

# The Carpathian Mountains



Effectively the eastern extension of the Alps, the Carpathians (Karpaty) stretch from the southern border with Slovakia into the Ukraine. They make up the highest and largest mountain range in Central Europe and form Poland's most scenic and rugged region. Indeed, their wooded hills and snowy mountains are a beacon for hikers, skiers and cyclists. And because of its remoteness and relative inaccessibility over the centuries, this 'forgotten corner' has been able to preserve its strong regional culture. Even today, you'll still see plenty of picturesque timber houses, rustic shingled churches and scores of tiny roadside shrines.

The region's largest city is Rzeszów, which offers excellent transport links but few real attractions. A much better destination is the popular resort town of Zakopane in the heart of the Tatra Mountains (Tatry), the highest section of the Polish Carpathians. This area offers the best winter sports and mountain walks in the country, and in the Podhale region to the north, folk traditions are still a part of everyday life.

Elsewhere, a mosaic of small, modest towns provide jumping-off points for half a dozen national parks and some of Poland's most rewarding walking trails; laid-back spa resorts present a chance to unwind; and historic regional towns such as Przemyśl, Tarnów and Sanok offer unique insights into the past. Just don't try to hurry things down here in the 'deep south'. Instead, adopt the local pace of life and amble at your leisure through some of Poland's most stunning scenery.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Viewing the natural beauty of the Bieszczady up close by jeep tour from **Ustrzyki Górne** (p281)
- Enjoying a papal cream cake in the happy town where Pope John Paul II was born, **Wadowice** (p261)
- Marvelling at the colours and patterns of the painted houses of **Zalpie** (p265)
- Following the **Icon Trail** (p278) from Sanok and visiting the region's charming timber churches
- Hiking or skiing in the Tatra Mountains above the fashionable resort of **Zakopane** (p306)
- Rafting relaxedly down the **Dunajec Gorge** (p301)
- Taking to the waters and having a treatment (milk bath, anyone?) in peaceful **Krynica** (p296)
- Hitting the town after dark in lively, studenty **Rzeszów** (p265)



## Getting There & Away

The main entry points for this region are Kraków in the west and Rzeszów in the east. Both have air links with Warsaw, plus some direct international flights (see p206 and p269). Most of the larger towns have bus or train links with other Polish cities and beyond.

## Getting Around

Although most of the main towns in the region can be reached by train, buses are usually the fastest and most convenient mode of public transport. Getting around more isolated areas, particularly the Bieszczady, can be a slow and frustrating exercise so it's best to be under your own steam.

## THE CARPATHIAN FOOTHILLS

The Carpathian Foothills (Przedgórze Karpackie) form a green and hilly belt sloping from the true mountains in the south to the Vistula and San River Valleys to the north. Except for Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and Wadowice, which are usually visited from Kraków, most sights in the region are located along the Kraków–Tarnów–Rzeszów–Przemyśl road (and are ordered accordingly, west to east, in this section).

## KALWARIA ZEBRZYDOWSKA

pop 4475

Poland's second most important pilgrimage site after Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (kahl-vah-ryah zeb-zhi-dof-skah) is set amid hills 35km southwest of Kraków. The town owes its existence and subsequent fame to the squire of Kraków, Mikołaj Zebrzydowski, who commissioned the church and monastery for the Bernardine order in 1600. Having noticed a resemblance in the area to the topography of Jerusalem, he set about creating a place of worship similar to the Via Dolorosa in the Holy City. By 1617, 24 chapels were built over the surrounding hills, some of which looked as though they'd been brought directly from the mother city. As the place attracted growing numbers of pilgrims, more chapels were erected, eventually totalling 42. In

1999 Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was added to Unesco's list of World Heritage sites.

There is a **tourist office** (☎ 033 876 6101; [www.kalwaria-zebrzydowska.pl](http://www.kalwaria-zebrzydowska.pl); Rynek 19; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) just south of the basilica.

## Sights

The original hilltop church north of the centre was gradually enlarged and today is the massive **Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels** (Bazylika Matki Bożej Anielskiej). The holiest image in the church is the icon of Mary in the **Zebrzydowska Chapel** (Kaplica Zebrzydowska) to the left of the high altar. Tradition has it that the eyes shed tears of blood in 1641, and from that time miracles occurred. Pilgrims flock to Kalwaria year-round but especially on Marian feast days, when processions along the **Calvary Trails** (Dróżki Kalwaryjskie) linking the chapels take place.

The basilica is flanked to the north by the equally huge **Bernardine Monastery** (Klasztor Bernardynów; ☎ 7am–7pm), which contains impressive 16th- and 17th-century paintings in its cloister.

What have really made Kalwaria famous are the **Passion plays**, a blend of religious ceremony and popular theatre re-enacting the crucial final days of Christ's life and held here since the 17th century. They are performed by locals, including Bernardine monks, during a two-day-long procession starting in the early afternoon of Maundy (Holy) Thursday during Holy Week.

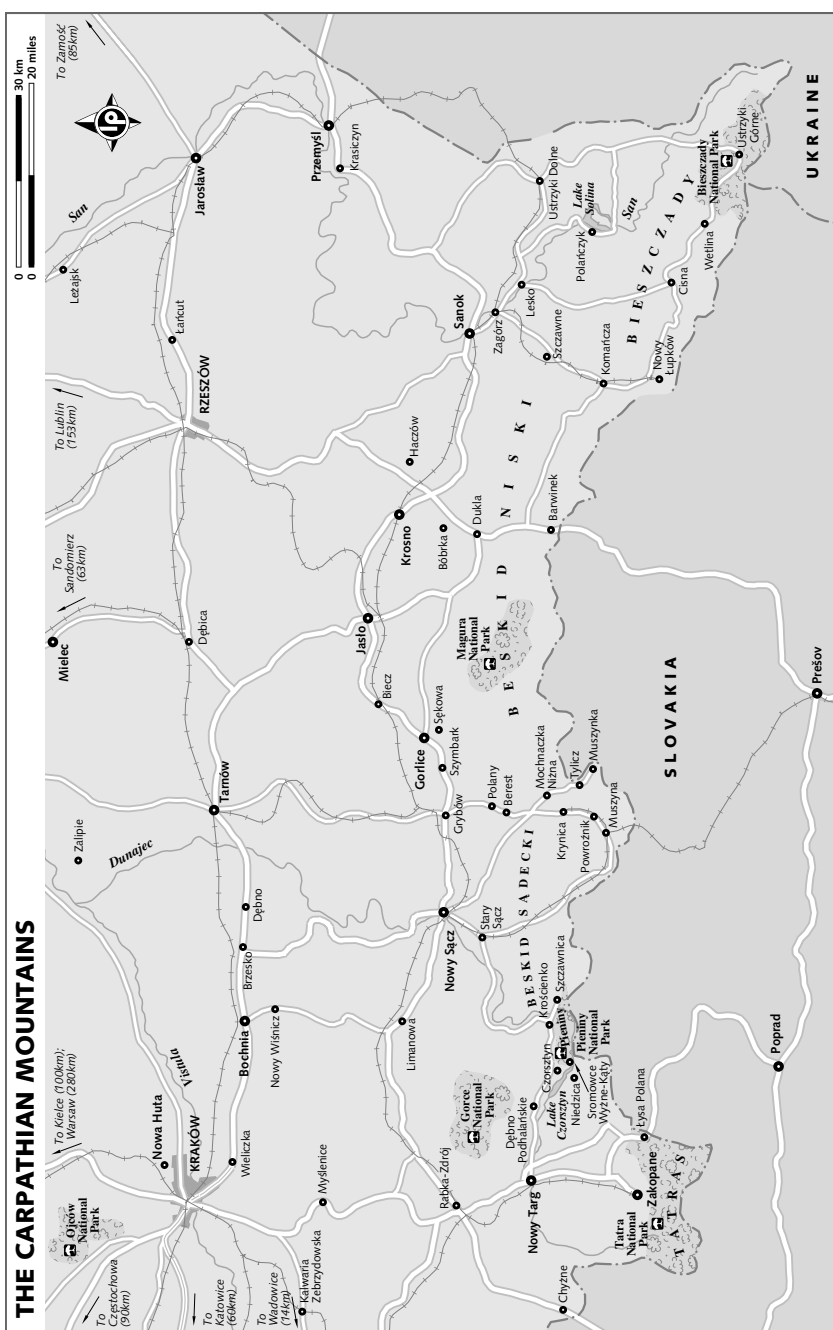
## Sleeping

**Hotel Kalwarianka** (☎ /fax 033 876 6492; ul Mickiewicza 16; s 39–44zł, d 51–59zł, tr 64–75zł, q 78–96zł; 📞) Located next to the town stadium about 1km south of the Rynek, this 54-bed place is basic but cheap; rooms with private facilities are at the upper end of the price scale. There's a tennis court on site.

**Hotel Merkurj Tatarscy** (☎ 033 867 6277; [www.merkury-tatarscy.com.pl](http://www.merkury-tatarscy.com.pl); ul Sądowa 11; s 72–92zł, d 124–144zł, tr 171–216zł; 📞) Right in the centre of town, the Merkurj has 18 spotless and comfortable rooms in two separate buildings. It's an easy walk up the hill to the church and monastery.

## Getting There & Away

There are hourly buses to Kraków (7zł, one hour) and Wadowice (4zł, 30 minutes). Three trains a day pass through Kalwaria on their



THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS

way to/from Kraków (9zł, 45 minutes) and Wadowice (4.50zł, 20 minutes).

## WADOWICE

pop 19,100

The birthplace of one Karol Wojtyła (better known to the world as Pope John Paul II), Wadowice (vah-do-vee-tsah) is a pretty little town 14km west of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska that today welcomes pilgrims in the tens of thousands. And when – not if – the late pontiff is canonised, it is likely to surpass even Częstochowa as Poland's top pilgrimage centre. Unlike Lourdes and other places where miracles are said to happen, the atmosphere here is not sombre and talk does not come in the form of whispers; indeed, in keeping with the spirit of the man and his vision, Wadowice is a joyous place.

The **tourist office** (☎ 033 873 2365; www.it.wadowice.pl; ul Kościelna 4; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun) will provide you with all the information you need. The office is opposite the **Family Home of John Paul II** (Dom Rodzinny Jana Pawła II; ☎ 033 823 2662; www.domrodzinnyjanapawla.pl; ul Kościelna 7; donation requested; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 9am–4pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr), where Karol was born in May 1920; to the north is the 18th-century **Lesser Basilica** (Bazylika Mniejsza; Plac Jana Pawła II), where he was baptised a month later. Outside the church is a **monument to Pope John Paul II**, which is known as the 'Cream Cake Statue' in some circles. It seems that when the pope visited his hometown in 1999, he sat in almost the same spot and reminisced about how he and his mates would enjoy *kremówki* (cream cakes) from a certain shop 'just over there'. The statue actually depicts the pope in the usual pastoral pose, with his hand raised in a blessing, but it might look to some as though he is pointing.

Naturally, you can't miss trying a *kremówka*, the calorific pastry of cream, eggs, sugar and a dash of brandy. Everyone claims to serve the real McCoy, but to our mind the best is at **Kawiarna Mieszczkańska** (☎ 0500 636 842; ul Kościelna 6; cream cakes 4.50zł; ☎ 9am–7pm Apr–Oct, 9am–5pm Nov–Mar), just next to the church.

## Getting There & Away

There are hourly buses to Kraków (8zł, 1½ hours), some of which go via Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (4zł, 30 minutes). There are also half a dozen daily buses to Katowice (12zł, two hours) via Oświęcim (6.50zł, one hour).

Three trains a day go to Kraków (11zł, 1½ hours) via Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (4.50zł, 20 minutes).

## NOWY WIŚNICZ

pop 2700

The little town of Nowy Wiśnicz (*no-vi veesh-neech*), 46km east of Kraków and just south of the transport hub Bochnia, boasts a well-proportioned, early Baroque castle designed by Italian architect Matteo Trapola for one of the most powerful men in Poland at the time, Stanisław Lubomirski (1583–1649).

As soon as the castle was completed, Lubomirski commissioned the same architect to build a monastery nearby for the Carmelites. Equally splendid and similarly fortified, the monastery was erected between 1622 and 1635 about 500m up the hill from the castle. After the Carmelites were expelled in the 1780s, the monastery was turned into a prison, and it remains a high-security one to this day.

## Sights

With its four distinctive towers in the corners, **Wiśnicz Castle** (Zamek w Wiśniczu; ☎ 014 612 8589; adult/concession 8/5zł; ☎ 9am–2pm Mon, 9am–4pm Tue–Thu, 9am–5pm Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 10am–6pm Sun Apr–Oct, 9am–2pm Mon–Fri Nov–Mar) is 1.5km uphill from the town centre. The castle was completed in 1621 using the foundations and parts of the walls of a 14th-century stronghold. The new castle was reputedly very well prepared to defend itself: it had food and ammunition to withstand a three-year siege. Despite its enviable defences, the castle surrendered to the Swedes in 1655 in exchange for the promise that they would not destroy it. They indeed kept their word, but nonetheless thoroughly plundered the interior, taking away some 150 wagonloads of art and other valuables. The castle suffered a series of further misfortunes, including a fire in 1831, which left it in ruins. Only after WWII was restoration undertaken, and this is ongoing.

The 50-minute guided tour covers the courtyard and rooms on the two upper floors, including the domed castle chapel, a large hall with a splendid ornate ceiling, the **Knights Hall** (Sala Rycerska) with a coffered ceiling and a huge ballroom measuring 30m by 9m and 9m high. There's also the sarcophagus of Stanisław Lubomirski, a small exhibition displaying three models of the castle from

different periods and photographic documentation of postwar reconstruction.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Atlas** (☎ 014 612 9125; www.hotelatlas.pl; Stary Wiśnicz 410; s/d/ste 100/140/160zł; (P) (Q)) The charming Atlas offers 10 spotless rooms in a country setting, with a delightful garden and its own detached restaurant and pub done up like a traditional old barn. It's in Stary Wiśnicz, 2.5km north of Nowy Wiśnicz on the road from Bochnia.

**Hotel Cold** (☎ 014 612 2802; www.hotel.cold.pl; ul Storkyňa 5, Bochnia; s/d/apt 115/160/200zł; (P) (X) (Q) (♿)) The reception at this friendly 19-room hotel in Bochnia is anything but what its name suggests. It's a very smart, modern hotel with a restaurant, pub, tennis court and – wait for it – ten-pin bowling alley right in the heart of town.

## Getting There & Away

Nowy Wiśnicz is well served from Bochnia (2.40zł, 15 minutes) by either the hourly suburban bus 12 or the PKS buses running every quarter of an hour or so. Bochnia is on the main Kraków–Tarnów route and has frequent buses and trains to both destinations.

## DĘBNO

pop 1500

Lying roughly halfway between Bochnia and Tarnów, the small village of Dębno contains a relatively little-known castle that is a good example of a small defensive residence. **Dębno Castle** (Zamek w Dębie) was built in the 1470s on the foundations of a previous knights' stronghold and was gradually extended until the 1630s. It was plundered several times since, but the structure survived without major damage.

The castle consists of four two-storey buildings joined at the corners to form a small rectangular courtyard, all surrounded by a now-dry moat that's still spanned by a footbridge. The structure is adorned with fine corner towers, oriels, bay windows and doorways.

The castle is now a **museum** (☎ 014 665 8035; adult/concession 8/4zł, 9/5zł Sun, free Fri; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue & Thu, 9am–3pm Wed & Fri, 11am–3pm Sat & Sun, to 6pm Sat & Sun Jun–Aug). The rooms have been refurbished and contain paintings and weaponry. Larger rooms include the knights' room,

the chapel and the concert hall, which hosts piano recitals from time to time.

**Agawa** (☎ 014 665 8317; www.agawa.noclegiw.pl; ul Wola Dębińska 278; d 130zł; (P)) a motel and restaurant at the petrol station 1km east of Dębno on the highway towards Tarnów, offers budget food and has 15 rooms upstairs.

## Getting There & Away

The castle is an easy stopover on the Kraków–Tarnów highway. There are regular buses on this road that will let you off at the village centre, from which the castle is about 300m south.

## TARNÓW

pop 116,500

Though you probably wouldn't guess it while strolling about its pleasant, finely restored Old Town, Tarnów (*tar-noof*) is an important regional industrial centre and transport hub. With just the right number of attractions and of a manageable size, it's the perfect place to stay put for a while.

The town layout – an oval centre with a large square in its middle – is unusual, suggesting that the town was planned in medieval times. Tarnów is indeed an old city: its municipal charter was granted in 1330. Developing as a trade centre on the busy Kraków–Kyiv route, the town enjoyed good times in the Renaissance period. But a fire in the 15th century completely destroyed the medieval city, which was not rebuilt for almost 200 years.

Not uncommonly for the region, Tarnów had a sizable Jewish community, which by the 19th century accounted for half the city's population. Of 25,000 Jews living here in 1939 (45% of the town's population), only a handful survived the war. To remind itself and others of its past, Tarnów uses a stylised yellow Star of David in its tourist office logo. The city is one of the major centres for Poland's relatively small Roma population.

## Information

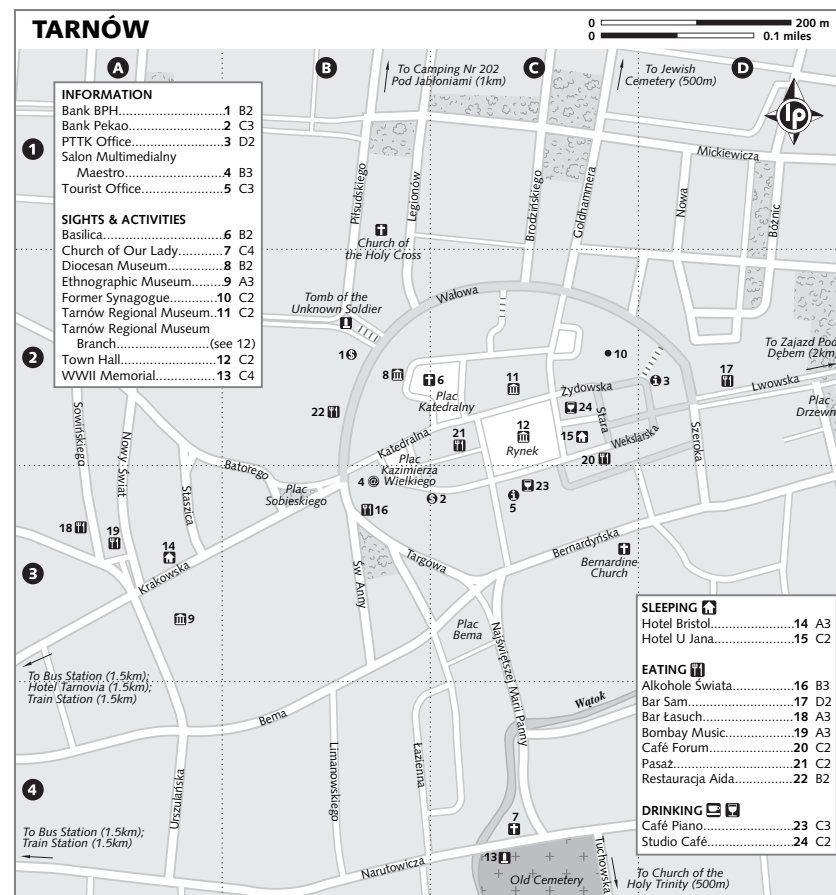
**Bank BPH** (ul Wałowa 10; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri)

**Bank Pekao** (Plac Kazimierza Wielkiego 3a; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat)

**PTTK office** (☎ 014 622 2200; ul Żydowska 20;

☎ 9am–1pm & 5–8pm Mon & Thu, 9am–3.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri) Travel agency.

**Salon Multimedialny Maestro** (Plac Kazimierza Wielkiego 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am–9pm Mon–Sat, noon–9pm Sun) Internet access.



**Tourist office** (☎ 014 688 9090; www.it.tarnow.pl; Rynek 7; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun May–Oct, 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun Nov–Apr) Offers free internet access.

## Sights

On the northern side of the Rynek (called the 'Pearl of the Polish Renaissance') is the **Tarnów Regional Museum** (Muzeum Okręgowe w Tarnowie; ☎ 014 621 2149; www.museum.tarnow.pl; Rynek 20/21; adult/concession 4/2zł, all branches incl town hall branch & Ethnographic Museum 8/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue & Thu, 9am–3pm Wed & Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun), with items relating to the city and region. It's in one of the arcaded burghers' houses, with lovely graffiti of an elephant and a Moor.

Far more interesting is the **town hall museum branch** (Rynek 1), which keeps the same hours. It has a fine collection of historic paintings, armour, furniture, glass and porcelain, and items relating to the life of Józef Bem (1791–1850), a Polish general born in Tarnów who took part in Hungarian war of independence in 1848–49 and is revered as a hero there. Note the town hall's Gothic tower, Renaissance parapets and bizarre faces of devils and gargoyles on the roof.

The **basilica** (bazylika; Plac Katedralny), just off the Rynek to the northwest, dates from the 14th century but was thoroughly remodelled at the end of the 19th century in the neo-Gothic style. The interior shelters several Renaissance and Baroque tombs, of which two in the



chancel are among the largest in the country. Also of interest are the 15th-century oaken stalls under the choir loft, a pair of ornately carved pulpits facing one another and two early-16th-century stone portals at the western and southern porches. Note the beautiful bronze door showing the Apostles.

Behind the cathedral, in a 1524 townhouse, is the **Diocesan Museum** (Muzeum Diecezjalne; ☎ 014 626 4554; Plac Katedralny 6; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-3pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon & 1-2pm Sun). It has a good collection of Gothic sacred art, including some marvellous Madonnas and altarpieces, and an extensive display of folk and religious painting on glass.

The area east of the Rynek was traditionally inhabited by Jews, but little original architecture has survived. Of the 17th-century **former synagogue** off ul Żydowska, destroyed by the Germans in 1939, only the brick *bimah* (from where the Torah was read) still stands. A more moving sign of the Jewish legacy is the **Jewish cemetery** (Cmentarz Żydowski), which is about 500m north along ul Goldhammera, the centre of Jewish life in Tarnów before the war. To reach it, walk north from the Rynek then turn right onto ul Słoneczna. The cemetery dates from the 16th century and boasts about 3000 tombstones in various states of decay and disarray. It's always locked but you can look over the fence from ul Słoneczna or ask for the key at the main branch of the Regional Museum (25zł deposit). The tourist office has a map-brochure called the *Jewish Trail (Szlak Żydów)* that will take you by these and other sites of Jewish interest.

Back in the Old Town, stroll along the curved **ul Wałowa**, which follows the course of the medieval moat. It is lined with fine neoclassical buildings, especially the bank at No 10.

The **Ethnographic Museum** (Muzeum Etnograficzne; ☎ 014 622 0625; ul Krakowska 10; adult/concession 4/2zł, incl regional museum branches 8/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue & Thu, 9am-3pm Wed & Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) has Europe's only permanent collection relating to Roma culture. It's housed in an old inn featuring exterior walls with floral motifs from Zalipie (see opposite).

Worth a look are two small wooden churches south of the Old Town. The shingled **Church of Our Lady** (Kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny; ul Najświętszej Marii Panny), dating from 1442, has charming folk decorations inside and a fine Rococo high altar. Note the poignant **WWII**

**memorial** on the edge of the Old Cemetery (Cmentarz Stary) opposite.

About 500m south along ul Tuchowska and behind the cemetery is the **Church of the Holy Trinity** (Kościół Św Trójcy; ul Tuchowska 5), built in 1597, with a similar naively charming rustic interior that includes an early Baroque high altar.

## Sleeping

**Zajazd Pod Dębem** (☎ 014 626 9620; www.zajazd.poddebem.tarnow.pl; ul Marusz 9b; s/d/tr 82/110/130zł; (P)) The 'Inn under the Oak' is a spotless modern motel some 2km east of town on the road to Rzeszów. Its 29 rooms are cheerful and fresh-looking and there's a decent restaurant on site. Breakfast is 11zł extra.

**Hotel Tarnovia** (☎ 014 630 0350; www.hotel.tarnovia.pl; ul Kościuszki 10; s/d/ste from 90/144/370zł; (P) (Q)) The large Tarnovia, near the bus and train stations, is a holdover from the communist era but offers good value for a place still so close to the centre. The 145 rooms are bright and spacious, and there's a gym and solarium as well as a modern art gallery (which explains the bizarre stone mosaic in front).

**Hotel Bristol** (☎ 014 621 2279; www.bristol.tarnow.com.pl; ul Krakowska 9; s 190-210zł, d 320zł, ste 270-380zł; (P) (Q) (R)) This survivor of the interwar years, with its 15 sumptuous guestrooms and chilled atmosphere, is our favourite place in town, especially the retro restaurant, which is a flashback to the 1970s.

**Hotel U Jana** (☎ 014 626 0564; www.hotelujana.pl; Rynek 14; s 150-250zł, d 200-400zł, tr 280-570zł, q 360-720zł; (P) (Q) (R)) This all-suite hotel is the classiest and most central place to stay in the Old Town, conveniently located on the Rynek. The 10 apartments have decent artwork on the walls, the beds are huge and the bathrooms are up to date. Breakfast is 15zł extra.

**Camping Nr 202 Pod Jabłoniemi** (☎ 014 621 5124; www.camping.tarnow.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 28a; per person/tent/caravan 13/5/17zł, s/d/tr/q 25/55/75/100zł; ☎ Apr-Nov; (P)) About 1km due north of the Old Town, this camping ground also has 18 simple bungalows with shared facilities.

## Eating

**Restauracja Aida** (☎ 014 627 4264; www.restauracja-aida.pl; ul Wałowa 2; mains 9-20zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) This wonderful discovery in a courtyard through an arcade serves excellent Italian dishes as well as more enlightened Polish ones. It's a quiet, almost romantic spot meant for two of you.

**Café Forum** (☎ 014 620 1111; ul Weklerska 9; mains 9-28zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 1-10pm Sun) This is a convivial place in the Old Town offering a menu of cheap pizzas, salads and drinks.

**Bombay Music** (☎ 014 627 0760; www.bombay.rix.pl; ul Krakowska 11a; mains 14-40zł; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun) The Bombay serves up somewhat less-than-authentic Indian dishes (plus a few European ones) in elegant surrounds. And the Music part? Photos of jazz musicians on the walls hint at the occasional live set (but not in August).

**Pasaż** (☎ 014 627 8278; www.pasaz.tarnow.pl; Plac Kazimierza Wielkiego 2; mains 15-38zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Probably Tarnów's finest restaurant, the Pasaż, in a passageway leading west from the Rynek, serves rather exotic international (crab) and Polish (venison) dishes in a very chichi dining room.

