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The Osowiec fortress,
by J. Świerad

species. The majority of Biebrza is covered with peat bogs, called the Biebrza Marshes, with rare species of flora and fauna, mostly ornithofauna. The elk is the symbol of the river, as its area is heavily populated with the species. The whole area of the Biebrza Marshes has been added to the Ramsar Convention list.

Osowiec Fortress. One of the most interesting 19th-century strongholds in Poland. The citadel was built in 1882–87 in the narrow portion of a marsh zone, which formed a great obstacle for enemy armies. It was a part of the defence system of the Russian Empire along the border with East-

Imperial forts in Piątnica. Additional Russian defence buildings in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, comprising one of the most valuable fort complexes at the turn of the 20th century in Poland. The forts in Piątnica constitute part of a larger defence

Market Square in Tykocin,
by M. Franaszek



system, called the Łomża Fortress. Their purpose was to protect a bridge crossing at the Narew and stop the first waves of Prussian attacks from Mazury. Nowadays, the fortifications are a great treat for tourists – the impressive system of dikes, embankments, and moats creates a unique green amphitheatre several dozen meters along the Narew's waters.

Bunkers in the Wizna region in Strękowa Góra. The bunkers form an unfinished defensive complex stretching along several kilometres from the mouth of the Biebrza into the Narew in the Wizna region, through Strękowa Góra and Osowiec and finally to Goniądz. They were built directly before WWII and played an important role during the famous Battle of Wizna, where 720 soldiers halted the march of 42 thousand German soldiers for two days.

Tykocin. A town with one of the most vibrant atmospheres in Poland, which was in the past heavily populated by Jews (70% of the total population at the beginning

of the 19th century), and a marvellous example of Poland's multicultural heritage. Its unique spatial arrangement has been preserved, along with the sumptuous town hall and various attractions, including the Small and Great synagogues (from 1642; now transformed into a museum). On the market square there is a statue of Stefan Czarniecki (the oldest secular statue after Sigismund's Column in Poland) who received Tykocin as gratitude for his services in 1661. Near the market square, one can find other attractions: the Baroque Church of the Holy Trinity, the Bernardine monastery, and the 17th-century soldiers' home for veterans (called an *alumnat*). On the other side of the

Cyclists on the Śliwino-Waniewo bridge,
by J. Gumowski



Narew River there is the partially reconstructed Castle of Sigismund II Augustus, and on the western outskirts of the town one may find the oldest *kirkut* (Jewish cemetery) in Podlaskie, with a matzevah tombstone from 1791.

Kiermusy and Pentowo. Adjoining villages on the left-hand bank of the Narew. Kiermusy is the location of a unique heritage park with fourplex manors, the Rome Tavern and a small border castle restored with great attention to detail. In Pentowo, one can find a mansion built in 1904 from wood transported from the Białowieża Primeval Forest. The village has also received the title of European Stork Village – each year you can count over 30 of these birds' nests. Moreover, it is situated on the Podlaskie Stork Trail, the longest cycle route in the Podlaskie Voivodeship.

The Branicki Palace
in Białystok,
by arch. Podlaska ROT

Narew National Park. Established in 1996, the park protects the section of the Narew River between Suraż and Rzędziany. It offers an unforgettable feature: a braided river bed. This is because in the area of the park the Narew divides into hundreds of channels, creating a truly complicated system flowing around hundreds of islands of various sizes. Over 150 species of birds nest every year in this so-called "Polish Amazonia". The biggest attraction of the Park is a footbridge connecting Śliwino and Waniewo – an unbelievably long bridge constructed over the Narew's backwaters and consisting of five parts connected by floating platforms. The Narew National Park Bicycle Beltway also offers opportunities to feast your eyes on unique landscapes.

Choroszcz. A town west of Białystok near the Narew River with several fascinating attractions. The most famous is the Branicki Summer Palace, where the Palace Interior Museum is currently located. Additionally, other places worth visiting include: a former Dominican



monastery, an Orthodox church, a historical water tower and a Jewish cemetery.

Białystok. The region's capital is a true melting pot, gathering together Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Jews, and members of various Protestant churches. Before WWII the city was heavily populated by Jews. The most remarkable attraction of

Białystok is the Branicki Palace, built during the 17th-18th centuries, called the Versailles of Podlaskie. Other places worth visiting in the city include: the Podlasie Philharmonic and Opera House, Białystok Cathedral, the town hall and numerous Orthodox churches, the Holy Spirit Orthodox Church being the most impressive. Białystok is crossed by various thematic trails, e.g. the Esperanto Trail, the Białystok Temples Trail, the Manufacturers Trails, the Cuisine Trail, and the Wooden Architecture Route.

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A chain of attractions



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Introduction

The Green Velo East-ern Cycle Trail, covering 1980 km, is the longest cycle route in Poland. It goes through five regions in the east-ern part of the country: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Pod-laskie, 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 communi-ties: Poles, Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Armenians, and Tartars. On their way from the western border of the Podlaskie Voivodeship to Białystok, cy-clists can admire one of the most beautiful regions in Poland, including picturesque views of the Suwałki Landscape Park and the Wigry Landscape Park, the backwoods of the Augustów Primeval Forest, and the unique Biebrza Marshes. The region is also

Prayer house in Wodzilki, by M. Franaszek

Attractions along the trail

1. FROM THE TRIPPOINT TO AUGUSTÓW

Suwałki Landscape Park. The oldest landscape park in Poland, established in 1976 to protect the picturesque post-glacial landscape filled with moraine hills, boulder fields and lakes. In the park in Wodzilki there is a temple of the Old Believers, called a *molenna*.

