

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ACTION FOR ADAPTING CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

WELCOME TO POLAND WELCOME TO WSEI UNIVERSITY - BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT POLAND





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FACTS ABOUT POLAND - GEOGRAPHY


Poland is located in the center of the Europe. There is are some basic information to remember about our coutry.





 Poland is the seventh biggest country in Europe, with total area of 312,679 km².

 Poland borders 7 countries: Germany on the west, Czech Republic and Slovakia on the south, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania on the east, and Russia on the north.

 Warsaw is the capital of the country.

 The highest point of Poland is the peak of Rysy, 2,499 meters in elevation. The lowest point in Poland is at 2 meters below sea level, located in the Vistula Delta.


 There is a diverse landscape in Poland: two major mountain chains – the Carpathians (Karpaty) and the Sudetes (Sudety) on the south and The Baltic sea on the north.


 Poland has approximately 38 523 000 inhabitants, which gives it the 8th place in the most populated countries in Europe.


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FACTS ABOUT POLAND - GEOGRAPHY


Poland is located in the center of the Europe. There are some basic information to remember about our country.

 Poland has more than 1,300 lakes throughout the country.

 The longest river, Vistula (Wisła) is 1,047 km (678 miles) long.

 Since Poland joined the Schengen Area in 2007, it has become part of the zone where 27 European countries abolished their internal borders, allowing people to travel freely between member countries without going through border controls.

 The most famous and visited cities are Warsaw, the medieval town of Malbork, Lublin, Toruń, Kraków and Poznań.

 More and more foreign investments from Western Europe are to be shifted to Poland, as well as from the US and Asia. Poland's geographic location facilitates the logistics activities and forecasts indicate an increase in the number of immigrants to the country.



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FACTS ABOUT POLAND - ADMINISTRATION

In this section you will find some basic facts about Poland

The official name of the country is the Republic of Poland (local: Rzeczpospolita Polska)

Poland is a parliamentary republic.

The official language of Poland is Polish and the Złoty is the official currency. Złoty is subdivided into 100 groszy.

The emblem of the country is an image of a white eagle with a golden crown on its head turned to the right, with spread wings, with a golden beak and claws, placed in the red field of the shield.

The colors (flag) of the Republic of Poland are white and red, arranged in two horizontal, parallel stripes of the same width, of which the upper one is white and the lower one is red.

Over 80% of the Poles are Catholics.

The territorial administrative structure of Poland is based on three levels of self-government. Poland is divided into:

- *Voivodeships (similar to provinces),*
- *Powiats (similar to counties or districts),*
- *Gminas (similar to communes or municipalities).*

Although Poland is going through a process of rapid economic development, the cost of living is still significantly lower than in most of the EU countries.

Poland is much safer than most of the European countries. It's perfectly safe here for international students of all race, beliefs and origins.



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FACTS ABOUT POLAND - WEATHER

Poland is placed in a moderate zone with mixed continental and oceanic climate influences. However the weather can be very suprising! Check the tips below and talk with your friends and colleagues before packing your laguagge!

The weather in Poland is also characterised by transitional periods between the four seasons of the year.

SPRING: changeable with moderate temperatures. There is a Polish saying "W marcu jak w garncu," which translates to "March is like a pot." This means that you can never quite know what to expect.

SUMMER: usually sunny with temperature reaching 35°C. The summer solstice is the day with the most hours of sunlight of the whole year (16 hours 46 minutes, sunrise: 4.14 am, sunset: 9 pm) and is seen as the end of spring and the beginning of summer.

AUTUMN: This time in Poland is called poetically 'Golden Polish Autumn' (Złota Polska Jesień). This season can be cold and wet or warm and sunny.

WINTER: cold and snowy, the temperatures from December to late February usually fluctuate around 0 °C to -10°C.



Remember to get the umbrella as it can be usefull regardless the season.

Select clothing items that are versatile and can be worn with different outfits. It is also recommended bringing layers of clothing so that you can be prepared for weather and temperature changes.

Dedicate some time to read about the weather in Poland on the Internet, for sure you will find a lot of useful tips there.

