

MINI**GUIDEBOOK**

Culture and historical monuments

The north-eastern Mazovia

MAZOVIA.
heart of Poland

Content:

Sylvia Kulczyk

Cover design and graphics:

PANCZAKIEWICZ ART.DESIGN / Paweł Panczakiewicz

www.panczakiewicz.pl

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Mazowieckie Voivodeship

03-719 Warszawa, ul. Jagiellońska 26

tel. (+22) 5979-100, fax: (+22) 5979-290

e-mail: urzed_marszalkowski@mazovia.pl

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THE NORTH-EASTERN MAZOVIA

The mini guide you are holding in your hands will acquaint you with the greatest cultural attractions of the north-eastern part of Mazovia, and specifically of the following poviats: of Ostrołęka, Przasnysz, Maków Mazowiecki, Pułtusk, Serock, Wyszaków and Ostrów Mazowiecka. The major part of the discussed area is situated on the territory of the White and Green Forests. These lands are often called "Kurpie". In the former forest settlements the rich Kurpie folk customs, different in the north and the south of the region, have been preserved. In the Green Forest, the centres best-known for maintaining the tradition are Kadzidło, Łyse and Myszyniec, and in the White Forest - Pniewo. Church holidays, fairs and festivities celebrated in these towns are of unique charm. The traces of the vivid past are also enchanted in the small streets of the Mazovia towns. One of the most charming ones is Pułtusk, not without reason called the Venice of Mazovia. Valuable monuments of church architecture can be found among others in Ostrołęka, Przasnysz and Brok on the Bug River.

The largest town in this part of Mazovia is Ostrołęka, but many of the above mentioned towns are located in the immediate vicinity of Warsaw. Both towns, together with Wyszaków and Pułtusk, are the best starting points for a trip. Each town or village can be reached by bus (PKS), but our own means of transport will make us independent of the bus schedule.



A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE

The main axes of the described area are the valleys of the Narew and Bug Rivers. The riverside meadows and brushwood are very valuable environmentally, as they are the habitat for many animal and plant species. In spring and autumn birds migrate along the rivers. At that time in the sky one can see V-formations of cranes, flocks of ducks and many other bird species. The north-eastern Mazovia was covered with impenetrable forests for ages. The nearest from Warsaw was the Nieporęt Forest, small patches of which have survived until the present day. The northern edges of Mazovia are covered by the Green Forest. On sandy dunes,

balm-smelling pine woods whisper. Wonderful spots of ancient forest can still be found here today. Huge trees overshadow whole stretches of bilberries and cowberries. Dune embankments divide the river valleys, which are filled with peat bogs and marshy meadows. The Szkwa, Rozoga and Omulew Rivers roll their waters to the Narew River. In the bifurcation of the Narew and Bug Rivers the White Forest is located. Its name derives from the colour of sand, which in many places emerges from under the forest bed. The local forests are the favourite mushrooming place for the capital city inhabitants.

The swelled waters of the connected Narew and Bug Rivers form the Zegrzyński Lake. The extensive surface of the artificial reservoir is a curiosity in the Mazovia landscape, which is deprived of lakes. On a high western shore of the lake there is Se-

IN THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF HISTORY

rock with its unique fortified church, and a charming palace in Jadwisin.

Roadside chapels, crosses and church towers visible from afar, beautifully harmonize with a mosaic of forests, meadows and fields. In many villages traditional wooden houses, a distinctive feature of which are elaborate ornaments, have been preserved.

For years researchers have been trying to establish what in fact the name "Mazowsze" means. It is usually divided into two parts: "maz" and "wsze". The second element is associated with the word "vše", which denotes a settled country. The first part is more difficult to explain; most probably it should be derived from the word "mazać" (smear) and "mazidło" (ointment). This term may have been used to nickname the inhabitants of the region who were smeared with muddy soil, it may be also derived from tar burning, that are "maż" (soft greasy substance).

Explaining the region's name is as difficult as marking its exact boundaries. Due to multiple changes over the centuries they have

become blurred in many places. The biggest in Poland Mazowieckie Voivodeship, which has existed since 1999, occupies the largest part of the historical Mazovia, stretching slightly further to the east and south.

The discussed part of the region was covered by impenetrable forests during the entire Middle Ages period, which is why it used to be named the Forest Mazovia. The Mazovia lands were a part of the Piast monarchy from the times of Mieszko I. In the reign of Władysław Herman (Ladislaus Herman) and Bolesław Krzywousty (Boleslaus the Wry-mouthed) numerous towns, the inhabitants of which grew wealthy through trade, were built in the northern Mazovia. From the end of the 12th century, when power was seized by Konrad I (Conrad I), the Duchy of Mazovia was politically independent. The forest borderland was inhabited by hunters, beekeepers and tar makers. In the 14th centu-

ry settlers from the overpopulated parts of the region began to come to the north. The newcomers from the western part of Mazovia were offered favourable conditions, as the Mazovia dukes were anxious about gathering the largest possible amount of wood. The demand for Polish pines and yews was brought about by the coming of the epoch of great geographical discoveries and the development of shipbuilding. In the 15th century, in the reign of Duke Janusz I, many manor seats were built in northern Mazovia, for example, in Maków Mazowiecki, Różan and Ostrołęka. The Duke visited his possessions regularly, controlling the economy and presiding over the courts. The frequent visits of the sovereign had a beneficial impact on the economic and cultural development of the towns.

