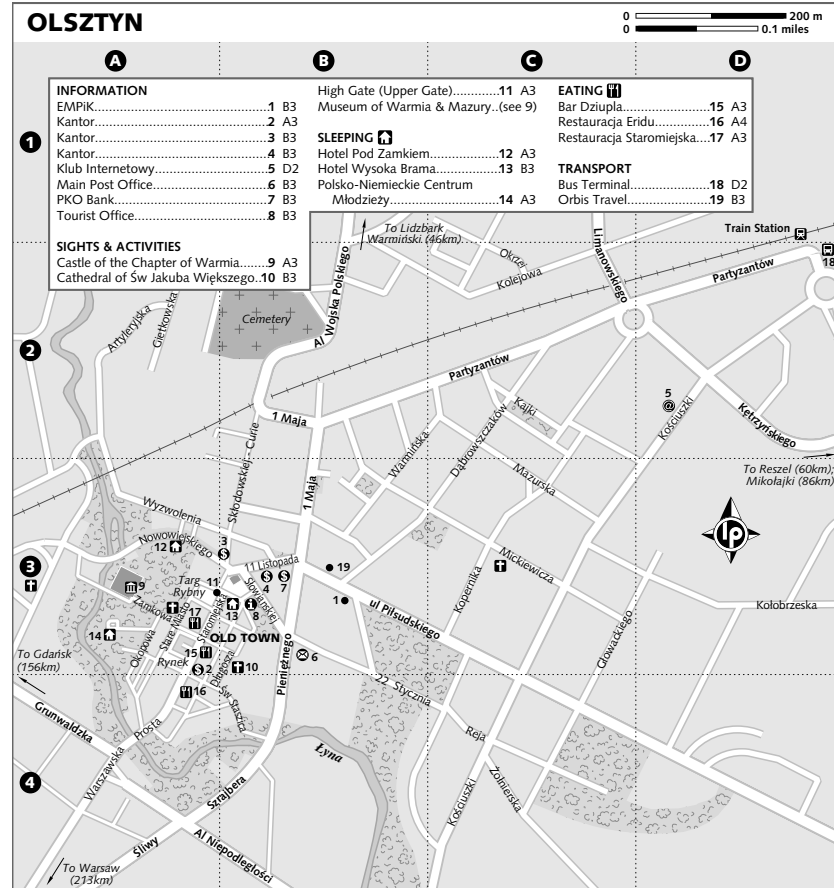
The **Rynek** (Market Square) was rebuilt after WWII destruction. To the east, the red-brick Gothic **Cathedral of Św. Jakuba Większego** (ul Długosza) dates from the 14th century. Its 60m tower was added in 1596.

Sleeping

Hotel Wysoka Brama (☎ 527 36 75; www.hotel-wysokabrama.olsztyn.pl; ul Staromiejska 1; s/d/ste 45/60/160zł) Offers cheap but basic rooms that are in a very central location next to the High Gate.

Hotel Pod Zamkiem (☎ 535 12 87; www.hotel-olsztyn.com.pl; ul Nowowiejskiego 10; s/d 150/190zł; P) *Cosy pension*, with charmingly old-fashioned rooms, reached via an extravagant stairwell constructed of dark timber carved with German text. It's located in a convenient spot near the castle.

Polsko-Niemieckie Centrum Młodzieży (☎ 534 07 80; www.pncm.olsztyn.pl; ul Okopowa 25; s/d 190/240zł; P) This place is also situated next to the castle. The rooms (some with views of the castle) are plain, but have gleaming



bathrooms. There's a sunlit restaurant off the foyer.

Eating

Bar Dziupla (☎ 527 50 83; Rynek 9/10; mains 11-15zł; ☞ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, 9am-7.30pm Sun) This small place is renowned among locals for its tasty Polish food, such as *pierogi*. It also does a good line in soups, including Ukrainian *borscht*.

Restauracja Eridu (☎ 534 94 67; ul Prosta 3/4; mains 13-18zł; ☞ 11am-8pm) The Eridu offers some inexpensive Middle Eastern choices in a vaguely Arabian setting. Also serves takeaway kebabs from a street window.

Restauracja Staromiejska (☎ 527 58 83; ul Stare Miasto 4/6; mains 16-36zł; ☞ 11am-10pm) In classy

premises on the Rynek, this restaurant serves quality Polish standards at reasonable prices. There's a range of *pierogi* and *naleśniki* on the menu.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (ul Partyzantów), buses travel to Białystok (40zł, five daily), Gdańsk (30zł, three hours, six daily) and Warsaw (32zł, five hours, 10 daily).

Trains depart from the **Olsztyn Główny train station** (ul Partyzantów) to Białystok (42zł, two daily), Warsaw (38zł, three daily), Gdańsk (35zł, six daily), Poznań (44zł, three daily), Wrocław (50zł, two daily) and Toruń (32zł, seven daily). **Orbis Travel** (☎ 522 06 13; ul Piłsudskiego) sells advance train tickets.

FROMBORK

☎ 055 / pop 2600

It may look like the town that time forgot, but Frombork was once home to Nicolaus Copernicus. It's also where he wrote his ground-breaking *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, which established the theory that the earth travelled around the sun. Beyond the memory of its famous resident, it's a charming sleepy settlement that was founded on the shore of the Vistula Lagoon in the 13th century. It was later the site of a fortified ecclesiastical township, erected on Cathedral Hill.

The hill is now occupied by the extensive **Nicolaus Copernicus Museum** (☎ 243 72 18), with several sections requiring separate tickets. Most imposing is the red-brick Gothic **cathedral** (adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 9am-3.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr), constructed in the 14th century. The nearby **Bishop's Palace** (adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr) houses various exhibitions on local history, while the **Belfry** (adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 9.30am-5pm May-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct-Apr) is home to an example of Foucault's pendulum. A short distance from the main museum, the **Hospital of the Holy Ghost** (adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat May-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sat Oct-Apr) exhibits historical medical instruments and manuscripts.

Dom Dziecka (☎ 243 72 15; ul Braniewska 11; dm 20zł) offers inexpensive accommodation about 500m east of the museum, along ul Kopernika toward Braniewo.

