

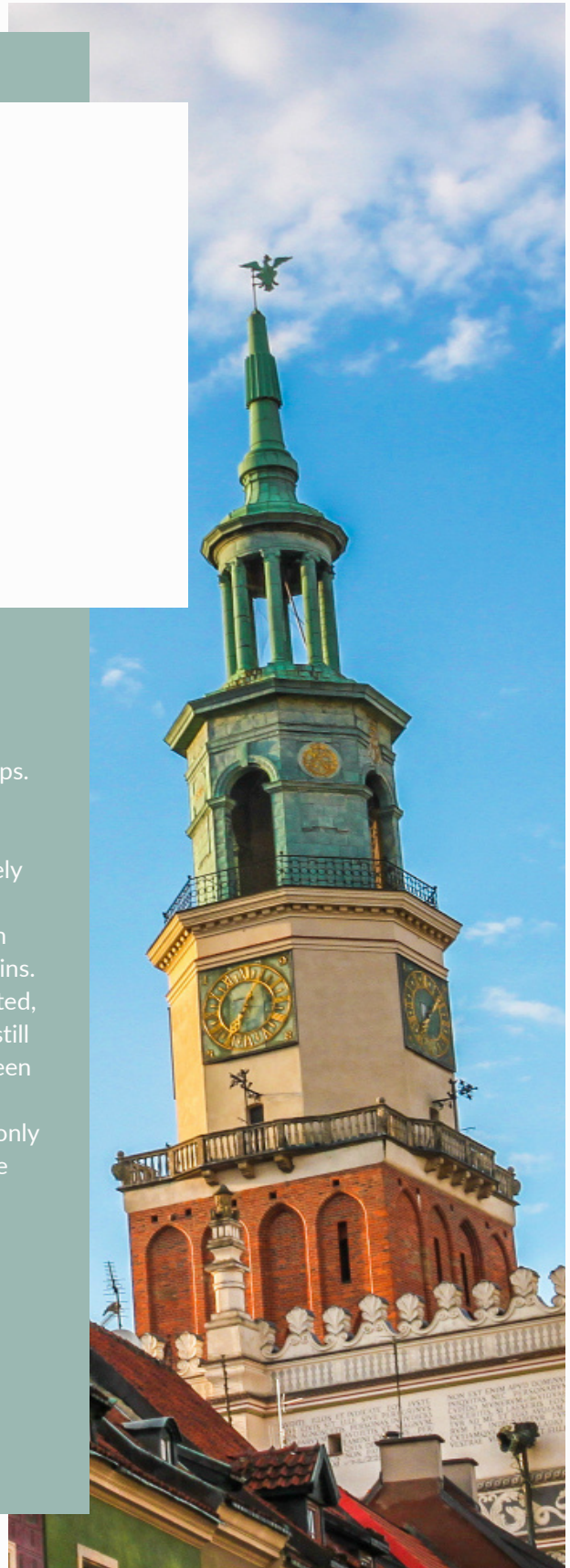
WHAT'S OUT THERE? | PART 2

# VOLUNTEERS WELCOME TO WIELKOPOLSKA

EVS | ESC

Poland is divided into sixteen administrative regions - voivodeships. Greater Poland is one of them, with its capital city Poznań. The full Polish name is Województwo Wielkopolskie and yes, we know it couldn't possibly be any longer :) Wielkopolska is definitely NOT the most touristic region in Poland - typical Polish tourists usually don't choose it for their holiday destination. We are an "in between region" - halfway to the seaside, halfway to the mountains. A lake district, but not as big and clean as Mazury. Densely forested, but not as spectacular as Białowieża. Historically important, but still not Cracow :) Business-oriented, but rather a transfer stop between Warsaw and Berlin.

We are a flat, forested region full of lakes and small towns, with only Poznań being considered a mainstream Polish tourist site. Is there anything more to discover?



Erasmus+

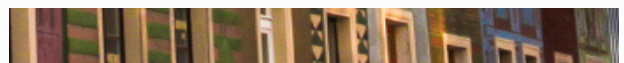


Stowarzyszenie „Jeden Świat”  
Service Civil International Poland



## Find Out Inside

- Wielkopolskie - The Greater Poland Voivodeship
- National Parks, Nature Reserves and Landscape Parks
- Final Thoughts



# WIELKOPOLSKA - THE GREATER POLAND VOIVODESHIP

A bunch of facts before we start :)

“Greater Poland” is not an accidental name. We truly have a great contribution to the polish history. Well, to be honest, we started it :) Exactly here, on our lands, the Polish State was created. First capital, first ruling family, first cities, cathedrals and bishopships were based here. Back then it was just called Poland. Later, due to expansion, more regions emerged, with Greater and Lesser Poland (Małopolska - find it on the map!).