As the ruling families from the Piast dynasty were dying out, subsequent Mazo-

via lands were included into the Crown. In 1526, the last of the dukes of Mazovia, Janusz III, who was ruling in Warsaw, died heirless. Due to the fact that the sad event took place only a year and a half after the death of his older brother Stanisław, and since both dukes were in their prime, the circumstances of their death remained the subject of gossip and inquiry for a long time. After the incorporation into the Crown, the described part of Mazovia was included in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship with its capital in Warsaw. Until the mid-17th century Mazovia, being a stable centre of the great Republic of Poland, was in its golden age. Intensive development of towns began. In the area discussed, Pułtusk, Przasnysz, Ostrołęka, Brok and Wyszaków among others were growing in strength. The majority of towns were partially agricultural, and their major source of income was trade. The capital earned in this

way was eagerly invested in craft; numerous water mills, grinding workshops and paper mills were established in towns at that time. The lands between the Bug and Narew Rivers remained in the hands of the bishops of Płock from the 11th century. The summer residence of church dignitaries was in Pułtusk, the bishops readily rested also in Brok and Wyszaków on the Bug River. Over the centuries they became known as caring hosts, who attached a lot of weight to preserving the good condition of the forests.

The settlement of the forests in the northern Mazovia was still in progress. The main income source of the settlers coming from somewhere on the Vistula River was hunting, fishery, forest bee-keeping and forest management. They also hewed lime phloem, called "kurpie" - this is exactly how the new inhabitants of the Green Forest were named.

The end of the golden age came together with the Swedish Deluge in 1655. This destructive war, which lasted for several years, and the concurrent epidemics stopped the development of the entire country for more than a hundred years. Towns became ruined, and many villages were almost totally depopulated. Several dozen years later northern Mazovia was simultaneously harassed: by the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia, the fight over the Polish throne between August II (Augustus II) and Stanisław Leszczyński, and the plague. The troops were plundering and destroying the forest settlements. The Kurpie people bravely supported the Polish king in the fight over the throne. The best-known hero of this episode in history is Stach Konwa, a forest beekeeper from Myszyniec; one of many who paid with their life for their allegiance to the King.

The rebuilding after the ravages of war made very slow progress. In 1730 Bishop Stanisław Żaluzki began a repeat settlement of the White Forest. The Kurpie people were settled in the forests, but only those were chosen who knew a lot about forest management.

By the end of the 18th century, Poland began to gradually disappear from the map of Europe. The last attempt to defend the sovereignty of the Republic of Poland was the Kościuszko Uprising. The beginning of the insurrection was the so-called Madaliński's march; Madaliński was one of the commanders, he set off on March 12th, 1794 from Ostrołęka, leading a group of 1200 soldiers. Unfortunately, the participants' heroism did not manage to guarantee military success.

As a result of the third partition of Poland, the discussed part of Mazovia, similarly to the majority of the region, fell to

Prussia. In 1806-1807 the Napoleonic campaign swept through these lands. Successful battles with the Russians were fought near Pułtusk (December 26th and 27th, 1806) and Ostrołęka (February 16th, 1807). In 1807, the described area was incorporated in the Warsaw Duchy, and in 1815 into the Kingdom of Poland. The period of enlargement and development lasted until 1830. More and more inhabitants were arriving, and cities underwent changes in the spatial order and in the development plan. Many public buildings come from this period, for example, the town hall in Ostrołęka. The image of Mazovia from the period dating back to a hundred and so years ago will be complete if we realise that in Różan or Serock, for example, at that time there was not even one brick house. The crucial role in the development of craft and trade was played by the Jewish population, which constituted

the majority in many towns. In 1830 the November Uprising broke out in Warsaw. The majority of the population of Mazovia, irrespective of faith and social status, supported the armed bid for independence. Unfortunately, divergences among the generals commanding the uprising and the enormous Russian advantage led to defeat. The Polish defeat in the Battle of Ostrołęka (May 26th, 1831) is considered as the beginning of the uprising's end. After the uprising's defeat the Kingdom's autonomy was considerably limited. It was finally liquidated after the defeat of the subsequent uprising in 1864. The fights that broke out in January 1863 after the impressment order into the Russian army encompassed the entire Mazovia. Together with Tsar sentences and exile to Siberia, they caused the death of thousands of people. The post-uprising repression considerably changed the character of

the region. Church goods were confiscated and numerous monasteries were liquidated. Many towns were deprived of their municipal rights. Among the degraded ones there were Serock, Wyszaków and Myszyniec. During World War I many battles took place in Mazovia. Ostrołęka, Przasnysz and Różan were the three of the most seriously damaged towns. Right after independence was regained, the bloody episode of the Polish-Bolshevik War began. Only after 1920 did a period of reconstruction and stabilisation begin, but was soon disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Mazovia was occupied by the Germans. The Jewish population of the Mazovia towns suffered a terrible fate; initially, the Jews were placed in ghettos, and then slaughtered in death camps. During the whole period of occupation resistance troops were active in Mazovia. The region was liberated in two phases. Between

July and October 1944 the Red Army accompanied by the First Corp of the Polish Army occupied the territories between the Bug, Vistula and Narew Rivers. The rest of Mazovia was liberated in January 1945.

From 1945 onwards Mazovia, similarly to the rest of Poland, lived according to the rhythm of the so-called six-year plans. After the several-year period of reconstruction, the establishment of new and sometimes huge industrial plants began. An example of such an investment on a large scale is the cellulose and paper-making company in Ostrołęka. In 1975, as a result of the administrative reform, several dozens of small voivodeships were created in Poland. Ostrołęka was elevated to the rank of the capital town of the voivodeship. The town performed this function until January 1st, 1999, when the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in its current shape was created.

OSTROŁĘKA

In the battle fire

The town, which has a population of more than fifty thousand inhabitants, is an important industrial and cultural centre of the north-eastern Mazovia. Although Ostrołęka is dominated by modern housing, it has been a town since 1373. However, history lavished canon boom and battle fire on it. The victory was not always on the Polish side. During the Swedish Deluge Ostrołęka was occupied by the Swedes, and during the war of succession in 1733-1735 the Saxon and Russian armies marched through the town several times. On March 12th, 1794, leading a group of 1200 soldiers, Antoni Madaliński set off from Ostrołęka, which was the beginning of the Kościuszko Uprising. Several years later, on February 16th, 1807, in the vicinity of the town the Russian

army was defeated by the French troops. This event is commemorated by the note on the Triumphal Arch in Paris. The next war phase was not as happy for the Poles. The defeat, suffered by the Polish troops in the battle against the Russians on May 26th, 1831, is considered as the beginning of the November Uprising's end. Over eleven thousand soldiers were killed then. By the end of 1944 the town was almost completely bombed. Taking into account such courses of events, it is a kind of miracle that a few interesting monuments have survived in Ostrołęka.