Dom Familijny Rheticus (☎ 243 78 00; domfamilijny@wp.pl; ul Kopernika 10; s/d/ste 88/120/240zł; (P)) is a small, quaint old place with cosy rooms and good facilities, a short walk to the east of the bus stop.

The bus and train stations are along the riverfront about 300m northwest of the museum, but trains are slow and infrequent. Frombork can be directly reached by bus from Elbląg (6zł, hourly) and Gdańsk (16zł, five daily). The best place to get on and off is the bus stop directly below the museum on ul Kopernika.

ELBLĄG-OSTRÓDA CANAL

The longest navigable canal still used in Poland stretches 82km between Elbląg and Ostróda. Constructed between 1848 and 1876, this waterway was used to transport timber from inland forests to the Baltic. To over-

come the 99.5m difference in water levels, the canal utilises an unusual system of five water-powered slipways so that boats are sometimes carried across dry land on rail-mounted trolleys.

Usually, **excursion boats** (☎ mid May-late Sep) depart from both Elbląg and Ostróda daily at 8am (85zł, 11 hours), but actual departures depend on available passengers. For information, call the **boat operators** (Elbląg ☎ 055-232 43 07, Ostróda ☎ 089-646 38 71; www.zegluga.com.pl).

Hotel Młyn (☎ 055-235 04 70; www.hotelmlyn.com.pl; ul Kościuszki 132; s/d from 220/310zł; (P) ☎), in Elbląg, is located in a picturesque old water mill and offers comfortable modern rooms. In Ostróda, try **Hotel Promenada** (☎ 089-642 81 00; ul Mickiewicza 3; s/d 120/180zł), 500m east of the bus and train stations. **Camping Nr 61** (☎ 055-232 43 07; www.camping-elblag.alpha.pl; ul Panieńska 14; tents 12zł, cabins 60-80zł; ☎ May-Sep), right at Elbląg's boat dock, is pleasant.

Elbląg is accessible by train and bus from Gdańsk, Malbork, Frombork and Olsztyn. Ostróda is regularly connected by train to Olsztyn and Toruń, and by bus to Olsztyn and Elbląg.

GREAT MASURIAN LAKES

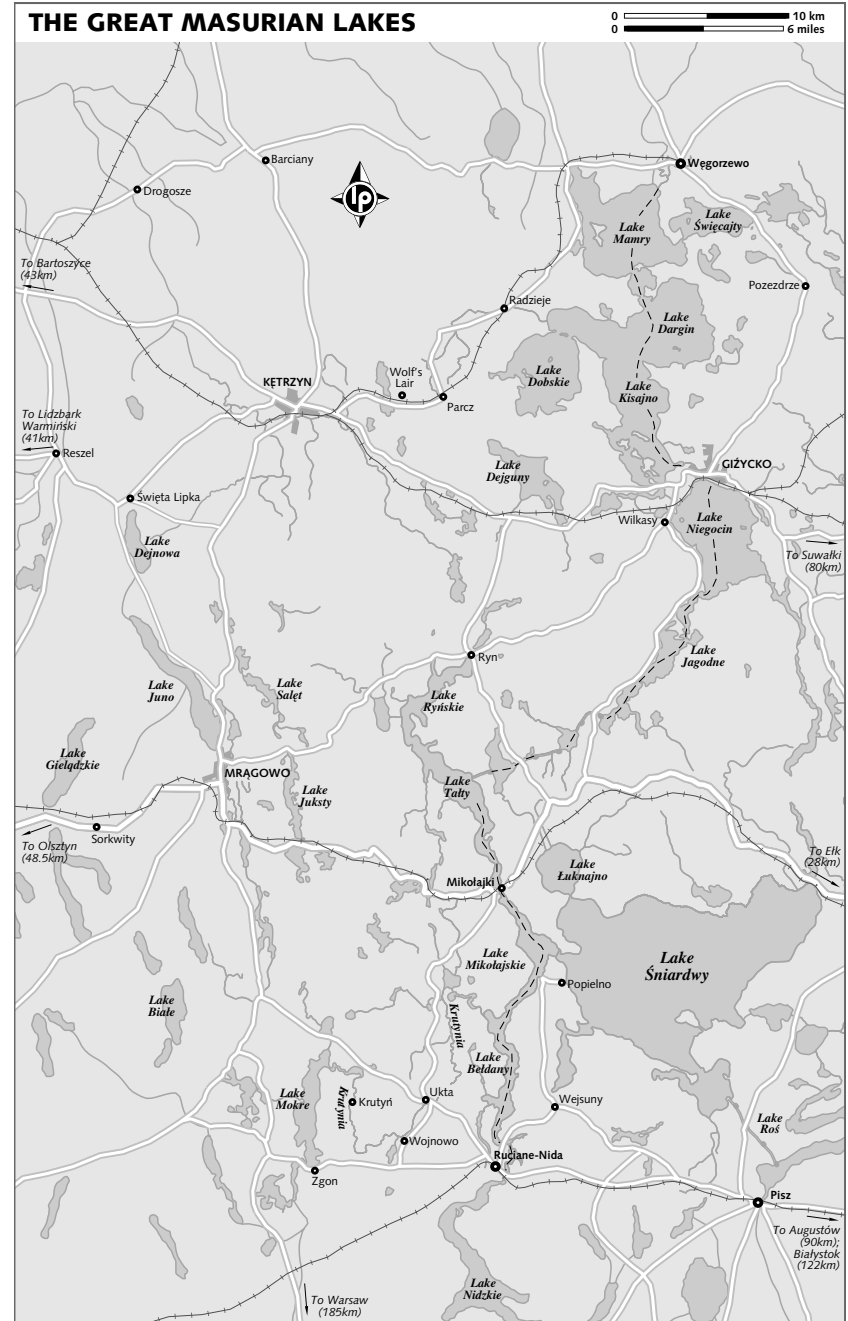
The Great Masurian Lakes district east of Olsztyn has more than 2000 lakes, which are remnants of long-vanished glaciers, and surrounded by green hilly landscape. The largest lake is **Lake Śniardwy** (110 sq km). About 200km of canals connect these bodies of water, so the area is a prime destination for yachting and canoeists, as well as those who prefer to hike, fish and mountain-bike.