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FACTS ABOUT POLAND - HISTORY

Poland is a unique country packed to the brim with history. Check this basic information to know this interesting country better. If you're someone who loves history and battles, try taking a peek into Polish history. The country has been invaded or fought for its freedom more than 40 times.



- In 966, Mieszko, a local duke from the Western Slavic tribe of Polans, adopted Christianity. Becoming a Christian country resulted in one of the biggest Mediaeval conflicts in this part of Europe was a clash between Poland and the State of the Teutonic Order.
- For 123 years Poland disappeared from the map of Europe. Poland, after three partitions by Russia, Prussia and Austria, returned to the map after World War I. It took 123 difficult years to appear again.

- Poland adopted its first written constitution in the spring of 1791, which was the 2nd in the world valid legal document of the kind.
- In 1991 The Poles vote in the first free parliamentary elections since the Second World War.
- Polish history was very complicated. The country has been invaded or has fought for freedom in insurrections over 40 times. Poland even disappeared from world maps between 1772 and 1795.



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From the 16th to the late 18th century the country was called The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At that period Poland was a multi-cultural polity, inhabited by Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Jews, Tatars, Armenians and Germans.



In May 1989 the Polish government fell, along with communist regimes throughout eastern Europe, beginning Poland's rapid transformation into a democracy.

Jagiellonian University founded way back in 1364 was the Second Oldest University in Europe.



World War II was particularly damaging, as Poland's historically strong Jewish population was almost wholly annihilated in the Holocaust.

Poland has been a NATO member since 1999.



Warsaw was almost completely destroyed during World War II. Warsaw was heavily bombed and effectively razed by Nazi Germany in 1944 during World War II. The Poles rebuilt their city after the war using the detailed paintings of Bernardo Bellotto.

Poland has been a member of the European Union since 1 May 2004 under the Accession Treaty signed in Athens on 16 April 2003.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

Would you like to impress your friends or family? Check this information about unusual facts about the Republic of Poland.

The world's biggest castle is located in Poland in Malbork. The Castle of the Teutonic Order is the largest castle in the world by land area. Originally built in the 13th century as a Teutonic castle and fortress.

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Poland is home to a remarkable 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites!

■■■■■

There are only nine copies of the Gutenberg Bible remaining in their original 15th-century binding... And you can find one of them in the Diocesan Museum in the little town of Pelplin in Poland's Kociewie region.



One of the oldest European restaurants is located in Wrocław. Piwnica Świdnicka is located in the city's main square and was launched as early as 1273.

■■■■■

The world's oldest salt mines (800 years!) is located in Wieliczka in Poland.

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Spodek, or "The Flying Saucer", is a multipurpose arena in Katowice which brings to mind a flying saucer. Regularly used for large events such as concerts, international volleyball matches or video game tournaments, it is a widely-recognized symbol of Katowice.

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PRACTICAL TIPS - OPENING HOURS

First days or months can be difficult. You have to get to know new country and it's customs. Opening hours of banks, public offices or any other public places is quite important, especially to manage formal issues.

SHOPPING: There are super-and hyper-markets in every large city in Poland. Shopping centres operate in every bigger town in Poland. They offer products of Polish and foreign brands. Usually, they are open 6 days a week, often from 8.00 to 21.00, although, there are also shops open 24/7.

SHOPPING ON SUNDAY: Since 2018 on Sundays and public holidays, it is forbidden to trade and perform activities related to trade in commercial establishments. The law defines the number of trade Sundays, i.e.: the next two Sundays preceding Christmas Day; the Sunday immediately preceding the first day of Easter; the last Sunday in January, April, June and August. However, if there is a holiday on the last Sunday in January, April, June or August, then the trade prohibition applies.

OPENING HOURS: public offices or banks are usually open from Monday to Friday from 8.00 a.m. till 4 p.m.

MUSEUMS: There are no set open times. A lot of museums are closed on Monday.

OPENING HOURS OF RESTAURANTS: Most of the restaurants are open till 10 p.m. during the week and longer during week-ends.



PUBLIC OFFICES: are usually open from 8.00 a.m to 4 p.m. only during the week days. During the COVID-19 pandemics some of the public institutions introduced online registration systems. Check website before going to the specific place, maybe you can book the appointment online.

