

MINI GUIDEBOOK

Culture and historical monuments

The north-western Mazovia


heart of Poland

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Mazovia.
heart of Poland



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THE NORTH-WESTERN MAZOVIA

The mini guide you are holding in your hands will acquaint you with the greatest cultural attractions of the north-western part of Mazovia, and specifically of the following poviats: of Ciechanów, Mława, Żuromin, Płońsk and Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki. The lands under discussion have been the borderline of the Mazovia region for ages - which is why numerous strongholds and fortified castles, part of which has survived till the present day, were built there. You can find here not only earth-walled forts and medieval castles, but also the nineteenth-century fortress in Modlin, whose size is amazing.

The biggest towns in this part of Mazovia are Ciechanów and Mława. The southern part of the described region is situated in the vicinity of Warsaw. All the above mentioned towns are good bases from which to explore the region. You can get to each town by bus (PKS), but using your own means of transport will make us independent of the bus schedule.



A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE

In this part of Mazovia the slightly undulating area is occupied by farmland and small forest complexes. Due to the good-quality soil the Ciechanów, Płońsk and Mława surroundings are an important agricultural area. Numerous sugar factories process beet from the local fields. Around Płońsk and Czerwińsk there are large fields of currants and strawberries, as well as numerous fruit orchards. The "straight from the bush" goodies can be bought at the local markets and often right next to the road.

The river valleys add variety to the landscape. The axis of the described area is the Wkra River valley. The lazy and lowland river meanders amidst meadows sprinkled with flowers. The tributaries of the Wkra

River are smaller but equally picturesque rivulets, the Mławka and the Łydynia Rivers among others. The southern boundary of the described area is outlined by the Vistula River valley. Across from the fortress in Modlin, the Narew River flows into the queen of Polish rivers. The high northern bank of the Vistula River valley between Modlin and Czerwińsk is one of the most picturesque spots of the region. The steep bank is cut by numerous ravines, and from the edge of the height unfolds a panorama of unique beauty.

KALEIDOSCOPE OF HISTORY

Researchers have been investigating for years what the Polish name "Mazowsze" (Mazovia) exactly 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"(to smear), "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 is "maż"(soft sticky substance).

Similarly, it is not easy to point out the exact boundaries of the region. Due to multiple changes over the centuries they have

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

The northern boundary of this part has remained unchanged practically since the Middle Ages. The Mazovia lands were a part of the Piast monarchy from the beginning of Polish statehood. 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 and beekeepers. In the 15th century, during the reign of Duke Janusz I, many manor seats were

built in northern Mazovia, for example in Ciechanów and Zakroczym. 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 Mazovia lands were included into the Crown. In 1526 the last of the Mazovia dukes, 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. Until the mid-17th century Mazovia, being a stable centre of the great Republic of Poland, was in its golden age. Intensive development of its'

towns began. In the area discussed, Zakroczym and Czerwińsk, among others, were growing in strength. Both of these towns were situated on the Vistula River, which at that time was one of the most important trade routes in Poland. On the northern border of the state, important trade centres included Mława and Sześć.

The end of the golden age came together with the Swedish Deluge of 1655. It should be highlighted that the lands situated to the north-west of the Wkra River never completely submitted to the Swedes. Guerrilla warfare was fought there from the autumn of 1655. The Polish troops, amounting sometimes to a few hundred soldiers, crippled transport and supply chains, cutting off subsequent castles from each other. As a result of the war, many towns were ruined (Mława was completely destroyed), and many villages were almost totally depopulated.

Several decades years later northern Mazovia was harassed by a multitude of challenges: 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 reconstruction of war damage was very slow, but its progress can be proved by the appearance of a new town on the region's map - Żuromin (1765). As a result of the third partition of Poland, this part of Mazovia, similarly to the majority of the region, fell to Prussia. In 1806-1807 the Napoleonic campaign swept through these lands. On the order of the emperor, the construction of the fortress in Modlin began. In 1807 the area was included in the Warsaw Duchy. After Napoleon's downfall, Modlin's fortress withstood an eleven-month siege of the Russian army, and surrendered only by the end of November 1813. In 1815 Mazo-

via was included in the Kingdom of Poland. The period of enlargement and development lasted until the year 1830. More and more inhabitants arrived, and the towns underwent changes in the spatial order and in the development plan. Many public buildings date back to this period, for example the town hall in Ciechanów. A 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 military Russian advantage led to defeat. After the uprising's defeat the Kingdom's autonomy was considerably limited. Finally, it was liquidated af-

ter the defeat of the subsequent uprising. The fighting that broke out in January 1863 after the impressment order into the Russian army spread throughout the whole of Mazovia. Fighting, punishment and exile to Siberia 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. Several dozen towns were deprived of municipal rights. Among the degraded ones were Czerwińsk, Biezuń, Szreńsk and Żuromin. During World War I many battles were fought in Mazovia. Mława and Ciechanów were two seriously damaged towns. Immediately after independence was regained, the bloody episode of the Polish-Bolshevik War began. On August 19th and 20th, 1920 fierce fighting with the Bolshevik army took place in the Ciechanów

area. The short period of reconstruction and stabilisation that followed the final establishment of Poland's borders was soon disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. During the first days of September 1939 hard battles took place near Mława. A heroic defence brought renown to the Modlin fortress, the garrison of which did not surrender until September 29th. Then, Mazovia was occupied by the Germans. The Jewish population of Mazovia towns suffered a terrible fate; initially, the Jews were placed in ghettos, and then slaughtered in death camps. During the entire period of occupation resistance troops were active in Mazovia. When the war ended, the region was in a terrible condition; military activities and the extermination of Jews had reduced the population of many towns by half. The buildings and infrastructure damage was also considerable.