The oldest legends and tales about Poland take place here. Do you know the story of our national code of arms, white eagle? We are the second biggest and third most populated voivodeship in Poland. Let's start our short trip through Wielkopolska - one of the most developed railway nets in the country will surely be helpful!

## 1 - Gniezno

The first official capital city of Poland, dates back to the very beginning of the country (Xth century). According to the legend, the name of the city comes from the word “gniazdo”, which means nest. The nest of our nation is nowadays a medium sized town around 50 km away from Poznań - you can get there using cheap regional trains ( POLregio or Koleje Wielkopolskie ). A trip will cost you around 15 złoty and take 45 minutes (one way). It has a typical Greater Poland styled old town market and one of the most important cathedrals in the whole country. It is possibly the place, where our country was officially baptized - but this is a well known local battle :) Poznań, Lednica and Gniezno argue since always which city should hold the title of the “cradle of polish christianity”. We will not try to convince you who is right, but one is certain - the cradle of polish christianity is definitely somewhere in...Greater Poland :)



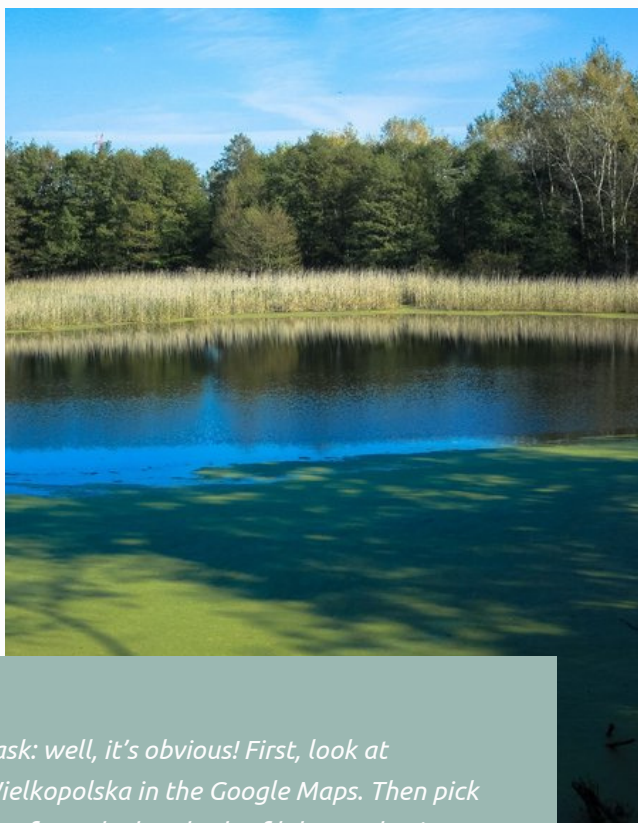
*Task: A photo with the statue of the first polish king is highly recommended! You will find it in the front of the cathedral. By the way, haven't you seen this guy before? In another cathedral?*

## 2 - Lednogóra

You can reach it by train too, although the railway station is located not very close to the main attractions. It is a perfect spot for a one day trip on a sunny summer day. Lednogóra is a small town with a huge historical value. In Wielkopolskie Muzeum Etnograficzne ( Greater Poland's Ethnographic Museum ) you can feel how it was to live centuries ago - it is an open air museum full of wooden cottages, barns, windmills and little wooden churches, all beautifully painted and fully equipped, surrounded by local fruit trees and flowers. I recommend visiting it in late spring or summer, when nature is all in bloom. When done with this museum, there is a second one to visit - the remains of Mieszko I palace, the first official polish ruler. The ruins are not too spectacular, but remember - they are dated back to the Xth century! Going there is an adventure for itself, as they are located on an island and you need to take a ferry. And after all this sightseeing...just jump into the water! Lednickie Lake is clean and good for swimming, with few "beaches" often used by local people.