The most valuable mementoes of the past are the church and monastery of St. Anthony of Padova. The Baroque temple was built in 1666-1696, and at the beginning of the 18th century characteristic galleries, which served as a calvary, were added. The interior of the church is decorated by a Rococo polychrome, made in 1762-1764 by Walenty

Żebrowski. The paintings depict the history of the patron's life and of the miracles performed by him. The majority of the furnishings come from the 18th century. The late-Baroque and Rococo altars delight with their rich decorations. The eighteenth-century organ is also a valuable monument.

The centre of the town is outlined by the marketplace, named after the hero of the 1831 battle, General Józef Bem. In the middle of the square there is a monument dedicated to him. A slender tower of the Classical town hall dated 1824 overlooks the marketplace. Opposite, in the post office building, dated 1828, there is Muzeum Kultury Kurpiowskiej (Museum of the Kurpie Culture).

The exhibitions present rich archaeological, historical and ethnographic collections. Many variants of the Kurpie outfit delight the eye and offer the possibility of analysing the differences among them. Due to the illuminated

mock-up, you can become acquainted with the course of the battle that took place in the Ostrołęka area in 1831. In the museum there is also a biographical exhibition dedicated to the poet Wiktor Gomulicki, who was born in Ostrołęka, and collections of Polish graphic arts and paintings. The works of such artists as Wojciech Weiss, Tytus Czyżewski or Tymon Niesiołowski can be admired here. Moreover, noteworthy permanent exhibitions are organised.

Ostrołęka is picturesquely situated at the bank of the Narew River. The eye of those walking by the river is attracted by the modern arched A. Madaliński bridge. The author of the design of this interesting construction is Marek Łagoda.

Muzeum Kultury Kurpiowskiej
(Museum of the Kurpie Culture)
pl.Generała Bema 8, tel. 029 7643500
www.muzeum-ostroleka.art.pl
www.ostroleka.pl



KADZIDŁO

The Kurpie wedding

Kadzidlo is one of the most vibrant centres of the Kurpie folk customs. The name of the village derives from the fragrant oils used during church services and for incensing the sick. They were made from dried seeds of juniper and powdered amber. The centre of the village is marked by the towers of the Neo-Baroque Church under the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the building was erected at the end of the 19th century. The temple is distinguished by noteworthy furnishings - particular attention should be paid to a Renaissance high altar dating back to the 17th century, which was brought here from the Church of St. Ann in Kodeń in Podlussia. Our eye is also attracted by two stoups made from huge shells, which were a gift of the Krasinścy family. Ornamen-

tal feretrum, which are worn during holiday processions, are kept in the church. The Corpus Christi procession is one the most solemn ones.

On the cemetery hill, across from the church there is a large chapel with a characteristic quadrangular tower, built in the mid-20th century.

In the outskirts of the village, by the entrance from the Ostrołęka direction, a small open-air ethnographic museum is located. The visitors can see a typical Kurpie homestead here. The farmyard includes a peasant cottage, a granary, a woodshed, a barn, a riding track and a well with a sweep bent over it. In the interiors, original furniture, traditional ornaments and farm tools are exhibited. In the territory of the homestead many interesting events take place. The organizers aim is to save the vivid culture of the region. On the third Sunday of June the whole of Kadzidło and thousands of

guests who have arrived for this occasion enjoy themselves at a wedding party. The staging of the Kurpie wedding does not omit any of the traditional elements of this ceremony. After "rajby", that is, engagement, a ceremonial departure to the wedding site takes place. The colourful wedding procession goes in britzkas and carts to the solemn church service. It has happened several times that the wedding was not only staged; during the service the bride and groom administered an authentic sacrament to themselves. During the wedding, "oczepiny" takes place, the essential parts of which are bread rolling and collecting money into a bonnet. The guests are welcomed by the regional dishes and the sounds of a Kurpie folk band, which guarantees a good party.

The Kadzidło Sunday, organised in the territory of the Kurpie homestead on the first Sunday of September, serves as a presentation of all signs of the regional folk customs. The guests

will enjoy the performances of folk bands, watch folk artists while working and taste regional dishes. A large circle of contestants and spectators gather during the games and contests. The contests of butter making, threshing cereals with flails and special tying of a scarf ("na zakład") enjoy particular popularity.

A treasury of the Kurpie art is also Izba Pamięci Czesławy Konopkówny (Czesława Konopkówna Exhibition Room). Visiting the reconstructed interior of her family house, one cannot help but get the impression that the famous folk artist has left just for a moment.

Zagroda Kurpiowska (Kurpie Homestead)
ul. Trasa Mazurska 2, tel. 029 7618200

Izba Pamięci Czesławy Konopkówny
(Czesława Konopkówna Exhibition Room)
ul. Targowa 15, tel., 029 7618486
www.kadzidlo.pl

DĄBRÓWKA

Folk Baroque

The pride of the village, which is lost in forests and meadows, is the wooden Church under the invocation of St. Ann, built in 1756. Initially, the temple was located in Kadzidło, but when a new church was built there, it was moved to Dąbrówka in 1883. Inside, visitors will be delighted with the Baroque altars of folk character.

CZARNIA

On a hunt

Lost in the woods of the Green Forest, the village derived its name from an iron blacksmith's shop that functioned here in the 18th century. The metal was smelted from turf oar, extracted on the local boggy meadows. In Czarnia a few traditional Kurpie houses have been preserved. They are distinguished by decorative cornices above the windows, tops covered with boards and "šparogi" (wind boards which cross over the roof ridge).

