

Podlaskie – European bisons, elks, birds and insects

Family-friendly Podlaskie

Active leisure in Podlaskie

Slow leisure in Podlaskie

Water leisure in Podlaskie

Podlaskie – a melting pot of cultures



Podlaskie

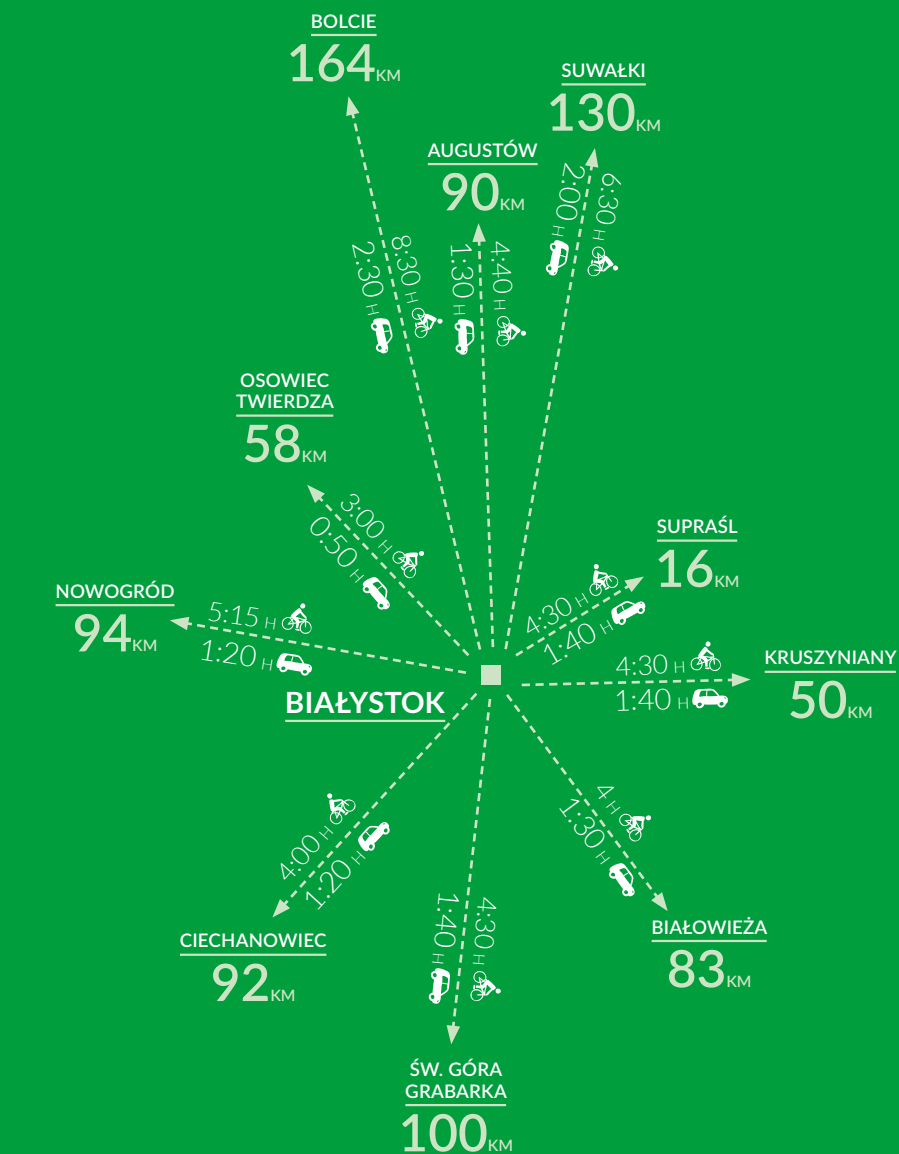
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PODLASKIE

european bisons,
elks, birds
and insects





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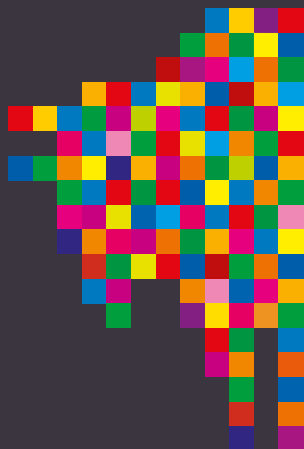
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Introduction