**Alkohole Świata** (Alcohols of the World; ul Targowa 4; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) Late-night shop selling various foodstuffs and drinks.

Two very similar milk bars serve dishes (mains 3zł to 10zł) that are nothing to write home about but are cheap and filling. **Bar Łasuch** (☎ 014 627 7123; ul Sowińskiego 4; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) is southwest of the Old Town near the Ethnographic Museum, while **Bar Sam** (☎ 014 627 7119; ul Lwowska 12; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) lies to the east.

## Drinking

**Café Piano** (☎ 014 621 9248; Rynek 9; ☎ 10am-midnight) Set in beautifully decorated cellars, this studenty place offers plenty of drinks, a few budget dishes and live jazz on some weekends.

**Studio Café** (☎ 0603 555 695; ul Żydowska 3; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Sat, 4-11pm Sun) Where else could you get sloshed, look at artsy photos and have your portrait taken? This pub/gallery/photography studio can see to all your needs.

## Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are next to each other, just over 1km southwest of the Old Town. Bus 9 (2zł) will take you to the Rynek.

There are frequent buses west to Kraków (14zł, two hours) and regular departures southeast to both Jasło (9zł, 1½ hours) and Krosno (12zł, two hours). For Sandomierz (17.50zł, three hours), take any of the Tarnobrzeg (15zł, 2½ hours) buses, which depart every two hours, and then change.

Trains to Kraków (13zł, 1½ hours) and Rzeszów (13zł to 20zł, 1½ hours) run every hour or so. There are departures every other hour to Nowy Sącz (14zł to 22zł, two hours). Two or three direct trains go to Warsaw (84zł, 4½ hours) daily.

## ZALIPIE pop 800

The village of Zalipie, 36km northwest of Tarnów, has been known as a centre for folk painting for more than a century, since its inhabitants started to decorate both the inside and outside of their houses with colourful floral designs. Today about 20 such houses can be seen in Zalipie, with another dozen or so in the neighbouring villages of Kuzie, Nivka and Khyż.

The best-known painter was Felicja Curyłowa (1904-74), and since her death her three-room farmhouse has been opened to the public as the **Felicja Curyłowa Farmstead Museum** (Muzeum Zagroda Felicji Curyłowej; ☎ 014 641 1912; adult/concession 3/1.50zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun). If you find it locked, ask for the keys from the house (Zalipie 196) across the road. Every flat surface is painted with colourful flowers, and on display are painted dishes, icons and costumes.

In order to help maintain the tradition, the Painted Cottage (Malowana Chata) contest for the best decorated house has been held annually since 1948, during the weekend after Corpus Christi (late May or June).

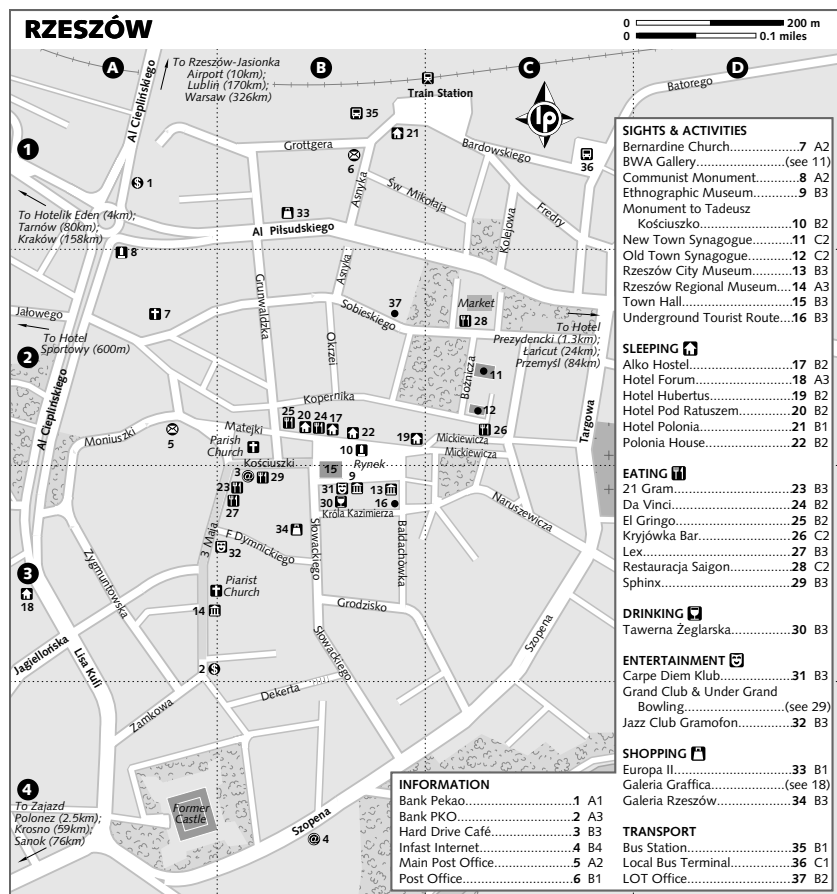
At the **House of Painters** (Dom Malarek; ☎ 014 641 1938; Zalipie 128a; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-May), which serves as a centre for the village's artists, you can watch the women painters at work. There's also a gift shop here, with guides and maps.

## Getting There & Around

There are only a few daily buses daily from Tarnów (6.50zł, 1½ hours), and the village spreads over a relatively large area, so it's useful to have your own transport.

## RZESZÓW pop 157,800

The chief administrative and industrial centre of southeastern Poland, Rzeszów (*zheh-shoof*) may at first glance seem to offer little inducement to stay any longer than it takes to get the next bus out. Nevertheless, the town does have a few interesting museums



and several historic buildings of note. As a major regional transport hub, Rzeszów makes a handy base for exploring the surrounding countryside, and because it is an important university town, the nightlife here is the best in the region.

Rzeszów started life in the 13th century as a remote Ruthenian settlement. It grew rapidly in the 16th century when Mikołaj Szytek Ligęza, the local ruler, commissioned a church and a fortified castle. It later fell into the hands of the powerful Lubomirski clan, but this couldn't save the town from subsequent decline.

Rapid postwar development increased the size of Rzeszów, but with little aesthetic consideration. Fortunately, enough of the his-

toric core survived the bulldozers to make a stopover worthwhile.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (Al Cielińskiego 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat)

**Bank PKO** (ul 3 Maja 23; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) In a lovely neoclassical building.

**City of Rzeszów** ([www.rzeszow.pl/en](http://www.rzeszow.pl/en)) Tourist office.

**Hard Drive Café** (☎ 017 852 6141; ul Kościuski 13; per hr 2.50zł; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Internet access.

**Infast Internet** (☎ 017 852 3715; ul Szopena 51; per hr 3zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Internet access.

**Main post office** (ul Moniuszki 1; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

**Post office** (ul Asnyka 9; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

### Sights

Most of the sprawling Rynek has been repaved in recent years. In the centre of the square is a **monument to Tadeusz Kościuszko**, honoured by Poles and Americans alike (see p33). In the southwest corner, the 16th-century **town hall** was wholly remodelled a century ago in some lovely Art Nouveau townhouses on the square.

Rzeszów's prime attraction is the **Underground Tourist Route** (Podziemia Trasa Turystyczna; ☎ 017 875 4199; ul Króla Kazimierza; admission 5.50zł; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri, noon-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-3pm Tue-Fri Nov-Mar). It took 17 years to link 34 old cellars into a 214m-long route, which opened in 2001. The cellars date from various periods (from the 15th to 20th centuries) and are on different levels (the deepest one is nearly 10m below the surface of the Rynek). Visits are by guided tour lasting about 45 minutes. Buy your tickets from the **Rzeszów City Museum** (Muzeum Historii Miasta Rzeszowa; ☎ 017 875 4198; [www.muzeum.rzeszow.pl](http://www.muzeum.rzeszow.pl); Rynek 12), just around the corner from the entrance.

The **Ethnographic Museum** (Muzeum Etnograficzne; ☎ 017 862 0217; Rynek 6; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł; free Sun; ☎ 9am-3pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 9am-5.30pm Fri) has traditional folk costumes and old woodcarvings from the region on permanent display.

The **Rzeszów Regional Museum** (Muzeum Okręgowe w Rzeszowie; ☎ 017 853 5278; ul 3 Maja 19; adult/concession 6.50/4.50zł; free Sun; ☎ 9am-3pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 9am-5.30pm Fri) is housed in a one-time Piarist monastery complete with frescoed vaulting from the 17th century. It contains Polish paintings from the 18th to 20th centuries and European art from the 16th to 19th centuries, along with glass, faience and furniture.

Northwest of the Rynek is the **Bernardine Church** (Kościół Bernardynów; ul Sobieskiego), with its opulent furnishings and decoration. It was built for Ligeza as his mausoleum, and there are eight life-sized alabaster effigies of his family in the side walls of the chancel. In the gilded chapel to the right is an early-16th-century statue of the Virgin Mary to which numerous miracles have been attributed; wall paintings on both sides dating from the 17th and 18th centuries showed 100 people who were cured.

Close by, you can't miss the overblown **Communist Monument** (Al Cielińskiego), erected 'in memory of the heroes of the revolutionary struggles' and now topped with a cross. It towers over a rather arid square and is a rare survivor from the old regime.

To the northeast of the Rynek are two synagogues standing close to each other. Though less attractive from the outside, the 18th-century **New Town Synagogue** (Synagoga Nowomiejska; ul Sobieskiego 18) has more to offer on the inside as it contains the **BWA Gallery** (☎ 017 853 3811; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Note the gate to the café on the 1st floor – made of wrought iron and clay, it's the work of the contemporary sculptor Marian Kruczek. The much smaller 17th-century **Old Town Synagogue** (Synagoga Staromiejska; ul Bożnicza 4) now houses the city archives and is also a centre for studies of the history of local Jews.

### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Alko Hostel** (☎ 017 853 4430; [www.ptsmrzeszow.epodkarpace.com](http://www.ptsmrzeszow.epodkarpace.com); Rynek 25; dm 20zł, d/tr from 60/80zł; ☎) This is the cheapest and one of the most central options in town, with 90 beds. It has some doubles and triples, but accommodation is mostly in dormitories with up to 12 beds.

**Hotel Sportowy** (☎ /fax 017 851 2483; ul Jałowego 23a; s/d 70/95zł; ☎) Located in a long cream- and pink-coloured sports complex roughly 1km west of the Rynek, the Sport is a great budget choice, with good facilities (swimming pool, tennis courts) on site. It also has cheaper doubles/triples without bathrooms or wash-basins for 50/70zł.

**Hotelik Eden** (☎ 017 852 5683; [www.hotel.eden.prv.pl](http://www.hotel.eden.prv.pl); ul Krakowska 150; s/d/tr 75/90/135zł; ☎) The Eden is small, 50-bed hotel that offers reasonable standards, but it's a long way – just over 4km – northwest of the centre. Rooms with washbasins and shared bathrooms cost 60/70/140zł for singles/doubles/quads. To get here, take westbound bus 1 or 22 from Al Piłsudskiego.

**Hotel Polonia** (☎ 017 852 0312; [www.hotel-polonia.com](http://www.hotel-polonia.com); ul Grottera 16; s/d/tr 110/140/150zł) The 37-room Polonia has been revamped and is just fine for what you'll pay (though its location just opposite the train station is not the most picturesque).

#### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Pod Ratuszem** (☎ 017 852 9770; [www.hotelpodratuszem.rzeszow.pl](http://www.hotelpodratuszem.rzeszow.pl); ul Matejki 8; s 140zł, d 180-240zł, apt 250zł;



☑) This modern, perfectly central hotel, not quite 'Under the Town Hall', offers 13 neat (if rather small) rooms.

**Polonia House** (Dom Polonii; ☎ 017 862 0174; www.wspolnota-polska.rzeszow.pl; Rynek 19; s/d 130/220zł; ☑) Run by an association that looks after the interests of Poles abroad, Poland House is another very central option, but be warned: this guesthouse only has two large single rooms and two even bigger double suites. Book well ahead.

**Hotel Forum** (☎ 017 859 4038; www.hotelforum.pl; ul Lisa Kuli 19; s/d/apt 190/230/320zł; ☑) In the same block as the Galeria Graffica shopping centre, this modernised high-rise offers the best facilities in the city centre, with 34 light and spacious rooms and big bathrooms.

## TOP END

**Hotel Hubertus** (☎ 017 852 6007; www.hubertus.rzeszow.pl; ul Mickiewicza 5; s 190-220zł, d 300-350zł; ☑) Rzeszów's first and (so far) only boutique hotel is a delightful 13-room hostelry artfully fitted into an 18th-century townhouse on the Rynek. The bathrooms are fabulous and the views of the square from some of the doubles priceless, but the place is decidedly not for animal-rights activists: St Hubert is the patron saint of hunters, and there are trophies and paintings with hunting themes everywhere.

**Hotel Prezydentki** (☎ 017 860 6500; www.hotelprezydentki.com.pl; ul Podwisloce 48; s/d 250/360zł, ste 515-545zł; ☑) Located a little over 1km southeast of the city centre on the opposite side of the Wisłok River, the President is a contemporary 56-room hotel geared towards business travellers. Consequently, it's fairly bland but bright and clean, and it has a sauna, solarium and restaurant.

## Eating

**Kryjówka Bar** (☎ 017 853 2717; ul Mickiewicza 19; mains 3.50-11zł; ☑) 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat) One of the few addresses for a tasty budget meal in the centre of town, the 'Hideaway Bar' is a pleasant place offering an extensive Polish menu as well as that 21st-century European staple, pizza.

**Restauracja Saigon** (☎ 017 853 3593; ul Sobieskiego 14; mains 11-18.50zł; ☑) 11.30am-11pm It might sound risky trying something as exotic as Vietnamese food in provincial Poland, but the real McCoy is at the helm in the kitchen (we peeked) and dishes are pretty authentic as a result.

**El Gringo** (☎ 017 864 2118; Rynek 25; mains 12-22zł; ☑) noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Burritos, tacos and enchiladas are on the menu at this colourful sombrero-bedecked Mexican place northwest of the Rynek.

**Da Vinci** (☎ 017 853 6677; www.davinici.rzeszow.pl; ul Matejki 4; mains 12-24zł; ☑) 1-11pm Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Thu-Sun) Tired of pizza but could do with an infusion of something with lots of tomatoes and garlic? Head for this place, where the walls are covered with the drawings, engravings and writings of the great Renaissance man. We love the cosy room with a fireplace in winter. Excellent choice of wines.

**Sphinx** (☎ 017 853 4598; www.sphinx.pl; ul Kościuszki 9; mains 13.50-30zł) OK, it's a branch of the ubiquitous Egyptian-themed restaurant chain, serving lots of variations on kebabs, cabbage and grilled-meat dishes. But the Sphinx is dependable, if not particularly exciting, and always busy.

**21 Gram** (☎ 017 853 5350; ul 3 Maja 5; mains 14.50-21zł; ☑) 9am-midnight Mon-Wed, noon-1am Thu-Sun) It's not easy to come by vegetarian eateries of any calibre in Poland, but this place, boasting views over pedestrian ul 3 Maja and dishes heavily influenced by the subcontinent, apparently attracts as many meat eaters on holiday as it does vegetarians.

**Lex** (☎ 017 852 5859; www.restauracjalex.pl; ul 3 Maja 7; mains 18-35zł; ☑) 10am-10pm) Rzeszów's finest restaurant, Lex serves continental dishes in the very refined setting of an 18th-century townhouse. A seat on the outside terrace is a coveted spot on a warm summer's evening.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**Tawerna Żeglarska** (☎ 017 862 0239; Rynek 6, enter from ul Króla Kazimierza; ☑) 2pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 2pm-1am Fri & Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun) Frequented by students, the 'Sailors' Tavern' is far from the sea but can get pretty stormy when the tide is up on musical evenings.

**Jazz Club Gramofon** (☎ 0663 440 020; www.jazz.rzeszow.pl; ul 3 Maja 13; ☑) noon-1am) A highly recommended venue for cool jazz, this place has live gigs on Friday and Saturday nights.

**Grand Club & Under Grand Bowling** (☎ 017 853 3035; ul Kościuszki 9; ☑) 2pm-midnight Sun-Wed, 2pm-4am Thu-Sat) This super DJ club also has ten-pin bowling (30zł to 60zł per hour) in the basement (Under Grand Bowling – get it?) to lure in the punters.

**Carpe Diem Klub** (www.carpediem.pl; Rynek 4; ☑) 10am-2am) Our favourite new place, this

basement DJ club has a fantastic sound-and-light system and some pretty neat motorcycles on display.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport** (☎ 017 852 0081; www.lotnisko-rzeszow.pl) is at Jasionka, 10km north of the city, and is accessible by bus 14 (3.60zł) from Al Piłsudskiego or by taxi (50zł). There are daily flights to Warsaw as well as to London and Dublin. **LWS** (☎ 017 862 0234; Plac Ofiar Getta 6; ☑) 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) makes bookings and sells and issues tickets.

### BUS

The bus station is 500m north of the Rynek. Buses depart roughly every hour for Sanok (10.60zł, 1½ hours), Krosno (9zł, 1½ hours), Przemyśl (9zł to 12zł, two hours) and Lublin (24zł, 3½ hours). Buses also go to Ustrzyki Dolne (14.50zł to 16.20zł, 2½ hours, five to seven daily) and Ustrzyki Górne (23zł, 3½ hours, three daily), as well as to Zamość (23zł, three hours, two daily). Buses to Łańcut (4zł, 30 minutes) run roughly every half-hour or so and are more convenient than trains, as they stop near the palace. Eurolines also operates international services, including those to London, Paris, Prague and Lviv. Enquire at **Centrum Eurobus** (☎ 017 852 6498; ☑) 9am-5pm) at the station.

### TRAIN

The train station is next to the bus station. Trains depart almost hourly for Przemyśl (22zł to 42zł, 1½ hours) and Tarnów (13zł, one hour). A dozen or so daily trains leave for Kraków (19.50zł, 2½ hours). To Warsaw (88zł, five hours), there are two morning express trains.

## ŁAŃCUT

pop 18,600

Just 24km northeast of Rzeszów, Łańcut (*wine-tsoot*) has Poland's largest and richest aristocratic home.

The building started life in the 15th century, but it was Stanisław Lubomirski who turned it into both a mighty fortress and a great residence. Soon after he had successfully completed his castle at Nowy Wiśnicz (p261), he came into possession of the large property of Łańcut and commissioned Matteo Trapola to design a new home even

more spectacular than the old one. It was competed in 1641.

A century and a half later the fortifications were partly demolished while the castle was reshaped in Rococo and neoclassical style. The last important alteration, executed at the end of the 19th century, gave the building its neo-Baroque façades, which survive today.

The last private owner, Alfred Potocki, one of the richest men in prewar Poland, accumulated a fabulous collection of art during his tenancy. Shortly before the arrival of the Red Army in July 1944, he loaded 11 railway carriages with the most valuable objects and fled with the collection to Liechtenstein.

## Information

**Bank Pekao** (ul Kościuszki 5; ☑) 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Opposite the castle entrance.

**Post office** (ul Królowej Elżbiety; ☑) 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

## Sights

Just after WWII the 300-room castle was taken over by the state and opened as the **Castle Museum** (Muzeum Zamek; ☎ 017 225 2008; www.zamek-lancut.pl; ul Zamkowa 1; adult/concession 21/13zł; ☑) noon-3.30pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, noon-3.30pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun Feb-May, Oct & Nov, closed Dec & Jan). The collection has systematically been supplemented and enlarged to such a degree that it's difficult to take it all in on one visit.

The castle is visited in groups accompanied by a Polish-speaking guide, and the tour takes 1½ hours. The last tour departs one hour before closing time. **Guides** (☎ 017 225 2008 ext 124) speaking English, French and German are available for 240zł per group (plus tickets). Brochures in English are available for a small fee.

You'll be shown around the western wing of the ground floor and the whole of the 1st floor, visiting altogether about two dozen rooms. In the carefully restored interiors – mostly late Baroque and Rococo – you will find heaps of paintings, sculptures and *objets d'art* of all descriptions. Among the highlights are the 17th-century **Grand Hall** (Wielka Sień), the Renaissance-style **Eastern Corridor** (Korytarz Wschodni) and the Rococo **Corner Room** (Pokój Narożny).

After viewing the castle's rooms, you'll be shown around the **Orangery** (Oranżeria) southwest of the castle, with palms and parrots, and

then Potocki's collection of 55 carriages and sleighs in the **Coach House** (Powozownia), 300m south of the castle.

You can then individually visit the **stables** (adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 9am-4pm) north of the Coach House, with a fine collection of more than 1000 icons from the 15th century onwards.

The castle is surrounded by a delightful and very well-kept **park** (admission free; ☎ 7am-sunset). Just outside the park and to the west of the castle is the **synagogue** (Plac Sobieskiego; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug). Built in the 1760s, it has retained much of its original Rococo decoration and some liturgical items are on display. You can visit it in other months by faxing ☎ 017 225 2012 in advance.

### Festivals & Events

The **Łańcut Music Festival** (Muzyczny Festiwal w Łańcutcie; www.lancut.pl) is held over about 10 days in May, with chamber-music concerts performed in the castle ballroom.

### Sleeping

**Dom Wycieczkowy PTTK** (☎ /fax 017 225 2052; ul Dominikańska 1; beds in d/tr/q 17-25zł; (P)) This 49-bed hostel, in the former Dominican monastery just off the Rynek, offers simple rooms with shared bathrooms that sleep from two to 10.

**Pensjonat Pałacyk** (☎ 017 225 2043; www.pałacyk.emeteor.pl; ul Paderewskiego 18; d/tr 120/150zł; (P)) About 200m south of the synagogue, the 'Little Palace' is set in a diminutive mansion and is a pleasant place to stay. It has seven rooms as well as its own restaurant.

**Hotel Szwadron** (☎ 017 225 6042; www.szwadron.emeteor.pl; ul Mickiewicza 16; d/tr 120/150zł; (P)) About 400m southwest of the Rynek in a leafy part of town, the Szwadron is another hotel housed in a historic mansion (this one from 1784 but rebuilt in 1904). It has 10 comfortable rooms and its public areas are an Aladdin's Cave of old photos, antiques and curios.

**Hotel Zamkowy** (☎ 017 225 2671; vena@rze.pl; ul Zamkowa 1; r 100-200zł; (P)) Located in the castle's southern wing, the 15-room Castle Hotel is quite simple; rooms with a private bathroom are at the top end of the price scale. The hotel's restaurant across the small courtyard has acceptable food at reasonable prices.

### Eating

**Gospoda Hetmańska** (☎ 0608 021 210; ul Zamkowa; mains 6-18zł; ☎ 8am-10pm) This café-restaurant

is housed in a corner tower in the northeastern wing of the castle. The food is nothing to write home about but you couldn't find a more romantic spot in Łańcut.

**Café Antico** (☎ 017 225 6151; Rynek 3; mains 8-20zł; ☎ 9am-midnight) With something for everyone (gyros, Polish mains, pizzas), the Antico is the most popular eatery in town, with a wonderful outside seating area overlooking the elongated Rynek.

### Getting There & Away

The bus station is 500m northeast of the castle along ul Kościuszki; the train station about 2km to the north. Buses to Rzeszów (4zł, 30 minutes) run about every 30 minutes and to Przemysł (9zł, 1½ hours) every hour or two.

## PRZEMYSŁ

pop 66,600

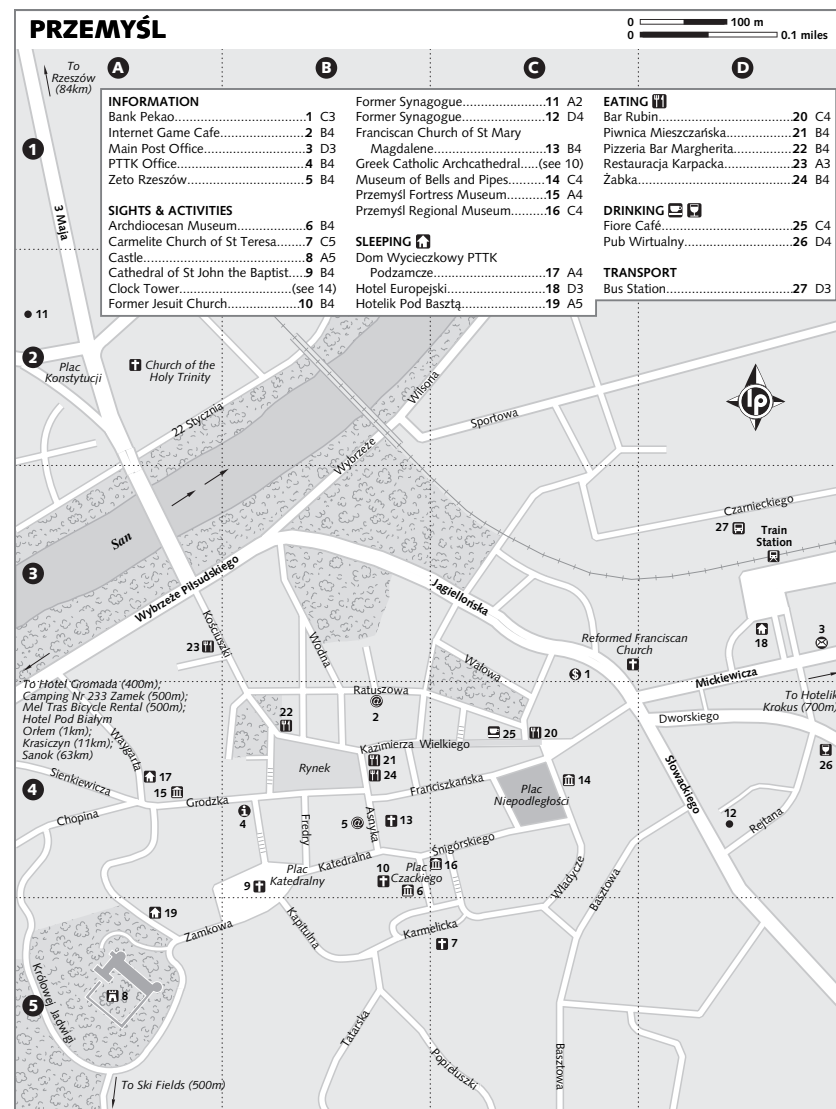
A sleepy town with an impossible name, Przemysł (*pshéh-mishl*) is close to the Ukrainian border and some way off the usual tourist route. It's an agreeable little place though, at the point where the San River leaves the foothills and enters the Sandomierz Plain. Przemysł has an attractive main square and a couple of worthwhile churches and museums to explore.