The detailed *Wielkie Jeziora Mazurskie* map (1:100,000) is essential for anyone exploring the region by water or hiking trail. The *Warmia i Mazury* map (1:300,000), available at regional tourist offices, is perfect for more general use.

Activities

The larger lakes can be sailed from Węgorzewo to Ruciane-Nida, while canoeists might prefer the more intimate surroundings of rivers and smaller lakes. The most popular kayak route takes 10 days (106km) and follows rivers, canals and lakes from Sorkwity to Ruciane-Nida. Brochures explaining this route are available at regional tourist offices. There's also an extensive network of **hiking** and **mountain-biking** trails around the lakes.

THE GREAT MASURIAN LAKES



Most travellers prefer to enjoy the lakes in comfort on **excursion boats**. Boats run daily (May to September) between Giżycko and Ruciane-Nida, via Mikołajki; and daily (June to August) between Węgorzewo and Ruciane-Nida, via Giżycko and Mikołajki. However, services are more reliable from late June to late August. Schedules and fares are posted at the lake ports.

Świąta Lipka

This village boasts a superb 17th-century **church** (☎ 7am-7pm), one of the purest examples of late-baroque architecture in Poland. Its lavishly decorated organ features angels adorning the 5000 pipes, and they dance to the organ's music. This mechanism is demonstrated several times daily from May to September, and recitals are held Friday nights from June to August.

Ask any of the regional tourist offices for a list of homes in Świąta Lipka offering **private rooms**. There are several **eateries** and places to drink near the church.

Buses run to Kętrzyn every hour or so, but less often to Olsztyn.

Wolf's Lair

An eerie attraction at Gierłoż, 8km east of Kętrzyn, is the **Wolf's Lair** (Wilczy Szaniec; ☎ 089-752 44 29; www.wolfsschanze.home.pl; adult/child 8/5zł; ☎ 8am-dusk). This was Hitler's wartime headquarters for his invasion of the Soviet Union, and his main residence from 1941 to 1944.

In 1944 a group of high-ranking German officers tried to assassinate Hitler here. The leader of the plot, Claus von Stauffenberg, arrived from Berlin on 20 July for a regular military staff meeting. A frequent guest, he entered the meeting with a bomb in his briefcase. He placed it near Hitler and left to take a prearranged phone call, but the briefcase was then unwittingly moved by another officer. Though the explosion killed and wounded several people, Hitler suffered only minor injuries. Stauffenberg and some 5000 people allegedly involved in the plot were subsequently executed.

On 24 January 1945, as the Red Army approached, the Germans blew up Wolfsschanze (as it was known in German), and most bunkers were at least partly destroyed. However, huge concrete slabs – some 8.5m thick – and twisted metal remain. The ruins are at their most atmospheric in winter, with fewer visitors and a thick layer of snow.

A large map is posted at the entrance, with features of interest clearly labelled in English (Hitler's personal bunker, perhaps aptly, is unlucky No 13). Booklets outlining a self-guided walking tour are available in English and German at the kiosk in the car park. The services of English- and German-speaking guides are also available for 50zł. Note that some reports from visitors have mentioned the attraction of this place to neo-Nazi skinheads. If walking through the woods, stick with other people and be aware of your surroundings, particularly if you're of non-European appearance.

Hotel Wilcze Gniazdo (☎ 089-752 44 29; fax 752 44 92; s/d/tr 70/80/130zł), situated in original buildings within the complex, is fairly basic but adequate for one night. A restaurant is attached.

Catch one of several daily PKS buses (3.20zł) from Kętrzyn to Węgorzewo (via Radziej, not Srokowo) and get off at the entrance. Between May and September, a local bus (2.50zł, 9am to 6pm) from the train station in Kętrzyn also goes to the site, either a bus 1 on an extended route or a separate bus bound especially for Wilczy Szaniec. The Kętrzyn **tourist office** (☎ 089-751 47 65) can advise current transport details.

Giżycko

☎ 087

Giżycko (ghee-*zhits*-ko) is the largest lakeside centre in the region, set on the northern shore of Lake Niegocin. A notable historic site is the 19th-century **Boyen Fortress** (ul Turystyczna 1; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 8am-7pm), built by the Prussians to defend the border with Russia.

Near the main square (plac Grunwaldzki) is the very helpful **tourist information office** (☎ 428 52 65; www.gizycko.turystyka.pl; ul Warszawska 7; ☎ 8am-5pm May-Jun, 8am-7pm Jul-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Apr) and **Bank Pekao** (ul Olsztyńska 17). There are some *kantors* in the town centre, including one at **Orbis Travel** (☎ 428 35 98; ul Dąbrowskiego 3), about 250m east of the main square.

Sailing boats are available from **Almatur** (☎ 428 59 71; ul Moniuszki 24), 700m west of the fortress, and at **Centrum Mazur** at Camping Nr 1 Zamek.

Wama Tour (☎ 429 30 79; ul Konarskiego 1) rents out bicycles (about 20zł), and Hotel Zamek has kayaks (8zł per hour). **Zegluga Mazurska** (☎ 428 25 78; ul Kolejowa 8) operates excursion boats, and you can arrange car rental through **luczany** (☎ 428 26 62; ul Suwalska 19b).

SLEEPING & EATING

Boyen Fortress Youth Hostel (☎ 428 29 59; tmtb@wp.pl; dm 15-20zł) Has a character-packed location within the battlements, and offers the usual basic but clean facilities.

Hotel Zamek (☎ 428 24 19; d 144zł; ☎ May-Sep; ☐) This place provides a decent standard of accommodation for the price.

Hotel Wodnik (☎ 428 38 71; www.cmazur.pl; ul 3 Maja 2; s/d from 180/250zł; ☐ ☎ ☎) A big barn of a place just off the main square, with plain but tidy rooms and modern bathrooms. There's a restaurant, bar and billiards room on the premises.

Camping Nr 1 Zamek (☎ 428 34 10; ul Moniuszki 1; per person/tent 15/10zł; ☎ May-end Sep; ☐) Just west of the canal, this camping ground is simple but central.

