EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Backroads of Poland (BP 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
tour Code: BP

Tour Highlights - Backroads of Poland

- ✓ Warsaw - Explore the colourful Old Town and Medieval market square
- ✓ Biebrza Marshes - Bird watching in the largest area of inland marsh in Central Europe
- ✓ Narew River National Park - Enjoy a punted boat trip along the 'Polish Amazon'
- ✓ Bialowieza Forest - Walk in one of last remaining and largest primeval forests in Europe
- ✓ Bieszczady Mountains - Ramble through the hiking trails in this remote wilderness area
- ✓ Krakow - Featuring Europe's best-preserved Medieval market square

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	12 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Standard Guesthouse
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 2 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Warsaw
End Point:	Tour ends: Warsaw
Transport:	Bus, Train, Boat
Countries:	Poland

Backroads Of Poland

Take this journey of discovery with us across the primeval forests, jagged peaks and vast waterways of rural Poland. We canoe along reedy canals in the lake district, punt through the marshes in Narew River National Park and hike along ridges in the Bieszczady Mountains. We also explore the country's greatest cities - Krakow and Warsaw.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Warsaw

Arrive in Warsaw and check-in to the hotel. The capital of Poland has had a turbulent history spanning seven centuries. During this time it has been destroyed many times, most recently during World War II when 85% of its buildings were left in ruins. Today Warsaw stands rebuilt and restored to its former glory with its Old Town, the 'Stare Miasto', undoubtedly the showpiece. Here there are buskers and artists galore and many 'al fresco' cafes and restaurants surround the square.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Drive to Wigry National Park

Crossing the Vistula River, we head into Poland's rural heartland, part of an area known as the 'Green Lungs of Poland'. It has been given special protection prohibiting the establishment of any major industries. We drive onto the lakeside town of Augustow where the surrounding thick forest reminds us of the primeval forest which once covered large tracts of Eastern Poland. Heading further north, the vegetation thins to reveal the district's largest lake, Wigry, formed by a Scandinavian glacier. The backwater canoeing here is particularly good and this afternoon we take the first outing in our stable wide-bottomed canoes. You may like to visit the former Camaldolese monastery. Founded in the 1660's, it has superb views of the surrounding national park from its bell tower.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Morning forest walk; afternoon canoeing the Czarna Hancza River

This morning there is the opportunity to explore the numerous marked walking trails through the forest. In the afternoon we take to the Czarna Hancza River, possibly one of the most beautiful and unspoilt canoeing routes in Poland. Paddling along the tranquil water is an ideal way of seeing the attractive landscape and untouched nature of this region. We spend a half day paddling serenely along forest lined reed banks.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Drive to Narew National Park

Today we drive south to the Biebrza National Park. Here there are the famous Biebrza river marshes, the largest area of inland marsh in central Europe. We can look for birds such as white and black stork, cranes, waterfowl or, if we're lucky, a lesser spotted eagle. Other wildlife here includes elk, beaver and otter. Later we drive to the small farming village of Waniewo, where we are punted silently through the reed-fringed channels of the tranquil Narew River. Nicknamed the 'Polish Amazon', this is a unique area where centuries of farming traditions exist in harmony with nature.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5 Drive to Bialowieza National Park; explore primeval forest

Following the back roads east towards the Belarussian border, we arrive at the Bialowieza Forest, the last primeval forest remaining in Europe. On our journey we will see many old wooden villages. As Poland's first national park, established in the 1920s, there are a number of walking or biking trails showing the large variety of flora and fauna here. There is the option to visit the Bison Reserve where injured or orphaned animals, such as elk, red deer, wolf, wild boar and the European bison (the largest mammal on the continent) can be seen. There are different ways to get there; horse and cart, biking or walking through the forest. In the evening it may be possible to have an 'Ognisko' (traditional Polish campfire) accompanied by local musicians playing folk music.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Drive to Kazimierz Dolny

Early this morning we have a guided walk in the forest, learning more about the trees, wild flowers and birds that live here. Later we drive south to Kazimierz Dolny. This picturesque and well-preserved town was once a prosperous mercantile centre at the end of the 14th century. Ornate burghers' houses were constructed along the banks of the Vistula River and around the old cobbled square. We take a short walking tour to discover the bestpreserved of these residences.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 In Kazimierz Dolny

The day is free for you to explore at leisure. The whole region surrounding Kazimierz has been designated a Landscape Park and there are excellent walks in the hills and to north of the town, along the Vistula river. One short marked path, starting in the town square, leads to the ruins of a 14th century castle and its watchtower. Built by King Kazimierz the Great, it was destroyed by invading Swedes three centuries later. Other options include a boat trip on the Vistula and if you hop off you can visit the ruins of a 16th century castle at Janowiec; or you can simply spend your time relaxing in one of the many cafés which line the old Square.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Drive to Bieszczady Mountains

Today we have a full day's drive to the Bieszczady Mountains in the south-eastern corner of Poland. Travelling through the rolling hills and tobacco fields, we come to Zamosc. This unique town was unscathed in World War II and is a superb example of a pure Renaissance city in both plan and architecture. For this reason, it has been included by UNESCO on its World Heritage list. We drive on through Roztocze National Park, an area of gentle limestone hills, small farms, clean streams and narrow strip fields, finally reaching our destination on the edge of the Bieszczady National Park.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 Hiking in the Bieszczady Mountains

