POLAND

Basic Data

Official name: Republic of Poland

Location: in the very centre of Europe. Between 49° 00' and 54° 50' northern geographic latitude and between 14° 08' and 24° 09' eastern geographic longitude

Neighbouring countries: Russian Federation, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany. Its northern border runs along the Baltic Sea coast

Climate: moderate with average temperature between 7 and 10°C

Area (sq. km): 312685

Population: 38,230,000

Language: Polish

Capital: Warsaw

(1.6 million people)

Main cities: Lodz, Krakow, Gdansk, Szczecin, Poznan, Wroclaw, Katowice

Usage of the area: agriculture (61.4%), forests (29.5%), lakes and rivers (2.1%), wasteland (1.5%), transport and residential (4.5%), others (1.0%)

Authority: legislative - Sejm (lower house of Parliament), Senate (upper house of Parliament); executive: President, Council of Ministers; judicial: courts and tribunals

Administrative division: since 1999 there is three-level division: 16 voivodships (provinces), 314 powiats and 66 cities with powiat level (municipality level), 2478 gminas (commune level)

To find Polish exporters please contact:

TRADE & INVESTMENT PROMOTION SECTION, EMBASSY OF POLAND

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Gdańsk (population of just under 500,000) is situated on the Bay of Gdańsk on the Baltic Sea and close to the delta of Poland’s longest river, the Vistula. The city is the main port of the urban development that includes Sopot and Gdynia and is known as the Triicity.

The earliest records of Gdańsk go back to 10th century. In the mid-14th century it joined the Hanseatic League, the most powerful trading organization in Northern Europe, which ensured the city’s rapid growth and power. Gdańsk's greatest period of prosperity lasted until the end of the 16th century. Seventy five percent of Polish exports, chiefly grain, were shipped through the port of Gdańsk to all parts of Europe. Settlers came to Gdańsk from Germany, the Netherlands, England, Scandinavia, Russia, the Czechia, Hungary, France, Scotland and Italy. The city’s political system was a form of free mercantile republic.

During World War II, which actually began in Gdańsk with the Nazi assault on the Westerplatte peninsula, the city suffered enormous damage. It was also shelled by the Russian Red Army in 1945 when many buildings were totally destroyed. The majority of the historical buildings in Gdańsk were rebuilt after the war.

The very recent history of the Tri-city area (Gdańsk, Gdynia & Sopot) is important for all Poles. It was here that the strikes of 1970, 1980 and 1988 began, ultimately leading to the demise of communism. Lech Wałęsa led the 1980 strike at the shipyard in Gdańsk, which became the cradle of the Solidarity movement. The trade-union leader went on to become a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Poland's President. The memory of the past is still very much alive in the city. Three large crosses stand at the entrance to Gdańsk Shipyard to commemorate the workers killed in 1970.

**Gdańsk's Glorious Past**

You may want to start with a stroll through historic Gdańsk along the Royal Way, the several-hundred-metre long main axis of the old city. The Royal Way starts from the Renaissance Wyszyński (Upland) Gate (1586-1588), once part of the city’s western fortifications. Right behind it is the Torture House and the Prison Tower, built in the 14th century and subsequently converted. Nearby, on the left-hand side, is the Great Armoury (1600-1609) – Gdańsk’s former arsenal. This building is considered Gdańsk’s best example of Dutch Mannerism. Nearby is the Złota (Golden) Gate (1612-1614), another example of Mannerist architecture. This gate opens onto Długa Street, where some of the wealthiest Gdańsk residents used to live. Among the many houses with interesting façades is the Uphagen House, 12 Długa St., which has been a museum since 1910.

At the far end of Długa Street stands the Main Town Hall with its spire from the turn of the 13th century. The Town Hall interiors in the Dutch Mannerism style are considered to be one of Europe’s most sumptuous decorations. The Town Hall opens up onto Gdańsk’s most characteristic area – the wide Długi Targ (Long Market) Street. The building’s huge cellars contain a wine bar and restaurant. In front of the Artus Manor is the large 17th-century Rococo Neptune fountain, the symbol of the city and a popular meeting place.