## 3 - WielkoPolskie Lake District



*Task: well, it's obvious! First, look at Wielkopolska in the Google Maps. Then pick one from the hundreds of lakes and enjoy your trip!*

It's not a certain place or point on the map, it's everywhere around you. Greater Poland is geographically a flatland and a lake district, although even local people tend to forget about it. Our lakes are far from being spectacular, but they are an important part of the landscape and a natural weekend destination for all of us. We swim in them, grill next to them, fish there, sail, kayak and sunbath. Without them our life would surely look much, much different! One of the biggest and surely most popular is Jezioro Powidzkie, well known for its clear water and big sailing community. Others are lakes located around the town of Sieraków (also a natural reserve and a little historical old town) , Stęszew, Zaniemyśl (with an island once owned by a local aristocratic family, today a museum) and many, many more. Those closest to Poznań (but not within the city borders like Rusałka) are Lusowo, Swarzędzkie and Kiekrz.

## 4 - Castles, Palaces and Mansions

Greater Poland used to be a home to many noble and aristocratic families. Those people owned a lot of lands and properties and as you can imagine, their houses needed to reflect their status. The region is full of old palaces and mansions once hosting the Polish high society. Many of them have impressive art collections and have been turned into museums and galleries. In some you will find elegant restaurants and hotels specializing in sumptuous weddings. Almost all of them have beautiful parks and gardens. Let us recommend you some destinations not too far away from Poznań



### • Kórnik

This is a classical one day trip, it is even possible that Kórnik has been visited by 100% of Poznań inhabitants. It is a palace, although it looks more like a castle - it was built in the arabic style, has a moat and a famous garden. But it's not the architecture that makes it famous here, but the fact that the house is...haunted! Yes, it is not a joke - there is a legend about the White Lady who passes quietly through its corridors... In the main hall you can look her straight in the eyes, as her big painting is displayed there ( yes, this is this place where you can always see a crowd of people taking photos ).



*Task: find the painting of the White Lady and look at her - she will look back at you. Then change the place and look at her again. She is still watching you. Some say it's a well known painting trick, but can you be sure? Sweet dreams! :)*

- **Rogalin**

Beautifully located palace owned by one of the most important polish noble families. It has been fully renovated and can be visited from inside with an audio guide (good option for english speakers). This costs some money, as the museum is ticketed, but it is worth its price. In one of the outbuildings there is an art gallery that exhibits some of the old collection. Rogalin is best known for it's beautiful park, where you can pay a visit to the oldest oaks in Greater Poland - they are our local treasures, have names and witnessed more than any person did!



- **Gołuchów Castle**

You would love to see the famous french castles but Loire Valley is a bit too far away? No problem! The Gołuchów Castle is a whiff of France just next door and it's beautiful garden looks gorgeous at every time of the year. Gołuchów is a place for everyone - art and history lovers will surely enjoy elegant interiors and museum exhibitions, nature seekers can get lost in the big and wild garden and animal enthusiasts can pay a visit to the wisent family that lives in the enclosure close to the castle (wisent - european bison ).

Task: find the oaks! Try to look like a real druid, tell them something nice and take a picture :)



Task: Don't waste the picturesque potencial of this place, photoshoot till you can't any longer! :)

## 5 - Touristic Routes

To do with a car, bike, kayak or on foot - in Greater Poland there are plenty of marked, thematic routes. It is not always easy to find their detailed description in English, but finding the map of the most popular shouldn't be too difficult.



### Piast Trail (Szlak Piastowski)

A route covering places related to the first ruling dynasty of Piast. They ruled the country from its beginning in the Xth century until XIVth century, but the last known member of the family died in...XVIIth century! You can imagine, that they left a huge heritage behind them and that there is a lot to see. The route consists of museums, ruins, churches, tombs, exhibitions and events and is spread throughout the whole region. Some of the places have been already covered by this little guidebook ( f.ex. Gniezno ). If you want to learn more about the Piast Trail project, please look at the website <https://szlakpiastowski.pl/>