Kuchnie Świata (☎ 429 22 55; plac Grunwaldzki 1; mains 15-40zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) A good dining choice is this cheery red-and-orange space serving up an eclectic range of dishes including pizza and pasta, along with *placki ziemniaczane* and other Polish favourites.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the train station, on the southern edge of town near the lake, around seven trains run daily to Kętrzyn and Olsztyn, and two head to Gdańsk.

From the adjacent bus terminal, buses travel regularly to Mikołajki (9zł, one hour), Kętrzyn (8zł, 45 minutes) and Olsztyn. Five buses daily head to Warsaw.

Mikołajki

☎ 087

Mikołajki (Mee-ko-*wahy*-kee), 86km east of Olsztyn, is a great base for exploring the lakes, and it's a picturesque little village in its own right. The **tourist office** (☎ 421 68 50; www.mikolajki.pl; plac Wolności 3; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Sep) is in the town centre, though in the low season tourist advice is available at the **local government offices** (ul Kolejowy 7; ☎ 10am-3pm Oct-Apr). There are *kantors* and ATMs near the tourist office, but nowhere to change travellers cheques or get cash advances.

Sailing boats and kayaks can be hired from **Cicha Zatoka** (☎ 421 50 11; al Spacerowa 1) at the waterfront on the other side of the bridge from the town centre, and also from the appropriately named **Fun** (☎ 421 62 77; ul Kajki 82).

Lake Śniardwy and Lake Łuknajno are ideal for **cycling**. The tourist office can provide de-

tails and maps, and bikes can be rented from Pensionjat Mikołajki.

SLEEPING & EATING

Pensions and homes offering private rooms are dotted along ul Kajki, the main street leading around Lake Mikołajskie; more *pensions* can be found along the roads to Ruciane-Nida and Elk. There are plenty of eateries along the waterfront and around the town square to cater for peak-season visitors.

Pensjonat Mikołajki (☎ 421 64 37; www.pensjonat.mikolajki.prv.pl; ul Kajki 18; s/d 100/200zł) An attractive place to stay, with timber panelling and a prime lake-front location. Some rooms have balconies overlooking the water.

Camping Nr 2 Wagabunda (☎ 421 60 18; ul Leśna 2; per person/tent 15/12zł, cabins 80zł; ☎ May-Oct) Across the bridge, this camping ground is 1km south-west of the town centre.

Pizzeria Królewska (☎ 421 63 23; ul Kajki 5; mains 8-22zł; ☎ noon-10pm) A reasonable pizza restaurant open year-round, in cosy cellar premises.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the bus terminal, next to the bridge at plac Kościelny, six buses go to Olsztyn (13zł, two hours) each day. Otherwise, get a bus (hourly) to Mrągowo and change there for Olsztyn. Several buses also go daily to Giżycko (9zł, one hour) and three depart in summer for Warsaw. A private company, **Agawa** (☎ 0698 256 928) runs an express service daily to Warsaw year-round, departing from the bus terminal.

From the dozy train station, two slow trains shuttle along daily to Olsztyn (14zł), and two to Elk (11zł), and one fast train heads to Poznań via Olsztyn in summer. In quiet times, the ticket office only opens 30 minutes (or less) before departures.

POLAND DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION Camping

Poland has hundreds of camping grounds, and many offer good-value cabins and bungalows. Most open May to September, but some only open their gates between June and August.

Hostels

Schroniska młodzieżowe (youth hostels) in Poland are operated by Polskie Towarzystwo

Schronisk Młodzieżowych (PTSM), a member of Hostelling International. Most only open in July and August, and are often very busy with Polish students; the year-round hostels have more facilities. Youth hostels are open to all, with no age limit. Curfews are common, and many hostels close between 10am and 5pm.

A number of privately-operated hostels operate in the main cities, and are geared towards international backpackers. They are usually open 24 hours and offer more modern facilities than the old youth hostels, though prices are higher. These hostels usually offer free use of washing machines, in response to the absence of laundromats in Poland.

A dorm bed can cost anything from 15zł to 50zł per person per night. Single/double rooms, if available, cost from about 80/100zł.

Hotels

Hotel prices often vary according to season, and are posted at hotel reception desks. Top-end hotels sometimes quote prices in euros, and discounted weekend rates are often available. Rooms with a private bathroom can be considerably more expensive than those with shared facilities. Most hotels offer 24-hour reception.

If possible, check the room before accepting. Don't be fooled by hotel reception areas, which may look great in contrast to the rest of the establishment. On the other hand, dreary scuffed corridors can sometimes open into clean, pleasant rooms.

Two reliable companies can arrange accommodation (sometimes with substantial discounts) over the internet through www.poland4u.com and www.hotelspoland.com.

Mountain Refuges

PTTK runs a chain of *schroniska górskie* (mountain refuges) for trekkers. They're usually simple, with a welcoming atmosphere, and serve cheap, hot meals. The more isolated refuges are obliged to accept everyone, so can be crowded in the high season. Refuges are normally open all year, but confirm with the nearest PTTK office before setting off.

Private Rooms & Apartments

Some destinations have agencies (usually called *biuro zakwaterowania* or *biuro kwater prywatnych*), which arrange accommodation in private homes. Rooms cost about 70/100zł per single/double. The most important factor

to consider is location; if the home is in the suburbs, find out how far it is from reliable public transport.

During the high season, home owners also directly approach tourists. Prices are open to bargaining, but you're more likely to be offered somewhere out in the sticks. Also, private homes in smaller resorts and villages often have signs outside their gates or doors offering a *pokoje* (room) or *noclegi* (lodging).

In Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław and Gdańsk, some agencies offer self-contained apartments, which are often an affordable alternative to hotels.

ACTIVITIES

Hikers and long-distance trekkers can enjoy marked trails across the Tatra (p575) and Sudeten Mountains (p588), around Biańowieża National Park (p559) and the Great Masurian Lakes district (p608), and at places near Poznań (p589) and Ćwinoujście. Trails are easy to follow and detailed maps are available at most larger bookshops.

As Poland is fairly flat, it's ideal for cyclists. Bicycle routes along the banks of the Vistula River are popular in Warsaw (p547), Toruń (p593) and Kraków (p561). Many of the national parks – including Tatra (near Zakopane), Wolin (near Świnoujście) and Słowiński (near Łeba) – offer bicycle trails, as does the Great Masurian Lakes district. Bikes can be rented at most resort towns and larger cities (see also p617).