The wide perspective of Długi Targ Street is closed off by the huge, palace-like Green Gate, dating from the mid-16th century, initially planned to be a royal residence. Behind the Green Gate, on the canal, is the start of the boulevard running to the Old Port. Walking along Długa Pobrzeże, it’s worth turning into the second gate, Mariacka Gate, to enter the fairy-tale Mariacka Street, the most beautiful corner of Gdańsk’s Old Town. This little street ends at the monumental St. Mary’s Basilica, a huge building that can hold up to 25,000 people. The city’s ample architectural heritage includes the Old Town Hall erected between the 16th-17th centuries. Its showpieces are the entrance hall and the mayor’s study. Another very characteristic Gdańsk landmark is the Medieval Dock Crane.

**Sopot and Oliwa**

During a short break in Gdańsk, it’s worth visiting Sopot, located just along the coast. Founded in the mid-19th century, often called the Monte Carlo of the north, Sopot was from the very beginning a seaside resort and a place for holiday makers. The city offers a wide range of attractions in the summer, which includes numerous restaurants, cafés and night clubs. After a day at the beach, there’s time for a stroll down the promenade and a concert at the beautiful Lesna (Forest) Opera. The pier is Sopot’s unique feature – the half-kilometre-long wooden promenade is nearly 150 years old. Right...
next to the beach is the Grand Hotel, Sopot's largest and most elegant hotel, built in the 1920s in the Emperor Wilhelm Baroque style. Halfway between Gdańsk and Sopot is Oliwa, famous around the world for its priceless organ in Oliwa Cathedral.

A few kilometres west of Sopot is Gdynia. This city was built between 1920 and 1930 on the site of an existing village. After the restoration of independence in 1918 Gdynia was to be Poland's main port and shipbuilding centre. Gdynia's modern centre is a favourite shopping area for local residents. These places include the nearby Marine Boulevard, at the foot of a scenic park in the direction of Sopot. From 1923 Gdynia has been the home of one of the world's largest shipyards.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The area surrounding the Tricity is one of the best tourist regions in Poland. To the north, on the other side of the Bay of Gdańsk, is the Hel Peninsula. The peninsula features fishing villages and beautiful beaches, including Chalupy, Jastarnia and Jurata. Between the Tricity and the Hel Peninsula is the picturesque town and fishing port of Puck. World-class sailing and windsurfing events are held here because of the excellent sailing conditions in the Bay of Puck. In the nearby town of Rzucewo, on the edge of the Bay of Puck, is a hotel located in a beautiful neo-Gothic palace, surrounded by a lovely park.

The area near Tricity includes Kashubia and Zulawy. Kashubia, a densely forested region dotted with lakes and rivers, with exceptional natural features and folk culture. Bytów, with its Teutonic Knights' castle, and the towns of Kościerzyna and Kartuzy are typical of the Kashubian Lake District stretching south-west from Gdynia. You can stay here at one of many small hotels and B&B farms. The open-air museum near Wędzisz Kiszewskie presents original rural architecture with period fittings. A traditional country fair is held here every year in July. Local cuisine, games and music as well as arts and crafts attract many visitors. Zulawy, stretching southeast from Gdańsk, is a depression in the delta of the Vistula river, and lies below the level of the sea, and was originally developed by Dutch settlers. Arcaded houses, windmills and little village churches as well land reclaimed from the sea are characteristic of Zulawy.

In the nearby town of Malbork stands the Teutonic castle complex which has been recorded on the UNESCO List of World Heritage. From the 14th-century, for almost 150 years, the castle was the seat of the Grand Master of the powerful monastic order of Teutonic Knights. Today it is an very interesting museum. Son et lumière performances and Medieval jousting tournaments are held here all summer long. Enthusiasts of older 'technology' and engineering will enjoy travelling along the 19th-century Elblag Canal with its unique lock system requiring ships to be moved over land between waterways.