The brick Neo-Gothic Church under the invocation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built at the beginning of the 20th century according to a design by Franciszek Przeclawski. A characteristic element of

the interior design are items made from amber, which naturally can be found in the territory of the Green Forest. The Kurpie people were occupied with the exploitation of hardened resin deposits for ages, and an amber necklace is an important element of the traditional women's outfit. In front of the church there is a monument, commemorating a Franciscan missionary, Father Zenon Żebrowski. Father Zeno, as he was called by the faithful, was born in nearby Surowe, but his vocation led him to Japan. The display in a museum, which is established in the previous building of the vicarage, tells about the missionary's connections with both countries - the one where he was born, and the one to which he devoted half a century of his work. You can see here photographs and books documenting the missionary activity of Father

Zeno, interesting handicraft products and Kurpie folk outfits.

It is worth coming to Czarnia on the first Sunday of June and...go hunting. And this is the motto of a vivid event, which cultivates the old Kurpie hunting customs. A part of the festivities is a review of folk bands and handicraft products sale.

While in Czarnia, it is worth going on a trip to the nearby reserve which bears the same name. Its biggest curiosity are pines used as hives for wild forest bees, from the hollows of which honey was gathered. Forest bee-keepers belonged to one of the most respected groups in Kurpie society. They had their own organization and numerous privileges granted by Polish kings. Every forest bee-keeper had a certain number of trees used as hives for wild forest bees. Wild bee-hives were marked and described in books. Bee-keepers' ac-

tivities included not only gathering honey, but also cleaning wild-bee hives, removing unnecessary honeycombs and cutting new hollows. They were always situated from the south-eastern side, at the height of a few to a dozen or so metres. Getting to a hollow full of bees situated high above the ground was not an easy task. To do it, bee-keepers used ropes and a trunk of a young spruce with stumps of branches which served as rungs of a ladder. In order to calm bees, they incensed them with a piece of smouldering rotten wood, called "kurzysko". Honeycombs taken out from the hives were collected in a special wooden bucket, called "kadłubek". The honey gathered with such an effort reached the royal table. After the collapse of the Republic of Poland forest bee-keeping fell into significant decline. In the mid-19th century in the Green Forest there were

only 33 wild bee-hives. In "Czarnia" reserve you can see four pines used as hives for wild forest bees. One of them is still a living tree. From the village a green trail leads to the reserve. On the way, at the junction with the Chorzele - Myszyniec road, there is a noteworthy chapel of regional character. It was dedicated to St. Hubert, the patron of hunters. Up a wooden trunk, topped with the characteristic "śparogi", a bear carved in wood climbs. These animals could still be met in the Green Forest in the 18th century.

MYSZYNIC

The joy of honey harvest

The small town on the Rozoga River, which has a population of three thousand people, is considered to be the heart of the Kurpie region. In the second half of the 17th century, the best-known hero of the region, Stach Konwa, lived here and had a seat on the bee-keeping court. During the Great Northern War he fought with the Russian, Swedish and Saxon armies, which were plundering the Kurpie settlements. Taken prisoner, he refused to break the oath of allegiance to Stanisław Leszczyński and was hanged on a pine. The main street of Myszyniec was named after Stach Konwa. Some of the houses built on this street are interesting examples of the traditional architecture.

The towers of the Neo-Gothic Church under the invocation of the Holy Trinity overlook the small town. The huge five-nave temple was built in 1909-1922 according to a design by Adolf Schimmelpfennig. Inside, our attention is attracted by a modern polychrome based on the Kurpie motifs. During holidays, women wearing traditional costumes can be met in the Myszyniec church.

A brick bell tower which is located next to the church is much older than the temple itself. Erected at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, it is considered to be the latest example of the Gothic style in Mazovia. In the building's wall there are two iron hoops, which were used to detain criminals.

On the last Sunday of August, folk customs and honey enthusiasts from all over Poland arrive in Myszyniec. In the suburb

called "Zawodzie" a fair called "the Kurpie Honey Harvest" takes place. The event is a great occasion to become acquainted with the treasure of the Kurpie folk customs, and to enrich a home pantry with the best-quality kinds of honey. When the winter cold sets in, jars full of gold will remind us of aromatic summer days.

ŁYSE

Colours of the Palm Sunday

The solemn celebration of Palm Sunday in Łyse is famous for its unique atmosphere. The Kurpie palms are made from crepe paper flowers and green branches; they are often decorated with colourful ribbons. Some of them are as big as ten metres high. Every year the contest for the prettiest and highest palm is held. The celebration of Palm Sunday begins with a solemn procession and a Mass, said in the Church under the invocation of Christ Universal King, still shining with its newness. Many women wear traditional outfits for this occasion. The Kurpie women from the Green Forest wear skirts with narrow and colourful stripes, and embroidered aprons with a lace rim on them. They put sapphire

or green bodices on white shirts. The outfits are complemented by amber necklaces. The heads of young girls are decorated with high "czółka" (decorative bands) made of black velvet, decorated with sequins and bunches of ribbons. The colours of the palms perfectly complement the richness of the faithful's outfits. A feast of colour beautifully contrasts with the white walls of the temple designed by Anna and Wojciech Kawęczyński. The wooden nineteenth-century Church of St. Ann, located a few hundred meters further, is also worth popping into. Around the old temple majestic pines rustle, and the interior is graced by charming folk paintings.

Religious celebrations are accompanied by performances of regional bands and a huge fair, the main attraction of which are, of course, the palms. Each of them is unique so the choice is really hard. During

the fair one may taste the delicacies of the Kurpie cuisine. "Rejbak" (a kind of a potato pie filled with meat) and juniper beer (a drink made from slightly fermented juniper berries) are the delectable culinary card of the region.

LELIS

From prehistory to modern times

The main task of the ethnographic centre in Lelis is documenting the history and tradition of the region. The reconstructed interior of the Kurpie peasant cottage shows what the everyday life of the region's inhabitants looked like centuries ago. Special exhibitions are devoted to various forms of the Kurpie peoples' activity – by watching them, you can become acquainted with, among others, the art of fishing and the amber craft or weaving. Particular interest of visitors is aroused by the exposition of old farm machines. It is hard to believe that devices that today surprise everybody with their appearance, were years ago invaluable help

on the farm. The museum in Lelis touches also upon the oldest history of the region. Currently, archaeological finds dating back to the Middle Stone Age can be seen, and plans for the future include the reconstruction of a village dating back to six thousand years ago.