From 1945 Mazovia, similarly to the rest of Poland, lived according to the rhythm of the so-called six-year plans. Significant development of industry took place in Mława, Ciechanów and Płońsk. In 1975, as a result of the administrative reform, several dozen small voivodeships were created in the territory of Poland. Ciechanów was elevated to the rank of capital of the voivodeship. The town performed this function until January 1st, 1999, when the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in its current shape was created.

CIECHANÓW

In the clang of arms and with the sounds of music in the background

Ciechanów is one of the oldest towns in Mazovia. It was granted municipal rights in the 13th century, but the settlement marks found by archaeologists come from the period dated 600 years earlier. The town, situated on the northern edges of Mazovia, developed as a trade settlement, but it was simultaneously exposed to the raids of Pomeranians, Prussians, Yotvingians and then the Teutonic Knights. The Swedish and Napoleonic armies also marched through the town, the First and Second World Wars did not spare it either. In spite of the historical turbulence many interesting mementoes of the past have been preserved in Ciechanów.

On the meadows by the Łydynia River, the red walls of the castle of the Mazovia dukes rise. The stronghold was built in the 15th century on the order of Duke Janusz I. A serious problem for the builders was the marshy and boggy land in the river valley. In order to prevent the building from settling, wooden stilts were applied. The parts of the castle that have survived till the present day are the rectangular outside wall and two round towers. The south-eastern one used to serve as a prison, while the western one, called the arsenal, was used for defence. In the interior of the towers there is a museum exhibition, presenting an interesting collection of cold steel weapons, weapons and protective weaponry from the period between the 14th and 18th centuries. Of particular interest to visitors is the lance of Zygmunt August's (Sigismund-Augustus's) child armour and the winged cavalryman's basinet. However, the castle in Ciechanów is not only a mu-



seum – just like ages ago, it serves as a cultural centre. Between May and August, once a month, classical music concerts take place in the Gothic hall. Ciechanów, like every decent stronghold, cannot lack the smell of gunpowder, the clang of arms and knights' feasts. In the third decade of June there is the grand Biesiada Kasztelańska (Castellan's Feast) in the castle. During the 13th-century knights' manoeuvres at the end of July, one may watch struggles in siege manoeuvres, an archery tournament and the tournament of infantry fights. Moreover, a medieval battle is staged. Of course, there is a feast and special competitions for ladies. Those who like the medieval atmosphere will certainly visit the castle only a week later, when the 14th-century knights' tournament takes place. In the middle of August Napoleon's troops reach the walls of the castle. Just like two hundred years ago, light cavalymen ford the river on horseback and fight fiercely

with the Russian troops on the common land. Nobody stints gunpowder, and the rumble of cannons is heard across the whole neighbourhood. So far, the emperor's army have always been the winner. In the first part of September the picturesque scenery of the castle of the Mazovia dukes becomes the place of Festival Teatralny Dionizje (Dionizje Theatre Festival). The participants are drama troupes who look for new means of expression. Many performances are given in the streets of the city.

The castle is situated almost in the centre of Ciechanów. In the vicinity, there is a rectangular marketplace, which is dominated by the Neo-Gothic building of the town hall dating back to the mid-19th century, designed probably by Henry Marconi.

The castle exposition is a part of Muzeum Szlachty Mazowieckiej (Museum of the Mazovia Nobility). It is worth visiting the main department of the museum, located in a brick

house dated 1924 at ul. Warszawska. The three storeys of the building are the site of a series of interesting exhibitions. Archaeology enthusiasts will be interested in the reconstruction of a grave from the Neolithic period, and bronze and silver women's ornaments; some of which are two and a half thousand years old. The pottery and folk sculpture exhibitions acquaint us with the rich folk tradition of the region. A curiosity are the, over a hundred, miniature objects and farm appliances, reconstructed with great care by Kazimierz Bobiński. Interesting Judaica, which serves as a memento of the pre-war Jewish population of Ciechanów, are also presented in the museum. Another exhibition is the natural history one - children always stop for a longer time by the cases with insects. Every month (except for summer holidays) the institution organizes museum meetings, to which famous artists and scientists are invited.

The towers of two temples overlook the centre of the town. Both late-Gothic buildings were erected in the 16th century. The Church under the Invocation of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary initially belonged to the Augustinians. This congregation rendered considerable services to the development of culture and to raising the standard of education in Ciechanów. The brethren ran a school, which was famous throughout Mazovia. The rich monastic book collections were robbed during the Swedish Deluge; the temple itself was seriously damaged. The majority of the late-Baroque furnishings date back to the 18th century. The polychromes, gracing the interior, were made in 1920 by Władysław Drapiewski. The Parish Church under the Invocation of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary also served as the scene of historical events many times. At the beginning of the 18th century, during the meeting of local noblemen, a few of them were

killed within the temple walls. A hundred years later, almost all the church's furnishings were burnt by Napoleon's soldiers. During World War I, the Germans organized a military hospital in the temple. Nevertheless, on the walls of the parish church a few 16th and 17th century epitaphs have been preserved. Plaques commemorating crucial moments from the history of the city are also placed there. To the north of the church, on a high bank of the Łydnia River there is an early-medieval town dating back to the 10th-12th centuries, called Farska Góra (Farska Mountain). In 1889 a Neo-Gothic bell tower was built there. From here one may admire an impressive view of the Łydnia River valley.

An important organiser of cultural activities in Ciechanów is Centrum Kultury i Sztuki (Centre of Culture and Art). Interesting temporary exhibitions are organised in the "C" gallery. The Centre is also a co-organizer of numerous noteworthy cyclic events. In the

first decade of June Międzynarodowe Spotkania Chóralne (International Choral Meetings) take place in Ciechanów. The folk meetings "Kupałnocka" cover not only Ciechanów, but also Płońsk, Gliniojeck and Serock. Some of the bands giving concerts come from very distant and exotic places of the world. The November blues meetings "Blues on the Spot" are of much cosier character. This event, which enjoys nationwide reputation, takes place on the last Saturday before the St. Andrew's Eve party.

