



# Informator

## TOURIST GUIDE

## CZĘSTOCHOWA

### THE ENCHANTED JURA



#### Castles and fortresses

The rocky configuration of the area of the Jura Uplands had an important role in the history of Polish military defence, especially during the reign of King Casimir the Great. At that time the system of watchtowers and castles was built here to support the royal army. The towers and castles were built on the hills, making use of the natural defensive qualities of the area. In the 16th century the importance of this defensive system diminished and most of them were ruined and devastated. But the history, legends and present beauty of the "Eagles' Nests' Route" is still worth discovering. Don't miss the ruins of **Olsztyn** castle, nearest to Częstochowa, founded by King Casimir the Great in the mid 14th century. The Voivode (Province Governor) of Poznań, Maćko Borkowicz was imprisoned in the dungeons of Olsztyn castle. The castle is also famous for its heroic defence against the army of Archduke Maximilian Habsburg under the command of Kacper Karliński. The defence of Olsztyn was a theme of poems by Aleksander Fredro and Władysław Syrokomla and was represented in the paintings by Juliusz Kossak and Kazimierz Alchimowicz.

A visit to **Mirów** and **Bobolice** is also an unforgettable experience. A stroll between the two castles situated within easy walking distance of each other, among unusual shapes of white limestone rocks, among the everchanging vegetation is an opportunity to see the most beautiful part of the Jura Uplands. No wonder that a legend was born against this backdrop, a legend of two brothers living in neighbouring castles, a legend of a beautiful girl and the story of the brothers' love for her a story of jealousy and betrayal. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in this legend? Surely one can picture that scenario looking at the picturesque ruins of both castles. Other places worth seeing are the remains of the watchtower in **Przewodzisławice**, situated on a high, almost inaccessible rock, now surrounded with colourful forests and the ruins of the watchtowers in **Morsko** or **Ostrężnik**, much frequented by tourists. The chain of castles starts near Częstochowa and runs through Ogrodzieniec and further ruined fortresses before finally reaching Kraków (Cracow).

#### Nature reserves

Several nature reserves are situated around Częstochowa. The biggest one is **Sokole Góry** (the Falcon Mountains) with limestone hills and picturesque white rock clusters hidden in the beech forest. Underground there is a mysterious world of 46 caves. It is here that the 140-metre long Maurice Cave (Jaskinia Maurycego) with the abundance of calcite stalactites and stalagmites, considered to be the most beautiful cave in Poland, is to be found. In the Coral Cave (Jaskinia Koralowa) dripstones resembling corals were formed on the overhanging and tangled roots of the trees growing above. The oldest human skeleton in Poland was found in the Mosquito Cave (Jaskinia Komarowa) in Sokole Góry. Scientists estimate that it dates back 32 thousand years. The most bizarre, fantastic rock forms are to be found in the forests of the **Parkowe** Nature Reserve: Twardowski Gate (Brama Twardowskiego), the Rock with a Cross (Skała z Krzyżem), the Bear Cave (Grota Niedźwiedzia), and Rampart Settlement (Osiedle Wały), where the remains of a stronghold from the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries were discovered. Legends and fairy tales are often associated with these places. In the reserves there are also picturesque springs: Sigismundus' Springs (Źródła Zygmunta) and Elizabeth's Spring (Źródło Elżbiety). In the centre of the Reserve there are several ponds with a fish farm nearby, where the tastiest trout in the Jura Uplands come from. To preserve one of the most beautiful scenic sights the **Góra Zborów** Reserve was established. Its unique rock shapes are visible from far away to the approaching tourist. The southern slope of Góra Zborów cascades with steep rocks, divided by flat shelves, paths, and little overhanging hollows. This beautiful place is a habitat of some rare bird and butterfly species.

The surrounding rocks are a real paradise for those who like climbing, a perfect place for improving skills and for training under the supervision of professional instructors. On the rock walls contests are held with the participation of the best climbers. Among the nature reserves should also be mentioned **Bukowa Góra** (Beech Mountain) with its 200 years old beeches reaching heights of 30 meters and trunk diameters of 90 cm; **Bukowa Kępa** (Beech Cluster), **Dębowa Góra** (Oak Mountain), **Kaliszak**, **Ostrężnik** and **Zielona Góra** (Green Mountain), where under the peak lies a 70 meter long cave complete with stalagmites, and from the mountain top the beautiful panorama of Częstochowa spreads. Several rich and interesting caves are located here. In Towarna, which is linked with Dzwonnica by underground tunnel, the bones of a cave bear and fragments of string ceramics were found dating back to the 21st century B.C. Unique species of beetles, which have survived since the ice age, live in the caves. Also here, in numerous colonies, nest the majority of species of Polish bats.