Founded in the 10th century on terrain long fought over by Poland and Ruthenia, Przemysł changed hands several times before being annexed by the Polish crown in 1340. It experienced its golden period in the 16th century and declined afterwards. During the Partitions it fell under Austrian administration.

In around 1850 the Austrians began to fortify Przemysł. This work continued right up until the outbreak of WWI, and was responsible for producing one of the largest fortresses in Europe. It consisted of a double ring of earth ramparts, including a 15km-long inner circle and an outer girdle three times longer, with more than 60 forts placed at strategic points. This formidable system played an important role during the war, but the garrison surrendered to the Russians in 1915 due to a lack of provisions.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (ul Jagiellońska 7; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)  
**Internet Game Café** (☎ 016 676 9260; ul Ratuszowa 8; per hr 3zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Internet access.



**Main post office** (ul Mickiewicza 13; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

**PTTK office** (☎ 016 675 2164; www.przemysl.pl; ul Grodzka 1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Travel agency that serves as the tourist information office.

**Zeto Rzeszów** (☎ 016 678 5920; ul Asnyka 4; per hr 3zł; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Internet access.

### Sights

Perched on a hillside and dominated by four mighty churches to the south, Przemysł's Old Town is a picturesque place. The sloping Rynek has preserved some of its old arcaded houses, mostly on its north and south sides.

The **Franciscan Church of St Mary Magdalene** (Kościół Franciszkański Św Marii Magdaleny; ul Franciszkańska),



southeast of the Rynek, was built between 1754 and 1778 in late-Baroque and classical style, but its monumental façade was remade later. The church has a beautiful Rococo interior with a vaulted and frescoed nave.

Just up the hill behind it stands the **former Jesuit Church** (Kościół Pojezuicki). Built between 1627 and 1659, it's also a Baroque construction. The church now serves the Uniat congregation as the **Greek Catholic Archcathedral** (Archikatedra Grecko-Katolicka) and is a popular destination for pilgrims from across the border in Ukraine. The enormous and heavily gilded iconostasis dates from the 17th century.

The adjacent former Jesuit college shelters the **Archdiocesan Museum** (Muzeum Archidiecezjalne; ☎ 016 678 2792; Plac Czackiego 2; donation requested; ☹ 10am-4pm May-Oct), which contains religious art, vestments and church plate.

Up the hill is yet another house of worship, the **Carmelite Church of St Teresa** (Kościół Karmelitów Św Teresy). Designed in 1630 by Italian architect Galeazzo Appiani, who also built Krasiczyn castle (opposite), the church has preserved some of its original features, including the classical main gate and the white and gold stucco work on the vaulting. Note the large wooden pulpit in the shape of a boat, complete with mast, sail, rigging, anchor and two saints bearing oars.

Due north of the church is the **Przemysł Regional Museum** (Muzeum Ziemi Przemyskiej; ☎ 016 678 3325; Plac Czackiego 3; adult/concession 5/3zł, free Sun; ☹ 10.30am-5.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-3pm Wed & Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), with a splendid collection of Ruthenian icons and other religious art dating back to the 15th century.

A short walk west along ul Katedralna is the **Cathedral of St John the Baptist** (Katedra Św Jana Chrzyciela; Plac Katedralny), with its 71m-high freestanding bell tower. Originally a Gothic building (note the impressive star vaulting), the church was remodelled and is now predominantly Baroque.

Continue up along ul Zamkowa to what is left of the 14th-century **castle**. Built by King Kazimierz III Wielki (Casimir III the Great) in the 1340s, it mutated into a Renaissance building two centuries later when it acquired its four looped towers, two of which have been restored. A local theatre, a city cultural centre and a café now occupy the restored rooms.

The curious **Museum of Bells and Pipes** (Muzeum Dzwonów i Fajek; ☎ 016 678 9666; ul Władycze 3; adult/con-

cession 5/3zł, free Sat; ☹ 10.30am-5.30pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-3pm Wed & Sat, noon-4pm Sun), housed in an 18th-century Baroque clock tower, contains vintage bells as well as elaborately carved wooden and meerscham pipes and cigar cutters. (Przemysł has long been famous for manufacturing these items.) The rooftop affords a panoramic view of the town.

Those very interested in military matters may be drawn to the fortifications of the Austro-Hungarian **Przemysł Fortress** (Twierdza Przemysł) surrounding the town. As these were mostly earth ramparts, however, they are now overgrown and resemble natural rather than artificial bulwarks. Among the best examples are **Fort I** (Salis Soglio) in Sieliska, **Fort VIII** (Łętownia) in Kuńkowce and **Fort XIII** (San Rideau) in Bolestraszyce. The tourist office can give you information about these sites and transport details. The modest **Przemysł Fortress Museum** (Muzeum Twierdza Przemysł; ☎ 016 677 1942; ul Grodzka 8; admission free; ☹ 10am-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun), with photographs, postcards, weapons and commemorative mementos connected with the fortress, will satisfy the curiosities of most.

The only significant relics of the Jewish legacy are two **synagogues** (of four existing before WWII), both dating from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, renovated after the war and put to other uses. One is in Plac Unii Brzeskiej, off ul 3 Maja on the northern side of the river; the other, now housing the city's public library, is on ul Słowackiego.

Bicycles are available for hire from **Mel Tras Bicycle Rental** (☎ 0502 102 950; ul Sanocka 8a; per hr/day 6/40zł), near the camping ground. Ask the staff at the PTTK office for their brochure listing cycle tracks and routes in the area.

**Ski fields** on the edge of Park Zamkowy, 500m southeast of the castle, have two trails and a downhill slope. During the skiing season the chairlift runs from 9am to 9pm daily and costs 55zł for a day ticket.

### Sleeping

**Dom Wycieczkowy PTTK Podzamcze** (☎ 016 678 5374; http://przemysl.pttk.pl in Polish; ul Wąygarta 3; dm 20-24zł, d/tr 58/72zł; ☎) The nine rooms (containing 46 beds) at this place have seen some wear but have had a new lick of paint. It's just a block west of the Rynek.

**Hotelik Pod Basztą** (☎ 016 678 8268; ul Królowej Jadwigi 4; s/d/tr 39/59/79zł; ☎) Enjoying a quiet, central location, this small hotel in an old clas-

sical-style building has seven old-fashioned rooms with shared bathrooms, but many have castle or city views. The one en suite double (118zł) boasts a balcony overlooking the Old Town.

**Hotelik Krokus** (☎/fax 016 678 5127; ul Mickiewicza 47 & 49; s 50zł, d 80-118zł, tr/q 105/120zł) About 1.3km east of the Rynek, the Krokus provides adequate rooms with private facilities in a nice little villa with garden. It's not far from the train station.

**Hotel Europejski** (☎ 016 675 7100; www.hotel-europejski.pl; ul Sowirńskiego 4; s/d/tr 90/120/140zł; ☎) Housed in a renovated old building facing the attractive neoclassical train station (1895), this comfortable place has 29 bright rooms with high ceilings and modern bathrooms.

**Hotel Pod Białym Orłem** (☎ 016 678 6107; www.podbialymorlem.com.pl; ul Sanocka 13; d/tr/apt 120/145/250zł; ☎) Located about 1km west of the Old Town, the 'Under the White Eagle' is an affordable option with 16 spotless rooms with private facilities and a nice (though small) garden.

**Hotel Gromada** (☎ 016 676 1111; www.hotels.gromada.pl; Wybrzeże Piłsudskiego 4; s 166-199zł, d 178-249zł; ☎) This modern, central but rather soulless hotel has 120 comfortable rooms and its own restaurant. Rates drop significantly at the weekend.

**Camping Nr 233 Zamek** (☎/fax 675 0265; Wybrzeże Piłsudskiego 8a; per person/tent/car 7/11/6zł, s/d/tr/q 51/67/80/93zł; ☎) This camping ground has fairly simple rooms in year-round cabins and is quite close to the centre. Seasonal cabins costing 18zł per person are open from May to September. Get here on bus 2 or 5.

### Eating

**Żabka** (Rynek 10; ☹ 6am-11pm) Branch of the late-night convenience store chain.

**Bar Rubin** (☎ 016 678 2578; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 19; mains 5-15zł; ☹ 9am-9pm) This small, friendly, family restaurant, 'where you eat like at mom's', is one of the best places to grab a bite to eat in the Old Town.

**Pizzeria Bar Margherita** (☎ 016 678 9898; Rynek 4; mains 6-18zł; ☹ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) This inviting place has a long list of pizzas, plus risotto, pasta and fast food such as hot dogs. It has a lovely terrace right on the Rynek.

**Restauracja Karpacka** (☎ 016 678 9057; ul Kościuszki 5; mains 6-18zł; ☹ 10am-10pm) Northwest of the Rynek, this old-fashioned eatery features bow-

tied waiters, a timbered ceiling and yellow stucco walls. It serves a good range of Polish standards, and Ukrainian-style borscht in a nod to the neighbours.

**Piwnica Mieszkańska** (☎ 016 675 0459; Rynek 9; mains 6-25zł) This beer-cellar restaurant setting is decorated with mini-chandeliers and lace tablecloths. The bourgeoisie platter (22zł), with three types of meat, will excite ardent carnivores.

### Drinking

**Fiore Cafe** (☎ 016 675 1222; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 17b; ☹ 10am-8pm) If you're looking for ice cream or a slice of something sweet, this modern café on a pedestrian street should be your destination.

**Pub Wirtualny** (☎ 016 675 1782; ul Dworskiego 12; ☹ 10am-midnight) This very real (not virtual) modern pub south of the stations has a nice back garden.

### Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are next to each other, on the northeastern edge of the town centre, about 600m from the Rynek.

Up to four buses a day depart for Sanok (11zł, 1½ hours), and there are also departures for Ustrzyki Dolne (11zł, two hours, three to four daily) and Rzeszów (9zł, two hours, 10 daily). Buses to Krasiczyn (2.80zł, 20 minutes) run as often as twice an hour.

Trains to Rzeszów (42zł, 1½ hours) depart regularly throughout the day. There are half a dozen fast trains and two express trains a day to Kraków (71zł, 3½ hours). One express and several fast trains go daily to Warsaw (90zł, six hours), and one fast train runs to Lublin (40zł, four hours). International trains to Lviv, Odessa and Kyiv pass via Przemysł.

## KRASICZYN

pop 1000

The **castle** (☎ 016 671 8321; www.krasiczyn.com.pl; adult/concession 8/5zł; ☹ 9am-4pm) in the village of Krasiczyn (krah-shee-chen), just 11km southwest of Przemysł, is called 'the gem of the Polish Renaissance'. It's in a landscaped 14-hectare **park** (adult/concession 1/0.50zł; ☹ dawn-dusk) with almost 100 different species of plants and trees.

Designed by Italian architect Galeazzo Appiani and built between 1592 and 1618 for the wealthy Krasicki family, the castle is more or less square and built around a spacious,



partly arcaded courtyard, with four different cylindrical corner towers. The towers were meant to reflect the social order of the period and were named (clockwise from the southeastern corner) after God, the pope, the king and the nobility. The **God Tower** (Baszta Boska), topped with a dome, houses a chapel. The **King Tower** (Baszta Królewska), with its conical roof and little turrets, would make a lovely home for Rapunzel of long-hair fame. On the courtyard side of the castle walls are Renaissance sgraffiti decorations of Biblical scenes and Polish nobility.

The courtyard and three of the corner towers can be visited on a guided tour (in Polish only), which departs on the hour.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Our pick** **Hotel Zamkowy** (☎ 016 671 8321; www.krasiczyn.com.pl; Krasiczyn 179; s/d/tr/ste from 140/220/280/500zł; P ☒ ☒) This grand hotel, with 36 rooms in a former coach house just north of the castle, is one of the most attractive and evocative places to stay in Poland. It offers elegant and modern rooms in a unique and historic setting. The suites come in blue, pink or green and there's a gym, sauna, solarium and restaurant. Even better, you can also stay in wonderfully restored rooms in the castle itself (doubles/suites 260/500zł). Other accommodation options include the self-contained five-bed Hunter's Pavilion (800zł), which has its own kitchen and garden, and the charming 17th-century Swiss Pavilion (singles/doubles from 140/270zł), which reputedly comes with its own resident ghost. Bikes (per hour 3zł) and fishing equipment can be rented.

**Castle Restaurant** (☎ 016 671 8321; mains 12-30zł; ☒ 2-10pm Mon, 10am-10pm Tue-Sun) Conveniently located within the castle grounds, this restaurant serves mostly Polish dishes in traditional surrounds.

**U Krzycha** (☒ noon-midnight Sun & Mon, 4pm-midnight Tue-Sat) In the basement of the castle's northern wing, this is a lively cellar wine bar. The bar usually closes over winter.

### Getting There & Away

The castle is an easy trip from Przemyśl (2.80zł, 20 minutes) on one of the frequent PKS buses or the regular bus 40. From Krasiczyn you can also reach Sanok (10zł, one hour, four daily) or Ustrzyki Dolne (10zł, 1½ hours, four daily) by bus.

## THE BIESZCZADY

The region around the Bieszczady (byesh-chah-di), in the far southeastern corner of Poland and sandwiched between Ukraine and Slovakia, is one of thick forests and open meadows. Scantly populated and largely unspoiled, it's one of the most attractive areas of the country. As tourist facilities are modest, roads sparse and public transport limited, the Bieszczady retains its relative isolation and makes for an off-the-beaten-track destination. It's very popular with nature-lovers and hikers.

In geographical terms, the Bieszczady is an extension of the Beskids, running east-west for some 60km along Poland's southern frontier, with the lower hills to the north referred to as the Przedgórze Bieszczadzkie (Bieszczady Foothills). In practical terms, the Bieszczady is the whole area to the southeast of the Nowy Łupków-Zagórz-Ustrzyki Dolne railway line, up to the national borders: approximately 2100 sq km, about 60% of which is largely fir and beech forest.

The range's eastern end, the highest and most spectacular part, has been decreed the Bieszczady National Park (Bieszczadzki Park Narodowy), with its headquarters in Ustrzyki Dolne. At 292 sq km it's Poland's third-largest national park after Biebrza and Kampinos. Its highest peak is Mt Tarnica (1346m).

The region was once much more densely populated than it is today, but Ukrainian nationalists devastated it after the war (see the boxed text, opposite). Indeed, many people here say WWII didn't end until 1947.

One of the most exciting developments in recent years is the completion of the 350km bicycle loop known as the **Greenway Bicycle Trail** (Szlak Zielony Rower; www.zielonyrower.pl), which links the Bieszczady towns of Sanok, Lesko, Ustrzyki Dolne and Solina before crossing into Ukraine, Slovakia and back into Poland.

The region around Cisna, Wetlina and Ustrzyki Górne forms part of Unesco's tripartite Eastern Carpathian Biosphere Reserve with Slovakia and Ukraine.

### SANOK

pop 39,600

Nestled in a picturesque valley in the Bieszczady Foothills, Sanok, the so-called gateway to the Bieszczady, has been subject to Ruthenian, Hungarian, Austrian, Russian,

### BOYKS & LEMKS: A TALE OF TWO PEOPLES

The Bieszczady, along with the Beskid Niski and Beskid Sądecki further west, were settled from about the 13th century by various nomadic Slavic groups migrating up from the south and east. Most notable among them were the Wolosi from the Balkans and the Rusini from Ruthenia. Living in the same areas and intermarrying for centuries, they slowly developed into two distinct ethnic groups known as the Bojkowie and Łemkowie. They are sometimes referred to as Rusyns or Carpathian Russians.

The Bojkowie (Boykos or Boyks) inhabited the eastern part of the Bieszczady, east of Cisna, while the Łemkowie (Lemkos or Lemks) populated mountainous regions stretching from the western Bieszczady up to the Beskid Sądecki. The two groups had much in common culturally, though there were noticeable differences in dialects, dress and architecture. They shared the Orthodox faith with their Ukrainian neighbours.

After the Union of Brest in 1596, most Lemks and Boyks turned to the Uniat Church, which accepted the supremacy of Rome but retained the old Eastern liturgy. From the end of the 19th century, however, the Church began systematically to impose the Latin rite. In response, many Lemks and Boyks chose to return to the more familiar traditions of the Orthodox Church. By WWII both creeds were practised in the region, and the total population of Boyks and Lemks was estimated at 200,000 to 300,000. Ethnic Poles were a minority here.

All this changed dramatically in the aftermath of WWII, when the borders of Poland and the Soviet Union were redrawn. Not everyone was satisfied with the new status quo and some of its opponents didn't lay down their arms. One such armed faction was the Ukrainian Resistance Army, which operated in the Bieszczady region. Civil war continued in the region for almost two years after Germany had surrendered.

In a bid to destroy the rebel base, the postwar Polish government decided to expel the inhabitants of all the villages in the region and resettle the entire area. In the so-called Operation Vistula (Akcja Wisła) in 1947, most of the population was brutally deported either to the Soviet Union or to the 'recovered territories' regained from Germany in northern and western Poland. Ironically, the main victims of the action were the Boyks and the Lemks, who had little to do with the conflict apart from the fact that they happened to be in the way. Their villages were abandoned or destroyed, and those that survived were resettled with inhabitants from other regions. Only about 20,000 Lemks were left in the whole region, and very few Boyks.

Today the most visible reminders of their legacy are the wooden Orthodox or Uniat churches dotting the countryside, many of them dilapidated but others in remarkably good condition. When hiking on remote trails, especially along the Ukrainian border in the Bieszczady, you'll find traces of destroyed villages, including ruined houses, orchards, churches and cemeteries.

German and Polish rule in its eventful history. Although it contains an important industrial zone – Autosan, the bus used in intercity and urban transportation throughout the land, is produced here – it is also a popular base for exploring the mountains. Sanok is also the springboard for the fascinating Icon Trail (p278), a signposted walking or bicycle route taking in the surrounding countryside's wealth of wooden churches.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (ul Kościuszki 4; ☒ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

**Bank Zachodni** (ul 3 Maja 23; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Main post office** (ul Kościuszki 28; ☒ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

**Orbis Travel** (☎ 013 463 2859; ul Grzegorza 2; ☒ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Information and accommodation.

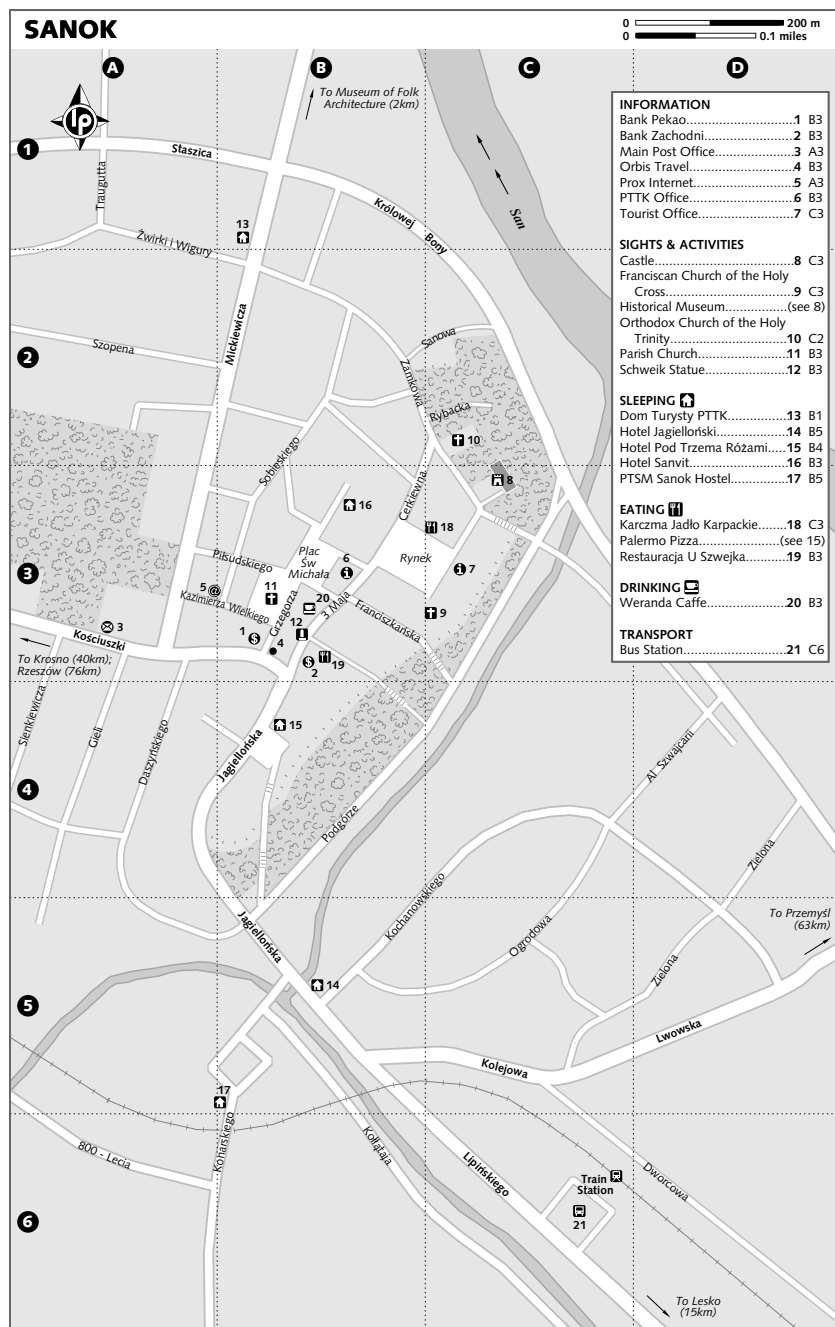
**Prox Internet** (☎ 013 464 2250; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 6; per hr 3.50zł; ☒ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Internet access.

**PTTK office** (☎ 013 463 2512; www.pttk.avx.pl in Polish; ul 3 Maja 2; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Information about activities; excellent selection of maps.

**Tourist office** (☎ 013 463 6060; www.sanok.pl; Rynek 14; ☒ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun)

### Sights

One of Sanok's major attractions is the **Historical Museum** (Muzeum Historyczne; ☎ 013 463 0609; ul Zamkowa 2; adult/concession/family 7/10/25zł; ☒ 8-10am Mon, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-Sep &



Nov-Mar, 8-10am Mon, 9am-5pm Tue & Wed, 9am-3pm Thu-Sun Apr-mid-Jun & Oct). Housed in a renovated 16th-century castle, the museum has several sections, of which the highlight is a 700-piece collection of Ruthenian icons. The selection on display consists of about 260 large pieces dating from the 15th to 18th centuries; most were acquired after WWII from abandoned Uniat churches.

The museum's other treasure is the collection of paintings by Zdzisław Beksiński (1929-2005) exhibited on the top floor. Beksiński, who was born and lived in Sanok, was one of Poland's most remarkable contemporary painters, with a fantastical style all his own. The exhibition features more than 200 of the artist's works.

Sanok is also noted for its unique **Museum of Folk Architecture** (Muzeum Budownictwa Ludowego; ☎ 013 463 1672; ul Rybickiego 3; adult/concession 9/6zł; ☎ 8am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-4pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Mar), a skansen (open-air museum of traditional architecture) about 2km north of the centre. Poland's largest open-air museum, it has gathered about 120 traditional buildings from the southeast of the country and provides an insight into the culture of the Boyks and Lemks (see the boxed text, p275). Among the highlights are four timber churches, an inn, a school and even a fire station. The interiors of many cottages are furnished and decorated as they once were, while some buildings house exhibitions; one of these features a collection of 200 icons.

You can buy a leaflet with short descriptions of the buildings and objects in English or German. In summer there may be some English-speaking guides; enquire at the ticket office or preferably call in advance. Tours cost 30zł per group, in addition to the entry ticket. To reach the skansen, walk north from the town centre for 2km along ul Mickiewicza and ul Białogórska, cross the bridge over the San and turn right. Bus 3 from the Rynek will get you as far as the bridge.

At the southeast corner of the large rebuilt Rynek is the **Franciscan Church of the Holy Cross** (Kościół Franciszkanów Św Krzyża; ul Franciszkanska), the town's oldest, dating back to the 1640s. The neo-Romanesque **parish church** (kościół parafialny; ul Gregorza), dating from 1886, has Art Nouveau wall paintings and remarkable stained glass behind the main altar. The neoclassical **Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity** (Cerkiew Św Trójcy; ul Zamkowa) was built in 1784 and initially

served the Uniat congregation. The main door behind the grill is left open for you to admire the modern iconostasis.

The odd little bronze likeness of a soldier sitting on a bench in the centre of ul 3 Maja is the **Schweik statue**, representing the antihero of Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek's polemical novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1923). According to the book, Schweik (or Švejtek) visited Sanok on 15 July 1915. Fame at last.

## Sleeping

**PTSM Sanok Hostel** (☎ 013 463 0925; soswasanok@op.pl; ul Konarskiego 10; dm 12-15zł; ☎ Jul & Aug; ☎) One of the very cheapest places to stay in town, the local hostel is a modest 60-bed establishment between the bus station and the centre.

**Dom Turysty PTTK** (☎ 013 463 1413; domturysty@domturysty.net.pl; ul Mickiewicza 29; s/d/tr/q 70/90/110/120zł; ☎) This large year-round PTTK hostel offers plenty of beds in 78 rooms. Private bathrooms and low prices may seem an attractive option, but some rooms are on the shabby side.

**Hotel Pod Trzema Różami** (☎ 013 463 0922; www.podtrzemarozami.pl in Polish; ul Jagiellońska 13; s/d/tr/q 80/100/120/140zł; ☎) About 200m south of the main square, the cavernous 'Under Three Roses' has only 24 rooms. The accommodation here is in plain but perfectly clean and acceptable rooms.

**Hotel Jagielloński** (☎ 013 463 1208; jagielloński.sanok@wp.pl; ul Jagiellońska 49; s/d/tr 100/120/140zł; ☎) The 19-room Jagielloński, with distinctive wooden furniture, parquet floors and a very good restaurant, is excellent value. Rooms are spacious and have private facilities; we loved the flower-bedecked balcony. Rates don't include breakfast.

**Hotel Sanvit** (☎ 013 465 5088; www.sanvit.sanok.pl in Polish; ul Łazienna 1; s/d/tr 130/180/230zł, ste from 250zł; ☎) Just west of the Rynek, the Sanvit is far and away Sanok's flashiest accommodation, with 31 bright, modern rooms, shining bathrooms, a restaurant and café, and a wellness centre with sauna, gym and a salt cave.

## Eating & Drinking

**Restauracja U Szwejka** (☎ 013 464 4761; ul 3 Maja 15; mains 5-27zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, 11am-1am Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Just down from the bronze statue of the soldier Schweik (from which it takes its name), this place has something for everyone - Czech dishes, pierogi (dumplings), pizza and pancakes.