Zakopane (p572) will delight skiers from December to March. Facilities are cheaper than – though not as developed as – the ski resorts of Western Europe.

Throngs of yachters, canoeists and kayakers enjoy the network of waterways in the Great Masurian Lakes district every summer; boats are available for rent from all lakeside towns. Windsurfers can head to the beaches of the Hel Peninsula (p604).

BOOKS

God's Playground: A History of Poland, by Norman Davies, offers an in-depth analysis of Polish history. The condensed version, *The Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, also by Davies, has greater emphasis on the 20th century. *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and their Culture*, by Adam Zamoyski, is a superb cultural overview. The wartime Warsaw Rising is vividly

brought to life in Norman Davies' *Rising '44*, and *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980–82*, by Timothy Garton Ash, is entertaining and thorough. *Jews in Poland* by Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, provides a comprehensive record of half a millennium of Jewish life.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most shops are open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and until 2pm on Saturday. Supermarkets and larger stores often have longer opening hours. Banks in larger cities are open from about 8am to 5pm weekdays (sometimes until 2pm on Saturday), but have shorter hours in smaller towns. *Kantors* generally follow shop hours.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Poland is a relatively safe country, but be alert for thieves and pickpockets around major train stations, such as Warszawa Centralna. Robberies have become a problem on night trains, especially on international routes. Try to share a compartment with other people if possible. Watch out too for bogus ticket-inspectors on public transport – ask to see ID if they try to fine you.

Theft from cars is a widespread problem, so keep your vehicle in a guarded car park whenever possible. Heavy drinking is common and drunks can be disturbing, though rarely dangerous. Smoking is common in public places, especially in bars and restaurants. However, it's becoming more common for hotels and restaurants to offer nonsmoking options.

As Poland is an ethnically homogeneous nation, travellers who look racially different may attract curious stares from locals in outlying regions. Football (soccer) hooligans are not uncommon, so avoid travelling on public transport with them (especially if their team has lost!).

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Poland is not well set-up for people with disabilities, although there have been significant improvements over recent years. Wheelchair ramps are only available at some upmarket hotels, and public transport will be a real challenge for anyone with mobility problems. However, many top-end hotels now have at least one room specially designed for disabled access – book ahead for these. There are also some low-floor trams now running on the Warsaw public transport network. Informa-

tion on disability issues is available from **Integracja** (☎ 022-635 13 30; www.integracja.org).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Polish Embassies & Consulates

Australia (☎ 02-6273 1208; 7 Turrama St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); **Sydney** (☎ 02-9363 9816; 10 Trelawny St, Woolhara, NSW 2025)

Canada (☎ 613-789 0468; 443 Daly Ave, Ottawa 2, Ontario K1N 6H3); **Toronto** (☎ 416-252 5471; 2603 Lakeshore Blvd West); **Vancouver** (☎ 604-688 3530; 1177 West Hastings St, Suite 1600)

France (☎ 01 43 17 34 00; 1 Rue de Talleyrand, 75007 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-22 31 30; Lassenstrasse 19-21, 14193 Berlin); **Hamburg** (☎ 040-61 1870; Gründgensstrasse 20)

Netherlands (☎ 070-799 01 00; Alexanderstraat 25, 2514 JM The Hague)

UK (☎ 0870-774 27 00; 47 Portland Pl, London W1B 1JH); **Edinburgh** (☎ 0131-552 0301; 2 Kinneair Rd, EH3 5PE); **Sheffield** (☎ 0114-276 6513; 4 Palmerston Rd, S10 2 TE)

USA (☎ 202-234 3800; 2640 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009); **New York** (☎ 212-686 1541; 233 Madison Ave); **Chicago** (☎ 312-337 8166; 1530 North Lake Shore Dr); **Los Angeles** (☎ 310-442 8500; 12400 Wilshire Blvd)

Embassies & Consulates in Poland

All diplomatic missions listed are in Warsaw unless stated otherwise.

Australia (Map p550; ☎ 022-521 34 44; www.australia.pl; ul Nowogrodzka 11)

Belarus (Map p548; ☎ 022-742 09 90; ul Wiertnicza 58)

Canada (Map p550; ☎ 022-584 31 31; www.canada.pl; ul Matejki 1/5)

Czech Republic (Map p550; ☎ 022-628 72 21; warsaw@embassy.mzv.cz; ul Koszykowa 18)

France (Map p548; ☎ 022-529 30 00; ul Puławska 17); **Kraków** (Map p562; ☎ 012-424 53 00; ul Stolarska 15)

Germany (Map p548; ☎ 022-584 17 00; www.ambasadaniemiec.pl; ul Dąbrowiecka 30); **Kraków** (Map p562; ☎ 012-424 30 00; ul Stolarska 7)

Ireland (Map p550; ☎ 022-849 66 33; www.irelandia.pl; ul Mysia 5)

Lithuania (Map p548; ☎ 022-625 33 68; litwa.amb@waw.pdi.net; al Szucho 5)

Netherlands (Map p548; ☎ 022-559 12 00; www.nl.embassy.pl; ul Kawalerii 10)

Russia (Map p548; ☎ 022-621 34 53; ul Belwederska 49)

Slovakia (Map p548; ☎ 022-528 81 10; ul Litewska 6)

Ukraine (Map p548; ☎ 022-629 34 46; al Szucho 7)

UK (Map p550; ☎ 022-311 00 00; www.britishembassy.pl; al Róż 1); **Kraków** (Map p562; ☎ 012-421 70 30; ul Św. Anny 9)

USA (Map p550; ☎ 022-504 20 00; www.usinfo.pl; al Ujazdowskie 29/31); **Kraków** (Map p562; ☎ 012-424 51 00; ul Stolarska 9)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Warsaw

International Book Fair (www.bookfair.pl) Held in May.

Warsaw Summer Jazz Days (www.adamiakjazz.pl) Held in July.

Mozart Festival Held in June/July.

International Street Art Festival (www.sztukaulicy.pl) Held in July.

Warsaw Autumn Festival of Contemporary Music (www.warsaw-autumn.art.pl) Held in September.

Kraków

Organ Music Festival Held in March.