The Podlaskie Region abounds with natural attractions. The local forests of Białowieża, Augustów and Knyszyn, and national parks are best known for such attractions. Many areas are protected as landscape parks and reserves. The region's landscape is diversified, with picturesque river valleys and numerous lakes. The region's biodiversity and developed tourist infrastructure offer many opportunities for leisure in the bosom of nature.

The opportunities to peek at wildlife, and in particular, the king of the **Białowieża Forest**, the European bison, belong to the greatest local attractions. You can see these animals even outside the European Bison Show Reserve near Białowieża. They often appear on forest clearings. Viewing platforms on the "Tropem Żubra" (European Bison Trail) and "Carska Tropina" (Tsar's Trail) are also good observation points. The swamps of the **Biebrza National Park** are habitats of the elk and many bird species. To see them, you'd better take binoculars. You may also watch wild animals along Carska Droga (Tsar's Route). You can best explore the "**Polish Amazonia**," i.e. the Narw River Valley crossed by numerous river offshoots, walking along natural footbridges Waniewo – Śliwino and "the Marshland Footbridge." When in the **Knyszyn Forest**, don't miss the Silvarium forest garden in Poczopek, the Insurgents of 1863 Arboretum in Kopna Góra, and the nature footbridge in the Krzemianka reserve. The January Uprising Trail also runs through this area. On the trail, you can see insurgents' graves, monuments, and a historic battlefield.

Numerous lakes and postglacial hills add variety to the landscape of the northern part of the region. When in the **Wigry National Park** you may walk along educational paths and visit the Museum of Wigry. You might also climb Góra Cisowa, offering a view of the beautiful panorama of local villages and lakes.



Białowieża Forest – the Land of the European Bison

Why is the Białowieża Forest so unique? Is it permitted to visit it without a guide? Which sites are particularly worth seeing? Tourism in the Białowieża National Park is not only the European Bison Show Reserve, but also trails leading through swampy woodland areas and the picturesque valley of the Narew River. It is also worth discovering the “power site” hidden in the forest, i.e. an area with unique electromagnetic radiation.



© Białowieża Forest,
photo J. Walecicki | Żubrowa 10

The Białowieża Forest is one of the world's unique forest complexes stretching on the Polish side of the border (580 km²) and on the Belarusian side of the border (ca. 1250 km²). Its ecosystems are unspoiled by human intervention, and there is a wealth of wildlife, including five-hundred-year-old trees that are protected in 20 reserves. In view of environmental preservation precautions, you must visit strict reserves only with a licensed guide. However, many sites are accessible to individual tourists. Such **walking** trails include the Tsar's Trail, the Wolf Trail, Around Eurasian Grouse Wilderness Trail, and the European Bison Trail (“Carska Tropina,” “Wilczy Szlak,” “Wokół Uroczyska Głuszc,” and “Tropem Żubra”). If you choose **biking**, it is worth starting the trip in Narewka, where equipment hire and car parks are available. Two cycling trails lead to the Białowieża National Park marked in green and in black. When planning a visit to the Białowieża Forest, you should remember that some tourist trails may be temporarily closed because of spring thaws or heavy rainfall. The Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK) branch in Białowieża provides detailed information on that matter.

The **Trail of Royal and Lithuanian Dukes' Oaks** is a major attraction in the forest. The path is around 500 m long, leading among trees which are a few dozen centuries old. The oaks bear the names of Polish kings and grand dukes of Lithuania. Some of the trees may remember the times of mediaeval rulers. The trail runs along wooden footbridges and is adjusted to the needs of the disabled. On the trail, there are information boards in Polish, English, and in Braille alphabet. Resting places and places for making campfires are also here. The trail starts near the car park on the Białowieża – Budy route (about 6 km past the Białowieża border sign), a few hundred metres into the forest, to the right.

