

# **CENTRAL-EASTERN POLAND**

(StayPoland regional e-book)

For each Polish region we have prepared a special regional e-book. It is a short guide that enables you to quickly familiarize yourself with a new territory. The best of each region is listed in order of importance.

#### There are five regional e-books and each of them has five sections:

- 1. introduction to region and sights,
- 2. map,
- 3. "must-see" tourist sights (9 featured locations in Central-Eastern Poland e-book),
- 4. "explore!: tourist sights (27 places in Central-Eastern),
- 5. information on what STAYPOLAND travel agency & reservation system can do for you in selected places.

#### Two important points:

- A great number of the place & activity recommendations are made based on our customers' experiences. Your comments are welcome. We are looking forward to your feedback at <u>e-books@staypoland.com</u> (best comments will be published).
- You will find the guide very practical. It enables the independent traveler to make the most of their trip to Poland. At the end of this guide we post information on what STAYPOLAND travel agency can do for you in every destination. For more details check: <u>www.staypoland.com</u>.

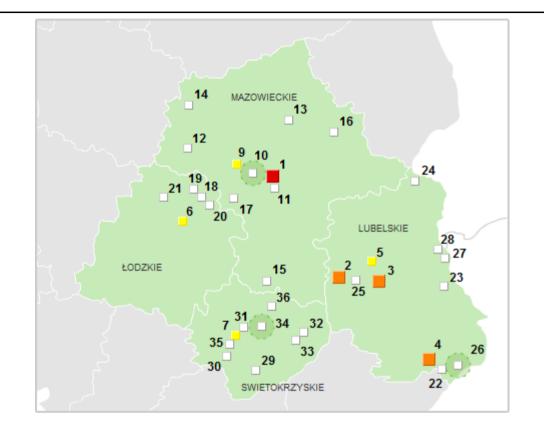
# 1. INTRODUCTION TO CENTRAL-EASTERN POLAND

provinces: 4 voivodeships: mazowieckie (Masovia), łódzkie (Łódź), lubelskie (Lublin), świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross)

- area / population: 90,604 sq km / 11.2 million people
- featured must-see places: 1 "one of a kind": Warsaw 3 Polish must-see: Kazimierz Dolny, Lublin, Zamość 5 regional must-see: Kozłówka, Łódź, Raj cave, Sandomierz, Żelazowa Wola
- explore!: 27 off-the-beaten-path: Arkadia, Bełżec, Busko-Zdrój, Chełm, Janów Podlaski, Jędrzejów, Kampinos National Park, Kielce, Konstancin-Jeziorna, Krzemionki Opatowskie & Opatów, Krzyżtopór, Łowicz, Nałęczów, Nieborów, Płock, Pułtusk, Roztocze National Park, Sierpc, Sobibór, Szydłowiec, Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Tokarnia, Treblinka, Tum, Wąchock, Włodawa, Żyrardów (in text below listed by voivodeship)

#### **UNESCO World Heritage:** 2: Warsaw, Zamość





# 3. MUST-SEE PLACES

# \*\*\* WARSAW (1)

The capital of Poland is an exciting city of contrasts with a poignant history to tell. Severely demolished (destroyed up to 85%) in World War II: to see the contrasts visit the Old Town and the remains of the Jewish ghetto area. Postwar reconstruction implanted socialist realist architecture and drab housing blocks, while post-communism development brought glossy and award-winning modern buildings. The flock of 14 downtown skyscrapers is still guarded by a stern present from Stalin: the Palace of Culture.

++ Old Town (Market Square / Rynek Starego Miasta, faithfully reconstructed streets and churches, secluded courtyards, Zamek Królewski: Royal Castle interiors, viewing terrace on Gnojna Góra, captivating Warsaw Historical Museum, the Barbakan); Palace of Culture (viewing terrace on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor);



Łazieńki Royal Castle and Gardens (walk, interiors, Chopin monument); Royal Route (stroll from Plac Zamkowy to Łazieńki Park: on the way you can make a short detour to the Sejm parliamentary buildings and Zamek Ujazdowski castle: modern art exhibitions and a restaurant with superb view); Warsaw Uprising Museum (interiors, outdoor memorial wall).