GIFTS AND SOUVENIRS

The perfect souvenir from a trip to Gdańsk or a vacation on the Baltic Sea is amber, resin fossilized millions of years ago. It can be found along the waterline, washed up by the sea onto the sandy Polish beaches. On sale in shops you will find necklaces made of this natural raw material, which is also believed to possess therapeutic properties, or silver jewellery decorated with amber – a Polish specialty. The country fair in Władysław is an excellent place to buy elaborate Kashubian embroidery, hand made by local artisans.

CALENDAR OF CULTURAL EVENTS

- In mid-July the Gdańsk International Street and Open-Air Theatre Festival "FETA" is held; the historic streets become a living stage set for performers from all over the world. www.feta.pl
- St. Dominic Market – the oldest Gdańsk festival (since 1269). Staged in the Old Town, it lasts for three weeks, starting on the last Saturday in July. Everything can be bought there, from lollipops to antique furniture. The festival presents many cultural side shows, performances, concerts and presentations. www.mtgiz.pl
- The International Organ Music Festival in Oliwa is a prestigious cultural event with nearly 50 years of tradition. The beautiful form and excellent sound of the Oliwa Cathedral organ attracts the best organists from the whole world to Gdańsk.
- The Shakespeare Festival is held in Gdańsk each August. It is an international review of the most interesting theatre productions of the plays written by the Bard. www.teatr-zespolspodloda.pl
- The Gdańsk Carillon Festival is a unique musical event in Poland. Every year in August various musical compositions, including Baroque pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, are played by two sets of bells located in the Main Town Hall tower and the tower of St. Catherine's Church.
- The International Song Festival is held in August at the Leśna Opera in Sopot.
- Maritime Days are organised in Gdynia in the summer. Other events – www.pot.gov.pl/kal
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORT

Buses, trolleybuses and commuter trains operate across the whole Tri-City area. Tramways operate only in Gdańsk. There are plenty of taxis at taxi stands, but it's cheapest to order a radio-taxi by phone — the drive to the customer is free of charge. Telephone numbers of reliable taxi services are: 91 91, 91 92 and 91 97.

GDAŃSK'S MUSEUMS

5. Historical Museum of Gdańsk, Main Town Hall and the Amber Museum, ul. Dlugi 47, tel./fax 767 91 00
6. Artus Court, ul. Dlugi Targ 43/44, tel. 767 91 80
7. Upphagen's House, ul. Dlugi 12, tel. 301 23 71
8. Museum of Tower Clocks, ul. Wielkie Miasto, tel. 305 64 92
9. Amber Museum, Targ Weglowy, tel. 301 49 45
10. The Vistula Estuary Fortress, ul. Staraja Wozownia 1, tel. 343 14 05
11. Westerplatte – Guardhouse No 1, tel. 767 91 62
15. Crane, ul. Szeroka 67/68, tel. 301 53 11

OPERA, MUSIC, THEATRE

17. State Baltic Opera, Gdańsk, Al. Zygmunta 15, tel. 763 49 12
18. Polish Baltic Philharmonics, Gdańsk, ul. Obwodnica 1, tel. 305 20 40
19. Wybrzeże Theatre, Gdańsk, ul. Św. Ducha 2, tel. 301 70 21
20. Muzyczny Theatre, Gdańsk, ul. Grunwaldzka 1, tel. 621 60 24

CLUBS

23. Pęczek, Młodzi i Bogaci, Gdańsk, ul. Teatralna 1, tel. 305 31 54

SELECTED HOTELS AND B&B

27. Taboa, Gdynia, ul. 3-go Maja 27/31, tel. 782 01 73

TRI-CITY ON THE INTERNET

www.trojmiasto.pl • www.gdansk.pl • www.sopot.pl • www.sopot.net • www.gdynia.pl

TOURIST INFORMATION IN GDAŃSK

52. ul. Długa 45, tel. 301 91 51, www.pttk.gdansk.pl

OTHER INFORMATION

54. Railway Station Gdańsk Główny, ul. Podwale Grodzkie 1, tel. 94 36

Phoning Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia from Poland use the prefix 058 from abroad +48 58