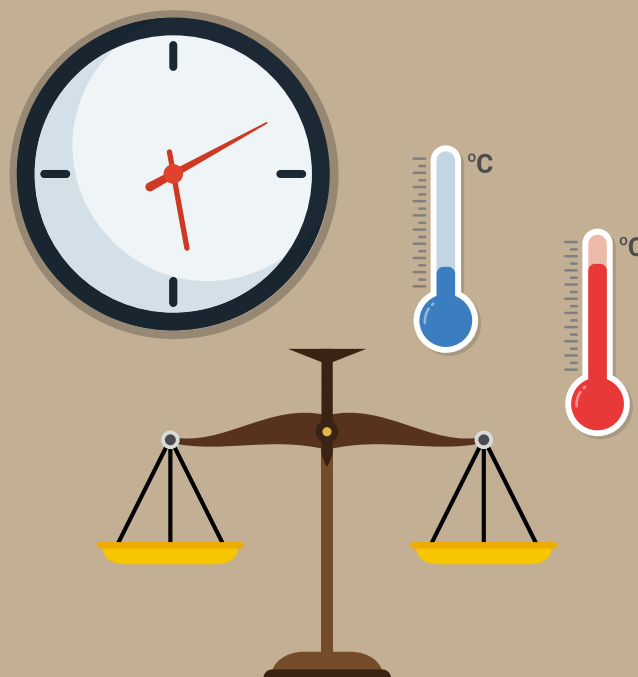
BANKS are opened during the week days and some branches on Saturdays. The opening hours 8.00 or 9.00 a.m till 4-5 p.m. A lot of bank services are available online nowadays, check the website offer to see what kind of contact is preferred.

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PRACTICAL TIPS - DAILY TOPICS

Traveling abroad means different currencies, culture and language. However daily life in foreign country is full of surprises and differences. Those tips will help you in daily activities and communication with natives.

- To use electrical gadgets you may need a travel adapter plug, and also a step down voltage converter if your devices are not designed for European voltage (230V).
- Like most European countries, Poles use the metric system.
- In Poland fluids are measured in liters and weight in kilograms.
- The temperature is measured in Celsius degrees.
- Did you know that Gabriel Fahrenheit was born in Gdansk (Danzig) in northern Poland?
- The time in Poland is 1 hour ahead of UTC. The current timezone in Poland is Central European Time (CET).
- Poland uses Daylight Saving Time, which moves an hour ahead, is observed from the last Sunday in March (02:00 CET) to the last Sunday in October (03:00 CEST). This is shared with several other EU member states.



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PRACTICAL TIPS - ABOUT CLOTHES

Polish weather can be unpredictable, especially if you are coming from different continent and time zone. Choosing which clothes to pack for a trip to Poland might be the most time consuming part of your packing!

It is recommended to pack layers of clothing so that you can be prepared for weather and temperature changes.

Do not forget about hat and sunglasses for the summer period as well as warm hat, gloves and scarf for the winter.

You have to remember about warm clothes for the winter time. It would be a good idea to invest in some thermal leggings, a few warm sweaters to wear indoors. Outdoor coats must be removed when you come indoors and remain with a sweater of jacket.

Remember to buy good winter shoes which are water resistant and have good grip.

Make sure that you have comfortable clothes as well as something for formal occasions.



Remember to bring something smarter as well – you will never go wrong with a white shirt. These might be useful for examinations or any other formal event at your university, as Polish students still tend to wear smart clothes on such occasions.

There are a lot of weather apps which you can use in order to check the weather conditions and select the best clothes.

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WHAT TO EXPECT IN POLAND?

Poles are simply not used to interacting with strangers and smiling at people they do not know, without reason. However, it doesn't mean you shouldn't approach them! You just have to observe their culture and daily behaviours to understand them better.

Polish people are helpful, if you get lost in a new place, they will help you for sure!

You should note that Poles are Europe's one of the hardest working nation.

There is an old saying "A guest in the house, God in the house" and the hospitality is one of the basic elements of Polish culture.

The family is at the first place for a lot of Poles. Cooking at home and eating together is very common in many families.