+ Wilanów Royal Castle (outskirts; castle interiors, walk in fine gardens, Polish poster museum); New Town (reconstructed streets and churches, Marie Curie-Skłodowska museum); Plac Piłsudskiego (changing of guards on the square, beautiful Saxon gardens); Plac Teatralny (the Great Theatre, trendy night clubs); Foksal / Nowy Świat / Chmielna Streets (restaurants and cafés); the former Jewish ghetto (walk with a guide: wall remnants, various memorials, the Nożyk synagogue, Próżna Street, Jewish cemetery, Jewish Historical Institute); National Museum (a superb gallery of Polish medieval and modern art); Polish Army Museum (free entry to the courtyard with combat equipment such as tanks and unique aircraft); Fotoplastykon (historical 3D pictures); Praga district (right bank: Ząbkowska and Okrzei streets where walls are riddled with bullet holes from World War II, the old river port, Army memorial, Orthodox church, and the zoo); Plac Konstytucji and the classic and imposing 1950s MDM social realist shopping and residential area (Muranów district is a good alternative if you want to see the 1950s architecture); Zachęta Art Gallery (premium temporary exhibitions of modern art); Jan Paweł II Paintings Gallery (a peculiar, forlorn collection of European works of art); BUW (Warsaw University Library: a modern architecture – if you like that, check also the halls of Polytechnika and SGH universities); Powązki cemetery; Złote Tarasy & Arkadia: the biggest and most opulent Polish shopping malls; Kopiec Powstania Warszawskiego (man-made hill in Sadyba district built to commemorate the Warsaw Uprising); wooden houses of the Soviet builders of the Palace of Culture (so-called Finnish houses near the Sejm or the fascinating Russian spirit Jelonki suburb) and the underground metro line (award-winning metro station at Plac Wilsona).

[min: 1.5 day – best: 3 days – max: 5 days]

#### \*\* KAZIMIERZ DOLNY (2)

A small, beautiful and ancient town along the Vistula River. It is rustic, quaint and very scenic, ideal for weekend getaways to bask in the summer sun.

++ Old town (Renaissance square with a unique well, narrow streets with art shops, outdoor market, the Three Crosses Hill, the ruins of a castle and a separate tower).

+ Walk along the Vistula river to see the more remote Renaissance granaries; a boat ride to the opposite riverbank and Janowiec Castle; Jewish synagogue; walks up shady gulley systems.

[min: 3 hours – best: 2 days – max: 4 days or more if you enjoy reading and unhurried strolls, featured in the Simple Pleasures itinerary]

# \*\* LUBLIN (3)

Set in the middle of Eastern Poland is this nostalgic and historical city, one which even Poles underestimate. The old town is pleasantly more like what one would expect to find in a historical European city.

++ Castle (a splendid 14th century Holy Trinity chapel with Byzantium-inspired paintings that are typical for Russia, and a museum of Polish art with a small selection of exquisite pieces), the Old Town (a great atmosphere and unusual, for Poland, an almost circular street plan, the notable and imposing Brama Krakowska main gate, a market square with town hall, hidden passageways: a maze of wooden stairs and balconies to explore, plus a good range of well-priced restaurants and cafés), Majdanek concentration camp museum (outskirts; Holocaust memorial).

+ Archikatedra (cathedral, J. Meyer frescoes); 19th century Krakowskie Przedmieście Street; remnants of a once thriving and prominent Jewish community (well-known story about the Seer of Lublin); Lublin open-air folklore museum.



[min: 8 hours – best: 1.5 day – max: 2 days]

# \*\* ZAMOŚĆ (4)

Zamość is an UNESCO heritage site. It was built from scratch amid meadows in 1580 by dynamic chancellor Jan Zamoyski as a vision of the ideal Renaissance town. Although this remarkable place is still relatively unvisited, there is a superb square, impressive fortifications to explore, underground bars and restaurants, and a lovely arched walkway surrounding the large market square to shelter you from the heat of the sun.

++ Walk around the moderate-sized but unique town center; Renaissance Armenian houses line the main square, a beautiful town hall, the Zamoyski palace; fortifications.

+ Martyrdom museum in the Rotunda; City History Museum; synagogue (now a public library).

[min: 3 hours – best: 7 hours – max: 1 day]

# \* KOZŁÓWKA (5)

Beautiful late-Baroque palace: both the Zamoyski museum and Socialist Art museum, all in a peaceful rural setting.

