

Title:

Once Golden, Again Golden Poland

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575

Summary:

From a global and historic perspective it seems as though Poland had reached its golden era around the 16th century during the wealthy and powerful Jagiellonian Dynasty and that it has been largely downhill ever since.

Keywords:

Poland, travel to Poland, Poland travel information, travel to Europe, vacation information

Article Body:

From a global and historic perspective it seems as though Poland had reached its golden era around the 16th century during the wealthy and powerful Jagiellonian Dynasty and that it has been largely downhill ever since. The Polish have taken a tremendous beating during the second 500 years of their existence but have had remarkable and admirable success pulling their vast and stunningly beautiful land back together to make up today's modern Third Republic. Travel to Poland to experience fast-pasted cosmopolitan centers like Krakow, rewind in time in the horse-and-carriage countryside or lose yourself completely in one of the forested national parks.

Poland, Pillage and Plunder

Whether Poland has been synonymous with bridge or battlefield to its surrounding neighbors, the results have not been pleasant. As early as the 13th century, Polish states were ravaged by Mongolian raiders due to the lack of natural boundaries and its strategic position between east and west, which would again become a curse during the World Wars and the Cold War. There were few cities that emerged from WWII unscathed, but the baffling restorative reconstruction has left even the locals duped by the perfectly replicated Baroque and Gothic architecture. Thriving cities like Krakow and Warsaw are hubs of both traditional and modern Poland, showcasing contemporary art, classic jazz and an unfettered youthful spirit. Auschwitz Nazi Concentration Camp and Holocaust Museum is located just outside Krakow, which became the epicenter for the Nazi battle against Europe's Jews. Also in this area is a World Heritage Site known as Southern Little Poland where an enchanting collection of medieval wooden churches still stand among the Carpathian Mountains.

Hillside, Countryside, Seaside

Poland has a unique draw due to its positioning on the Baltic Sea and its shared borders with Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia. Poland today is finally the more tranquil, dynamic and cheaper cousin of its neighbors. Visit the Great Mazury Lake District in the northeast where nearly 15% of the area is covered by pristine lakes and canals, dotted with picturesque villages. This is a haven for cycling, canoeing and hiking. Don't miss the 13th century Malbork Castle, the headquarters for the Order of the Teutonic Knights, which holds the title as the largest medieval castle in Europe. Then, as you find your way to some of the Baltic seaside resorts, stop along the coast in Gdansk, the historic medieval Hanseatic trading city that was perfectly restored in the 20th century. While you make your way east to visit Bialowieski National Park in order to see Europe's last surviving native Bison, stop in the 14th century town of Torun to pay homage to Nicolaus Copernicus' place of birth. For skiing and hiking, the Sudeten Mountain Range winds through part of southern Poland, including the popular escapes in the Tetra Mountains.

Although the ravages of the 20th century are behind Poland, they are certainly not out of mind. The Polish have a blossoming culture that emerged vehemently from the violence and repression of the Cold War. The reactive and eager populace finally has found a place to shine artistically, politically (as part of NATO and the EU) and domestically with open arms to those curious about the Polish way of life. Travel to Poland and discover a proud and established nation that is equally as excited to finally welcome you!

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