Jewish Culture Festival (www.jewishfestival.pl) Held in June/July.

International Festival of Street Theatre (www.teatrktko.pl, under 'Festiwale' link) Held in July.

Summer Jazz Festival (www.cracjazz.com) Held in July.

Częstochowa

The major Marian feasts at Jasna Góra are 3 May, 16 July, 15 August (especially), 26 August, 8 September, 12 September and 8 December.

Wrocław

Musica Polonica Nova Festival (www.musicapoloni.canova.pl, in Polish only) Held in February.

Jazz on the Odra International Festival (www.jnofestival.pl) Held in April.

Wrocław Marathon (www.wroclawmaraton.pl) Held in April.

Wrocław Non Stop (www.wroclawnonstop.pl)

Held in June/July.

Wratlavia Cantans (www.wratlavia.art.pl) Held in September.

Poznań

The largest trade fairs take place in January, June, September and October.

St John's Fair Cultural event in June.

Malta International Theatre Festival (www.malta-festival.pl) Held in late June.

Gdańsk

International Organ Music Festival (www.gdanskie-organy.com, under concerts) Organ recitals are held at the Oliwa Cathedral twice a week (mid-June to late August).

International Street & Open-Air Theatre Festival (www.feta.pl) Popular event held in July.

International Organ, Choir & Chamber Music Festival (www.gdanskie-organy.com, under concerts)

Every Fri in July and August, at St Mary's Church.

St Dominic's Fair (www.mtgasa.pl, under Jarmark Św. Dominika) An annual shopping fair held in August.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

With the Church remaining influential in social matters, and with senior government figures accused of homophobia, gay acceptance in Poland is still in development. As a result, the Polish gay and lesbian scene remains fairly discreet. Warsaw and Kraków are the best places to find gay-friendly bars, clubs and accommodation. The free tourist brochure, the *Visitor*, lists a few gay nightspots.

The best source of information on Warsaw and Kraków is online at www.gayguide.net. **Innastrona** (www.innastrona.pl) is also useful. **Lambda** (☎ 022-628 52 22; www.lambda.org.pl) is a national gay rights and information service. Newsstands and gay bars in Warsaw may also stock copies of *Nowy Men*, a gay listings magazine.

HOLIDAYS

Poland's official public holidays:

New Year's Day 1 January

Easter Monday March or April

Labour Day 1 May

Constitution Day 3 May

Corpus Christi A Thursday in May or June

Assumption Day 15 August

All Saints' Day 1 November

Independence Day 11 November

Christmas 25 and 26 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

InsidePoland (www.insidepoland.com) Current affairs and reasonable links.

Poland What Where When (www.what-where-when.pl) Online version of the handy tourist magazine.

Poland.pl (www.poland.pl) Excellent place to start surfing.

POLISHWORLD (www.polishworld.com) Directories and travel bookings.

VirtualTourist.com (www.virtualtourist.com) Poland section features postings and discussion by travellers.

VISIT.PL (www.visit.pl) Online accommodation booking service.

MEDIA

The glossy, English-language *Poland Monthly* and the *Warsaw Business Journal* are aimed at the business community, while *Warsaw Insider* has more general-interest features, listings and reviews.

The free *Welcome to...* series of magazines covers Poznań, Kraków and Warsaw monthly, with special editions released irregularly on other cities including Gdańsk and Wrocław. The free magazine *Poland: What, Where, When* covers Warsaw, Kraków and Gdańsk.

Recent newspapers and magazines from Western Europe and the USA are readily available at EMPIK bookshops, which are *everywhere*, and at newsstands in the lobbies of upmarket hotels.

The state-run Polish Radio (Polskie Radio) is the main broadcaster, while Warsaw-based Radio Zet and Kraków-based RFM are two nationwide private broadcasters.

Poland has several private TV channels, including PolSat, and two state-owned country-wide channels. Foreign-language programmes are painfully dubbed with one male voice covering all actors (that's men, women and children) and no lip-sync, so you can still hear the original language underneath. Most major hotels have access to European and US channels.

Cinemas are present in all city centres, including modern multiplexes. English-language films are usually subtitled rather than dubbed into Polish.

MONEY

The Polish currency is the złoty (*zwo-ti*), abbreviated to zł. (The currency is also sometimes referred to by its international currency code, PLN.) It's divided into 100 groszy (gr). Denominations of notes are 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 złoty (rare), and coins come in one, two five, 10, 20 and 50 groszy, and one, two and five złoty.

ATMs

Bankomats (ATMs) accept most international credit cards and are easily found in the centre of all cities and most towns. Banks without an ATM may provide cash advances over the counter on credit cards.

Moneychangers

Private *kantors* (foreign-exchange offices) are *everywhere*. *Kantors* require no paperwork and charge no commission. Rates at *kantors* in the midst of major tourist attractions, in top-end hotels and at airports are generally poor.

The most widely accepted currencies are the euro, the US dollar and the pound sterling (in that order), though most *kantors* will change a range of other currencies. Foreign banknotes should be in perfect condition or *kantors* may refuse to accept them.

Travellers cheques are more secure than cash, but *kantors* rarely change them. Not

all banks do either, and most charge 2% to 3% commission. The best place to change travellers cheques are branches of Bank Pekao or PKO Bank. In remote regions, finding an open bank that cashes travellers cheques may be tricky, especially on weekends.

POST

Postal services are operated by Poczta Polska. Most cities have a dozen or more post offices, of which the Poczta Główna (main post office) has the widest range of services.

Letters and postcards sent by air from Poland take a few days to reach a European destination and a week or so to anywhere else. The cost of sending a normal-sized letter (up to 20g) or a postcard to other European countries is 3zł, rising to 3.20zł for North America and 4.50zł for Australia.

TELEPHONE

All land-line numbers throughout Poland have seven digits. Note that it's necessary to dial both the area code and the local number, even for calls within the local area.

To call Poland from abroad, dial the country code ☎ 48, then the two-digit area code (drop the initial '0'), and then the seven-digit local number. The international access code for overseas calls from Poland is ☎ 00. If you need help, try the operators for local numbers (☎ 913), national numbers and codes (☎ 912) and international codes (☎ 908), but don't expect anyone to speak English.