Muzeum Szlachty Mazowieckiej
(*Museum of the Mazovia Nobility*)

ul. Warszawska 61, tel./fax 023 6725345,
www.muzeumciechanow.pl

Centrum Kultury i Sztuki (*Centre of Culture and Art*)

ul. Strażacka 5, tel. 023 6724296,
www.ckisz.ciechanow.net.pl
www.um.ciechanow.pl

GOŁOTCZYŻNA

Spirit of positivism

In the country villa "Krzewnia", surrounded by a beautiful park, a writer, feature writer and one of the main positivism theoreticians, Aleksander Świętochowski lived and worked for many years. Being extremely involved in village matters, he was the co-founder of the agricultural schools in Gołotczyzna and nearby Bartno, he also took part in the organisation of the local cooperative society of consumers and the post office. The original interior design has been preserved in the villa. A valuable complement to the exposition are trinkets from the period. In farm buildings, an exhibition of vehicles, machines and farm devices dating back to the beginning of the 20th century has been organized. In the vicinity of "Krze-

wnia", there is a small manor house, which belonged to the earl's daughter Aleksandra Bąkowska, the heiress of Gołotczyzna and the close co-worker of Świętochowski. The building is the site for the exhibition of interiors and the gallery of nobility portraits.

Gołotczyzna is worth visiting especially in the third decade of May. At that time an event called "The Flowers of Gardens" takes place, and its programme includes not only a flower exhibition, but also concerts and folk performances. Guests have the possibility to learn the steps of folk dances and to purchase handicraft products and honey straight from the apiary.

Muzeum Pozytywizmu
im. Aleksandra Świętochowskiego
(*Aleksander Świętochowski Museum of Positivism*)
ul. Świętochowskiego 4, tel. 023 6713542

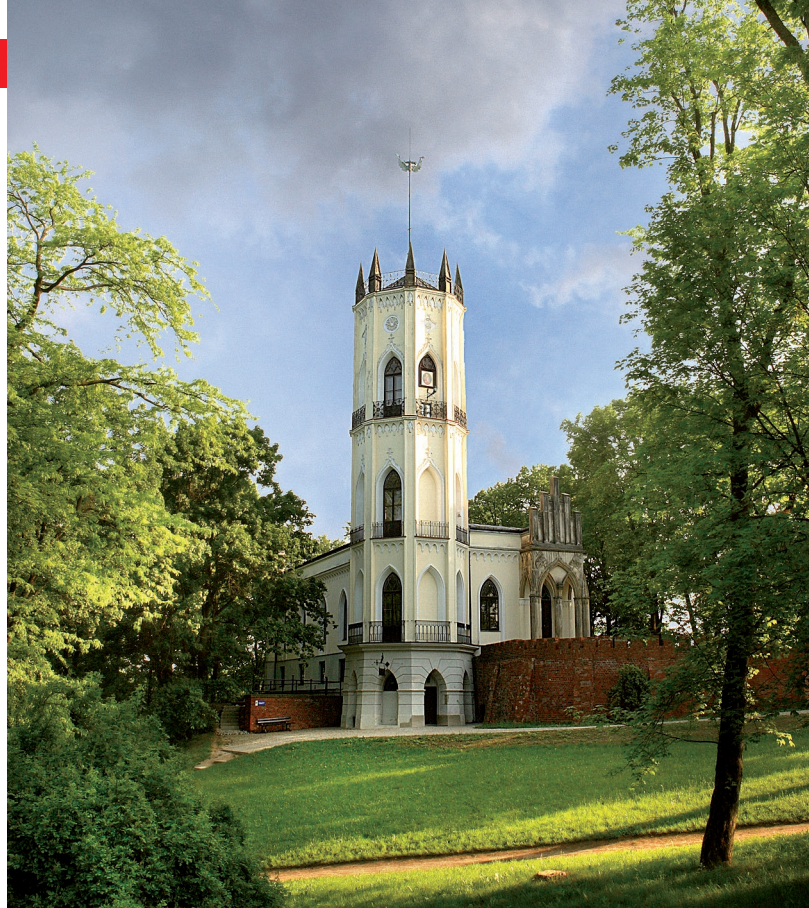
OPINOGÓRA

In quest for poetic vein

A hunting manor of the Mazovia dukes existed in Opinogóra from the 12th century. When the family died out, the King came into the ownership of the estate and he had the power to hand it over as a lifehold to people who rendered particular service to the country. As a result, Opinogóra and the Krasieńscy family became bound by the fate - from 1659 they handed down from generation to generation the local estate, with the King's consent each time. Their rights to Opinogóra were acknowledged by Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I.

Undoubtedly, the most famous inhabitant of this town was Zygmunt Krasieński – a poet considered as one of the “bard trinity” of the Polish Romanticism. Born in Paris, he

spent his childhood and youth in the family estate, which he treated as a “paradise of freedom”. The poet's father, Wincenty, the Somosierra battle hero, built a small romantic castle for his son. The Neo-Gothic building, designed probably by Henry Marconi, is distinguished by its octagonal four-storey tower. The castle was a wedding present for Zygmunt Krasieński and Eliza Branicka. Unfortunately, the marriage, which was contracted on the order of the father (at that time Krasieński had an open affair with Delfina Potocka, the muse of many artists) was not a happy one. The legend of unfulfilled love becomes a perfect part of the atmosphere of the period - it can be easily felt while visiting Muzeum Romantyzmu (Museum of Romanticism), located in the castle. Numerous mementoes connected with Zygmunt Krasieński, his family and the period have been col-



lected in the stylistically designed interiors. An interesting exhibit is a solid leather briefcase which used to belong to Napoleon. Every second Saturday of each month the manor annexe becomes the site of *Koncerty Muzyki i Poezji* (Music and Poetry Concerts). Among the performers invited to Opinogóra there are famous artists of the Warsaw stages. In the vicinity of the annexe a manor house is being built. The work is around ninety years late; in its initial phase the construction work was interrupted by World War I, and only many years later a decision to continue the project was made.

