

# Republic of Poland

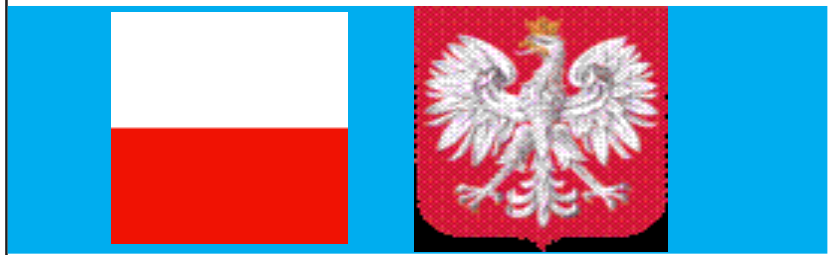
**Poland** (Polish: *Polska*), officially the **Republic of Poland** (Polish: *Rzeczpospolita Polska*), is a country in Central Europe. It is bordered by Germany to the west, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the south, Ukraine and Belarus to the east, and the Baltic Sea, Lithuania, and Russia (in the form of the Kaliningrad Oblast exclave) to the north. It also shares a maritime border with Denmark and Sweden.

The first Polish state was born in 966. Poland became a kingdom in 1025, and in 1569 it cemented a long association with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by uniting to form the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Commonwealth collapsed in 1795, and the Poles were without a state for 123 years. Poland regained its independence in 1918 but lost it again in World War II, emerging several years later as a satellite of the Soviet Union. In 1989 it threw off the communist yoke and became what is informally known as the **Third Polish Republic**.

Poland is member of the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization.

## GEOGRAPHY

The Polish landscape consists almost entirely of the North European Plain, with an average height of 173 m . The Sudetes (including the Karkonosze) and the Carpathian Mountains (including the Tatra mountains) form the southern border. This is also where one finds Poland 's highest point, Rysy, at 2,499 m . Several large rivers cross the plains, i.e., the Vistula (*Wisla*), Oder (*Odra*), Warta and the (Western) Bug. Poland also contains over 9,300 lakes, predominantly in the northern part of the country. Masuria (*Mazury* Lake District) forms the largest and most-visited lake district in Poland . Remnants of the ancient forests are present there, with the world famous Bialowieza Forest. Poland enjoys a temperate climate, with cold, cloudy, moderately severe winters and mild summers with frequent showers and thunderstorms.



## POLAND

### Government

- President
- Prime minister

Parliamentary republic  
Lech Kaczynski  
Jaroslaw Kaczynski

### Formation

- Christianisation
- Redeclared

966  
November 11, 1918

### Accession to EU

May 1, 2004

### Area

- Total  
120,728 sq mi
- Water (%)

312,685<sup>3</sup> km<sup>2</sup> (68th)  
2.65

### Population

- 2006 estimate
- 2002 census
- Density  
319.9/sq mi

38,128,000 (32nd)  
38,230,080  
121.9/km<sup>2</sup> (83rd)

### GDP (PPP)

- Total
- Per capita

2006 estimate  
\$546.543 billion (23rd)  
\$14,400 (48th)

### HDI (2004)

0.862 (high) (37th)

### Currency

Zloty (PLN)

### Time zone

CET (UTC+1)

- Summer (DST)

CEST (UTC+2)

### Internet TLD

.pl<sup>s</sup>

### Calling code

+48

# HISTORY

Poland began to form into a recognizable unitary and territorial entity around the middle of the 10th century under the [Piast dynasty](#). Poland's first historically documented ruler, [Mieszko I](#), was baptized in 966, adopting [Catholic Christianity](#) as the nation's new official religion, to which the bulk of the population converted in the course of the next century. In the 12th century Poland fragmented into several smaller states, which were later ravaged by the [Mongol](#) armies of the [Golden Horde](#) in 1241, 1259 and 1287. In 1320 [Wladyslaw I](#) became the King of a reunified Poland. His son, [Casimir III](#), repaired the Polish economy, constructed new castles, and won the war against the [Ruthenian duchy](#) ([Lviv](#) (*Lwów*) became a Polish City).

Under the [Jagiellon](#) dynasty, Poland forged an alliance with its neighbour [Lithuania](#). A [golden age](#) ensued during the 16th century after the [Lublin Union](#), which gave birth to the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](#). The citizens of Poland took pride in their ancient freedoms and [Sejm parliamentary system](#), with the [szlachta](#) nobility enjoying most benefits. Since that time Poles have regarded [freedom](#) as their most important value; Poles often call themselves the *nation of the free people*.

