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GEO blogs:

The rough guide to surviving Mazury, Poland

“ a land of a thousand lakes”



INTRODUCTION

Mazury (Masuria) is Poland’s largest lake district and one of the main tourist attractions. This district of deep wonderlands and 2000 lakes connected with each other through streams and rivers stretches over 200 proud miles. As heavenly as it may seem, it keeps a lot of cautious secrets to know beforehand...

Must Experience Attractions

Mazury has a lot to offer in terms of attractions, as it is regarded as 'one of the favourite tourist destinations.' The lakes are one of the main attractions as you can: canoe, swim, try extreme water sports, sail on boats, fishing and even having beach days! Other attractions include horse riding, exploring woods (or cycling through the woods), going mushroom picking, hunting, go on watchtowers, treasure hunting and even go to places that offer you ice skating, water parks and other options. All depending on where you decide to go.



Masuria offers a trip to the 'wolf's lair.' the ' wolf's lair' is hitlers former second world war headquarters (it is formally known as wolschanze). It is hidden in the forest quiet close to a village called ketrzyn. It is believed that this is the place where hitler spent 800 days and survived a assissination attempt in 1944. This lake district also hovers the largest lake in Poland and polands favourite sailing spot: Sniardwy. Mikolajki is located on the rim of the lake. Mikolajki are therefore so popular for that and also for its modern layout.

Treasure hunting

Another popular attraction is ‘treasure hunting.’ People bring their magnets, into the lakes into the forests, anywhere they want to be honest. It is very possible that you find a before war thing, for eg. a coin, a gun ammunition and maybe even a dagger if you are lucky. There are many other rarities you could find. There is a downside though, these things are classed as historical monuments and it is illegal to sell them. Therefore it is in your right to give it into the closest office of monuments (urząd zabytków) or ask for directions from a police officer. It is most likely that it will be taken away by the government and a restorer (konserwator zabytków) and the property owner could get involved if it is found on their property.



‘the train full of gold’

It is believed that in Poland, somewhere there is hidden a Nazi train full of gold. People also refer to it as the gold train. The treasure was buried by the Nazis in a tunnel in Poland during the last days of the Second World War. Many searches for the train have been attempted, yet it has never been found. The Polish army even tried to unsuccessfully find it during the Cold War. The search for the train gained global media interest between 2015 and 2018.

Hazards

As comes lots of fun, there also comes risks. Many attractions have hazards, which can be eliminated by using common sense and knowledge. Extreme water sports have a lot to come with them, costs vary but usually are quite pricey because of the equipment. Common hazards include, drowning, getting lost or getting cut. Which is why, it is advised to get some knowledge on some of the things you might want to do in this district; such as knowing how to use and follow a map.

Bests times to go

It is said that the summer season is the best time to visit mazuria, but it is also the busiest and most expensive time. So if you're looking to be more alone and looking for more relaxation time then it is recommended to go in spring and autumn. Winter is good to go too, as there is usually tons of snow, but there is a limited amount of attractions you can really do.



Getting there

This district is located in the north-eastern side of Poland. It is about 3 hours away from the capital of Poland, Warsaw (Warsaw), by car. The best way to get to the lakeland is by plane and then train. There are many airports you could fly to, for eg. in Warsaw, Gdansk, Szczytno or Olsztyn. It depends where exactly you want to go in Mazury. The most recommended places are: Mikolajki, Olsztyn, Gizycko and Elblag.

Staying there

If you're interested in a more nature- based experience, it is better to go to a farm stay. The most recommended farm stays are; Siedlisko Blanki, Moniowka or Kwaśne Jabłko. These places offer organic regional food and a friendly, homely atmosphere. If you're looking for more spa related places to stay, the most recommended are: Golebiewski Mikolajki, Przystan Hotel & spa or Hip Glendoria (that offers an outside wooden spa). As they are popular, it is advised to book these places in advance. For a truly luxurious experience, the best way to go is Masuria arte.

The wilderness to explore

Mazuria flatters itself with its forests! This place provides the beautiful nature of earth to explore. It is legal to go hiking, cycle or just have a walk around these forests. It is **vital** for you to have a map or note your path along though. It is really easy to get lost in these deep wonders of nature. Please acknowledge the fact that polish people really care about their lands too. By all means, it is advised not to smoke there (if you do, there will be benches and ashtrays with bins). You can camp in these natural habitats too, but if you start a campfire, it is important to stop it from spreading too uncontrollably. There has been an incident of this happening a few years ago...



Litter will not be tolerated either. There are massive fines for this, plus it is damaging for others

and animals especially. Fines for littering usually go from 100-1000 zł, and for starting a wildfire, it can even go down as jail time.

The forests vital protection

Talking about caring, these forests have their own carer! In Poland they have communities that care over forests in each region (lasy państwowe). In Mazury, their forest community is called nadlesnictwo państwowe. In all parts of the forest there should be tall towers to watch and observe animals. They are also used by **foresters** (lesnicy) to hunt. These towers are long and tall and are called ambony. Be careful on your step, as these builds can reach 6 metres



Depending on the surroundings. Foresters are people who care for that specific part of the forest and they even have their own house in the forest called a forest lodge. Now, if you are lost they should be more than happy to help you. However, please remember that they are humans with privacy too and that if you have no specific reason to go to them, then simply don't. They have a very important role in the woods. Foresters are the only one that can properly hunt (as they have experience and got special courses for that). There are special parts of the forest too, where it is illegal to trespass. These parts of the forest are parts for endangered

plants that are trying to develop.

Courageous animals

It is nearly impossible for you not to meet a wild animal on your path in Mazury. **Bocian** (stork) is what you are most likely to see. Storks are all over the place, hunting for frogs and other snacks in fields. They are thankfully no danger at all, and they are not disturbing. **Orzeł** (eagle) is however a threat if you bring along a small pupil. There have been many incidents where small dogs and cats have taken for a fly with these magnificent beasts! So if you are planning to go to a field or open space with your small pupil, please keep an eye out. **Dzik** (boar) are described as brave. This is because they tend to not be scared of humans at all. They are usually found in forests with their little ones and to be honest, anywhere around the forest. They are

very protective over their piglets. It is advised to not interact with the animal at all. If it comes down to the point where you are perhaps chased by one then a) run away somewhere far until the boar gives up b) climb up to a high place if you can. **Wilki** (wolves) are very rare to find. They are endangered animals in Poland though, so it would be illegal to kill or damage one. The plus about this animal is that it is very strong, but not confident. In fact it is so not confident that it is terrified of humans. **Labedzie** (swans) you will see most definitely. They are beautiful animals and the ornament of love. You will probably meet them when canoeing or when swimming in lakes (basically whenever you're doing something in a lake). They are the most protective bird you will ever meet. As tempting as it is, DO NOT feed its children or them. They can hiss, and even bite when it comes to protection. It is even possible to get chased by one. Therefore just ignore them; take pictures if you must and carry your adventure on. **Lisy** (foxes) are adorable small creatures. They have a very charistic squeaky noise they make too. It is possible to see one, and it can be tempting to stroke or even pick them up. Please remember that these animals do have teeth for a reason!



Mushroom picking

Mushroom picking is one of the locals favourite things to do. Mushroom seasons are usually around september- november. This activity **can be dangerous** if you do not know the difference between edible and poisonous mushrooms. What we offer you to do before doing this

activity is taking a look at <https://www.wildfooduk.com/mushroom-guide/>. The mushrooms can be found in the forests in the sidewalks or even deeper into the woods. The most common ones to find are: porcini, milk caps and chanterelles.