At the back of the castle there is a large park varied by picturesque ponds. And this is where the poets who enter the poetic contest "O laur Opina" ("The Opin Laurels Contest"), organised yearly at the beginning of October, look for their inspiration.

The present form of the park was introduced in 1895 by a well-known landscape architect Walerian Kronenberg. There are many interesting monuments in the park. A stone cross was raised on the order of Wincent Krasieński to commemorate Duke Bolesław IV (Boleslaus IV), who died in Opinogóra in 1454. The statue of Zygmunt Krasieński, which presents a poet lost in thought and seated in an armchair, was made in 1989 according to the design by Mieczysław Welter. Next to the statue there is a stone table, at which allegedly the poet liked to sit. The marble bench is called "the bench of love". It was placed there in 1832 by Amelia Załuska, an adolescent love and a distant relative of the poet. The note "Let my memory stay beloved to you forever" was supposed to welcome Zygmunt who was coming back home after the three-year period of European journeys. Accord-

ing to the legend, people who sit together on the bench will be bound by love.

In the second half of August, Napoleon's soldiers make their camp in the Opinogóra park. Some of the regiments that participate in the event called "The return of light cavalymen" arrive from abroad. Just like two hundred years ago, military tents show white on the camp, campfires smoke and pennants blow in the breeze. When the solemn requiem mass for the souls of light cavalymen is finished, and when homage is paid to General Wincenty Krasieński, the army sets off to Ciechanów, where it gets engaged in the battle with the Russian army on the common land.

The park borders on the territory of the parish. The Church under the Invocation of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built in 1874-1875 according to the design by Wincenty Rakiewicz. The frontage

of the late-classical building is decorated by the portico with four Tuscan columns. Inside, our eye is caught by a marble gravestone of Zygmunt Krasieński's mother, Maria Radziwiłł. The Florentine artist Luigi Pampalioni's sculpture dated 1841 presents the mother on her deathbed who is blessing her son, kneeling by the headboard. At the moment of Maria Krasieńska's death (1822) the future poet was only ten years old. He believed that, by passing away, his mother handed over the artistic power to him; this scene was used by him in "The Undivine Comedy". In the temple there are also epitaphs of the poet's sons, Władysław and Zygmunt Krasieńscy, made in 1881 by Jules Franceschi, and the epitaph of Amelia Załuska made by the famous Polish sculptor Konstanty Laszczka (1899). A memorial plaque was also dedicated to Edward Krasieński. The last Opinogóra entailer, the

founder of Biblioteka Krasieńskich (Krasieńscy Library) in Warsaw, was murdered in 1940 in Dachau. Inside the temple, visitors' attention is attracted by a late-Baroque ambo, coming probably from the Church of St. Ann in Kodeń in Podlussia and an Italian mosaic picture dating back to the end of the 18th century, depicting St. Anna Samotrzcica (Anna Self-thirdly).

In the church vaults many members of the Krasieńscy family are buried. The poet's tomb is decorated with three bronze plates, depicting allegoric scenes of his most outstanding work: "The Undivine Comedy", "Dawn" and "Irydion". The plates, made in 1877 according to the design of Jules Franceschi, were supposed to be a part of the poet's un-built mausoleum in Wawel Castle. Next to the church there is a small picturesque graveyard, where many people connected with the Krasieńscy family

are buried, among others the nanny of the future poet Katarzyna Rozpedowska.

Muzeum Romantyzmu
(Museum of Romanticism)
ul. Krasieńskiego 3, tel. 023 671 7025,
www.muzeumromantyzmu.pl

MŁAWA

Where Mazovia ends

Mława, which is situated by the northern boundary of Mazovia, prides itself on its nearly six hundred-year history. It was granted municipal rights in 1429. The town was an important border centre and customs house from the beginning of its existence. As with the entire region, Mława fell into decline after the Swedish invasion. The favourable location, however, led to an economic boom of the city in the period of Congress Poland. The present day Mława has over thirty thousand inhabitants. However, being a significant industrial centre (it is the producer of TV sets among others), Mława has preserved the enchantment and charm of the past.

In the middle of the big marketplace there are the town hall and the parish church. The Church under the Invocation of the Holy Trinity was built in the 15th century. In the second half of the 19th century it was rebuilt in the Neo-Baroque style. The Baroque town hall was built in 1789 on the foundations of an older building. The characteristic clock tower was added in the mid-20th century. At the frontage of the marketplace a few noteworthy Art Nouveau tenements have been preserved. In the vicinity of the marketplace, at ul. Żwirki, there is a nice nineteenth-century covered market. Under the wooden vault of the building intense trade is still in progress. On a hot day it is nice to have a rest in the town park (between ul. Reymonta and ul. Wyspiańskiego). The charming sculptures in the Art Nouveau fountain refer to the history of Mława. In June the

city celebrates its holiday; on this occasion interesting concerts, contests and fairs are organised.

Mława can pride itself on noteworthy museums. Muzeum Ziemi Zawkrzeńskiej (Museum of Zawkrzeńska Land) is one of the oldest institutions of this type in Mazovia - it carries on the tradition of the institution founded in 1926. Although the collections assembled before the year 1939 got lost during warfare, there is a lot the museum can boast about. The exposition includes the following departments: historical, natural history and art collections. Among the antiquities collected in the museum there are: a fully-fitted duke's tomb dating back to the 1st century AD, a granite statuette of a pagan god and a medieval out boat. Numerous Wojciech Piechowski's paintings (1849-1911) are the pride of the art department. The rich collection of the

Mazovia landscapes, genre scenes and portraits is the only permanent collection of this artist's works in Poland. Among the natural history collections, the fragments of a forest elephant skeleton, dating back to a hundred thousand years ago, deserve particular attention. The giant animal was of amazing size - its foreleg is three meters long!