Mobile Phones

The three mobile telephone providers are Orange, Era and Plus GSM. Reception is generally good and covers the whole country. Mobile numbers are often quoted as nine digits, but require an initial zero to be dialled from land-line phones.

The website www.roaming.pl has plenty of information about using a mobile in Poland.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Police ☎ 997, from mobiles ☎ 112
- Ambulance ☎ 999
- Fire brigade ☎ 93
- Roadside Assistance ☎ 981

Phonecards

Most public telephones use magnetic phonecards, available at post offices and kiosks in units of 15 (9zł), 30 (15zł) and 60 (24zł) – one unit represents one three-minute local call. The cards can be used for domestic and international calls.

VISAS

EU citizens do not need visas to visit Poland and can stay indefinitely. Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Switzerland and USA, can stay in Poland up to 90 days without a visa. South African citizens do require a visa.

Other nationals should check with Polish embassies or consulates in their countries for current visa requirements. Updates can be found at the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.mszy.gov.pl.

TRANSPORT IN POLAND

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The vast majority of international flights to Poland arrive at Warsaw's Okęcie airport (some at the Etiuda terminal), while other important airports include Kraków Balice, Gdańsk and Wrocław. The national carrier **LOT** (LO; www.lot.com; ☎ 0801 703 703) flies to all major European cities.

Other major airlines flying to Poland include the following:

Aeroflot (code SU; ☎ 022-628 25 57; www.aeroflot.com)

Air France (code AF; ☎ 022-556 64 00; www.airfrance.com)

Alitalia (code AZ; ☎ 022-692 82 85; www.alitalia.it)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 022-529 90 00; www.ba.com)

Centralwings (code CO; ☎ 022-558 00 45; www.centralwings.com)

EasyJet (code U2; ☎ 0044 870 6 000 000; www.easyjet.com)

KLM (code KL; ☎ 022-556 64 44; www.klm.pl)

Lufthansa (code LH; ☎ 022-338 13 00; www.lufthansa.pl)

Malév (code MA; ☎ 022-697 74 72; www.malev.hu)

Ryanair (code FR; ☎ 0353-1-249 7791; www.ryanair.com)

SAS Scandinavian Airlines (code SK; ☎ 022-850 05 00; www.scandinavian.net)

SkyEurope (code NE; ☎ 022-433 07 33; www.skyeur.ope.com)

Wizz Air (code W6; ☎ 022-351 94 99; www.wizzair.com)

Land

BORDER CROSSINGS

Below is a list of major road border-crossings that accept foreigners and are open 24 hours.

Belarus South to north Terespol and Kuźnica Białostocka.

Czech Republic West to east Porajów, Zawidów, Jakuszyce, Lubawka, Kudowa-Słone, Boboszków, Glucholaży, Pietrowice, Chałupki and Cieszyn.

Germany North to south Lubieszyn, Kołbaskowo, Krajnik Dolny, Osinów Dolny, Kostrzyń, Słubice, Świecko, Gubin, Olszyna, Łéknicza, Zgorzelec and Sieniawka.

Lithuania East to west Ogrodniki and Budzisko.

Russia (Kaliningrad) West to east Gronowo and Bezledy.

Slovakia West to east Chyżne, Chochołów, Łysa Polana, Niedzica, Piwniczna, Konieczna and Barwinek.

Ukraine South to north Medyka, Hrebenne, Dorohusk and Zosin.

If you're heading to Russia or Lithuania and your train/bus passes through Belarus, be aware that you need a Belarusian transit visa and you must obtain it in advance; see p95 for details.

BUS

International bus services are offered by dozens of Polish and international companies. They're cheaper than trains, but not as comfortable or fast.

One of the major operators is **Eurolines** (☎ 032-3512020; www.eurolinespolska.pl), which operates to a range of European destinations, including eastern cities such as Minsk, Brest, Vilnius, Tallinn and Riga. For more details of international bus travel into Poland, see p930.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To drive a car into Poland, EU citizens need their driving licence from home, while other nationalities must obtain an International Drivers Licence in their home country. Also required are vehicle registration papers and liability insurance (Green Card). If your insurance is not valid for Poland you must buy an additional policy at the border.

TRAIN

Trains link Poland with every neighbouring country and beyond, but international train travel is not cheap. To save money on fares, investigate special train tickets and rail passes (see p939). Domestic trains in Poland are significantly cheaper, so you'll save money if you buy a ticket to a Polish border destination, then take a local train.

Do note that some international trains to/from Poland have become notorious for theft. Keep a grip on your bags, particularly on the Berlin-Warsaw, Prague-Warsaw and Prague-Kraków overnight trains, and on any train travelling to/from Gdańsk. Some readers have reported being gassed while in their compartments and have had everything stolen while they 'slept'. Always reinforce your carriage and, if possible, sleep in a compartment with others. First-class carriages, in theory, should be safer.

Sea

Three companies operate passenger and car ferries all year:

Polferries (www.polferries.pl) Offers services between Gdańsk and Nynäshamn (18 hours) in Sweden every other day in summer (less frequently in the off season). It also has daily services from Świnoujście to Ystad (9½ hours) in Sweden, every Saturday to Rønne (six hours) in Denmark, and five days a week to Copenhagen (10½ to 11 hours).

Stena Line (www.stenaline.com) Operates between Gdynia and Karlskrona (11 hours) in Sweden.

Unity Line (www.unityline.pl) Runs ferries between Świnoujście and Ystad (eight hours).

Any travel agency in Scandinavia will sell tickets for these services. In Poland, ask at any Orbis Travel office. In summer, passenger boats ply the Baltic coast from Świnoujście to Ahlbeck, Heringsdorf, Bansin and Sassnitz in Germany.

GETTING AROUND

Air

The only domestic carrier, **LOT** (www.lot.com), runs flights several times a day from Warsaw to Gdańsk, Kraków, Łódź, Poznań, Szczecin and Wrocław. So, flying between, for example, Kraków and Gdańsk means a connection in Warsaw, which is not necessarily convenient.

Bicycle

Cycling is not great for getting around cities, but is often a good way to travel between villages. Major roads are busy but generally flat, while minor roads can be bumpy. If you get tired, it's easy to place your bike in the special luggage compartment of a train. These compartments are at the front or rear of slow passenger trains, but rarely found on fast or express trains, and never on InterCity or EuroCity services. You'll need a special ticket for your bike from the railway luggage office.

