



# Time for Podlaskie

IN TOUCH WITH NATURE

BIAŁOWIEŻA PRIMEVAL FOREST  
AND THE BUG VALLEY



SUWAŁKI REGION

AUGUSTÓW FOREST AND RAJGRÓD LAKE

BIEBRZA AND NAREW VALLEY

KNYSZYN FOREST

BIAŁOWIEŻA PRIMEVAL FOREST AND THE BUG VALLEY



Podlaskie Regional  
Tourism Organisation

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**T**ake a deep breath and relax, surrounded by forests, fields, waters and enchanting wooden cottages. Just close your eyes to hear the sounds of nature. You will leave the noise far behind you. When you open your eyes, you will see beautiful wooden churches smelling like old wood, history and tranquillity. It is where animals, plants and people live in perfect harmony. The world of various traditions, cultures and religions has coexisted there for centuries, with no noise or argument. This is the magic of the Białowieża Forest region – one of

the most valuable forest complexes in Europe. The Białowieża National Park was established in order to protect the uniqueness of these forests. It is the best-preserved fragment of the Białowieża Forest, which has been spared from human interference. In 1979 the Park was entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List and is one of Poland's greatest natural treasures. Białowieża Forest can be called a kingdom, and every kingdom needs its ruler. It is the bison – the unquestionable symbol of the region. The first bison were released into the wild in the

Białowieża National Park after more than 30 years since the species became extinct there. There are several hundred living there today – so you have a real chance of an unforgettable encounter with the King of the Forest. The park is home to Europe's last remaining primeval deciduous forest – a forest ecosystem untouched by human activity. If you plan to explore the Białowieża Primeval Forest, be sure to book a guided walk through the strict reserve. You will be amazed to find how many shades of green there are, how rich a micro-cosmos is created

by a fallen tree covered in a thick layer of moss and how monumental the ancient oaks are. You can also see them on the Trail of Royal Oaks and Lithuanian Dukes. The oldest trees are up to 500 years old. Among them you can find Stefan Batory, Sigismund Augustus and Gediminas. There is a mysterious cult centre of ancient Slavs nearby. Surrounded by pines, spruces and unusually shaped oaks, the stone circles hidden in the forest were hard to find years ago. Today a signpost leads to the Place of Power, pointing the way for anyone who wants to feel the impact of this place for themselves.

The Białowieża Primeval Forest also means active recreation in contact with nature! The „Land of the Forest and Bison” Nordic Walking Park is a network of trails dedicated to people who want to spend their time in the region in an active way. It offers trails of varying lengths and difficulty – altogether more than 100 kilometres of trails set in a magnificent scenery. They take the form of loops of various sizes, have common points, overlap and intersect in some places. It allows you to shorten or lengthen your walk or to change its direction as you wish. „The Land of the Forest and Bison” is an excellent suggestion to spend your time in an active way! Train hard and fight for the Polish Nordic Walking Cup in the autumn! But before that, don't miss the summer Bison Fair in Hajnówka, – the Festival of Many Cultures and Nations „From the Village Yard” in Czeremcha and the „touring” International Theatre Festival, WERTEP!





SKIT IN ODRYNKI

South of Białystok lies an extraordinary land where the past intertwines with the present. It is the Land of Open Shutters and 3 fairy-tale villages of Podlasie: Trześcińska, Soce and Puchty. Plan an unhurried stroll through the world that is fading away. The Land of Open Shutters is, above all, unique wooden architecture, unusual woodcarving ornaments and colourful, always open, shutters. The ornaments, impossible to find in other regions of Poland, originate from the Russian folk architecture. The region is inhabited mainly by Orthodox people of Belarussian descent, who still cultivate their folklore, visible not only in the

buildings, but also in the rituals and dialect. The Land of Open Shutters is famous not only for its decorative cottages, but also for the distinctive colourful wooden Orthodox churches. You will be greeted by an intensely green building in Trześcińska and a blue temple of the Protection of Our Lady in Puchty, which is considered one of the most beautiful churches in the area. Note that the Orthodox churches are not open all the time – you usually have a chance to go inside during the Sunday service. Light a candle and take a moment to reflect. Visit other nearby villages: Ciełuszki, Pawły, Dawidowicze, Ryboły, Płoski, Plutycze... You will find more

ornate wooden houses, roadside crosses and hospitable locals sitting on benches in front of their houses in the summer. Many of the nearby villages have their own enchanting Orthodox churches as well.

When you are visiting the Land, you should also see a truly magical place: the Skit of Saints Antoni and Teodozjusz Pieczerski in Odrynki – an Orthodox hermitage situated among the picturesque floodplains of the Narew river. The only way to get there is on foot, hiking on wooden footbridges which lead you above the rough, marshy ground.