In the mid-17th century a Swedish invasion rolled through the country during the turbulent time known as "[The Deluge](#)" (*potop*). Numerous wars against the [Ottoman Empire](#), [Russia](#), [Cossacks](#), [Transylvania](#) and [Brandenburg-Prussia](#) ultimately reached an end in 1699. During the following 80 years, the waning of the central government and deadlock of the institutions weakened the nation, leading to anarchistic tendencies and a growing dependency on [Russia](#). This eventually led to the '[Liberum Veto](#)', which allowed for any member of parliament to break off the Sejm's proceedings during the session, effectively paralysing any attempt at reform. Russian [Czars](#) took advantage of this unique political vulnerability by offering money to Parliamentary traitors, who in turn would consistently and subversively block necessary reforms and new solutions.

The [Enlightenment](#) in Poland fostered a growing national movement to repair the state, resulting in the first modern written [constitution](#) in Europe, the [Constitution of May 3](#) in 1791. The process of reform ceased with the three [partitions of Poland](#) between [Russia](#), [Prussia](#), and [Austria](#) in 1772, 1793, and 1795, which ultimately dissolved the state. Poles resented their shrinking freedoms and several times rebelled against the partitioners (the largest were November and January Uprisings).

[Napoleon](#) recreated a Polish state, the [Duchy of Warsaw](#), but after the [Napoleonic wars](#), Poland was again divided by the victorious Allies at the [Congress of Vienna](#). The eastern portion was ruled by the Russian [Czar](#) as a [Congress Kingdom](#), and possessed a liberal constitution. However, the Czars soon reduced Polish freedoms and Russia eventually *de facto* annexed the country. Later in the 19th century, Austrian-ruled [Galicia](#) became the oasis of Polish freedom.

During [World War I](#) all the [Allies](#) agreed on the restitution of Poland that [United States](#) President [Woodrow Wilson](#) proclaimed in Point 13 of his [Fourteen Points](#). Shortly after the surrender of [Germany](#) in November 1918, Poland regained its independence as the [Second Polish Republic](#) (*IIRzeczpospolita Polska*). It reaffirmed its independence after a series of military conflicts, the most notable being the victorious 1919-1921 Polish-Soviet War.

Poland was the first country to resist the growing militarism of Germany at the end of the 30s of the last century. It led to the outburst of the II World War. It began when German battleship "Schleswig Holstein" fired on Polish stronghold Westerplatte, near Gdansk, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939. Only 17 days later Poland was attacked by Soviet Union, which acted on the basis of the secret pact signed with Nazi Germany only few months ago. During the five year conflict Polish soldiers were fighting on all world's fronts and the number of Polish who died on the battlefields or were killed by occupants was the largest taking under consideration the number of casualties to the population of country. Finally Poland was released from Germans by Soviet army in 1944-45. However many Poles did not recognize new regime. Although the war was over in 1945 many underground freedom fighters remained active till late 50s and Polish Government on refuge in London was dissolved only after first free presidential election in 90s.

The Soviet Union instituted a new [Communist](#) government in Poland, analogous to much of the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Military alignment within the [Warsaw Pact](#) throughout the [Cold War](#) was also part of this change. In 1948 a turn towards [Stalinism](#) brought in the beginning of the next period of totalitarian rule. The [People's Republic of Poland](#) (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*) was officially proclaimed in 1952.

In 1956 the régime became more liberal, freeing many people from prison and expanding some personal freedoms. Persecution of communist opposition figures persisted. Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent [trade union](#), "[Solidarity](#)" ("[Solidarnosc](#)" in Polish), which over time became a political force. It eroded the dominance of the [Communist Party](#); by 1989 it had triumphed in parliamentary elections, and [Lech Walesa](#), a "Solidarity" candidate, eventually won the presidency in 1990. The "Solidarity" movement together with Polish Pope John Paul II greatly contributed to the soon-following collapse of Communism all over Eastern Europe.

A [shock therapy](#) program during the early 1990s enabled the country to transform its economy into one of the most robust in Central Europe. Despite a temporary slump in social and economic standards, there have been numerous improvements in other [human rights](#), such as free speech, a functioning democracy and the like. Poland was the first post-communist country to reach its pre-1989 GDP levels. In 1991 Poland became a member of the [Visegrad Group](#) and joined the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) (NATO) alliance in 1999 along with the [Czech Republic](#) and [Hungary](#). Poles then voted to join the [European Union](#) in a referendum in June 2003, with Poland becoming a full member on May 1, 2004.

## CULTURE

Polish culture has a rich thousand-year history influenced by both west and east. Today, we can see these influences in Polish architecture, [folklore](#) and [art](#). Poland's culture has also been influenced by countries such as [Italy](#), [Ottoman Empire](#), [France](#) and [USA](#). [Pope John Paul II](#), Fryderyk Szopen ([Chopin](#)), Krzysztof Penderecki, Mikolaj Kopernik ([Copernicus](#)), Henryk Sienkiewicz, Boleslaw Prus, Adam Mickiewicz, Czeslaw Milosz, Jan Matejko, Maria Curie-Sklodowska ([Marie Curie](#)), Andrzej Wajda, Roman Polanski, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Juliusz Slowacki, Witold Gombrowicz, Wladyslaw Reymont, Wislawa Szymborska and many others came from Poland.