**Karczma Jadlo Karpackie** (☎ 013 464 6700; Rynek 12; mains 6-18zł; ☎ 9am-10pm) This is an amenable, folksy (but not overly so) bar and restaurant on the main square that serves up unusual Carpathian dishes, including *hreczanyky* (a local dish made with minced pork and buckwheat groats) and *ogórki matosolne* (lightly salted pickles).

**Palermo Pizza** (☎ 013 464 3979; ul Jagiellońska 13; mains 10-25zł; ☎ 9am-11pm) One of the more popular budget eateries in Sanok, this pizzeria below the Hotel Pod Trzema Różami also does a nice range of pasta dishes and salads.

**Weranda Caffè** (☎ 0609 741 936; ul 3 Maja 14; ☎ 10am-10pm) This cosy café-bar, with a fireplace glowing in winter and outdoor terrace set up in summer, is a good place to have a drink, alcoholic or otherwise, year-round.

## Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are next to each other, about 1.2km southeast of the Rynek.

There's hourly bus transport to Rzeszów (10.60zł, 1½ hours) and Lesko (3.50zł, 20 minutes, up to 10 daily). Buses also run to Ustrzyki Dolne (7zł, one hour, 12 daily) and Ustrzyki Górne (13zł, 1½ to 2½ hours, seven daily). There are five to six buses to Cisna (8zł, one hour) and Wetlina (12zł, 1½ to two hours), with additional departures in summer. A couple of buses go to Komańcza (7zł, one hour). Five fast buses go directly to Kraków (32zł, three hours), with three heading for Warsaw (47zł, four to five hours).

Two fast trains run to Warsaw daily (57zł, nine hours) while two go to Kraków (46zł, 3½ hours). A dozen ordinary trains serve Jasło (11zł, two hours) via Krosno (7.40zł, 1½ hours).

## ICON TRAIL

The environs of Sanok are sprinkled with small villages, many of which still boast old Orthodox or Uniat churches. Most of these are traditional wooden ones and a reminder of the prewar ethnic and religious fabric of the region. You can see many of these churches on a pair of a marked trails called the **Icon Trail** (Szlak Ikon). The first (and more popular) route is a 70km-long loop that begins and ends in Sanok and winds along the San River valley north of the city. The net walking time is about 15 hours, and it's also suitable for bicycles and mountain bikes.

The trail covers about a dozen churches. Most date from the 18th and 19th centuries, but the route also includes the oldest Uniat timber church in Poland, at **Ulucz**, built in 1510. You can visit all the churches along the way; arrangements have been made with each of the key holders to let visitors in and show them around. A small donation is appreciated.

A longer route follows the Ośława River valley south of Sanok into the Bieszczady, and almost to the Slovakian border, although it's not marked in the same way as most of the churches here are close to the main road. One of the more interesting churches on this trail is the wooden Orthodox church at Turzańsk (p285), built in 1803.

Tourist information and PTTK offices stock English-language brochures outlining the trails and briefly describing the churches found along them. They also include details of where to ask for church keys (though that information is not always up to date).

## LESKO

pop 5860

Founded in 1470 on the banks of the San River, Lesko had a mixed Polish-Ruthenian population for centuries, a reflection of the region's history. From the 16th century, many Jews arrived from Spain fleeing the Inquisition. Their migration continued and by the 18th century Jews made up half of the town's population.

WWII and the years that followed changed the ethnic picture altogether. The Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis, the Ukrainians were defeated by the Polish military and the Lemks were deported. The town was rebuilt and, without having developed any significant industry, is now a small tourist centre. While it may not be the 'Gateway to the Bieszczady' as it likes to call itself – that distinction really goes to Sanok – it is a pleasant stopover on the way south.

## Information

**Bank PKO** (ul Przemysłowa 11; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)  
**Bieszczady Adventure** (☎ 013 469 7270; www.kraina.wilka.pl; Rynek 1) Specialises in active sport, including rafting, trekking, fly fishing, off-road and mountain biking.  
**Carpathians Center of Active Tourism** (☎ 013 469 6290; www.zielonyrower.pl; Plac Konstytucji 3 Maja 7) Sells the 1:100,000-scale *Greenway Bicycle Trail* (Szlak Zielony Rower; 15zł) map and provides information about the trail.

## WHEN GOD WAS ON VACATION

Based on the number of day tours to Auschwitz on offer, especially out of Kraków, you would be forgiven for thinking that the nightmare of the Holocaust, the time 'when God was on vacation' as some Jews put it, was played out solely in the extermination camps at Oświęcim in Upper Silesia. But even a cursory trip around Galicia, the Austro-Hungarian province that was heavily Jewish and included many of the towns and cities mentioned in this chapter, will dispel that notion. As dozens of plaques, memorials and crude markers point out, hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews – in fact, a quarter of the three million annihilated – were murdered in their fields and forests. And in some respects it is even more horrible to imagine such crimes committed in the idyllic surrounds of a country town or village.

And the cemeteries... You may have wondered why they are so overgrown, their broken stones pitched this way and that. The answer is simple: there are no relatives left. Brothers, mothers, husbands, lovers, nephews, granddaughters – all are dead or have fled.

When a Jew dies a prayer called the Mourner's Kaddish is recited for them. The kaddish is repeated at Yahrzeit, the first anniversary of the death, and annually after that. But virtually no Jews lying in cemeteries like the one at Lesko have anyone to say this prayer for them. You might consider saying kaddish for those whose relatives cannot. Your voice can fill a decades-old void. Download the prayer from [www.jewfaq.org/prayer/kaddish.htm](http://www.jewfaq.org/prayer/kaddish.htm).

**Main post office** (ul Parkowa; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 013 469 6695; bcit@lesko.pl; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) In a pavilion on the Rynek.

## Sights & Activities

Lesko is notable for its Jewish heritage. From the oddly shaped Rynek, with its 19th-century **town hall** in the middle, head 200m north to the town's erstwhile **synagogue** (ul Joselewicza). Built in the Mannerist style in the mid-18th century, the synagogue has an attached tower – a dead giveaway that it was once part of the town's fortifications. Little of the temple's original decoration has survived. The interior houses the **Synagogue Art Gallery** (Galeria Sztuki Synagoga; ☎ 013 469 6649; adult/concession 3/1.50zł; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct), which is supposed to showcase artists from the Bieszczady. In the porch is a list of towns and *shtetls* in the region with Jewish populations of more than 100, a poignant reminder of what the make-up of the region was before the German murderers arrived.

Just west of the synagogue is the **Parish Church of Our Lady** (Kościół Parafialny Najświętszej Marii Panny; ul Kościuski). It was built in 1539 and its exterior still retains many Gothic features, including the eastern portal. The freestanding Baroque bell tower was added in the mid-18th century.

From the synagogue, follow ul Moniuszki north (and downhill); the stairs on the right lead up to the old **Jewish cemetery** (Kirkut). More than 2000 gravestones, the oldest one

dating back to the mid-16th century, are scattered amid trees and ever-consuming ivy, in varying stages of decay. Some of them miraculously retain their rich decoration; others have been defaced.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotelik Ratuszowa** (☎ 013 469 8632; s.kaszyci@interia.pl; Rynek 12, enter from ul Parkowa; s/d/tr 60/80/120zł; (P)) About the only central place in town, the cosy little 'Town Hall Inn' has eight small and rather plain rooms up under the eaves of its restaurant (mains 8zł to 22zł, open 9am to 9pm), which serves Polish favourites and is just about the best value in town.

**Pensjonat Zamek** (☎ 013 469 6268; www.gat.pl/98.php; ul Piłsudskiego 7; s/d/tr 90/110/138zł, apt 300-400zł; (P)) Located about 200m south of the Rynek, in what's left of Sanok's 16th-century castle, this modest guesthouse was once a holiday centre for miners. It's now a regular hotel with 43 rooms, a gym and a swimming pool. It also hires out mountain bikes.

**Camping Nad Sanem** (☎ 013 469 6689; ul Turystyczna 1; beds per person 20-35zł; ☎ May-Sep; (P)) The camping ground is on the riverside below the castle. It has a 15 bungalows with rooms of different sizes, an area where you can pitch your tent and a restaurant.

**Pizzeria Kaszyno** (☎ 013 469 8680; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 3; mains 8-30zł; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Halfway between the synagogue and the parish church, northwest of the Rynek, the



'Casino' is a no-frills pizzeria that will not send you away hungry.

### Getting There & Away

The bus station is on ul Piłsudskiego – the road to Sanok – about 1km west of the Rynek. There are plenty of buses to Sanok (3.50zł, 20 minutes), about 11 of which continue to Krosno (10zł, one hour). A dozen daily buses run to Rzeszów (11.50zł, two hours) and four express buses go directly to Kraków (38zł, three hours).

For the Bieszczady, there are three daily buses to Cisna (7zł, one hour), and some wind up as far as Wetlina (9zł, 1½ hours). As many as 10 buses serve Ustrzyki Górne (11zł, two hours), half of which go via Ustrzyki Dolne.

### USTRZYKI DOLNE

pop 9600

An unprepossessing town in the southeastern corner of Poland, Ustrzyki Dolne (oost-*shikee dol-neh*) is really only an overnight stop for those heading south into the Bieszczady; the headquarters of the Bieszczady National Park are conveniently located here. If you plan on trekking in the mountains independently, Ustrzyki Dolne is the last reliable place to stock up on a decent range of provisions and exchange money.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (Rynek 17; ☎ 9am–4.30pm Mon–Fri) Next to the tourist office.

**Bieszczady National Park headquarters** (☎ 013 461 0650; www.bdpn.pl; ul Belska 7; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sat, plus 9am–2pm Sun Jul & Aug) In the museum.

**Tourist office** (☎ 013 471 1130; www.cit.ustrzyki-dolne.pl in Polish; Rynek 16; ☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat)

### Sights & Activities

There's not much to see in Ustrzyki Dolne except for the **Natural History Museum** (Muzeum Przyrodnicze; ☎ 013 461 1091; ul Belska 7; adult/concession 5/3zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sat, plus 9am–2pm Sun Jul & Aug) behind the tourist office. It's a good introduction to the geology, flora and fauna of the Bieszczady.

Enquire about horse riding and riding excursions at the **Galop** (☎ 013 471 1151, 0609 940 349; horse@w.polsce.com; ul Chopina 21) shop and travel agency west of the centre.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotelik Bieszczadzki** (☎ 013 461 1071; www.bieszczadzka.com; Rynek 19; d/tr with en suite 80/150zł; s/d/tr with shared facilities 35/60/80zł; ☎) The most central place in town, the 16-room Bieszczadzki is very simple and has a similarly simple budget restaurant (mains 8zł to 20zł, open 8am to 10pm Monday to Thursday, 8am to midnight Friday to Sunday) with pizza and the like.

**Hotel Laworta** (☎ 013 468 9000; www.laworta.pl in Polish; ul Nadgórną 107; s/d/tr/apt 115/200/240/400zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) To the north of town, around 1.5km uphill from the train and bus stations, the Laworta is a peaceful 54-room place set in its own parkland. It has good facilities, including tennis courts and a sauna, and its own restaurant.

### Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are in one building. You won't get far by train – Zagórz (7.50zł, 2¾ hours) and Jasło (17zł, 4½ hours) are two of the very few destinations – but bus service is reasonably good. Two dozen daily buses run to Sanok (7zł, one hour), some passing through Lesko (5zł, 30 minutes) on the way. Up to seven buses (several more in summer) go daily to Ustrzyki Górne (7.60zł, 1½ hours) and six to Polańczyk (6.50zł, one hour). Destinations further afield include Przemyśl (11zł, two hours, four daily), Rzeszów (16.20zł, 2½ hours, seven daily) and Kraków (40zł, four hours), which is served by two daily expresses.

### LAKE SOLINA

About 30km southwest of Ustrzyki Dolne and accessible by bus is Lake Solina (Jezioro Solińskie), a reservoir 27km long and 60m deep, created in 1968 when the San River was dammed. Today it is the Bieszczady region's most important centre for water sports and recreation.

Polańczyk, the attractive town on the irregularly shaped lake's western shore, offers visitors everything from sailing and windsurfing to fishing and beaches. The **tourist office** (☎ 013 470 3028; www.esolina.pl; ul Wiejska 2; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat), just off Hwy 894 on the way to Lesko, can supply you with all the details.

Ul Zdrojowa, which starts just east of the tourist office, is lined with hotels and sanatoriums offering any number of treatments. Many of them are huge soulless blocks; instead head for **Pensjonat Korona** (☎ 013 469 2201;

www.pensjonatkorona.pl; ul Zdrojowa 29; s/d 60/120zł), a flower-bedecked guesthouse with 40 beds and its own restaurant and pizzeria just over 1km down the peninsula. For budget accommodation close to the water, it's hard to beat the **Centrum Wypoczynkowe Wyspa Polańczyk** (☎ 013 469 2746; www.solina.pl; 4-/6-/8-person cabins 250/300/400zł), which has 20 A-frame cabins on the southwestern coast of the of the Big Island (Wyspa Duża), accessible by ferry boat across a channel a mere 5m wide.

### Getting There & Away

The main bus stop is at the start of ul Zdrojowa, just east of the tourist office. Up to six buses a day head for Ustrzyki Dolne (6.50zł, one hour). Other destinations include Lesko (4.50zł, 30 minutes, hourly), Krosno (12zł, 1½ hours, five daily) and Ustrzyki Górne (11zł, 1½ hours, six daily).

### USTRZYKI GÓRNE

pop 120

Ustrzyki Górne, less of a village than a string of houses scattered along the main road, is the Bieszczady's premier hiking base.

Since the Bieszczady loop road opened in 1962, the mountains have become more accessible. But this is still remote country and Ustrzyki Górne is a good example: there are a few mostly basic places to stay and eat, a shop and not much else. The village springs to life in summer, then sinks into a deep sleep for most of the rest of the year, stirring only a little in winter when the cross-country skiers arrive.

### Sights & Activities

**Bieszczady National Park** is full of fascinating sights and sounds: the remnants of villages abandoned or destroyed during Operation Vistula (see the boxed text, p275), ancient cemeteries, peat reserves (complete with quicksand), the cry of a lone wolf in the distance. The best way to see it all is up close with a forest guide. One of the best is **Andrzej Luks** (☎ 013 461 0281, 013 461 0010), who's based at Muczne, 20km northeast of Ustrzyki Górne, and will take you around by jeep.

Horse riding in the national park is offered by **ZHKN** (☎ 0500 207 581; zhkh@bdpn.pl; per hr 25zł, equipment hire 50zł) in Wołosate, 7km south-east of Ustrzyki Górne.

### Sleeping & Eating

Villages like Ustrzyki Górne usually don't have street names, but general directions should get you there.

**Hotelik Biały** (☎ 013 461 0641; www.hotelik-bialy.bieszczady.info.pl; dm 23–26zł; ☎) This 70-bed hostel is run by the Bieszczady National Park; rooms generally have four to five beds. It's on a side road, about 500m from the turn-off next to the shop.

**Schronisko PTTK Kremenaros** (☎ 013 461 0605; dm 27zł; ☎ Apr–Oct; ☎) This hostel is in the last house of the village, on the western side of the road heading towards Wetlina and opposite a huge border station. It's old and basic, but the staff is friendly and the atmosphere is good. Rooms have between two and 10 beds. The restaurant has a very short menu but the food is cheap and acceptable.

**Hotel Górski** (☎ 013 461 0604; www.hotel.ustrzyki.biz; s 75–91zł, d 150–182zł, apt 197–307zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) This PTTK-run hotel, at the northern end of the village on the road to Ustrzyki Dolne and bedecked with flower baskets, is significantly better than anything else around. With 63 clean, comfortable and modern rooms, all with their own bathrooms, it's also the biggest place in town. The hotel has a gym and sauna, and its own reasonably priced restaurant.

**Camping Nr 150 PTTK** (☎ 013 461 0614; per person/tent 8/10zł, beds in cabins with/without bathroom 32/21zł; ☎ May–Sep; ☎) The camping ground next door to the Hotel Górski has some old triple cabins without bathrooms and newer double cabins with en suites.

In addition to the two year-round PTTK eateries listed above, more places open in summer along the main road, including the ever-popular **Bar U Eskulapa** (☎ 0607 139 872; mains 6–16zł; ☎ 8am–9pm), famous for its *pierogi*, trout and *placek po bieszczadzku* (potato pancake filled with goulash). If you have your own transport, **Wilcza Jama** (Wolf's Lair; ☎ 013 461 0269; mains 10–35zł) in Muczne, 20km northeast of Ustrzyki Górne, is one of the best restaurants in the Bieszczady and specialises in game (boar, venison, pheasant).

### Getting There & Away

There are up to seven buses daily to Ustrzyki Dolne (7.60zł, 1½ hours), two to Krosno (16.50zł to 19.50zł, three hours), three to Rzeszów (23zł, 3½ hours) and as many as nine a day to Lesko (11zł, two hours) and Sanok (13zł, 2½ hours). A couple more

### HIKING IN THE BIESZCZADY

The Bieszczady region is one of the best places in Poland to go hiking. The region is beautiful and easy to walk around, and you don't need a tent or cooking equipment as mountain hostels are a day's walk apart and provide food. The main area for trekking is the national park, with Ustrzyki Górne and Wetlina being the most popular starting points, followed by Cisna.

Bieszczady National Park counts about a dozen well-marked hiking trails, with a total length of 130km. All three jumping-off points have PTTK hostels, with helpful staff who can provide information, and all have boards outlining the trails, complete with walking times, both uphill and downhill. Ascending **Mt Tarnica** (the region's highest peak at 1346m) from Wołosate, southeast of Ustrzyki Górne, will take two to three hours. At least one of the trails reaches (but does not cross) the Ukrainian border at one point. Be sure to carry your passport when hiking in this sensitive area.

Mountain hostels will put you up for the night and feed you regardless of how crowded they get. In July and August the floor will most likely be your bed, as these places are pretty small. Take a sleeping bag with you.

Get a copy of Galileo's 1:50,000-scale *Bieszczady* map (9zł), which covers the whole region. Agencja Wit's 1:50,000-scale map showing both the Upper and Lower Bieszczady – *Bieszczady Wysokie i Niskie* – costs 15zł.

buses run in July and August to the above destinations, as well as a couple of buses to Wetlina (4.50zł, 30 minutes) and up to six to Cisna (6.50zł, 45 minutes).

### WETLINA

pop 300

Wetlina is another popular jumping-off spot for hiking in the Bieszczady. Like Ustrzyki Górne, it stretches along one main road (in this case Hwy 897) and has a limited choice of simple places to sleep and eat.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Dom Wycieczkowy PTTK** (☎ 013 468 4615; www.wetlinapttk.pl; dm 14zł, d 36-445zł; P ☒) This old and very simple hostel offers beds year-round in doubles as well as dorms sleeping five. In summer you can also stay in cabins (17zł to 25zł per person) or pitch your tent (9zł) on the grounds. There's a rustic restaurant here with rough pine tables and decorated with carved wooden figures.

**Zajazd Pod Połoniną** (☎ 013 468 4611; www.podpolonina.prv.pl; per person 25-40zł; P) The 45-bed 'Inn below Mt Połonina' has rooms that sleep two to four people, and some come with bathrooms. There is also a budget restaurant. It's at the eastern end of the village, on the way to Ustrzyki Górne.

**Pensjonat U Rumcajsa** (☎ 013 468 4633; s/d/tr/q 25/40/60/75zł; P) This large pension almost opposite Zajazd Pod Połoniną has 80 beds

in basic but serviceable rooms sleeping up to four people.

**Camping Górna Wetlinka** (☎ 013 468 4776, 0604 172 238; per person/tent/car 7/3/5zł, family cabin 200zł; ☒ May-Oct) This excellent and very friendly camping ground also serves as an information point for Bieszczady National Park. Several hiking trails start from here and the staff can organise horse riding (25zł per hour).

### Getting There & Away

Up to 10 buses a day go to Sanok (11zł, two hours) via Lesko (9zł, 1½ hours). Count on up to nine buses a day to Ustrzyki Górne (4.50zł, 30 minutes) to the east and Cisna (4.50zł, 30 minutes) to the west.

### CISNA

pop 460

Cisna sits on the borderland between the territories once inhabited by the Boyks to the east and the Lemks to the west. The region was densely populated before WWII but today it counts fewer than 500 inhabitants, yet it's still the largest village in the central part of the Bieszczady. The village is not attractive in itself, but it has a decent choice of accommodation and is a good base for hiking. It is also the place to board the narrow-gauge tourist train.

The **tourist office** (☎ 013 468 6465; www.cisna.pl; ☒ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat May-Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-Apr) is in the county cultural centre in the middle of the village.

### Activities

The narrow-gauge train known as the **Bieszczady Forest Railway** (Bieszczadzka Kolejka Leśna; ☎ 013 468 6335; ciuchciaszaszka@vp.pl), based at the station in Majdan, 2km west of Cisna, was built at the end of the 19th century for transporting timber between Nowy Łupków and Majdan. The line was later extended north to Rzepedź and east to Moczarnie, beyond Wetlina. The train on the Majdan-Rzepedź route was in use as recently as 1993, but the line has since been turned into a tourist attraction.

The train makes three runs. The 12km stretch from Majdan to Przystup (adult/child 11/8zł one way, 18/12zł return), midway between Cisna and Wetlina, operates daily in July and August and at weekends in May, June and September. The other two runs – the 17km one between Majdan and Wola Michowa (14/10zł one way, 22/16zł return) and the 9km stretch between Majdan and Balnica (9/7zł one way, 14/10zł return) – operate at the weekend only in July and August. There's a small museum here as well as a snack bar and shop.

For **cycling** fans, Ośrodek Wczasowy Perełka (below) rents bikes for 4/20zł per hour/day.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Bacówka PTTK Pod Honem** (☎ 0503 137 279; www.podhonem.home.pl in Polish; dm 19zł, d/tr/q 44/63/80zł; P ☒) The 40-bed PTTK mountain hostel is located 668m up on a slope at the eastern end of Cisna; it's about 1km up the hill from behind the Wołosan, along a steep dirt track. It's simple and friendly and serves uncomplicated meals.

**Schronisko Turystyczne Okraglik** (☎ 013 468 6349; per person 20-25zł) Handily located on the central crossroads, this hostel has extremely plain rooms with between two and six beds and shared facilities.

**Villa Helena** (☎ 0502 573 061; Cisna 107; s/d 20/35zł; P ☒) This pleasant little B&B, opposite the road up to the Wołosan and Pod Honem, has 11 neat rooms. It's fairly simple, but comfortable and homely.

**Ośrodek Wczasowy Perełka** (☎ 013 468 6325; perelka@naturatour.pl; s/d 40/70zł, cabins per person 20zł; P ☒) This comfortable holiday home, the first house on the left as you enter Cisna from the west, has 34 beds in singles and doubles plus another 54 in seasonal A-frame cabins.

**OSW Wołosan** (☎ 013 468 6373; www.wolosan.pl; Cisna 87; s/d 190/200zł; P ☒ ☒ ☒) By far the classiest

place in this part of the Bieszczady, the 27-room Wołosan at the eastern end of Cisna is geared towards hunters (thus the trophies and stuffed animals throughout) but can organise any number of activities – from quad bikes and snowmobile excursions to off-road jeep safaris.

Half a dozen eateries near the crossroads open in summer, including the delightful **Demerada** (☎ 013 468 6502; mains 18-22zł; ☒ 9am-10pm), a tearoom and bistro with Carpathian specialities.

### Getting There & Away

Half a dozen buses run daily to Sanok (7.80zł, one hour) and Wetlina (4.50zł, 30 minutes). There are more seasonal buses in summer, including up to six to Ustrzyki Górne (6.50zł, 45 minutes).

### KOMAŃCZA

pop 880

A village nestled in a valley between the Bieszczady and Beskid Niski, Komańcza is yet another base used by hikers. Though not as popular as Ustrzyki Górne, Wetlina or Cisna, Komańcza offers something different for the traveller. As it somehow escaped Operation Vistula (see the boxed text, p275) in 1947, there's more of an ethnic and religious mix here than elsewhere in the region. There is a sizable community of Lemks living in and around the village.

The **tourist office** (☎ 013 467 7076; www.komanicza.pl in Polish; ul Komańcza 166; ☒ 7am-3pm Mon-Fri) is in the county office en route to the Uniat church.

### Sights & Activities

Until recently, tiny Komańcza could boast something unique in Poland – Orthodox, Uniat and Roman Catholic churches within walking distance of each other and all in use. Sadly, the oldest of the three, a beautiful wooden Orthodox church dating from 1802 and tucked away on the outskirts of the village on Hwy 897 to Dukla, was burned to the ground in September 2006, leaving only the separate bell tower, dating from 1836. The parish has pledged to rebuild the church and the forestry department has donated the timber, but that won't be nearly enough. If you'd like to make a donation, contact the **Orthodox priest** (☎ 013 467 7224; ul Komańcza 216).

The Uniats make up a significant part of Komańcza's population. In the late 1980s

### KEEPING THE BIESZCZADY IN RANGE

Krzysztof Krzysta, from Wołosate, is the park ranger of Bieszczady National Park (BNP), home to Poland's largest concentration of wild animals.

**Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!** Well, bears in the mountains and park, along with wolves, lynx, deer, boar and European bison.

**Conservationist equals antihunter, right?** In the BNP, of course, but not outside. I was a professional hunter for almost a decade before I joined the park in 1989. There was no great awakening. The area of the park was increased by fivefold and all hunting was forbidden. I had to choose between working in the park or moving on. I chose the former. Now I'm a professional hunter of poachers.

**Is that a problem here?** No. The human population in the park is tiny; there are just three villages including Wołosate. What is a problem is the growth in the populations of certain animals where the forests cannot sustain the numbers. In Slovakia bears are culled but not in Poland. The problem is, male bears control their own populations by killing off their young as necessary. With male bears being killed, the young population is increasing substantially in areas that cannot sustain those numbers. Wolves also have their own natural birth control. An alpha couple requires 100 sq km of land for roaming and hunting. Otherwise the female cannot conceive or aborts.

**How was the park managed under the old regime?** Like everything under socialism it was all carefully planned and tightly managed. The animal populations were fattened up over the winter and protected from wolves, especially the best specimens.

**Why was that?** Hunting was big business, both for government ministers and for their foreign guests. Hunting was always the 'sport of kings' in England and in the rest of Europe, so why should it have been different here? This stag was for the general secretary, that boar was for the minister of the interior. And in those days foreigners might spend up to DM3000 (€1535) just to bag a wolf.

**The big bad wolf sure gets a lot of bad press. Is it deserved?** Wolves are the smartest animals in the forest and I respect them. Wolves and humans are natural enemies because they have to compete for the same food. But they are no longer afraid of humans and are coming closer and closer to built-up areas. And they've been protected since 1996.