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+48 85 681 29 01  
[www.bpn.com.pl](http://www.bpn.com.pl)

Tourist Centre of the Białowieża Primeval Forest Region  
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# Białowieża Municipality

As you enter the Białowieża municipality, you will be greeted by the majestic Bison Monument located in the small village of Zwierzyniec. It is a copy of the original statue which had been standing in this place since 1826, was taken away from Białowieża during the war and never returned. A visit to the Bison Reserve is an obligatory part of a family trip to Białowieża. This is where you have the chance to have a close encounter with the largest animal living in Europe. The reserve is where you can find not only bison, but also other inhabitants of the forest: deer, wild boar, elk, in semi-natural conditions. Before you start your walk, however, take a moment to stop at the new Educational Pavilion in front of the entrance to the Reserve. In its interactive rooms, you can learn more about the entire primeval forest and the bison themselves. It is also worth spending some time at the heart of Białowieża, in the Palace Park, which many years ago surrounded the now non-existent Tsar Alexander III's palace. Nothing has survived of its buildings except the palace gate, which now hosts the Gallery in the Tsar's Gate. Today the Park offers some relaxation by the picturesque ponds, after which you will discover the secrets of the Natural Forest Museum of the Białowieża National Park. It is the oldest operating museum in the entire region, where you can learn about the heritage of the forest in a pleasant and accessible way and find out what makes the local flora and fauna so unique.



Białowieża is also a superb attraction for history and architecture enthusiasts. You can hardly find a wooden building in the area with greater craftsmanship and attention to detail. Be sure to stop for a while at the Grodno Governor's Mansion in the Palace Park. It is a beautiful monument, which is even older than the said palace. The enchanting Białowieża Pałac station and the unique brick Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker from the second half of the 19th century are located in its immediate vicinity. This church is an unquestionable gem on a national scale – it has the only multi-coloured porcelain iconostasis in Poland, imported years ago from St Petersburg. You should also visit St. Theresa Church with St. Hubert's Chapel. Its interior boasts unusual decoration based on tree branches and roots, with elements of antlers. We also recommend visiting the open-air Museum of Wooden Architecture of the Russian Population of Podlasie in Białowieża, where you can feel the true spirit of the region by visiting traditional wooden cottages and other buildings reflecting the idyllic charm of the surrounding villages. These include a historic windmill from the village of Kotły, the purchase of which initiated the creation of the open-air museum. There is also the Chapel of St Alexander Nevsky, modelled after the 18th century chapel in Novoberezov near Hajnówka. The entire area of the open-air museum is almost four hectares, and the collection of objects for it began in the late 1970s. If you visit the nearby Pogorzelce, be sure to stop by at the „Kresy” Gallery of Regional and Borderland Art. This place is nestled in the midst of remarkable nature and overflowing with local folklore. Admire the traditional art and unique handicrafts. Don't forget to buy a souvenir! Make the most of the cultural offer of the area and take part in the Night of Owls organised by the Białowieża Forestry Inspectorate in spring. In the summertime, don't miss the Night of Kupała, „Kupalle” and concerts of the „Różnogłosie” series in Białowieża!



BIAŁOWIEŻA PAŁAC STATION



There are many ways to explore the Białowieża municipality. Walk the local hiking and wildlife trails. One of them is the oldest forest path of this kind in Poland called „The Bison's Ribs”. It is a 4 km long wooden footbridge meandering through the wetlands of the forest and meadows. Look around carefully – in spring you will notice lots of frogs waking up from their winter dormancy at the entrance to the path. Breathe deeply – you can smell the distinctive scent of bear's garlic in May. Take your time – you have the unique opportunity to admire an intact landscape, intricately designed by nature. The trail runs mainly through swamp forests and former, overgrown meadows. One of this path's advantages is that it allows you to pass through a fragment of the natural reserve – the Natural Forests of the Białowieża Forest, which boasts well-preserved natural tree stands. You can also have a ride with a horse-drawn carriage, enjoy the proximity of nature by riding a bike along the Green Velo trail, the Podlaskie White Stork Trail or one of the many local bike routes. Take a ride in a horse-drawn carriage or on the Hajnówka narrow-gauge railway – or travel through the Forest with a draisine powered by your own muscles!

Manual draisines were used by railway workers as auxiliary vehicles for track works. The Białowieża Draisines are a unique opportunity to encounter nature while staying on a steel highway. You are the train driver. The stations on the route are: Białowieża Towarowa, Białowieża Pałac, Grudki and the Power Place.

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„The Land of the Bison”  
Budy Leśne 1  
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(+48) 85 682 30 46  
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Białowieża Draisines  
Stacja Towarowa  
17-230 Białowieża  
(+48) 783 002 927  
[www.bialowieskie-drezniny.com](http://www.bialowieskie-drezniny.com)





Hotel Białowieski\*\*\* is located at the heart of the Białowieża Forest. Its secluded location, exceptional microclimate, original nature and historical heritage make this place perfect for anyone looking for a holiday in a unique place. Indulge in a wellness treatment at the local SPA or taste the excellent craft beer at the Przełom Brewery.