The chivalry is not dead – in Poland, a man very often let a woman through the door first and hold it for her, even in formal or business situations.

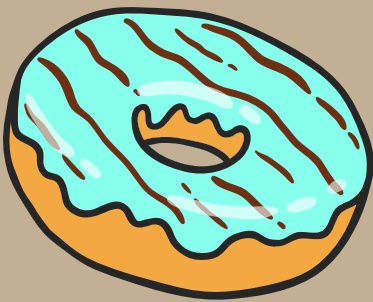
They seems to be serious and do not smile to the stragners on the street, but once they get to know somebody they are very opened and friendly.

Poles also honor their tradition and religion. They give importance to special religious occasions and events.

INTERESTING TRADITIONS CELEBRATED IN POLAND

FAT THURSDAY (TŁUSTY CZWARTEK) IN POLAND

Polish donuts (Pączki) are widely and commonly consumed food on Fat Thursday. Some are filled with rose flavored jam, but many varieties exist (chocolate, raspberry jam, custard, toffee, blueberry jam, eggnog). There are also many different toppings such as liquorice, powdered sugar or coconut chips or nuts.



© On Fat Thursday, you can eat a lot of sweet dishes, such as Polish donuts, angel wings and puff pastry fingers, etc.). You can also drink alcohol before Lent (a Christian holiday).

© This holiday is celebrated nationwide, even by the Polish people living abroad, (Germany, Greece, Italy, or Spain)

© It's an annual cultural feasting celebration which take place 52 days before Easter.

© The exact date of Fat Thursday changes every year because it depends on the Christian calendar and is linked to Lent (time of fasting) and Easter. However, Fat Thursday is always celebrated on the last Thursday before Ash Wednesday and therefore, just before the beginning of Lent.



© It is said you will have a bad luck for an entire year if you don't eat at least one pączek (donut) this day.

© This year (2024), Fat Thursday is going to be on the 8th of February.

© The second special treat of a typical Fat Thursday are minions (angel wings). These are wonderful small pieces of dough fried and turned into twisted ribbon shaped cookie, sprinkled with powdered sugar.



INTERESTING TRADITIONS CELEBRATED IN POLAND

APRIL FOOL'S DAY IN POLAND

April Fool's day is about making jokes to other people, family, friends. These are jokes, or little scams that do no harm to anyone.

- ★ April Fool's Day is called Prima Aprillis in Poland.
- ★ People love to play pranks on their friends, relatives and also on strangers.
- ★ April Fool's Day in Poland isn't much different to other countries, but here is a Survival Rule list for that day:
 - 1: Don't trust anyone
 - 2: If someone suddenly changes the place or time of an appointment, keep in mind that it might be a trap
 - 3: Forget about newspapers, news on the Internet, TV, radio, etc. - most of the headlines are fake
 - 4: If you have flatmates or roommates, check every single thing you normally use twice, without hesitation
 - 5: Before you enter a room, look carefully at the place from a distance, and enter slowly and very carefully
 - 6: If given something to eat, examine it closely. If you have a chance, make your friend eat it first; same applies to drinks
 - 7: Have fun! Even if you're tricked, don't go mad for too long and appreciate your friends' jokes
- ★ Generally every word on April Fool's can be untrue.
- ★ The conviction for this is so strong that the Polish anti-Turkish alliance with Leopold I signed on the 1st of April, was backdated to 31 March.
- ★ For some in Poland prima aprillis ends at noon of 1 April and prima aprillis jokes after that hour are considered inappropriate and not classy.



INTERESTING TRADITIONS CELEBRATED IN POLAND

SAINT NICHOLAS' DAY

St. Nicholas Day is celebrated all across Europe, and each country has its own traditions. But no matter where the holiday is observed, this day is eagerly awaited by children who know that gifts will be delivered.



Leading up to December 6th, children write letters to St. Nicholas touting their good behavior and hinting as to which gifts they want.

St. Nicholas day is celebrated in December 6th in Poland. This holiday begins the Christmas Season.

In Poland, St. Nicholas comes as a bishop in bright vestments, carrying a golden crozier that resembles a shepherd's crook, symbolizing - like shepherds with sheep - that the religious tend their flock of people.