Hiking enthusiasts should also take the **European Bison Ribs Footbridge (Żebra Żubra)**. The trail begins a few kilometres past Białowieża on the way to Budy, on the left side next to the car park. The trail is 4 kilometres long, leading

through swampy forest areas, offering the opportunity to watch forest animals and birds in their natural environment. The footbridge ends by the **European Bison Show Reserve**. Big animals like red deer, roe deer, wolf, elk, and lynx also live here along with the king of the forest. You can also see a Polish *konik* horse and a hybrid of wisent and domestic cattle (*żubrori*). Special elevations and sheds in the area make animal watching easier.

In the depths of the forest, hidden among strangely shaped trees, there is “the power site,” marked with a stone ring. Most likely, it is a relic of an early Slavic centre of worship. There is a specific hollow filled with water nearby. To reach that site, you should leave Białowieża, taking regional Road No. 689 heading for Hajnówka, then turn left some 500 m after the town (there is a signpost at the site). You must leave the car in the car park behind the railway. A four-kilometre-long path leads from there to “the power site.”

ATTRACTIONS

Białowieża National Park

ul. Parkowa 11, 17-230 Białowieża
Phone: + 48 85 6829700
E-mail: bpn@bpn.com.pl
www.bpn.com.pl

European Bison Ribs Footbridge (Żebra Żubra)

The Power Site

European Bison Show Reserve near Białowieża

Phone: +48 85 6812398
www.bpn.com.pl

The Trail of Royal and Lithuanian Dukes' Oaks

Tourist trails in Białowieża Forest

Phone: +48 85 6812295
www.pttk.bialowieza.pl



The Narew Valley – “the Polish Amazonia”

The Narew River, also known as “the Polish Amazon” owes its name to its numerous meandering branches, creating bends and a complex river network. It is a unique landscape, with wet meadows and swampy river banks, abundant with wild birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The Narew National Park and the Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew Valley constitute the Narew’s unique river ecosystem. Its attractions are made available to visitors on tourist trails, educational footbridges, and in museums.

© The Valley of the Narew River –
the Polish Amazonia, photo A. Trojanowska

The Narew National Park covers an area of 6805.02 ha. Its unique river system with a huge wealth of wildlife is protected. Wetlands, peat bogs, and wet meadows are a refuge to various insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Twenty-two fish species live in the river itself. Many tourist trails lead through the park.

One of the most important paths in the Narew National Park is the **Waniewo – Śliwno Footbridge** leading to the very heart of the park. At the beginning of the trail, in Waniewo, there is the Tourist Information Centre, a playground, and a gazebo with a place for a campfire. When passing the footbridge to the other bank of the Narew Valley, be prepared for an unforgettable journey. Floating platforms are the greatest pleasure on the way. Pulling the footbridges fixed on ropes on your own is a great attraction. You can watch the panorama of the park from a viewing tower situated mid-trail and offering a picturesque view of the Narew Valley.

The **Marshland Footbridge** is just behind the manor house, which is the seat of the Narew National Park management in Kurowo. It is the shortest educational trail in the park, only a kilometre long. It leads through various ecosystems (a reed bed, a sedge community, the river, a meadow, and a willow thicket), each of them with the relevant information board.

Biking in the Narew River Valley, you might as well take the **Svantovit Trail**, which links the Narew National Park with Białystok. The picturesque trail, marked with green, is 20 km long. On the way, you will see the monument to insurgents of the January Uprising of 1863 on the hill known as “Szubienica” (Gallows), Babia Góra with a replica of a Svantovit statue, a symbolic war cemetery from 1915, the ruins of a Dutch-style windmill from 1936, and a roadside shrine dating from the 18th century.

Svantovit Trail itinerary: Białystok – Krupniki – Barszczewo – Konowaly – Kruszewo

The Svantovit Trail ends at the **Zerwany Most (Broken Bridge) viewing point in Kruszewo**, offering a beautiful panorama of the Narew River. Legend has it that every bridge built on the site will last 11 years, then the war breaks out and the bridge will be destroyed. The prediction came true twice – during the First and

the Second World Wars. Following the legend, the ill fate of the structure results from a pact with the devil made by the constructors of the first bridge. This is why no one ventures to reconstruct the bridge over the Narew River anymore.