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One of the guides from J.J. Karpiński's branch of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society in Białowieża will take you on an unforgettable journey through the Białowieża Primeval Forest. The information centre of PTTK (the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society) in Białowieża will inform you about the forest's most interesting places.

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[www.pttk.bialowieza.pl](http://www.pttk.bialowieza.pl)





# Narewka Municipality



photograph: Maciej Nowakowski

The next stop is Narewka municipality, located in the border area and separated from Belarus by the eastern border of Poland. It is a forested area and the entire municipality is located in the protected area of the Białowieża Primeval Forest. There are as many as four nature reserves: Siemianówka, Waliczówka Valley, Gnilec and the Natural Forest Reserve of the Białowieża Forest. Nature conservation is a priority there, which makes the area perfect for walks and bicycle rides. Start in Narewka.

Take the black trail leading to the „szypulowa depot” in the valley of the Braszcza river crossing the swampy forest. The red „Partisan Combat Trail” between Narewka and Hajnówka will take you through places once travelled by insurgent units. Its route includes the mysterious Szczekotowo reserve, which protects old Slavic barrow cemeteries dating back as far as the 10th century! Take a walk to the village of Świnoroje, follow the „Pod Dębami” (Under the Oaks) nature trail among 150-year-old tree stands and learn some interesting facts about forest preservation. If you're in Narewka municipality, we recommend cycling. It is quite a challenge as you have a distance of over 200 kilometres to cover! The Białowieża Cross-Border Trail is a cycling route running along both sides of the Polish-Belarusian border. It follows paths well-marked with wooden, decorative signposts reflecting the region's architecture, with additional information boards along the way. The Polish section is approximately ¼ of the trail's length the rest is across the Belarussian border, which you can cross without a visa! All you need is a special „pass” which you can obtain from several Podlasie travel agencies.

Anglers and water sports enthusiasts will not be disappointed as the Siemianówka reservoir in the northern part of the municipality is one of the largest water bodies in the country. There is a Tourist, Recreational and Cultural Centre in Stary Dwór with a wide beach, various sports fields, a waterside amphitheatre, floating piers, a large playground, a climbing wall, campfire shelters, and water sports rental facilities. In the summer you can watch the Bison Cup Regatta on the Siemianówka Reservoir, then visit Narewka and enjoy the rest and relaxation zone on the Narewka River, where you can get a bit of sun on the beach. Children will have a lot of fun at the modern playground and the Canoe Marina, which is the starting point for canoeists. Narewka is the perfect river to start your canoeing adventure. Your canoeing trip will be made even more interesting as you encounter animals, such as roe deer and deer. If you have some luck, you may even see a bison! In the vicinity of the Canoe Marina you can also find a tourist accommodation base in Narewka, where you can recover after an active day and prepare for a next one. You can spend it visiting Tamara Sołowiecz Gallery in Narewka – a phenomenal place, as it is located in the countryside! This „tiny art gallery” gathers and presents local culture, tradition, history and handicrafts, organises photography and painting exhibitions by local artists and craftsmen.

As you are visiting Narewka municipality, pay attention to the regular street architecture preserved in many villages with historic wooden buildings, among which the distinctive houses with ornate shutters stand out. Be sure to see the wooden Orthodox Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Lewków Stary – the first reference to its existence dates back to the 16th century!

Canoe Marina in Narewka – Tourist  
Information Centre  
ul. Hajnowska 33  
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+48 85 685 80 62  
[www.gci.narewka.pl](http://www.gci.narewka.pl)



# Bug Valley



photograph: Michał Zabokrzęcki, 500 kayaks

Today, the southern part of Podlaskie province lies far from transit routes, but it is there that the history of the region and of the noble republic was shaped – mostly parochial, but also proud and patriotic. It is there, right next to Mielnik, Drohiczyn and Siemiatycze, that the picturesque, meandering and still not engineered Bug river flows lazily. The borderland ambience as well as the tranquillity and somewhat sleepy atmosphere of the area are becoming and increasingly attractive location for busy city dwellers. The Bug is a dream river for canoeists. It is changeable and whimsical enough to look different every season, and it presents a challenge for canoeists. There are also other enjoyable attractions on the Bug, such as boating, jet-skiing and dinghy-riding, as well as fishing and bird-watching. The famous places on the Bug River include Drohiczyn – a coronation town and the first capital of Podlaskie province. Once a mighty fortress on the Polish-Ruthenian border, today a peaceful, charming town. You can admire its panorama from the viewpoint on the nearby Castle Hill. An obelisk was erected on top of it in 1928 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Poland's independence. If you are captivated by the view from the top, it is time for a close encounter with the history and culture of Drohiczyn. Visit the Bug Canoeing Tourist Centre and see the exhibitions gathered by the Canoeing Museum. If you love motorbikes, make sure to see the Old Motorcycle Exhibition in the Cultural and Historical Park named „Bug – the borderland of cultures and religions”. Stop for a moment in front of the 17th-century Holy Trinity Church, experience the adventure on the Trail of the Bug River Settlements, where you will find traces of the oldest land forms: settlements, barrows and barrow cemeteries, hidden among the fields and forests, often far from present-day human settlements. You can find traces of a somewhat closer, though turbulent, history in the Drohiczyn area as well. The „Molotov Line”, which runs through the area, is a complex of Soviet fortifications built during World War II. Some of the bunkers were destroyed by the Germans, who tested the effectiveness of their artillery on them. Others, situated along the Bug, serve as a reminder of those troubled times today.