**If I were a tourist...** I wouldn't run if I saw a wolf. Just stand still. Wolves usually don't attack humans but if you run they may mistake you for a sheep or a dog and pursue you.

they built a **Uniat church** south of the centre. In the basement is a small **Lemk Museum** (Muzeum Łemków; ☎ 013 467 7224) featuring a collection of household items, tools and handicrafts related to the Lemk culture.

Though it looks older, the modest wooden **Roman Catholic church** was built in the early 1950s for newly settled adherents of that creed, which was virtually nonexistent in the region before WWII. The church is opposite the train station, north of the centre on Hwy 892 heading towards Sanok.

Also north of the centre is the **Convent of the Nazarene Sisters** (Klasztor Sióstr Nazaretanek; ☎ 013 467

7056; www.nazaretanki.dir.pl; ul Komańcza 27; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-6pm), where Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901-81), primate of Poland, was placed under house arrest for a year in 1955, for his opposition to the arrest and internment of priests and other religious figures. Two rooms in this green clapboard mansion are open to the public, including Wyszyński's bedroom-cum-study and a small chapel. To reach it from the centre, head north for about 1.5km along Hwy 892 and take the narrow track that branches off to the left under the railway bridge. The convent is about 550m up the hill from the car park.

Recently extended, the so-called **Cross Border Cycle Route** (Transgraniczna Trasa Rowerowa; www.komanca.info), a signposted cycling route into Slovakia, now totals 160km. Ask the tourist office for maps, brochures and other practical details.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Schronisko PTTK** (☎ 013 467 7013; www.pttk.komanca.prox.pl; dm 17zł, cabins per person 25-30zł; ☎ ☑) Fully refurbished, this year-round 25-bed hostel, about 250m up the hill from the convent car park, offers a warm welcome and good standards in rooms with two to four beds. It serves simple hot meals and operates five-person cabins when the weather is nice.

### Getting There & Away

There are half a dozen daily buses to Sanok (7zł, one hour). One bus goes daily to Cisna (6.50zł, 45 minutes) and there is also sporadic transport to Dukla (8zł, one hour).

The train links Komańcza with Zagórz (7.50zł, 1¼ hours, four daily) via Rzepedź. From Zagórz, there's frequent bus transport to Sanok and Lesko.

### AROUND KOMAŃCZA

Scattered around Komańcza are some of the finest Uniat and Orthodox churches in Poland. You'll find the first good example in the village of **Rzepedź**, 5km north of Komańcza and 1.3km west of the main road. This unusually light-coloured wooden structure, with a bell tower in front and topped with three onion domes, dates from 1824 and is now a Uniat church. The key is kept by Sławomir Jurkowski at Rzepedź 26, about 500m from the church, though you might try peering through the keyhole to admire the wonderful polychrome on the walls or attending Mass at 9.45am on Sunday.

A bit different in shape, and perhaps even more attractive, is the church in **Turzańsk**, 1.5km east of Rzepedź. Topped with five graceful onion domes and complemented by a freestanding belfry, the church was built in 1803 and has preserved its internal decoration, complete with an elaborate iconostasis from 1895. Today the church serves the Orthodox community and Divine Liturgy takes place at 10am every second Sunday. If you want to visit at other times, the keys are kept at the house of Teodor Tchoryk,

Turzańsk 63, in the upper part of the village, about 2km from the church.

One more Orthodox *cerkiew* (church) can be found in the village of **Szczawne**, 3km north of Rzepedź and 300m from the main road, just before crossing the railway track. Watch out to the left, as this huge church with green copper domes is well hidden in a cluster of trees. Services are held around 10am every second Sunday. The keys are kept by Jan Walorny, Szczawne 20, in the large brick house near the train station on the road to Bukowsko, 2km northwest of the church.

## THE BESKID NISKI

The Beskid Niski, or 'Low Beskid', is a forest-covered mountain range with gentle slopes that runs for about 85km west to east along the Slovakian frontier. It's bordered on the west by the Beskid Sądecki and on the east by the Bieszczady. As its name suggests, it is not a high outcrop: its tallest peak does not exceed 1000m and the range is made for easy walks. Admittedly the Beskid Niski offers less-spectacular vistas than the neighbouring Bieszczady. But its dozens of small Orthodox and Uniat churches, especially in the western half of the region, are a strong draw.

### KROSNO

pop 47,600  
Founded in the 14th century and prosperous during the Renaissance – it was even nicknamed 'little Kraków' for a time – Krosno slid into decay from the 18th century onwards. It revived with the trade of linen and Hungarian wine, and, in the mid-19th century, with the development of the oil industry. It is especially known for its ornamental and commercial glassworks.

Krosno is unexceptional except for its tiny historic core, perched on a hill, and some interesting sights nearby.

### Information

**Bank PKO** (ul Słowackiego 4; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Northeast of the Rynek.

**Jack-Pol** (☎ 013 432 7704; Plac Konstytucji 3 Maja 3; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) Internet access south of the Rynek.

**Tourist office** (☎ 013 432 7707; www.krosno.pl; Rynek 5; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep,



9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Oct-Mar) At the south-east corner of the main square.

## Sights

The Old Town's spacious **Rynek** has retained some of its Renaissance appearance, notably in the houses fronted by wide arcaded passageways that line the southern and north-eastern parts of the square. The best example is the **Wójtowska Townhouse** (Kamienica Wójtowska; Rynek 7).

A few steps southeast of the Rynek is the large 15th-century **Franciscan Church of the Holy Cross** (Kościół Franciszkanów Św Krzyża; ul Franciszkańska), today filled with neo-Gothic furnishings. The showpiece here is the **Oświęcim Family Chapel** (Kaplica Oświęcimów), just to the left (north) as you enter the church. Built in 1647 by Italian architect Vincenti Petroni, and embellished with magnificent stucco work by another Italian master, Jan Falconi, the chapel is considered to be one of the best early Baroque chapels in Poland.

Another huge brick structure, the **Parish Church of the Holy Trinity** (Kościół Parafialny Św Trójcy; ul Piłsudskiego) is 50m northwest of the Rynek. Founded in 1402, it was almost completely consumed by fire in the mid-17th century (only the chancel survived) and rebuilt. Note the intricate grape pattern on the wrought-iron main gates. Inside, the renovated gilded high altar is 350 years old, as is the elaborate pulpit. The freestanding onion-domed bell tower (1651) houses three bells called Jan, Marian and Urban. The tower is one of the largest in Poland.

One block northwest of the church is the **Subcarpathian Museum** (Muzeum Podkarpackie; ☎ 013 432 1376; www.muzeum.krosno.pl in Polish; ul Piłsudskiego 16; adult/concession 6.50/3.50zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Apr). Installed in the 15th-century former Bishops' Palace, the museum has interesting historical, archaeological and art sections. The highlight, however, is its extensive collection of decorative old kerosene lamps, reputedly the largest in Europe.

Directly opposite is the **Craft Museum** (Muzeum Rzemiosła; ☎ 013 432 4188; www.muzeumrzemiosla.pl in Polish; ul Piłsudskiego 19; adult/concession 5/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Oct-Apr), featuring displays related to such local crafts and trades as clock-making, weaving, saddlery and even hairdressing.

About 1km northwest of the Old Town is the famous **Krosno glassworks** (Krośnieńskie Huty Szkła; ☎ 013 432 8000; www.krosno.com.pl; ul Tysiąclecia 13). There's a **factory shop** (☎ 013 432 8755; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) on site selling a range of its products.

## Sleeping

**Hotelik Śnieżka** (☎ 013 432 3449; www.hotelsniezka.prv.pl; ul Lewakowskiego 22; s/d/tr 89/128/169zł; (P) (Q)) This attractive brick-red Victorian townhouse, hard by the bus and train stations, now counts 14 cosy rooms, all sparkingly modern, with polished wood floors and big bathrooms. The in-house restaurant is pretty stylish.

**Pensjonacik Buda** (☎ 013 432 0053; www.buda.krosno.pl; ul Jagiellońska 4; d/tr/ste 150/200/250zł; (P) (X) (Q)) This friendly B&B sits uncomfortably close to the railroad tracks 800m southwest of the Rynek, but its seven charming rooms and excellent restaurant (below) make it worth consideration.

**Hotelik Twist** (☎ 013 432 0708; www.krosno-twist.republika.pl; ul Pużaka 37; s/80-150zł, d 140-180zł, tr 200-210zł; (P) (Q)) It may look boxy from the outside, but this hotel 400m southeast of the train and bus stations offers 29 large and airy rooms in both new and old wings.

**Hotel Krosno-Nafta** (☎ 013 432 6212; www.hotel.nafta.pl; ul Lwowska 21; s/d/q 180/270/370zł; (P) (X) (Q) (S)) The city's top-end accommodation option, this modern hotel, a little over 1km southeast of the centre on the Sanok road, offers 41 comfortable rooms and its own upmarket restaurant. Prices drop by 30% at the weekend.

## Eating & Drinking

**Cukierna Santos** (☎ 013 431 5127; ul Staszica 16; cakes & pastries 1.50-10zł; ☎ 8am-8pm) This very popular little bakery and café sells a wide range of pastries, cakes and other sweet and savoury snacks.

**Marhaba Bar** (☎ 013 420 2492; ul Sienkiewicza 2, enter from the Rynek; mains 6-21zł; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) This vaguely Turkish-sounding eatery offers generic Middle Eastern favourites such as kebabs, koftas and falafel.

**Restauracja Buda** (☎ 013 432 0053; ul Jagiellońska 4; mains 11-25zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) This charming Polish-style eatery at the pension of the same name is the best restaurant in town. Check out the snarling stuffed monkey on the bar.

**Piwnica Wójtowska** (☎ 013 432 1532; Rynek 7; mains 6-30zł; ☎ 10am-9pm) Located in the pleasant vaulted cellar of the Rynek's most beauti-

ful Renaissance building, this pub-restaurant offers a variety of Polish dishes as well as basic international fare (think chicken with chips).

**Que Pasa** (☎ 013 436 5191; ul Słowackiego 14; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 10am-late Fri & Sat) Popular with Krosno's young bloods, this bar has a large outside terrace perfect for watching the day (or night) come to an end.

## Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations sit eyeballing one another 1.5km west of the Rynek.

A dozen or so daily buses head eastward for Sanok (7.40zł, 1½ hours), up to four of which continue to Ustrzyki Dolne (17.40zł, two hours) and two to Ustrzyki Górne (16.60zł, three hours). A dozen fast buses depart daily for Kraków (23zł, three hours), and hourly buses go to Rzeszów (9zł, 1½ hours). There are frequent buses south to Dukla (3.20zł, 45 minutes) and regular buses to Bóbrka (2.80zł, 30 minutes). For Haczów (2.80zł, 40 minutes) count on up to 10 buses a day, most of which terminate at Brzozów.

Most trains cover the Zagórz-Jasło route, which can be used for Sanok (7.50zł, 1½ hours, 10 per day) but not much else. There are trains to Warsaw (55zł, eight hours, three daily) and Kraków (42zł, five hours, two daily).

## HACZÓW

pop 1175

The village of Haczów (*hah-choof*), 16km east of Krosno, boasts what is considered to be the largest timber Gothic church in Europe. Built around the mid-15th century on the site of a previous church founded by Władysław Jagiełło in 1388, the **Church of the Assumption of Mary and Michael the Archangel** (Kościół Wniebowzięcia Matki Boskiej i Św Michała Archanioła), on Unesco's World Heritage List since 2003, is also one of Europe's oldest timber churches. The walls and coffered ceiling inside are covered in naive paintings dating from the late 15th century and restored in the 1990s.

You shouldn't wait more than an hour for a bus to Krosno (2.80zł, 40 minutes), which goes via Krościenko Wyżne or Miejsce Piastowe.

## BÓBRKA

pop 510

The small village of Bóbrka, 17km southwest of Krosno, is the cradle of the Polish oil industry. It was here in 1854 that the world's first oil

well was sunk by Ignacy Łukasiewicz, inventor of the paraffin lamp (see the boxed text, p288), and one of the country's most ambitious (and unusual) skansens marks the achievement.

## Sights

Today the site where Łukasiewicz first hit pay dirt is the open-air **Museum of the Oil and Gas Industry** (Muzeum Przemysłu Naftowego i Gazowniczego; ☎ 013 433 3478; www.bobrka.home.pl in Polish; 38-458 Chorkowa; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 7am-3pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr), established in 1961. It's based on a group of early oil wells, complemented by their old drilling derricks and other rigs collected from around the world. The world's oldest surviving hand-dug oil shaft, named Franek and dating back to 1860, can be seen with crude still bubbling below. The Janina shaft (1878) nearby is still used commercially. In all there are more than 50 pieces of machinery and outbuildings here.

The **Ignacy Łukasiewicz House**, which once served as the oil-industry pioneer's office, contains exhibits relating to the oil and gas industries. The collection of kerosene lamps includes decorative and industrial examples. Note the original map of the Bóbrka oil field with the shafts marked on it; the deepest went down as far as 319m. There are more exhibits in the new **Grand Exhibition Pavilion** at the entrance, as well as a library and archives.

Those who can't get enough of the oil industry will be pleased to hear that there is a **Petroleum Trail** (Szlak Naftowy; www.beskidniski.org.pl) in Krosno and neighbouring counties that can be followed by car or bicycle.

## Getting There & Away

From Krosno there are about 10 buses daily to Bóbrka village (2.80zł, 30 minutes), though fewer depart at the weekends. The skansen is at Chorkowa, about 2km north of where the bus will let you off.

## DUKLA

pop 2140

Dukla, 19km southwest of Krosno, is close to the Dukla Pass (Przełęcz Dukielska), the lowest and most easily accessible passage over the Western Carpathians. In the 16th century this strategic location brought prosperity to the town, which became a centre of the wine trade on the route from Hungary. Its heyday was in the 18th century, when most of its important monuments were built.

### THE BLACK GOLD OF BÓBRKA

Natural oil had been known for centuries in the Krosno region and was used by local people for both domestic and medicinal purposes. But it wasn't until 1854, when Ignacy Łukasiewicz (1822–82) sank the world's first oil well at Bóbrka, that oil exploitation at a commercial level began.

Łukasiewicz, a pharmacy graduate from universities in Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine), Kraków and Vienna, studied the properties of crude oil and was the first to obtain paraffin oil from petroleum. In 1853 he constructed the world's first kerosene lamp, used in a Lwów hospital to light a surgical operation that urgently had to be carried out one night. A year later he lit the world's first kerosene-fuelled streetlamp at Gorlice.

That same year a local landowner pointed out a site in the Bóbrka forest where substantial amounts of oil accumulated in natural hollows. The first approach to get oil out of the soil was by means of a 120m-long, 1.2m-deep ditch. When that proved ineffective Łukasiewicz began to experiment with vertical shafts. By 1858, four years after initial trials, the new Małgorzata shaft was yielding about 4000L of crude oil a day, a milestone that fostered further exploitation.

More shafts, including Franek, were sunk, and in 1861 a primitive refinery was opened at Polanka. The region prospered from the industry, which reached its peak just before WWI. When larger deposits of crude were discovered elsewhere, the importance of the local oil fields diminished. Exploitation on a small scale continues, primarily to preserve the memory of this far-flung village's role in the discovery of a product that changed the world.

In the autumn of 1944 one of the fiercest mountain battles of WWII was fought around the Dukla Pass, in which the combined Soviet and Czechoslovakian armies crushed the German defence, leaving more than 100,000 soldiers dead.

There's a **Bank PKO** (ul Mickiewicza 1; ☎ 8am–3.30pm Mon–Fri) south of the parish church.

### Sights

Dukla's large Rynek boasts a squat **town hall** in the centre. Across the Krosno road to the northwest and next to the tiny Dukielska River is the mighty **Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene** (Kościół Parafialny Św Marii Magdaleny), built in 1765. With its glorious pink and white stuccoed and marbled wood interior, it's a fine example of late Baroque and Rococo architecture.

Diagonally opposite the church is the **Historical Museum** (Muzeum Historyczne; ☎ 013 433 0085; Trakt Węgierski 5; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–3.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr), housed in the decaying 18th-century Mniszech Palace (Pałac Mniszchów). It has a permanent display on the battle of 1944 and some temporary exhibitions; note the number of signs in Czech. In the park surrounding the palace are 20 heavy weapons – tanks, big guns, lorries and fighter planes – from WWII on permanent display.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Dukla Hostel** (☎ 013 433 0886, 013 433 0033; ptsmdukla@op.pl; Rynek 9; dm 17–22zł; ☎) A basic and very central option on the Rynek, this year-round hostel has 40 beds.

**Dom Wycieczkowy PTTK** (☎ 013 433 0046; Rynek 18; dm 20zł, s/tr 30/75zł; ☎) The local PTTK offers seven stark rooms with bare-bones facilities, and it also has its own pub and cheap restaurant (open 10am to 10pm).

### Getting There & Away

There are about a dozen daily buses up to Krosno (3.20zł, 45 minutes) and four south to Barwinek (4.50zł, 40 minutes), near the Czech border and the Dukla Pass. A bus runs from around April to October along the backwoods route from Dukla to Komańcza (8zł, one hour) and on to Cisna (12zł, two hours), which is a short cut to the Bieszczady. Count on four buses to and from Rzeszów (12zł, two hours).

### BIECZ pop 4650

One of the oldest settlements in Poland, Biecz (pronounced byech) was a busy commercial centre from at least the 15th century. It benefited from the wine-trading route heading south over the Carpathians to Hungary, and some 30 crafts developed here. In the 17th century Biecz began to see its prosperity wane

when the plague struck and new trade routes appeared. The sleepy atmosphere seems to have remained to this day, though some important historic monuments and a good museum make the town worth a stop.

There's a **Bank PKO** (Rynek 17; ☎ 8.15am–3.30pm Mon–Fri) on the main square.

### Sights

The town's landmark is the **town hall** on the Rynek or, more precisely, its huge 56m-high octagonal **tower** (adult/concession 2/1zł; ☎ 8am–3pm Tue–Sat), which you can climb with a ticket purchased from the museum. The tower, which looks a little like a lighthouse, was built between 1569 and 1581, except for the top, which is a Baroque addition. Its original Renaissance decoration and the unusual 24-hour clock face on its eastern side have been restored in recent years.

West of the Rynek is the monumental **Corpus Christi Parish Church** (Kościół Parafialny Bożego Ciała). This mighty Gothic brick structure, evidence of the town's erstwhile affluence, dates from the 15th century and looks vaguely Flemish. Inside, the chancel holds most of the church's treasures, most notably the late-Renaissance high altar and massive stalls, all from the early 17th century. To the side of the altar is a gilded woodcarving depicting the genealogical tree of the Virgin Mary. Further up is an impressive crucifix from 1639.

Near the church are the remains of the **town walls** and what has become known as **Execution Tower** (Katownia). Biecz was allowed to pass death sentences, and there was even a corporation of executioners who appear to have taken their job pretty seriously. In the year 1614 alone, some 120 brigands were executed here.

Most of the collection of the excellent **Biecz Regional Museum** (Muzeum Ziemi Bieckiej; ☎ 013 447 1093; ☎ 8am–5pm Tue–Fri, 8am–4pm Sat, 9am–4pm Sun May–Sep, 8am–3pm Tue–Sat, 9am–2pm Sun Oct–Apr) is housed in two 16th-century buildings, both close to the church. The so-called **House with a Turret** (Dom z Basztą; ul Węgierska; adult/concession 4/2zł) holds the complete contents of an ancient pharmacy including its laboratory, as well as musical instruments, traditional household utensils, equipment from old craft workshops and a cellar for storing Hungarian wine. The **Kromer Townhouse** (Kamienica Kromerówka; ul Kromera 3; adult/concession 3/1.5zł) has more historical exhibits

on the town's past, plus archaeological and numismatic collections.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Biecz Hostel** (☎ 013 447 1014; ptsmbiecz@o2.pl; ul Parkowa 1; dm 22zł; ☎) This basic but clean hostel with 130 beds is around 1km from the Rynek. It's on the top floor of a large school building and has only doubles and quads, so provides more privacy than most.

**Hotel Restauracja Grodzka** (☎ 013 447 1121; grodzka@grodzka.info; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 35; s 60zł, d 65–70zł, apt 90zł; ☎) This is a just-acceptable, 16-room, budget option not far from the hostel. It's nothing out of the ordinary, but it does have its own bright and airy restaurant (mains 9zł to 17zł, open 8am to 10pm Monday to Saturday, 10am to 10pm Sunday).

**Hotel Centennial** (☎ 013 447 1576; www.centennial.com.pl; Rynek 6; s/d/ste 182/161/235zł; ☎) The somewhat over-the-top Centennial – all swag drapes, chrome and leatherette settees – offers the best facilities in town, including suites of different size and design in two historic burghers' houses. The two singles face the Rynek. The hotel's Restauracja Ogród (mains 8zł to 18zł, open 10am to 10pm) next door serves excellent and reasonably priced Polish food and pizza. The hotel offers big reductions at the weekend.

### Getting There & Away

All buses pass through and stop on the north-east and southwest sides of the Rynek. Buses to Jasło (4.50zł, 35 minutes) run regularly but only a few buses continue to Krosno (8zł, one hour). Plenty of buses run to Gorlice (1.80zł to 3.50zł, 30 minutes), and there are a couple of daily departures to Nowy Sącz (9zł, 1½ hours), Nowy Targ (19.50zł, 2½ hours) and Zakopane (26zł, 3½ hours).

Biecz's train station, 1km west of the centre, handles a couple of trains a day to Jasło (9zł, 30 minutes), Nowy Sącz (14.50zł, two hours) and Kraków (34zł, three hours). There's a daily departure for Warsaw (54zł, seven hours).

### GORLICE

pop 28,400

Like Bóbrka's, Gorlice's name entered the history books (well, the Polish ones anyway) with the beginnings of the Polish oil industry. In 1853, in the local chemist shop, Ignacy Łukasiewicz obtained paraffin (or kerosene) from crude oil. Gorlice was also the site of a

### HIKING IN THE BESKID NISKI

Two main trails cover the entire length of the Beskid Niski range. The trail marked in blue originates in Grybów, goes southeast to the border and then eastwards all along the frontier to bring you eventually to Nowy Łupków near Komańcza. The red trail begins in Krynica, crosses the blue trail around Hańcowa, continues east along the northern slopes of the Beskid, and arrives at Komańcza. Both these trails head further east into the Bieszczady.

You need four to six days to do the whole of the Beskid Niski on either of these routes, but there are other trails as well as a number of rough roads that link the two main trails.

A dozen hostels scattered in small villages throughout the region provide shelter, but most are open only in high summer (July and August). There are also a number of agrotourist farms; these are open for a longer season and sometimes year-round. If you plan on more ambitious trekking, camping gear may be useful. You can buy some elementary supplies in the villages you pass, but you're better off stocking up on essentials before you set out.

The major starting points for the Beskid Niski are Krynica, Grybów and Gorlice from the west; Komańcza and Sanok from the east; and Krosno, Dukla and Barwinek for the central part.

The 1:125,000 *Beskid Niski i Pogórze* map (9zł) from PPWK will give you all the basic information you need for hiking. A more detailed map is Galileos' 1:50,000 *Beskid Niski* (8.90zł).

great WWI battle, fought for 126 days from May 1915, which ended with the Austrians breaking through the Russian Carpathian front, leaving 20,000 dead.

The town itself has a few tourist sights but the region to the south was once Lemk territory and harbours some lovely old Orthodox and Uniat churches. Gorlice is a major transportation hub for the region, and the helpful tourist office can provide information.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (ul Legionów 12; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri) Opposite the tourist office.

**Bank Spółdzielczy** (ul Stróżowska 1; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-1pm Sat) At the northwest corner of the Rynek.

**Post office** (ul Węgierska 2; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat) Across the river.

**Tourist office** (☎ 018 353 5091; www.it.gorlice.pl in Polish; ul Legionów 3; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Toxic Inntonet Café** (☎ 018 353 6700; ul Piekarska 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Internet access; southwest of the Rynek.

### Sights & Activities

Gorlice's **Old Town** and its unusual two-tiered, sunken Rynek are perched on a rise above the Ropa River. The **PTTK Regional Museum** (Muzeum Regionalne PTTK; ☎ 018 352 2615; ul Wąska 7/9; adult/concession 5/3zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri Oct-Apr), south of the Rynek, has exhibitions on Lemk ethnography, the oil industry and the battle of 1915.

Gorlice claims to have the world's first kerosene **streetlamp**, dating back to 1854. It's attached to roadside shrine of Christ and an unusual umbrella on the corner of ul Kościuszki and ul Węgierska.

There are more than 100 **WWI cemeteries** around Gorlice. Ask at the tourist office for the brochure *Gorlickie Cmentarze z I Wojny Światowej* (Gorlice Cemeteries from the First World War), which contains illustrations and a simple map.

Gorlice sits at the foot of the mountains and is excellent starting point for **hiking** into the Beskid Niski. Two marked trails, blue and green, start near the tourist office and wend southeast from the town up the mountains, joining the main west-east red trail that crosses the range. And while the town is not the main gateway to the 200-sq-km **Magura National Park** (Magurski Park Narodowy; www.magur skipmn.pl) – that honour goes to Krempana, 44km to the southeast – it is easily accessible from here via Sękowa. The tourist office distributes a useful pack of brochures on the park and its flora, fauna and cultural heritage.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Dwór Karwacjanów** (☎ 018 353 5618; www.gorlice.art.pl in Polish; ul Wróblewskiego 10a; d/tr 80/100zł; ☎) This is a very attractive fortified manor house whose roots reputedly go back to 1417. Extensively renovated, the building now houses the Małopolska Art Gallery, a cellar pub and four cosy (in every sense) rooms. Rates don't include breakfast.

**Dom Nauczyciela** (☎ 018 353 5231; oupisgorlice@up.pl; ul Wróblewskiego 10; s/d 60/85zł; ☎ ☎ ☎) This central student house, next door to the Dwór Karwacjanów, offers a dozen beds in simple but very clean rooms. It's 100m northeast of the Rynek.

**Hotelik Dark Pub** (☎ 018 352 0238; www.hotelik.gorlice.pl; ul Wąska 11; s/d/tr 90/130/180zł; ☎ ☎) This amenable little place next to the PTTK Regional Museum has just three rooms, all with bright modern bathrooms. There is a very popular pub-restaurant (mains 5zł to 20zł, open 10am to 11pm Monday to Saturday, and 2pm to 11pm Sunday) with a covered courtyard downstairs.

There are not many other eating options in Gorlice beyond pizzerias. Two tried and tested ones (small/medium/large pizzas from 3.80/5/7.90zł) are **Café Rose** (☎ 018 352 2053; ul Mickiewicza 10; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat & Sun), on the way down to the river, and **Pizzeria Oregon** (☎ 018 352 0070; ul Piekarska 14; ☎ 10am-10pm), southwest of the Rynek in the Old Town.