A trip by boat known as *pychówka* down the Narew River is a special attraction. Once such boats were used by fishermen, today they are perfect opportunities to explore “The Polish Amazon.”

The **Natural Museum in Drozdowo** presents the attractions of the **Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew River**, the natural assets of the Narew and Biebrza Rivers and the history of Drozdowo. “Herbal Secrets. Medicinal Plants in the Narew Valley” is one of the Museum’s many interesting exhibitions. The Museum is surrounded by a beautiful park, in which the “wild” part hides the **Drozdowo Sanctuary (Ostoja Drozdowska)** Educational path. It is a wooden footbridge leading through the swampy riparian forest area. Such attractions like quests and animal tracks add variety to the walk.

ATTRACTIONS

Waniewo – Śliwno Footbridge and the Marshland Footbridge

Narew National Park
Kurowo 10, 18-204 Kobylin-Borzymy
Phone: +48 85 7181417
E-mail: npn@npn.pl
www.npn.pl

Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew Valley

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Phone/fax: + 48 86 2192175
E-mail: lpkdn.drozdowo@wp.pl
www.lpkdn.wrotapodlasia.pl

Natural Museum in Drozdowo

ul. Główna 38, Drozdowo, 18-421 Piątnica
Phone: +48 86 2192081
E-mail: muzeumdrozdowo@wp.pl
www.muzeum-drozdowo.pl

Cycling Svantovit Trail in the Narew National Park

Knyszyn Forest

A forest garden, an arboretum, wooden crosses, insurgents' graves, viewing towers, and picturesque river valleys can all be found hidden in the mysterious Knyszyn Forest. Next to beaver lodges, you can meet the honey buzzard, and the black grouse nesting near peat bogs and meadows. A developed network of tourist trails leads through the Knyszyn Forest, highlighting its natural and historical values.



Silvartum in Poczopek, photo MOPR archive

Dense woodland areas stretching along the valleys of the Supraśl and Sokółka Rivers are now protected as the **Knyszyn Forest Landscape Park**. It is inhabited by such animals as European bison, deer, wolf, and lynx. The park has its centre in Supraśl, where you can see the exhibition of the forest fauna and flora, an ethnographic exhibition, and an interesting collection of roadside crosses.

The Knyszyn Forest is a diversified forest complex, which enchants the visitor by its various attractions in every season. In spring, it is worth taking a **footbridge in the Krzemianka Reserve**, situated near Rybniki. In that season nature comes to life again, presenting numerous attractions and the diversified landscape of the area. The educational path leads through a wooden platform and along forest paths. The boards at various sites along the path (1020 m long), inform about local natural curiosities. In summer, by the forest **Lake Komosa**, you can see nesting kingfishers, grey herons and woodpeckers. In autumn, you can see the siskin and the bullfinch. In the winter time, you can hear the sounds of the eagle owl and see herds of dignified European bison in the forest clearings.

A walk in the **Silvartum forest garden in Poczopek** is a particularly interesting way to acquaint yourself with the forest nature. It is a unique place for family and school trips, and even for romantic walks. The Silvartum is located in the heart of the forest and offers numerous attractions, such as the Gallery on the Edge of Forests (a natural mini-museum), Strigiforium (a house for owls), the Birds' Hut, Tropinka (a trail with forest animal tracks), Feng Shui Avenue, and hotels for insects. Other attractions include a pond with many bridges, wooden and stone sculptures and sundials adorning the park. A special place for resting has also been prepared.

Hiking enthusiasts will certainly visit the **the Arboretum of Insurgents of the Uprising of 1863 in Kopna Góra**. The dendrological garden is worth visiting with the whole family. There are benches and tourist sheds between clusters of various trees and bushes. At the far end, hidden among the trees, stands a wooden cottage looking like Baba Yaga's hut. A playground for children has been planned next to a water hole. In 2013, the **National**

Memorial Site in Kopna Góra was put up at the arboretum. The necropolis of 46 soldiers of the November Uprising from Colonel Józef Zaliwski's unit is a tribute to those who fell defending Poland's independence.