This holiday honors St. Nicholas (Święty Mikołaj), a saintly, dignified figure. St. Nicholas was the 4th-century Bishop of Myra in Lycia, what is now a province in Turkey. He had a reputation for secret gift-giving and is associated in some countries with Santa Claus.

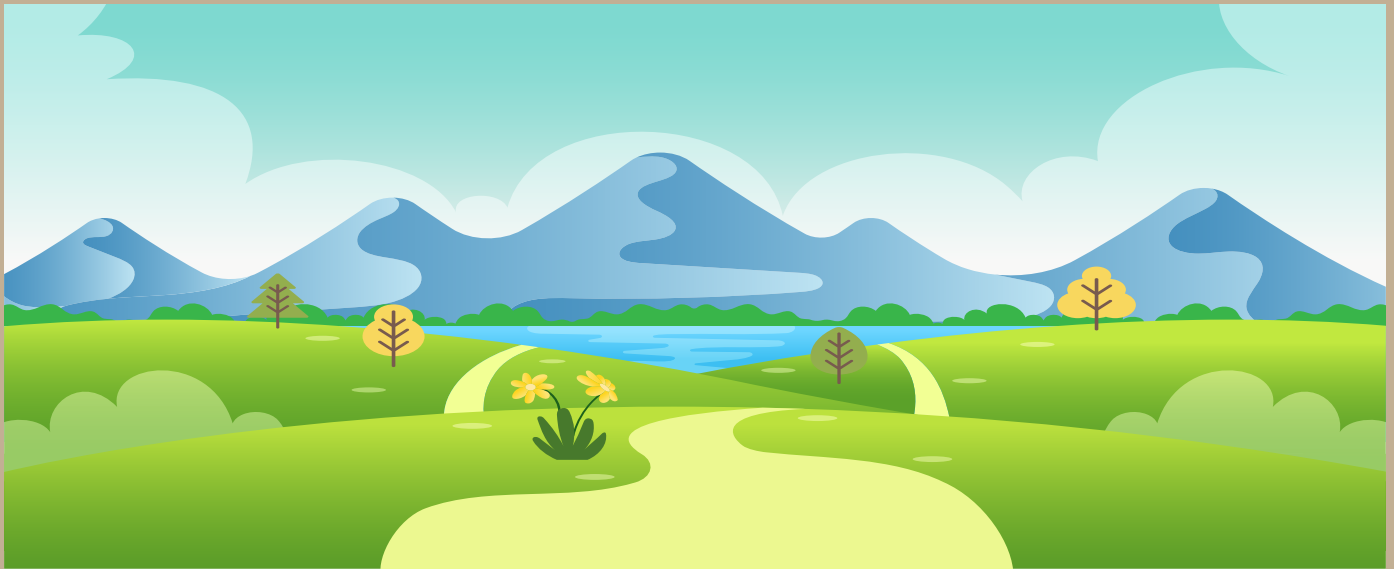
In some regions of Poland (like Poznań), it's the Starman who gives the gifts, not St. Nicholas. Starman is a little more like Krampus, and threatens the children with a birch stick before opening a sack of presents to be passed around.

St. Nicholas day was originally the only day in December that presents were given. The practice of handing out presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day came to be as a result of Western traditions. So larger gifts are saved for Christmas and smaller tokens and sweets are found on December 6th - under pillows or inside shoes and boots, as well as stockings that have been hung up the night before.

INTERESTING TRADITIONS CELEBRATED IN POLAND

MELTING MADDER - 1ST DAY OF SPRING IN POLAND

On the first day of the long-awaited spring (March 20st 2023) people in Poland celebrate it with two annually-celebrated unique traditions: Drowning Marzanna and Truant's Day.



For the Truant's festivals, many schools organize different events, games and competitions.

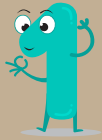
There is also the Truant's Day, a spring festival primarily for elementary to high school students. On that day, many students cut class and head to local parks and gardens to celebrate the incoming spring, longer days, and warmer weather.

There is the Drowning of a Marzanna doll, which is intended to summon the spring by letting the winter drift away in the river. Marzanna or Morana was a Slavic goddess portrayed as a figure representing death, winter and disease, braided from straw and shaped into a human doll dressed in traditional local women clothing.

