

Ojcowski national park

Spring of Love - Cracow Gate - Pieskowa Skala

The Ojcowski National Park is situated about 16 km (10 miles) from Cracow on the Cracow-Czestochowa plateau. It is one of the most important recreation areas of its citizens who in this park can enjoy nature and fresh air by walking to the spring of love, Cracow gate, Lokietek cave or Pieskowa Skala castle. Established in 1956, the Ojcowski National Park embraces two narrow river valleys as well as parts of the Jurassic plateau. With only an area of 2200 ha (5450 acres) it is the smallest National Park in Poland. Its highest mountain reaches 473 m (1550 feet) above sea level.

Genesis of Ojcowski Region - Hercules Club

From geological point of view the area consists of Jurassic limestone which is sometimes up to 200 meters (660 feet) thick. About 150 million years ago there was an ocean full of life. The animals died, sank to the sea bottom and over thousands of years a limestone layer was formed. Later, when the ocean didn't exist any more, erosion happened. Rivers carved themselves into the limestone creating valleys, steep ravines and bizarre limestone rocks. The most famous are the Hercules Club and the Deotyma Needle. In addition karst waters formed many caves: Lokietek cave 320 m (1056 feet), Ciemna Cave 230 m (760 feet) where first traces of human hunters were found.

Eagle-nest Route

In the Middle Ages an important trade route to Silesia led across today's Ojcowski National Park. At that time many local castles were built up giving the Eagle-nest Route its name for the castles on the surrounding hills look like little aeries. One of these castles - the Pieskowa Skala Castle - is often visited by tourists. It was in 16th century rebuilt in the renaissance style used as a privat residence housing nowadays one part of the Wawel Castle exhibition. In front of Pieskowa Skala Castle stands the already mentioned Hercules Club.