The wild and sparsely-inhabited Bieszczady Mountains border both Ukraine and Slovakia and form part of the Eastern Carpathian range. They were completely unpopulated for political reasons in 1945-48 and are now home to the largest numbers of red deer, wolf and bear in Poland. Many of the numerous walking trails which take us high above the tree-line were originally developed by shepherds. Today we plan to hike from Gorna Wetlinka to Polonina Wetlinska ridge (1297 m, approximately 4.5 hours walking).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Hiking in the Bieszczady Mountains

Today we have a slightly more strenuous walk, which will take us further east across the national park. We ascend from our lodge at Muczne, through a spruce and beech forest, onto the grass-covered Bukowe Berdo ridge and climb to Tarnica Peak (1346 m), the highest point in the Polish Bieszczady Mountains. We then descend to Wolosate village and meet our transport (approximately 5 hours walking). Both walks should provide us with stunning vistas of this mountain region. Easier, shorter walks are available for those that wish to explore independently.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Drive to Krakow

This morning we drive north-west to Krakow, the capital of Poland until 1596. Its location on the Vistula river and its magnificent medieval market square, old tenement houses, fortifications and castle, all having survived both World Wars almost untouched, give the city a very special atmosphere. Your tour leader will introduce you to the delights of the Old Town on an orientation stroll, through a maze of narrow streets which open on to the huge market square - the largest square of medieval Europe. The Sukiennice, a vast cloth hall in medieval times and now a covered market, is a distinctive sight and the venders wares vary from wooden toys to beautiful amber jewellery. In the evening, you can eat al fresco in one of the many open-air cafés and restaurants which surround the square.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Exploring Krakow

The two days we spend here are left free for you to explore the many sites of Krakow. The Jewish Kazimierz district, the setting for the film 'Schindler's List', has many points of interest including the Old Synagogue and the Museum of Jewish life. You may like to make an excursion by train to Oswiecim, the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp; a haunting reminder of the terrible atrocities which took place there during World War II. It is also possible to visit the Royal Castle, perched high on Wawel Hill, which overlooks both the Old Town and the Vistula River. Constructed in Renaissance style, the castle houses exquisite treasures collected through the ages by Polish monarchs. Next to the castle is Wawel Cathedral, the final resting place of Polish Kings. Another option is to visit the salt mines of Wieliczka.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Free time in Krakow

Today you have further free time to enjoy sightseeing in Krakow.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Train to Warsaw

We transfer to the central railway station and take a morning express train (approximately 3 hours) back to Warsaw for our final night. Your tour leader will escort you on a short orientation walk of the old town in the afternoon. You could also visit the impressive Wilanow Palace (optional entrance) set in attractive parkland on the outskirts of the city. The afternoon is free for personal exploration. Recognised as a 'Natural and Cultural World Heritage Treasure', the old town contains several beautiful Gothic churches. The 17th century rust red Royal Castle and the colourful facades of the merchant houses that surround the Market Square make it one of Europe's most beautiful medieval squares. You may also like to visit one of Warsaw's excellent museums.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends Warsaw

Your tour ends this morning, but if you are not leaving straight away you may choose to take another look at the fascinating buildings and market square in the old town or people watch from one of the street-side cafes.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches,2 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Poland

Lunch £: 12.00

Dinner £: 20.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Poland

Bottle of Beer £: 1.20

Water £: 0.80

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Warsaw - Entrance ticket to the history museum 1.50 Pounds
Bialowieza - 3 hour horse and cart ride to Bison Reserve approximately 6.00 Pounds; Polish campfire including food and music 13.00 Pounds
Kazimierz Dolny - Ferry to Janowiec and visit the family castle 4.00 Pounds
Krakow - Guided tour of Wawel Castle £4.00; train to Auschwitz 5.00 Pounds; bus and entrance to Wieliczka Salt Mines 10.00 Pounds; Jewish Galicia Museum 2.00 Pounds

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £25 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Poland

ATM Availability: Available in all major cities

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are widely accepted in all major cities

Travellers Cheques: Easily exchanged

Local Currency: Polish Zloty

Recommended Currency for Exchange: British Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are all accepted at exchange offices and banks

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Poland: Visas are not required by UK, US, Canadian, Australia and New Zealand citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Poland

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Tickborne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Poland

Poland has a temperate, changeable climate. September and October are cooler and gradually become damper until late November when temperatures fall below freezing with snowfall, particularly in mountainous areas. Cold temperatures last through to March, but are tolerable. Snow can lie for up to three months in the mountains.

Clothing

You'll need waterproof raingear and warm clothing for the mountains i.e. a warm sweater or fleece, long trousers and long sleeved shirts. Gloves maybe useful for canoeing. Swimwear is also advisable as it is possible to swim in some National Parks.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle, a small torch, insect repellent containing deet, sunhat, sunglasses, sun cream and binoculars for wildlife viewing.

As we have quite a few picnic lunches on this tour a penknife might be useful - please remember to pack it in your main luggage.

Keen photographers may want to take a dry bag so you can take your camera whilst canoeing. Trekking poles can also be useful.

Footwear

Lightweight walking shoes or boots and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac for personal items. Do not overload yourself as porters are not available and most hotels don't have lifts.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Poland

Population: 38,186,860

Size of Country: 312,685 sq km

Major Language: Polish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Poland

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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