++ Unusual blend of very interesting 18th-19th century aristocratic interiors (guided tour) juxtaposed to a museum of Social Realist propaganda art. [2-3 hours, close to Lublin]

# \* ŁÓDŹ (6)

The second largest Polish city is the puzzling product of the 19th century industrial revolution. It fell into disrepair in the postwar years creating a grimy atmosphere that fascinates American director David Lynch. Łódź is now enjoying a slow but steady rejuvenation.

++ Piotrkowska Street & environs (walk or rickshaw ride: the longest street in Poland, inventive sculptures, Art nouveau and classicist buildings, palaces of factory owners: e.g. Kindermann and Richter, a string of pubs and restaurants, well-known nationwide for its nightlife); Muzeum Sztuki (best 20th century art gallery in Poland, showcasing not only Polish art – check the new building ms2 located in the Manufaktura zone); Ksieży Młyn (cotton mills and the residential palace of industrialist E. Herbst).

+ Manufaktura (an old factory converted into a shopping & entertainment centre); City History Museum (Poznanski Palace interiors); cotton industry museum (Biała Fabryka, Geyer's Palace interiors); Polish cinematography museum (Scheibler's Palace); the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe; remnants of the WW2 Łódź ghetto; Łódź Kaliska Art Club (the famous Polish avant-garde group), places captured in David Lynch's movie Inland Empire.

[min: 0.5 day – best: 1 day – max: 2 days, good to have a guide in Łódź, as interesting things are not always obvious here]

# \* RAJ (PARADISE) CAVE (7)

One of the two most beautiful caves in Poland (the other is Bear's Cave in Kłodzko area). Voted as the best natural attraction of Poland by the readers of the Polish daily newspaper Rzeczpospolita. Though that is a disputable accolade, Raj Cave is refreshing and easy to incorporate into your trip if you prefer a slow pace of travel between Warsaw and Kraków.

++ Stalactites, stalagmites, the story about prehistoric people and how the cave was discovered (a short guided tour).

+ Towering ruins of the Chęciny castle nearby.



[min: 1.5 hour, max: 4 hours, advance ticket reservation strongly advised]

#### \* SANDOMIERZ (8)

Lovely old town with a captivating market square. Historically a very important and influential Polish city, and today a great choice for those who love small, ancient towns. Sandomierz became quite popular among Poles after it was used as the setting for a TV series about a priest-detective. A drive along the Vistula river valley to the north is recommended.

++ Old town walks; strolls along the Vistula river (or the Wąwóz Królowej Jadwigi gully); cathedral with dicomfortingly sombre interiors (a painting depicting an alleged ritual murder of Christian children – it's a shame to run into anti-Semitism in contemporary church; as well as the Martyrologium romanum: a chronicle of all the ways a martyr can be killed).

+ Underground tourist route; diocesan museum in the House of the Chronicler Dlugosz; museum in the Castle.

#### [min: 3 hours, best: 1 day, max: 1.5 day]

### \* ŻELAZOWA WOLA (9)

The birthplace of Chopin and probably the most visited tourist attraction in the outskirts of Warsaw. The site has a reconstruction of the modest manor house where Chopin was born in 1810.

++ Museum in a reconstructed manor house, beautiful garden and park, memorable summertime piano recitals by renowned international pianists. [min: 1.5 hour, best: 3 hours, max: 4 hours]

#### 4. eXPLORE! PLACES

#### MASOVIA (MAZOWIECKIE) VOIVODESHIP

#### **KAMPINOS NATIONAL PARK (10)**

A very large national park on the western outskirts of Warsaw. Good for a walk or a bicycle ride in the summer. Interesting sand dunes, forests, and plenty of wildlife (including elk, fox and beaver) that generally keep away from the more popular tourist trails in the eastern part. There is also the famous Palmiry martyrdom cemetery. From May till September on Saturdays, you can get to the park from Sochaczew by a historical narrow-gauge railway.

#### **KONSTANCIN-JEZIORNA** (11)

A small spa town on the southern edge of Warsaw. Since the 19th century the large and elaborate villas in Konstancin have long constituted a perfect property investment for the cream of Polish society.