## GRABARKA HOLY MOUNTAIN

If you are staying in Drohiczyń, canoeing down the Bug is a must in your schedule. Use the services of one of the numerous equipment rental companies and set off downstream – the river will take you through some of the most beautiful places in Podlaskie province. The local slogan, „Bug is a tourist’s paradise”, becomes really clear to you when you start your expedition along the trail under this very name. Three ferry crossings as well as canoeing infrastructure, many campsites and barbecue shelters have been built along its route. If you are planning your holiday in the Bug valley at the turn of

July and August, you have the opportunity to participate in a unique nationwide event! A rafting trip of 500 canoes unites the enthusiasts of this unusual sport, who seek peace, quiet and active recreation. The rafting route leads through the picturesque Bug river area, abundant with virgin nature and unique history. Two days of intensive paddling will be rounded off with a traditional feast, where you can recover by the bonfire, watch local bands perform and taste delicacies of the traditional Podlaskie cuisine.

Take a trip to Ciechanowiec and visit the K. Kluk Museum of Agriculture, which is a showpiece of Podlaskie province displaying monuments related to the spiritual and material culture of the Polish – and, in particular, Podlasie – countryside. Afterwards, proceed to Mielnik. In its setting, your attention will be drawn to a place which looks as if an eternal winter prevailed there. It is not snow, however, but Poland’s only active opencast chalk mine, which you can admire most clearly from the viewing terrace at Dubois Street. It is close to the Holy Mountain of Grabarka – the most important place of worship for Orthodox Christians in

The Bug River Canoe Tourist Centre  
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(+48) 501 701 152  
[www.bugunitesus.eu](http://www.bugunitesus.eu)

Tourist Information of the Municipal  
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Poland. Walking among the thousands of crosses placed there by pilgrims – many of them more than 100 years old – you will almost touch the mysticism. Take a sip of water from the healing spring, breathe in and indulge in a moment of tranquillity.

Development of tourism in the Bug river region is possible partly due to the activity of the Local Tourist Organisation, „FLIGHT over the Bug” and the Local Activity Group „Melting Pot of the Bug Valley”.





photograph: Local Tourist Organisation Great Lithuanian Tract

The Great Lithuanian Tract was one of the most important Polish mail and trade routes. It led through the Eastern Mazovia, Podlasie, Belarus and Lithuania, linking the two capitals of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Warsaw and Vilnius. The route offers a chance to visit places inhabited by people of various cultures and nationalities, to experience contact with nature, discover unique monuments and places

connected with prominent historical figures. The attractions of the trail include several nations' regional cuisine, abundant accommodation facilities and educational farms. In Podlaskie province the trail goes through places such as Drohiczyn, Brańsk, Supraśl, Białystok and Sokółka, which you can visit by car, bicycle or motorbike.

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Great Lithuanian Tract  
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08-300 Sokółów Podlaski  
(+48) 536 838 500  
[www.wielkigoscinielitewski.pl](http://www.wielkigoscinielitewski.pl)





The Podlaskie Cuisine Trail is created by producers of local food products, which are part of the region's heritage and have been prepared for hundreds of years, following recipes passed down from generation to generation. What brings all the participants of the Route together is their love for food. Due to the culinary richness of the Podlaskie region, the Route has been divided into nine local pantries (including the Białowieża and the Bug river pantry) with their own, local specificities. Here you can taste dishes of Polish, Lithuanian, Belarussian, Tatar, Gypsy, Ukrainian and Jewish cuisine.

Podlaskie Cuisine Trail  
[www.podlaskiszlakkulinary.pl](http://www.podlaskiszlakkulinary.pl)  
Podlaskie Flavours Association  
[www.facebook.com/podlaskiesmaki](https://www.facebook.com/podlaskiesmaki)

Podlaskie Smaki



Podlaski Szlak Kulinarny



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Local Tourist Organisation „FLIGHT  
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