Spring's warmer weather and increased daylight hours make it one of the best and favorite seasons. Poland is a perfect destination especially in this season, following the beautiful blooming flowers and green leaves, which presents a chance to learn about.

INTERESTING TRADITIONS CELEBRATED IN POLAND

REFLECTION ABOUT POLISH CELEBRATIONS FROM A FOREIGN STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



„Polish traditions and celebrations have a very interesting look into Polish culture and traditions. After researching on these dates, it's actually very hard to finalize on the most interesting celebration. For a foreign student whose nationality is African, April Fool's Day is widely known worldwide, which we can rule out because Africans also have their own way of celebrating April Fool's which is mainly among friends and agemates.”



„The Saint Nicholas event is quite similar to Christmas Eve and it is much more interesting to children.”



„The 1st day of spring centers mostly on kids and teenagers celebrating the day more (to the fullest through games, competitions, and different school events, it's somewhat interesting in the fact of celebrating warmer weather and longer daylight hours, which in a way makes the whole entironment beautiful with blossoming flowers and beautiful nature. When I came in March 2022, I loved the constant beauty and blossoming flowers in the tree and bushes as well as general flowers, and everything looks so alive and beautiful. I couldn't stop obsessing over taking just a picture or more every time I went outside. The scent is also very beautiful. So I guess the 1st day of Spring (March 20th) is one of my favorites.”



„Midsummer Night is quite interesting too, expecially now that I have read and understood what it's really about. Because the first time I heard about it (in July) I thought it was about people dressed as witches running around the bonfire chanting some incantations. But the researched information is absolutely different and very interesting, entertaining even. I would absolutely love to go there and see how they make the wreathes and engage in bonfire jumps as well. Looking forward to it this year!”



„The Fat Thursday is really interesting (not because sweet food is involved) but because I never heard of such a day while in Africa. I was told about it, but because I was not told about the date of celebration or what it really implies, I never understood it until now. It's one of the most beautiful Polish traditions (including Polish cuisines) that makes my stay even more pleasant.”



„All these Polish celebrations are unique and beautiful in their own way, revealing the truance of Polish tradition and ripe culture that is rarely known all over the world. It's a pity that many people, especially in Africa, know so little about how stunning and incredible the Polish culture is. I have always been a huge fan of other cultures, so it's been very easy for me to fall in love with Poland the moment I came here. I just hope that this information reaches out to ever life and heart of every foreign student, and helps them understand, appreciate, as well as engage in some of the Polish celebrations they have to offer, and have fun too.”

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

Would you like to impress your friends or family? Check this information about unusual facts about the Republic of Poland.

"Palace of Culture and Science Warsaw - The tallest building in Poland and one of the most recognizable landmarks in Warsaw. The structure was designed by Soviet architect Lev Rudnev modeled on American skyscrapers. A "gift" of the Soviet Union for Poland but by many seen as a symbol of Soviet domination. The Palace today serves as an exhibition center and office complex. Don't miss the panoramic view and admire the Warsaw from the 30th-floor (115m) observation deck."



The Crane is one of the defining symbols of Gdańsk city and represents what little is left of the city's great trading age. It's one of the world's oldest port cranes, was destroyed in 1945, and was carefully put back together and is now the only fully restored relic of its kind in the world.



Sukiennice is the oldest shopping centre with stalls selling cloth handicrafts, amber jewellery, lacework, wood carvings, sheepskin rugs and all sorts of Polish souvenirs and trinkets. A 14th-century architectural marvel in the middle of Cracow market square.



The Centennial Hall in Wrocław, a landmark in the history of reinforced concrete architecture, was erected in 1911-1913 by the architect Max Berg. In form it is a symmetrical quatrefoil with a vast circular central space that can seat some 6,000 persons. The 23m-high dome is topped with a lantern in steel and glass.

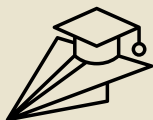
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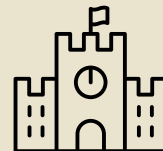
Would you like to impress your friends or family? Check this information about unusual facts about the Republic of Poland.



