

## Introduction

The Green Velo Eastern Cycle Trail, covering 1980 km, is the longest cycle route in Poland. It goes through five regions in the eastern part of the country: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podlaskie, Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships. Just one glance at the map is enough to make one realise how many different regions the trail combines, and how diverse it is in terms of landscapes and culture. Among seaside sceneries and highlands, along lake lands, through primeval forests and big urban centres, Green Velo takes us on a journey discovering the most beautiful features of the lands inhabited for centuries by various communities: Poles, Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Armenians, and Tartars.

The section of the Green Velo crossing the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship is unique. From Sandomierz, located in the hills, the trail goes down the Vistula River to Skotniki, a small village, offering remarkable views of lowland landscapes shaped by the greatest of the Polish rivers. Then, from Skotniki it goes on through the more undulating areas of the Sandomierz Uplands to Klimontów and the Krzyżtopór castle in Ujazd, and continues along hills with views of the major range of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains to Kielce, Obłęgorek, Sielcia Wielka and Końskie. Despite these undulating areas, this section of the route should not pose any problems for less-advanced cyclists.

The Gorge of St. Hedwig,  
by K. Pęczalski

## Attractions on the trail

### 1. FROM SANDOMIERZ TO UJAZD

**Sandomierz.** One of the most beautiful cities in Poland, it is located on seven adjoining hills on the Vistula. The medieval urban structure has been preserved in the Old Town, together with numerous attractions from various centuries – tenement buildings, churches and public utility buildings. The most remarkable include: the gothic Opatowska Gate, the town hall from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with a Renaissance attic, the Gothic Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary with polychromes from 1421, and the Romanesque Church of St. James from the first decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the adjacent Dominican Monastery

**Sandomierz.** Tourist Information Centre, Rynek 20, tel.: +48 15 6446105, [www.sandomierz.travel](http://www.sandomierz.travel). Tourist Service Office PTTK, Rynek 12, tel.: +48 15 8322305, [www.pttk-sandomierz.pl](http://www.pttk-sandomierz.pl).

from the years 1226–50. One should also visit the underground tourist trail, take a cruise down the Vistula River, and admire many natural attractions in the city's neighbourhood, e.g. the Pepper Mountains and loess ravines, including the famous Queen Jadwiga Ravine.

**Sandomierz horticulture.** The surroundings of Sandomierz form one of the richest regions for fruit orchards in Poland. There are over 20,000 ha of apple orchards, 1400 ha of plum orchards and around 600 ha each of orchards for apricots, peaches, and sweet cherries. The region owes its uniqueness,

among other things, to its unique microclimate, which provides the longest vegetation period in Poland. Cycling along Green Velo between Sandomierz and Ujazd, you can feast your eyes upon the gorgeous landscapes, which are a match for such agricultural phenomena as the vineyards of southern Europe.

And in the flowering season the beauty of the orchards is undoubtedly unrivalled!

**Skotniki.** In this small village hidden among forests lies the Church of Saint John the Baptist from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. A charming manor and palace complex rests in front of the temple. The alcove manor is surrounded with a semi-wild romantic park. You can also clearly recognise the outlines of an old moat, which encircled the park in the past. Skotniki is home to the Skotnicki family, whose descendants include Stanisław Grzmot-Skotnicki – a Polish general and a member of the First Cadre Company of

Józef Piłsudski – who died in the Battle of Bzura, the largest September campaign battle in 1939.

**Koprzywnica.** Another must-see on the trail is the old 13<sup>th</sup>-century Cistercian monastery in Koprzywnica. You can feast your eyes upon the preserved Romanesque elements, such as the four-column portal with a tympanum in the church, or the chapter house in the eastern wing of the monastery.

**Klimontów.** A village in the Sandomierz Uplands. The towers and the dome of the baroque Collegiate Church of St. Joseph, designed by Laurentius de Sent, stand tall and proud over the townhouses. This majestic building is one of the most remarkable sacral attractions from the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Poland. Other things worthy of attention in Klimontów are: the former Dominican Church of St. Hyacinth from 1617–20, buildings of the old Dominican monastery and the neo-Classical synagogue erected in 1851.

**Konary.** Here in May 1915, the legionnaires of Józef Piłsudski fought bloody battles with Russian troops – an event which went down in history as the Battle of Konary. A bronze plate with a cross lying on a granite boulder, funded by the nation in 2000 on the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle, commemorates the event.

**Klimontów.** Tourist information, ul. Krakowska 19, tel.: +48 601 760 948, [www.klimontow.pl](http://www.klimontow.pl).