### Getting There & Away

The bus and shuttle-train stations are 1.5km northeast of the Rynek. At least six fast buses go to Kraków (12zł, 2½ hours) every day and there are almost hourly departures for Nowy Sącz (6.50zł, two hours). Buses also go to Nowy Targ (13.60zł, two hours) and Krosno (5zł, 1½ hours) three times a day. Buses run every half-hour or so to Biecz (1.80zł, 30 minutes).

The main railway station is at the village of Zagórzany, 5km to the northeast, which is linked with Gorlice by a shuttle train running back and forth every two or three hours. From Zagórzany, there are a couple of daily trains to Jasło (10zł, 40 minutes) and Kraków (19.50zł, three hours).

### AROUND GORLICE

#### Sękowa pop 240

Lying in the ethnic borderland between the Poles and the Lemks, Sękowa, 6.5km southeast of Gorlice, was one of the southernmost outposts of Roman Catholicism before the war.

The small wooden **Parish Church of SS Philip and James** (Kościół Parafialny Św Filipa i Jakuba) at the start of the village is an exquisite example of timber architecture and was listed by Unesco as a World Heritage site in

2003. The main part of the building dates back to 1522, though the bell tower and *soboty*, the steep arcading that looks like a veranda around the church, were added in the 17th century. The *soboty*, meaning 'Saturdays', were built to shelter churchgoers from distant villages arriving late on Saturday night in time for Mass on Sunday morning.

The church passed through particularly hard times during WWI when the Austro-Hungarian army took part of it away to re-inforce the trenches and for firewood, but careful reconstruction has restored its gracious outline. The interior contains an original baptismal font, a Renaissance altar, and wall paintings and portraits, some by Stanisław Wyspiański. The key is held by the affable priest in the house next to the church. If no-one answers ring ☎ 0696 888 454.

From Gorlice take suburban bus 6 (to Ropica Górna), 7 (to Owczary) or 17 (direct to Sękowa; 2.20zł), get off in Siary and continue in the same direction for 50m until the road divides. Take the left-hand fork, cross the bridge 300m ahead and you'll see the church to your right.

#### Szymbark pop 3200

Just a scattering of houses that spreads along the Gorlice-Grybów road, Szymbark, 6.5km southwest of Gorlice, contains the **Centre of Folk Architecture** (Ośrodek Budownictwa Ludowego; ☎ 018 351 3114; adult/concession 7/4zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr), a skansen of old peasant cottages in the centre. The biggest building is an impressive fortified manor house from the 16th century, adorned with Renaissance parapets.

Buses on the main east-west road run regularly throughout the day to both Gorlice (1.50zł, 20 minutes) and Nowy Sącz (6.50zł, 50 minutes).

## THE BESKID SADECKI

Fanning out to the south of Nowy Sącz, the Beskid Sądecki (*bes-keed son-dets-kee*) is yet another attractive mountain range where you can hike, sightsee or simply have a rest at a mountain spa like Krynica or Muszyna. The mountains are easily accessible from Nowy Sącz by two roads (Hwy 87 and Hwy 75) that head south along the river valleys, joining



up with Hwy 971 to form a convenient loop; public transport is good along this route.

The Beskid Sądecki consists of two ranges, the Pasma Jaworzyny and the Pasma Radziejowej, which are separated by the Poprad River valley. There are a number of peaks over 1000m, the highest being Mt Radziejowa (1261m).

The Beskid Sądecki was the westernmost territory populated by the Lemks, and a dozen of their charming rustic churches survive, particularly around Krynica and Muszyna. *Beskid Sądecki* maps (scale 1:50,000; 9zł) published by three different firms (WiT, Demart and Galileos) are helpful for both hikers and *cerkiew* peepers.

## NOWY SĄCZ

pop 84,300

Nowy Sącz (*no-vi sonch*), the economic and cultural centre of the Sącz region, is a laid-back town with an attractive main square and a few decent attractions, most notably its large skansen. It can also be a good base for further exploration of the surrounding countryside.

Founded in 1292 and fortified in the middle of the next century by King Kazimierz III Wielki, Nowy Sącz developed rapidly until the 16th century, thanks to its strategic position on trading crossroads. As elsewhere, decline in the 17th century gave way to a partial revival at the close of the 19th century. Nowy Sącz grew considerably after WWII, and its historic district has been largely restored over recent years.

## Information

**Bank BPH** (ul Jagiellońska 26; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

**Bank PKO** (Al Wolności 16; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri)

**C@ffe Internet** (☎ 018 443 8433; ul Kościuszki 22; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun) Internet access.

**EMPIK** (☎ 018 443 7241; Rynek 17; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Maps and English-language books and guides.

**Klub Mega** (☎ 018 443 4727; 1st fl, ul Kościuszki 26; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) Internet access.

**Main post office** (ul Dunajewskiego 10; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**PTTK office** (☎ 018 443 7457; Rynek 9; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 11am-7pm Thu & Fri) Travel agency.

**Tourist office** (☎/fax 018 443 5597; www.nowy-sacz.info in Polish; ul Piotra Skargi 2; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

## Sights

Measuring 160m by 120m, Nowy Sącz's **Rynek** is one of the largest in Poland and is lined on all sides by a harmonious collection of historic houses. The large **town hall**, erected in the middle in 1897, incorporates a number of architectural styles, including Art Nouveau. You'll spot more examples of this style south of the Rynek along pedestrian ul Jagiellońska.

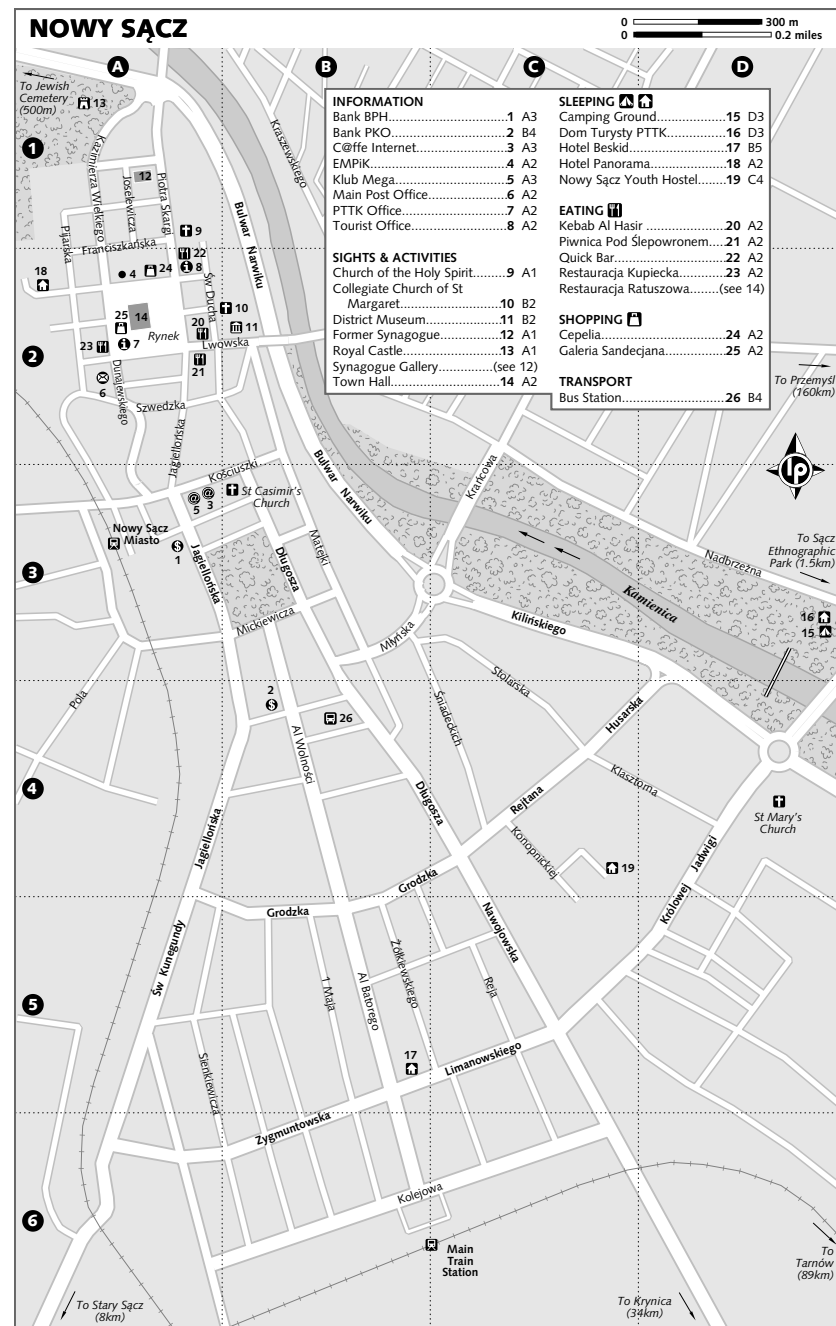
The **Collegiate Church of St Margaret** (Kościół Kolegiacki Św Małgorzaty; ul Św Ducha), a block east of the Rynek, dates back to the 14th century but has undergone many additions and changes since then. The small 15th-century image of Christ on the Renaissance main altar suggests a Byzantine influence. Note the remnants of a medieval fresco of the Last Supper on the column to the left as you enter. At the northern end of the same street is the **Jesuit Church of the Holy Spirit** (Kościół Św Ducha) and its massive cloister.

The 15th-century Gothic building to the south of St Margaret's houses the **District Museum** (Muzeum Okręgowe; ☎ 018 443 7708; www.muzeum.sacz.pl; ul Lwowska 3; adult/concession 6/4zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Thu, 10am-5.30pm Fri, 9am-2.30pm Sat & Sun). The museum is dedicated to religious art, with naive religious paintings and folk-art woodcarvings collected from rural churches and roadside chapels throughout the region. The collection of Ruthenian Orthodox icons, which includes a splendid iconostasis of the 17th century, is especially fine.

Two blocks north of the Rynek is the **former synagogue** (ul Joselewicza 12), built in the first half of the 18th century in Baroque style but remodelled in a neo-Moorish style in the 1920s. Partly destroyed in WWII after some 25,000 Jews from around the region were gathered here and shipped off to Nazi concentration camps, it was restored and now houses the **Synagogue Gallery** (☎ 018 444 2370; admission varies, free Sat; ☎ 10am-3pm Wed & Thu, 10am-5.30pm Fri, 9am-2.30pm Sat & Sun), which presents changing exhibitions and a small permanent display of Judaica.

The remains of the **Royal Castle** (Zamek Królewski; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego), built by Kazimierz III Wielki in the 1350s, are 200m further north. The castle was in use till the early 17th century, when a fire destroyed much of it. You can still see doorways, windows, brick vaults and loopholes.

Another 500m north, on the other side of the Kamiénica River, is the **Jewish cemetery**



(cmentarz żydowski; ul Rybacka), containing a couple of hundred derelict headstones amid overgrown grass. You can see most of it from over the fence, but if you want a closer look, ask for the key to the cemetery gate from the house at ul Rybacka 3, directly opposite the entrance.

**Sącz Ethnographic Park** (Sądecki Park Etnograficzny; ☎ 018 441 4412; ul Długoszowskiego 83b; adult/concession 10/6zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr), about 3.5km southeast of the centre, is one of the largest and best skansens in the country. Houses and other buildings typical of several ethnic cultures from the Carpathian Mountains and foothills are displayed in 10 groups. All in there are almost 70 buildings and other structures, including a farmhouse, forge, windmill, various churches and so on. Visits are in groups guided in Polish; follow along with *The Sącz Ethnographic Park* by Magdalena Kroh, available in English from the skansen shop. Infrequent city buses 14 and 15 go there from the train station, passing the bus station on the way.

## Sleeping

**Nowy Sącz Youth Hostel** (☎ 018 442 3897; ssmrejtana@op.pl; ul Reytana 18; dm 17-22zł, tr 66zł; ☎) This 50-bed hostel, equidistant from the bus and train stations, is the cheapest place to stay in Nowy Sącz. It has three triples but most beds are in dorms of six to 10 beds.

**Dom Turysty PTTK** (☎ 018 441 5012; ul Nadbrzeźna 40; d/tr/q 75/110/150zł; ☎) This year-round PTTK hostel has 21 spartan but spic-and-span rooms. It also operates the camping ground (per person/tent 4/7zł, open May to September) next door.

**Hotel Panorama** (☎ 018 443 7110; htpanorama@poczta.onet.pl; ul Romanowskiego 4a; s/d/tr/ste 110/176/219/310zł; ☎) The recently renovated Panorama, just off the Rynek, is the only place to stay in the Old Town. Its 32 rooms are large, clean and comfortable, and they come with updated furniture and modern bathrooms. Ask for a room looking west towards the Dunajec River.

**Hotel Beskid** (☎ 018 443 5770; www.orbis.pl; ul Limanowskiego 1; s/d 150/180zł; ☎) This uninspiring 81-room hotel run by Orbis offers predictable facilities and standards. It's 300m due north of the train station but quite a way from the Rynek. Discount rates of 116/127zł for singles/doubles apply at the weekend.

## Eating

**Kebab Al Hasir** (☎ 018 440 0580; ul Lwowska 1; mains 3.30-12.40zł; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 3-10pm Sun) If you just can't handle any more Polish fast food (and we all have our limits), make your way to this Middle Eastern grill opposite the museum for kebabs, *shoarmas* (pita bread with meat and salad) and *salads*.

**Quick Bar** (☎ 018 442 1448; ul Piotra Skargi 4; mains 3.50-10zł; ☎ 9.30am-10pm) Next to the tourist office and just off the Rynek, this small café offers simple Polish fast food. Set lunches are a snip at 9.90zł or 11.50zł.

**Piwnica Pod Ślepowronem** (☎ 018 443 7921; ul Lwowska 2; mains 6-18zł) This quirky pub-restaurant filled with antiques and curios is located in a cellar at the southeast corner of the Rynek. There's a healthy choice of vegetarian dishes.

**Restauracja Ratuszowa** (☎ 018 443 5615; Rynek 1; mains 8-20zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Located in the cellar vaults of the town hall, the Ratuszowa has the expected range of filling Polish dishes, including a full 20 types of *pierogi* – from meat and cheese to strawberry and blueberry. It's best to order a mixture (24zł).

**Restauracja Kupiecka** (☎ 018 442 0831; Rynek 10; mains 15-40zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Another vaulted cellar affair, but this time with lovely naive wall paintings and, incongruously, toys for the kiddies, the "Trader" offers more international dishes than the Ratuszowa.

## Shopping

The area around Nowy Sącz is noted for its folk art and the town is a good place to shop for gifts and souvenirs.

**Cepelia** (☎ 018 442 0045; Rynek 21) This branch of a national chain has a wide range of locally produced folk items as well as ceramics, weavings and religious icons.

**Galeria Sandeczana** (☎ 018 443 4929; Rynek 12; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) This lovely gallery on the main square focuses on naive paintings done on glass, a speciality of the region.

## Getting There & Away

**BUS**  
The bus station is midway between the city centre and the train station. Buses to Kraków (16zł, 2½ hours) and Krynica (3.50zł to 6zł, 1½ hours) depart every half-hour or so and are much faster than the train. There's an hourly service to Gorlice (6.50zł, two hours) and Szczawnica (6.70zł, two hours), and up

to nine departures to Zakopane (18zł, three hours). Frequent city buses go to Stary Sącz (2.60zł, 20 minutes).

## TRAIN

The main train station is 2km south of the Old Town, but city buses run frequently between the two. (The Nowy Sącz Miasto station is much closer to the centre but does not serve destinations useful to most travellers.) There are a few trains to Kraków (34zł, three hours), but buses are more useful for this route. Trains run regularly throughout the day to Krynica (11zł, 1½ hours) and pass Stary Sącz (5.50zł, 10 minutes) on their way. There's a reasonable service to Tarnów (22zł, two hours), with trains departing every couple of hours, and three trains a day to Warsaw (98zł, 5½ hours).

## STARY SĄCZ

pop 8950

As the first part of its double-barrelled name suggests, Stary Sącz (*stah-ri sonch*) is the oldest town in the region and owes its existence to 13th-century Princess Kinga, wife of King Bolesław Wstydlwy (Bolesław the Shy), who in the 1270s founded the convent of the Poor Clares here. After the king's death, Kinga entered the convent, where she lived for the last 13 years of her life, becoming its first abbess.

The town's position at the confluence of the Dunajec and Poprad Rivers and on the trade route between Kraków and Buda made it a busy commercial centre, though it gradually lost out to its younger but more progressive sister, Nowy Sącz to the northeast. Today there's no comparison between the two – Stary Sącz is now just a small satellite town, but has been able to preserve much of its old architecture and charm.

## Sights

There are not many genuine cobbled market squares left in Poland, but Stary Sącz's **Rynek** is the real thing. The neat houses lining the square are almost all one-storey buildings; for a closer look, walk into the passageway of No 5. The oldest house, at No 6, dates from the 17th century and now contains the **Regional Museum** (Muzeum Regionalne; ☎ 018 446 0094; Rynek 6; admission 3zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-1pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr). Its collection of objects relating to the town is reminiscent of a charming old curiosity shop.

The Gothic **Parish Church of St Elizabeth of Hungary** (Kościół Parafialny Św Elżbiety Węgierskiej; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego), two blocks south of the Rynek, dates from the town's 13th-century beginnings but was changed considerably in the 17th and 18th centuries and is now a textbook example of unbridled Baroque, with five large florid altars.

Equally splendid is the **Church of the Poor Clares** (Kościół SS Klarysek; Plac Św Kingi), a short walk east from the parish church. Surrounded by a high defensive wall, this was the birthplace of the town. The church, originally Gothic and completed in 1332, also ended up with opulent Baroque fittings. The traces of its creator are clearly visible: the Baroque frescoes in the nave depict scenes from the life of Blessed Kinga, and her chapel on the south side boasts a 1470 statue of her on the altar. The pulpit (1671) on the opposite wall is an extraordinary piece of art.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Zajazd Szalas** (☎ 018 446 0077; ul Jana Pawła II 77; d 35zł; ☎) This very basic four-room property with the cutesy name of 'Shed Inn' is smack dab on the Poprad River, 1.5km northeast of town on the way to Nowy Sącz. It has its own restaurant serving inexpensive meals and there is a camping ground, too. Breakfast costs extra.

**Motel Miś** (☎ 018 446 2451; www.motelmis.pl; Rynek 2, enter from ul Daszyńskiego; s 40-60zł, d 60-80zł, tr 80-100zł; ☎) This colourful 11-room hostelry on the Rynek's east side has rooms both with and without bathrooms. There's a charming vaulted pub-restaurant and a beer garden covered with rustic canopies made of birch logs.

**Restauracja Marysieńka** (☎ 018 446 0072; Rynek 12; mains 7.50-22.50zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) Located up the steps of the tallest house in the main square, the Marysieńka is the most pleasant place to eat in town and incorporates quite a nice art gallery within its walls. If the weather is fine, the balcony overlooking the Rynek is *the* spot of choice in Stary Sącz.

## Festivals & Events

The town is celebrated for the annual **Stary Sącz Festival of Ancient Music** (Starosądecki Festiwal Muzyki Dawnej; www.festiwal.stary.sacz.pl), held the first week in July.

## Getting There & Away

Buses stop in the Rynek. A continuous service to Nowy Sącz (2.60zł, 20 minutes) is provided



by both PKS and several city buses, including No 11. The train station is about 2km east of the centre and has a regular service southeast to Krynica (10zł, 1½ hours) and northeast to Nowy Sącz (5.50zł, 10 minutes).

## KRYNICA

pop 12,200

Set in attractive countryside amid the wooded hills of the Beskid Sądecki, Krynica (kri-nee-tsah), often known as Krynica-Zdrój (Krynica Spa), is Poland's largest spa and mountain health resort. Though the healing properties of the local mineral springs had been known for centuries, the town only really began to exploit them in the mid-19th century. By the end of the century Krynica was a fashionable hang-out for the artistic and intellectual elite and continued to be so right up until WWII. Splendid villas and pensions were constructed during that period, blending into the wooded landscape. Development continued after the war but priorities shifted towards cheap mass tourism, and massive concrete holiday homes and sanatoriums came to occupy the slopes of surrounding hills. Nevertheless, Krynica has managed to retain much of its laid-back, refined atmosphere.

## Information

**Bank PKO** (ul Zdrojowa 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

**Post office** (ul Zdrojowa 28; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Tourist office** (☎ 018 471 6105; www.krynica.org.pl in Polish; ul Piłsudskiego 8; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Books accommodation.

## Sights & Activities

About 20 mineral springs are exploited in this pretty town and roughly half of them feed the public pump rooms where, for a mere 1zł, the waters can be tried by anybody. The largest of all is the **Main Pump Room** (Pijalnia Główna; ☎ 018 471 2223; Al Nowotarskiego 9; ☎ 6.30am-6pm) on the central pedestrian promenade running parallel to ul Zdrojowa and west of the massive Park Zdrojowy.

There are a number of different waters to choose from in the pump room and displays list the chemical composition of each. By far the heaviest, as you'll notice, is the Zuber, which has over 21g of soluble solid components per litre – a record for all liquids of that type in Europe. It's a sulphurous brew that won't be to everyone's taste.

You'll need your own drinking vessel; a bottle or a plastic cup will do, but if you want to follow local style, buy one of the kitsch porcelain tankards from the water 'bars' themselves, or from the shops downstairs in the pump room. Local practice is to drink the water slowly while walking up and down the promenade.

On a more cultural front, the **Nikifor Museum** (Muzeum Nikifora; ☎ 018 471 5303; ul Bulwary Dietla 19; adult/concession 6/4zł, free Wed; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun), located just west of the promenade, displays about 50 works by Epifan Drowniak, better known as Nikifor (1895-1968) and possibly the best-known Polish naive painter. Born in Krynica and Lemk by ethnicity, he produced hundreds of watercolours and drawings that have been exhibited round the world.

You can take a short trip on the **Góra Parkowa Funicular** (Kolej Linowa na Górę Parkową; ☎ 018 471 2262; ul Nowotarskiego 1; adult/concession up 8/5zł, down 5/3zł; ☎ 10am-sunset). The bottom station is near the northern end of the promenade in Park Zdrojowy. The car departs every half-hour or more frequently, depending on the season and the demand. The ascent of 142m takes less than three minutes.

A longer trip can be taken on the modern **Mt Jaworzyna Cable Car** (Kolej Gondolowa na Jaworzynę; ☎ 018 471 3868; ul Czarny Potok 75; adult/concession up 15/12zł, down 13/9zł), which keeps more or less the same hours as the Góra Parkowa funicular. The cable-car system consists of 55 six-person cars that run from the bottom station in the Czarny Potok Valley, about 6km west from the centre of Krynica, to the top of Mt Jaworzyna (1113m). The route is 2210m long and the cable car climbs 465m in seven minutes.

## Sleeping & Eating

Krynica has a slew of hotels, pensions and holiday homes – a total of 120 in all. Many places – particularly holiday homes – will offer you half or full board, which can be convenient. There are also plenty of private rooms welcoming guests. The tourist office can arrange private accommodation for around 25/35zł per person without/with private bathroom. Remember that in the high season (July and August, January and February) few owners will be interested in travellers staying just a night or two.

## HIKING IN THE BESKID SĄDECKI

Krynica is an excellent springboard for hiking in the Beskid Sądecki. Two marked trails, green and red, head westward from Krynica up to the top of **Mt Jaworzyna**. It takes three hours to walk there by either trail (or you can get there faster by the Mt Jaworzyna cable car, opposite). At the top, you'll get some good views, and may even spot the Tatras on clear days. There's a **PTTK mountain hostel** (☎ 018 471 2171; dm 30-40zł) just below the summit, where you can eat and stay overnight in doubles or cheap dorms, or you can return to Krynica the same day. You can also continue on the red trail northwest to **Hala Łabowska** (1038m), another three hours' walk from Mt Jaworzyna, where you'll find another **PTTK mountain hostel** (☎ 018 447 6453; dm/d 20/60zł) providing cheap beds and food. The red trail continues northwest to **Rytko** (four hours' walk). This route, leading mostly through the forest along the ridge of the main chain of the Beskid Sądecki, is spectacular and easy, and because of the accommodation on the way you can travel light. From Rytko, you can go back to Krynica by train or bus.

## BUDGET

**Dom Wypoczynkowy PTTK Rzymianka** (☎ 018 471 2227; www.halka.ibd.pl; ul Dąbrowskiego 15; per person without/with en suite 40/45zł) The PTTK Rzymianka offers only very basic but comfortable accommodation in 26 rooms. It's up a quiet street about 300m northwest of the tourist office.

**Hotel Kasztelanka** (☎ 018 471 2945; www.granit.ctstnet.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 33; per person 50-70zł; ☎) This comfortable and very friendly 33-room hotel is housed in a pretty, vaguely Art Deco building facing Park Zdrojowy, a bit out of the centre. Try to get a room with a balcony. Facilities are minimal but there's an indoor pool (adult/concession 10/6zł, open 9am to 6pm) diagonally opposite on ul Piłsudskiego where you can keep cool or fit or both.

**Dom Wypoczynkowy-Leczniczny Jagiellonka** (☎ 018 471 5486; jagiellonka@nat.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 8; per person B&B/half board 50/85zł; ☎ ☎) This rarest of breeds, a holiday home offering budget accommodation in the heart of Krynica, is a mere 150m north of the tourist office. The 80 rooms offer bare-bones comfort but are tidy, and there's a decent in-house restaurant.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Pensjonat Witoldówka** (☎ 018 471 5577; www.witoldowka-krynica.pl; ul Bulwary Dietla 10; per person 70-150zł; ☎) This big wooden hotel looks like a grand Gothic lodge from the outside. It's in a great central location, set along the narrow Krynicyanka River and close to the pump room. The 40 upgraded rooms are comfortable and spacious and there's a bar and restaurant.

**Małopolanka** (☎ 018 471 5896; www.malopolanka.com.pl; ul Bulwary Dietla 13; s 65-145zł, d 125-185zł, apt 225-315zł; ☎ ☎) Just next door to the Nikifor Museum, the Małopolanka is an

old-fashioned, somewhat faded 20-room pension and spa dating from the 1930s. It could almost be the setting for an Agatha Christie mystery. Rooms are well equipped (some have hardwood floors) and there's a small spa with sauna, massage and various treatments (goat-milk bath, anyone?). Rates depend on the season and the view.