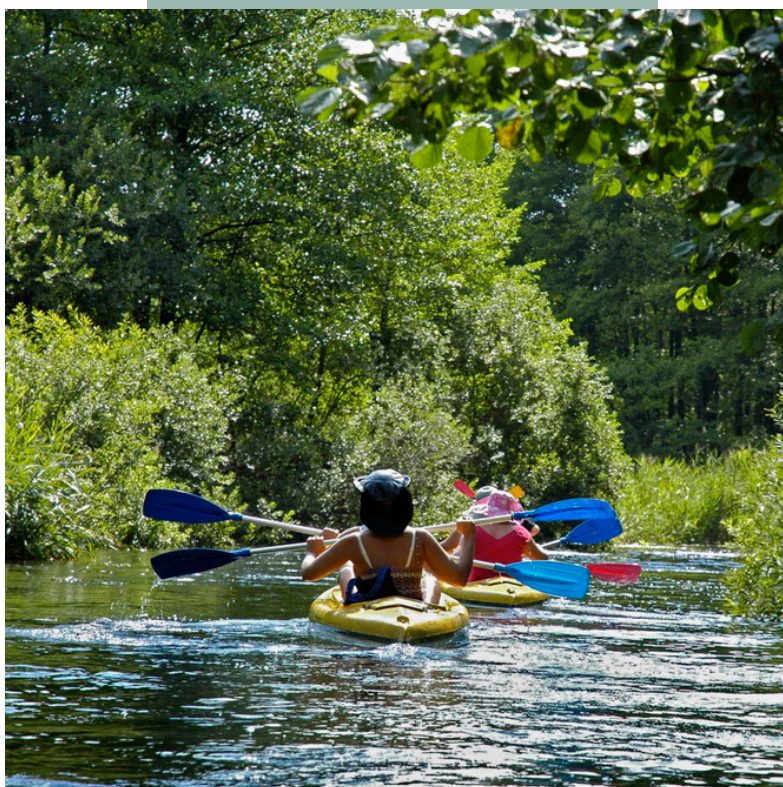
### Wooden Churches Trail (Szlak Kościołów Drewnianych)



something for local history lovers who seek a rustical atmosphere. Our wooden churches are truly a local treasure - most of them didn't survive the turbulent times ( it is sad, but wood burns quickly). Fires happen till today and every few years one of those little beauties disappears. Seeing at least some of them is a good way to learn about the local folklore and a great chance to see the "real Greater Poland" - the vast majority of them is located in the villages and little towns, and as mentioned before this is the true face of our region.

## Kayak Routes

As you learned just a page ago, Greater Poland is a lake district. All those lakes need to draw water from somewhere - in most cases their sources are little streams and rivers. Some of them are big enough to create a net of possible kayak routes - in fact you can row miles and miles! Kayak tourism is very popular here, renting a kayak is quite cheap and there are a lot of companies that offer it. If you are a beginner we recommend a day trip without any camping luggage - you will be picked up by a car at the end of the route and taken back to where you started. You may think that river Warta (the biggest in the region, third biggest in the country) would be a good choice to start with, but it is not. Warta is quite boring, like all big, lazy rivers. Popular places to go are rather Wełna (for beginners) and Drawa (for profis).



Task: don't worry, we are not asking you to go on a big adventure if you don't feel like :) Kayak can be borrowed also on the lake and you can do it in Poznań too (Strzeszynek, Kiekrz, maybe even Rusałka). If you have never done it before, try it! Don't forget to always wear a life vest.

# NATIONAL PARKS, NATURE RESERVES AND LANDSCAPE PARKS

We mentioned before, that Greater Poland's landscape is far from dramatic, but this doesn't mean, that it doesn't have any value! If you cherish wide open fields cut through calm rivers, little lakes and friendly forests full of deers and mushrooms, you may even fall in love with it. Greater Poland looks pretty much the same everywhere you go, but here are some recommendations of spots officially considered interesting :)