The most important place in Mława for the enthusiasts of military items is the private museum of the Juskiewiczowie family, which collects items connected with the history of the national struggles for liberation of the years 1863-1945. The majority of the exhibits come from the Second World War period. You can see here many types of weapon, an anti-aircraft gun and a T-34 tank. The collection also includes uniforms, portraits of commanders, documents and accounts of soldiers,

among others of those from the "Modlin" army, which fought in 1939 in the Battle of Mława.

A visit to the museum is a good introduction to a trip to the so-called Mława position. A complex of several dozen bunkers, together with the remains of trenches and anti-tank obstacles is the largest and best-preserved complex of light Polish fortifications from the interwar period. The fortifications were located to the north of the city, using the advantageous natural conditions. A natural obstacle was a forested bank of an end moraine and the Mławka River, which flows at its foot. The fortification work started on July 14th, 1939 and they were carried on in haste. In the face of the approaching war the fortifications were manned by the troops of the 20th Infantry Division of the "Modlin" army. On September 1st at 4 o'clock in the

morning the Mława position was attacked from the north by the III German Army. In spite of their numerical and technical superiority and the air support, the Germans did not manage to break the Polish line of defence for three days. However, in the danger of the complete encirclement and devastation by the troops of the "Wodrig" corps, which managed to get across the marshes to the east of the Mława position, the commander of the "Modlin" army gave an order to leave the position and withdraw towards Warsaw. On September 4th the withdrawing army suffered great losses as a result of air attacks. As a memento of these events, a huge monument, presenting a soldier running to a battlefield, was erected in 1985 on the hill between Mława and the town Uniszki Zawadzkie. The monument was designed by K. Zieliński. In the nearby bunker a map, de-

picting the course of the 1939 warfare in northern Mazovia, and plaques with the surnames of those killed in action have been placed. A walking tour along the red tourist trail gives the possibility of seeing the majority of the preserved fortifications. The circular route which starts in Mława is 24 km long.

A unique way of becoming acquainted with the Mława area is a trip by the narrow-gauge railway. Started in 1915, the narrow-gauge railway carried passengers to Przasnysz and Maków Mazowiecki, it was also at the service of the local sugar factories. Many years later, in 2001, the operation of the railway was suspended. In spring 2006 Lokalna Organizacja Turystyczna Północnego Mazowsza (Local Tourist Organisation of the Northern Mazovia) managed to reopen the narrow-gauge railway.

Muzeum Ziemi Zawkrzeńskiej (*Museum of Zawkrzeńska Land*)
ul. 3 Maja 5, tel. 023 6544305
www.mzzmlawa.republika.pl

Muzeum Juskiewiczów (*Museum of the Juskiewiczowie Family*)
ul. Żwirki 32a, tel. 023 6543347
www.mlawa.um.gov.pl
www.mazowsze.turystyka.org.pl

ŻUROMIN

Carriages, trombones and fires

The present poviat town functioned as a significant agricultural centre in the early Middle Ages, but its development should be associated with the first half of the 18th century due to the concern of its owner, the Great Crown Chancellor Andrzej Zamoyski. On his initiative Żuromin was granted municipal rights in 1765. During World War II the town was seriously damaged, and that is why it is dominated by modern housing, which however, reconstructs the 18th-century urban plan of the town. The characteristic oblong square, which serves as a green square, initially used to be a marketplace. The eye of those visiting Żuromin is caught by the silhouette of the church and the post-Reformation monastery. The Baroque temple under the invocation of St. Anthony of Padova was built in 1760-1784. In the high altar there is the worshipped painting of Our Lady of Żuromin dating back to the end of the 17th century.



It is worth visiting Żuromin and participating in one of its interesting events. The town and poviats days, the main attraction of which is the concert of a national star, always take place in August. However, the most original events in the local cultural calendar are certainly the Brass Band Review, organised in June, and the Carriage Driving Competition, organised in September. In July a wide audience is attracted by the Poviats Sports and Fire Brigades Competition.

www.zuromin.pl



SZREŃSK

The knight enchanted in marble

Szreńsk is one of the oldest towns in Mazovia; the mentions of its existence date back to the 11th century. In 1371 the Mazovian Duke Siemowit III gave it as a present to Stanisław Grad. The Gradowie family who was in charge of the town until the mid-16th century changed its surname to the Szreńscy family. Among the next owners there was, among others, the Bishop of Płock Andrzej Noskowski and the Great Crown Marshal Kazimierz Ludwik Bieliński. In its heyday Szreńsk was the seat of the poviat of the Zawkrzeńska Land, which was the biggest one in Mazovia, and the local castle was considered to be one of

the best fortified in Mazovia. The history of Szreńsk resembles the history of many other Mazovia towns - the end of its heyday came together with the damage caused during the Swedish Deluge, and taking away its municipal rights in 1869 was a "punishment" for the January Uprising.

Today Szreńsk is a big district village, nicely situated on the Mławka River. The Church under the Invocation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a memento of the great past. The church was built in 1531 in the place of an older damaged church, and was then rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries. Its distinctive features are stylistically different tops; a pinnacle Gothic one on the eastern side and a Baroque one on the western side. Inside, our sight is directed upwards. In the presbytery the ceiling

is stellarly vaulted, the southern chapel has got a ribbed vault. A valuable element of the church furnishings is a beautiful Gothic pieta dating back to the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. In the chapel of St. Ann there is a marble Renaissance gravestone of Feliks Grad Szreński dated 1546. The founder of the temple and the last heir of the Szreńsk estate was presented as a knight enclosed in armour. In front of the church there is a wooden column bell tower dated 1772.

