

Business Travel

Visas: In addition to valid passports, both business travellers and tourists from North America require a visa to enter Poland. These are available from Polish Embassies, Polish Consulates, through the offices of Poland's national travel agency, ORBIS, or through local travel agents. The application fee is approximately \$CDN 50.00 for a one-time visa and \$CDN 160.00 for a multiple-entry visa. To apply for a visa, the traveller's passport must be valid for at least nine months after the date of application. A completed application should be accompanied by two passport photos.

Travel Arrangements: ORBIS, Poland's state-owned Travel Office, formerly arranged most foreign travel to and from Poland. Now, arrangements may be made with one of the numerous new private travel agencies established in Poland or with any reputable western travel agency. Information and advice on travel in Poland is available from the *Centre for Tourist Information*, ul. Krucza, Warsaw.

Currency: No limits are placed on the amount of currency travellers may bring into Poland, but visitors will be asked to report all such amounts. On departure, visitors may not take out more currency than they originally brought with them. Apart from this rule, visitors may dispose of their money as they wish without restriction, and no reports on its expenditure are required. The most widely used foreign currency is the US dollar, but the Deutsch Mark and some other currencies are also common. Western currencies can be exchanged for Polish *zlotys* at an exchange office (*kantor*), hotels, and banks. Major credit cards and travellers' cheques are increasingly accepted by the larger hotels, stores, and restaurants.

Customs Formalities: Personal belongings may enter Poland duty free. They may include sports equipment, musical instruments, a typewriter, radio, cassette recorder, two cameras with ten rolls of film each, ten rolls of film for one movie camera (16 mm); two litres of wine and half a litre of spirits, 250 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco. Guns and ammunition require a Polish permit.

As of July 12, 1990, visitors to Poland can also import duty-free one personal computer plus 10 diskettes; one video camera and one video cassette recorder (VCR), plus 10 cassettes; and one television set. Gifts up to a value of \$US 100 are also exempt from duty. A blanket duty of 10% is applied to all gifts and other goods valued at \$US 100-300 brought to Poland for non-commercial reasons.

Articles not exceeding \$US 100 in value can be taken out of Poland duty free, but there are restrictions on certain items such as precious metals and furs. The nominal value of duty free items is frequently amended to match the inflation rate, so travellers are advised to check with ORBIS or tourist shops regarding current regulations and restrictions. Goods bought with foreign currency in Poland are not subject to duty, but receipts must be shown at customs control. No works of art produced before May 9, 1945 or books published before that date may be taken out of Poland.

Climate: Poland has a moderate climate with four distinct seasons. Summer average temperature is between 16.5 C and 19 C, and can reach 30 C. Winter temperatures range between 0 C and -4.5 C, and can fall as low as -20 C. The weather in spring and autumn is often unpredictable, and can change suddenly in the course of a day. Warm clothing is recommended from November to the end of March, and rain gear is advised for spring and autumn.

Time Zones: Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Local time changes twice a year in summer and winter. In the summer, clocks are moved forward one hour, so that the country is seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. In winter, they are moved back.

Hotel Accommodation: There is currently a shortage of hotel rooms in Poland, so travellers should book well in advance. Poland's national tourist agency, ORBIS, operates its own chain of hotels. Regional tourist agencies operate in several parts of Poland. International hotel chains with facilities in Poland include Marriott, Holiday Inn, Intercontinental, and Novotel. Reservations for the major hotels can be made through ORBIS or a travel agent.

Transportation: Taxis are the best means of moving about Warsaw or other major cities, since public transportation tends to be crowded. Travellers should be warned that rates shown on taxi metres are multiplied by an appropriate factor to cover inflation. Taxis can be hailed on the street, but are easy to find at the many taxi ranks located throughout Poland's cities. Specially marked taxis, taken from some hotels, will double the charge to cover the cost of a return trip to the hotel. At present, the cost of a taxi in Warsaw is comparable to that in most western countries.