**Ósrodek Panorama** (☎ 018 471 2885; www.panorama.krynica.pl in Polish; ul Wysoka 15; s/d from 110/180zł; ☎ ☎) This large, 80-room holiday home, about 500m up the wooded slope east of the tourist office, offers OK standards, but has excellent views and a wealth of fitness and recreational facilities, including a large indoor pool. You may never come down from the mountains.

**Hotel Saol** (☎ 018 471 5858; www.hotel.saol.com.pl; ul Zdrojowa 16; s 100-120zł, d 200-240zł, tr 270-300zł; ☎) This property is one of Krynica's more modern and upmarket hotels. Perched above busy ul Zdrojowa not far from the centre, it offers 82 bright, clean rooms, two of which have fireplaces. Facilities include a sauna, solarium, pub and restaurant.

**Hotel Lwigród** (☎ 018 472 5800; www.hotel-lwigród.pl in Polish; ul Nitribitta 6; s 110-150zł, d 195-300zł; ☎ ☎) Very flash indeed is this newly opened hotel and wellness centre set in a park 150m southeast of the tourist office. Housed in a renovated holiday home dating back to 1928, the hotel has 119 positively shimmering rooms and a spa that will respond to every possible need and/or affliction.

## Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are next to one another on ul Dr Henryka Ebersa in the southern part of town, about 1.2km from the centre.



Buses to Nowy Sącz (3.50zł to 6zł, 1½ hours) run every half-hour to hour. Buses to Grybów (6zł, 50 minutes, six daily) pass through Berest and Polany. There are plenty of buses south to Muszyna (1.50zł, 25 minutes) via Powroźnik, and a fairly regular service to Mochnaczka and Tylicz (2.60zł).

There's a regular train service to Nowy Sącz (11zł, 1½ hours) by a roundabout but pleasant route, passing through Muszyna and Stary Sącz. Half a dozen daily trains go to Tarnów (19.50zł, 3½ hours) and there are several to Kraków (24zł, 4½ hours) as well.

## AROUND KRYNICA

The countryside surrounding Krynica, with its beautiful wooded valleys, hills and charming small villages, is worth exploring, particularly for the wealth of old wooden churches still standing. An essential aid for exploring the region is one of the *Beskid Ślądecki* maps (see p291), readily available in these parts. Most of the churches – all originally Uniat and Lemk – are accessible by bus, though it's better to be under your own steam in a car or on a bicycle.

To the north of Krynica, 13km and 16km respectively on the road to Grybów, there are good *cerkiew* – that's the plural of *cerkiew* – in **Berest** (1842) and **Polany** (1820). Both retain some of the old interior fittings, including iconostases and wall paintings. Buses ply this route regularly so you shouldn't have problems getting back to Krynica or continuing on to Grybów, from where there's frequent transport west to Nowy Sącz or east to Szymbark and Gorlice.

The 24km loop via Mochnaczka, Tylicz and Powroźnik to the east and south of Krynica is another interesting trip. The 1846 church in **Mochnaczka Niżna** still has its late-17th-century iconostasis, although it's disfigured by a central altar. You can also see the small *cerkiew* 600m down the road towards Tylicz on the other side. Built in 1787, it holds a beautiful tiny iconostasis complete with original icons. If you find the church locked, ask the nuns living in the nearby house to open it. There are several buses from Krynica to Mochnaczka daily, but take an early one if you want to continue along the route.

The next village, **Tylicz**, boasts two churches, a Catholic one and the Uniat *cerkiew* dating from 1743. The latter is used only for funerals. The priest is not eager to open the churches

for visitors, but in July and August he runs a guided tour around their interiors. If you have your own transport head due east for 3km to **Muszynka**, which is almost at the border with Slovakia. The striking *cerkiew* here dates from 1689.

From Tylicz, a spectacular road skirts the Muszyna River valley for 8km to **Powroźnik**, which features yet another *cerkiew*. This one is the oldest in the region (1606) and the best-known. The exterior is beautiful, and inside is an 18th-century iconostasis and several older icons on the side walls. The church can only be visited just before or after Mass, which is held at 7am and 11am on Sunday, and once a day on weekdays: at 6pm on Wednesday and Friday, or at 6.30am on remaining days.

## MUSZYNA

pop 5000

Much smaller than its big sister Krynica, 11km to the northeast, Muszyna (moo-*shin*-na) is another spa town that exploits its mineral springs for tourism, and there are a number of old-fashioned sanatoriums in the area.

## Information

**Bank PKO** (ul Kity 1; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Southwest of the Rynek.

**Post office** (Rynek 24; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 018 477 7922; www.muszyna.pl; Rynek 31; ☎ 7.30-11am & 2-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Vector travel agency** (☎ 018 471 8003; info@btvector.com; ul Kity 24; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, 8am-1pm Sun Jun-Aug) Can provide information, book accommodation and organise tours.

## Sights & Activities

Worth a look is the tiny **Regional Museum** (Muzeum Regionalne; ☎ 018 471 4140; ul Kity 26; adult/concession 3/1.50zł; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri May-Sep, 10am-12.30pm Mon-Fri Oct-mid-Nov, 10am-noon Jan-Apr, closed mid-Nov-Dec), in an old inn 300m southwest of the V-shaped Rynek. It displays artefacts and old household implements collected from the area. Otherwise Muszyna has no remarkable sights, though it can be a convenient starting point for trips into the surrounding region. If you can't travel further afield, have a look at the lovely folk houses and gardens lining ul Kościelna, the street running north of the Rynek.

Two **hiking trails** originate in Muszyna and wend their way northward up the mountains.

The green one will take you to **Mt Jaworzyna** (1113m), while the yellow one goes to the peak of **Mt Pusta Wielka** (1061m). You can get to either in three hours, then continue on to Krynica or Rytro. Any one of the *Beskid Ślądecki* maps (see p291) has all the details.

## Sleeping

**Ośrodek Wypoczynkowy Mimoza** (☎ 018 471 4023; www.mimoza.pl; ul Nowa 4; per person 20-35zł, full board 35-60zł; ☎ ) This central 'holiday centre', 300m up from the river, is one of the cheapest places in town. Rooms are fairly plain but they're clean; some have balconies and there are fabulous views.

**Pensjonat Jaworzyna** (☎ 018 471 4733; www.pensjonat-jaworzyna.pl; ul Polna 24; d/tr 60/90zł; ☎ ) Jaworzyna is a neat little B&B with 13 modern rooms, on the opposite (northern) side of Muszyna River as you approach the town from Krynica. Keep your eyes open for the narrow bridge beyond the railway tracks and turn right on the other side. Breakfast is an extra 10zł.

**Sanatorium Uzdrowiskowe Korona** (☎ 018 477 7960; www.sanatoriumkorona.pl in Polish; ul Mściwujewskiego 2; s/d/tr 65/110/220zł; ☎ ) Perched on a hill above the Poprad River about 1.5km southwest of the Rynek, this modern hotel-cum-hydrotherapy centre has 120 beds in bright, well-maintained rooms and a good choice of spa treatments.

**Hotel Klimek Spa** (☎ 018 477 8222; www.hotel-klimek.com.pl; Złockie 107; s/d/tr/ste 300/400/550/700zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ) In Złockie, about 3km northwest of the centre of Muszyna, this new 53-room spa hotel is one of the best (and most expensive) places around, with an interminable list of hydrotherapy programmes and treatments on offer, plus a sauna, a steam room and a small water park. You'll also find a well-received restaurant and a pub. Some suites have their own Jacuzzis.

## Getting There & Away

Buses to Krynica (1.50zł, 25 minutes) run frequently, and there's also an adequate service to Nowy Sącz (7zł to 9.50zł, 1½ hours). Muszyna is on the rail line linking Krynica (4zł, 20 minutes) and Nowy Sącz (14zł, 1¼ hours), and trains go regularly to both destinations.

## AROUND MUSZYNA

Having been in the possession of the bishops of Kraków from 1288 to 1772, Muszyna

was traditionally a Polish town; not surprisingly, it has a Catholic church but not a *cerkiew*. The surrounding villages, however, were populated for the most part by Lemks, whose wooden Uniat churches still dot the region. There are at least five within 5km of Muszyna.

Three of the churches are north of the town, at **Szczawnik** (built in 1841), **Złockie** (1872) and **Jastrzębik** (1856). Each boasts its original iconostasis. The *cerkiew* at Złockie has a separate bell tower and is somewhat different in style. The belfry of the Jastrzębik *cerkiew* is home to a colony of lesser horse-shoe bats and thus off limits. Krynica suburban buses go via Muszyna to these villages sporadically throughout the day.

Two more wooden churches, in **Milik** (1813) and **Andrzejówka** (1864), are west and southwest of Muszyna and have their original iconostases; you can get there by the regular buses or trains heading for Nowy Sącz. In Andrzejówka, ask for the key in the mustard-coloured house 50m down the road from the church. In Milik, the priest lives in the house at the foot of the *cerkiew*.

## THE PIENINY

The Pieniny, the startling beautiful mountain range between the Beskid Ślądecki and the Tatras, is famous for the raft trip down the spectacular Dunajec Gorge, which has become one of Poland's major tourist highlights. Yet there's much more to see and do here. Walkers won't be disappointed with the hiking paths, which offer more dramatic vistas than the Beskid Ślądecki or Bieszczady, while lovers of architecture will find some amazing old wooden churches here. There's also a picturesque mountain castle in Niedzica, or you can just take it easy in the pleasant spa resort of Szczawnica.

The Pieniny consists of three separate ranges divided by the Dunajec River, the whole chain stretching east-west for about 35km. The highest and most popular is the central range topped by Mt Trzy Korony (Three Crowns; 981m), overlooking the Dunajec Gorge. Almost all of this area is now the Pieniny National Park (Pieniński Park Narodowy), whose headquarters is at Krościenko. To the east, behind the Dunajec River and south of Szczawnica, lies the Male

Pieniny (Small Pieniny), while to the west extends the Pieniny Spiskie. The latter outcrop, south of Lake Czorsztyn and including Niedzica, is the lowest and the least spectacular, though the region around it, known as the Spisz, has an interesting blend of Polish and Slovakian cultures.

## SZCZAWNICA

pop 7350

Picturesquely located along the Grajcarek River, Szczawnica (shchahv-nee-tsah) has developed into a popular summer resort, while its mineral springs have made it an important spa. It's also the disembarkation point for Dunajec Gorge raft trips.

The town spreads for 4km along the main road, ul Główna, and is divided into two suburbs, Szczawnica Niżna (Szczawnica Lower) to the west and Szczawnica Wyżna (Szczawnica Upper) to the east, with the bus station more or less in between. Most of the tourist and spa facilities are in the upper section, which also boasts most of the fine old timber houses.

## Information

**Bank Spółdzielczy** (ul Główna 1; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-1pm Sat) Next to the PTTK office.

**Podhale Tour** (☎ 018 262 2727; www.podhale-tour.com in Polish; ul Zdrojowa 3; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Organises accommodation.

**PTTK office** (☎ 018 262 2332; www.pttk.szczawnica.pl in Polish; ul Główna 1; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Organises excursions.

**Szewczyk Travel** (☎ 018 262 1895; www.szewczyk-travel.pl in Polish; ul Zdrojowa 2; ☎ 9am-5pm) De facto tourist office in the centre of town.

## Sights & Activities

Try the local version of liquid sulphur at the **Magdalena Jan Pijalnia** (ul Zdrojowa 28; tastings free; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun), the pump room 500m north of Szewczyk Travel.

Szczawnica is a good starting point for **hiking** in both the Pieniny and the Beskid Sądecki ranges. Three trails originate in town and two more begin at Jaworki, 8km to the southeast.

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation in Szczawnica is the same as in many other mountain resorts: plentiful, usually inexpensive and highly varied depending on the season. There are a few regular year-round hotels as well as a number of small pensions and holiday

homes, though most are open in summer only. Plenty of locals also rent out rooms; look for signs along ul Główna and the side streets. Expect to pay from 40zł to 45zł per person for a room with a bathroom (20zł to 30zł without).

**Solar Spa Centrum** (☎ 018 262 2411; www.solar-spa.pl; ul Zdrojowa 4; per person 58-88zł; ☎ ☎) This huge hotel and spa complex, on a hill more or less opposite Szewczyk Travel, has 103 unadorned though spotless rooms in four separate buildings. The list of spa treatments goes on forever. Best of all is the water park complex (Park Wodny; adult/concession from 10/8zł, open 10am to 10pm), with pools and slides and open to nonresidents.

**Hotel Batory** (☎ 018 262 0207; www.batory-hotel.pl; Park Górny 13; s 90-150zł, d 160-220zł; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This half-timbered hotel dating back to 1874 has had a makeover and is the nicest place in town if you want something on a human scale. The interior décor is a little too standard-issue international, but the 27 rooms are large and airy. The hotel's list of VIP guests includes Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz, who stayed several times in 1909.

**Willa Pokusa** (☎ 018 262 0235; ul Zdrojowa 15/16; mains 13-22zł) This restaurant in another wonderful (though new) half-timbered house opposite the Solar Spa Centrum that gets good reviews and offers excellent-value set lunches during the week.

## Getting There & Away

Buses to Nowy Targ (7zł, 50 minutes to 1½ hours) depart roughly every hour, as do ones to Nowy Sącz (6.70zł, two hours) via Stary Sącz (5.90zł, 1½ hours). Up to eight fast buses run daily to Kraków (13.50zł, 2½ hours). Buses to Krościenko (2.20zł, 15 minutes) depart frequently.

For the Dunajec Gorge, take a bus (up to four daily in the high season) to Stromowce Wyżne-Kąty (4.40zł, 30 to 40 minutes) – the driver will set you down at the right place. There are also private minibuses that depart when full. Also check with the PTTK, which organises tours to the gorge for 48zł per person.

## KROŚCIENKO

pop 3700

A small town at the northern foot of the Pieniny range, founded in 1348, Krościenko

is today a local holiday resort that fills up with visitors in summer. Rich mineral springs were discovered here in the 19th century, but the town didn't exploit them and the title of spa went to nearby Szczawnica. But Krościenko remains the number-one hiking base for the Pieniny and is home to the headquarters of the Pieniny National Park.

## Information

**Pieniny National Park headquarters** (Dyrekcja PNP; ☎ 018 262 5601; www.pieniny.pl in Polish; ul Jagiellońska 107b) West of the Rynek.

**PTTK office** (☎ 018 262 3059; www.pttk.pl; ul Jagiellońska 28; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Books accommodation.

**Tourist office** (☎ 018 262 3304; www.kroscienko.pl; Rynek 32; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) In the town hall.

## Sights

Drop into the startling yellow Gothic **All Saints' Church** (Kościół Wszystkich Świętych) at the eastern end of the Rynek to admire the surviving fragments of 14th-century frescoes depicting scenes from the Passion of Christ on the north, south and east walls. Note, too, the Gothic baptismal font and the overblown Baroque gilded pulpit. The long and leafy **Rynek** has some lovely 19th-century wooden buildings, including the **town hall** at No 32.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Willa Maria** (☎ 018 262 6151; www.kroscienko.info; ul Św Kingi 75a; per person 25-30zł; ☎) On a quiet street 900m south of the Rynek and hard by the Dunajec River, the 10-room Maria is one of the more attractive small hotels in the area. It has a variety of rooms, most with balconies overlooking the river.

**Pensjonat Granit** (☎ 018 262 5707; www.granit.kroscienko.pl; ul Jagiellońska 70; per person 25-35zł) This delightful 14-room pension just off the main road into town feels like a family home, which is just what it is. There are several others in the immediate area if the 'Granite' is full, but they're not as nice. It has an in-house pizzeria.

**Restauracja U Walusia** (☎ 018 262 3095; ul Jagiellońska; mains 8-20zł) This is the best restaurant in Krościenko, 800m west of the Rynek along the Nowy Targ road. Specialities include *placki po góralsku* (potato pancakes with goulash), *żurek po pienińsku* (Pieniny-style sour rye soup) and *kwaśnica na żeberkach* (sauerkraut soup with pork spareribs).

## Getting There & Away

Buses stop in Krościenko on the southern side of the Rynek. There are regular services to both Nowy Targ (6.50zł, 45 minutes) and Nowy Sącz (9zł, one hour). Buses to Szczawnica (2.20zł, 15 minutes) run every 20 minutes or so. Four buses go to Stromowce Niżne daily (4.50zł, 25 minutes), which is the way to the raft wharf in Stromowce Wyżne (sometimes called Kąty); there are private minibuses that go directly to the wharf in summer. As many as nine buses a day go to Zakopane (11zł, two hours).

## DUNAJEC GORGE

The Dunajec Gorge (Przełom Dunajca) is a spectacular stretch of the Dunajec (*doonah-yets*) River, which snakes from Lake Czorsztyn (Jezioro Czorsztyńskie) west for about 8km between steep cliffs, some of which are over 300m high. The river is narrow, in one instance funnelling through a 12m-wide bottleneck, and changes incessantly from majestically quiet, deep stretches to shallow mountain rapids. Be advised, however, that this is not a white-water experience but a leisurely pleasure trip.

The gorge has been a tourist attraction since the mid-19th century, when primitive rafts ferried guests of the Szczawnica spa on a day out. Today the raft trip through the gorge attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year, not counting do-it-yourselfers in their own kayaks. The raft itself is a set of five narrow, 6m-long, coffinlike canoes lashed together with rope. It holds 10 to 12 passengers and is steered by two raftsmen, each decked out in embroidered folk costume and armed with a long pole used to navigate.

The raft trip begins in the small village of **Stromowce Wyżne-Kąty**, at the **Raft Landing Place** (Przystań Flisacka; ☎ 018 62 9721; www.flisacy.com.pl; ul Kąty 14; ☎ 8.30am-5pm May-Aug, 9am-4pm Apr & Sep, 9am-3pm Oct, closed Nov-Mar). You'll take an 18km-long trip and disembark in Szczawnica. The journey takes about 2¼ hours, depending on the level of the river. Some rafts go further downstream to Krościenko (23km, 2¾ hours), but there's not very much to see on that stretch of the river.

The trip to Szczawnica costs 35/17.50zł adult/concession, while the one to Krościenko is 44/22zł. You can organise a trip at any travel agency in Zakopane from 71/52zł and in Kraków from 240/220zł, which includes transport, equipment and guides. The



### HIKING IN THE PIENINY

Almost all hiking concentrates on the central Pieniny range, a compact area of 40 sq km that now encompasses Pieniny National Park. Trails are well marked and short, and no trekking equipment is necessary. There are three starting points on the outskirts of the park, all providing accommodation and food. The most popular is Krościenko at the northern edge, then Szczawnica on the eastern rim and Sromowce Niżne to the south. Arm yourself with the 1:50,000 *Gorce i Pieniny, Pieniński Park Narodowy* map, which includes a 1:125,000-scale map of the park showing all hiking routes.

Most walkers start from the Rynek in Krościenko. Follow the yellow trail as far as the **Przełęcz Szopka** pass, then switch to the blue trail branching off to the left and head up to the top of **Mt Trzy Korony** (981m), the highest summit of the central range. The reward for this two-hour walk is a breathtaking panorama that includes the Tatras, 35km to the southwest, if the weather is clear. You are now about 520m above the level of the Dunajec River.

Another excellent view is from **Mt Sokolica** (747m), 2km east as the crow flies from Mt Trzy Korony, or a 1½-hour walk along the blue trail. From Mt Sokolica, you can go back down to Krościenko by the green trail in about 1¼ hours, or to Szczawnica by the blue one in less than an hour.

If you plan on taking the raft trip through the Dunajec Gorge, you can hike all the way to Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty, site of the raft landing place. There are several ways of getting there and the park map shows them all. The shortest way is to take the blue trail heading west from the Przełęcz Szopka and winding up along the ridge. After 30 to 40 minutes, watch for the red trail branching off to the left (south) and leading downhill. It will take you directly to the wharf in about half an hour.

tour sponsored by the PTTK in Szczawnica is 48zł.

There are about 250 rafts in operation and they depart as soon as 10 passengers are ready to go. In general you won't have to wait long to get on the raft. Rafts normally operate from April to October; the trips may be suspended occasionally for a day or two when the river level is high.

Just down from the ticket office is a branch office of the **Pieniny National Park** (☎ 018 262 5601; www.pieniny.pl in Polish; ul Kąty 117b), which keeps the same hours as the ticket office.

### Getting There & Away

Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty is serviced by five buses daily from Nowy Targ (10zł, 45 minutes) and, in season, four from Szczawnica (4.40zł, 30 minutes). There's also a seasonal private minibus service from Szczawnica and Krościenko. Another way of getting to Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty is to hike from Krościenko or Szczawnica (see the boxed text, above).

If you have private transport, you'll have to either leave your vehicle in Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty and come back for it after completing the raft trip in Szczawnica, or drive to Szczawnica and leave your vehicle

there, so you'll have it as soon as you complete the trip. There are car parks in both Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty and Szczawnica, and the raft operator provides a bus service between the two locations. The cost from Szczawnica back to the raft wharf is 8/6zł adult/concession.

### NIEDZICA

pop 3000

Niedzica, 5km northwest of Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty, is known for its castle. Perched on a rocky hill above the southeastern end of Lake Czorsztyn, the castle was built in the first half of the 14th century as one of the Hungarian border strongholds and was extended in 1601. It remained in private Hungarian hands until the end of WWII. It was partially restored in the 1920s and again 50 years later, but it essentially looks the same as it did in the 17th century, managing to retain its graceful Renaissance shape.

### Sights & Activities

The fortress shelters the **Niedzica Castle Museum** (Muzeum Zamkowy w Niedzicy; ☎ 018 262 9480; adult/concession 9/7zł; ☎ 9am-7pm daily May-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr). There's not a tremendous amount to see – some period costumes, furnishings,

hunting trophies, a chapel from the late 14th century, and collections on the archaeology and history of the Spisz region – but there are fine views over the lake and surrounding area. An ethnographic section of the museum, including Spisz folk art, is presented in season in an old timber **granary** (spichlerz; admission 2zł; ☎ May-Sep) 150m from the castle. You can also visit the nearby **Coach House** (Powozownia).

Pleasure boats **Biała Dama I** and **Biała Dama II** (☎ 018 275 0121; www.turystyka.wolski.pl) ply the waters of Lake Czorsztyn daily in July and August and at the weekend in May and June. Boats leave the pier at the Harnaś Café beneath the castle to the northwest between 9am and 6pm; the 50-minute trip costs 10/8zł adult/concession. A trip to or from Czorsztyn on the opposite side of the lake costs 4zł.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Pieniny** (☎ 018 262 9383; www.niedzica.pl; ul Kanada 38; s 55-65zł, d 100-120zł, tr 140-160zł; ☎ ☎) Located halfway between the castle and Niedzica village to the south, this 52-room hotel is a reasonably priced option with plain but comfortable rooms. It also has a tennis court and a sauna, and bikes can be hired for 5/25zł per hour/day.

**Hotel Lokis** (☎ 018 262 8540; www.lokis.com.pl; Zamek 76; d 180-220zł, tr 240-280zł, apt 280-460zł; ☎ ☎) Situated in a wonderful spot overlooking the lake, about 500m from the castle on the road to Nowy Targ, the Lokis is a lovely modern hotel and one of the more attractive places to stay in the Spisz region. It has 23 rooms and a sauna, and there's a big balcony with lake views. Guests can rent bicycles for 15zł a day.

**our pick** **Zespół Zamkowy** (☎ 018 262 9489; shsneedzica@wp.pl; s 200zł, d 180-250zł, tr 200-400zł; ☎ ☎) Part of the castle has been turned into a hotel, providing 39 beds in 13 rooms, some of which are in the historic castle chambers and decorated with antique furniture. The castle management also offers cheaper rooms (a couple without private bathroom) in the Celnica (double/twin 180/200zł), a fine timber house built in the local style, 200m up the road from the castle. The lovely castle restaurant (mains 9zł to 20zł, open noon to 9pm) is open to all.

**Karczma Hajduk** (☎ 018 262 9507; Zamek 1; mains 6.50-18.50zł; ☎ 9am-6pm) This little inn, whose name recalls the castle's Hungarian links (the Heyducks were Hungarian mercenaries who fought against the Habsburgs in the 17th

and 18th centuries), serves basic Polish dishes right next door to the castle.

### Getting There & Away

There are eight or nine buses a day from Nowy Targ (6zł to 4.50zł, 30 to 40 minutes) to Niedzica castle. The village of Niedzica is better serviced from Nowy Targ, with about 10 buses per day, but not all go via the castle. When buying your ticket, make sure to specify 'Niedzica-Zamek' (castle). Bus links between the castle and other towns in the region are sporadic (there are two departures a day to Szczawnica).

### CZORSZTYN

pop 310

The village of Czorsztyn (*chor-shtin*), across the lake from Niedzica, boasts **castle ruins** (ruiny zamku; adult/concession 4/2zł; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-3pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr) dating from the second half of the 13th century. The fortress was built as the Polish counterpart to the Hungarian stronghold opposite at Niedzica. It's a picturesque ruin: you get to see a 15th-century gatehouse, courtyards and the remains of an old kitchen. Best of all are the excellent views over the lake, the Dunajec River valley and as far as the Tatras. There's a small exhibition on the Pieniny region.

The castle is 2km west of the new village of Czorsztyn (no public transport). The village was built in the 1990s to accommodate residents of old Czorsztyn, further west, which is now flooded by the waters of Lake Czorsztyn. The village is just off the Krościenko-Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty road, accessible by the same buses you take for the Dunajec raft trip at Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty (see opposite).

### DĘBNO PODHALAŃSKIE

pop 3000

This small village boasts one of the oldest and most highly rated wooden churches in Poland. The **Church of St Michael the Archangel** (Kościół Św Michała Archanioła) was built in the 1490s on the site of a former church and, like most others, the larch-wood construction was put together without a single nail. The paintings – representing 77 patterns and motifs in 33 brilliant colours – covering the ceiling and most of the walls date from around 1500 and have never been renovated.

A triptych from the late 15th century adorns the high altar, while the crucifix that stands on



The Tree of Life rood beam dates from 1380 and was probably transferred from an earlier church. There are some antique furnishings and objects on the side walls, including a wooden tabernacle from the 14th century.

Another curiosity is a small musical instrument, a sort of primitive dulcimer from the 15th century, which is used during Mass in place of an organ. The seemingly illogical thing about it is that the thicker the bars, the higher the notes they produce.

The priest living in the house just across the road at ul Kościelna 42 takes visitors through the church. He expects tourists from 9am to noon and from 2pm to 4.30pm weekdays and on Saturday morning. He will wait until about 10 people turn up, so you may have to wait as well. He can be reached on ☎ 018 275 1797.

## THE TATRAS

The Tatras form the highest range of the Carpathians and the only alpine type, with towering peaks and steep rocky sides dropping hundreds of metres to icy lakes. There are no glaciers in the Tatras, but patches of snow remain all year. Winters are long, summers short and the weather unpredictable.