A beautiful example of the respect for the architectural tradition of the region is also the church in Lelis. The wooden temple under the invocation of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was built only a few years ago. Its silhouette perfectly refers to the architectural tradition of the region.

Ośrodek Etnograficzny
(Ethnographic Centre),
tel. 029 7611077
www.lelis.pl

PRZASNYSZ

Duke's gratitude

According to the legend, Duke Konrad I Mazowiecki (Conrad I of Mazovia) got lost one day while hunting. The duke, tired with wandering around the forest, was taken in by a miller, whose name was Przaśnik. As a sign of his gratitude the Duke granted him the nearby lands, and gave an order to name the future settlement Przasnysz. The town, which has existed since the 13th century, was granted municipal rights in 1427. Until the period of the Swedish wars, the town, favourably situated on the route leading to Warmia and Prussia, was a significant trade centre. The enemy's invasion, fires and a seven-time epidemic curbed the development of Przasnysz. In the town, which now has

a population of several thousand inhabitants, interesting traces of the ancient splendour have been preserved. In spite of the flow of time, the medieval urban plan with a square marketplace is still recognizable. On the ground floor of the Classical town hall from the 18th century, which is located in the middle of the square, there is Muzeum Historyczne (History Museum). Making use of its own rich regional collections, as well as of the materials of other institutions, the museum organises interesting temporary exhibitions.

The brick parish church was built in 1474-1485, and then rebuilt several times. The bell tower, which is located next to the church, dates back to the same period. In this temple Stanisław Kostka (Stanislaus Kostka), born in nearby Rostkowo, was baptised. This event is commemorated by

a plaque in the side chapel. The ashes of the Saint's parents and brother rest in the temple.

The most valuable historic monument of Przasnysz is a post-Bernardine church. The temple funded by Paweł Kostka, St. Stanisław's brother, was erected in 1588-1618. It is one of the latest Gothic structures in Poland. In the side chapel there is a painting depicting Our Lady with the Baby Jesus, famous for miracles, which was brought from Rome by the founder of the church.

Muzeum Historyczne
(History Museum)
ul. Rynek 1, tel. 029 7522866
www.przasnysz.pl

ROSTKOWO

St. Stanisław and frogs

St. Stanisław Kostka (Stanislaus Kostka), worshipped as the patron of young people, was born in Rostkowo in 1550. His parents were Jan Kostka, the castellan of Zakroczym, and Małgorzata Kryśka. The Neo-Gothic church was erected at the end of the 19th century according to the design of Adolf Schimmelpfennig. In the Neo-Gothic high altar there is a sculpture, which presents St. Stanisław Kostka (Stanislaus Kostka), taking the Baby Jesus from the hands of Our Lady, and relics of the saint, brought from Rome in 1926. In a building next to the church there is a small gallery; its exposition acquaints visitors to Rostkowo with the person of St. Stanisław Kostka (Stanislaus Kostka).

The figure of the Saint is shrouded in several legends. In the church area there is a stone, which is said to wear the trace of his foot. Visiting Rostkowo on a May afternoon, it is worth stopping for a longer time by a picturesque pond at the back of the temple. It is said that for ages nobody has managed to hear frogs croaking in its waters. St. Stanisław (Stanislaus) forbade the animals to croak, because they interfered with his prayers.

Similarly, in the present day unique silence and calmness that prevail in Rostkowo. The town becomes bustling and crowded only during church celebrations. The church fair on the Sunday after August 15th gathers a few thousand of the faithful. On the Saturday after September 18th (the patron's day) a walking pilgrimage of young people from the entire diocese comes to Rostkowo.

MAKÓW MAZOWIECKI

On a trade route

The Gothic parish church is evidence of the long history of the poviát town, which originated in the Medieval Ages as a trade settlement on a route leading northwards. The brick temple under the invocation of Corpus Christi was built in 1490. The three-nave basilica is distinguished by a pinnacle top. Walking around the church, it is worth paying attention to the erratic blocks in its walls and a millstone. Such materials were often used in the construction of temples in the region. Eight altars make up the interior. The oldest one, dating back to the mid-17th century, is placed in the Baroque chapel of St. Ann. The most valuable mon-

ument of the church is a Mannerist gravestone of the staroste of Różan and Maków Mazowiecki, Jędrzej Noskowski.

An important memento of Maków's past is the lapidary monument made from the gravestones of the damaged Jewish cemetery. The Jews lived in Maków from the second half of the 16th century, and in the first half of the 19th century they constituted 90% of the town's population. The last Judaism followers were taken by the Nazis to the camp in Treblinka in 1942.

Maków Mazowiecki is the last station of a narrow-gauge railway, which gets here from Mława, a town situated several dozen kilometres away from Maków. For the time being the colourful carriages go on their route occasionally, but future plans include starting a regular tourist line.

PUŁTUSK

The Venice of Mazovia

Pułtusk is one of the oldest towns in Mazovia. It was granted municipal rights in 1339, but the settlement on the bank of the Narew River existed much earlier. Similarly to many other towns in the region, Pułtusk had its golden age in the 15th and 16th centuries. Trade and craft earned the inhabitants money, and bishops of Płock, to whom the town belonged, made it an important centre of cultural and intellectual life. Valuable monuments, as well as the enthusiasm for artistic or entertainment events, characteristic for those times, have survived until the present day.

The heart of Pułtusk is the rectangular market square. The square, which is 400 m long, aspires to be acknowledged as the

longest in Europe. At its frontage a few classical stone houses dating back to the first half of the 19th century have been preserved. It is said that at No. 29 at the turn of 1806 and 1807 Napoleon was quartered, resting after a successful battle with the Russians. The town hall, which is situated in the middle of the market square, consists of a Gothic eight-storey tower and a Neo-Classical building, added to the tower after World War II. In the town hall tower there is Muzeum Regionalne (Museum of the Region). One can see here archaeological finds from the territory of the town and its surroundings, as well as rich ethnographic collections. Particular attention should be paid to the chips of the Pułtusk meteorite, which, in the form of stone rain, hit the fields near the town in 1868. It is estimated that 9 tons of high-iron-content material fell there.