## LANGUAGE

Like Czech, Slovak, Russian, and a host of others, Polish is a Slavic language. If you travel throughout Central and Eastern Europe you will notice many similarities between the Slavic languages, though they are not necessarily mutually comprehensible. All of the Slavic languages are difficult because of their inherent grammatical complexities. Pronunciation is no simple task either. You will notice lots of unusual punctuation symbols, and a high ratio of consonants to vowels. On the good side, Polish is completely phonetic, and once you've mastered the sound combinations, you're well on your way.

## POLITICS

Poland is a [liberal democracy](#). Its current [constitution](#) dates from 1997. The government structure centres on the Council of Ministers, led by a [prime minister](#). The president appoints the [cabinet](#) according to the proposals of the prime minister, typically from the majority coalition in the bicameral judicial lower house (the [Sejm](#)). The [president](#), elected by popular vote every five years, serves as the [head of state](#).

Polish voters elect a [bicameral](#) parliament consisting of a 460 member lower house [Sejm](#) and a 100 member Senate ([Senat](#)). The [Sejm](#) is elected under a [proportional representation](#) electoral system using the [d'Hondt method](#) similar to that used in many parliamentary political systems. The Senate, on the other hand, is elected under a rare plurality [bloc voting](#) method where several candidates with the highest support are elected from each [constituency](#). With the exception of ethnic minority parties, only candidates of [political parties](#) receiving at least 5% of the total national vote can enter the Sejm. When sitting in joint session, members of the Sejm and Senate form the [National Assembly](#), ([Polish Zgromadzenie Narodowe](#)). The National Assembly is formed on three occasions: Taking the oath of office by a new President, bringing an indictment against the President of the Republic to the Tribunal of State, and declaration of a President's permanent incapacity to exercise their duties because of the state of their health. Only the first kind has occurred to date.

The [judicial branch](#) plays an important role in decision-making. Its major institutions include the [Supreme Court of Poland](#) ([Sad Najwyzszy](#)), the [Supreme Administrative Court of Poland](#) ([Naczelnny Sad Administracyjny](#)) with judges appointed by the president of the Republic on the recommendation of the National Council of the Judiciary for an indefinite period, the [Constitutional Tribunal of Poland](#) ([Trybunal Konstytucyjny](#)) with judges chosen by the Sejm for nine-year terms, and the [State Tribunal of Poland](#) ([Trybunal Stanu](#)) with judges chosen by the Sejm for the current term of office of the Sejm, (except for the position of chairperson which is held by the First President of the Supreme Court). The [Sejm](#) (on approval of the Polish Senate) appoints the Ombudsman or the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection ([Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich](#)) for a five-year term. The Ombudsman has the duty of guarding the observance and implementation of the rights and liberties of people and the [citizens](#), the law and principles of community life and social justice.

## WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The best time to visit is May-September. Summer days can be hot, but take a sweater for evenings. Winters are wet, cold, dreary and not a great time to visit unless you're interested in skiing (December-April). In May and June, the fields are overrun by wildflowers: poppies, cornflowers and daisies. October is also a good time to go, because the weather is mild and there are no crowds.

# PRINCIPAL CITIES

Agglomeration or conurbation	Voivodeship	Inhabitants (Estimated, 2005)
1 Upper Silesian Industry Area	Silesia	3,487,000
2 Warsaw (Warszawa)	Masovia	2,679,000
3 Kraków	Lesser Poland	1,400,000
4 Łódź	Łódź	1,300,000
5 Tricity	Pomerania	1,100,000
5 Poznan	Greater Poland	
6 Gdansk	Pomerania	458,053
7 Rzeszów	Subcarpathia	163,069
8 Białystok	Podlasie	294,864

**RELIGION** Poland is predominantly Catholic. It's that simple. Nine out of every ten Poles belong to the Roman Catholic church, and the majority—over sixty percent—attend church regularly. Pope John Paul II hailed from Poland, so Catholicism's popularity and influence should come as no real surprise. In fact, the Catholic church has played an important political role throughout Poland's history. The "Solidarity" movement which brought about the revolution that toppled the communists owes much to the organizational forces and supportive underpinnings of the church leadership in Poland. Many Poles found refuge in the church's support during the repressive years of the communist regime.

Though predominantly Roman Catholic, Poland is home to other religious groups, such as Russian Orthodox and several Protestant Offshoots. Poland has always been famous for its religious tolerance giving home to many religions like Judaism, Islam and protestant churches.