Two hundred metres to the north of the church, in the thick brushwood you can find the remains of Szreńsk castle. The brick building was erected on the order of Feliks Grad Szreński in the first half of the 16th century. The castle had four corner towers, a moat and a drawbridge. It was seriously damaged during the Swedish Deluge. In the spring of 1773 on the castle hill, the Bar Confederates defended themselves under the command of Józef Sawa-Caliński. When Szreńsk was under Prussian rule, the damaged castle was dismantled. The remains of the walls are surrounded by a picturesque but untended landscape park dating back to the 19th century.

BIEŻUŃ

The charm of a small town

Beautifully situated on the Wkra River, Biežuń was granted municipal rights as early as 1406. Damaged during the Swedish Deluge, it redeveloped in the 18th century due to the efforts of the owner, the Great Crown Chancellor Andrzej Zamoyski. In the 19th century Biežuń was a well-known craft centre - cloth, tanning and shoemakers' workshops worked at full speed. The town fell into decline after the January Uprising, during which many battles and skirmishes took place in the vicinity. Municipal rights which were taken away from Biežuń in 1869: Which were re-granted only in 1994. Biežuń is worth visiting mostly due to its peaceful provincial atmosphere and a unique museum.

ted in the former hospital building, which was funded at the end of the 18th century by Konstancja Zamoyska. The exhibition successfully reconstructs the climate of a provincial town from the second half of the 19th century. In the stylistically designed interiors, collections testifying to the several hundred-years of Biežuń's history are gathered. A curiosity is a reconstructed surgery of a provincial doctor, which is full of old medical devices and appliances. The Judaica collected in the museum are also worth attention. Before the war the Jewish community constituted a significant percentage of Biežuń's inhabitants. A memento of those times is also a synagogue at ul. Mławska converted into a cinema.

A branch of the museum is the poet Stefan Gołębiowski's house at ul. Zamkowa 4. The outstanding inhabitant of Biežuń who

became famous for his translation of Horace's works. The exposition presents interiors of where the poet lived and worked, and numerous documents connected with his work.

Muzeum Małego Miasta
(Museum of a Small Town)
Stary Rynek 19, tel. 023 6578045

RATOWO

In the monastic silence

The small village is picturesquely situated by the Mławka River, in the vicinity of its mouth into the Wkra River. In 1685, the owners of the local estate, the Narzymscy family brought the Bernardines (Friars Minor of the Observance) here. When the monks got accustomed to the new place, they began to build a brick temple (1736-1760). The rich Baroque and Rococo furnishings of the Baroque single-nave building's interior have been preserved until the present day. In the high altar there is a 17th-century painting depicting the temple's patron - St. Anthony of Padova. According to the tradition, initially it was a camp painting of the Polish armoured company. The picture, which enjoys the popularity of being

miraculous, is decorated by a gold-plated icon-cover and numerous votive offerings. The painting depicting Our Lady with the Baby Jesus dating back to the 17th century, placed in the side altar, is also worshipped by the locals. After the dissolution of the order, which was part of the repression after the January Uprising, the Bernardines did not come back to Ratowo. Currently, the church and the monastery are used by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. In the southern chapel there is a tomb of the congregation's founder - Blessed Bolesława Maria Lament.

STRZEGOWO

To the marketplace and the lakeshore

Cut in half by the busy road No. 7, Strzegowo is most frequently only an image seen through car windows. However, this large district village with centuries-old history is worth stopping for a longer time. Strzegowo is known to have been a large market settlement as early as in the Middle Ages. Until the present day, every Monday one of the largest fairs in Mazovia takes place here.

The most valuable monument in Strzegowo is the wooden Church under the Invocation of St. Ann. The three-nave temple was built in 1756. In the interior a Mannerist high altar dating back to the beginning of the 17th century has been preserved,

the remaining furnishings follow the late-Baroque style. Next to the church there is a wooden bell tower dating back to the 19th century. In the area around the church there are two huge oak trees. According to the legend, they were planted by King Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great), satisfied following successful hunting.

In Strzegowo there is a gallery and workshop of the well-known sculptor Jan Stępkowski. In the spacious building and the adjacent garden his numerous works are exhibited. The stone statues are on different subjects and have interesting forms.

A little square in front of the gmina office is also decorated with Jan Stępkowski's sculpture. In the vicinity, at ul. Wyzwolenia 15, there is a collection of the gmina's exhibits. The collection of old objects includes, above all, inhabitants' gifts. One of the chambers was founded in memory of

Marianna Razikowa, a circus and folk artist. The collections are looked after by Towarzystwo Rozwoju Strzegowa (Society of the Development of Strzegowo), which is the driving force behind cultural and public activity in the gmina.

The Society is also the co-organiser of the two most important events in Strzegowo. By way of greeting the summer the Days of Strzegowo are riotously celebrated, and on August 15th the Parade of Sailing Objects takes place. At that time many bizarre sailing objects can be seen on the Wkra River meandering along the edge of the village. The very sight of them is enough to induce a smile on people's faces.

www.strzegowo.pl

Galeria Step (*Step Gallery*)

ul. Wyzwolenia 54a, tel. 023 6794332

www.step.art.pl

PŁOŃSK

Under the archangel's wing

The poviats town, having 23 thousand inhabitants, is a significant centre of the food and processing industry. Only a few places in today's Płońsk let us guess that a significant town existed here as early as 1155. Płońsk was granted municipal rights in 1400 by the Mazovian Duke Siemowit IV. The oldest part of Płońsk is a fortified settlement, called Łysa Mountain, dating back to the 11th-13th centuries (ul. 19 Stycznia). On a hill on the Płonka River, which is visible till the present day, a duke's manor was then built and substituted at the beginning of the 15th century with a brick castle, which was damaged during the Swedish invasion. Having acknowledged Płońsk as a town, Duke Sie-

mowit IV together with his wife Aleksandra funded the church and the monastery of Calced Carmelites. The temple was partially rebuilt in the 17th century, and today it is a Gothic and Baroque building. In the northern chapel there is a late-Gothic crucifix dating back to the end of the 16th century. It is also worth paying attention to the gravestone of Charles Savary, a colonel of the Napoleonic army, who was killed in the Battle of Kołoząb on the Wkra River in 1806. The gravestone was made on the reverse of a marble Turkish fountain; only in 1932 was it sawn and the fountain was converted into a vessel for priest's to wash their hands in.