# **PŁOCK (12)**

The one-time capital of Poland in the 11th-12th centuries. These days, it is more of an industrial hub (the biggest Polish company, Orlen, has a



petrochemical plant in its vicinity). However, a visit to this town is a pleasant surprise: a noted castle-cathedral complex (from 1130) with the sarcophagi of two Polish princes, the oldest school in Poland (collegiate from 1180) and a breathtaking view of the Vistula river valley. Once in the centre, you should not miss the city museum with its quality collection of fin-de-siècle art, the interesting building of the Mariavite church, and the chapel at the monastery of Divine Mercy where Saint Faustyna Kowalska had her first vision in 1931. The Christ's image is one of the most globally recognizable and venerated Catholic motifs.

# PUŁTUSK (13)

A provincial city north of Warsaw that has retained yesteryear charm and home to the longest market square in Poland. There is a big castle housing Dom Polonii (the foundation responsible for maintaining contacts with the strong Polish diaspora overseas) - part of the castle is a hotel. Boat rentals are available for a float on the river.

### SIERPC (14)

An excellent open-air folk architecture museum not far from Płock. Pleasant surroundings, with the museum forming a separate "settlement". Seasonal exhibitions. In the refreshments area there is great smalec (traditional lard spread for open sandwiches) and an inn-keeper that looks like a recent arrival from ancient Poland.

#### SZYDŁOWIEC (15)

On your unhurried journey south from Warsaw, be sure to stop in this sleepy town of 10 thousand inhabitants and the highest unemployment rate in the country. You will find here a lovely square, a beautifully preserved 15th century church and a museum of musical instruments in the castle.

# **TREBLINKA (16)**

For some people, this ominous place proves most adequate for pondering over the horrors of the 20th century. In 1944, about 700,000-1,000,000 human beings (mostly Jews, exact numbers unknown) were systematically gassed here very soon after their arrival (usually departing from Umschlagplatz in the Warsaw Ghetto). 40 people are known to have survived. The Nazis managed to raze down all the buildings, leaving behind a haunting void amid the forests. You will find here a meadow with memorial stones and boulders where birds are still too afraid to sing.

# ŁÓDŹ VOIVODESHIP

# ARKADIA (17)

A pleasant, conceptually romantic aristocratic landscape park, created in the 18th century, with several eye-catching structures. A homage to Ancient Greece conceived by Princess Helen Radziwiłł. Along with Łowicz and Nieborów, Arkadia forms a pleasant outing from Warsaw or Łódź.

#### ŁOWICZ (18)

A seemingly unexceptional small town with the feel of Polish provincial life. There are two interesting churches and it is best visited in May/June during the celebration of Corpus Christi (a Thursday, check calendar for exact dates) in order to catch the most famous Polish religious procession.



# NIEBORÓW (19)

An 18th century country palace (desiged by architect Tylman of Gameren) with lavish interiors housing many valuable objects and a rich art collection. French gardens and an English park.

#### TUM (20)

Amid the never-ending wheat fields of central Poland, this austere Romanesque three-nave 12th century church is quite unexpected and looks as if it was brought here from France. Once a part of a Benedictine abbey, today it stands alone. A stone's throw away is the wooden church of St. Nicolaus and 2 km further, the small town of Łęczyca with the ruins of a medieval castle and the village of Piątek, the cartographic centre of Poland.

# ŻYRARDÓW (21)

A very strange and highly unique place. Similar to Łódź, Żyrardów is a cotton industry town that expanded quickly in the 19th century. Yet, in comparison to Łódź, Żyrardów's development was stalled and the town centre is left with curious 19th century workers' barracks. The town seems to be slumbering and forgotten by technological development.

#### LUBLIN (LUBELSKIE) VOIVODESHIP

### BEŁŻEC (22)

Unfortunately, Eastern Poland saw more atrocities of the Holocaust than any other region in Europe. The Nazi built six extermination camps located within the borders of present-day Poland. Belzec was one of them. The memorial and museum were created to commemorate the 600,000 people killed in this location.

#### CHEŁM (23)

In the 'terra incognita' of the central portion of Poland's eastern border, this town is the most likely place to stop for the maverick traveler. The local must-see is the system of underground chalk cellars and tunnels that provide an unusually cool one-hour walk, including an encounter with the resident ghost. At the top of hill that gives this town its name ("chełm" means "helme" or "helmet", so called after the shape of the hill) is the impressive Uniate Cathedral. For more ornate interiors, visit the 18th century parish church. And it is recommended that while in Chełm you should visit at least two of the four museums.