**COMMON CUSTOMS** Though the Polish people have struggled over the centuries to keep hold of their territory, Polish culture is rich with customs and tradition because Poles have been too stubborn to let history's vagaries quash or dilute their identity. The following are customs that you would do well to observe:

- Bring a bouquet of flowers if you are invited into someone's home.
- Shake hands when you greet people (both men and women), and opt for the formal greeting when addressing someone, unless you know someone or have mutually agreed on using first names. Polish gentlemen kiss female's hand during welcome.
- Poles love to drink—often late into the night. Expect interesting and lively conversations, often about politics and other controversial social concerns.
- Keep both of your hands above the table while you're eating.
- Catholic conservatism dictates the way many Poles think, so be careful about offending people by expressing strong religious views that may run counter to tradition. However atheism is wildly accepted.
- If you visit a church, take off your hat.

**FOOD AND DRINK** Slavic cuisine is heavy on meat and it is understandable considering the climate conditions and tradition. Fried, baked and boiled meat of different kind (pork, beef, poultry) together with different kind of mainly freshwater fish creates extraordinary combination of flavor and taste. Those who ever entered traditional Polish home before main festivals like Christmas or Easter will never forget feeling of getting full even before trying the food! Be careful, Polish are mainly meat eaters and it is really difficult to remain vegetarian there due to extraordinary choice of meat products in every shop. Fish and eggs are considered to be a vegetarian food there. Potatoes in every form usually accompany meat, but if one asks for rice or pasta, it will be served without hesitation.

If you're an avid drinker of distilled spirits, Poland is close to heaven. The Polish national drink is vodka, and lots of it. Beer is becoming increasingly popular, as well.

Just because Poland's cuisine has never quite attracted international attention doesn't mean the Poles are short on hospitality. In fact, quite the contrary. When visiting a Polish home expect to be treated like a VIP. Your hosts will undoubtedly expect you to ingest great quantities of heavy food and strong drink.

Famous meals from [Polish cuisine](#) include [bigos](#), [kielbasa](#), [barszcz](#), [czernina](#) (duck blood soup), [schabowy z kapusta](#), [pierogi](#), [golabki](#) and various [potato](#) dishes.

# TRANSPORTATION

- **Rail:** Poland's railways constitute one of the larger railway systems in the European Union, with 23,420 km of network (1998). Access to track has been opened up to **competition** as required by the EU. However, delays by successive Governments in reforming the state railway company, **PKP**, combined with the imposition of severe budgetary constraints, have caused a major cash crisis. Refurbishment of the network, bringing key routes into line with the standards on western European railway networks is proceeding. Line closures and the withdrawal of feeder services similar to those that took place in the UK under the '**Beeching Axe**' have accelerated since 2000.
- **Road:** By Western European standards, Poland has a relatively poor infrastructure of expressways/highways. The Government has undertaken a programme to improve the standard of a number of significant national highways by 2013. The total length of expressways/highways is 364,657 km. There are a total of 9,283,000 registered passenger automobiles, as well as 1,762,000 registered trucks and buses (2000).
- **Air:** Poland has ten major airports (in decreasing order of traffic: **Warsaw**, **Kraków**, **Katowice**, **Gdansk**, **Wroclaw**, **Poznan**, **Szczecin**, **Rzeszów**, **Bydgoszcz** and **Lódz**), a total of 123 airports and airfields, as well as three heliports. The number of passengers at Polish airports has consistently increased since 1991.
- **Marine:** The total length of navigable rivers and canals is 3,812 km. The **merchant marine** consists of 114 ships, with an additional 100 ships registered outside the country. The principal ports and harbours are: **Port of Gdansk**, **Port of Gdynia**, **Port of Szczecin**, **Port of Swinoujscie**, **Port of Ustka**, **Port of Kolobrzeg**, **Gliwice**, **Warsaw**, **Wroclaw**.

# FOREIGNER IN POLAND

## POLAND IN THE COMMUNICATIONS HEART OF EUROPE

On May 1st Poland became a member state of the European Union (EU) and thanks to its location occupies a specific place within it. Poland's border on the river Bug became the EU's eastern border. In the wider geographical and geopolitical sense Poland occupies a central position. It is, furthermore, likely that after accession Poland will to a large extent perform the role of a transit state in Europe. Poles realize the threats associated with this state of affairs. On one hand, more foreign investment from EU countries is expected to be shifted to Poland, while on the other, forecasts indicate an increase in the number of immigrants to Poland. Accepting its responsible role connected with the regulation of people and goods across its borders, Poland is also open to visitors from all over the world.

# CURRENCY



5 Zloty

## IIG EDUCATION CONSULTANCY PVT. LTD.

SCO 26-27 First Floor Sector 34-A Chandigarh 160 022 INDIA

Ph.: +91 172 5087256 Fax: +91 172 5087257

mail@iebcgroup.com www.iebcgroup.com