The temple's patron, St. Michael Archangel is at the same time the patron of the town. Every year the celebration of the patron holiday, which falls in the second half of September, begins with a solemn mass.

On this occasion historical festivities, a concert with a popular star as the main part, and countless games and contests are organized in Płońsk.

In the previous monastic building there is the "P" gallery. Within the 16th-century walls, under the beautiful tunnel and cross vault, temporary exhibitions are organised. The programme of the gallery is very diverse; the work of regional amateur artists as well as professionals from Poland and abroad are exhibited.

Before World War II a large Jewish community lived in Płońsk. In 1886, in a house at pl. 15 Sierpnia 21a, David Ben Gurion was born. The future co-founder of the state of Israel and its two-time prime minister spent the first 21 years of his life in Płońsk. In the exhibition room, established at Ben Gurion's family home, you can see many of the pictures from

his youth, and get acquainted with the texts describing the social and political situation in Płońsk at the turn of the century, which come from Ben Gurion's radio broadcasts. Materials concerning the later period of the prime minister's life tell about his work for the benefit of Israel's development.

An organiser of cultural activities in Płońsk is Miejskie Centrum Kultury (City Centre of Culture). Both the "P" gallery and Ben Gurion's Exhibition Room are branches of this institution. In the community centre building a small exhibition of Zbigniew Jaskierski's works has been organised - he was a promising colourist painter, whose career prematurely ended in a fatal air crash in 1969. On the first Friday of June, in the square next to the City Centre of Culture a nationwide dance contest "Przytup" ("Stamp") is adjudicated. The audience

is roaring to dance, especially as an entire range of rhythms is presented - from folk to modern.

On the last Saturday of August an international parade of brass bands passes along the streets of Płońsk. Teams from all over Europe participate in this event. During the parade they present their skills both individually and as teams. The sonorous and vigorous music is accompanied by a military parade.

Miejskie Centrum Kultury
(City Centre of Culture)

ul. Płocka 50, tel. 023 6622702
www.mck1.republika.pl

Galeria „P” (“P” Gallery)

ul. Płocka 19, tel. 023 6628035
www.plonsk.pl

CZERWIŃSK ON THE VISTULA RIVER

Through the Vistula River towards Grunwald

According to documentation, a settlement on the high bank of the Vistula River existed as early as 1065. In 1148, brought by the Bishop of Płock Aleksander of Malonne, regular canons arrived here. The town's greatest development should be associated with the 15th and 16th centuries, when it was an important centre of the grain trade. Polish kings often visited Czerwińsk, it was the place where royal privileges used to be granted. Damaged during the Swedish Deluge, the town did not regain its previous magnificence, and in 1869 it irretrievably lost

its municipal rights. Today Czerwińsk is a small sleepy town. The only time it becomes more bustling is the last Sunday of June, when the inhabitants riotously celebrate the Strawberry Holiday. Apart from the pleasure of participating in the festivities, it a perfect occasion to try the sweet fruit from the local fields.

In the old part of Czerwińsk, on the Vistula River, there are small, charming one-storey houses. On a high bank above them one can see the walls of a church and a monastery. Built in the first half of the 12th century, the Basilica under the Invocation of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the few Romanesque monuments in Mazovia. In spite of the subsequent architectural alterations many original elements of the temple have been preserved. The two high stone towers have narrow double windows and arrow slits.

The portal dating back to 1140 is a rare example of masonry art. Its left column has the marks of sword sharpening. They are said to have been left by the knights heading towards Grunwald. This explanation is highly probable, because in the first days of July 1410 the army going to the war with the Teutonic Knights gathered precisely near Czerwińsk. The army got across the Vistula River using a special bridge made of boats, which at that time was an advanced feat of engineering. After the victory in the Battle of Grunwald, Władysław Jagiełło (Ladislaus Jagiełło) made a votive offering of his basinet in the church of Czerwińsk.

Inside the basilica the largest fragments in Poland of Romanesque paintings and valuable Gothic murals have been preserved. The Romanesque columns in the southern nave and the Renaissance ambo also deserve attention. In the high altar

there is a painting of Our Lady of Czerwińsk, famous for miracles. This oil painting, painted in 1612 by Łukasz of Łowicz, is a copy of the Roman original located in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Next to the church there is a huge monastery. Erected in 1328, it was rebuilt many times. It has been the residence of the Salesian order since 1923. In a museum adjacent to the monastery, you can visit the exhibition devoted to missionary work, which presents items from all over the world. From the monastery courtyard an extensive view stretches over the Vistula River valley and the Kampinos Forest, situated on the other side of the river.

ZAKROCZYM

On a high river bank

The high embankment, cut by ravines and descending towards the Vistula River, makes Zakroczym one of the most beautifully situated towns in Mazovia. As early as in the 13th century there was the castellan's seat here, and in 1422 Zakroczym was granted municipal rights. This is the place where twenty-one duke conventions took place, during which the binding laws of Mazovia were passed. In the 17th century the Swedes burnt the city, but in the 19th century, due to the building of a fortress in nearby Modlin, economic development began. In September 1939 Zakroczym was 80% demolished. Hence the majority of the city's buildings date only to post-war times.