# JANÓW PODLASKI (24)

If you are looking for thoroughbred horses, then Janów's stable is the best address in Poland for Arabian steeds. You can have a look around the stables if you make an appointment beforehand. Every August, there is a famous international horse auction. Janów Podlaski is also a village with a number of picturesque buildings and a cute petrol station from 1928.

#### NAŁĘCZÓW (25)

Nałęczów is an old traditional spa town that has had a strong appeal to Polish men of letters. In the past, it was frequently visited by authors like Żeromski, Prus and Sienkiewicz. Today, it is favored by people seeking quiet retreats, therapeutic waters, massages, or even a hot chocolate in the café by the lake. There are many wooden mountain-style buildings from the early 20th century, including a remarkable small wooden church. You do not have to stroll far



from the centre to find yourself in beautiful forests and sandy gullies.

### **ROZTOCZE NATIONAL PARK (26)**

Roztocze, in particular the small waterfalls on the Sopot and Tanew rivers, were voted as the sixth best natural attraction in Poland by the readers of the Polish national daily newspaper Rzeczpospolita. While it is not spectacular, its proximity to nature makes wildlife-spotting easy, and gives quick access to dense forests and rolling hills. One of the best places to stay is Zwierzyniec (a splendid white church on a lake: illuminated at night, and a brewery with its own bar) or Guciów with a farmstead that is popular with StayPoland customers on the Simple Pleasures tour, possibly due to the Polish moonshine that is served as part of the meal. Ask us about this tour to experience some of the best things in life: e.g. picking berries and mushrooms and learning how to make pierogi, or even an evening barbecue with music played by the local village musicians.

# SOBIBÓR (27)

For tourists seeking carefree impressions, Poland can often appear to be focusing too much attention on martyrdom. Here is another site: the former extermination camp in Sobibór. During the Holocaust, the death toll reached 250,000 people, but little is visible today other than a small museum and the memorial. Sobibór is a border village: a short stroll down a farm track from the main village will take you to the Bug River, where you can gaze across to Ukraine on the other bank – while Belarus lies a few miles to the north.

#### WŁODAWA (28)

Practically on the border with Belarus and Ukraine, Włodawa is a good destination for those who want to stray far but still be in Poland. We list it for its frontier atmosphere and especially for the larger of the two synagogues, one of the largest in the country and housing a preserved Aron ha-Kodesh. Besides this, the border of the city is the Poleski National Park, with unspoilt nature harboring rare species of waterfowl and many other animals (crane, black stork, white eagle, tortoise, wolf, ermine, owls, beaver, otter, and elk). You can get a close-up of peat bogs and marshy swamps.

# HOLY CROSS (ŚWIETOKRZYSKIE) VOIVODESHIP

#### BUSKO ZDRÓJ (29)

Busko is a well-know spa town. Its therapeutic waters are rich in sulphur and very effective in treating liver or gall bladder diseases. If you have ample time on your hands, it is worth stopping here for one or two days to partake on the culture of "taking waters" that restores wellbeing, stroll across the beautiful spa park and take an outing beyond the little town to see floral that thrive on sulphur in the lovely Owczary reserve.

# JĘDRZEJÓW (30)

Few guidebooks neglect small Jędrzrejów. It boasts an unusual sundial museum with 650 objects, allegedly the third biggest in the world, a Cistercian Abbey and a provincial narrow-gauge railway.

#### KIELCE (31)

Kielce is the capital of the Świetokrzyskie Province and it has a number of remarkable features. While in the vicinity, do visit the Kadzielnia Geological Reserve (scenic limestone quarry), Bishop's Palace (a remarkable 19th and 20th century Polish art gallery) and climb the hill known as Karczówka to discover a pilgrimage church and enjoy a view of to the Holy Cross (Świętokrzyskie) Mountains.



### KRZEMIONKI OPATOWSKIE & OPATÓW (32)

One of the biggest quarry mines of Neolithic Europe, covering an area 4 km long and up to 200 m wide, it was in continuous operation for 2500 years. It is possible to visit the mines and see what they looked like in 4900-1600 BC when the material was a sought-after merchandise for the whole of Europe.