Monastery in Koprzywnica,  
by M. Franaszek

Collegiate church  
in Klimontów,  
by A. Drzewiecka

**Ujazd.** Ujazd is the location of Krzyżtopór Castle (English: the Cross-axe Castle) erected in the years 1631–44 by Krzysztof Ossoliński according to designs by Laurentius de Sent. It is a *palazzo in fortezza* building, i.e. a "palace in a fortress". Over the entrance gate there is a cross and the crest of the Ossoliński family – an axe (the castle took its name from these two elements). Walls and a moat, the outline of which is still visible today, defended the castle. Its structure marvels contemporaries even now; it was claimed to have as many windows as days in the year, as many rooms as weeks, and as many sumptuous halls as months. The four corner

keeps symbolized four quarters of the year. On the northern side, a gorgeous garden in the Italian Renaissance style adjoined the residence. The impressive ruins of the castle have been preserved and are open to visitors.

The Krzyżtopór castle,  
by Sz. Pawlak

### 2. FROM UJAZD TO KIELCE

**Raków.** From the very beginning, this old town was a centre of Arianism, a faction of Protestantism, whose members were called the Polish brothers in the Polish lands. The town was founded in 1569 by Jan Sienieński. Here there was an Arian house, a printing house, and in 1602–38 the Raków Academy, a secondary school famous throughout Europe. Due to the victory of Counter-Reformation in April 1638, the royal court decided to close the academy and expel the Arians from Raków. During WWII the town was heavily populated by Jews; however, no material relics have survived (a wooden synagogue was burnt down). Currently, in Raków one can see the late baroque Holy Trinity Church, and a building of the old Arian house (at the corner of Kościelna and Sienieńskiego streets).

**Chańcza Reservoir.** This is a retention reservoir at the Czarna Staszowska River located south of Raków. The water surface area is 340 ha, and the reservoir's depth does not exceed 5 m in most of its sections. The majority of its shores are sandy, and its clear waters enhance active leisure and swimming. On the eastern side, near

a dam, there is a bathing place monitored by WOPR lifeguards and a water equipment rental.

**Szydłów.** A town, known as the Polish Carcassonne, with the remains of defensive fortifications built by the order of Kazimierz Wielki (Kazimierz the Great). The walls made of local limestone in the 14<sup>th</sup> century were at one time 1080 m long and up to 1.8 m thick. Other attractions of Szydłów worthy of recommendation are, for example, the Cracow Gate, the late Gothic synagogue, the Parish Church of Saint Stanislaus from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the gothic All Saints Church, built at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

**Cisowsko-Orłowski Landscape Park.** South of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains and southeast of Kielce, a landscape park was established to protect the area's charming landscapes and diverse flora and fauna. The park contains 4 natural reserves (Białe Ługi, Cisów, Słopiec, and Zamczysko), with 52 protected species of vegetation (of which 15 are extremely rare). The protection also covers bogs, and over 200-year-old fir, beech and oak stands. Moreover, the park offers numerous outcrops, and the 200-metre-long Zbójce Cave near Łagów.

**Borków.** A small holiday resort located in the middle of a fir forest in the Bielnińska

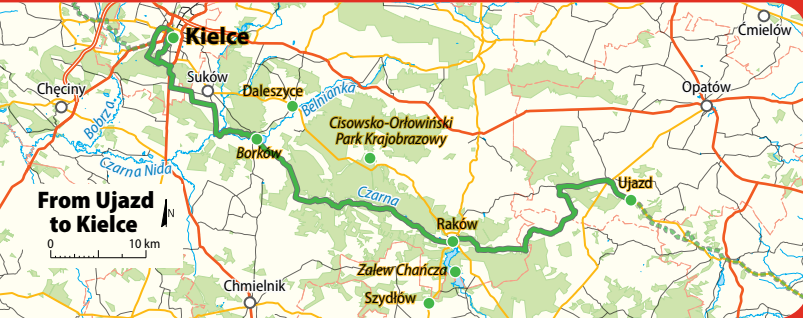
**Bieliny.** Tourist information, ul. Partyzantów 3, tel.: +48 41 2608152, [www.bieliny.pl](http://www.bieliny.pl).

River valley. Here there is a 36 ha reservoir, a popular place for summer and weekend trips for people living in Kielce and its surroundings. It offers a 300 m sandy beach as well as a charming jetty, excellent for walks, and a water equipment rental with, for example, paddle boats, boats and kayaks. Near the beach there is a volleyball pit, and in summer it is full of other attractions, such as airball or an inflated castle slide. Many outdoor events are held here at summer weekends.

**Daleszyce.** A town established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the southern part of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, between the Daleszyce range and the Cisów range by the Belnianska River. During WWII it was the area of the most intense partisan activity. As revenge for one of the partisan troop's operations, the Germans pacified and burned down the town in August 1944. Attractions worth visiting include: a church

The Krakow Gate  
in Szydłów,  
by M. Franaszek





from 1221, reconstructed twice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in 1912.