## WIELKOPOLSKI PARK NARODOWY (GREATER POLAND'S NATIONAL PARK)

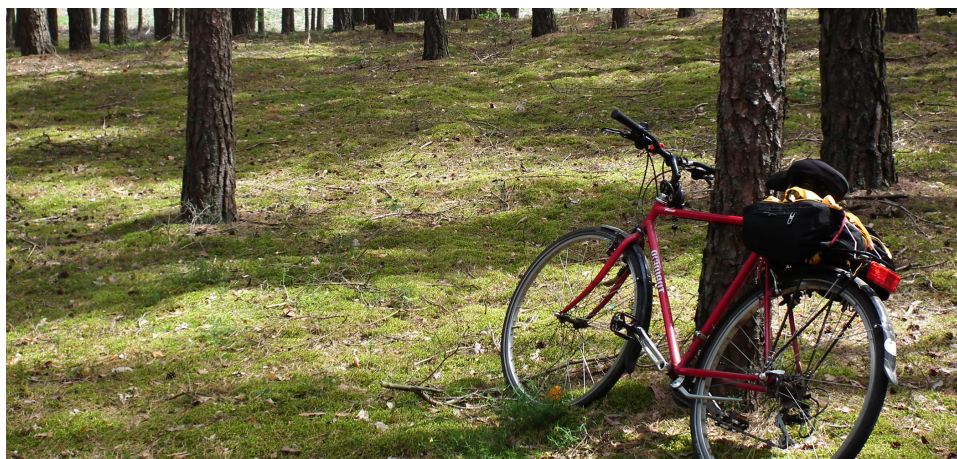
covered in the Poznań  
Guidebook

## DRAWIEŃSKI PARK NARODOWY (DRAWIEŃSKI NATIONAL PARK)

It is shared between three voivodeships, we have the smallest park of it.

It is a large forest full of lakes, streams, peat bogs and swamps. Huge amounts of water birds and other water friendly animals live there and if you are the luckiest visitor, you may even spot a grey wolf, a species once practically extinct in Poland. Let's be honest - you probably won't see it, as they are masters in avoiding people :) Rather expect to see some trees bitten by beavers and of course a lot, lot of deers.





## **PUSZCZA NOTECKA ( NOTECKA PRIMEVAL FOREST )**

It is not a “spot to visit”, as the whole forest has more than 1000 square kilometers and is at least 100 kilometers long. It is actually a whole region, one of our green lungs. Probably the most popular place to go is Sieraków, a town we mentioned before as a good lake destination :) In Puszcza Notecka you will find plenty of walking trails. If you have an idea of cycling there, please rethink it :) Puszcza Notecka is a very dry forest with sandy, powdery soil. Cycling there can be a nightmare, especially for unequipped or inexperienced bikers. There are better places to start with.



## **PUSZCZA ZIELONKA (ZIELONKA PRIMEVAL FOREST)**

Just a short jump from Poznań and reachable with the regional railway, it is again a very typical Greater Poland landscape, with dry forest, lakes, rivers and little towns. Very popular for weekend day trips among Poznań inhabitants, who love to walk, cycle and swim there, not mentioning picking mushrooms in the Autumn (our beloved national “sport”)

## **NADWARCIAŃSKI PARK KRAJOBRAZOWY (NADWARCIAŃSKI LANDSCAPE PARK)**

A park that protects the Warta river valley and a few hundreds of waterbird species that live there. Here you can see how the river naturally shapes the landscape, leaving the old river beds behind, creating new meanders and giving protection to it's faithful friends - the beavers. Beware of the mosquitoes, the most annoying inhabitants of our meadows! Don't let them eat you alive...