The most interesting monument in Zakroczym is the Parish Church under the Invocation of the Exaltation of the Cross. The temple was built at the turn of the 16th century. The building combines elements of the Gothic and Renaissance styles. This medley of styles is characteristic of Mazovia, where the Gothic style has been preserved for a much longer time than in other parts of Europe. The three-nave buttressed building is adjoined by two chapels. The facade is decorated by two side turrets, and in the temple's walls there are mill wheels, fieldstones and cannonballs. In the high altar there is a painting depicting Our Lady with the Baby Jesus dated 1663. Our attention is also attracted by the late-Renaissance epitaph of the Chądzyński family in the southern chapel.

The parish church is situated between the embankment of the Vistula River and

the rectangular marketplace paved with cobblestones. In the place where the town hall once existed, there is a lamp post monument, commemorating the town's inhabitants who were killed in the 1831 and 1863 uprisings and during World War II.

In the vicinity of the marketplace there is a Capuchin church and monastery. The Baroque temple under the invocation of St. Lawrence was built in 1714 and extended almost half a century later.

As always in churches of this congregation, the interior is modest. It is graced by Szymon Czechowicz's paintings dating back to the 18th century. Between 1874 and 1892 the local monastery played host to Father Honorat Koźmiński, the founder of many religious congregations, who was beatified in 1988.

Zakroczym is situated within a ring of forts, which are part of the system of the

Modlin fortress fortifications. The fortifications were built in 1878-1880, and modernised in 1912-1914. One of the best preserved forts is Fort 1, situated on the north-eastern edge of the town. Its most important part is the two-storey eight-teen-compartment barracks covered with a thick layer of soil. The interior courtyard, walled off with concrete casemates, is sheltered by a high embankment and a moat. In 1939 the fort's garrison defended themselves heroically until September 28th. In August 1944 a transitory camp for the inhabitants of the right-bank of Warsaw was located in the fort. Several thousand people passed through the camp. The loyal attitude of Zakroczym inhabitants saved many prisoners from freezing to death and dying from starvation. The events of the war period have been commemorated with a monument.

In Gałachy, situated by the road to Modlin, the private collection of Maciej Kostrzewski has been founded forming an interesting museum presenting the history of I Pułk Przeciwlotniczy (the First Anti-aircraft Regiment). Every militaria enthusiast will be interested in the collection of vehicles, radar, artillery guns and noteworthy mementoes connected with the history of the regiment.

www.zakroczym.pl

Muzeum I Pułku Przeciwlotniczego
(*Museum of the First Anti-aircraft Regiment*)

Gałachy 2, tel. 022 7852270

MODLIN

The biggest fortress in Poland

Visitors to Modlin will be surprised by the size of its fortress. When seen on a map, it resembles the Russian matryoshka doll - the internal fortress, which is the centre of the system, is surrounded by an extensive area of external fortresses, and further two rings of forts can be noticed. The strategic location at the junction of the Narew and Vistula Rivers determined the foundation of this huge fortification complex. The present shape of the complex is the result of the work and technical ideas of Poles, Frenchmen, Russians and Germans.

The fortress was founded on the order of Napoleon, who realised the outstanding defensive values of this place. The

construction work began in 1806, according to the plan of the French engineers F. Chasseloup-Laubat and F. Haxö. The work continued until 1812. After Napoleon's defeat the Modlin garrison defended themselves from the tsarist army for almost a year. The oldest element of the fortification, which has been preserved till today, is Reduta Napoleona (Napoleon's Redoubt) within the external fortress, at ul. Obwodowa. The firing position of the cannon on a square plan is said to have been built according to the idea of the emperor himself. During the November Uprising the fortress in Modlin, commanded by General Ignacy Ledóchowski, was one of the last defensive points of the Polish army. After the defeat of the uprising tsar authorities set about modernising and extending the fortress thoroughly. The work was directed by the engineers Iwan J. Dähn and

A. Feldman. At that time external bastions and fire positions of cannons were built, and in the curtain walls of the internal ring, gates were built. The next period of fortress extension took place after 1864. These changes were designed by General Edward Todtleben. At that time defensive barracks surrounding the entire internal fortress were built. The building, which is 2300 m long, is considered to be the longest in Europe. In 1878-1880, at a distance of 2-6 km from Modlin, a ring of eight forts was built, and between 1912 and 1914 an external ring was added - altogether ten forts forming a circle with a perimeter of almost 50 km. It is worth remembering that the fortress did not only serve as a military structure, but it was also the place of residence of a few thousand people. That is why it needed to have a huge granary, the picturesque remains of which rise on

the island at the junction of the Narew and Vistula Rivers, and an officers' mess; the charming Neo-Gothic building is located at ul. Kościuszki.

In spite of huge fortifications and a large garrison, in 1915 Modlin was captured by the German army in just one week. A beautiful card was added to the history of the fortress by the defensive war in 1939. The heroic garrison fought until September 29th.

The best way of visiting the Modlin fortress is going there accompanied by a guide, who is not only a mine of knowledge on the complex, but also leads visitors to places which are usually inaccessible to tourists. Apart from military buildings, the great attractions of the trip are an extensive panorama of the region stretching from the Tartar Tower and a trip to the vaults which are a shelter for bats.

In one of the most valuable fortress monuments – General Dähn's firing position for a cannon – a museum devoted to the fortress and the September Campaign of 1939 has been founded. The exposition includes historical pictures and elements of the equipment and weaponry of the Polish and German armies. An additional attraction is the very access to the museum; the route leads through an underground passage drowning in mysterious darkness.

On the initiative of Fundacja Park Military Twierdzy Modlin (Foundation Military Park of the Modlin Fortress), military sales, rallies of off-road and military vehicles, and reconstructions of chosen events from the history of Modlin often take place within the fortress walls.

Fundacja Park Military Twierdzy Modlin
(Foundation Military Park of the Modlin Fortress)
ul. Mickiewicza 99, tel. 0604 528293
www.twierdzamodlin.pl

MAZOVIA.
heart of Poland