Hańcza Lake. The res-ervoir in the Suwałki Landscape Park is the deepest natural lake in Poland (108.5 m) of post-glacial origin, in the shape of a narrow, over 4.5 km long gut-ter, fully protected by the reserve. Fans of active leisure can use the walk-cycle track loop around the lake or go diving in it (deep water diving).

Czarna Hańcza. This 142 km left branch of the Niemen is the longest river of the Suwałki region (in Po-land 108 km). It belongs to the Augustów Canal water system and flows into Hańcza and Wigry lakes. In the seg-ment from its source to Suwałki it demonstrates

View from Góra Cisowa, by Marek Białokoz

Bachanowo boulder field. This na-ture reserve in the Suwałki Landscape Park protects a col-lection (around 10,000) of glacial errat-ics with circumferences rang-ing from 0.5-8m. It is located at the fork of the Czarna Hańcza River and Kozikówka Stream and was formed by rock fragments (e.g., limestone, basalts, porphyry, and sandstone) transported from Scandinavia by a glacier.

“Szelment” Voivodeship Sports and Leisure Centre. This ski complex built in 2007–08 covers a major part of the slopes of Jesionowa Góra, which towers over Szelment Wielki Lake. In winter one can use one of eight ski lifts, an ice-skating rink, a snow park, ski equipment rentals and a skiing school. Trails for cross-country skiers are also available. In summer there is an 18-hole golf course, a paintball field, and bike rental.

Wigry Lake. This is a ribbon lake, or to be pre-cise: a complex of 42 reser-voirs in a shape resembling

Former Camaldolese monastery in Wigry, by J. Sienkiewicz

the letter “S” and a 60 km diversified coastline covering over 2115 ha. Wigry National Park was established in 1988, encompassing the lake and its surroundings. The lake is considered to be one of the most beautiful in Poland, and in 1975 it was added to the list of the world’s most valuable water areas (Aqua Project). Moreo-ver, in 2002 it was added, to-gether with the whole national park, to the list of areas protected according to the Ramsar Convention. It is protected under the

Natura 2000 programme along with the entire Augustów Forest. On one of the lake’s peninsulas there is a former Camaldolese monastery from the turn of the 18th century with a church and her-mitages for monks built on two terraces. One can also take a trip on the Wigry narrow gauge railway (established for wood transport) or a boat cruise along the Papal Trail established in memory of St. John Paul II’s visit in 1999.

Augustów Canal. This 101 km canal (80 km within Polish borders) was constructed in the years 1824–39 to connect the

Kingdom of Poland with the Baltic Sea to allow ships to bypass the lower sec-tion of the Vistula, which in those times fell within the territory of Prussia. There are 18 locks along the Canal, 14 within Polish borders. They maintain the wa-terway’s navigability. The Polish part of the Canal ends at the Dębowo lock on the Biebrza River, and the Belarusian part ends at Niemnowo. Every year in summer you can take a cruise along the Ca-nal starting from Au-gustów. In addition, cruises are organised along the Papal Trail (“Augustów Canal – the Papal Trail”) es-tablished in memory of

Chapel in Studzieniczna, by Magkrys / Wikimedia Commons

the cruise John Paul II took on 9 June 1999 on board the *Serwy*. The track received a Gold Certificate from the Polish Tourist Organisation.

Studzieniczna. This village by Studzien-iczna Lake was a separate administrative

unit until 1973, but currently it falls within the administrative borders of Augustów. It is the site of a wooden church from 1847, the Studzieniczna Mother of God sanctuary, one of the major pilgrimage points in the Suwałki region, visited by thou-sands of pilgrims in the 19th cen-tury. Near the church on one of the lake islands stands the Holy Vir-gin Mary chapel, accessible via a narrow causeway raised in the 19th cen-tury. Next to it there is a miracle-working

Lake Necko, by arch. Podlaska ROT

Studzieniczna Lock on the Augustów Canal, by M. Franaszek

well built by Wincenty Mu-rawski – a Polish Army officer who joined a monastery. The well gave its name to the lake and the village. John Paul II visited Studzieniczna in 1999.

Biebrza River, by P. Świętkiewicz

Augustów. The unquestion-able capital of the Augustów Primeval Forest, as well as one of the most important tourist centres, both in the Suwałki region and in the whole Pod-laskie Voivodeship. The key to the town’s success is its proximity to a number of enchanting lakes connected by the Au-gustów Canal to form an impressive wa-terway. The lakes offer opportunities for active leisure thanks to water equipment rentals and a water ski lift at Necko Lake. The Papal Trail, commemorating John Paul II’s visit to the Suwałki region in 1999, runs through the town.

Osowiec Fortress, The Biebrza National Park.
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valuable forest complexes in Poland with respect to natural environment and tourism, covering over 160,000 ha, 114,000 ha on the Polish side. The primeval forest hides a number of picturesque lakes (e.g. Wigry and Studzieniczne), while its watery axis is formed by the Czarna Hańcza River and the Augustów Canal, which connects the river with Biebrza. A number of tourist trails, bicycle trails, kayaking routes, and horse-riding trails go through the forest.

Biebrza. The Biebrza River is protected within the Biebrza National Park for al-most its entire length (155 km out of 165 km). The river is one of the most unique water retention areas in Poland, the ca-pacity of which is comparable to that of Poland’s largest rivers. It is also a habitat for numerous water and marsh birds. Moreover, due to its unique environ-mental treasures, it is a popular kayaking route. In season, rafting is also organised here, where rafts can serve as unique bases from which to observe various bird

Male elk, by Wikimedia Commons