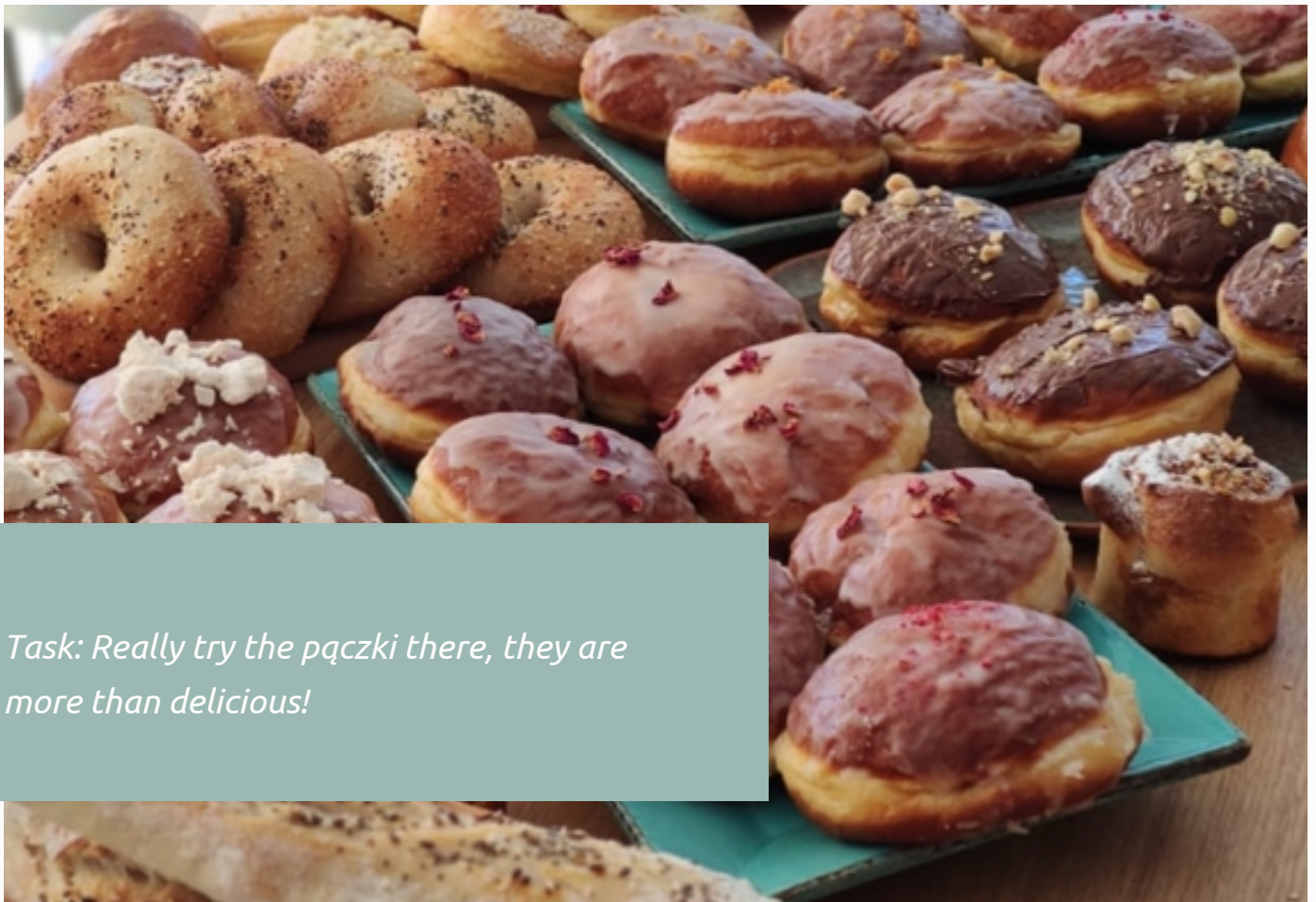
## 7 - FINAL THOUGHTS

And what if you don't want to discover it all, cause it's too much, too far away, too time consuming or too expensive? What if you want to experience 100% of Wielkopolska spirit in just one weekend, or even one day? To see a typical town, get a look at some Piast stuff, swim a bit in the lake, walk a bit in the forest, see a really old church or two and then comfortably return to your own bed in Poznań? Well, you are a lucky person, cause we can find a place like this for you!

Take a regional train from Poznań main station and get off at Podziedziska station.

Pobiedziska is a small town around 30 km away from Poznań, which, at the first glimpse, does not have too much to offer, but it is certainly a right spot for Greater Poland's spirit seekers. Once you get off the train find the old town market - Rynek. Not spectacular? Well, it is not, but it looks exactly like every other Rynek in our region and ( a recommendation from a local who knows it well) you can get great donuts there ( *pączki* ), not mentioning the famous ice-cream... After you certainly ate too much sugar it's time for some action! Close to the Rynek there is a little church made from red brick, the oldest in the city.

Truly speaking it is hard to find buildings that old here - it was built in the XIIIth century! Once done with history you might want to stretch your legs a bit. Another good news for you - you basically are in Puszcza Zielonka. You can visit one of the many natural reserves, for example Park Krajobrazowy Promno and have a walk around the little charming lake Dobre ( Jezioro Dobre means literally a "kind, good lake"). The lake is too small? Then change it for a bigger one - Jezioro Biezdruchowo is right behind the corner, offering a city beach, kayak rental and even a tiny island. Still not enough? You can go one train station back to Pobiedziska Letnisko ( Pobiedziska summer station ), you will find there more lakes, more forests and more attractions, for example Skansen Miniatur Szlaku Piastowskiego (open air exhibition with miniatures and models of Piast trail attractions - we know, it sounds strange, but it is an option to see all of them in one place ). Still not enough? Ok, just step on the first train that comes from Poznań and go to Gniezno, just 15 minutes away from Pobiedziska.



*Task: Really try the pączki there, they are more than delicious!*

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