On the first Saturday after Corpus Christi, in the market square in Pułtusk, Wielki Jarmark Średniowieczny (Great Medieval Fair) is organized. Participants have the possibility to become acquainted with the arcana of the traditional craft, to try their hand at court dances and to put on historical outfits. Every year, Midsummer Night is also ceremonially celebrated. The most important moment of the holiday is the blessing of the Narew River waters, one can also take part in a contest for the most beautiful garland. At midnight the sky over Pułtusk is illuminated by fireworks. In September the town's inhabitants celebrate the day of their patron, St. Matthew. Games and concerts in the fresh air are simultaneously meant to welcome autumn.

On the northern edge of the market square there is the Basilica under the In-

vocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Matthew. The Gothic three-nave temple was built in 1443 on the order of the bishop Paweł Giżycki. A hundred years later on the order of the bishop Andrzej Noskowski, the architect Giovanni Battista the Venetian added a Renaissance side chapel. The same artist took up the reconstruction of the main nave vault, which he decorated with a geometric net of connected circles. This type of vault, met also in other churches in Mazovia (e.g. in Brok on the Bug River), is called the Pułtusk vault. The majority of the temple's furnishings follow the Baroque style. Fifteen side altars, choir stalls, the ambo and eight epitaphs of the Żaluscy family pride themselves on their rich decorations.

Having left the temple, it is worth examining the front wall. There is a stone in it, the shape of which resembles a human

head. Tradition views it as the head of a pagan god. There is also a legend, according to which it is the head of a thief, who was trying to run away from the church with his spoils and was trapped by the walls. Next to the basilica there is a bell tower dating back to 1507, thoroughly rebuilt in the classical style in the 18th century. Two Baroque gates lead to the basilica territory.

On the northern edge of the market square, which is opposite the basilica, there is a small round castle chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, commonly called Magdalenka. The Renaissance church dating back to the first half of the 16th century is a rare Polish example of a detached temple following a central layout.

To the south of the market square one can see the walls and the tower of the castle of the bishops of Płock. It was erected

on an artificial embankment surrounded by water, which was the remains of the former town. Pułtusk used to be the summer residence of the bishop's court. The first Gothic castle was built in the 14th century, but over the centuries it was damaged and rebuilt many times. The present day building, with the shape of a polygonal horseshoe, was rebuilt in the 20th century, with reference to its classical appearance from the first half of the 19th century. The castle can be reached by using the arcade bridge built at the beginning of the 17th century on the order of Bishop Henryk Firlej. The same church dignitary was the founder of extensive gardens, stretching towards the river. In the castle there is a hotel-conference centre - Dom Polonii (Polonia House). Luxurious hotel rooms, restaurants and banquet rooms foster relaxation and work. The castle includes

also sports areas and a harbour, where romantics can find gondolas ready to go on a cruise. The organisation of ceremonial Easter and Christmas holidays, and wonderful carnival balls by Dom Polonii (Polonia House) has become a tradition.

Muzeum Regionalne
(Museum of the Region),
Rynek 1,
tel. 023 6925132

Dom Polonii
(Polonia House),
tel. 023 6929000,
fax 023 6920524
www.pultusk.pl

SEROCK

Where the Bug and Narew Rivers meet

Serock is one of the oldest towns in Mazovia - the first mentions of its existence date back to the 11th century. The town, picturesquely situated at the junction of the Narew and Bug Rivers, attracts tourists with its neat streets, beautiful views stretching from the embankment and a promenade for pedestrians by the river. The majority of the housing is modern - what remains of the former urban plan is a square market place. The most valuable monument of Serock is the Parish Church under the Invocation of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The late-Gothic temple is a rare example of a church structure of defensive character. The one-nave

building is distinguished by its four-sided tower covered with a roof joining it with the nave. Around the church fierce battles were fought many times. A memento of the turmoil of war is an artillery shell, dating back to the times of World War I, which is stuck in the northern wall. Inside the church, the Baroque furnishings from the 18th century have been preserved.

www.serock.pl

JADWISIN

Rest in a palace

The Neo-Renaissance castle of the Radziwiłłowie family was built in 1890-1892 according to the design of the French architect Francois Arveuf. The building is distinguished by its irregular layout, which consists of several asymmetrically arranged masses. The frontage is decorated by a two-storey square tower. The palace is supported by underpinning made of fieldstones, and its elevation is covered with red ceramic tiles. The mansard roof with wooden spire lights is covered with metal sheeting formed into fish scales. The building is located in a hundred-hectare park, parts of which are designed in the Baroque and English styles. The residence is administered

by the Office of the Council of Ministers. Once a closed and closely guarded structure, today it willingly meets at its doors all guests.

Centrum Obsługi Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów (Centre of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister Service)

Ośrodek Wypoczynkowy Jadwisin
(Jadwisin Leisure Centre)
tel. 022 7826541, fax 022 7826731,
www.owjadwisin.pl

JABŁONNA

Visiting the Poniatowscy family

Only 20 km from the centre of the capital city, in an extensive park there is a beautiful palace. When, having crossed the brick gate, the hubbub of the street dies away in the distance, one cannot help but get the impression that time has travelled backwards two hundred years.

