

Zakopane, Tatras

Health resort - Mountaneers culture

Zakopane is the most important spa of Poland, centre of Polish mountain tourism and capital of the Tatra Region. Zakopane has only 30000 inhabitants, but offers 20000 accomodation places. The culture of the Tatra mountaineers has been preserved with their own customs, traditional music and liveries. The biggest feast in Zakopane - the international festival of mountaineers folklore - takes place in August. Music groups from mountain regions of the whole world take part in this folklore festival. Often visited sights in Zakopane are timber constructions built by Witkiewicz in the Zakopane Style and the sacral complex with Clemens Church, Gasienica Chapel and the Old Cemetery.

Tatra Mountain range, Gubalowka hill

The highest part of the Carpathians Range are the Tatra mountains which are similar to the Alps. But the Tatra is only 50 km (31 miles) long and 15 km (9 miles) wide. Only one fifth of the Tatra lies in Poland, the rest in neighbouring Slovakia. The highest Polish Tatra peak is called Rysy (2500 m - 8200 feet), but the highest peak of the whole Tatra Range - located on the Slovak side - is the Gerlach top (2655 m 8710 feet). Very often tourists walk along the Koscieliska valley or to the large mountain lake Morskie Oko (Mountain eye). People, who don't want to hike, should take the Gubalowka cable railway and can admire a wonderfull Tatra view from the top of Gubalowka hill.

Open-air museum Chocholow

Only a short distance from Zakopane away there is the open-air museum Chocholow. It is the only village of the Tatra foreland with original wooden buildings (timber houses) built about 1900. For 50 years the village of Chocholow has been under special protection because of its monumental values. In Easter time the femal inhabitants wash the outer walls of their houses with soap sud to preserve the natural wood colour.