# **KRZYŻTOPÓR (33)**

Probably the biggest castle ruins in Poland. Built in the 17th century, the castle had 4 bastions, 12 large halls, 52 rooms and 365 windows. Apart from symbolism, the most interesting feature was an overhead crystal aquarium (instead of a ceiling) in the dining room. Take care when exploring the interiors as there is little by way of safety barriers – but a cautious, intrepid explorer is rewarded with a thrilling adventure through darkened dungeons and passageways.

#### ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE (HOLY CROSS) MOUNTAINS (34)

In Polish the same word is used for hill and mountain, so do not be surprised that most 'mountains' in the Świętokrzyski National Park are no more than around 600 m high. The highest is the sinister Łysica (612 m), home to witches' covens. On the frequently visited Łysa Gora (595 m) you will find the Holy Cross (Świetokrzyskie) Abbey, a pilgrimage church enshrining a fragment of the Holy Cross. Both hills give you fabulous views of the surrounding areas.

#### TOKARNIA (35)

This open-air museum of Kielce Village is rather small, but interesting and well-planned. Between Warsaw and Kraków, Tokarnia is the best place to see old Polish folk architecture. The museum also holds numerous festivals throughout the year.

#### WĄCHOCK (36)

The Cistercian Abbey originated in the 13th century, but underwent extensive changes in the Baroque period. There is also a late Romanesque church, the most precious Cistercian building in Poland.

# 5. WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU IN SELECTED DESTINATIONS

#### **CENTRAL-EASTERN POLAND**

- Reservations of 100 contracted hotels (1-5 stars) and guesthouses. Tourist information on an additional 600 properties.
- Car rental: we partner with 6 trusted local rental agencies. High-quality models of all car types.
- Limousines with private drivers. Coach rental. Private chartered planes.
- Private tailor-made itineraries: self-drive, chauffeur-driven or railway tours.
- Professional support and consultancy before and during your tour: free restaurant and event booking; 24/7 emergency phone line during your stay in Poland; complimentary restaurant guides sent in advance to your postal address.
- Incentive and teambuilding programs in cities or in the countryside.



### **KAZIMIERZ DOLNY**

- 3 of the best hotels in town available online.
- 1 SPA hotel.
- One-day excursions to Kazimierz Dolny from Warsaw and Lublin
- Kazimierz Dolny is one of the highlights of the SIMPLE PLEASURES fixed-date Escorted tour (2 overnights).

### **KIELCE**

- 6 of the best hotels in town.
- Hotel reservations during Kielce international fairs.
- 7 car models available for rental from Kielce.

### LUBLIN

- 7 of the best hotels in town available online.
- 14 car models available for rental from Lublin.
- 4 prepared city tours and excursions.
- Highlighted in the SIMPLE PLEASURES fixed-date Escorted tour.
- Private chauffeured or railway tours from Warsaw to Lublin available.

# ŁÓDŹ

- 10 of the best hotels in town available online.
- 41 car models available for rental from Łódź.
- Featured in the fixed-date Escorted GRAND TOUR OF POLAND (1 overnight).
- Private guided tours of Łódź (city centre, former factories and palaces, Jewish heritage).
- Quality sights and restaurant guide (70 pages) sent in advance to anyone interested in tailor-made tours.

#### WARSAW

- 45 of the best hotels in town available online.
- 80 car models for rental stationed in Warsaw.
- Comfortable serviced apartments in the Old Town and city centre.
- Two fixed-date Escorted tours start in Warsaw: POLAND IN ONE GO and GRAND TOUR OF POLAND (2 overnights).
- ENIGMAWARSAW city game (for groups of at least 4 up to 40 participants, larger groups on request).
- 17 kinds of city tours and private excursions.
- City break packages.
- Private airport transportation.
- Railway ticket booking and delivery.



• Quality sight and restaurant guide (120 pages) sent in advance to anyone interested in tailor-made tours.

# ZAMOŚĆ

- 2 of the best hotels in town available online.
- Highlighted in the SIMPLE PLEASURES fixed-date Escorted tour.
- Private chauffeured tours from Lublin to Zamość.

# ŻELAZOWA WOLA

- 1 good hotel in nearby Sochaczew.
- 2 types of private chauffeured-tours available from Warsaw (possible to combine with a visit to Arkadia, Nieborów and Brochów).

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