The Knyszyn Forest is also a living witness to the events of 1863, so the **Trail of the January Uprising** has been marked within the forest. Former battlefields, the graves of insurgents on Góra św. Jana (St John's Hill), and Pierociosy Hill, various monuments, a small Museum of the History of the Knyszyn Forest in Kopna Góra, and a Forest Sculpture Gallery devoted to the insurgents of 1863 are on the trail, as well as a viewing tower and recreational shelters.

ATTRACTIONS

The Arboretum of Insurgents of the Uprising of 1863 in Kopna Góra

Supraśl Forest Management Office
ul. Podsupraśl 8, 16-030 Supraśl
Phone: + 48 85 7131550

E-mail: suprasl@bialystok.lasy.gov.pl
www.suprasl.bialystok.lasy.gov.pl

Nature footbridge in the Krzemianka Reserve

Knyszyn
al. Niepodległości 31, 19-101 Mońki
Phone: +48 85 7278219
E-mail: knyszyn@bialystok.lasy.gov.pl
www.knyszyn.bialystok.lasy.gov.pl

Knyszyn Forest Landscape Park

ul. abp. gen. Chodakowskiego 6, 16-030 Supraśl
Phone: + 48 85 7183785
sekretariat@pkpk.pl
www.pkpk.wrotapodlasia.pl

Silvartum in Poczopek

Poczopek 6D, 16-113 Szudziałowo
Phone: +48 85 7229640, +48 7229641
krynki@bialystok.lasy.gov.pl
www.krynki.bialystok.lasy.gov.pl

Biebrza National Park

Numerous peat bogs and swamps surrounding the meandering river bed, the kingdom of the elk, and many bird species – this is how we can briefly describe the greatest protected area in Poland, the Biebrza National Park. If you plan to explore those areas, you should take your rain boots and binoculars. When hiking through the park areas from dawn to dusk, you will see many diverse plant and animal species. It is easier to watch them from numerous footbridges and viewing towers. Regardless of the season, a habit of admiring the nature of the Biebrza environs, with their beaver lodges and flying cranes, is addictive.

The Biebrza National Park created in 1993 is the largest national park in Poland. (59,223 ha). Vast peat bogs, natural swamps and wetlands with habitats of approximately 270 bird species are protected areas. By the Biebrza River, you can see extremely rare birds, including the aquatic warbler, the great snipe, the ruff, the snipe, the crane, the Eurasian eagle-owl, and Montagu's harrier. When visiting the Biebrza National Park, you can also meet the king of the marshlands – the elk. It is not particularly difficult, because numerous viewing points, platforms, and towers on hundreds of kilometres of tourist trails facilitate observation. The **viewing terrace in Goniądz** is one of the many places which offer a scenic view of the Biebrza River panorama. It is worth coming here in spring, when the river is still not overgrown with greenery, and flocks of birds nest at the river backwaters.

When in the Biebrza National Park, you might also like to visit the **Oswiec Fortress** dating from the 2nd half of the 19th century. In the tsar's fortress that has never been conquered, you can visit the "cry room," and the "death tunnel," and listen to the legend about the Black Lady. Only guided tours are available. The Central Fort I, the New Fort IV, and the Museum of the Oswiec Fortress are open to tourists.

A characteristic swampy scent hangs in the air over the Biebrza National Park. You can hear the sounds of a red deer calling, an elk wailing, and an owl hooting. In the bird migratory season, you can watch the scenic view of flying geese or cranes. A trip along the 35-kilometre-long **Tsar's Route** (Carska Droga) allows for close contact with Biebrza nature. Elks, foxes, and ermines strolling here are the hosts of the area, where animals always go first. Viewing points and resting points (the Tower on Ławki Swamp and Grobla Honczarowska Causeway) are on the road leading from Laskowiec to Goniądz.