**Kielce.** The capital of Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship is filled with attractions. Visitors are recommended to go to the highest point in the city, Telegraph Hill, accessible also by chairlift. There is a sky lift on the slopes of the adjoining peak, Pierścienica Mountain, and the Forest Stadium at its foot, a popular park and forest complex. Another must-see is one of the Kielce nature reserves (e.g., Ślichowice, Kadzielnia, or Wietrznia, with its modern Geo-Education Centre). The city centre holds numerous museums, and above all Castle Hill with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century baroque Bishops' Palace (currently a branch of the National Museum) and the Cathedral of the Assumption of

Palace of Bishops of Kraków in Kielce, by K. Pęczalski



### 3. FROM KIELCE TO KOŃSKIE

**Podzamcze Piekoszowskie.** In this small village west of Kielce, there are the ruins of the remarkable baroque residence of the Tarło family, of the Topór coat of arms. The building was erected in the years 1649–55 in the style of the Cracow Bishops' Palace in Kielce. At the corners of the palace there are four six-sided keeps: the northern ones for administration offices, and the southern ones for staircases.



Palace ruins in Podzamcze Piekoszowskie, by K. Pęczalski

**Chelmce.** Northwest of Kielce, in Chelmce the Baroque Church of Sts. Maria Magdalena and St. Nikolas stands on a tall hill, erected in 1620–65 at the location of an old 14<sup>th</sup>-century temple. Here you can find a defensive manor, one of the oldest defensive buildings in Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. In some publications it is called the Arian church, as it played this role for some time.

**Suchedniowsko-Oblęgorski Landscape Park.** The park covers the western edges of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, including the Oblęgorek Range with Siniewska Mountain as its highest peak (448.8 m above sea level). It was established to protect the unique sightseeing,



The manor of Henryk Sienkiewicz in Oblęgorek, by K. Pęczalski

environmental and cultural treasures of the region (one may find the remains of the Old Polish Industrial Centre within its borders, e.g. ruins of blast furnace facilities in Samsonów and Bobrza). However, the most well-known object in the park is Bartek, the Oak tree, in Zagnańsk – one of the oldest trees in Poland, at least 1200 years old.

**Oblęgorek.** This village is hidden among the picturesque hills of the Suchedniowsko-Oblęgorski Landscape Park and is famous for the enchanting palace, which the Polish nation presented to Henryk Sienkiewicz on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his literary works. The palace

Church in Chelmce, by M. Franaszek



is surrounded by a small garden, where the writer used to work in summers. Sienkiewicz lived here from 1902–14, and after the outbreak of WWI he moved to Switzerland, never to return to Poland. No wonder, then, that the Henryk Sienkiewicz Museum was established here in 1958.

**Bobrza.** In the town, where the Bobrza River forces its way through the Oblęgorek Ridge, one can find the remains of the largest foundry of the time of the

Ruins of foundry in Bobrza, by K. Pęczalski



Kingdom of Poland. The facility was to produce as much pig iron as all the foundries in the nation combined. It consisted of five 18 m tall furnaces, and a brick wall 15m high and 500 m long was built to protect it. The construction was interrupted by the outbreak of the November Uprising in 1830, but the remains of the unfinished facility remain impressive to this day.

**Sielpia Wielka.** Sielpia, south of Końskie, is the largest tourist resort of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Here you can find a reservoir established on the Czarna Konecka River, many tourist facilities and tourist and water equipment rentals. Another great feature awaiting tourists is the dense network of walking paths and cycle trails. Moreover, Selpia is the location of the Museum of the Old Polish Industrial Region. The

**Strawczyn.** Tourist information – Local Centre of Culture and Sport, ul. Żeromskiego 16, tel.: +48 41 3038635, sckis@strawczyn.pl.  
**Sielpia Wielka.** Tourist information by the Association for the Wies Konecka Development, ul. Spacerowa 1, itsielpia@o2.pl. **Końskie.** Tourist Information Centre, ul. Partyzantów 1, tel.: +48 41 3729088, www.konskie.travel.

most precious exhibits include a large metal drive wheel (8 m in diameter), and a collection of unique machines and equipment. The well-developed network of tourist and cycle trails takes visitors to the greatest attractions around Selpia: the Foundry Facility in Maleniec, the Skalki Piekło nature reserve at the Niekłań River, and the broads of the Krasna River.

**Końskie.** This town on the southeast edge of the Opoczno Hills was probably established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Its attractions include the neo-classical palace and park complex, famous



Bridge in Sielpia Wielka, by K. Pęczalski

for its so-called small garden architecture. The pavilions, such as the Egyptian Orangery, the Greek Temple, gloriottes, etc. come from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the palace itself was built in 1440s. The centre of the town holds the neo-Gothic Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas and Lawrence, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.



Palace and park in Końskie, by K. Ptak

ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE VOIVODESHIP

GREEN VELO EASTERN CYCLE TRAIL

Section 1: From Sandomierz to Ujazd

Section 2: From Ujazd to Kielce

Section 3: From Kielce to Końskie

A chain of attractions

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