Poland is an incredible country with a diverse and rich education history. Studying in Poland will give you a high quality European degree, recognizable all around the World at a low cost. Not only will you enjoy high quality of teaching, but also have a chance to pursue your future career in EU.



Despite widespread destruction during wars, Poland has a number of beautiful cities laid out with charming squares. Some have old towns with cobbled streets, Gothic churches, and intriguing architecture alongside modern restaurants and buzzing nightlife spots.



Poland has at least 500 castles throughout the countryside, including Moszna Castle, Wawel Royal Castle, Książ Castle, and many more. However, the Malbork Castle, located near the city of Gdańsk, is the largest and most impressive; it's also Europe's largest brick building.

Oscypek cheese is a delicious cheese made from salted sheep's milk and produced in the Tatra Mountain region. It's a holiday cheese for many Europeans and often eaten with a dollop of cranberry sauce. It's sold between late April and early October.

Pierogi or Polish dumplings are made of unleavened dough rolled extra thin and filled with a variety of fillings.

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BANK HOLIDAYS

Poland celebrates 13 public holidays throughout the year. It will be useful to know when you can expect extra off day. Usually most of shopping centers and public offices are closed then and public communication works according to different schedule. In case of movable holidays check the calendar for the specific year.

JANUARY

1 January: New Year's Day

6 January: Epiphany (Trzech Króli), an annual holiday to mark when the three wise men, or kings, visited baby Jesus.

APRIL

Easter Sunday: movable Sunday in Spring. Called also Pascha or Resurrection Sunday. It has come to be the first Sunday after the ecclesiastical full moon that occurs on or soonest after 21 March.

Easter Monday: Monday following Easter Sunday. In Western Christianity, it marks the second day of the Octave of Easter, and in Eastern Christianity it marks the second day of Bright Week.

MAY

1 May: Labour Day

3 May: Constitution Day. The holiday celebrates the declaration of the Constitution of 3 May 1791.

Pentecost Sunday: is a Christian holiday which takes place on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) after Easter Sunday

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JUNE

Corpus Christi: also known as the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. It is a moveable feast that is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday in Poland.

AUGUST

15 August: The Assumption of Mary, or the Day of Assumption. It is also Polish Army Day as it is connected with the anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw in 1920.

NOVEMBER

1 November: All Saints' Day
11 November: Independence Day

DECEMBER

25 December: Christmas
26 December: Second Day of Christmas



Erasmus+



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PRACTICAL TIPS

You are going to start new life - new adventure in Poland. Knowing those facts will help you to manage with daily life situations.



PLUGS: In Poland the power plug sockets are of type E. The standard voltage is 230 V and the frequency is 50 Hz. This socket also works with plug C and with plug F if it has an additional pinhole.

CURRENCY: the Polish zloty (PLN) and its symbol is zł. The word itself means "golden" in Polish, and each zloty is divided into 100 groszy. You'll find notes of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 zloty. The coins currently in circulation are 1, 2 and 5 zloty; and 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 groszy. If you would like to exchange the money into Polish currency, you have to find the place called KANTOR.

BARGAINING: you may try to negotiate prices at bazaars, markets or fairs, particularly if you want to buy handicraft products or antiques but never at the shopping centers or shops.

TIPS: It is expected to tip waiters in restaurants, leaving about 10% of the bill's original value. The best way to tip is in cash. It is not obligatory but are truly appreciated in Poland, especially for good services at restaurants.

AGE RESTRICTIONS: persons aged 18 or above can buy and drink alcohol or cigarettes. The entrance to night clubs is allowed to people over 18 years of age although there are also clubs where you have to be over 21. To legally drive in Poland, you must be 18 years or older and in possession of a full valid driving licence.

CAR DRIVING: the traffic flows on the right side of the road, seatbelts are obligatory. Children up to the age of 12 have to travel in a specially approved child safety seat. Dipped-beam headlights have to be switched on throughout the year. While on the road, the driver can only talk on the mobile phone via a hands-free set.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ACTION FOR ADAPTING CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ISAAC)

No. 2020-1-PL01-KA203-082267



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with the support from the European Commission (project no: 2020-1-PL01-KA203-082267). This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.