Ławki Swamp is the largest open marshland area. It consists of vast low-moors, and meadows stretching over many kilometres. Rare bird species nest here, e.g. great snipes, aquatic warblers, and western curlews. The area is also used by short-eared owls, short-toed eagles, and greater spotted eagles for their predator activities. Among plants, Polish native orchids – yellow ladies' slippers stand out. Each August, the swamps host the **Biebrza Haymaking** – an event during which the visitors can try their hands in cutting with a traditional scythe, or participate in the Championship of Cutting Swamp Meadows for Nature.

Close to the Ławki Swamp there is a 3.5-km long **Grobla Honczarowska Causeway educational trail**. Many tree

species grow along the trail, e.g. water elder, bird cherry, and European ash, as well as many orchids, Siberian irises, and daphnes. When trekking along the trail, one can see many tracks of wild animals, and – with a bit of luck hear or see an elk or red deer.

When visiting the Biebrza National Park, you may also choose a walk along **educational paths**. On the **Dunes Path** (2.4 km), you can admire the highest and the most beautiful dune elevations extending among swamp forests and wetlands. Animal tracks can be seen on the sandy ground. Observation is easier because there are viewing points on the way, such as the tower on Wielka Góra. A view of the picturesque Biebrza Valley extends from the hilltop. The **Kapice Beech Woods Trail (Brzeziny Kapickie, 4.5 km)** runs in the vicinity of Goniądz. The trail is surrounded by swampy beech woods with numerous beaver lodges. The path ends in a wooden hide where you can watch animals. Also worth noting in the green-marked **Biały Grąd (White Oak-hornbeam Forest) trail**. The 3.2 km-long trail runs among seasonally flooded meadows, from Mścichy up to a campsite and a viewing tower. To thread it, particularly in spring, rubber boots will be of use. On the trail, you can watch for various water-swamp bird species, e.g. herons, wild geese, and cranes.

The Red Swamp Reserve is another attraction in the Biebrza National Park. It abounds with a huge biodiversity of flora and fauna. Peat bogs, wetlands, and dense woods offer a refuge to the elk, deer, roe deer, wolf, and lynx. The white-tailed eagle, the golden eagle, and the lesser spotted eagle nest here. Five tourist trails lead through the reserve, and there is an educational path, 700 m long, that ends by the viewing platform.

ATTRACTIONS

Biebrza National Park

Oswiec-Twierdza 8, 19-110 Goniądz
Phone: +48 85 7380620, +48 7383000 ext. 233
E-mail: sekretariat@biebrza.org.pl
www.biebrza.org.pl

Oswiec Fortress

Oswieckie Towarzystwo Fortyfikacyjne (OTF)
Oswiec-Twierdza, 19-110 Goniądz
Phone: +48 600941954

Environs of Suwałki and Augustów

Picturesque lakes hidden in the forest, vast panoramas extending at the foot of the hills (sometimes two hundred meters high), and the soft hills around Sejny are perfect for biking. These are among the attractive nature paths in the Wigry National Park. Appreciate the beauty of the Suwałki Region.



Environs of Suwałki and Augustów –
Camaldolese Monastery in Wigry, photo J. Gumowski

Around 70% of the **Augustów Forest** tree stands consist of pine woods. The area has a specific microclimate, due to aromatic oils released by pine trees. It shows a very beneficial influence on the respiratory system. The source of Augustowianka mineral water, which springs some 482 meters below ground level, is also a local wealth. A well-developed system of cycling and hiking routes adds to the Augustów Forest attractions. An equestrian trail also leads through the forest. Augustów lakes and the canal offer opportunities for water tourism – kayakig and cruises.

The woodlands of the **Wigry National Park** cover the northern part of the Augustów Forest. It is best to start a visit to the park from **Krzywe**. The Park offices with the exhibition devoted to local nature and culture “By Lake Wigry” and the ethnographic exhibition “Saving from oblivion” are on display. A playground for children and information boards are located next to the building of the Wigry National Park management.