# PILGRIMS' ROUTE



## Częstochowa

This place is known to many people around the world, mainly for the picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa - the icon of Black Madonna, kept in the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra (Mount of Light). Many people make a pilgrimage to this Madonna, with thanks, pleas, and prayers in difficult and delighted moments. Every year the shrine is visited by 4 – 5 million pilgrims from 80 countries around the world. A peculiar religious and social phenomenon on a worldwide scale is foot pilgrimages. From June till the end of September over 200,000 pilgrims come here on foot. The longest pilgrimage routes running across Poland are over 600 km long and it takes pilgrims up to 20 days to cover this distance. Every year for Assumption Day (August 15th) the oldest pilgrimage (initiated in 1711) – the Warsaw Pilgrimage comes to Częstochowa. On August 26th multitudes of the faithful gather to celebrate the great holy day of international importance – the Day of Our Lady of Częstochowa. The Jasna Góra Harvest-Home Festival is another important feast – every year on the first Sunday in September farmers come to Częstochowa bringing gorgeous corn and flower wreaths, symbolizing the fruits of their year round toil. It is the greatest celebration of Polish country folk.

Częstochowa and Jasna Góra is the biggest pilgrimage centre of Marian devotion in the world. Around Częstochowa, however, there are also some famous places of historic significance, rich in tradition and famous for special favours, visited by numerous pilgrims every year. They are worth seeing, too. Being in Częstochowa, you can discover in a unique way the history and rites of the Polish pilgrimage, and visit important and interesting places.



Częstochowa – Pauline Monastery at Jasna Góra



Gidle – Basilica of Assumption



Święta Anna – Baroque church



Gidle – stone figure of Mary with Child

## Gidle

The stone figure of Mary with Baby Jesus, the size of a human hand, is the smallest image in the Catholic world crowned with papal crowns. Found in a field by a ploughman in 1516, today it is placed in a magnificent altar, surrounded by pictures commemorating miraculous healings that occurred through her intercession. The figure remains in the custody of the Dominican Fathers in the Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady – one of the most outstanding examples of 17th century architecture. Madonna of Gidle is famous for her miraculous healing powers. She is also a patron of people working on the soil and underground: farmers and miners. Every year over 100,000 pilgrims come to the Gidle shrine from all over Poland and abroad. They pray for intercession and the grace of healing. On the monastery premises there is also the Way of the Cross (the so-called Calvary) and the monastery museum.

When in Gidle, one cannot fail to see the 15th century, larch-wood parish church of St. Mary Magdalene and contemplate the relics of the Carthusian hermitage to be found in the crypts of the Church of the Sorrowful Mother of God dating back to the 18th century.

Gidle is certainly worth visiting – even the Polish kings: Wladyslaw IV and Jan Kazimierz visited this village.

## Święta Anna (St. Anne)

This is the place of silence and meditation, because here we visit the contemplative, habit-wearing religious order: the world of cloistered Dominican Nuns. They have in their custody a wooden Gothic figure of St. Anne holding the Blessed Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus. We can visit the Baroque church and the adjacent convent built in the form of a quadrangle enclosing a precinct, decorated with stuccos dating back to the 17th century and with 18th century paintings. In front of the church, among trees there is a monument to Tadeusz Kościuszko and a wooden cross-dedicated to the insurgents of 1863. Święta Anna has always been an important place of rest and prayer for pilgrims heading for Jasna Góra. Święta Anna has its special holy days around August 26th each year. Crowds of people come to take part in religious celebrations and there are few so picturesque church feasts in Poland as the ones in Święta Anna.

## Mstów

It is one of the oldest centres of monastic life in Poland. The Canons Regular settled here and set up their monastery before 1145. In 1212 a synod was held in Mstów. Since the 17th century the town and church have been famous for the picture of Our Lady recognized by the Archbishop of Gniezno as having miraculous power. The picture is still surrounded with devotion. Every Wednesday a Marian novena is said, newly-weds and parents with baptized children kneel down before the Madonna. The picture is an integral part of the spiritual and material heritage of Mstów region. Until the 16th century Mstów was a town of greater importance than Częstochowa. When in Mstów, you must see: the cemetery chapel dating from 1620 with its original 16th century metalwork on the door, and a complex of old barns forming separate streets outside the town proper, beautifully situated on the southern hill and Miłosna rock (Love Rock) on the banks of the Warta river.



Mstów – Canons Regular monastery complex.

## Leśniów

The devotion to Our Lady of Leśniów is closely connected with the cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa. In 1382 Prince Ladislaus of Opole (Władysław Opolczyk), unsuccessfully looking for water in the area of today's Leśniów, prayed to Virgin Mary and was granted an extraordinary favour, because all of a sudden an abundant spring burst forth, starting the stream of Leśniówka, flowing here until now. In gratitude Prince Ladislaus left in the chapel at the spring a wooden figure that he was carrying together with the picture of Black Madonna. The Gothic statue, 70 cm tall is to be found today in the main altar of the shrine and is an object of special devotion. In 1967 the statue was crowned by the Primate Stefan Wyszyński and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. Our Lady of Leśniów is worshipped as the patron of families. Many miraculous physical and spiritual cures have been wrought here. The register of favours bestowed upon people visiting Leśniów, kept by the Pauline Fathers since 1706, contains several thousands of events. The shrine with its complex of monastery buildings housing the Pauline novitiate and Our Lady Church with the Miraculous Figure of Our Lady the Patron of Families has become a local pilgrimage centre.



Leśniów – spring.