In 1773 Jabłonna was acquired by Duke and Bishop Michał Poniatowski. The later primate entrusted Domenico Merlini, the creator of Łazienki Park in Warsaw, who enjoyed great recognition, with building his residence. According to the directions of the architect, a complex of three buildings was erected - a centrally situated small palace with a characteristic tower topped

with a sphere, and two two-storey side pavilions. In 1837 on the order of Anna Dunin-Wąsowiczowa from the Tyszkiewiczowie family, the residence was reconstructed. The project of changes was designed by Henry Marconi. While rebuilding the palace after the ravages of World War II, some elements of the original appearance of the building were restored. Currently, in the palace there is Dom Zjazdów Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Meeting House of the Polish Academy of Sciences), which has conference rooms, guest rooms and a restaurant for 120 people. The interiors are designed in the classical style. In the ballroom, every month concerts from the series "Palace Meetings with Music" are organised. The Modern Art Gallery in Oranżeria is held under the patronage of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts.

Around the palace there is an English landscape park, designed by Szymon

Bogumił Zug. Out of numerous pavilions which were built in the park, the cave, orangery and the Chinese pavilion have survived till today. The triumphal arch built in the first half of the 19th century commemorates Duke Józef Poniatowski. The hero, who died in the Battle of Leipzig (1813), was the owner of Jabłonna; in 1798-1806 he of-

ten rested here and enjoyed various types of entertainment.

Dom Zjazdów i Konferencji PAN
(Meeting House of the Polish Academy of Science)
ul. Modlińska 105, tel. 022 7825461,
022 7825489, www.palacjablonna.pl



RYNIA

In the Vikings' town

During the last weekend of August on the shores of the Zegrzyński Lake time goes back to a thousand years earlier. The aim of the historical festival "Vikings and the Vistula Veneti" ("Wikingowie i Wenedzi") is to bring back to life the figures of brave warriors, sailors and craftsmen. Groups of contemporary Vikings and Slavs from all over Poland, Europe and even from America and Australia come to Rynia, or rather to the settlement called Jomsborg. All participants wear outfits which refer to the outfits from the 9th-11th centuries. Presentations of fights with spears and Danish axes, demonstrations of the medieval crafts and a noisy fair last three days, from Friday to Sunday. Visiting Jomsborg, one may get acquaint-

ed with Viking music and poetry, and even try their famous honey. The fearless warriors enjoyed themselves tirelessly.

www.jomsborg.pl

BENIAMINÓW

A concrete fortress

The huge concrete fort, clearly visible from the Nieporęt - Radzymin route, was built around 1904 according to the design of Konstanty Wieliczko. The Russians planned to build five fortifications of this type in the line Warsaw - Prague - Zegrze. The most glorious part in the war history of the fort was the fights in defence of Warsaw in August 1920. Today it is no longer used and it attracts enthusiasts of architectural curiosities. The mysterious corridors, niches in the walls and echoes in the gloomy tunnels may turn a walk around the fort into a real spine-chilling adventure. Nevertheless, we should remember to obey the basic standards of safety.



PORZĄDZIE

A church of the Podhale region and Kurpie cottages

Among the buildings of the large village situated on the edge of the White Forest one can still find many interesting examples of folk architecture. The wooden cottages with gable roofs are topped with crossed wind boards. Similarly to the window finials and porches, they are richly decorated with woodcarving. What's interesting, this way of decorating houses is the reflection of the worldwide fashion prevailing at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in holiday and heart-resort building. After World War I, when many buildings in the region were damaged, travelling craftsmen popularised the new style of building. Unfortunately, wood is not

a durable material and there are fewer and fewer cottages every year. Most of the old houses have been preserved in the southern part of Porządzie, called Stara Wieś (the Old Village). Slightly further to the north there is a school, next to which a mini open-air ethnographic museum presenting farm machines has been organised. One needs a lot of imagination to guess what some of them are for.

At the junction of the roads leading to Pułtusk and Wyszaków, on the so-called Kolonia (Colony), there is an interesting church. The temple under the invocation of St. Theresa of the Baby Jesus was built in 1928-1930. For this purpose the material from a very damaged eighteenth-century church in Dzierżenin on the Narew River was used. Stefan Szyller, an excellent architect famous among others for the reconstruction of the cathedral in Płock, created

in Porządzie a temple the style of which refers to buildings in the Podhale region. In 1954 the church was extended. Surrounded by a ring of trees, it is distinguished by its steep roof and massive four-sided tower. The interior is graced by the wooden altar with a painting depicting Our Lady with the Baby Jesus.

Next to the church there are a wooden chapel dating back to 1926 and a monument commemorating the victims of World War II. In 1939-1945, a few kilometres to the northern-east of Porządzie ran the boundary of General-Government. Among many partisans who died in the White Forest there was also Tadeusz Zawadzki "Zośka". One of the best-known Polish scouts, the commander of the daring operation at the Warsaw Arsenal, was killed during the attack on a frontier post in Sieczychy, in the night of August 20th and 21st, 1943.

PNIĘWO

Embroideries, paper cuttings and painted eggs

Pniewo, which is situated between Pułtusk and Wyszaków, is one of the most lively centres of the Kurpie culture. The towers of the Neo-Gothic Church under the Invocation of St. Peter and Paul overlook the village. The temple with red brick walls, was built in 1912-1928 according to the project of Józef Pius Dziekoński. The interior delights us with a colourful polychrome, repeating the patterns of the Pułtusk embroidery. This embroidery is considered to be one of the most beautiful in Poland. Following red and black colours, it is composed of decorative circles and plant motifs. During the most important church holidays, especially Corpus Christi and during the Peter and Paul church fair, the inhabitants of Pniewo put

on their traditional outfits. Women from the region of the White Forest wear white embroidered shirts, red skirts or green skirts with red stripes, and aprons. An important part of the festive outfit is a richly decorated pink or purplish red short close-fitting jacket, and a bonnet tied under the chin.

The Association "Puszcza Biała – Moja Mała Ojczyzna" ("The White Forest – My Small Homeland") takes care of preserving the tradition of handicraft and the Kurpie culture. Folk artists from Pniewo and the local folk band are regular participants of the fairs organised in Pułtusk. Elaborate cuttings, rich patterns of painted eggs, delicate ornaments of tissue paper, and certainly the famous embroideries arouse admiration. A preview of the skills of the inhabitants of Pniewo can be seen in the building of the former school. A small exposition presents the traditional Kurpie house.