Bus

Buses can be useful on short routes and through the mountains in southern Poland; but usually trains are quicker and more comfortable, and private minibuses are quicker and more direct.

Most buses are operated by the state bus company, **PKS**. It provides two kinds of service from its bus terminals (*dworzec autobusowy PKS*): ordinary buses (marked in black on timetables), and fast buses (marked in red), which ignore minor stops.

Timetables are posted on boards inside or outside PKS bus terminals. Additional symbols next to departure times may indicate the bus runs only on certain days or in certain seasons. Terminals usually have an information desk, but it's rarely staffed with English speakers. Tickets for PKS buses are usually bought at the terminal, but sometimes from drivers.

The largest private bus operator is **Polski Express** (www.polskiexpress.pl), which operates long-distance routes to/from Warsaw (p557). **Polski Express** buses normally arrive and depart from PKS bus terminals – exceptions are mentioned in the relevant destination sections.

COSTS

The price of bus tickets is determined by the length, in kilometres, of the trip. Prices start at roughly 2zł for a journey of up to 5km. Minibuses charge set prices for journeys, and these are normally posted in their windows or at the bus stop.

Car & Motorcycle

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Petrol stations sell several kinds of petrol, including 94-octane leaded, 95-octane unleaded, 98-octane unleaded and diesel. Most petrol stations are open from 6am to 10pm (from 7am to 3pm Sunday), though some operate around the clock. Garages are plentiful. Poland's roadside assistance number is ☎ 981.

HIRE

Major international car-rental companies, such as **Avis** (www.avis.pl), **Hertz** (www.hertz.pl) and **Europcar** (www.europcar.com.pl), are represented in larger cities and have smaller offices at airports. Rates are comparable to full-price rental in Western Europe.

Some companies offer one-way rentals, but no agency will allow you to drive their precious vehicle into Russia, Ukraine or Belarus.

Rental agencies will need to see your passport, your local driving licence (which must be held for at least one year) and a credit card (for the deposit). You need to be at least 21 or 23 years of age to rent a car; sometimes 25 for a more expensive car.

It's usually cheaper to prebook a car in Poland from abroad, rather than to front up at an agency inside the country. It would be even cheaper to rent a car in Western Europe (eg Berlin or Geneva), and drive it into Poland, but few rental companies will allow this. If they do, special insurance is required.

ROAD RULES

The speed limit is 130km/h on motorways, 100km/h or 110km/h on two- or four-lane highways, 90km/h on other open roads and 60km/h in built-up areas (50km/h in Warsaw). If the background of the sign bearing the town's name is white you must reduce speed to 60km/h; if the background is green there's no need to reduce speed (unless road signs indicate otherwise). Radar-equipped police are very active, especially in villages with white signs.

Unless signs state otherwise, cars may park on pavements as long as a minimum 1.5m-wide walkway is left for pedestrians. Parking in the opposite direction to traffic flow is allowed. The permitted blood alcohol level is a low 0.02%, so it's best not to drink if you're driving. Seat belts are compulsory for front seats. Motorbike helmets are also compulsory. Between 1 October and the end of February, all drivers must use headlights during the day (and night!).

Train

Trains will be your main means of transport. They're cheap, reliable and rarely overcrowded (except for July and August peak times). The **Polish State Railways** (PKP; www.pkp.pl) operates trains to almost every place listed in this chapter.

InterCity trains operate on major routes out of Warsaw, including Gdańsk, Kraków, Poznań, Wrocław and Szczecin. They only stop at major cities and are the fastest way to travel by rail. These trains require seat reservations.

Down the pecking order but still quick are *pociąg ekspresowy* (express trains) and the similar but cheaper *pociąg TLK* (TLK trains). *Pociąg pospieszny* (fast trains) are a bit slower and more crowded. *Pociąg osobowy* (slow passenger trains) stop at every tree at the side of the track and should be used only for short trips. Express and fast trains do not normally

require seat reservations except at peak times; seats on slow trains cannot be reserved.

Almost all trains carry two classes: *druga klasa* (2nd class) and *pierwsza klasa* (1st class), which is 50% more expensive. The carriages on long-distance trains are usually divided into compartments: 1st-class compartments have six seats; 2nd-class ones contain eight seats.

In a couchette on an overnight train, compartments have four/six beds in 1st/2nd class. Sleepers have two/three people (1st/2nd class) in a compartment fitted with a washbasin, sheets and blankets. Most 2nd-class and all 1st-class carriages have nonsmoking compartments.

Train *odjazdy* (departures) are listed on a yellow board and *przyjazdy* (arrivals) on a white board. Ordinary trains are marked in black print, fast trains in red. An additional 'Ex' indicates an express train, and InterCity trains are identified by the letters 'IC'. The letter 'R' in a square indicates the train has compulsory seat reservation. The timetables also show which *peron* (platform) it's using. Be aware that the number applies to *both* sides of the platform. If in doubt, check the platform departure board or route cards on the side of carriages, or ask a fellow passenger.

Timetable and fare information in English is on the PKP website. *Miejsca sypialne* (sleepers) and *kuszetki* (couchettes) can be booked at special counters in larger train stations or from Orbis; pre-booking is recommended.

If a seat reservation is compulsory on your train, you will automatically be sold a *miejscówka* (reserved) seat ticket. If you do not make a seat reservation, you can travel on *any* train (of the type requested, ie slow, fast or express) to the destination indicated on your ticket on the date specified.

Your ticket will list the *klasa* (class); the *poc* (type) of train; where the train is travelling *od* (from) and *do* (to); the major town or junction the train is travelling *prez* (through); and the total *cena* (price). If more than one place is listed under the heading *prez* (via), find out from the conductor *early* if you have to change trains at the junction listed or be in a specific carriage (the train may separate later).

If you get on a train without a ticket, you can buy one directly from the conductor for a small supplement – but do it right away. If the conductor finds you first, you'll be fined for travelling without a ticket. You can always upgrade from 2nd to 1st class for a small extra fee (about 5zł), plus the additional fare.

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