The Forest educational path starts right past the centre of the park management. A walk along the path takes less than an hour. The route goes through the various neighbouring forest habitats, including deciduous forests, a riparian forest, a mixed forest, and a swamp forest. It also passes through Stone Age archaeological excavations. The Suchary nature path begins barely 800 m from the centre of the Wigry National Park. It leads through forest lakes (*suchary*) and peat bog woods. You can see beaver lodges on the way, and sometimes even their constructors. A viewing tower and a resting shelter are situated on the trail.

Picturesque hills, woodlands, and numerous lakes mark the landscape of the northern part of the region. Take the **“Across Sejny Hills” cycling trail** to explore this part of the region. The trail is about 35 kilometres long, starting in the woods, on the east bank of Lake Wigry. The trail leads further through villages, among picturesque lakes connected by the small Gremzdówka River, passing by historic Old Believers’ churches (*molenna*) in Karolin and Giby, and a memorial to the victims of Augustów round-up (*Oblawa augustowska*).

Across Sejny Hills cycling trail: Wężał wilderness by Lake Wigry – Maćkowa Ruda – Wysoki Most – Gremzdówka – Lake. Miałkie – Buda Ruska – Lake. Jurkowo – Jezioroki – Lake. Głucho – Karolin – Pokrowski – Lake Białe – Lake. Czarne – Wierśnie – Lake. Okuniewo – Lake Gieret – Giby – Pomorze – bridge over Marycha – Posejnele – Grodzisko Hill - Pomorze reserve– Degucie – Posejny – Sejny

When visiting the north of the region, you should not miss Mount Cisowa . The hill known as “the Suwałki Fujiyama” (256 above sea level) is an excellent viewing point, offering a vast panorama of the

Suwałki Landscape Park with the Szeszupa Hollow with a dozen or so lakes, picturesque meadows, peat bogs, and hills.

The chief asset of the Suwałki Landscape Park is its postglacial landscape with a number of groove lakes, river valleys, boulder aggregations, moraines, kames, and eskers. Among the land relief forms, the hanging valley Gaciska is worth noting. This interesting geological form, also called **suspended valley**, is a topographic low spanning in the form of a 4-km long arch, 10 m above the level of the Czarna Hańcza river. The picturesque land relief of this hanging valley is best seen from close range from the educational trail **“Through the Czarna Hańcza river valley”**, or from an osar hill in the landscape-geological reserve **Głazowisko Bachanowo (Bachanowo boulder field)**. On the area of 0.98 hectares, there are approx. 10 thousand of erratic boulders of various sizes brought by the continental glacier many thousand years ago. Among them there are granite boulders, gneisses, sandstones, limestones, basalts, and rhyolites, the largest reaches 8 m in circumference. The boulders occur in four terraces: in the Czarna Hańcza river bed, at the valley bottom, 10 m above the river bed and 25 m above the water table, on glacial outwash surface. The aggregation represents an exceptional example of postglacial landscape therefore a nature reserve was created around it in 1972. Erratic boulders can be also seen in the **Rutka reserve** along educational trail “Rocks and minerals of the Suwałki Landscape Park” (the trail is 1.1 km long), and in the **Głazowisko Łopuchowskie reserve**, situated between Lake Hańcza and Łopuchowo locality. Here, an aggregations of boulders cover the area of 16 hectares.

Across the area of the Suwałki Landscape Park, a number of educational and biking trails was marked. The seat of the Park in Turtul is a convenient point to start the sightseeing of the Suwałki Landscape Park. It has a tourist information desk, as well as mountain bike, cross-country ski, and rowing and paddling equipment rental services.

ATTRACTIONS

Suwałki Landscape Park

Malesowizna 24, 16-404 Jeleniewo
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turtulspk@gmail.com
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Wigry National Park

Krzywe 82, 16-400 Suwałki
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Email: wigry_pn@su.onet.pl
www.wigry.org.pl

CERTIFIED TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

Augustów, CIT, rynek Zygmunta Augusta 44, Phone: +48 87 6432883, it@urząd.augustow.pl
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