The vegetation changes with altitude, from mixed forest in the lower parts (below 1200m) to spruce woods and stone pine stands higher up (to 1500m), then to dwarf mountain shrubs (to 1800m) and highland pastures (to 2300m). The wildlife is similarly stratified, with deer, roe deer and wildcats living in the lower forests, and marmots and chamois in the upper parts; there is also a small population of bears.

The whole range, roughly 900 sq km, stretches for 60km across the Polish-Slovakian border and is 15km at its widest point. About a quarter of it is Polish territory and forms the Tatra National Park (Tatrzański Park Narodowy), encompassing 211 sq km and headquartered in Zakopane. The Polish Tatras boast two dozen peaks exceeding 2000m, the highest of which is **Mt Rysy** (2499m).

At the northern foot of the Tatras lies the Podhale region, which extends from Zakopane to Nowy Targ. Dotted with small villages populated by *górale* (literally 'highlanders'), the Podhale is one of the few

Polish regions where old folk traditions still form a part of everyday life.

### NOWY TARG

pop 34,200

One of the region's oldest settlements, Nowy Targ started life at the foot of the Tatras in the early 13th century. Little of its old architecture survived the 1784 conflagration that all but reduced the town to ashes. Located at the confluence of the Czarny (Black) and Biały (White) Dunajec Rivers, 'New Market' is a busy commercial town and a transport hub on the crossroads between the Tatra, Gorce, Pieniny, Spisz and Orawa ranges.

The town is a possible jumping-off point for travellers wanting to get to the surrounding countryside, though accommodation offerings are poor and there's very little to detain you. You'll find a better selection of lodging options – and a whole lot more to see and do – in Zakopane to the south and even Szczawnica to the east.

### Information

**Bank Pekao** (Al Tysiąclecia 35/37; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat)

**Post office** (ul Jana III Sobieskiego 1/3; ☎ 7am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat, 8am–noon Sun)

### Sights

The town hall in the Rynek shelters the **PTTK Podhale Museum** (Muzeum Podhalańskie PTTK; ☎ 018 266 7776; Rynek 1; adult/concession 4/2zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon, 8am–3pm Tue–Fri), which features exhibitions related to stratified folk art and the history of the region.

One block north of the Rynek is the walled **Parish Church of St Catherine** (Kościół Parafialny Św Katarzyny; ul Kościelna), built in the mid-14th century (the sanctuary still has Gothic features) but extensively reformed in the early 1600s. The interior boasts the usual Baroque overlay. The freestanding **bell tower** was recently renovated.

A bit further northwest, beyond the Czarny Dunajec River, is a cemetery with the shingled **Church of St Anne** (Kościół Św Anny) at its entrance. Local lore has it that it was built by brigands from the Tatras in the 12th century, though it probably went up some four centuries later. The interior is embellished with wall paintings from 1866.



Nowy Targ's best-known attraction is the **Thursday market**, which has been held here for more than five centuries after the king granted the town the privilege in 1487. But nowadays it's full of mass-produced consumer goods; if you're looking for more traditional items such as hand-knitted sweaters and carved wooden utensils, wait for Zakopane. The market is held on Plac Targowy, a few blocks southeast of the Rynek and facing the Biały Dunajec River.

### Sleeping

**Dudek** (☎ 018 266 2033, 0603 402 033; www.dudek.nowytarg.pl; Al Tysiąclecia 7a; per person 25–60zł; (P)) This popular music club 200m west of the bus station has well-equipped rooms upstairs worthy of consideration for an overnight stay.

**Ośrodek Sportowy Gorce** (☎ 018 266 2661; www.gorce.nowytarg.pl; Al Tysiąclecia 74; s/d 40/60zł with bathroom, d/tr/q 50/66/88zł with shared facilities; (P)) This simple, 50-bed place a few blocks south of the Rynek has hotel rooms plus four heated cabins. Conditions aren't exactly plush but it's one of the few central places in town.

### Getting There & Away

The bus station is about 800m southwest of the Rynek; the train station is about the same distance further along Al Tysiąclecia to the southwest.

All the Kraków–Zakopane traffic passes through Nowy Targ. Buses to Zakopane (4zł to 6zł, 30 to 45 minutes) run frequently. To Kraków, it's faster to go by bus (13zł, two

## HIKING IN THE TATRA MOUNTAINS

With a huge variety of trails, totalling around 300km, the Tatras are ideal for walking. No other area of Poland is so densely crisscrossed with hiking paths, and nowhere else will you find such a diversity of landscapes.

Although marked trails go all across the region, the most popular area for hiking is **Tatra National Park**, which begins just south of Zakopane. Geographically, the Tatras are divided into three parts: the West Tatras (Tatry Zachodnie), the High Tatras (Tatry Wysokie) to the east, and the adjoining Belianske Tatras (Tatry Bielskie). All the areas are attractive, though they offer quite different scenery. In general the West Tatras are lower and gentler, and are easier to walk and safer. The High Tatras and Belianske Tatras are completely different: a land of bare granite peaks with alpine lakes at their bases. Hikers will face more challenges here, but will also enjoy much more dramatic scenery.

If you just want to go for a short walk, there are several picturesque and densely forested valleys south of Zakopane, of which **Dolina Strążyska** is arguably the most attractive. It's long been a popular walking and picnic area for locals, and for reasonably fit walkers it should take no longer than 50 minutes to walk all of it by the red trail up to Polana Strążyska. From there you can come back the same way or transfer by the black trail to either of the neighbouring valleys, the **Dolina Białego** to the east being the usual way. It takes around an hour to get to this charming valley and another hour to go all the way down to Zakopane.

The most popular mountaintop climbed in the Tatras is **Mt Giewont** (1894m), the very symbol of Zakopane. You can reach it via the red trail in about 3½ hours from Zakopane. A reasonable level of fitness is required to attempt this climb.

Before you do any walking or climbing, you should get hold of the 1:25,000-scale *Tatzański Park Narodowy* map (12zł), published by Sygnatura. It shows all the trails in the area, complete with walking times both uphill and downhill. Another option is the 1:20,000-scale *Tatry Polskie* (Polish Tatras) map (8zł), which is divided into two sheets.

You normally won't need a guide for hiking in the Tatras, as trails are well marked, but if you do require this service, the **Tatra Guides Centre** (Centrum Przewodnictwa Tatzańskiego; ☎ 018 206 3799; www.przewodnik-tatzański.pl in Polish; Chałubińskiego 42/44; ☎ 9am-3pm) in Zakopane is able to arrange English- and German-speaking mountain guides for about 330zł per day.

Camping is not allowed in the park, but there are several basic PTTK mountain hostels dotted around the slopes and mountaintops. The tourist office in Zakopane has a list and details.

hours, up to nine a day) as the train (18.50zł, three hours) takes the long way around. Buses to Szczawnica (7zł, 50 minutes) run roughly every hour. There are two daily buses to Niedzica castle (6zł, 30 minutes), via the village of Niedzica.

## ZAKOPANE

pop 27,200

Nestled in the foothills of the Tatras, Zakopane is the most fashionable mountain resort in Poland and the country's winter-sports capital. Although Zakopane is essentially a base or springboard for skiing or hiking in the Tatras, the attractive town is an enjoyable enough place to hang about for a while, with a fair number of sights and plenty of facilities. It may resemble a tourist trap at times, but it also has a relaxed, laid-back vibe that makes it a great place to visit.

Zakopane moved from being a small mountain village in about 1870, when it began to attract writers, artists and composers in search of inspiration. Among them were the composer Karol Szymanowski and the writer and painter Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, better known as Witkacy. The father of the latter, Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851–1915), based his so-called Zakopane style of architecture on traditional houses and outbuildings in the area. Some of the buildings he designed still stand to this day and can be visited.

Zakopane grew at a faster pace in the interwar period, and shortly before the outbreak of WWII the town's prime attractions – the cableway and funicular railway – were built. Development continued after the war but it's still reasonably small. Overall Zakopane feels more like an overgrown village than a town, its mainly villa-type houses set informally in their own gardens.

## Orientation

Zakopane sits at an altitude of 850m at the foot of Mt Giewont (1894m), which, locals say, resembles the profile of a sleeping giant. The bus and train stations are opposite one another in the northeast part of town. From here, ul Kościuszki leads 800m or so southwest to the pedestrian ul Krupówki, the heart of town and always jammed with strollers.

The funicular to Mt Gubałówka is just beyond the northwestern end of Krupówki. The cable car to Mt Kasprowy Wierch is at Kuźnice, 3km to the southeast.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Księgarnia Górską** (☎ 018 201 2481; ul Zaruskiego 5; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, daily Jul & Aug) In the Dom Turysty PTTK, with the best choice of maps and guidebooks on the Tatras.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Cyber-Net** (☎ 018 201 4040; ul Kościuszki 24a; per hr 4.50zł; ☎ 7am-10pm) Next to the bus station.

**Widmo** (☎ 018 206 4377; ul Gen Galicy 6; per 30/60min 3/5zł; ☎ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun)

### INTERNET RESOURCES

**Zakopane Life** (www.zakopane-life.com) Interactive information portal on every aspect of life and tourism in Zakopane.

### LAUNDRY

**Pralnia Ekologiczna** (☎ 018 206 3637; ul Gen Galicy 8)

### MONEY

**Bank BPH** (ul Krupówki 19; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

**Bank Pekao** (Al 3 Maja 5; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

### POST OFFICE

**Main post office** (ul Krupówki 20; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat year-round, 8am-6pm Sat Jul–mid-Sep & mid-Jan–Feb)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 018 201 2211; www.zakopane.pl; ul Kościuszki 17; ☎ 8am-6pm year-round, 8am-8pm Jan, Feb & Jul-Sep)

**Tatra National Park headquarters** (Tatzański Park Narodowy; ☎ 018 202 3288; www.tpn.pl in Polish; ul Chałubińskiego 42/44; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon-Fri)

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Orbis Travel** (☎ 018 201 5051; www.orbis.pl; ul Krupówki 22; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) organises accommodation in private homes. Other useful travel agencies include **Tatra Tourist Centre** (Centrum Turystyki Tatry; ☎ 018 201 3744; www.cttatury.pl; 1st fl, ul Krupówki 50; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat), **Strama** (☎ 018 200 1386; www.nosal.pl; ul Krupówki 58; ☎ 9am-9pm) and **Trip** (☎ 018 202 0200; www.trip.pl; ul Tetmajera 18; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). They all arrange accommodation, sell transportation tickets and have tours to popular regional destinations, including the Dunajec Gorge (p301).

## Sights

**Tatra Museum** (Muzeum Tatzańskie; ☎ 018 201 5205; ul Krupówki 10; adult/concession 6/5zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun), the big wooden pile above the pedestrian mall, has sections on regional and natural history, ethnography and geology, and is a good introduction to the region.

At the northern end of ul Krupówki is the neo-Romanesque **Parish Church of the Holy Family** (Kościół Najświętszej Rodziny), which looks as though it has been imported from suburban Boston in the USA. It was built at the end of the 19th century when the wooden **Old Church** (Stary Kościół; ul Kościeliska), 200m to the west and dating from 1851, could no longer cope with the numbers of worshippers. The Old Church has charming carved wooden decorations and pews, and Stations of the Cross painted on glass.

The **stone chapel** standing beside the Old Church is about 30 years older and is in fact the oldest extant structure in Zakopane. Just behind it is the **old cemetery**, with a number of amazing wooden tombs, some dating back to the mid-19th century and resembling giant chess pieces.

Some 300m to the southwest and on the same road is the **Villa Koliba**, completed in 1893 and Witkiewicz's first design in 'Zakopane style'. It now houses the **Museum of Zakopane Style** (Muzeum Stylu Zakopiańskiego; ☎ 018 201 3602; ul Kościeliska 18; adult/concession 5/4zł; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun), which examines that school of design through architectural drawings and models as well as interior furnishings.

About 500m to the southeast is **Villa Atma**, the home of Karol Szymanowski from 1930 to 1935. Today it's the **Karol Szymanowski Museum** (Muzeum Karola Szymanowskiego; ☎ 018 206 3493; ul Kasprusie 19; adult/concession 5/3zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Thu & Sat, 10am-6pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sun).

**ZAKOPANE**

0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles

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To Kraków (104km)  
To Mt Gubałówka (1km)  
To Mt Batorowski Wierch (1.2km)  
To Dolina Strążyska (400m); Mt Gierwot (3km)  
To Mt Nosal (750m); Jaszczurówka Chapel (1.5km); Goodbye Lenin (1.5km); Morskie Oko (10km)  
To Kuźnice (2km); Mt Kasprowy Wierch (2km)

Just under 2km southeast and next to the large roundabout is the **Tatra National Park Museum** (Museum Tatrzańskiego Parku Narodowego; ☎ 018 206 3203; ul Chałubińskiego 42a; admission free; ☞ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat), with displays on local flora and fauna and the natural history of the park.

A short walk northeast up the hill takes you to **Villa Pod Jedlamami**, another splendid

Zakopane-style house built in 1897 for the Pawlikowski family (interior closed to the public). But Witkiewicz's greatest achievement is **Jaszczurówka Chapel** (Kaplica w Jaszczurówka), built in 1907 and about 1.5km further east. The folk interior alone is worth the trip.

The emerald-green lake called **Morskie Oko** (Eye of the Sea), about 12km southeast of

Zakopane, is a popular day trip. Buses and minibuses regularly depart from ul Kościuszki for Polana Palenica (30 minutes), from where a 9km-long road continues uphill to the lake. Cars, bikes and buses are not allowed up this road, so you'll have to walk (allow about two hours each way). Alternatively, take a horse-drawn carriage (about 40zł) to within 2km of the lake. The last minibus to Zakopane returns between 5pm and 6pm. Most travel agencies organise day trips here (from 140zł).

## Activities

### CYCLING

Cycling can be a pleasant and convenient means of getting around the Zakopane region, including some of the less-steep parts of the Tatras. Bikes are permitted only on designated routes in Tatra National Park. These include the Dolina Chochołowska and Dolina Suchej Wody, both picturesque and attractive for biking. Droga Pod Reglami, the service road that marks the northern boundary of the park, also offers some good riding. Note that the access road to Morskie Oko is not open to cyclists; they can go only as far as the car park at Polana Palenica.

Bicycles are available for hire from a number of companies in Zakopane, including **Tatry Sport** (☎ 018 201 4423; ul Piłsudskiego 4; ☞ 10am-6pm) and **Trek** (☎ 018 201 2555; ul Tetmajera 8; ☞ 10am-8pm). Expect to pay from 10/40zł per day/week.

### SKIING

Zakopane is Poland's capital of winter sports. The town's environs have a number of ski areas, ranging from flat surfaces for cross-country touring to steep slopes – suitable for everyone from beginners to advanced – served by 50 ski lifts and tows in all.

**Mt Kasprowy Wierch** (1985m) offers some of the most challenging ski slopes in the area, as well as the best conditions, with the spring skiing season sometimes extending as late as early May. You can get to the top in 20 minutes by **cable car** (return adult/concession 30/20zł; ☞ 7am-9pm Jul-Aug, 7.30-5pm Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Feb), then stay in the mountains and use the two chairlifts, in the Goryczkowa and Gaśienicowa valleys, on both sides of Mt Kasprowy. The view from the top is spectacular (clouds permitting) and you can stand with one foot in Poland and the other in Slovakia.

**Mt Gubałówka** is another popular skiing area and it, too, offers some pistes and good conditions. It's easily accessible from central Zakopane by **funicular** (one way/return adult 8/14zł, concession 6/10zł; ☞ 8am-10pm Jul & Aug, 8.30am-7.30pm Sep, 8.30am-6pm Apr, May & Oct-Dec, 7.30am-10pm Jan-Mar, 9am-8pm Jun), covering the 1298m-long route in 3½ minutes and climbing 300m from the lower station just north of ul Krupówki. An all-day pass for skiers costs 70zł; a one-day pass at other times for 10 rides costs 50zł.

Some 2km to the west is **Mt Batorowski Wierch**, with its 1.6km-long chairlift making it yet another good skiing area.

One more major ski area is at the slopes of **Mt Nosal**, on the southeastern outskirts of Zakopane. Facilities include a chairlift and a dozen T-bars.

Ski-equipment hire is available from outlets throughout Zakopane, including **Tatry Sport** (☎ 018 201 4423; ul Piłsudskiego 4; ☞ 10am-6pm) and **Sukces Ski Rental** (☎ 018 206 41 97; ul Nowotarska 39). Complete kits for skiing/snowboarding average 35/40zł a day.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

A half-hour whirl around Zakopane in a **horse-drawn carriage** (or, in winter, a sleigh) seating four people will set you back from 40zł. They gather near Tatry Sport on ul Piłsudskiego.

The **Altius Travel Agency** (☎ 018 201 53 99; www.horsebacktouring.com; ul Piłsudskiego 4) offers horse riding, as well as riding holidays and excursions into the surrounding countryside.

An excellent place to cool off on a warm summer's day is **Aqua Park** (☎ 018 200 1122; www.aquapark.zakopane.pl; ul Jagiellońska 31; per hr/day adult 16/80zł, child 9/50zł; ☞ 8am-10pm), with indoor and outdoor pools, slides, various saunas and – incongruously – bowling.

### Festivals & Events

The **International Festival of Mountain Folklore** (Międzynarodowy Festiwal Folkloru Ziemi Górskiej; www.zakopane.pl) held in August is the town's leading cultural event. In June and July, a series of **piano concerts** (usually 35zł) presenting the music of Karol Szymanowski and other composers is held in the Villa Atma.

### Sleeping

Zakopane has no shortage of places to stay and, except for occasional peaks, finding a bed is no problem. Even if the hotels and hostels are full, there will always be private



rooms around, which provide some of the most reasonable and best-value accommodation in town. Check at the tourist office for details (rooms should cost around 40zł to 50zł per person) or look for signs reading 'pokoje', 'noclegi' or 'zimmer frei' outside private homes.

As with all seasonal resorts, accommodation prices in Zakopane fluctuate between the high and low seasons, peaking in late December, January and February, and then again in July and August. Prices given here are for the high season.

## BUDGET

**Szarotka Hostel** (☎ 018 201 3618; www.szarotkapsm.republika.pl; ul Nowotarska 45g; dm/d 35/100zł) This friendly and homely place with 62 beds gets packed in the high season and is on a busy road. But it's friendly and there's a kitchen and washing machine on site.

**Goodbye Lenin** (☎ 018 200 1330; www.goodbyelenin.pl; ul Chłabowska 44; dm 30-50zł, d 110-120zł) A branch of the popular Kraków hostel, this five-room place with 30 beds in a century-old farmhouse is as chilled a place as you'll find. The welcome is warm, the barbecues free and the mountain views priceless. It's 2.5km southeast of the centre; the hostel will pick you up from the stations or you can take any bus headed for Morskie Oko and Polana Palenica.

**Dom Turysty PTTK** (☎ 018 206 3281; www.domturysty.z-ne.pl; ul Zaruskiego 5; with bathroom s 55-70zł, d 100-140zł, with shared bathroom d 60-80zł, tr 75-105zł; ☎) The very central PTTK hostel has 350 beds in lots of rooms of different sizes, including 'suites' for up to five people. It can often be swamped with school excursion groups.

**Camping Nr 97 Pod Krokwią** (☎ 018 201 2256; www.podkrokwia.pl in Polish; ul Żeromskiego 34; camping per person/tent 12/12zł, beds in bungalows 40-45zł; ☎) The camping ground has large heated bungalows, each containing several double and triple rooms. They are often full in the July/August period. To get here from the bus/train stations, take any bus heading south and get off at the roundabout.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Pensjonat Carlton** (☎ 018 201 4415; www.carlton.pl; ul Grunwaldzka 11; s 65-90zł, d 130-190zł; ☎) This 21-room pension in a grand old house away from the main drag features light-filled rooms with modern furniture. There's an impressive shared balcony overlooking the road, a big

comfy lounge lined with potted plants, and lovely grounds.

**Lipowy Dwór & Hotel Sośnica** (☎ 018 206 6796; www.lipowydwor.gat.pl; ul Heleny Modrzejewskiej 7; s 60-170zł, d 180-220zł, apt 250-380zł; ☎) On a quiet street south of the centre and opposite one another, these sister hotels could not be more different. The Lipowy Dwór is a charming, wooden, chalet-style hotel with 15 small, well-maintained rooms. The larger Sośnica, with all the facilities (including reception), is a little dated, but some of the 38 rooms have been renovated and have mountain views.

**Hotel Sabala** (☎ 018 201 5092; www.sabala.zakopane.pl; ul Krupówki 11; s 245-295zł, d 320-390zł, ste from 660zł; ☎) Built in 1894 but thoroughly up to date, this striking timber hotel has a superb location overlooking the picturesque pedestrian thoroughfare. The hotel offers 51 cosy, attic-style rooms, and there's a sauna, solarium and swimming pool.

**Czary Potok** (☎ 018 202 0204; www.czarnypotok.pl; ul Tetmajera 20; s/d from 250/350zł; ☎) The 'Black Stream', set upon a pretty brook amid lovely gardens, is a 36-room pensionlike hostelry along a quiet street just south of the pedestrian mall. It has a great fitness centre with two saunas.

**Grand Hotel Stamary** (☎ 018 202 4510; www.stamary.pl; ul Kościuszki 19; s/d/ste 340/440/690zł; ☎) As posh as a hotel as you'll find in the Tatras, this massive 54-room gingerbread house was the bee's knees when it opened in 1905 and is just that now after a total makeover. The emphasis here is on style and health; the spa/wellness centre is among most attractive and best equipped we've seen in Poland.

**Hotel Litwor** (☎ 018 202 4200; www.litwor.pl; ul Krupówki 40; s/d 450/600, ste 625-840zł; ☎) This is a sumptuous four-star place, with large, restful rooms and all the usual top-end facilities, including a gym and sauna. It has an excellent restaurant serving traditional Polish dishes.

## Eating

**Pierózek Bar Mleczny** (☎ 018 206 6257; ul Weteranów Wojny 2; mains 2.50-7zł; ☎) Set in a little wood cabin with folk décor just off the main pedestrian street, this place serves the best pierogi in Zakopane.

**Bar Smakosz** (☎ 018 206 4049; ul Krupówki 22; mains 5.90-11.90zł; ☎) 8am-9pm) Serving Polish fast food at its most basic and cheapest, the ironically named 'Gourmet' is for early birds at both ends of the day.

**Pstrąg Górski** (☎ 018 206 4163; ul Krupówki 6; mains 12-28zł; ☎) 9am-10pm) This self-service fish restaurant, done up in traditional style and overlooking a narrow stream, serves some of the freshest trout, salmon and sea fish in town. It's excellent value.

**Karczma Zbójcka** (☎ 0512 351 739; ul Krupówki 28; mains 12-36zł; ☎) 10am-midnight) An attractive basement eatery, this place offers regional dishes and meats grilled on a huge wood-burning rotisserie. There's always a buzzy atmosphere and decent local folk music on some evenings.

**Restaurant Sabala** (☎ 018 201 5092; ul Krupówki 11; mains 12-45zł; ☎) 10am-midnight) This delightful candlelit restaurant at the hotel of the same name (opposite) serves both local specialities and international favourites. The views up and down the pedestrian street below are enviable.

**Karczma Czarny Staw** (☎ 018 201 3856; ul Krupówki 2; mains 16-31zł; ☎) 10am-midnight) Though under the same management as Zbójcka, the 'Black Pond' is more upmarket. It 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, with home-preserved vegetables and mushrooms.

A large number of the traditional (and similar-looking) restaurants lining ul Krupówki are owned by the same group and offer the exact same *jadło karpackie* (Carpathian cuisine), accompanied by rather hokey alpine music performed by a *kapela góralska* (folk-music ensemble). Still, there are a few diamonds in the rough: try any of the following.

**Karczma Zapiecek** (☎ 018 201 5699; ul Krupówki 43; mains 10-22zł) Arguably the pick of the lot, with great food, old stove and terrace.

**Staro Izba** (☎ 018 201 3391; ul Krupówki 28; mains 14-35zł) Serves lots of excellent lamb dishes, including *kielbasa* (Polish sausage) and *kwaśnica*, a kind of sauerkraut soup.

**Stek Chałupa** (☎ 018 201 5918; ul Krupówki 33; mains 12-33zł) Good for grilled sausages and steaks in all their guises.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**Paparazzi** (☎ 018 206 3251; ul Gen Galicy 8; ☎) 4am-1pm Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat & Sun) This branch of the popular chain with a media theme keeps both the après-ski crowd and tourists well lubricated into the wee hours. Great cocktails – try anything mixed with *miód pitny* (mead).

**Café Antrakt** (☎ 018 201 7302; ul Krupówki 6; ☎) 11am-midnight) A mellow venue for an al-

coholic or caffeine-laden drink, hidden away above a mineral shop with an ambient old-meets-new décor. It occasionally hosts live jazz.

## Shopping

**Targ Pod Gubałówką** (☎) 9am-5pm) This large market at the northern end of ul Krupówki and in front of the funicular's lower station is the place to come for woollen goods and knits, handicrafts such as carved wood kitchen utensils, cheap clothing and food. This is also the place to try *osypki*, the round and stamped sheep's cheese that comes plain or smoked.

## Getting There & Away

Most regional routes are covered by bus. The train is better for long-distance travel (eg to Warsaw).

## BUS

Fast buses run to Kraków (16zł, two hours) run every 30 to 40 minutes. There are also two private companies, **Trans Frej** (www.trans-frej.com.pl) and **Szwagropol** (www.szwagropol.pl), that run services roughly hourly to Kraków (15zł, 1½ hours), departing from the front of the Grand Hotel Stamary at ul Kościuszki 19. There are two daily buses to Nowy Sącz (18zł, three hours) and daily buses to Przemyśl (38zł, 4½ hours), Rzeszów (38zł, 4½ hours), Łódź (48zł, six hours), Katowice (28zł, three hours) and Nowy Targ (4zł, 30 minutes). There are also two direct buses to Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty (8zł, 1½ hours) for the Dunajec Gorge raft trip in summer.

In the region around Zakopane, bus transport is relatively frequent. PKS buses can take you to the foot of the Kościeliska and Chochołowska valleys, as well as to Polana Palenica (5zł), the gateway to Morskie Oko. There are also private minibuses that ply the most popular tourist routes, including Gubałówka (3zł), Polana Palenica (6zł) and Poprad (17zł), departing across the road from the bus station.

## TRAIN

There are a number of trains to Kraków (19.50zł, 3½ hours), but buses are faster and more frequent. One train (a few more in the high season) runs daily to Warsaw (100zł, 6½ hours).