DŁUGOSIODŁO

Antiques among flowers

The large village surrounded by the White Forest attracts above all the enthusiasts of hiking and mushroom picking. In September the Polish Actors Mushroom Picking Championships take place here. Apart from nice moments spent in the woods, one can also have a lot of good fun.

The towers of the impressive church, built in 1908-1912 by Józef Pius Dziekoński, overlook Długosiodło. Inside the Neo-Gothic temple there is the eighteenth-century high altar, and in the altar the late-Gothic sculptures presenting Our Lady with the Baby Jesus and St. Anna Samotrzecia (Ann Self-thirdly). Next to the church there is a wooden mortuary dating back to the turn of the 19th century. Our attention is at-

tracted by the interesting door fittings. In the church area there is also the Oak of St. John – the oldest oak with an age certificate in Mazovia. The plate informs us that the tree was planted in 1481.

Some of the traditional wooden houses have survived in Długosiodło. A few years ago joyful flower patterns were painted on a number of houses on the main streets.

Every third Sunday in the month a fair of antiques and collector's items is organised in Długosiodło. Both charming trinkets and solid pre-war furniture are put up for sale then.

www.dlugosiodlo.pl

WYSZKÓW

In the vicarage

From the Middle Ages, Wyszaków, situated on the Bug River, was an important trade centre on the route leading to Lithuania. The town's heyday should be associated with the 16th and 17th centuries. Wyszaków was the favourite residence of Karol Ferdynand Waza (Charles Ferdinand Vasa), the bishop of Płock and Wrocław, the brother of the king Jan Kazimierz (John Casimir). After the bishop's death in 1655, his royal brother funded two marble obelisks in Wyszaków. The monuments were designed by Giovanni Battista Ghisleni, the creator of the chapel of the Wazowie family (the Vasas) in the Wawel castle in Cracow. Until the present day only one obelisk has been preserved; it is located at ul. 3 Maja, opposite

the town council building. The small, but well-formed mass is decorated by the family crest of Wazowie (the Vasas). The monument in Wyszaków is one of the oldest secular monuments in Poland.

In the place of the former bishop residence an extensive park was created at the end of the 19th century. In the Neo-Gothic caretaker's lodge there is a tiny municipal museum. On account of the tightness of the place only temporary exhibitions are organised here. Next to the guardhouse there is a monument to Cyprian Kamil Norwid. The outstanding poet was born in the nearby village Gluchy.

On a high bank of the Bug River, in the vicinity of the road bridge, one can see the white walls of the Church under the Invocation of St. Giles. The design of the classical temple dating back to 1793 is ascribed to Szymon Bogumił Zug. In the southern

chapel there is a beautiful seventeenth-century painting depicting Our Lady in a silver icon-cover. Next to the temple there is the brick classical vicarage dating back to the 19th century. It gained historical significance in August 1920, when the members of Tymczasowy Komitet Rewolucyjny Polski (Temporary Revolutionary Committee of Poland) waited there for the end of the Battle of Radzymin. After the expected Red Army entered Warsaw, Julian Marchlewski, Feliks Dzierżyński and Feliks Kon were to be the creators of a new communist government. The, favourable for Poles, course of events that took place in the Battle of Radzymin, forced the communists to evacuate. A day later the vicarage was visited by General Józef Haller, and soon by a group of Polish intellectuals. One of them, Stefan Żeromski, who at that time fulfilled the function of war correspondent, recorded in writing the account of the Wyszaków priest, who had to play host to the uninvited guests. To commemorate the events of 1920 every year poetical performances are organised in Wyszaków. Lighter muse prevails during the Days of Wyszaków, which are riotously celebrated on the first weekend of September.

www.wyszkow.pl

BROK

Traces of the past

"There was the Brok town, but it drowned" - this saying was created after the Swedish Deluge, when the well-developed town suddenly became impoverished. Walking today along the streets of the calm resort, it is hard to imagine that in the 16th century Brok was a trade centre vibrant with life. This was where the routes leading from the Baltic Sea to Ruś and from Lithuania to Cracow crossed.

The evidence of the former splendour of the town is the Parish Church under the Invocation of St. Andrew the Apostle, which was built in 1541-1560 by the workshop of Giovanni Battista the Venetian due to the donation of the bishop of Płock Andrzej Noskowski. Although

in the 16th century the Renaissance style was already popular, the Gothic style still prevailed in Mazovia. The church in Brok, distinguished by its Gothic mass and Renaissance top, is evidence of the emergence of new trends in art.

Inside, our attention is attracted by the Renaissance vault with the characteristic motif of circles joined by a wooden slat. This characteristic style of the Mazovia Renaissance is called the Putusk vault (the collegiate church in Putusk was erected by the same builder). The church furnishings date back to different periods. The late-Gothic side altar in the shape of the Tree of Jesse is considered to be the most interesting element of the church. The sixteenth-century painting depicting Our lady with the Baby Jesus, placed in the church, is associated with the Italian School.

ZUZELA

A small village – a big man

In the small village at the edge of the Bug River valley Stefan Wyszyński – the cardinal and the Primate of the Millennium - was born in 1901. Currently, in the reconstructed building of the former school, at the desks of which the future primate used to sit in 1908-1910, there is Muzeum Lat Dziecięcych Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego (Museum of Childhood of the Primate of the Millennium Stefan Wyszyński). The exposition reconstructs the appearance of the classroom from the beginning of the 20th century and of the living room where numerous mementoes connected with the Wyszyńscy family are gathered. The museum is adjacent to a Neo-Gothic church built in 1907-1913. In

On the eastern edge of the town, in a clump of trees, the remains of the summer residence of the bishops of Płock are hidden. The castle, built in 1617-1624, was burnt after the partitions, and since then it has been deteriorating. Recently, plans for using the ruins as a base for the construction of a big cultural and artistic centre have appeared.

www.brok.pl

front of the temple there is a monument to the primate, and inside the church there is the baptismal font, at which he was baptised. It was brought here from the former church.